Interpersonal Relationships in Crisis in Greco-Roman Literature

Schediasmata, no. 3

Editors:
Sofia-Elena Floros
Marina Tzortzakaki

with the collaboration of:
Melina Tamiolaki
Markus Zimmermann

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Faculty of Philosophy, University of Crete

2026

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Sofia-Elena Floros, Frankfurt
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June 2026

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Preface

The present volume arises from the international conference, *Interpersonal Relationships in crisis in Greco-Roman Literature*, organised in the framework of the LACRIMALit research project (Institute for Mediterranean Studies/Foundation for Research and Technology) in collaboration with the Postgraduate Program 'Classical Studies' of the University of Crete. The conference was held in Rethymno, Crete, at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies on November 14th–15th 2024. It gathered MA, PhD and early career researchers who were given the opportunity to exchange ideas with the members of the LACRIMALit project, as well as with senior researchers participating in the conference. The papers included in this volume constitute revised and expanded versions of the talks presented at the conference; they aim to study interpersonal relationships in crisis as they are portrayed in Greco-Roman literature, with an emphasis on the delineation of literary characters in the context of crisis.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in interest in the concept of crisis in ancient Greek and Roman thought and in the way in which Greco-Roman literature approaches crisis situations, as well as issues related to crisis management. The LACRIMALit research project, which has received funding from the HFRI (Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation), is part of a broader research effort that aspires to offer a comparative study of the phenomenon of crisis in Greco-Roman antiquity. We strongly believe that examining the concept of crisis contributes significantly to understanding Greco-Roman antiquity as an integral part of it, as crises can emerge in all areas of life and require a corresponding response.

In this volume, we aim to shed light on the specific issue of interpersonal relationships in crisis, and particularly the portrayal of literary characters in crisis contexts. Therefore, the papers of this volume deal with crises in interpersonal relationships of various kinds (crises between gods and humans, crises in the context of war, crises of an erotic nature, crises within the family, crises between different social classes) and in texts of various genres (epos, lyric poetry, historiography, novel, tragedy, comedy, rhetoric, and mime). The volume draws on a wealth of examples from Greco-Roman antiquity. The authors of the papers are postgraduate students, doctoral students, young and experienced researchers, and Professors from the fields of Classical Philology, History, and Archaeology at various international universities. This selection ensures a comprehensive approach to the subject based on the fruitful dialogue between experienced scholars and the younger generation.

Regarding the existing bibliography and despite the growing interest in crisis in Greco-Roman antiquity, most studies focus on the concept of crisis itself or on instances of crisis

within a specific literary genre or work. Alternatively, several monographs, articles, or collective volumes deal with historical crisis events or periods of crisis examined from a historiographical perspective.[1] Few are the studies that comparatively analyse issues of crisis in the Greco-Roman world with a specific theme as the focal point (e.g., human relations). At an international level, but also in Greek bibliography, there are no volumes that focus on interpersonal relationships in crisis in Greco-Roman antiquity. We hope the present publication will be an interesting contribution to the international bibliography for a number of reasons: (a) it will offer an important overview of the types of interpersonal crises that a scholar may encounter in Greco-Roman literature, highlighting the abundance and variety of possible crisis situations; (b) it will offer an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach to the subject of interpersonal relationships in crisis (philological and historical approaches with different methodologies); (c) it promotes scientific dialogue between different university levels, giving a platform to innovative approaches by young researchers in comparison with the more experienced view of faculty members from the international academic community; (d) given that the crisis instances are organised thematically (primarily based on the nature of the crisis), it will give readers the opportunity to compare different approaches to the issue of interpersonal relationships in crisis in Greco-Roman texts (by literary genre or author) but also the methodological approaches that a contemporary scholar may choose to explore a crisis (depending on the approach chosen by each author for the study of a specific type of crisis, e.g., crises within the family).

The valuable dialogue that develops between young or experienced and renowned researchers and Professors ensures that the volume is not only aimed at a specialist audience (scholars of a certain level, with a scientific interest in a particular literary genre or period, etc.), but also to any potential reader, member of the academic community or not, who is interested in the universal issue of crises in human relationships from the perspective of Greco-Roman writers.

This volume is an initial presentation of a new research topic, as we wish to spark interest in potential future studies and highlight the wealth contained in the subject of interpersonal relationships in crisis. Despite the frequent occurrence of such crises in Greco-Roman literature as an integral and timeless part of human experience, they have not been systematically researched until now.

[1] A few recent examples: Scholten (2007), Markantonatos/Zimmermann (2011), De Bruyn (2023), Drijvers (2023), Fink/Rollinger (2023), Duplá Ansuategui (2024), Flower (2024), Sierra Martín (2024), Van Oppen de Ruiter (2024), Tamiolaki/Zimmermann (2026).

The first part of the volume focuses on crisis incidents that are interwoven with myth. PhD candidate Christos Poulopoulos highlights three different poetic versions (by Pindar, Theocritus, and Lycophron) of the conflict between the Dioscuri and the Apharetides. Next, PhD candidate Ioannis Karakirisidis examines the relationship between Aphrodite and Sappho through the poetess' compositions.

The second part concerns crises of war in historiography. Dr Markus Zimmermann presents the crisis of leadership of the Spartan king Cleombrotos I in connection with the Battle at Leuctra (371 BC). He particularly investigates Xenophon's position on the end of the military supremacy and hegemony of the formerly seemingly invincible Sparta in Greece and how this end relates to the defeat of the Spartans at Leuctra and the decline of morals in Sparta during the classical period. PhD candidate Maria Ntampou explores how Plutarch presents Themistocles and Aristides as a contrasting but complementary pair in his *Parallel Lives*, whose relationship faces various crises and culminates in their crucial collaboration during the Persian Wars. Next, Dr Kleanthis Mantzouranis' study deals with political crisis, examining the importance of faith and fear, as well as interpersonal crises in the 2nd and 3rd book of Thucydides' *Histories*. Finally, Professor Nikolaos Miltsios explores the intertextual relationship between Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Arrian's *Anabasis*, expanding on his previous research and analysing how both authors depict their protagonists' reactions to crises of trust.

The third part of the present volume is devoted to erotic crises in Latin literature. Graduate student Marina Tzortzakaki investigates the multidimensional crisis between Dido and Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, emphasising the emotions of the two characters and their significance for the interpretation of the epos. Next, graduate student Sofia-Elena Floros studies the crisis involving the erectile dysfunction of Encolpius, the protagonist of Petronius' *Satyrica*, and how the women in the episode of Croton deal with this medical condition. Finally, research assistant Maria Kofina, who holds an MA degree from the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, explores interpersonal crises and identity crises in Herodas' fifth mime. Kofina analyses the complex power dynamics between Vitina and Gastronos, the deconstruction of gender roles, and the resolution of their conflict, while drawing thematic parallels with the anonymous mime *Moicheutria*.

The fourth part explores family crises in classical ancient Greek literature. Dr Roberta Dainotto discusses inheritance trials in ancient Athens, which reveal the fluidity of family structures. The litigants in Isaios' speeches negotiate their position in the *oikos* through rhetoric, leading to tensions and crises. Next, doctoral candidate Emmanuelle Jégo studies how, in Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, the father-son conflict arising from financial disagreements is

exacerbated by Socrates' teachings. The tension escalates into uncontrollable violence, culminating in an unresolved crisis that highlights the two characters' rivalry for dominance and control. Finally, MA student Charoula Dandolou studies tragedy, particularly, the two leading couples Prokne/Tereus (Sophocles, *Tereus*) and Medea/Jason (Euripides, *Medea*) from the perspective of marital crisis. Specifically, she focuses on the causes that lead to the crisis, as well as the behaviour of the individuals involved.

The fifth part deals with family crises and crises occurring in other close-knit structures, like the previous two parts, in a different literary genre, that of Latin historiography. On the one hand, PhD candidate Christos Argyropoulos explores the catalytic effect of the personal lives of the Julio-Claudian emperors on political public life, focusing on the competitive relationship between Tiberius and his mother, Livia Drusilla. On the other, doctoral candidate Maria-Eirini Zacharioudaki investigates the turbulent relationship between the brothers Caracalla and Geta and the latter's subsequent fratricide in Herodian's *History*.

The thematic axis of the sixth and final part of this volume focuses on interpersonal relationships in a socio-political frame. First, Professor Claudia Tiersch investigates the relationship between the emperor and the ecclesiastical sphere in the West of the late Roman Empire from a historiographical perspective, focusing on the negotiation processes in the mutual spheres of power of the Church and the state, using the example of the correspondence between Ambrosius and the emperors of his episcopate. Next, PhD candidate Cesare Barba explores clientelist relationships intertwined with friendships, as seen in Cicero's *Letters* during the critical period of the politician's exile and return. Finally, PhD candidate Evgenia Kompocholi studies the conflicting socio-cultural perceptions in New Comedy through the shaken interpersonal relationships of certain characters.

The Editors

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PART I: Myth and Crisis in Ancient Greek Poetry

Three Poets Singing: The Clash between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae in Pindar, Theocritus and Lycophron

Christos Poulopoulos

This paper will revolve around the account of the fight between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae by three poets: Pindar in *Nemean* 10, Theocritus in *Idyll* 22, and Lycophron in his obscure poem *Alexandra*.[1] The aim is to explore the different functions of the crisis in question in three different literary contexts, while trying to take a closer look at how the comparative reading of the three poets helps us shed light upon each poet's handling of this subject in their poems and their poetic creation as a whole. But first, let's begin with the myth.

Ancient sources give us various possibilities about Castor and Polydeuces' parentage: according to Homer, they are sons of Tyndareus, while slightly later sources point towards Zeus as their father.[2] The tradition about their split parentage is firstly attested in the *Cypria*,[3] where one of them is mortal (Castor) and the other immortal (Polydeuces). Two of the main events in the myths concerning the Dioscuri is the abduction of their cousins Leucippides, Phoebe and Hilaeira, and their fight with their other cousins, the sons of Aphareus, Idas and Lynceus — Tyndareus, Aphareus, and Leucippus were brothers.[4] The *Cypria* does mention Phoebe and Hilaera, though as daughters of Apollo.[5] Alcman also spoke of them, since a scrap of papyrus

[1] For the texts, the following editions are used: Bowra, C. M. (1935), *Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis*, Oxford (for Pindar), Gow, A. S. F. (1952), *Bucolici Graeci*, Oxford (for Theocritus), Hornblower, S. (2015), *Lycophron: Alexandra*, Oxford (for Lycophron). Any deviation from or variation of the aforementioned versions of the texts is declared. Translation is mine, unless otherwise stated.

[2] In the *Iliad* (3.243–244), in *Teichoskopia*, it is stated that they are covered by the life-giving earth of Lacedaemon, their homeland: Ὣς φάτο, τοὺς δ᾽ ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἶα | ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ ('So she spoke; but the life-giving earth was holding them there, in Lacedaemon, their dear homeland'). This passage indicates that they have died a normal death, which probably presupposes Tyndareus as their father. The same account of their parentage is found in the *Odyssey*; in the *Nekyia* (*Od*. 11.298–304) it is clearly stated that they are sons of Leda and Tyndareus but the earth holds them living, having equal honour from Zeus, being alive one day and dead the next: ἥ ῥ᾽ ὑπὸ Τυνδαρέῳ κρατερόφρονε γείνατο παῖδε, | Κάστορά θ᾽ ἱππόδαμον καὶ πὺξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα, | τοὺς ἄμφω ζωοὺς κατέχει φυσίζοος αἶα: | οἳ καὶ νέρθεν γῆς τιμὴν πρὸς Ζηνὸς ἔχοντες | ἄλλοτε μὲν ζώουσ᾽ ἑτερήμεροι, ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖτε | τεθνᾶσιν ('[Leda] bore to Tyndareus two sons, stout of heart, Castor the tamer of horses, and the boxer Polydeuces. These two the earth, the giver of life, covers, alive though they be, and even in the world below they have honour from Zeus. One day they live in turn, and one day they are dead', trans. Murray). In the *Ehoiai* we find both children to be sons of Zeus ([Hes.] fr. 42 M.-W., cf. *Schol*. Pind. *Nem*. 10.150a). Possibly the Catalogue Poet called them the *Dioskouroi* (as the *Odyssey* at least clearly cannot do), but the preserved use of that term is in the *Homeric Hymn* 33. Both in *h.Hom*. 33 and 17 they are sons of Zeus and Leda, although they are also addressed as *Tyndaridai* in honour of their stepfather (*Τυνδαρίδας*, *h.Hom*. 17.2 and 33.2). The same parentage is also found in a fragmentary poem by Alcaeus, fr. 34a 1–2 V; Gantz (1993), 323.

[3] Fr. 8 *PEG*.

[4] Tyndareus is the son of Oebalus (Hes. fr. 199 M.-W., *Schol*. *Il*. 2.581, *Schol*. Eur. *Or*. 457, *Schol*. Lyc. 1123) and Nyad Bateia or of Perieres and Gorgophone (Stesich. fr. 227 *PMGF* = fr. 287 Finglass). According to Stesichorus (ibid.), Tyndareus' brothers are Icarius, Aphareus, and Leucippus (*LIMC* VIII 1 s.v. 'Tyndareos').

[5] Paus., fr. 11 *PEG*.

mentions Phoebe's name,[6] but all our preserved literary accounts of parentage and abduction, as well as of the promised marriage to the Apharetidae, are late.

The conflict between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae arises from either the abduction of the Leucippides or a cattle conflict. Regarding the abduction episode, the myth in the ancient sources, overall, goes as follows: the Leucippides were engaged to the Apharetidae, but the Dioscuri carried them off.[7] Concerning the cattle conflict, which is presented in Pindar as the cause of the fight, Apollodorus (3.11.2) provides a fuller account of the dispute, where the two sets of brothers raid cattle in Arcadia. After they take the cattle, Dioscuri and Apharetidae proceed to the allotment of the booty; Idas divides a cow into four parts and proposes that whoever finishes his portion first shall receive half the cattle, and whoever finishes second shall take the other half. Idas, a fast eater, finishes his share and that of his brother first, claiming all the cattle and driving them to Messene. The Dioscuri later steal the herd back, setting up an ambush for the Apharetidae.[8]

In ancient visual representations, we find that both the abduction of the Leucippides and the joint cattle raid are very old tales. A lid fragment of a Chalcidian pot from the 6th century BCE shows Polydeuces lifting Phoebe — both names inscribed — into his chariot.[9] In the following century the carrying-off — often by chariot, sometimes from a temple — appears several times on Red-Figure vases, like the attic crater in the Lisbon museum.[10] Back to the 6th century, metopes from Heraion I at Foce del Sele showing two women fleeing and two men running, and the very fragmentary south frieze from the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi (ca. 530–525 BCE), are also commonly supposed to represent the abduction scene, but the identification of the scene is not certain.[11] As for the cattle raid, we find a representation in the poorly preserved parts of the frieze of the Monopteros of the Sicyonian Treasury of Delphi (ca. 560

[6] Fr. 8 *PMG*. Cf. also Alcm. 1.1 *PMG*: Πωλυδεύκης, without any more information on his parentage or kinship.
[7] Theoc. *Id*. 22.137–166, Lyc. 535–567, *Schol*. Lyc. 547, Ov. *Fast.* 5.699–702, Hyg. *Fab*. 80, *Schol*. *Il*. 3.243, *Schol*. Pind. *Nem*. 10. The account of Theocritus and Lycophron will be given below. In the *Iliad* and *Scholia* on Pindar, the Dioscuri are invited to their cousins' wedding and steal the girls during the feast. In general, the Leucippides were originally promised to the Apharetidae and the combat between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae follows the abduction episode.
[8] Gantz (1993), 326.
[9] Reggio Calabria, Museo Nazionale, no. 1027–1028.
[10] Lisboa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, no. 682.
[11] The frieze of Heraion I at Foce del Sele is considered one of the oldest Doric friezes known from the Greek world. The metopes in question (Museo Archeologico Nazionale Di Paestum, inv. 20459 and 20460) were carved probably during the 6th century as a part of the older temple and show either the pursuit of the Leucippides by the Dioscuri [Zuchtriegel (2023), 71–94, especially fig. 30–31, p. 73], or another story of woman pursuit, like the fleeing Niobids [Zancani Montuoro, P./Zanotti-Bianco, U./Krauss, F. (1954), 330–338]. In the case of the Siphnian Treasury, the abduction of Hippodameia by Pelops or that of Persephone by Hades is also suggested; La Coste-Messelière (1936), 370–388, Amandry/Chamoux (1991), fig. 9 b–c and 12a and p. 48 for the commentary on the reliefs, Rolley (1994), 230, D' Acunto (2013), 111.

BCE), although it is not connected to the fight.[12] Concerning the actual fight, the archaeological data has little to offer. The clash between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae is only depicted on an Apulian lecythus from the middle of the 4th century BCE,[13] following the main plotline of the literary sources.

Passing to the literary sources of the battle, although the result in early accounts is always the same — Idas, Lynceus and Castor dead — there are some variations. In Pindar we have clear references to the account delivered by the *Cypria* (fr. 15 *PEG*); following — vaguely — a dispute over cattle, which is not in the *Cypria*, Lynceus, gazing from Taygetus, sees the Dioscuri in a hollow oak,[14] with a vision that can penetrate through solid objects. Idas then wounds Castor with his spear by stabbing through the tree and Polydeuces pursues both Idas and Lynceus to the tomb of their father, Aphareus. There they make a stand and attempt to throw the polished tombstone at Polydeuces. This fails to daunt him, however, and he slays Lynceus with his spear, while Zeus hurls a thunderbolt at Idas.[15] In Theocritus' account of the fight, the action begins *in medias res*, when the Dioscuri have abducted the Leucippides and they are pursued by the sons of Aphareus. When they reach the tomb of Aphareus, Lynceus addresses a long speech to the Dioscuri, attempting to 'reason' with them. The speech is futile, so he proposes a duel between himself and Castor. During the fight, Castor first mutilates the fingers of Lynceus and then he disembowels him. Idas prepares to avenge his sibling by hurling his father's tombstone at Castor, at which point Zeus intervenes by first disarming and then incinerating Idas. In Lycophron, the fight ends like a Shakespearean tragedy: everybody dies. Because of the rape of Leucippides, both the Dioscuri are killed by Idas and, in return, Zeus kills both the Apharetidae.

Starting with Pindar, the tenth *Nemean Ode* is not a hymn for a victory at Nemean Games, but for a victory at *Heraia* or *Hecatombaia* (*Nem*. 10.21–24), an Argive festival in

[12] In the Monopteros, the frieze of the architrave was decorated with scenes in relief, inspired by heroic themes, dating around 560 BCE. For the relief depicting Dioscuri see Delphi, Mus. I, no. 322.

[13] Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 80.162. Phot. Mus. 31353, 29360: at the far left and right the Leucippides, desperate and almost totally nude, are held by their abductors on two quadrigas. Castor, wounded in the chest, falls at the left. Idas stands in the centre on the upper step of the grave monument, from which he has uprooted the stele that holds over his head. Wounded in the thigh, he is about to hurl the stele to Polydeuces who threatens him with a sword. Idas and the tombstone are about to be struck by a thunderbolt sent by Zeus; Mayo (1982), 128–132.

[14] I follow Bowra's edition who follows Boeckh's emendation ἡμένους. The mss. deliver ἥμενος, in singular. This *lectio* is syntactically intolerable, and it is doubted by the Scholiasts; Aristarchus corrects to ἧμενον, supporting that Lynceus was sitting alone in the hollow oak: *Schol*. Pind. *Nem*. 10.114a5–13. Didymus (*Schol*. Pind. *Nem*. 10 ibid.) proposes ἡμένος (= ἡμένους), based on ἀελλόπος and τρίπος. For an elaborate analysis on the problem see Henry (2005), ad loc.

[15] Gazing from Taygetus: *Cypria* fr. 15.1–2 *PEG*, Pind. *Nem*. 10.62; supernatural vision: *Cypria* fr. 15.4–5 *PEG*, Pind. *Nem*. 10.61–63; the cattle variation: Pind. *Nem*. 10.60.

honour of Hera,[16] obtained by the athlete Theaeus, whose victory is due to the *theoxenia* offered by his ancestor Pamphaes to the Dioscuri.[17] The rite of *theoxenia* seems to be particularly characteristic of the cult of the Dioscuri, for whom *Theoxenia* are celebrated not only in the Peloponnese and the Dorian-speaking areas, but also, for instance, in Attica and on Paros.[18] Vase paintings and reliefs show the divine horsemen galloping through the air towards the two *klinai* prepared for them.[19] The *gnome* of verses 59–60 sums up the moral of the story: χαλεπὰ δ' ἔρις ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλεῖν κρεσσόνων ('Strife against those who are stronger is difficult for men to face', trans. W. H. Race). Mortal people like the Apharetidae cannot mess with those superior to them. The Dioscuri are themselves half gods and protected by Zeus like Theaeus and his family are protected by the Dioscuri.[20]

In the poet's prayer to Zeus (*Nem*. 10.29 f.), it is stated that the fulfilment of all deeds lies within the god. Theaeus has already won in the Pythian, the Nemean, and the Isthmian Games, but, as far as we know, he hasn't yet participated in — or won — the Olympic Games, hence his unspoken desire (τῶν μὰν ἔραται φρενί, σιγᾷ | οἱ στόμα, 'what in truth his mind desires his mouth holds in silence', trans. W. H. Race) is to bring home a victory in Olympia and thus become a περιοδονίκης (*periodonīkes*). The poet subtly prays to Zeus that he grants Theaeus the last — but most important — athletic victory, since the athlete, as well as his family, also falls into the category of the κρέσσονες, because they are protected by the Tyndarids, the athletes par excellence. The myth aims to praise the heroic deeds of the Dioscuri, Zeus' offspring and protégé respectively, on the one hand, and on the other hand to recall an event of god's intervention and divine help, which, hopefully, will happen again for the sake of

[16] Merkelbach (1975), 94–101 argues that the poem is written for Theaeus' victory at *Dioscuria* in Sparta. For the Argive legends incorporated in the poem see Braswell (2015), 241–242. For the relationship between the myths mentioned and the monuments of the city of Argos and the literary effect on the audience see Braswell (2015), 214 and cf. Athanassaki (2009).

[17] Modern scholarship dates the poem after 467 BCE, after the acquisition of Tiryns by the city of Argos, because of the turmoil in Sparta due to the helot revolt. For the dating of the poem see Farnell (1932), 317, Bowra (1964), 411, Henry (2005), 91 etc. For an earlier dating, around 500 BCE see Gaspar (1900), 28. According to Farnell (1932), 316 and Tatsi (2010), 264–265 the arguments put forward for the dating cannot offer a definite solution for the chronology problem, there is not any historical evidence in the poem.

[18] For *theoxenia* see *OCD*[4] s.v. 'theoxenia' (E. Ke.) and s.v. 'Dioscuri' (R. C. P. T.). In myth and cult *theoxenia* denotes the entertaining of a god or gods by humans, usually at a meal, where as a festival name it indicates a specific type of worship in which a table is spread and a banqueting couch laid out for the divine guests. One of the best-known examples of the festival in question was the *Theoxenia* of Delphi which included various gods, among whom Apollo was predominant. This specific rite is, also, characteristic of the cult of the Dioscuri (in Peloponnese and elsewhere, e.g. Acragas and Paros, Cartharea on Ceos and Tenos) but there is a slight differentiation in the procedure; usually the table-offerings were made in the shrine of the god or hero concerned, but in the case of Dioscuri the table was set in the worshipper's own house. The domestic setting in this case creates an added intimacy between the worshipper and the god. For more information see Burkert (1985), 212–213, Jameson (2014), 145–176. Cf. also Pind. *Ol*. 3.34–41.

[19] Cf. the votive relief in the Louvre, Ma 746.

[20] Tatsi (2010), 281.

Theaeus.[21] By using vaguely the cattle variation, Pindar reinterprets the Dioscuri myth to fit the Argive context, where Castor and Polydeuces were worshipped with the Leucippides. He avoids the controversial aspects of their union and focuses on a more honourable cause for their conflict, reflecting the local religious practices.[22]

The last strophic triad (*Nem*. 10.73–90) contains the concluding scene of the myth; Polydeuces runs to his brother who is dying (*Nem*. 10.73–74) and with tears in his eyes he begs Zeus to kill him too (*Nem*. 10.77). Zeus responds by offering him two options: one is to grant him immortality[23] and the other is to give him shared immortality with his sibling. Polydeuces picks the second option; his choice along with Zeus' intervention shows the significant assistance of the god in achieving glory. Likewise, the poet wishes that Theaeus, after so many bronze prizes at Heraea and in other local games of the Peloponnese, will succeed, with the help of Zeus, to conquer the golden Olympic victory, which will make his name glorious and bestow the highest fame on his generation, offering him a glimpse of divine immortality.

Theocritus' *Hymn*[24] to the Dioscuri can be divided into four sections: (a) the prologue, where he praises the Dioscuri as divinities who help men, horses in battle, and ships in tempests

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[21] Tatsi (2010), 278. The Dioscuri, the protector gods of athletic games in Sparta, along with Hercules and Hermes, protect the rightful men (vv. 51–54). For the cult of the Dioscuri in Argos cf. the twin *kouroi* from Argos, Cleobis, and Biton, in Delphi; Hdt. 1.31. A part of modern scholars identifies the two identical statues as the Dioscuri: Vatin (1982), 509–525, Faure (1985), 56–65.

[22] Bowra (1964), 300.

[23] *Nem*. 10.84 is problematic. Bowra's edition (which is adopted by Snell/Maehler) prints the line as follows: αὐτὸς Οὔλυμπον θέλεις <ναίειν ἐμοὶ> σύν τ' Ἀθαναίᾳ κελαινενγχεῖ τ' Ἄρει. The line as transmitted by the mss. contains the errors Ὄλυμπον (corr. Tricl.) and ἐθέλεις, and is metrically defective, since it lacks four syllables. Based on the *Scholia*, the paraphrase αὐτὸς βούλει τὸν οὐρανὸν οἰκεῖν σὺν ἐμοὶ καὶ Ἀθηνᾶι καὶ Ἄρει shows that ἐμοί (Benedictus) stood in the text before σύν, and before it either οἰκεῖν or ναίειν (Boeckh, followed by Bowra etc.). Henry (2005), ad loc. sees no way of deciding between these two: where the choice is metrically indifferent, Pindar has forms of ναίειν (*Nem*. 7.91 and *Isthm*. 4.59) and of οἰκεῖν (*Isthm*. 1.31). Other suggestions: Οὔλυμπον κατοικῆσαι θέλεις (Schmid), Οὔλυμπον νέμειν μέλλεις ἐμοί (Mommsen), νοεῖς οἰκεῖν ἐμοί (Kayser), συνοικεῖν μοι ἐθέλεις (Hartung). Bury's restoration explains the corruption as an instance of *parablepsia*; he prints αὐτὸς οἰκεῖν αἶτος Οὐλύμπου θέλεις (ΑΥΤΟΣΟΙΚΕΙΝΑΙΤΟΣΟΥΛΥΜΠΟΥΘΕΛΕΙΣ). According to Bury (1890), ad loc.: 'When he had written αὐτός, the scribe glanced again at his "copy" and his eye, falling not on the word he had written but on the almost identical αἶτος, passed on to Οὐλύμπου, so that the two words οἰκεῖν αἶτος were omitted. Οὐλύμπου was subsequently altered to Οὔλυμπον as the object of θέλεις. […] The rare word αἶτος occurs in *Ol*. 3.17, where the reading of the best mss. has been rightly preserved by Bergk'. I think that there is no need to change the word order of the verse, and I agree with Hunter that we can adopt either the supplement of Boeckh or that of Benedictus.

[24] Theoc. *Id*. 22.1: ὑμνέομεν. We find the Doric suffix -μες in the *codices deteriores*. Although the mss. transmit the Doric form of the verb, given strong indications that the poem is characterised by Epic/Ionic dialect colouring, the editors pick out the Ionic form, cf. *κοινῇ Ἰάδι* in the title according to some mss.: M [Vat. gr. 915], X [Vat. gr. 1311] and Tr [Par. gr. 2832], and Gow (1950), ad loc., Sens (1997), ad loc. For the Ionic forms of the poem see Sens (1997), 36–42. Hunter [(1996), 32 n. 120] suggests ὑμνεῦμες. In brief, the division of *Idylls* based on the dialect is referred, according to Gow (1950), lxxii: (a) genuine poems in Doric: *Idd*. 1–7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 26, (b) dubious or spurious poems in Doric: *Idd*. 8, 9, 19–21, 23, 27, (c) poems prevailingly in Epic dialect with an admixture of Doric: *Idd*. 13, 16, 17, 24, (d) poems in Epic and Ionic: *Idd*. 12, 22, 25, (e) poems in Aeolic: *Idd*. 18–21, cf. the objections/concerns about this division expressed by Hunter (1996), 28–45. For other divisions, for example based on genre, see Fantuzzi/Hunter (2004), 133 with reference to the πολυείδεια (i.e. the tendency of the Hellenistic poets to cultivate various poetic genres and write in different dialects, metres etc.), and

(Theoc. *Id*. 22.1–26) reflecting the *Hom. Hymn* 33, (b) the Polydeuces narrative, which tells the story of his wrestling match with Amycus (Theoc. *Id*. 22.27–134) echoing the opening of Book 2 of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, (c) Castor's narrative, which recounts the clash between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae (Theoc. *Id*. 22.135–213), and finally (d) the *envoi*, the poet's *σφραγίς*, where he eulogises again the Dioscuri and notes the poets' mutually beneficial relationship with their subjects (Theoc. *Id*. 22.214–223).[25]

While the cause of the fight in Pindar is cattle, in Theocritus the fight is caused by the abduction of the Leucippides. In fact, Theocritus, through the mouth of Lynceus, utilised the motif of the cattle by making them part of the alleged bribe (along with mules and other possessions) that the Dioscuri offered to Leucippus to win him over: ὑμεῖς δ' οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίσοισι λέχεσσι | βουσὶ καὶ ἡμιόνοισι καὶ ἄλλοισι κτεάτεσσι | ἄνδρα παρετρέψασθε ('It is quite wrong that to get other men's wives you should have turned him away from our agreement with cattle and mules and other property', trans. Hopkinson, Theoc. *Id*. 22.169–151). Gow follows Gavalotti by printing ἄλλοισι κτεάτεσσι, based on D [Par. gr. 2726]. If we accept this, the oxen that the Dioscuri bring to Aphareus are not connected to the wrath by the Apharetidae. They are some other oxen, not *their* oxen. If we accept the *lectio* ἀλλοτρίοις reported by the mss. V [Vat. gr. 1824], Tr [Par. gr. 2832], M [Vat. gr. 915] the connection between βουσί and the Pindaric ἀμφὶ βουσί can be made: by presenting Lynceus as claiming that the Tyndarids caused Leucippus to break his promises 'by means of oxen, mules and other people's goods', where the expression 'other people's goods' is inclusive of the contextually named oxen and mules — and the insistent anaphoric reprise of the adjective ἀλλότριος — clearly suggests that here, as in verse 145, 'others' means of the Apharetidae themselves — Theocritus refers to a version of the myth in which the sons of Aphareus are wronged twice by

Kampakoglou (2021a), 20, who summarises the traditional division of the Theocritean corpus based on the themes of the poems. By questioning this type of divisions on the basis of theme, Segal [(1981), 176–209] introduces the term 'thematic coherence' and he distinguishes twelve motifs in Theocritus' genuine bucolic *Idylls* that function as a marker of the complex and interconnected composition of the poems. Nevertheless, as Hutchinson (1988), 142–145 puts it, every attempt to divide the poems based on motifs or themes is subjective and, hence, precarious. As for the genre of *Hymn* in Hellenistic poetry, according to Hunter (1996), 46–52, it is a quite popular genre, e.g. The *Hymns* of Callimachus, Apollonius' *Argonautica* is presented as a hymn to the Argonauts; [*Arg*.1: ἀρχόμενος; ἄρχομαι was the *vox propria* for the opening invocation of a hymn, cf. Arat. *Phaen*. 1, *Il*. 1.1 and 189, *h.Hom*. 32.1 to Selene; Mooney (1912) ad loc., Levin (1971), 9–10 and the very recent monograph on the matter by McPhee (2024), 83–117. Cf. also the *Idd*. 24, 25, 16, 17. Hunter (1996), 49: 'These hymns are considered literary manifestations of hymnical writing and performance as these flourished at all levels of Hellenistic society. The Hellenistic world was full of gods and godlike men requiring praise, so the hymnal poems of Theocritus or Callimachus, although they reveal a tendency in the distinctions between men and gods, these distinctions cease to matter in the case of great rulers. As the heirs of the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies inhabited a space in which everything was "religious", and we can assume that their Greek subjects, particularly the learned men of the court, were quite aware of it'.

[25] Paschalis (2010), 4.

the Tyndarids — not only are Idas and Lynceus deprived of their cattle herd, but the Tyndarids also offer it as a gift to Leucippus in exchange for his approval of their marriage to the cousins' wives-to-be. The word ἐκλέψατε (following Gow's choice by adopting the *lectio* of the codd. M, Tr, V instead of D), is right between the words γάμους and δώροις — even though γάμους is the object of the verb and δώροις is a dative instrumental by which the Dioscuri stole the wedding.[26]

Subsequently, Lynceus, unaware that he is speaking to gods, seeks to convince the Dioscuri to return the brides to the Apharetidae, reasoning that Castor and Polydeuces could easily find other women to marry (Theoc. *Id*. 22.154–166). His speech is futile, and he proposes a duel between himself and Castor, as younger brothers. Finding the long speech by the doomed Lynceus intolerable, Wilamowitz marked a *lacuna* after verse 170 and assigned verses 171–180 to Castor.[27] With the adoption of Castor rather than Lynceus as the speaker in verse 175, Wilamowitz's intervention would produce a rhetorical *agon* as a preliminary to the ritualised martial *agon* that follows.[28] This emendation has fallen out of favour in modern scholarship.[29]

The Castor narrative forms an antithesis with Polydeuces' narrative: according to Hutchinson, 'in the first story the dialogue sets Amycus very firmly in the wrong; in the second, Lynceus' speech sets the Dioscuri at a moral disadvantage'.[30] Similarly, Polydeuces' decision to spare Amycus has often been interpreted as reflecting modern 'civilising' values, in contrast to Castor's actions, which align more closely with an older code of 'heroic' *mores*. Indeed, the story of the abduction of the Leucippides evokes a bygone world of raiding and perpetual warfare — one that resonates with the tales recounted by Nestor in the *Iliad*,[31] and that the 'civilised' virtues of Polydeuces are also on display in the parallel scene of Apollonius' *Argonautica*,[32] although Amycus is finally killed by Polydeuces (*Arg*. 2.90–97).[33]

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[26] Sbardella (2003), 146–147.
[27] Wilamowitz (1906) and accepted by Gow (1950) ad loc.
[28] Hunter (1996), 59 and 70–72.
[29] Griffiths (1976), 353.
[30] Hutchinson (1988), 164.
[31] Note that the Castor narrative has been characterised as an Iliadic pastiche; Moulton (1973) *passim*.
[32] Hunter (1996), 64.
[33] The dating of the *Idyll* in question in relation to Apollonius' *Argonautica* is widely discussed. The poem needs to be examined with *Idyll* 13, which narrates Hylas' abduction by the Nymphs and Hercules' vain search for his lover. The Hylas episode is also found in the end of Book 1 of Apollonius' *Argonautica* (*Arg*. 1.1207–1362). Apollonius' priority is introduced by Wilamowitz, probably before 1883 according to Knaack (1888), 131–134, and earlier (1883), 29. Cf. also the brief summary of the matter by Wilamowitz in his edition of *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker* (1906), 161. Wilamowitz is followed by Gow (1950), vol. 2, 231–232, cf. Gow (1938), 10–17, Dover (1971), 179–181, Pulbrook (1983), Hutchinson (1988), 192, Effe (1992), 299–309, Sens (1997), 24–36, Hunter (1999), 265. The view on Theocritus' priority is less popular, and it is supported mainly by older scholarship, e.g. in *Editio Commeliniana* by Causabon in 1596, and during the 20th century by Cholmeley (1919), 13–35 and 277, and, mainly, by Köhnken (1965), 84–121. Cf. Griffin (1966), 300–302 on Köhnken's arguments,

Lynceus opens his speech by addressing the Dioscuri as δαιμόνιοι, a term that, perhaps unknowingly, captures their true nature. He speaks more truly than he realises, as the Dioscuri occupy a liminal status between mortals and gods, embodying traits of both. As Hunter notes, the opening of Lynceus' speech is marked by a deep irony that underscores his ignorance and the extent of his misunderstanding. He goes on to argue that the Dioscuri would have little difficulty in finding other brides (Theoc. *Id*. 22.162–4). His invocation of 'father's blood' in line 165, however, may be less persuasive — or even unfortunate — in tone and effect. Dover says that 'it would be a patronising utterance if Lynceus regarded Polydeuces as the son of Zeus',[34] but he must mean 'your father Tyndareos and Tyndareos' father', not 'Zeus'. Lynceus does not intend to be patronising, yet his misjudgement is once again revealed, and he again speaks more truly than he knows — for the lineage of Polydeuces' father is a very distinguished one indeed. In offering to help the Dioscuri find alternative brides, Lynceus fails to grasp the nature of the divine: it is *these* girls whom the Dioscuri want, and therefore *these* girls shall have. Just as soteriological deities choose when and how to intervene, so too can their actions appear to some mortals to be harsh, irrational and capricious. If the god so chooses, Amycus will be spared and Lynceus disembowelled.

Appealing to conventional ethical norms is beside the point. Taken together, the three scenes of *Idyll* 22 show three aspects of divine action: the saving intervention (part 1), the preservation of commonly accepted moral values (Polydeuces' narrative), and the power which can seem inexplicable, particularly when it is exercised in a way which does not always seem 'fair'.[35]

For Alexander Sens, this view on divine action is connected to the Ptolemaic context of the poem. Four genuinely Theocritean poems (13, 22, 24 26) contain compressed narratives centred on the deeds of gods and other mythological figures. Each of them focuses on divine figures who held symbolic significance for the Ptolemaic house. The Dioscuri, as sibling 'saviour' gods who despite apparent mortal background were actually of divine descent, were closely linked to the Ptolemies in a variety of ways. Berenice and Ptolemy I Soter were, like them, apotheosised as σωτῆρες ('saviour gods'). Although the opening scene of foundering ships at sea rescued by the Dioscuri is a reworking of *Homeric Hymn* 33, the role played by the gods there strongly parallels the protective function attributed to Arsinoe–Aphrodite in her

and Köhnken (2008). Some other scholars remain neutral on the matter, e.g. Mastronarde (1968), 274 n. 2, who supports that none of the arguments cited is very convincing.

[34] Dover (1971), ad loc.

[35] Griffiths (1976), 359 and Hunter (1996), 67–70.

cult at Zephyrium, where she was venerated as guardian of sailors. Moreover, the appeal of devoted siblings to Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his sister–wife Arsinoe is obvious and reflected in the fact that in Callimachus' account of her apotheosis, it is the Dioscuri who bear her to the temple of Aphrodite.[36] However, the poems paint a complex picture of royal power that includes both their benefactions and their capacity for brutality against opponents, even for reasons that elude easy comprehension. Following Griffith's and Hunter's interpretation, Sens argues that the poem shows two different aspects of sovereignty as it is reflected in the actions of protector gods.[37]

The Castor narrative ends with a *gnome* in verses 212–213, very similar to that of Pindar: Οὕτω Τυνδαρίδαις πολεμιζέμεν οὐκ ἐν ἐλαφρῷ· | αὐτοί τε κρατέουσι καὶ ἐκ κρατέοντος ἔφυσαν ('It is no easy matter, then, to fight against the Tyndaridae: mighty themselves, they are sons of a mighty father', trans. Hopkinson). These verses create a *trait d' union* with the Pindaric model with respect to which Theocritus establishes an obvious intertextual dialectical relationship. In my opinion, the meaning of Theocritus' poem is stronger, and multiple layers of reading are revealed, if we read *Idyll* 22 in conjunction with the other *Idylls*.[38] Theocritus' bucolic world, a world of sensitivity and pleasure, of sensual tenderness and delight, is gradually constructed, passing from one *Idyll* to another, as a 'heterotopia' in which the fantasies, shortcomings, and desires of his readers — and the public in general — for life, inspiration, and love are reflected. In the *Idylls* the dreams of an urban audience are projected, possibly of the multiracial aristocracy, living in the vast city of Alexandria, which has experienced intense political changes, wars and population movements. The contrast between peaceful 'bucolic' life and warfare finds its best expression in the 16th *Idyll*, in the encomium of Hieron of Syracuse, where the poet, echoing Bacchylides' 'Hymn to Peace' of his partly preserved 4th *Paean* (fr. 4.69–70 Maehler), wishes that the spiders would weave their webs on the weapons and stop the strife. In the timeless and 'spaceless' Theocritean spaces, the audience can experience the beauty and get tastes of paradise even within the city in which they live, see

[36] Fr. 228 Pfeiffer. Cf. also Kowerski's views on the reciprocal relationship (regarding mainly creating memory) between poets and their *laudandi* by identifying the 'new Simonides' as a *subtext* for Theocritus' *Id*. 22 (and also by the evocation of Homer): Kowerski (2008), 568ff., according to whom the poets praise the *laudandi* and in return the patrons/*laudandi* offer eternal glory to the poets. For lexical and metrical similarities between Theocritus' envoi and Simonides' elegy see especially pp. 574–575 with the supplements of M. L. West. For the 'New Simonides' see *P. Oxy.* LIX 3695 (ed. Parsons) and West's second edition of *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* vol. II in 1993.

[37] Sens (2021), passim.

[38] Regarding reading the Theocritean collection as whole see Kampakoglou (2021a), 20–22, Kwapisz (2021), 109. For the difficulties faced in approaching the corpus caused by the transmission of the texts, the dating problems and the unspecified performance conditions, along with the variety of themes, dialects, and style in the collection see Hunter (1996), 28–45.

the reflection of their personal needs, and come into nostalgic contact with the carefree of their long-lost pre-fall self. In Theocritus' lore of shepherds and urban people in love there is no place for gruesome violence;[39] hence, while the theological or political reading of the *Idyll* might point to the multifaceted aspects of divinity and/or sovereigns respectively, as scholars have brightly argued, by considering the *Idyll* in its context of the 'bucolic' world as it is formed in the collection as a whole, the Hymn to the Dioscuri, and especially the Castor narrative, might function as a counter-example, bearing heroic and epic values completely irrelevant to the lifestyle presented in — or even recommended by — the poems.

On the other hand, Lycophron's *Alexandra*, the most extreme example of Hellenistic erudition, brims with violence and gruesome deaths. The poem is almost in its whole Cassandra's prophecy of events preceding and following the Trojan War, expanding until the historical times of the Battleship of Salamis and Great Alexander. The proverbial obscurity of the poem lies within the poets' choice to not say anything directly; Cassandras' discourse is full of riddles, *hapax* compound words, periphrastic denominations, animal metaphors, and cult epithets that try to draw a veil on every hero, person, god or event that is mentioned in the text.[40] The Dioscuri story (Lyc. 503–568) is a part of a very long narrative concerning the

[39] These ideas can already be traced in post-classical antiquity and permeate the readings of Theocritus up until the Renaissance and European Romanticism, while in 20th century scholarship they are expressed and stabilised in the works of Lawall (1967) and Rosenmeyer (1969), including a philosophical–epicurean approach. The reading proposed here is based on these ideas combined with the reading of the poems in relation to archaic and early classical lyric song, along with the (more recent) study of space in the *Idylls*. Reading Theocritus next to lyric poets is also traced back in antiquity, according to ancient commentaries, e.g. *Schol*. Theoc. *Id*. 12 *Arg*. a–b p. 249–251 Wendel (Alcman), *Schol*. Theoc. *Id*. 11.38–39c p. 245 Wendel (Sappho), *Schol*. Theoc. *Id*. 16.34–35a p. 327 Wendel (Simonides) etc. For a brief literature review on the influence of archaic upon Hellenistic poets see Kampakoglou (2021a), 4, according to whom, since the studies of the beginning of the 20th century, e.g. Smiley (1914), Clapp (2013), Mesk (1922) — except for the article by Austin (1967) on Simonides' influence on Theoc. *16* — the interest of scholars on the matter is reignited in the decade of 1990, mainly with Hunter's work (1996). More recently see Acosta-Hughes (2006) and (2010), Sistakou (2017), Noussia-Fantuzzi (2017), Kousoulini (2019), Kampakoglou (2019) and (2021b), Davel (2023) etc. Studies on Theocritean space begin by exploring mainly the bucolic scenery, and specifically the vegetation found in the poems, e.g. trees, flowers, bushes, thorny plants etc., cf. Lindsell (1937). Studies focused on the bucolic space in distinction with other sceneries in the idylls are also found in the aforementioned works of Lawall and Rosenmeyer, along with Edquist (1975), Krevans (2006), Stephens (2006) and the more recent works of Thalmann (2021) and (2023), who utilises the notions of 'relative' and 'relational space', introduced in the disciplines of geography and anthropology by Harvey (2006).

[40] The poems' obscurity was proverbial since antiquity: ἔγραψε καὶ τὴν καλουμένην Ἀλεξάνδραν, τὸ σκοτεινὸν ποίημα ('He wrote also the so-called *Alexandra*, the obscure poem', *Sud*. s.v. Λυκόφρων), *latebrasque Lycophronis atri* ('the obscurities of dark Lycophron', Stat. *Silv*. 5.3.157) and in post-classical times: e.g. *AP* 919 and the epigram found in *Schol*. Lyc. 1471, Alex. Aphr. *in Top*. 456.6, Ammon. *in Int.* p. 166.26–29, where he compares the obscurity of style with Sphinx's riddles and he cites verses from *Alexandra's* Prologue, Hermog. *Id*. 1.4.140–141, Clem. Alex. *Strom*. 571 and later, Michael Psellus, *Poemata* 6.166–170, Joannes Laurentius Lydus, *De magistratibus populi Romani* 1.41, where Lycophron is compared with Persius. Later editions are also focused on obscure poetics; e.g. the edition by Aldus Manutius in 1513: *Pindari Olympia, Pythia, Nemea, Isthmia. Callimachi hymni qui inveniuntur. Dionysius de situ orbis. Lycophronis Alexandra, obscurum poema* or Sebastiani's edition in 1803. Late 19th and early 20th century scholarship repeat this characteristic of *Alexandra*; Ziegler (1927), 2334: 'Sprache und Stil. Die Dunkelheit der *Alexandra*' ('Discourse and Style: The Obscurity of *Alexandra'*) and 'Sie ist ein schweres Lehrgedicht und der größte (und absurdeste) γρῖφος, den wir aus dem

colonisation of Cyprus by the Achaeans, which is interrupted by multiple digressions. In Lycophron, the sequence begins with an episode from before the Trojan War, the abduction of Helen, when a young girl, by Theseus and Peirithoos, and her rescue by her Spartan brothers. Toward the end of the long dilation, the Trojan prophetess Cassandra introduces a new and significant idea: she links the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae to the larger Trojan theme by suggesting that the gods have orchestrated the deaths of these Greek heroes as part of a divine plan to aid the Trojans, even before the war has begun. In addition, Lycophron sets the scenery of the fight at the banquet offered to Paris in Sparta.[41]

The Dioscuri and the Apharetidae first will argue with words (Lyc. 544–545) and then they will fight with weapons because of the abduction of their young cousins.[42] The Leucippides are imagined as small birds (ἀνεψιαῖς ὄρνισι, 'cousin-chicks', trans. Hornblower, Lyc. 547), as every helpless victim — exclusively female — in the *Alexandra*, and of course Cassandra herself.[43] The cause of the fight is summarised by the phrase βιαιοκλῶπας ἁρπαγάς τε συγγόνων ('violently forced marriage and seizure', trans. Hornblower, Lyc. 548), with *hypallage*.[44] The alternative or Pindaric version of the origin of the quarrel, that involving theft of cattle, is hinted by the *hapax* word ἀεδνώτου ('without bride-price') which defines ἀλφῆς ('gain'), pointing to the forced marriage without the payment of bride-price (Lyc. 549). Following, *the daring of the eagles* (i.e. the fight between the cousins) will be seen from Laconia (the stream of Knakion) and it will also echo in Messenia (Pherai). The eagle is a usual

Altertum haben' ('It is a difficult didactic poem and the greatest, and most absurd, *grīphos* we have from antiquity'), Konze (1870), 5: *ipsa obscuritas, ipsaeque tenebrae* ('obscurity itself, darkness itself'). The poems' characteristics that 'construct' its obscurity are traced since the edition of Reichard (1788), xxi–xxxviii. The poems' melancholic and pessimistic aspect is revealed in the work by Sistakou (2012), using terms of European Romanticism, and Poulopoulos (2023). For the intertextual relation between Lycophron and Pindar see Kolde (2008).

[41] Hornblower (2015), ad loc.

[42] Griffiths (1976), 358–360 for the Homeric echoes of the fight and the parallels between the *Idyll* in question and *Idd*. 13 and 24. Cf. also Hunter (1996), 58.

[43] Indicatively: Cassandra as a dove and as a swallow (Lyc. 357, 1460), Hermione and Iphigeneia as doves (Lyc. 103), Polyxene and Laodice as nightingales (Lyc. 314), Hesione as a woodpecker (Lyc. 476), Asteria as a quail (Lyc. 401), the three Sirens as nightingales (Lyc. 653, 670), and the Leucippides as chickens (Lyc. 547) etc. For Cassandra's metaphor as a swallow cf. Aesch. *Ag*. 1460 and 1050–1051. Cf. also the myth of Procne and Philomela: Ov. *Met*. 6.424–674, Apollod. 3.14.18 and Soph. *TrGF* fr. 581–595b Radt <Τηρεύς>; *LIMC* 7.1 s.v. 'Prokne at Philomela'. For the animal metaphors in Lycophron see Sistakou (2009), Fountoulakis (2008) and, especially, for the small bird metaphors see Hess (2020) and Poulopoulos (2023), 97–99.

[44] Hornblower (2015), ad loc. For *hypallage* see (indicatively) the definition found in *BDL* s.v. 'hypallage', with examples from French literature. For *hypallage* in Lycophron see also Konze (1870), 92, Lambin (2003), 146–147, Kalospyros (2009), 216 and Lyc. 4, 10–11, 13, 27, 50, 56, 60, 79, 543, 594–595, 831, 842, 900, 1063, 1215 etc.

symbol of force in Lycophron; in general, the predatory birds are used often connected with sexual aggression and rape of women or abduction.[45]

Cassandra's account of the fight is complex, because of the animal imagery and the demonstrative pronouns that are used to point to each character of the episode. Idas, as a bull (Lyc. 555), will strike Castor, the lion (Lyc. 555), and as a response Polydeuces (Lyc ὁ δ' αὖ (Lyc. 556) will cause a wound on Lynceus' rib, who is now described as an ox (Lyc. 556). Idas, as a ram (Lyc. 558), will kill Polydeuces (τῷ δ' Lyc. 557) by hitting him with his father's gravestone. And finally, the two bulls, namely the Apharetidae, will be killed by Zeus' thunderbolts (Lyc. 560). In the end, Cassandra states that Idas and Lynceus will be accepted in Hades, whereas the two Tyndarids in Olympus on alternate days, following Pindar's *Pythian* 11 (*P.* 11.63–64).

The Dioscuri episode is probably one of the most typical examples of Lycophronean technique: apart from the previously shown mechanisms of denomination through periphrasis, animal imagery and pronouns, there is a standard fondness of Cassandra to *reformatio in peius*; in almost every case, Lycophron picks the worst-case scenario of every single myth in the poem, or he decides to shed light upon its most dark and gruesome aspects.[46] Similarly, while in Pindar and *Cypria* we have Castor killed, and in Theocritus we have none of the Dioscuri killed, in the *Alexandra* both brothers are assassinated by the Apharetidae. Their deaths are not heroic at all, neither their bravery nor their strength is actually praised. As concerning every other hero of the poem who is not a Trojan, their strength and power are described in extremely bad terms as violent or destructive,[47] and none of them is seen as an actual hero or even as an honourable person, not even the sons of the almighty Zeus. In addition, Cassandra has other reasons to dislike the Tyndarids; they are the brothers of hateful, unethical, and lascivious Helen, the very first cause of everyone's doom, and also the brothers of her own killer,

[45] The female victims of the rapes are described, as seen before, as small helpless birds, e.g. as doves or sparrows, while the male perpetrators as eagles, hawks, falcons, vultures, etc. Indicatively: Achilles (Lyc. 261), Paris and Theseus (Lyc. 148) as eagles, Ajax the Lesser as a vulture (Lyc. 357), Paris (Lyc. 169), Protesilaus (Lyc. 531), Tarchon and Tyrrhenus (Lyc. 1351) as hawks. Cf. also Lyc. 461 which probably describes Hercules as an eagle but see Hornblower (2015) ad loc. for the critical problem, cf. also Pind. *Isthm*. 6.50–53; ἀΐτα A [Marc. gr. 476], ἀείτα D [Par. gr. 2403] E [Pal. gr. 218], αίτα (v.l. ει) A^3, αίτου (v.l. ει) C^2 [Par. gr. 2723], αίτας *Schol*. Hurst/Kolde (2008) follow A because the word in Theocritus' *Id*. 12 means the ἐρώμενος. It is better to suppose that the word is a Boetian form for the eagle, because Hercules gave this name to young Ajax because of his similarity to the bird.

[46] Pellettieri (2021), 176, especially concerning the *hapax* compounds words in Lycophron.

[47] Rozokoki (2019), 53–63.

Clytemnestra.[48] Furthermore, the Dioscuri commit the crime of raping a woman, which reflects Cassandra's own rape by Ajax the Lesser in the temple of Athena.[49]

The fight between the cousins is the longest fight scene described in the poem, so it could work as an alternative or a substitute for the Trojan War: they are both caused by the abduction of maidens and they both end with suffering for both parties. Human suffering, in my opinion, is the actual protagonist of the whole poem: no one in *Alexandra* can escape Fate, neither the victors nor the defeated. Every person in the poem, no matter the side they fought for, is doomed.[50] In the Trojan War, and in every war, as in the fight between the Dioscuri and the Apharetidae, there is no true winner. That is what Cassandra is trying to say by her obscure, elusive and incomprehensible screaming.

To sum up, while in Pindar the heroism and divine origin of the Dioscuri are praised, both the Hellenistic poets deal with the crisis in question in a negative way, very subtle in the case of Theocritus, quite obvious in the case of Lycophron. In the *Idyll* the immorality displayed by the Dioscuri depicts the irrationality and 'mysterious' ways of god on the one hand, while on the other hand, by taking into account the bucolic world that is constructed piece by piece in the poems, we come to the realisation that the epic characteristics and values that the

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[48] Cassandra has probably another 'historical' reason to be enraged against the Dioscuri; during the battle of the river Sagra in the 6th century BCE between Epizephyrii Locri and Croton, the Locrians sought the aid of Sparta to save them from Croton. The Lacedaemonians replied that they would give to the Locrians as allies the sons of Tyndareus. In the course of the battle two gigantic youths in strange dress were seen fighting on the Locrian side and the Locrians achieved total victory; Diod. Sic. 8.32, Strab. 6.1.10, Just. 20.3; *OCD*[4] s.v. 'Dioscuri' and Pritchett (1979), 21. For the dating of the battle see Bicknell (1966), 294–301 who argues for an early date of 580 or 576 BCE. Modern scholarship is inclined to a later date, after 560 BCE; Moscati Castelnuovo (1995), 141 and Wright (2020), 33 n. 1.

[49] During the sack of Troy, Cassandra runs as a suppliant in the temple of Athena and hugs the wooden statue of the goddess hoping to escape. Here Ajax the Lesser finds her, throws her on the floor and rapes her in the temple's cella. For her rape cf. *Iliupersis* fr. 89.15–20 *PEG*, Paus. 1.15.2, 5.11.5, 5.19.5, 10.31.2, 10.26.3 and Polyb. 12.5.6 for the consequences of this rape. This episode is alluded in the *Od*. 4.495–511, but in ancient tradition it is often considered as an attempt of rape, see Heubeck, West and Hensworth (1990), on 1.257–259 where, concerning Phemius' song, it is stated that Homer probably was aware of the attempt story that is found in *Iliupersis* by Arctinus, cf. also Heubeck, West and Hensworth (1990), on 5.99. The episode is also found in Alc. fr. 306A *h* V. and fr. 298 V., cf. the commentary by Lloyd-Jones (1968). For the ancient imagery see *LIMC* 1.2 s.v. 'Aias II' 16–108, especially the vases where Cassandra is depicted naked or with her clothes torn; e.g. no. 44: Hydria attributed to the Kleophrades Painter, depicting naked Cassandra about to be violated by Ajax, Naples Archaeological Museum, c. 480 BCE, inv. no. 81669, and no. 56: crater attributed to the Milan Orpheus Group that depicts Cassandra partially clothed being pulled away from the statue of Athena, Naples Archaeological Museum, c. 350 BCE, inv. no. 82923.

[50] This reading of the *Alexandra* has its roots in Simone Weil's extremely influential reading of the *Iliad* in *L' Iliade ou la poème de la force,* published after the break of WW2 (1940–1941). On Lycophron's text, this aspect is revealed through the poem's meant ambiguity, and especially from verse 326, that describes a sacrifice of a maiden, Iphigeneia or Polyxene. According to Paidi's (2004) comment on the passage 'behind the ambiguity of the passage, the similarity between the two episodes emerges, and what will become clear at the end of the poem comes to mind: among the opponents the misfortunes were shared equally. Thus, the ambiguity caused by the use of wards that could apply to both sides does not aim solely at creating confusion in the reader; beyond this, it emphasises the equality of the warring parties in the face of pain and death' (trans. from Modern Greek). Cf. also Hurst/Kolde (2008), Hornblower (2015), ad loc. and Livrea (1989), 141–142.

Tyndarids embody are nothing like the ones that are preferred by the poet. As for the *Alexandra*, the outcome of the conflict is completely in line with the dark pessimism of the poem and Cassandra's maliciousness towards the Greeks, revealing through the seer's obscure discourse the deeply anti-war message of the poem.

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Sappho in Crisis: Deprived of Aphrodite's Benevolence?[1]

Ioannis Karakirisidis

The close association between Sappho and Aphrodite in the poetess' mutilated verses is well established. In her poetry, which cannot be fully determined as monodic and/or choral,[2] Sappho engages with this divinity in various contexts and tones, amongst which the poetic 'I' seems also to be placed in critical contexts of suffering.[3] Due to Aphrodite's frequent presence in her lyrics, Sappho has been attributed an official, authoritative, ritualistic role, akin to that of a priestess. Bruno Gentili regards Sappho as Aphrodite's ministrant drawing on Alcaeus fr. 384 *LP*: ἰόπλοκ' ἄγνα μελλιχόμειδε Σάπφοι ('violet-tressed, holy, sweetly smiling Sappho') and the epithet ἄγνα, in particular.[4] As a ritual poetess, she has been also identified as a cult leader of a so-called *Mädchenbund*, a group of young women united by religious bonds,[5] as an 'initiator' in some rites of passage,[6] or even as a kind of 'sorceress'.[7] Wilamowitz was the first to portray Sappho as the cult-leader of a θίασος of female devotees of Aphrodite, although this term is not attested in the surviving Sapphic fragments.[8] Alternatively, the term ἑταιρεία has been proposed to describe Sappho's 'Circle' (see frr. 126 V, 142 V, 160 V).[9] The long-standing theory portraying her as a 'schoolmistress', i.e. a principal of an academy of young girls, surrounded by companions and pupils,[10] has come under scrutiny in relatively recent scholarship.[11]

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[2] See e.g., Lardinois (1996), 150–172 on the mostly choral performance of Sappho's songs.

[3] Karakirisidis (2024): 'The various personae of the Sapphic Aphrodite'.

[4] Gentili (1988), 216–222; cf., fr. 384 V: ⊗ Ἰόπλοκ' ἄγνα μελλιχόμειδες ἄπφοι ('violet-haired, pure, gently-smiling sister'); see *LSJ* s.v., ἀπφά or ἄπφα, a term of endearment used by brothers and sisters, also by lovers, Eust. 565.23.

[5] Merkelbach (1957), 1–29.

[6] Rösler (1992); on erotic and musical instruction in a process of initiation in Sappho's group see Calame (1996), 113–124; on Sappho as a poetess instilling sensuality and sexual self-esteem within a social context see Hallett (1979), 447–464.

[7] Petropoulos (1993), 43–56.

[8] See e.g., Robbins (2013), 122–124 on Wilamowitz's θίασος.

[9] Burnett (1983), 209–228; Aloni (1983), 21 on ἑταιρεία for Alcaeus and θίασος for Sappho.

[10] See fr. 150 V: […] ἐν μοισοπόλων <δόμοι>: 'at the house of the servants of the Muses' as an isolated / private space; see also *Testimonium* 253 V and the *Suda Lexicon* c 107 Σαπφώ: […] ἑταῖραι δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ φίλαι […] μαθήτριαι δὲ αὐτῆς ('Sappho: […] her companions and friends […] her disciples).

[11] Parker (1993), 309–351, Stehle (1997), 262–318; see also Caciagli (2019), 321–325 on Parker and Stehle's approaches.

On the other hand, Sappho has been deemed to compose a kind of romanticised, personal and autobiographical literature, based on her own experiences and emotions.[12] This perspective is, also, particularly influenced by Sappho's alleged 'interpersonal' relationship with her special goddess and the way this relationship is adumbrated, mainly in the well-known Sappho 1 V, which constitutes the only fully extant poem of hers.[13] Moreover, her 'Ode to Aphrodite' also serves, according to some interpretations, a current trend in the study of ancient Greek religion that emphasises its understanding through the lens of the lived experiences of individuals.[14] Sappho appears to be Aphrodite's *protégée* and favourite; this is the reason why the goddess presides over her poetry.[15] To draw a preliminary conclusion, it is remarkable that the figure of Aphrodite causes Sappho to vacillate between the extremes of cultic and ceremonial and personal poetic expression.

This kind of classificatory distinction and polarisation needs to be reconsidered, as scholars have suggested. Dimitrios Yatromanolakis discusses the case of Sappho and the issue of 'personal vs. cult' poetry to suggest 'genre'-fluidity and '*interdiscursivity* of diverse ritual discourses and images' embedded in her poetry. He stresses that genres can be recognised within the *performative context* of the songs — which is unknown to us, while we are only left with the verbal (*descriptive*) context, in which various ritual features emerge.[16] Charles Segal succinctly points out the need to move beyond the binary distinction between the personal and the conventional in Sappho's poetry:

> 'The total aesthetic experience produced by such a work as 31 *LP* results from a coming together of the two levels of communication, the ritual and the private. It is just here, at these points of juncture between the social, outward-facing, public dimension and techniques of her art and their private, more personal, less ritualistic aspect, that Sappho especially exemplifies her originality and artistry. It is also where she is most difficult for the modern sensibility to grasp'.[17]

[12] Page (1955), 110–112 and 140–146; see also Lardinois (2021), 163–174 for his critical stance towards the 'personal' approach.
[13] E.g., Lanata (1966), 68: 'e se l'ode 1 ha potuto far pensare a un tipo particolare e personale di religione saffica […]'.
[14] Rask (2023), 7, 95, 157 on fr. 1 and Sappho and Aphrodite's 'long personal history'; on 'lived ancient religion' see Gasparini, V./Patzelt, M./Raja, R./Rieger, A.-K./Rüpke, J./Urciuoli, E. R. (2020), 1–8.
[15] Swift (2021), 204–216.
[16] Yatromanolakis (2004), 59–63.
[17] Segal (1974), 155.

The difficulty to overcome such a long-established polarity is undoubtedly substantial. Nonetheless, I suggest that the perspective of crisis, embedded in Sappho's poetry and relevant to the relationship between goddess and poetess, may offer a vantage point from which to gauge the complexity of her poetic expression. In the moments of crisis depicted in her 'Ode to Aphrodite' (1 V) and the newly-discovered *Kypris Song*, the Sapphic discourse seems to overcome clear-cut distinctions between the public/collective/conventional and the private/individual/personal aspects and to encourage a convergence between them. These two 'To Aphrodite' songs are selected for their invocations of the goddess and the moments of crisis they dramatise, in which the *persona cantans* appears to be afflicted by unfulfilled ἔρως and appeals to the goddess for resolution. The *Kypris Song*, although rather fragmentary, foregrounds the symptom of vertigo (ἄσαιτο, 1) linked to Aphrodite, while in fr. 1 V Sappho clearly appears as a victim of her 'intimate' goddess, diseased by erotic madness and suffering due to unrequited ἔρως. The moments of difficulty presented in Sappho's prayerful songs reflect not only mortal experiences but also the dynamics of mortal-immortal relationships. These moments seem to encourage a sense of shared humanity and highlight Sappho's engagement with Aphrodite as a not solely personal or individualised, but also communalised effort to communicate with the goddess.

As noted above, Sappho addresses Aphrodite in a prayerful mode across various contexts. In fr. 133 V she is asked about the reason why she addresses (?) the goddess, who is defined as πολύολβος ('rich in blessings'). The two verses transmitted by Hephaestion (14.7 p. 46C), are more likely parts of the same poem,[18] and suggest — through the use of *polyphony* and the distribution of roles amongst multiple singing voices — that Sappho's invocations of the goddess are not purely individualised 'confessions', but instead occur within a broader, communal — even competitive — framework. In this context, Sappho appears to be in competition with one of her 'artistic rivals' (ἀντίτεχνοι), namely Andromeda, along with Gorgo, according to Maximus of Tyre (18.9) seeking to surpass her and win Aphrodite's favour.[19] Andromeda has a good recompense, and Sappho seeks to regain Aphrodite's reciprocity. It is evident that the relationships between mortals and immortals need to be renewed and re-evaluated by the gods' divine agency.

Ἔχει μὲν Ἀνδρομέδα κάλαν ἀμοίβαν

[18] Neri (2021), 810.
[19] See *Testimonium* 219 V; on Andromeda see e.g., Ferrari (2010), 23–26.

* * *

Ψάπφοι, τί τὰν πολύολβον Ἀφροδίταν ...;

Sappho 133 V

‘Andromeda has a good recompense.
Sappho, why do you … Aphrodite, who is rich in blessings?’

In another fragment, namely 22 V, Aphrodite is once again associated with a kind of prayerful context (ἄραμ̣α[ι, 17). Although the text is rather corrupted and obscure,[20] we can still discern the lyric subject’s emotional state of joy (χαίρω, 14) and an expression of will or desire (β]όλλομ̣α[ι, 19) through the use of the first-person singular verbs. In other words, it appears that praying to the gods aligns with one’s wishes and serves to ensure an emotional state of gladness.

τὰν κάλαν· ἀ γὰρ κατάγωγις αὔ̣τα[
ἐπτόαισ’ ἴδοισαν, ἔγω δὲ χαίρω,
καὶ γὰρ αὔτα δή πο̣[τ’] ἐμεμφ[
K]υπρογεν[ηα 16
[–]
ὠ̣c ἄραμ̣α[ι
τοῦτο τῶ̃[
β]όλλομ̣α[ι

Sappho 22, 13–19 V

‘that beautiful girl; her dress
excites (you?) when (you?) see it, but I feel joy,
and the goddess herself once blamed […,
Cyprogeneia,
I pray like this [
this [
I wish for [‘

[20] Benelli (2017), 85: ‘Wofür dieses Gebet ist, wissen wir jedoch nicht’.

In the cases discussed above, we examined two prayerful contexts related to Aphrodite, in which both a more communal — or even 'competitive' — framework and a more personal, need-driven perspective are depicted. We now turn to Sappho's 'Ode to Aphrodite' (fr. 1 V) to explore how the dimensions of communalisation and individualisation intersect within an incident of 'crisis':

⊗ Ποι˩κιλόθρο˩ν' ἀθανάτ'Αφρόδιτα,
παῖ˩ Δ˩ί˩ος δολ˩όπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ'˩ ἄσαισι ˩μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότν˩ια, θῦ˩μον,
ἀλλ˩ὰ τυίδ' ἔλ˩θ', αἴ ποτα κἀτέρωτα
τὰ˩ς ἔμας αὔ˩δας ἀίοισα πήλοι
ἔκ˩λυες, πάτρο˩ς δὲ δόμον λίποισα
χ˩ρύσιον ἦλθ˩ες
ἄρ˩μ' ὐπασδε˩ύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἆγον
ὤ˩κεες στροῦ˩θοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
πύ˩κνα δίν˩νεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω_αἴθε
ρο˩ς διὰ μέσσω·
αἶψα δ' ἐξίκο˩ντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιαί˩σαισ' ἀθανάτωι προσώπωι
ἤ˩ρε' ὅττ˩ι δηῦτε πέπονθα κὤττι
δη˩ῦτε κ˩άλ˩ημμι
κ˩ὤττι ˩μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μ˩αινόλαι ˩θύμωι· τίνα δηῦτε πείθω
. ˩ : σάγην˩ὲς σὰν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ
Ψά˩πφ', ˩ἀδικήσι;
κα˩ὶ γ˩ὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει,
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα.
ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὔτα
σύμμαχος ἔσσο. ⊗ Sappho 1 V

‘Blossom-woven, immortal Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus,
weaver of wiles, I beseech you,
do not tame my heart with sorrows and vexations, mistress,
but come hither,
if you have ever again listened to my songs from afar,
you left your father’s palace,
mounted your golden chariot,
drawn by graceful sparrows; their swift wings fluttering,
pulled it above the black earth into the middle of the sky.
You arrived instantly,
and you, lady, with a smile on your immortal face,
asked me,
what has happened to me again,
why I call upon you by my side,
and what my frenzied heart desires to happen...
Whom shall I persuade once more […] to your φιλότατα?
‘Who treats you unfairly, Sappho?
And the one who flees, she will run after,
and the one who denies gifts, she herself will give them,
and the one who does not desire, soon she will desire,
even if she does not now wish!’
Come for my sake again, resolve my pain,
and bring to life what my heart longs for,
I want you to stand by my side,
an ally in this battle’.

In this melic ‘Prayer to Aphrodite’, which was catalogued first by the Alexandrians in a collection of nine books of Sappho, the *persona cantans* is explicitly named as ‘Sappho’ in vv. 19–20 (ὦ / Ψά⌋πφ’). The poetess’ name functions as a poetic σφραγίς within the song,[21] and encourages us to believe, on a first level, at least, that the appeal to Aphrodite reflects a real-life situation, experienced by the historical figure of Sappho.[22] The self-referential tone of the

[21] Bierl (2018), 930–931, Schlesier (2011), 421.
[22] See e.g., Page (1955), 16: ‘Upon this wholly personal matter Sappho has imposed a stately and traditional form. This is not a cult-song, an appeal for epiphany recited with ritual accompaniment on a formal occasion in honour

current prayer is absolutely evident and is underscored by the use of first-person verbs and pronouns: λίσσομαί (2), μ' (3), τὰ˩ς ἔμας αὔ˩δας (6), πέπονθα (15), κ˩άλ˩ημμι (16), μοι […] θέλω γένεσθαι (17), μοι (25), μοι (26). Moreover, Aphrodite is not only summoned by the lyric subject, but the dramatised persona of the goddess also engages with the suffering Sappho through both indirect (vv. 15–18) and direct speech (vv. 18–24). The adverb δηὖτε ('again'), which appears three times (vv. 15, 16, 18), demonstrates a possible recurring nature of such experiences and a repeated communication with the goddess.[23] Sappho also employs a reminder (ὑπομνησία) — a well-known prayer-technique,[24] of their past communicative framework with Aphrodite (αἴ ποτα κἀτέρωτα / τὰς ἔμας αὔδας ἀίοισα πήλοι / ἔκλυες, 5–7). Indeed, Sappho's primary request is unmistakably clear: she seeks to cure the symptoms of her affliction, namely, madness due to unrequited ἔρως (μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα, 3, μαινόλαι θυμώι, 18 and χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον / ἐκ μερίμναν, 25–26), by achieving divine ἐπιφάνεια (ἀλλ˩ὰ τυίδ' ἔλ˩θ' […], 5 and ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν […], 25).[25] It is undeniably fascinating that Aphrodite is able to both create and resolve the erotic issues that seem to torture the lyric subject. Sappho outlines how the 'charioteer' Aphrodite should be addressed in ritual terms to be assuaged and convinced to ally with her (σύμμαχος ἔσσο, 28), rather than be fought.[26] Hence, the figure named as Sappho appears — once again — to be in a state of erotic crisis, which she seeks to resolve through her long-standing and intimate relationship with the goddess.

Nonetheless, certain elements in Sappho 1 V suggest that the erotic crisis depicted in the song contains some fictional aspects. First and foremost, we observe a distinct performativity within the song, as it involves role-playing between the personae of Sappho and Aphrodite.[27] Sappho's prayer is not solely a first-person address to the goddess; it also incorporates Aphrodite's anticipated response to her call, as well as the intended outcome of the speech-act. Sappho seeks to make Aphrodite appear before her and compel those who resist her ἔρως to ultimately submit. She constructs a near-visionary manifestation of Aphrodite

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of Aphrodite: yet it is constructed in accordance with the principles of the cult-song'. See also Petropoulos (1993), 43.

[23] Mace (1993), 335–364 on the use of the adverb δηὖτε in the context of erotic poetry.

[24] Cf. Chryses' 'Prayer to Apollo' in *Iliad* 1 and the employment of the ὑπομνησία: […] εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα, / ἢ εἰ δή ποτέ τοι κατὰ πίονα μηρί' ἔκηα / ταύρων ἠδ' αἰγῶν, […], 39–4 ('if ever I covered with a roof a χαρίεντα temple for you, / or if ever I burned for you fat thighs of bulls and goats'); see Thomas (1999), 3–10 on the rhetorical strategy of Sappho's prayer.

[25] On the symptomatology of erotic disease in Sappho see Cyrino (1995), 133–164.

[26] On Aphrodite as a 'charioteer' and a 'martial' deity in Sappho 1 see Stanley (1976), 312–313, Castle (1958), 70–72 on the sparrows that draw the chariot, Svenbro (1975), 37–49, Rissman (1983), 20.

[27] Bierl (2018), 939.

responding to her songs and fulfilling her desires. This duet between Sappho and Aphrodite lends a theatrical-mimetic quality to the ode, achieved through the interaction of the two voices and the interplay of multiple temporalities: the present, the past, and the imagined future.

Moreover, Aphrodite's direct speech in the sixth stanza of the song (vv. 21–24), which is centred on the theme of erotic persuasion, bears elements of a 'magical' formula, specifically of a 'spell of attraction' (an ἀγωγή spell), as noted by many scholars.[28] In general, the repetitions, alliterations, and assonances create some rhythmical effects that enhance the efficacy of the prayer.[29] The oppositional and symmetrical repetitions of Aphrodite's speech in Sappho 1 V resemble a discourse, similar to those found in the magical papyri, as the following example suggests:

[…] εἰ κάθηται, μὴ κα- 1510
θήσθω, εἰ λαλεῖ πρός τινα, μὴ
λαλείτω, εἰ ἐμβλέπει τινί, μὴ ἐμ-
βλεπέτω, εἰ προσέρχεταί τινι, μὴ
προσερχέσθω, εἰ περιπατεῖ, μὴ
περιπατείτω, εἰ πίνει, μὴ πινέτω, 1515
εἰ ἐσθίει, μὴ ἐσθιέτω, εἰ καταφι-
λεῖ τινα, μὴ καταφιλείτω, εἰ τέρπε-
ταί τινι ἡδονῇ, μὴ τερπέσθω,
εἰ κοιμᾶται, μὴ κοιμάσθω, […]

(*PGM* 4, 1510–1519)

'[…] if she sits,
let her not sit, if she speaks to someone,
let her not speak, if she looks at someone,
let her not look, if she approaches someone,
let her not approach, if she walks,
let her not walk, if she drinks, let her not drink,
if she eats, let her not eat, if she kisses someone,
let her not kiss, if she is delighted with something,
let her not be delighted, if she sleeps,

[28] Cameron (1939), 8–9, (1964), 237–239, Burnett (1983), 254–255, Petropoulos (1993), 43–56.
[29] Segal (1974), 139–160 touches upon the theme of enchantment in Sappho's poetry, suggesting that her poems are, in a manner incantatory, by focusing on the repetitions, assonances and alliterations in her verses.

let her not sleep […]'

Nonetheless, as Anne Carson emphasises, Aphrodite's 'incantation' in Sappho 1 V lacks a direct object for the verbs within it.[30] This gives the incantation a more generalised nuance, which, however, still applies to the entire song. Notably, the name of the unresponsive girl is never revealed — not even during Aphrodite's 'attraction spell', which can be considered the most potent moment of the prayer. Sappho does not pray to Aphrodite by saying, 'The -x female does not respond to my ἔρως — Goddess Aphrodite, make her respond'. Instead, Sappho creates a *passe-partout* song centred around the critical experience of unrequited ἔρως, one that can be applied to any situation of erotic crisis within the realm of the goddess. In other words, Aphrodite is hymned through a storytelling process involving an apparently fictitious scenario that could resonate with any girl who does not reciprocate Sappho's ἔρως. She possesses the poetic dexterity to compose such a song to the goddess and use her own name to convey the experience of erotic crisis, ultimately aiming at honouring Aphrodite.

The other Sapphic invocation of Aphrodite in times of crisis, turns up in the newly discovered, yet fragmentary, *Kypris Song*:

⊗ πῶς κε δή τις οὐ θαμέως ἄσαιτο,
Κύπρι, δέσ̣π̣οιν', ὅττιν⌊α⌋ [.]ἠ φίλ̣[
[…] θέλοι μάλιστα π̣ά….ά̣λ̣[..](.)[
[…] ὀνέχησθα(;)
π̣α..άλοισ. μ' ἀλεμάτ̣ως δ̣ᾳ̣ΐ̈σδ[ης] 5
ειμέρω λύ.σ̣αντι· γονωμ….(.)[
πόλ..απάμ…μ' ο̣ὐ̣ π̣ρο.ερησ.[
]ουτ. ν̣εερ.[(.)]α̣.
…….(.)]…[..] σέ, θέλω[
τοῦ]το πάθη[ν 10
] αν, ἔγω δ' ἐμ' ⌊αὔτ̣αι
τοῦτο σ⌋ύνοιδα
……].[.].τοισ[….] [
……]εναμ[
]. [.]. [15

(Sappho, *Kypris Song* Neri)

[30] Carson (1996), 227.

‘How could one not be nauseous, over and over again
O Cypris, mistress, … whomever …
[and not?] wish more than anything else …
… you hold(?)
… you rend me in vain,
with desire (?)… (?) …
…
…
… you, I want …
… to suffer this …
… but I for myself
know this well’.

The *Kypris Song*, which overlaps with fr. 26 V, is rather mutilated and prompts scholars to propose a range of reconstructions.[31] Given the textual *lacunae*, it is tempting to interpret it through the familiar framework of fr. 1 V, especially since an invocation of Aphrodite and references to the sufferings of the lyric ‘I’ appear to emerge in the opening verses (1–2).[32] Nonetheless, we can focus with certainty on Sappho’s address to the goddess as her mistress (Κύπρι, δέσ̣ποιν̣’, 2) in *Du-Stil*, and the nausea-symptom, the disease attributed to the goddess herself (ἄσαι̣το, 1). Sappho once more constructs a deeply personal relationship with Aphrodite: their intimacy is evocative of the hierarchical yet strong bond between a servant and master.[33] Reversely, in fr. 159a V (σύ τε κἄμος θεράπων Ἔρος, ‘You and my servant Eros’), it is the goddess, according to Maximus of Tyre (18.9), who addresses the poetess placing her alongside her attendant Eros, and thus acknowledging her service and assigning her a privileged position. Both fragments suggest a close master-servant relationship. In the *Kypris Song* the use of the first-person voice (vv. 5, 7, 9, 11–12) further reinforces the individualised

[31] E.g. Neri (2021), 606–614, Schlesier (2016), 377–391 on the versions of Obbink, West and Ferrari regarding the *Kypris Song*; see also Rayor (2016), 400–407 about the translations of plausible reconstructions of the song in English.
[32] See Boehringer/Calame (2016), 356–357; see also Tsantsanoglou/Tselikas (2017), 23 for the *Kypris Song* ‘is a most interesting piece, a perfect counterpoint to fr. 1 Ποικιλόθρον’ ἀθανάτἈφρόδιτα’; Briand (2021), 38: ‘La *Newest Sappho* est ainsi amenée à interagir avec des poèmes aussi reconnus que les frr. 1 (et 2), 31, 44–44a, 58–59, 94’.
[33] West (2014), 10: ‘This is the earliest instance of a goddess being addressed as δέσποινα; cf., Eur. *Hipp*. 117 δέσποινα Κύπρι, 415, 522, *Med*. 632. It is not the same as Pindar’s Κύπρου δέσποινα (fr. 122.17, cited by Obbink): it is an acknowledgment of Aphrodite’s commanding power not over a region but over Sappho’; see Henrichs (2019), 221–254 on *Despoina Kybele*.

nature of the mortal-immortal connection, while the lines at vv. 11–12 (ἔγω δ' ἐμ' ˏαὔτᾳι / τοῦτο σˏύνοιδα) emphasise a striking degree of self-consciousness on the part of the lyric subject.[34] Winkler refers to Sappho's 'Double Consciousness' as her private, woman-centred poetry within the public, male-dominant world.[35] This distinction underlines the existence of two spheres represented in Sappho's work, structured around the concept of gender.[36] Besides issues of gender, the Sapphic material seems to explore the interface between two spheres of experience in different directions as well. Bierl has proposed a possible dialectic between a personal and a communalised response to the principle of ἔρως in the *Kypris Song*, and such an approach is worth further consideration.[37]

In the *Kypris Song*, Sappho's modality of knowledge in vv. 11–12 seems to be personal and idiosyncratic; the lyric subject's personalised approach is once again clearly articulated. However, the opening stanza of the poem introduces a broader perspective through a rhetorical question that leads to a negation: 'How could anyone not be nauseated over and over again, Cypris, mistress, [and not?] wish above all...?'. This query invites us into a collective, god-sent, and recurring experience. Thus, while Sappho's knowledge is expressed as individual and self-contained, it paradoxically gestures toward a humanly shared experience. The frequent symptom of nausea, as a divine infliction of Aphrodite, represents a potential experience for every human being. What distinguishes Sappho is her capacity to poetically articulate this general experience, offering a holistic vision of the goddess' power over humankind. She conveys a universal, panhuman moment (vv. 1–3), by enacting an invocation of the goddess, thereby opening a communicative channel between the mortal and the divine, filtered through the lens of her own voice. In this way, Sappho, Aphrodite, and all human beings are bound together in the shared experience of the goddess's influence — an experience mediated and recognised by Sappho's *ego*. After all, this kind of poetic discourse serves to hymn and praise Aphrodite's magnificent power over mortals.

[34] Tsantsanoglou/Tselikas (2017), 34: 'The verb with or without reflexive pronoun does not denote mere knowledge or even full knowledge, but rather knowledge of which the subject can bear witness, "I can testify, I can bear witness about this"'. I believe that the verb bears emphatically the 'consciousness' dimension, based also on the reflexive pronoun; see *LSJ* s.v., σύνοιδα.
[35] Winkler (1990), 162–187.
[36] Winkler (1996), 89–110.
[37] Bierl (2016), 351.

An analogous personal and communalised feature is also traced in another prayerful context (ἄρασθαι, 2) in the recently found fr. 16a *Neri*, which is finally not attached to Anactoria's ode (fr. 16 V, 21–32):[38]

(⊗) ……(.)](.) μὲν οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι
….(.)](.)ν ἀνθρωπ[..(.)· π]εδέχην δ' ἄρασθαι
ἔγω] ᾰ̣' ἔμ' αὔται
](.)..

[Sappho fr. 16a, 1–4 (20–24) Neri]

(⊗) Being … it is not feasible
… human … praying to partake of
… I] for myself
….

The fragment also starts with a generalisation (ἀνθρωπ[..(.), 2) in relation to the lyric 'I' in v. 3: ᾰ̣' ἔμ' αὔται).[39] The reference to the act of praying also stresses a participatory dimension (π]εδέχην δ' ἄρασθαι, 'praying to partake of', 2). A parallel to the *Kypris Song* and its communalised perspective, in which the poetic 'I' turns to the goddess on behalf of all humankind, seems to be drawn in this song. The notion of 'praying to share in' underscores the holistic nature of communication with the divine — an act that encompasses the sharing of collective emotions and experiences. Every human being can be seen as analogous to the lyric subject, particularly given the direct reference to prayer and interaction with metahuman powers. In this way, the *Kypris Song* reveals Sappho's poetic gift not only to pray and engage with the divine but also to partake of and transmit a shared knowledge amongst all human beings and with Aphrodite herself, concerning the critical experience of erotic affliction imposed regularly by the goddess.

In conclusion, a close reading of the two odes dedicated to Aphrodite by Sappho, namely fr. 1 V and the *Kypris Song*, reveals that moments of erotic crisis are not simply personal confessions. Sappho is not a 'Woman in Love', deprived of the goddess' favour and seeking to reclaim it. Her individualised relationship with Aphrodite is, in fact, anchored in her role as a poetess and in her charisma. Sappho addresses and celebrates Aphrodite in her own name, yet

[38] See Neri (2018), 39–54; see also Briand (2021), 27.
[39] On the *Kypris Song* and fr. 16a *Neri* beginning with generalisations see Neri (2018), 40, (2021), 582.

she composes her poetry as a means of conveying human experiences and emotions, all framed within the domain of Aphrodite's divine influence. Must she be granted a ritualistic or priestly title to fulfil this role? The answer is no. 'Sappho the Poetess' is sufficient to demonstrate what an archaic ποιητής/ποιήτρια can accomplish in general: to perform for both the human and the divine, to give voice to mortal-immortal interaction, and to unveil and teach truths about the gods through verse.

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PART II: War Crises in Ancient Greek Historiography

Cleombrotos' Crisis in Leadership and the Battle at Leuctra[1]

Markus Zimmermann

Leadership is a critical topic in Xenophon's writings.[2] However, fulfilling the Xenophontic criteria of good leadership is not easy.[3] The ideal image of Cyrus the Elder presented in the *Cyrupaedia* was difficult to achieve for Xenophon's contemporaries.[4] Even though he explicitly refers to Agesilaos as a role model,[5] and in the *Anabasis* alongside Cyrus the younger,[6] the protagonist Xenophon stands out in particular for his leadership abilities. G. Cawkwell sums this up succinctly with regard to the latter: 'Any reader of the *Anabasis* is inevitably impressed by Xenophon's conduct of the generalship according to Xenophon'.[7] For Xenophon, it is an essential ability of a good leader to secure the voluntary allegiance of his subordinates,[8] which was particularly well embodied by Cyrus the Elder.[9] Allegiance was secured through caring for the subordinates and the leaders' own exemplary behaviour,[10] as well as through successes and good decisions, while wrong decisions and the resulting failures could jeopardise not only their reputation and position but also their own lives.

An example of the latter is the military action of the Spartan Mnasippos at Corcyra in 393 BCE, as presented in Xenophon's *Hellenica*. Mnasippos was successful at the beginning of his campaign and initiated the city's siege. But in the expectation of an early victory, he then decided to dismiss some mercenaries and no longer pay the rest, even though the necessary funds were available.[11] Instead of caring for his subordinates, as a good leader should do, according to Xenophon,[12] and as other Spartan commanders such as Dercylidas and Agesilaos did, who rewarded their soldiers for good performance,[13] Mnasippos did the opposite. The negative consequences of this decision soon materialised in the form of an attack by the

[1] All editions used for the ancient texts are mentioned in the bibliography list below. The translations of the texts are from Brownson (1918 and 1921).
[2] See Buxton (2016), Gray (2011).
[3] Buxton (2017), 335–336.
[4] See, for example, Due (1989), 147–184.
[5] Xen. *Ages.* 10.1–2. See Gray (2011), 31–32.
[6] See, for example, Due (1989), 187–192.
[7] Cawkwell (2004), 59.
[8] Xen. *Oec.* 21.5–7. See Buxton (2017), 324, Gray (2011), 15–18.
[9] Xen. *Cyr.* 1.1.3.
[10] Buxton (2017), 326–327.
[11] Xen. *HG* 6.2.16. See Dillery (1995), 167.
[12] Xen. *Eq. Mag.* 6.3, Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.12. See, for example, Gray (1989), 17, Stoll (2010), 59–60.
[13] Xen. *HG* 3.1.28, 3.2.10, 3.4.16, 4.2.5–8. In the *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon repeatedly emphasises the importance of praise and punishment for a person in a leadership position: Xen. *Oec.* 4.7–8, 5.15–16, 9.14–15, 12.16, 21.10. He also addresses the use of praise and rewards to hierarchise subordinates: Xen. *Oec.* 13.10–12. For the importance of praise and blame for the correct exercise of leadership, see also Hobden (2017), 158–160.

Corcyraians. Mnasippos forces the ill-supplied and unmotivated soldiers into an unsuccessful counterattack in which he is killed.[14] This example impressively shows how poor leadership leads to problems between Mnasippos and his subordinates. This, in turn, has a negative effect on the motivation of the troops and therefore also on their military potential. When Mnasippos needs motivated soldiers to repel the Corcyraian attack, the consequences of his inadequate leadership become clear, since force is the only way to get the troops marching against the enemy, resulting in disaster and in his death.

However, for a leader, there was not only the risk of danger to life and limb caused by their own military mistakes, like in Mnasippus' case, but also from possible punishment by the community they represented as a leader, if the relevant committees considered their decision to be mistaken.[15] The leaders were therefore always under a certain pressure to legitimise the decisions they made during their office.[16] There was also a certain degree of unpredictability, as the outcome of a decision and its evaluation by fellow citizens are not foreseeable at the time of the decision. The possible sanctioning by third parties at home also brought about an inevitable reversal of power, as the commander, who had been powerful in the field, was subject to the power of the relevant committees on his return home. The latter influenced the Athenian general Nicias in his decision-making before Syracuse, when he considered retreating during the siege, which went badly for Athens. Still, according to Thucydides, he did not want to do so without the authorisation of his homeland, as he feared punishment upon return.[17] Officials and even kings could also be prosecuted in Sparta, as is shown, for example, by Pausanias (son of Cleombrotos), the victorious commander of the Persian Wars, who, according to Thucydides, took refuge in a temple and died there because of starvation, after accusations had been levelled against him in Sparta.[18] Other cases are also known from Xenophon's time. Regarding Athens, the accusation and execution of the victorious commanders of the Battle of Arginusae in 406 BCE should be mentioned,[19] and reprisals against officials are also known from 4th-century Sparta. One example is the accusation and execution of the commander of the Spartan occupation troops in Thebes, who decided to hand over the Kadmeia to the Theban counter-revolutionaries in 379 BCE in return for free passage.[20] Like his homonymous

[14] Xen. *HG* 6.2.17–23; see Dillery (1995), 168–169.
[15] Regarding the punishment of officials in Athens, see Hamel (1998), 130–135. On the topic of accountability in ancient Greece, see Landauer (2019).
[16] For Xenophon's treatment of this aspect of leadership, see Zimmermann (2025), 148–165.
[17] Thuc. 7.48.
[18] Thuc. 1.131–134.
[19] Xen. *HG* 1.7. For a historical treatment of the Arginusae Trial, see, for example, Andrewes (1974), Bleckmann (1998), 509–571. For Xenophon's treatment of the event, see also Zimmermann (2025), 107–116.
[20] Xen. *HG* 5.4.11–13. See also Buckler (2003), 213–214.

grandfather mentioned above, the Spartan king Pausanias also had problems with the Spartan authorities. He was felled by a decision made in the field, following the defeat and death of Lysander at Haliartos in 395 BCE. He consulted with his officers and concluded a truce with the Thebans for the recovery of the dead. This action led to an accusation at home, which Pausanias evaded by fleeing to Tegea.[21]

In the run-up to the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BCE, the Spartan king Cleombrotos was therefore undoubtedly aware that a failure of the campaign against Thebes could cause problems for him. However, nobody could have foreseen before the battle that this would represent such a negative turning point in the history of Sparta. John Buckler, one of the leading experts on the history of the 4th century BCE, summarises the Spartan defeat as follows: 'Epameinondas had broken the Spartan army in a decisive victory that ended the notion of Spartan military invincibility'.[22] In retrospect, this defeat can also be seen as the beginning of Sparta's decline as the hegemonic power in Greece.[23] For Xenophon, the turning point in Sparta's history had already occurred earlier and was caused by its moral decline, which was reflected in Sparta's impious behaviour. The decisive moment for Xenophon was the Spartan occupation of the Kadmeia in Thebes in 382 BCE, as it violated the existing and sworn conditions of peace and was, therefore, an offence to the gods. This emerges from Xenophon's assessment of the events:

> Xen. *HG* 5.4.1: Now one could mention many other incidents, both among Greeks and barbarians, to prove that the gods do not fail to take heed of the wicked or of those who do unrighteous things; but at present I will speak of the case which is before me. The Lacedaemonians, namely, who had sworn that they would leave the states independent, after seizing possession of the Acropolis of Thebes were punished by the very men, unaided, who had been thus wronged, although before that time they had not been conquered by any single one of all the peoples that ever existed; […].[24]

[21] Xen. *HG* 3.5.22–25.
[22] Buckler (2003), 293.
[23] Buckler (2003), 295.
[24] πολλὰ μὲν οὖν ἄν τις ἔχοι καὶ ἄλλα λέγειν καὶ Ἑλληνικὰ καὶ βαρβαρικά, ὡς θεοὶ οὔτε τῶν ἀσεβούντων οὔτε τῶν ἀνόσια ποιούντων ἀμελοῦσι: νῦν γε μὴν λέξω τὰ προκείμενα. Λακεδαιμόνιοί τε γὰρ οἱ ὀμόσαντες αὐτονόμους ἐάσειν τὰς πόλεις τὴν ἐν Θήβαις ἀκρόπολιν κατασχόντες ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν μόνων τῶν ἀδικηθέντων ἐκολάσθησαν πρῶτον οὐδ᾽ ὑφ᾽ ἑνὸς τῶν πώποτε ἀνθρώπων κρατηθέντες, [...]. See also Tuplin (1993), 99–100.

Xenophon's explicit criticism shows that this event is a turning point in Spartan politics, which at the same time marks the beginning of Sparta's decline as divine punishment.[25] A parallel to Xenophon's views on such conduct can be found in the *Cyrupaedia*, in which the moral decline of the Persian Empire in Xenophon's time is explained by the fact that Cyrus the Elder always kept his word. In contrast, godlessness now prevailed, and nobody trusted the Persians anymore.[26] In Xenophon's view, violating the oath by occupying the Kadmeia placed Sparta on a similarly low moral level to that of the Persian Empire of his time. Xenophon's negative view of Phoibidas' occupation of Thebes and Sparta's handling of it is later made clear in the *Hellenica* by the remarks of Kallistratos, who refers to the occupation of the Kadmeia as an example of the adverse effects of ill-considered actions.[27] This is strengthened by Xenophon's description of Phoibidas as a man who is not guided by rational considerations or common sense in his actions.[28]

If we now examine Xenophon's account in more detail, we will see that he attributes the defeat at Leuctra to both Sparta's impious behaviour and Cleombrotos' failure as a leader.[29] His deployment as commander of the Spartan forces against Thebes became necessary due to the conflict that broke out shortly after the conclusion of the Common Peace in 371 BCE. Although the peace treaty had been signed by all parties, the Thebans demanded a change the next day. They wanted the name 'Thebans' to be replaced with 'Boiotians' on the list of signatories. The Spartans and their king, Agesilaus, refused to accept this change and excluded the Thebans from the peace treaty.[30] According to Xenophon, the Thebans travelled disheartened (ἄθυμος) back to their homeland after the failure of their plan.[31] In the following passages of the *Hellenica,* Xenophon describes how the brilliant Theban victory over the Spartans at Leuctra can arise from this disadvantageous situation. The emphasis on the despondency of the Thebans indicates that this development could not be foreseen.[32] According to Plutarch[33] and Cornelius Nepos,[34] one of the Theban envoys was Epameinondas. However, he is not mentioned in Xenophon's account, which must have been his deliberate decision.

[25] Dillery (1995), 221–223.
[26] Xen. *Cyr.* 8.8.2–3.
[27] Xen. *HG* 6.3.11.
[28] Xen. *HG* 5.2.28. For Xenophon's critique of Phoibidas, see Dillery (1995), 217, Tuplin (1993), 97–98.
[29] The main argument of the following is also presented in a chapter of my recent (German) book, see Zimmermann (2025), 117–122.
[30] Xen. *HG* 6.3. On the historical event, see also Buckler (2003), 278–286, Jehne (1994), 65–74.
[31] Xen. *HG* 6.3.20.
[32] According to Diodorus, it was also assumed in Greece that the Spartans would easily defeat the Thebans: Diod. Sic. 15.51.2.
[33] Plut. *Ages.* 27–28.
[34] Nep. *Epam.* 6.4.

According to C. D. Hamilton, Xenophon did this to give Epameinondas as little space as possible in the *Hellenica*, and especially to minimise Agesilaus' part in the failure of the peace treaty, which in turn led to the Spartan defeat at Leuctra.[35] According to P. Cartledge, Epameinondas opposed Agesilaos in full knowledge of the consequences.[36] In this case, the despondency attributed to the Thebans by Xenophon would be a deliberate narrative choice of his to contrast the Theban success described in the following section of the *Hellenica*. If we also assume, following C. D. Hamilton, that Xenophon does not offer a complete description of the events and the protagonists involved, but merely wants to explain the Spartan defeat,[37] Xenophon's account is particularly informative for an understanding of his views on decision-making and leadership.

After the Common Peace was signed, the Athenians started implementing the peace treaty agreements. The Spartans also began to withdraw their harmosts from the cities. At this point, King Cleombrotos is in Phocis with an army and asks the Spartan authorities how he should proceed. Xenophon gives an insight into a debate in Sparta, in which a Spartan named Prothoos speaks out in favour of disbanding the military in accordance with the oaths (κατὰ τοὺς ὅρκους) and only to intervene if someone tries to prevent a city from becoming independent. Such an approach would guarantee the benevolence of the gods and cause the least annoyance to the other cities (τούς τε θεοὺς εὐμενεστάτους εἶναι καὶ τὰς πόλεις ἥκιστ᾽ ἂν ἄχθεσθαι).[38] From Xenophon's point of view, things have been going as they should up to this point: Cleombrotos acts as a prudent leader, since he is not making any decisions without consulting his home country first. He also covers his back through this approach.

It is of great importance in Xenophon's narrative that Prothoos' suggestion in the Spartan assembly is what Xenophon considers to be the correct and pious behaviour, namely, the observance of the oaths. By emphasising with the superlative εὐμενεστάτους that this would meet with the highest approval from the gods, Xenophon makes it very clear that this would have been the right course of action.[39] In the Spartan assembly, however, the proposal is met with rejection. It is said that Prothoos' statements were even regarded as nonsense (φλυαρέω). Xenophon comments on this decision, which he does not approve of, and the resulting consequences to the effect that from now on a divine power seems to have taken over the leadership (ἤδη γάρ, ὡς ἔοικε, τὸ δαιμόνιον ἦγεν). Xenophon's mention of divine intervention

[35] Hamilton (1991), 201–202.
[36] Cartledge (1987), 380.
[37] Hamilton (1991), 205.
[38] Xen. *HG* 6.4.1–2. On the possible historical implications of the proposal, see Tuplin (1993), 132–134.
[39] Dietzfelbinger (1992), 143.

could indicate that he has no rational explanation for what he sees as Sparta's flawed decision.[40] C. Tuplin rightly notes that Xenophon presents in Prothoos a person who thinks of the gods and not of revenge. However, the episode is obscure to him, since Xenophon offers no real context for Prothoos' remarks.[41] If one goes a step further and sees in Prothoos' speech a commentary by Xenophon regarding the course of action that Sparta should have taken, then the speech needs no further context than the harsh rejection by Sparta. In this way, Xenophon illustrates to the reader that Sparta is taking the wrong path through its own decisions, even though better options for action were available.

Instead of listening to Prothoos, Sparta instructs Cleombrotos not to disband the army and to attack the Thebans, unless they release the cities under their control.[42] As expected, the Thebans do not give in to this demand, and Cleombrotos sets off with his troops toward Boiotia. The Thebans expect (προσδοκάω) the Spartans to pass a particular bottleneck and guard it. Cleombrotos, however, unexpectedly (ἀπροσδόκητος) takes the path through Thisbai and conquers Creusis.[43] In a way, Xenophon contrasts the irrational behaviour of the Spartan assembly with Cleombrotos' rational approach. While the Spartan assembly makes a bad decision, which Xenophon can only explain with the influence of a δαιμόνιον, Cleombrotos begins his campaign as a foresighted general. He anticipates the equally foresighted behaviour of the Thebans, bypasses the bottleneck guarded by them and celebrates his first military success with the conquest of Creusis. Xenophon's narrative also draws attention to the contingency of decisions through the Thebans' failed plan. Even a rational approach does not always lead to success due to a variety of factors beyond one's control — a problem in decision-making, which is emphasised several times in Xenophon's writings.[44] The most prominent example is his statement at the end of the *Hellenica*, when he stresses that, contrary to everyone's expectations, the Battle of Mantineia did not lead to a decision on supremacy in Greece, but to an increase in chaos (ἀκρισία and ταραχή).[45] Xenophon was particularly interested in this topic, as it had also affected him in his role as leader of the Ten Thousand, as described in his *Anabasis*. When the protagonist Xenophon is offered the sole leadership of the mercenary army, the author Xenophon gives an insight into the thoughts of the protagonist Xenophon, who weighs up the pros and cons of the offer. However, he cannot make up his

[40] R. Dietzfelbinger and J. Dillery pointed out that Xenophon often refers to divine action when he cannot provide a rational explanation for the events he describes: Dietzfelbinger (1992), 138–139, Dillery (1995), 37.
[41] Tuplin (1993), 134.
[42] C. D. Hamilton suspects that Agesilaos was the driving force: Hamilton (1991), 203–204.
[43] Xen. *HG* 6.4.3.
[44] See Zimmermann (2025), 45–56.
[45] Xen. *HG* 7.5, 26–27. See also Dillery (1995), 35–38.

mind, as no man can foresee what the future holds. Xenophon, therefore, decides not to decide and consults the gods.[46] The sacrifices are unfavourable, Xenophon rejects the leadership role offered to him, and Cheirisophos is chosen instead.[47]

After Cleombrotos' first success, the Spartans and the Thebans set up a camp at Leuctra. As the armies face each other, the friends of the Spartan king advise him not to withdraw without a fight, as this could result in severe punishment (τὰ ἔσχατα παθεῖν) in Sparta. After all, he had achieved little in his last two campaigns against Thebes, while Agesilaos had operated successfully in Boiotia. For this reason, if he wants to save his life, he should go against the Thebans. His opponents also pressure him to risk the battle by insinuating that he was partial towards the Thebans. These statements provoke Cleombrotos (παροξύνω) to go into battle. The Thebans also believe they must take up the fight to prevent the apostasy of their allies and avoid giving the domestic opposition cause for an uprising.[48]

> Xen. *HG* 6.4.5: 'Cleombrotos, if you let the Thebans escape without a battle, you will be in danger of suffering the uttermost penalty at the hands of your state. For they will remember against you not only the time when you reached Cynoscephalae and laid waste no part of the country of the Thebans, but also the time when, on your later expedition, you were beaten back from effecting your entrace, although Agesilaos always made his entrance by way of Cithaeron. Therefore, if you really have a care for yourself or a desire to see your fatherland again, you must lead against these men'. Such were the words of his friends; but his opponents said: 'Now is the time when the man will make it clear whether he is in truth partial to the Thebans, as rumour has it'.[49]

Xenophon describes a decision-making process driven by external factors on both sides. Cleombrotos is severely restricted in his freedom of choice due to his previous, less successful campaigns, as leaving without a fight could be interpreted negatively back home and could result in punishment.[50] Furthermore, he is urged into battle by both his friends and his enemies,

[46] Xen. *An.* 6.1.20–22.
[47] Xen. *An.* 6.1.24–33.
[48] Xen. *HG* 6.4.4–6.
[49] ὦ Κλεόμβροτε, εἰ ἀφήσεις τοὺς Θηβαίους ἄνευ μάχης, κινδυνεύσεις ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως τὰ ἔσχατα παθεῖν. ἀναμνησθήσονται γάρ σου καὶ ὅτε εἰς Κυνὸς κεφαλὰς ἀφικόμενος οὐδὲν τῆς χώρας τῶν Θηβαίων ἐδήωσας, καὶ ὅτε ὕστερον στρατεύων ἀπεκρούσθης τῆς ἐμβολῆς, Ἀγησιλάου ἀεὶ ἐμβάλλοντος διὰ τοῦ Κιθαιρῶνος. εἴπερ οὖν ἢ σαυτοῦ κήδῃ ἢ τῆς πατρίδος ἐπιθυμεῖς, ἀκτέον ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας. οἱ μὲν φίλοι τοιαῦτα ἔλεγον: οἱ δ' ἐναντίοι: νῦν δή, ἔφασαν, δηλώσει ὁ ἀνὴρ εἰ τῷ ὄντι κήδεται τῶν Θηβαίων, ὥσπερ λέγεται.
[50] Hamilton (1991), 206–207.

each with different motives.[51] Therefore, there is no longer any weighing up of the options. This is underlined by Xenophon's choice of words, according to which Cleombrotos feels provoked to go into battle. However, the starting position of the Thebans is no better at this moment. Their decision is dictated by the premise that a retreat would lead to losing allies and problems at home. Xenophon's use of the verb λογίζομαι identifies the Thebans' considerations as rational in principle, while Cleombrotos' actions are described as irrational by the verb παροξύνω. C. Tuplin has drawn attention to this difference. For him, it shows that the Thebans, in contrast to Cleombrotos, were rather the masters of their own destiny.[52] Another critical difference is that Cleombrotos only had to fear personal consequences if he withdrawed, whereas the Thebans would have faced problems as a group. Therefore, the Thebans' decision is characterised by their desire to do what is best for the collective, while personal motives influence Cleombrotos' decision.[53] His behaviour is similar to that of the Spartan Callicratidas before the Battle of Arginusae, where he makes a decision based on personal honour alone, without considering the consequences for his fleet.[54] Both commanders decide for the entire army, albeit for different personal reasons, and thus place their personal sensitivities above those of the group, which leads to a fatal Spartan defeat in each case.

Before the battle, favourable omens are said to have encouraged the Thebans. Interestingly, Xenophon states that there were also people who believed these were not genuine omens, but a deception of the Theban leaders. As a result, things take a turn for the worse for Sparta. According to Xenophon, from this moment on, everything goes to Sparta's undoing, while the Thebans succeed in everything and even have chance (τύχη) on their side. Xenophon also mentions that the Spartans were said to have drunk some wine before the battle, which had spurred them on (παροξύνω) to start the fight.[55] At first glance, mentioning the motivating omens and the support of *tyche* in favour of the Thebans,[56] as well as the influence of alcohol on the Spartans, seems like an excuse for the upcoming Spartan defeat. At second glance, however, the reference to the decision-making process under the influence of alcohol is more likely to be understood as a criticism of Sparta and of Cleombrotos as a leader. The use of the verb παροξύνω, which Xenophon had previously used to describe how Cleombrotos had felt

[51] J. Buckler thinks that the various opinions were not invented by Xenophon but reflect the real divided opinion of the Spartan officers regarding Cleombrotos' intentions: Buckler (1982), 200. See also Tuplin (1993), 134.
[52] Tuplin (1993), 135.
[53] Breitenbach (1950), 118.
[54] Xen. *HG* 1.6.32. See also Gray (1989), 24.
[55] Xen. *HG* 6.4.7–8.
[56] According to C. Tuplin, Xenophon's reference to chance is not intended to diminish the Theban victory, but to show that on this day both Theban tactics and factors beyond the realm of planning were decisive for Thebes: Tuplin (1993), 138.

provoked into battle by the speeches of his friends and enemies, also makes the pre-battle deliberations recognisable as irrational. Furthermore, excessive wine consumption is to be rejected in Xenophon's view.[57] Instead, he believes that a good leader should excel in abstinence.[58] Moreover, self-control is the most essential prerequisite for being a *kaloskagathos*.[59] In the *Lacedaimonion Politeia*, the Spartans are described by Xenophon as men with the most excellent self-control.[60] Moreover, children in Sparta were kept away from wine or at least encouraged to consume wine in moderation,[61] and Lycurgos generally wanted to prevent excessive drinking through his regulations.[62] The Spartans at Leuctra thus violated the Lycurgian ideal presented by Xenophon in the *Lacedaimonion Politeia*. This can be cited as further evidence that Xenophon aims to explain the Spartan defeat without excusing it; rather, he criticises the Spartans' actions.

In Xenophon's description, the Spartan defeat at Leuctra appears to have been caused primarily by a chain of Spartan mistakes before the beginning of the battle. However, these mistakes could have been avoided if the Spartan authorities and Cleombrotos had behaved according to Xenophontian ideals of leadership and morality in the individual situations. This does not reflect well on Sparta in general and on Cleombrotos as a leader in particular, who does not fulfil these claims in his actions and does not instruct his soldiers to adhere to them. Instead, he is more concerned about his reputation as a commander and about a possible punishment at home. The starting position of the Thebans is by no means more advantageous. This is clear from Xenophon's mention of the Thebans' despondency after the failure of the peace negotiations. However, they make better decisions and also have *tyche* on their side (the latter perhaps precisely because they make better decisions). Nevertheless, the mistakes on Sparta's side are decisive in Xenophon's account.

In addition to the Spartan assembly, which makes an impious decision when voting for the campaign, Cleombrotos, in particular, does not cut a good figure.[63] At the beginning of the campaign, when he is not yet exposed to pressure from third parties in his choice of options, he makes the right decision and can bypass the Theban guard post with an unexpected route and successfully conquer Creusis. In the decisive situation, he does not weigh up his options

[57] Schiffmann (1993), 57–58.
[58] Buxton (2017), 334, Schorn (2008), 182–183.
[59] Waterfield (2004), 96–98.
[60] Xen. *Lac.* 2.14.
[61] Xen. *Lac.* 1.3.
[62] Xen. *Lac.* 5.4 and 5.7.
[63] B. Schiffmann is even of the opinion that Xenophon generally presents Cleombrotos as incompetent in his work: Schiffmann (1993), 72.

rationally but allows himself to be provoked into battle by the speeches of friends and foes. Although he is theoretically free in his decision, his previous unsuccessful campaigns put him under pressure to act. In particular, the retreat he ordered in 376 BCE probably played a role here, as it brought up criticism of Cleombrotos' weak leadership (μαλακία).[64] His previous decisions, therefore, have a significant influence on the one he has to make now.

Cleombrotos' motives for action are of a personal nature, as they are concerned with his reputation as a general and the avoidance of personal punishment. In Xenophon's view, this is just as negative as the consumption of wine before the battle. Cleombrotos' behaviour confirms Xenophon's characterisation of him in connection with the campaign against Thebes in 378 BCE. According to Xenophon, the Spartans preferred Agesilaos when choosing a commander for this campaign, because they considered him to be more prudent (φρόνιμος) than Cleombrotos.[65] Seven years later, it turns out that the Spartans were right in this assessment, as Cleombrotos allows himself to be goaded into battle by the speeches of others.

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[64] Xen. *HG* 5.4.59–60. According to C. Tuplin, this episode shows that, from Xenophon's point of view, no Spartan success was possible without Agesilaos: Tuplin (1993), 130.
[65] Xen. *HG* 5.4.35.

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Aristides and Themistocles in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*: Two Rivals in the Greek Camp[1]

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INTRODUCTION

From the Homeric conflicts between Achilles and Agamemnon to the rivalries of Alexander the Great's successors, ancient Greek literature offers a wealth of examples of interpersonal crises. The term *crisis*, which derived from the Greek verb *krinein*[2] ('to decide, separate or judge'), originally referred to judgment or trial rather than social or political instability.[3] In this paper, *interpersonal crisis* refers to strained relationships marked by emotions like anger, betrayal or fear, which often escalate into rivalries with broader implications for society. Such crises are not merely disruptions but opportunities for transformation and growth, offering insights into ancient moral, political and cultural dynamics.

One compelling example is the rivalry between Aristides and Themistocles, as depicted in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Aristides himself characterises their relationship as a rivalry (τὴν κενὴν καὶ μειρακιώδη στάσιν, *Arist*. 8.3). This cornerstone of ancient biographical literature juxtaposes Greek and Roman figures to explore their virtues, flaws and moral choices. Far from being mere historical accounts,[4] these biographies serve a didactic purpose, fostering ethical reflection through what Pelling describes as 'protreptic and descriptive ethics'.[5] Plutarch uses their rivalry — rooted in personal conflict based on youthful romantic jealousy but extending to political antagonism — to highlight their contrasting moral orientations: Aristides' commitment to justice and moderation versus Themistocles' bold pragmatism and ambition.

This study examines a different form of parallelism,[6] by investigating Plutarch's portrayal of the multifaceted rivalry between Aristides and Themistocles, emphasising its implications for the Athenian society during a formative democratic period. By exploring their conflict's development and eventual reconciliation during the Persian Wars, this paper aims to

[1] I gratefully acknowledge the use of Bernadotte Perrin's English translation (Harvard University Press, 1914).
[2] *LSJ*, s.v. κρίνω.
[3] Kõiv (2023), 43–44 observes the use of *stasis* for political sedition and discord, *anarchia*, *anomia* and *dysnomia* for instability and lawlessness. Political attempts for change were called *metabole* or *neoterismos* (innovation).
[4] See Momigliano (1981), Stadter (2002) and Pelling (2002).
[5] Pelling (1988), 15–16. 'Protreptic ethics' or 'expository ethics' involve a direct or indirect evaluation of the protagonists' flaws and strengths through praise or condemnation. 'Descriptive ethics' or 'exploratory ethics' conversely portray the fluctuating fortunes of the protagonist's life to convey insights into human nature.
[6] Marincola (2010), 121–143 has investigated Plutarch's use of *parallelism* in the three Persian-War *Lives*: *Aristides, Themistocles, Cimon*.

shed light on themes of leadership, morality and civic responsibility in Plutarch's work and to contribute to a deeper understanding of his biographical methodology and its relevance to ancient ethical and political thought.

1. PLUTARCH'S BIOGRAPHICAL METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The interpersonal relationships of the protagonists, particularly the conflicting ones, play a significant role in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. By observing the circumstances of personal conflicts and the possible ways of overcoming them, the reader evaluates the protagonists and forms a holistic image of their character. This becomes even more intriguing as in the *Parallel Lives*, protagonists in one biography often appear as secondary heroes in others. Beyond their central roles, Themistocles and Aristides also function as complementary or opposing figures in the biographies of their contemporaries. Through this technique, which Beck called 'internal synkrisis' and recognised it as a fundamental methodological tool of Plutarch,[7] the personality of each biography's central figure is comparatively illustrated and the thematic and moral issue at hand is highlighted.[8] Specific events and practices are brought to the forefront, the intertwined material is better illuminated and the common motives and triggers for the presentation of the narrative material are cross-examined. Simultaneously, the reader gains a broader perspective on ancient socio-political life. Thus, it transcends a purely historical narrative. Plutarch's narrative material is often modified, condensed or omitted to serve his thematic and moral objectives rather than strict historical accuracy.[9]

In internal comparison, Wardman sees Plutarch's effort to show that political involvement should be a field of cooperation and not an arena of competition for one's dominance over another.[10] When cooperation is absent, there is a deficit of virtue, which is brought to the foreground. Wardman's observations apply to the case of Themistocles and Aristides, two Athenians whose rivalry became proverbial. It was first recorded by Herodotus (8.79.1), reappears in Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia* (23.3–4), Diodorus (11.42.1–3) and Nepos

[7] Beck (2002).
[8] Beck (2002), 468 calls this form of comparison *'Folienfiguren',* meaning 'figures of the background'*,* referring to secondary characters that serve to emphasise or contrast with the main subject. Cf. the contrasting presentation of the cruelty of the son of Artaxerxes, Ochus, with the father king's meekness (*Art.*30.9), Numa's glory with the fate of his successor (*Num*. 22.9) and Phocion's flawless character with Demades' corrupt nature (*Phoc*. 1.1–4).
[9] The recently published by Beneker/Cooper/Humble/Titchener '*Plutarch's Unexpected Silences'* (2022) offers a comprehensive analysis of how silence functions as a narrative and literary technique in his works. Silence may reflect the protagonists' ignorance or serve as a deliberate omission that invites readers to fill interpretive gaps and engage with historical events from their own perspectives.
[10] Wardman (1974), 27.

(*Arist*. 1.1–2). Plutarch comments on it as a dark political chapter in the history of Athens in several *Lives* (*Cim*. 10.8, *Pel*. 4.3), but it is systematically covered in the *Lives* of Themistocles and Aristides. The two men lived in Athens at the same time and served its goals with dedication. However, each one of them adopted a different value system due to their differing moral orientations. The conflict in their relationship soon extended from the personal to the political level.

2. THE BEGINNING: THE ROMANTIC JEALOUSY OVER STESILAUS

The rivalry between Themistocles and Aristides has its roots in a heated episode of romantic jealousy over the handsome Stesilaus. As the biographer emphasises in the preface of *Alexander* (1.2–3), this incident may reveal more about the protagonist's character than battles, war formations or city sieges. However, Plutarch is not interested in the romantic rivalry per se.[11] The jealousy is important here because it serves as a negative precedent in their relations and a harbinger of a fierce competition that sheds light on the structural characteristics of the heroes. Stesilaus, whose name implies standing among the populace, becomes a catalyst for the division between the two Athenian men. This narrative, though likely a Hellenistic fabrication traceable to Ariston of Ceos, a Peripatetic philosopher, serves distinct goals within each biography.

In *Themistocles*, the mutual pursuit of Stesilaus by Themistocles and Aristeidis ignites an adolescent enmity (*Them*. 3.1–2), reflecting the 'puerile' nature of the protagonists as lovers, as the term *meirakion* generally refers to an immature youth.[12] This romantic rivalry underscores Plutarch's assertion that Themistocles, in his youth, possessed an 'uneven' and 'unstable' nature (ἀνώμαλος ἦν καὶ ἀστάθμητος, *Them*. 2.7). Plato, in the *Republic* (498b–c), similarly describes this period as a developmental stage marking the transition to psychological maturity. Themistocles' unbridled ambition — a trait both necessary and perilous in Athenian political and military life — finds early expression in this youthful competition.

Ambition (*philotimia*), as a driving force of human action, possesses a long tradition extending back to the Classical period. Aristotle (*N. Eth*. 1125b7–25) struggles to integrate *philotimia* within his doctrine of the *mesotes*, asserting that its significance is either positive or negative, contingent upon its degree, the context and its manner of expression. For Aristotle,

[11] See Duff (1999), 4–97, Lucchesi (2013), 210.
[12] See *Pel*. 2.6 and *Marc*. 28.6, where *meirakion* is associated with the reckless youthful drive. Cf. *Num*. 8.21, *Marc*. 3.4, *Sulla* 4.6, *Alex*. 31.12. At *Lys*. 4.3 Cyros is called *meirakion* due to the impulsiveness of youth.

honour is an intrinsic value, whereas a lack of *philotimia* constitutes an unhonoured attribute. Thucydides at times connects it negatively with the flawed political strategies of Pericles' successors (2.65.7) and with greed (*pleonexia*) (3.82.8), while at other times he positively observes that 'only the love of honour does not age' (2.44.4). Xenophon characterises it as a noble impetus for virtuous and glorious actions (*Mem*. 3.3.13).

Philotimia also occupies Plutarch's attention in both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*.[13] In *Praec. ger. rei publ.* 819F–823E, it is positioned above love of gain (*philokerdia*), yet it engenders significant adverse repercussions in political life; it is not the pursuit of glory, but that of virtue, which ennobles the statesman. In the treatise *De virtute morali* 452B–D, Plutarch more moderately deems it one of the passions – motives of a ruler, which, under the guidance of *logos*, will lead the young man 'to the right path'. Within the *Lives*, it is evaluated more realistically and regarded as a reliable impetus for glorious actions in political and military life, though excess is censured insofar as it frequently yields destructive outcomes for the social collective (*Comp. Arist.-Cat*. 5.4, *Mar*. 54.11, *Lys*. 23.3, *Sulla* 7.2, *Ages*. 8.5–6, *Comp. Cor.-Alc.* 4.7, 5.1, *Fab*. 25.3, *Marc*. 28.6). As far as Themistocles is concerned, his desire for pre-eminence (*Them*. 3.4), even in matters of love, suggests a deficiency in *paideia*. This behaviour, fuelled by adolescent ardour and the purportedly inadequate moral guidance of his teacher Mnesiphilus (*Them.* 2.6), hindered his ability to control his passions.

In *Aristides*, the shared romantic passion is more extensively portrayed, using vivid imagery to convey the lovers' inability to bear it. They both become embroiled in a fierce and painful conflict, foreshadowing the intensity of their later political conflict. Their antagonism is similar to a harsh physical exercise, where both rivals are consumed by the desire to prevail (ὥσπερ ἐγγυμνασαμένους ἐκείνῃ πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν εὐθὺς ὁρμῆσαι, διαπύρους ὄντας καὶ διαφόρως ἔχοντας, *Arist*. 2.3). This portrayal contrasts with the image of Aristides as a prudent and morally upright figure, who upholds what is just and secure (τὴν δ' ἱδρυμένην ἐν ἤθει βεβαίῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸ δίκαιον ἀτενῆ, *Arist*. 2.2). Consistent with his stated aim in *Cimon* (2.2) that he will endeavour to objectively present the character of his protagonists, Plutarch does not idealise Aristides. In his early youth, when the moral virtues, especially moderation, had not yet formed, Aristides was unable to handle his emotions rationally (ἀμφοτέρους ἐρασθέντας οὐ μετρίως ἐνεγκεῖν τὸ πάθος, *Arist*. 2.3). Plutarch observes that, despite their shared time as mates (*Arist*. 2.1), they experienced a significant conflict for which Aristides

[13] Frazier (1988), 109–127, Roskam (2004–2005), 89–103, esp. 93–95, Bucher-Isler (1972), 58–59.

also bore some responsibility. Without attempting to idealise or conceal the truth, Aristides retains his human characteristics intact.

Plutarch masterfully employs the youthful love rivalry as a microcosm of the broader ethical and political themes that define each biography. In *Themistocles*, this early episode serves as a prelude to the protagonist's all-consuming ambition, a trait that is both celebrated and critiqued throughout his *Life*. The fervor of adolescent passion foreshadows Themistocles' relentless pursuit of glory and power, highlighting his inherent drive to excel even in matters of the heart. Conversely, in *Aristides* the same incident is amplified to underscore the protagonist's initial imperfections, which will be gradually tempered by reason and virtue. Plutarch uses the intensity of Aristides' romantic jealousy to reveal the human flaws that he strives to overcome, thus emphasising his commitment to justice and moderation. This deliberate contrast in portrayal underscores Plutarch's didactic intent: to illustrate how individuals can shape their character through conscious effort and moral development.

3. POLITICAL RIVALRY

As the narrative progresses, the political differences between the two men come to the fore (*Them.* 3.1–3, *Arist.* 2.4–3.3). Aristides, as a supporter and political ally of Cleisthenes, an admirer of Lycurgus, leaned toward a policy against the trend of aristocratic restriction, making him the uncompromising and persistent opponent of Themistocles, who was considered a supporter of radical democracy (ὑπὲρ τοῦ δήμου, *Arist*. 2.1). In *Arist. 2.1* Plutarch cites that Aristides opposed to Themistocles (ἔσχε δ' ἀντιτασσόμενον ὑπὲρ τοῦ δήμου), where the present participle (ἀντιτασσόμενον) emphasises continuous opposition. Similar verbal forms appear in *Them. 3.1*, where the biographer comments that Aristides 'was always his opponent' (τὴν ἐναντίαν ἀεὶ πορευόμενον αὐτῷ), with the adverb (ἀεὶ) prominently preceding the present participle. Thus, the beginning of a prolonged political rivalry is immediately declared, though not yet in explicitly political terms.

The distinctions Plutarch adopts for Aristides as a proponent of an aristocratic constitution and for Themistocles as a leader of the *demos* likely come from Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 28.2), who, influenced by the demagogic behaviour of fourth-century politicians, spoke of *gnorimoi* and *demos*.[14] However, in the fifth century the distinction between aristocrats and democrats did not really exist. The distinction did not imply a *terminus technicus*, but it

[14] According to Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 28.2), politics, like all human endeavours, is structured around the principles of symmetry and dyadic organisation, notably the *gnorimoi* and the *demos*.

conveyed the looser notion of a political 'bloc', 'group' or simply 'force'. According to Frost, in the fifth century *demos* was simply called to decide for or against the proposal of an aristocrat.[15] Moreover, Aristides, admiring the democratic but not radical reformer Cleisthenes, could not have been an advocate of conservative politics. Aristotle himself notes in *Ath. Pol.* (23.3) the existence of many political rivals at the time and names Aristides and Themistocles as leaders of the *demos*. Rhodes assumes that the tradition of political rivalry and placing Aristides and Themistocles in opposing camps is due to the later ostracism of Aristides.[16] It is most likely that Themistocles was considered more democratic and radical compared to the more moderate — though not aristocratic — Aristides,[17] within the context of political rather than party rivalry.

This invocation seems to be one of the earliest political *topoi*. As a *locus communis*, this theme of rivalry does not offer specific proof relevant to the case at hand;[18] rather, it amplifies a universally recognised truth: competition for power is inherent in political life. While this *topos* adds no new factual information regarding Aristides and Themistocles, it strategically positions the audience to interpret their actions within a familiar framework, one where ambition, conflict and the struggle for dominance are expected. The use of this *topos* encourages the audience to view Aristides and Themistocles not merely as individuals, but as archetypes embodying the perennial tensions within Athenian political culture.

Thus, it remains unclear whether this is an oversimplification by Plutarch,[19] affected by the political *locus communis*, or an approach within the framework of a comprehensive thematic and chronological review of the later Athenian political history,[20] where a distinction between democrats and aristocrats is more technical. Surely, this political dimension forms the basis for a deeper differentiation between the two protagonists, Aristides and Themistocles, which significantly affects the characterisation of both heroes and gradually unfolds through the progression of their biographies.

4. CHARACTER DIFFERENCES

In *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch seeks to illuminate the protagonist's character and assess their moral qualities, with the ultimate goal of fostering self-improvement in the reader. Character (*ēthos*)

[15] Frost (1968), 122.
[16] Rhodes (1981), 280, 348–349.
[17] Calabi Limentani (1964), XXXV, Knight (1970), 33–44.
[18] Anastasiadis (1999), 313–335, Rubinelli (2006), 253–272.
[19] Marr (1998), 75.
[20] Papachrysostomou (2016), 56–57.

is revealed not only through an individual's actions, but also through factors such as ancestry, upbringing, private experiences and education (*paideia*).[21] Drawing on Platonic and Aristotelian thought,[22] Plutarch presents character as a quality of the irrational part of the soul, acquired through habituation, where reason (*logos*) shapes — or fails to shape — the passions. He distinguishes between nature (*physis*), the innate disposition with which one is born, and character (*ēthos*), which is shaped and transformed over time by habitual conduct and the influence of reason. While nature provides a stable foundation, character remains dynamic, subject to change through the disciplined moderation or unchecked indulgence of the passions.[23]

The character's differences between the two men lay the foundation for their mutual crisis. In *Aristides* (2.2), the contrast is emphasised through the use of the adversative conjunctions 'the one [...] the other [...]' (τὴν μὲν… τὴν δ'…). Themistocles is portrayed as a man whose nature is characterised by action, cunning and risk-taking (τὴν μὲν εὐχερῆ καὶ παράβολον καὶ πανοῦργον οὖσαν), while Aristides' character was well shaped as a guarantor of stability and justice and an enemy of deceit and falsehood — qualities indirectly attributed to Themistocles (τὴν δ' ἱδρυμένην ἐν ἤθει βεβαίῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸ δίκαιον ἀτενῆ, ψεῦδος δὲ καὶ βωμολοχίαν καὶ ἀπάτην οὐδ' ἐν παιδιᾶς τινι τρόπῳ προσιεμένην).

The concepts of stability, consistency and justice constitute intrinsic virtues of Aristides, which Plutarch embraces. In *Luc*. 29.6, the biographer exhorts the reader to emulate men who are more philanthropic and just rather than merely courageous, while in *Pel*. 26.6-8, the political virtues of justice, self-control and gentleness are considered unsurpassed. Similarly, in *Pel*. 30.5, stability is highlighted as a characteristic of an unblemished character. Deceit (*apate*), on the other hand, constitutes an ambivalent concept within the *Parallel Lives*. It is deemed acceptable in military conflicts, especially in the *Lives* of the Spartans, owing to its integration into Spartan *paideia* as a military stratagem.[24] However, it is censured when its limits are exceeded (*Sulla* 28.2) or when it is accompanied by the violation of oaths and agreements (*Lys*. 8.5). In the *Life* of Aristides, deceit is employed negatively, firstly because the biography's content is not martial and secondly because Aristides is ethically contrasted with the cunning Themistocles. Without detailing Aristides' education, his character is

[21] Duff (1999), 74–75.
[22] Plato, *Laws* 792e, Arist. *N. Eth.* 1103a11–b25, *E. Eth.* 1220a38–1220b7.
[23] Gill (1983), 469–487, Swain (1989), 62–68.
[24] *Ages.* 9.3, *Lyc*. 17.5–6, 28.4, *Phil*. 13.9, Xen. *Mem*. 4.2.15, *Cyrop.* 1.6.27–41.

presented as superior, as if illuminated by a light from beyond human comprehension — almost divine (*Arist*. 6.2).[25]

In *Themistocles*, the ambitious protagonist embodies the model of a pragmatic politician without moral qualms or prudence (*Them*. 4.2, 10.1–3). Secure in his innate intelligence (*Them*. 2.1, 2.3), he seeks guidance from Mnesiphilus (*Them.* 2.6), a Sophist of ambivalent character,[26] who cultivates a practical philosophy, thereby connecting Themistocles' inherent abilities with effective political action. But when a contrast to Aristides is at fore, the later embodies the virtues of goodness, moderation, justice and gentleness (*kalokagathia*) (πρᾷος γὰρ ὢν φύσει καὶ καλοκαγαθικὸς τὸν τρόπον ὁ Ἀριστείδης, καὶ πολιτευόμενος οὐ πρὸς χάριν οὐδὲ πρὸς δόξαν, *Them*. 3.3), values that are placed in service of the city and are embraced by Plutarch himself in other *Lives*, such as in *Lucullus* (29.6) or in *Pelopidas* (26.6–8).

The quality of being *kalos kagathos,*[27] a virtue rarely attributed to Plutarchan heroes,[28] is considered by Aristotle to be a perfect virtue (*Magn. Moral*. 2.9.2, *E. Eth*. 1249a8–16), encompassing all others — justice, courage and prudence — and differing from mere goodness in its adherence to the values of the noble and virtuous. It presupposes moral choice and action. The ultimate goal of the *kalos kagathos* man is not the acquisition of material goods or the attainment of the useful, but rather that which is morally right. Aristides is twice honoured with this characterisation in the *Life* of Themistocles (3.1, 12.7), notably in marked contrast to Themistocles, whose actions, while often beneficial, were not always morally praiseworthy. Themistocles' cleverness is admirable and occasionally useful; Aristides' morality remains an unsurpassed ideal. This is why Aristides is compelled to adopt a harsher stance against the impetuous Themistocles, even in cases where Themistocles' proposals were correct (*Them*. 3.3). Their rivalry is presented as relentless. Aristides concludes that the city's salvation could only be ensured by the removal of both men (*Them*. 3.2).

In Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, the portrayal of Aristides and Themistocles serves as a study in contrasting characters, each embodying distinct virtues and flaws. While Themistocles embodies the archetype of the pragmatic, ambitious politician, driven by cleverness and a willingness to take risks, Aristides represents the steadfast guardian of justice and moderation,

[25] Brun (2023), 171–202 has recently argued that the image of Aristides in Plutarch's *Lives* is based on increasing rhetorical exaggeration that developed during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, ascribing this trend partly to the influence of philosophers in the Socratic circle and partly to that of the Attic orators.
[26] Frost (1971), 20–25.
[27] Bourriot (1995).
[28] The adjective '*kalos kagathos'* is attributed solely to eminent personalities. See *Sol*. 4.6, *Cam*. 24.4. In *Marc*. 5.1, it characterises Tiberius and in *Sulla* 11.5 Lucullus; Also, in *Luc*.19.9.

committed to the common good. Within the *Life* of Aristides, Themistocles functions as a foil, highlighting the protagonist's superior qualities through contrast (*ex negativo*). Conversely, in the *Life* of Themistocles, Aristides serves as a complementary figure, tempering the narrative of a capable but flawed protagonist, and underscoring the multifaceted nature of ethical decision-making in politics. He illuminates Themistocles' ambition, but only to that extent, without further elaboration. Rather, this ambition serves as the central axis between the initially astute yet unruly Themistocles (*Them*. 2) and the later visionary leader, as he evolves in the subsequent narrative (*Them*. 4).

5. ARISTIDES' OSTRACISM

The characteristic divergence between the two men, along with their differing political stances and moral orientations, leads to the climax of their conflict: the ostracism of Aristides. Plutarch was the first to explicitly link Aristides' ostracism to the ascendance of Themistocles' power and actions (*Them.* 5.7, 11.1, *Arist.* 7.1–8). Herodotus (7.79.1) mentions that Themistocles was Aristides' greatest enemy, though without connecting their rivalry to the latter's exile. Nor does Aristotle (*Ath. Pol*. 22.7) correlate the two events, even though he notes that Athens' naval program and Aristides' exile chronologically coincided in 483/2 BCE. Epigraphic evidence, however, historically corroborates Themistocles' contribution to the ostracism of his adversary.[29]

Ostracism was an institution enacted by Cleisthenes to respond to the role of exile in the exercise of political power in the archaic period and at the time of the democratic revolution.[30] It was a practical mean to resolve and deter potentially violent conflict between elite leaders and a symbolic expression of popular power. It was also used as a tool in party strife to get rid of political opponents. According to Plutarch (*Arist*. 1.7, *Alc*. 13.2–4, *Nic*. 11. 1–4), individuals were most often targeted for ostracism due to their exceptional reputation, aristocratic lineage or persuasive oratory. Aristides is depicted as a victim of circumstances that undermine his merit, under the guidance of Themistocles.

As a pivotal moment in Aristides' biography, this incident receives an elaborate and detailed treatment in Plutarch (*Arist*. 7.1–8). The ostracism is directly linked to the envy surrounding his name, as evidenced by Plutarch's veritable tribute to his justice (*Arist*. 6.1–5),

[29] Meiggs/Lewis (1971), 45–46 observe that the name of Aristides appeared on only a few potsherds (*ostraca*), while most bore the name of Themistocles, suggesting that Aristides' supporters attempted to react ineffectually.
[30] Forsdyke (2009), 158–159.

a quality that naturally leads the reader to admire his integrity. Themistocles' stance emerges as a natural consequence of the aforementioned rivalry between the two men: he fuels the passions and exploits the sentiment of envy. He purportedly accused Aristides, through propaganda, of secretly preparing a monarchical system for himself by judging all cases and undermining the power of the courts (*Arist*. 7.1). In Athens of that time, the fear of potential tyrannical figures and oligarchies was so intense, that any leader who distinguished himself from the masses automatically aroused suspicion.

Conversely, the arrogance of the *demos* is highlighted, who, due to their prior victory against the Persians, would not accept the pre-eminence of anyone other than themselves (*Arist*. 7.1). The Athenian populace is reproached for its arrogance and envy toward anyone distinguished for power and prestige — in this case, for justice ('it befell Aristides to be loved at first because of his surname, but afterwards to be jealously hated', *Arist*. 7.1). Essentially, they are deemed unprepared to live democratically and vulnerable to the abuse of ostracism, a tool for manipulating the people and exiling political enemies. The toxic atmosphere of slander and envy prevailing in Athens, due to the Athenians' lack of political intelligence and responsibility, prevented the prevalence of prudence and justice that characterised Aristides. Plutarch's subsequent comment is indicative: ostracism was not a punishment for any wrongdoing, but, due to envy, an attempt to limit the power and prestige of an individual in the least inhumane way, namely that of a ten-year exile (*Arist*. 7.2, *Nic*. 11.6). Thus, Themistocles' role in Aristides' ostracism is acknowledged, but not deemed decisive. The undoubtedly fabricated anecdote (*Arist*. 7.5–6) about the illiterate farmer who gave a potsherd to Aristides — whom he did not recognise — and asked him to inscribe it with the name 'politician Aristides', whom he did not even know, reveals the misuse of the institution of ostracism.

In Plutarch's *Life* of Themistocles (5.7), Aristides' ostracism is portrayed as a consequence of Themistocles' manipulation of the Athenian populace. The biographer mentions the removal of his key political rival in a laconic and unadorned manner. This epigrammatic formulation is striking, given that just prior to this (*Them*. 3.1–3), Aristides had been presented in an extensive analysis of the differences between the two men, and especially because it is implied that Themistocles was the instigator of this penalty. Plutarch writes that 'so he grew in power, and pleased the common folk, and finally headed a successful faction and got Aristides removed by ostracism' *(*Αὐξόμενος δὲ καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀρέσκων, τέλος κατεστασίασε καὶ μετέστησεν ἐξοστρακισθέντα τὸν Ἀριστείδην). It is inferred that Aristides' opposition to Themistocles' extravagant naval program — whether due to fear of a democratic evolution of the *politeia* or due to his opposition to the war against Aegina — as well as his

weak relationship with the *demos* and the citizens' dissatisfaction with the foreign policy favoured by Aristides, contributed to propaganda against him on the part of Themistocles. However, Plutarch mentions nothing about the resonance this found in the conscience of the Athenian citizens.

The interpretation of Plutarch's stance presents difficulties. Stadter interprets it in light of Plutarch's biographical aim.[31] Insofar as the competition between Themistocles and Aristides is used to exalt the former's ambition and his role in Themistocles' development into a significant leader, the culmination of their rivalry — namely, the exile of Aristides — could not receive more attention than it is given. It serves as further evidence of Themistocles' ambition and consolidation of power. Simultaneously, the biographer avoids premature attribution of responsibility and averts criticism of his protagonist or at least precludes sole culpability for this political development. Hence, the verb *katastasiazein* is twice used in connection with Themistocles (*Them*. 5.7, 11.1). Frost, suggesting that the passage be translated as 'growing powerful and pleasing the many, he finally overthrew Aristeides and caused him to be banished by ostracism', also posits that Themistocles, by directing the public and making himself agreeable, instigated the ostracism by skilfully employing factional support.[32] In this way, responsibility does not fall exclusively on Themistocles, but also on the *demos*.

Regardless of specific interpretations, Plutarch's intention to downplay the event of the exile and his protagonist's involvement in it is clear, thereby shielding him from the reader's criticism for unjust behaviour. Indicative of the narrative's progression is the fact that Aristides' exile is described immediately after Themistocles is characterised as a just judge (*Them*. 5.6), where a request from Simonides and Themistocles' refusal to participate in an unjust act are recounted. Moreover, Plutarch's biographical aim in *Themistocles* was to highlight a hero who experiences the envy of others,[33] rather than a politician who himself harbours envy and engineers the removal of his rival. The biographer's indirect attempt to exonerate Themistocles also suggests a critique of the Athenians, implying their inability to resist political manipulation. According to Plutarch, it is the political situation in Athens that undermines the harmonious coexistence of the just and the practically useful, represented respectively by Aristides and Themistocles. Nevertheless, the final assessment of the event is left to the reader.

[31] Stadter (1983–1984), 360.
[32] Frost (1980), 91.
[33] Themistocles experiences envy from others after the Battle of Salamis (*Them*. 22–24), in Athens (24.3) and at the Persian court (29.5).

6. THE RECONCILIATION

6.1. ARISTIDES' RECALL TO ATHENS

With the Persian threat looming over the Greek cities and the imperative to mobilise all available resources, Aristides was recalled to Athens by a decree of amnesty. Plutarch examines the psychology of the Athenian *demos*, notably their fear of *medism* (siding with the Persians), portraying Themistocles' influence with a degree of ambivalence (*Them*. 11.1, *Arist*. 8.1).

In the *Life* of Themistocles (11.1), Themistocles signs the decree of amnesty for two reasons. First, the citizens feared that Aristides might collaborate with the Persians under the psychological pressure of anger (δι᾽ ὀργήν). Second, Themistocles perceived the needs of his fellow citizens 'when he saw that the citizens yearned for Aristides' and responded effectively to the circumstances (Zeitgeist). The suspicion of vengeful intent attributed to Aristides is striking, especially given the image of a moderate and gentle man that had been carefully crafted just earlier in the narrative (*Them*. 3.3). This emphasis on reason and gentleness is particularly relevant to Plutarch's portrayal of Aristides, who is often presented as a model of moderation. In the work *De cohibenda ira* (458C), Aristides' gentleness and moderation are also highly praised. Thus, the biographer does not reflect an angry psychological state in Aristides, but instead captures the social dimension of anger as a passion inherent to human nature, connected to a sense of honour and accompanied by the idea of contempt from others — in this case, from the Athenian *demos* under Themistocles' leadership.[34]

The historicity of this amnesty has been a subject of debate among historians. While the Troezen inscription aligns with the decree's content,[35] it emphasises the Greek cities' unification against the Persian threat. Plutarch, however, politicises it by naming the exiled Aristides and citing the fear of medism. Themistocles might have drafted two decrees, perhaps drawing from a literary source without full knowledge. Marr argues that this is plausible, given Themistocles' power, and maintains that unity, rather than fear of medism, motivated Aristides' return.[36] Carena et al. suggest that Plutarch invented the amnesty to justify Aristides' presence before Salamis, as Herodotus omits it and the amnesty excludes Aristides.[37] Regardless of the amnesty's historicity, Plutarch portrays Themistocles as prudent, prioritising united political

[34] In *Comp. Cor. Alc.* 4.8–9, Aristides, in contrast to most politicians, manages the irrationality of the *plethos* with composure and free from any vindictive sentiments.
[35] Labarbe (1957), 100 argues that Aristides took advantage of the amnesty and came back as a private citizen. See Meiggs/Lewis (1971), 49.
[36] Marr (1998), 96.
[37] Carena/Manfredini/Piccirilli (1983), 247–248.

action and downplaying rivalry, demonstrating conciliation despite exiling his rival.[38] In *Them*. 11.1, Plutarch uses Aristides' exile to highlight Themistocles' shift, thereby enhancing rhetorical *auxesis* (amplification),[39] and to foreshadow his pivotal role in the Battle of Salamis and the broader salvation of Greece.

In contrast, in the *Life* of Aristides (8.1) Plutarch attributes Aristides' recall to all Athenians and states that it concerns all exiles without exception, omitting any mention of Themistocles. This deliberate omission constitutes a clear instance of simplifying the narrative material in order to eliminate Themistocles' involvement in Aristides' return and to further emphasise the contrast between the virtuous and just Aristides and the self-serving and unscrupulous Themistocles, even though the latter also had reasons to desire his return. Plutarch again employs principles of rhetorical *auxesis* by not focusing on a singular political difference, but by contrasting Aristides with the entire Athenian populace as a benefactor of many goods. Plutarch comments the inaccurate assessment of the man by the Athenians as a whole, who feared a potential medism ('they much misjudged the man', *Arist*. 8.1). The biographer highlights the contrast between the fears of the entire Athenian populace and the integrity of the man who, after his return, collaborates successfully with Themistocles for the common goal and contributes indisputably to the increase in glory for both Themistocles and himself (*Arist*. 8.1–2). Even before the resolution, he was constantly urging the Greeks to fight for their freedom (πρὸ τοῦ δόγματος τούτου διετέλει προτρέπων καὶ παροξύνων τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐπὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν).

6.2. BEFORE THE BATTLE OF SALAMIS

The Persian threat underscores the necessity of unity and the transcendence of any rivalry, leading Aristides to join Themistocles' camp just before the Battle of Salamis. Aristides approaches Themistocles, despite the camp being surrounded by enemy forces (*Them*. 12.6, *Arist*. 8.2). They decide to abandon their competitive spirit and to cooperate for a higher purpose — service to their homeland (*Them*. 12.6–7, *Arist*. 8.3–6).

The episode of reconciliation serves as a tribute to the transcendence of personal obstacles and animosities in the face of patriotic duty. Without abandoning the biographical focus specific to each individual *Life*, Plutarch commends both heroes. Indeed, Plutarch himself

[38] In the *Praec. ger. rei publ.* 809B, he also praises setting aside political differences for the common good.
[39] Anax. *Ars Rhet.* 3.9. See Lausberg (1960), 542–543, Pernot (1993), 675–680, Alexiou (2005), 49.

was an advocate of concord and the unification of the Greeks during the Persian Wars.[40] In *Themistocles* (12.6) Aristides, upon realising the encirclement by the Persians, abandons his resentful feelings and assumes an advisory role. The contrasting phrase 'who was no friend of his' (οὐκ ὢν φίλος) is indicative of this admirable shift.[41] Through Themistocles' words, Plutarch underscores Aristides' nobility and moral excellence (*kalokagathia*), while simultaneously highlighting Themistocles' prudence (*synesis*), as he recognises Aristides' ethical superiority and reconciles with him. The spirit of collaboration is further demonstrated through Themistocles' request for Aristides' assistance in convincing the Greek commanders to fight at Salamis. Plutarch emphasises the importance of shared effort by portraying Themistocles as imploring cooperation (παρεκάλει) and employing terms prefixed with *syn-* (συνεπιλαμβάνεσθαι καὶ συμπροθυμεῖσθαι) to highlight collective action.

This incident is described more extensively in *Aristides*. What is presented concisely in *Themistocles*, according to Pelling,[42] spans nearly three paragraphs in *Aristides* and is conveyed primarily in direct speech, as also cited by Herodotus (8.79.3).[43] Aristides' moral superiority is not only affirmed by his perilous decision to approach Salamis from Aegina (*Arist*. 8.2), navigating enemy lines under cover of night, when Eurybiades wished to abandon Salamis; it is further underscored by his recognition of the futility of their rivalry and his acknowledgment of Themistocles' strategic wisdom ('the only one who has adopted the best policy', *Arist*. 8.3). Invoking the quintessential cooperative virtue of moderation (*sophrosyne*), Aristides transforms sterile political conflict into a noble competition (*kale filonikia*) for the common good (8.3).[44] The mature Aristides renounces the juvenile rivalry calling it 'vain and puerile' (τὴν κενὴν καὶ μειρακιώδη στάσιν), rooted in personal ambitions, and proposes that their motivation should be the salvation of Greece. He even proposes to subordinate himself to Themistocles' authority and adopt a distinct advisory role ('thou as commanding general, I as assistant counsellor', 8.3). In the same spirit of collaboration, Plutarch records Themistocles' positive response (πρὸς καλὴν ἀρχὴν ἀμιλλώμενος). The reconciliation between Aristides and

[40] Schmidt (1999), Marincola (2010), 121–43.
[41] The same emphasis is observed in *Comp. Cor*. *Alc.* 2.6, where Plutarch draws a parallel between Alcibiades approaching the generals at Aegospotami with Aristides approaching Themistocles ahead of Salamis — a comparison that magnifies the praiseworthy nature of Alcibiades' efforts to aid his native city while out of favour. Plutarch draws from Herodotus (8.79.2).
[42] Pelling (1980), 127–128 discusses forms of simplifying narrative material among *Lives* that pertain to the same period, including the compression of events. Cf. *Cat*. 51 with *Caes*. 22.4–5.
[43] Hdt. 8.79.3: ἔλεγε Ἀριστείδης τάδε. ἡμέας στασιάζειν χρεόν ἐστι ἔν τε τῷ ἄλλῳ καιρῷ καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῷδε περὶ τοῦ ὁκότερος ἡμέων πλέω ἀγαθὰ τὴν πατρίδα ἐργάσεται. See also 8.80.1: Ὁ δ' ἀμείβετο τοισίδε· κάρτα τε χρηστά διακελεύεαι καὶ εὖ ἤγγειλας.
[44] Noble competition (*kale filonikia*) is linked to social contribution and mostly referred to ambitious eagerness. Cf. *Pel*. 19.5, *Ages*.2.1.

Themistocles is finally evident in Aristides' counsel to the Greek commanders, urging them to adopt Themistocles' strategic plan ('he kept quiet, not out of any goodwill to the man, but because he approved of his plan', 8.6).

6.3. THE VICTORY AT SALAMIS AND THE PERSIAN RETREAT

The reconciliation between Aristides and Themistocles, occurring shortly before the pivotal Battle of Salamis, established the necessary conditions for persuading the Greek commanders and implementing Themistocles' stratagem involving Sicinus. The following victory, according to Plutarch, was a direct result of the Greeks' cooperation, as highlighted in *Themistocles*, where he attributes their success to collective bravery and enthusiasm, alongside Themistocles' prudence and cleverness (ἀνδρείᾳ μὲν καὶ προθυμίᾳ κοινῇ τῶν ναυμαχησάντων, γνώμῃ δὲ καὶ δεινότητι τῇ Θεμιστοκλέους, 15.4). Plutarch emphasises that the courage and willingness of all who fought were instrumental but particularly underscores Themistocles' sound judgment and ingenuity as decisive factors. A key demonstration of this prudence is his reconciliation with Aristides, which not only resolved personal animosities, but also reinforced unity among the Greek forces. Plutarch also assesses the reconciliation of the two men in *Praec. ger. rei publ.* 809B.

In *Aristides* (9.5) Plutarch quotes Themistocles' acknowledgment of the collaborative nature of the Greek victory: 'the deed they had now performed' (τὸ πεπραγμένον ἔργον αὐτοῖς). However, in this *Life* another critical factor should be considered: Aristides' conquest of Psyttaleia. While this incident is also mentioned by Herodotus (8.95), the historian situates it during the naval battle itself, whereas Plutarch places it beforehand.[45] Regardless of the historicity of the conquest, Plutarch's decision to mention it immediately after the protagonist's meeting with Themistocles, is dictated by the biographer's intention to highlight Aristides' contribution to the beginning of a magnificent achievement, the victory over the Persians at Salamis. The incident of Psyttaleia is emphasised, allowing Aristides to share in the glory surrounding the victory at Salamis. Themistocles' ingenuity and strategic acumen, combined with Aristides' wisdom and bravery, culminated in the triumph at Salamis.

Later also, when the issue of immediately expelling the Persians arose, the best results were achieved through the combined virtues of both Athenians. While Themistocles, elated by the victory, proposed the destruction of the bridge at the Hellespont to annihilate the Persian

[45] For the scholarly debate on the historicity of the incident cf. How/Wells (1928), 267 and Fornara (1966), 51–54.

fleet on Greek soil, the moderate and farsighted Aristides disagreed (*Them*. 16.2–4, *Arist*. 9.5–6). In *Themistocles* (16.2–4) the protagonist maintains a collaborative disposition, which Plutarch emphasises through the literary technique of dialogue to highlight his goodwill. Aristides with moderation and through an impassioned speech rejects Themistocles' plan, having foreseen the impending failure of the Greeks, and proposes to do everything they can to hasten the Persians out of Greece. In *Aristides* (9.5–6), however, Themistocles encounters Aristides' angry reaction (Ἀριστείδης ἀνακραγὼν), conveyed through indirect speech. The contrast between the impulsive Themistocles and the foresighted, prudent Aristides is further amplified. In both *Lives* Themistocles implemented another stratagem involving Arnakes, which finally hastened the Persian withdrawal. Therefore, the chosen strategy was the result of the harmonious collaboration between the two men (καὶ πεῖραν ἡ Θεμιστοκλέους καὶ Ἀριστείδου φρόνησις ἐν Μαρδονίῳ παρέσχεν, *Them*. 16.6), a point highlighted by the biographer as essential for the smooth functioning and positive progress of cities.[46]

It is worth noting that modern scholarship views this event as fabricated, as according to Herodotus, the discussion took place between Themistocles and the Spartan commander Eurybiades.[47] If so, the event described in the *Lives* is a Plutarchan invention to serve Plutarch's moralising goals,[48] which can be summarised as follows: in *Aristides*, the contrast between the two Athenians — the reckless and risk-taking Themistocles and the prudent and reasonable Aristides, who prioritizes safety — is emphasised, while in *Themistocles*, the contribution of a more mature politician to the Greek victory and his willingness to cooperate with Aristides is underscored.

6.4. AFTER THE NAVAL VICTORY: ATHENS' RISE TO POWER

An additional noteworthy aspect of the relationship between the two men, indicative of their current balanced cooperation, is Themistocles' proposal to burn the Greek fleet's dockyard at Pagasae to strengthen the Athenian naval power. In both *Lives* (*Them.* 20.1–2, *Arist.* 22.2–4), Themistocles announces the capture of an extremely useful idea, but the Athenians, having complete trust in Aristides, assign him the task of evaluating the undisclosed plan. Aristides, adhering to principles of justice and the common good, concludes that no other plan is 'more

[46] Hershbell (2004), 151–162.
[47] The incident is also mentioned at Diod. *Bibl*. 11.19.5–6, Aristod. 2a.104.F 1.4–8, 1.34–39, Nep. *Them*. 5.
[48] Frost (1980), 163.

advantageous' (λυσιτελεστέραν), but also 'more unjust' (ἀδικωτέραν), leading to its abandonment.

Themistocles and Aristides embody distinct yet complementary facets of prudence (φρόνησις),[49] forming a powerful and ideal partnership characterised by wisdom, intelligence, justice and boldness, a political *exemplum*. Themistocles exemplifies strategic foresight and innovative thinking, often identifying beneficial actions (λυσιτελεστέραν), while Aristides, known for his just nature, evaluates plans based on their justice (ἀδικωτέραν). More precisely, Aristides' prudence, a central virtue in his *Life*, encompasses sound judgment and decision-making guided by justice, alongside the ability to resolve conflicts by prioritising collaboration, harmony and the common good. This virtue is complemented by moderation, serving as a balancing force to Themistocles' sharp intellect (*oxynia*), which frequently incorporates daring elements and addresses the competitive tendencies of their allies (*Them*. 8.6, 9.2, 22.2–4, *Arist*. 12.1–2, 15.3–5, 16.2–3, 20.1). Themistocles' prudence, on the other hand, is defined by intellectual brilliance, remarkable foresight and cunning strategies. According to Alexiou,[50] these traits define the pragmatic politician, who relies on realistic assessments rather than moral constraints — a model indispensable during critical wartime periods. This pragmatic approach contrasts with Aristides' emphasis on justice and moderation, highlighting the complementary nature of their prudence.

Their distinct and complementary prudence is first noted in *Athenaion Politeia* 23.3, where Themistocles' martial competence and Aristides' political acumen are underlined (ὁ μὲν τὰ πολέμια δοκῶν, ὁ δὲ τὰ πολιτικὰ δεινὸς εἶναι). Rhodes observes that no one excelled in politics more than Themistocles.[51] The Athenians admired him less for his abilities as a general and more for his intellectual sharpness. Aristotle refers to these qualities to emphasise the contrast in the discussion regarding the selection of the appropriate Athenian state officials.

The historical accuracy of this episode too has been subject to scholarly scrutiny.[52] The narrative either may employ a rhetorical *topos* to represent in the *Life* of Aristides the protagonist as a champion of justice opposing to what is useful or is fabricated to illustrate Themistocles' declining fortunes and excessive ambition in *Themistocles*. Nonetheless,

[49] Alexiou (2007), 115–116 supports that *φρόνησις* is the common moral trait between *Aristides* and *Themistocles.* Plutarch, in *Phoc*. 3.7, highlights that Aristides and Themistocles exhibit distinct aspects of prudence (ἔστι γὰρ ἀμέλει καὶ ἀνδρίας διαφορὰ πρὸς ἀνδρίαν, ὡς τῆς Ἀλκιβιάδου πρὸς τὴν Ἐπαμεινώνδου, καὶ φρονήσεως πρὸς φρόνησιν, ὡς τῆς Θεμιστοκλέους πρὸς τὴν Ἀριστείδου).
[50] Alexiou (2007), 114.
[51] Rhodes (1981), 293–294.
[52] Cf. Perrin (1901), 233. Marr (1998), 123 views the incident as a fabrication. See also Bengtson (1951), 91. The plan is revisited in Cic. *De off.* 3.49 and Val. Max. 6.5.2, where it pertains to the Spartan navy during the period often termed as the 'First Peloponnesian War'.

Plutarch's account aligns with his panhellenic vision, emphasising the final unity and cooperation among Greek cities under the leadership of Aristides and Themistocles. This may explain why the biographer remains silent about Aristides' assistance to Themistocles in constructing the Athenian walls and misleading the Spartans after the battle of Salamis. While both Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 23.4) and Thucydides (1.90–92) document their collaboration, the incident neither fits Plutarch's vision of Greek unity nor coheres with Aristides' character as portrayed in *Parallel Lives*. Furthermore, it contradicts Plutarch's portrayal of Themistocles, whose strategic brilliance is crucial to Athens' salvation, yet whose cunning is also a defining trait. Thus, it is omitted.

CONCLUSION

Plutarch's meticulous depiction of the rivalry between Aristides and Themistocles transcends a mere historical account, evolving into a sophisticated exploration of leadership, morality and civic responsibility within the dynamic context of Athenian democracy, when its principles were still being formed. The initial romantic jealousy, an expression of their immaturity, carefully crafted by Plutarch, serves as a microcosm of the deeper ethical and political fault lines that divide the two men. This early episode sets the stage for their contrasting approaches to governance and public service: Aristides embodying justice and moderation, and Themistocles championing pragmatic solutions driven by ambition and innovation. Crucially, Plutarch's portrayal of their development differs significantly across the two *Lives*, offering a nuanced examination of their characters.

In *Themistocles*, the rivalry highlights Themistocles' ambition and acumen, illustrating how these traits manifest in both personal and political contexts. His conflict — and eventual reconciliation — with Aristides mirrors his character development: from youthful ambition to a more composed leader during the Persian invasion. Here, he sets aside selfishness to collaborate with Aristides in a shared effort for Athens' salvation. Plutarch's admiration for Themistocles' strategic brilliance is evident in his emphasis on Themistocles' crucial role in securing Athenian survival, even when his actions required ethical compromises.

Conversely, in *Aristides*, we witness the maturation of a character who perfects his natural qualities through reason and virtue, ultimately upholding his reputation for justice. The romantic jealousy and subsequent political conflict provide a backdrop against which Aristides' virtuous nature shines. By tempering his initial flaws with moderation and unwavering

commitment to the common good, Aristides emerges as a paragon of justice whose contributions to repelling the Persians and restoring Athens were invaluable.

Through these contrasting portrayals, Plutarch masterfully uses their rivalry to illuminate broader themes of leadership and morality. By presenting their conflict as both personal and ideological, he invites readers to critically examine the values underpinning effective governance and the potential pitfalls of unchecked ambition or rigid adherence to principle. Plutarch's narrative and biographical techniques — such as internal *synkrisis* and silence — and rhetorical strategies — such as *ex negativo* amplification — enhance this didactic purpose by encouraging readers to compare and contrast their actions and motivations, fostering ethical reflection and self-improvement.

Ultimately, Plutarch's portrayal resonates beyond its historical context, addressing enduring concerns about leadership, ethics and civic responsibility. The rivalry between Aristides and Themistocles serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of balancing competing virtues — justice versus pragmatism — and fostering collaboration even amidst ideological differences. By emphasising their evolution from personal enmity to political cooperation during critical moments in Athenian history, Plutarch underscores the transformative potential of shared leadership in times of crisis. Harmonious cooperation is the key element. The incomparable victories over the Persians set the *exempla*,[53] while this offers a powerful model for effective civic engagement.

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[53] Marincola (2010), 121–143.

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Athens and Corcyra: The Collapse of Interpersonal Relations and the Role of Leadership in Times of Crisis[1]

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INTRODUCTION

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines crisis as 'a sudden emergency situation' or 'a situation or period characterised by intense difficulty, insecurity, or danger, either in the public sphere or in one's personal life'.[2] In light of this definition, two of the most famous episodes in Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War immediately spring to mind, namely the plague in Athens and the civil war in Corcyra. The plague is described by Thucydides as an unprecedented event in terms of its scale and the casualties it produced (οὐ μέντοι τοσοῦτός γε λοιμὸς οὐδὲ φθορὰ οὕτως ἀνθρώπων οὐδαμοῦ ἐμνημονεύετο γενέσθαι, 2.47.3), an event beyond description or expectation (κρεῖσσον λόγου, 2.50.1, ἐλπίδος κρεῖσσον, 2.64.1), a disease against which no single remedy could be found (ἔν τε οὐδὲ ἓν κατέστη ἴαμα ὡς εἰπεῖν ὅτι χρῆν προσφέροντας ὠφελεῖν, 2.51.2), and which no human body, whether strong or weak, proved capable to resist (σῶμά τε αὔταρκες ὂν οὐδὲν διεφάνη πρὸς αὐτὸ ἰσχύος πέρι ἢ ἀσθενείας, 2.51.3).[3]

In his account of the civil war in Corcyra, on the other hand, Thucydides offers two observations which help us flesh out the aforementioned definition of crisis:

> For in peace and prosperity both cities and individuals have better dispositions (ἀμείνους τὰς γνώμας ἔχουσι), because they are not subjected to conditions of necessity against their will (ἐς ἀκουσίους ἀνάγκας); war, however, taking away the comfort and abundance of everyday life (τὴν εὐπορίαν τοῦ καθ' ἡμέραν), is a violent schoolmaster and assimilates people's moods to their present condition (πρὸς τὰ παρόντα τὰς ὀργὰς τῶν πολλῶν ὁμοιοῖ). (3.82.2)

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[2] See *OED*, s.v. 'crisis', 1.b. On the variety of situations and events subsumed under the modern term 'crisis' and on the difficulty of establishing a universally accepted definition, see Coombs (2010) and McConnell (2022).

[3] Thucydides does not have a generic word for 'crisis'; the specific words he uses for the plague are νόσος (2.47.3), νόσημα (2.51.1), κακόν (2.52.3), λοιμός (2.47.3) and also πρᾶγμα (2.64.1).

These remarks of Thucydides encapsulate the *essence* of what a situation of crisis consists in: first, facing conditions of necessity (*anankē*) against one's will, and second, being deprived of the 'ease' or 'abundance' (*euporia*) of everyday life. We may remind ourselves, for example, of the curfew restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic and the way the lockdowns changed our daily routine, or — for the Greek readers — of the dire necessity of the economic measures during the Greek financial crisis and the impact they had on people's everyday lives. Such adverse changes to 'life as usual', Thucydides says, and experience has bitterly confirmed, assimilate people's mood to the harshness of the conditions they face and generate equally harsh and negative emotions in them. An obvious candidate for an emotion of such kind is fear (*phobos*) owing to the insecurity these situations generate, but the primary emotion that is brought to bear in this context, as we shall see, is anger (*orgē*).[4] These negative emotions that people experience inevitably influence their day-to-day interactions and their relationships with others. Anger, in particular, as an emotion that typically requires a personal object,[5] is directed towards one's fellow-citizens or towards those influential individuals whom people take to be responsible for their misfortunes, or both.[6]

As Thucydidean scholars have already observed, the narratives of the two events are evidently meant to evoke each other through common structural, thematic and linguistic patterns that establish links between them. Connor, for instance, notes how in both accounts a description of the events pertaining to each is followed by meditative remarks on the moral implications of these events in more complicated language and syntax, and with greater use of generalisation and abstract vocabulary.[7] On the linguistic level, the conditions of necessity (*anankai*) of war, to which people become subject, recall the forced removal of the Athenian population into the city walls and the need to inhabit even places hitherto considered accursed, such as the 'Pelasgian ground' below the Acropolis (ὅμως ὑπὸ τῆς παραχρῆμα ἀνάγκης ἐξωκήθη, 2.17.1, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἡ ἀνάγκη τῆς οἰκήσεως, 2.17.2). At the same time, the

[4] Cf. Aristotle's observation that people grow angry when their expectations are frustrated (ἐὰν τἀναντία τύχῃ προσδεχόμενος, *Rh*. 2.2, 1379a22–23), whereas they tend to be 'mild' (*praoi*) when they enjoy a state of prosperity and fulfilment (ἐν εὐημερίᾳ, ἐν κατορθώσει, ἐν πληρώσει) and have good hopes for the future (ἐν ἐλπίδι ἐπιεικεῖ, *Rh*. 2.3, 1380b2–5). See also *Rh*. 2.5, 1382a21–22 on fear as an anticipation of future evil.

[5] Cf. *Rh*. 2.2, 1378a33–35: 'if anger (*orgē*) is such a thing, the angry person must always grow angry against a particular individual (τῶν καθ' ἕκαστόν τινι), for example Cleon and not men in general […]'.

[6] See, e.g., recent studies that examine the correlation between the Covid-19 restrictions and increased aggression, Killgore/Cloonan/Taylor/Anlap/Dailey (2021), Smith/Duffy/Moxham-Hall/Strang/Wessely/Rubin (2021), Hsu/Tsai (2022).

[7] See Connor (1984), 99–105. On the thematic level, Connor notes the excess of boldness (*tolma*) as a characteristic of individual behaviour in each case as well as the collapse of *logos* and 'the inability of any of the conventional restraints to control the powerful drives of nature'. On the similarities between Thucydides' account of the two events, see also Rusten (1989), 190, Hornblower (1991), 317, Price (2001), 28–30, and Stefanovski/Čavoški (2023). On the theme of the pursuit of individual pleasures, see below.

'ease' (*euporia*) of daily life in times of peace contrasts with the 'hopelessness' or 'utter perplexity' (*aporia*) of individual citizens who suffered from the plague (καὶ ἡ ἀπορία τοῦ μὴ ἡσυχάζειν καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία ἐπέκειτο διὰ παντός, 2.49.6) as well as the general state of the Athenian population while the disease was ravaging the city (πανταχόθεν τε τῇ γνώμῃ ἄποροι καθεστηκότες ἐνέκειντο τῷ Περικλεῖ, 2.59.2).

Thucydides' narrative of the two events famously underscores the moral degeneration and the collapse of customs and conventional norms and restraints that resulted in those situations.[8] For the purposes of the present volume, however, the two events are particularly useful in that they bring to the fore the different ways in which different forms of crisis can impact on interpersonal relations among fellow-citizens. Though different in their typology, a political crisis — the Corcyraean *stasis* — and a public health crisis — the plague in Athens — take a heavy toll on the way in which people interact with one another.[9] The two events also highlight the challenges posed to individual leaders in such extreme situations. It is these two themes — interpersonal relationships and the challenges of leadership during crises — that this paper aims to explore.

1. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

To begin with Thucydides' reflections on *stasis*, a prominent theme of his analysis is the collapse of *trust* between individuals that permeates social life in times of civil war. The question regarding which individuals are trustworthy and on what grounds is a recurrent one, and Thucydides bitterly remarks on the perverse ways in which trust is established in such situations. As he observes, trust was typically given to violent or harsh people and withheld from moderate ones, who were viewed with suspicion (καὶ ὁ μὲν χαλεπαίνων πιστὸς αἰεί, ὁ δ' ἀντιλέγων αὐτῷ ὕποπτος, 3.82.5), while the basis of trust was people's common participation in evildoing, rather than their adherence to divine laws (καὶ τὰς ἐς σφᾶς αὐτοὺς πίστεις οὐ τῷ θείῳ νόμῳ μᾶλλον ἐκρατύνοντο ἢ τῷ κοινῇ τι παρανομῆσαι, 3.82.6). Under those circumstances, the negative and anti-social attitudes of mutual suspicion, antagonism and mistrust triumphed over gentler qualities such as simplicity of character and nobility, which were thereby scorned and laughed at (καὶ τὸ εὔηθες, οὗ τὸ γενναῖον πλεῖστον μετέχει, καταγελασθὲν ἠφανίσθη, τὸ δὲ ἀντιτετάχθαι ἀλλήλοις τῇ γνώμῃ ἀπίστως ἐπὶ πολὺ διήνεγκεν,

[8] On the evils of *stasis*, see, e.g., Edmunds (1975) and Macleod (1979).
[9] On different typologies of crises and the difficulty of establishing a universally accepted one, and further bibliography on the subject, see Papadopoulou/Roche/Tamiolaki (2022).

3.83.1).[10] As a result, people became more disposed to guard themselves against potential harm, rather than show trust towards others, which is the very basis of any positive social interaction.[11] The deplorable state of trust as a social quality in the extreme circumstances of internal strife is also evidenced by Thucydides' remark that people took more pleasure in taking advantage of other people's trust than in attacking them openly:

> But when an opportunity presented itself, he who was first to gain some courage, if he found his opponent off his guard, was more pleased to exact his vengeance by means of violating his opponent's trust than by attacking them openly (ἥδιον διὰ τὴν πίστιν ἐτιμωρεῖτο ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ προφανοῦς); the reason was not only considerations of safety but also the fact that his prevailing by means of deceit granted him a kind of prize for cleverness (ἀπάτῃ περιγενόμενος ξυνέσεως ἀγώνισμα προσελάμβανεν) (3.82.7).

'Cleverness' (*xynesis*), though normally a term of praise in Thucydides, is used here with a negative overtone for the kind of astuteness that forsook moral considerations and took advantage of the trusting nature of prosocially disposed, but less shrewd, citizens.[12]

Hand in hand with the collapse of genuine trust, based on prosocial behaviour and mutual respect, goes the substitution of the ties of kinship with those of party allegiance:

> Furthermore, family ties became weaker than the ties of party (καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ ξυγγενὲς τοῦ ἑταιρικοῦ ἀλλοτριώτερον ἐγένετο), because partisans were more ready to dare things without any hesitationfor such associations were not created for the public good in accordance with established laws, but for the sake of personal advantage in opposition to them (3.82.6).

The weakening of kinship ties is emblematic of the moral degeneracy that ensues from *stasis*, as it violates a central, indeed perhaps the *most* central tenet of ancient Greek morality, namely

[10] On the complexity of this phrase and its implications for determining Thucydides' own moral outlook, see Hornblower (1991), 487.
[11] On the notion of *trust* in ancient Greek ethics (conveyed with words such as *pistis*, *pistos*, etc), and further bibliography on the subject, see Cairns (forthcoming).
[12] Cf. Macleod (1979), 56, Hornblower (1991), 424, 485; *xynesis*, then, is one of those (moral and intellectual) terms that fall prey to the 'distortion of discourse' [Connor (1984), 101] that is characteristic in times of civil war, cf. 3.82.4.

the obligation that one should help one's kin and *philoi*.[13] If a father can kill his own son during *stasis* (καὶ γὰρ πατὴρ παῖδα ἀπέκτεινε, 3.81.5), as Thucydides recounts, then all moral certainties and stable relations of trust are overturned and substituted with expedient alliances and associations on the basis of partisan self-interest.[14] This observation is especially important in describing the state of interpersonal relations during *stasis*, as it seems to adumbrate the process known from social identity theory as *depersonalisation*.

A central premise of the theory of social identity is that when people belong to, and identify strongly with, a group the cognitive process of categorising themselves as group members impacts on their attitude and behaviour.[15] First, the division between 'us' and 'them', a basic feature of human psychology, creates the categories of in-groups and out-groups.[16] Second, group members tend to behave in ways that conform to the group norm or the group prototype, that is, the manner of behaviour that group members take to be characteristic or defining of their group and distinguishing it from others.[17] This process, known as *depersonalisation*, is a basic process underlying group phenomena and involves perceiving oneself and others 'not as unique individuals, but through the lens of features that define relevant ingroup or outgroup membership'.[18] Through depersonalisation we *redefine* ourselves in terms of group membership and assimilate ourselves to the defining features of the group that we share with other in-group members.[19] In this context, depersonalisation is used as a descriptive term to refer to a change in the basis of perception: a shifting focus from the individual to the group.[20] When the degree of identification with the group rises, however, or if there is increasing tension between two groups, depersonalisation may lapse into the more sinister state of *deindividuation*, whereby the sense of individuality is diminished, and personal

[13] Cf. Connor (1984), 99. For the Greek maxim that one should 'help one's friends and harm one's enemies', see, e.g., Hes. *Op*. 707–713, Archil. fr. 23.14–15 W, Solon fr. 13.5–6 W, Thgn. 869–872, Pind. *Pyth*. 2.83–85, Pl. *Meno* 71e, Xen. *Mem*. ii.6.35.
[14] As Hornblower (1991), 484–485 rightly notes, Thucydides' reference to political 'associations' (*xynodoi*) in this context is not a negative comment on political *hetaireiai* in general, but a criticism of those (harmful) associations that prioritised greedy self-interest (*pleonexia*) over the common good.
[15] See Tajfel (1972) and Hogg (2001), 186–187.
[16] On the neurobiological underpinnings of the Us/Them dichotomy and its implications, see Sapolsky (2017), 387–424.
[17] According to Tajfel/Turner (1979), 38, 'the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups–that is, social categorisation per se–is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favouring the in-group'.
[18] Hogg (2001), 186. See also p. 187: 'This overall process is called *depersonalisation* because people are not viewed as unique and multifaceted individuals but as matches to the relevant ingroup or outgroup prototype; prototypicality, not individuality, is the focus of attention' (author's emphasis).
[19] On the process of depersonalisation, see also Haslam/Reicher/Platow (2011), 52–54. On the potential dangers of this process for decision-making and on 'groupthink' as a source of defective judgment, see Janis (1973).
[20] Hogg (2001), 187: 'Depersonalisation refers to change in the basis of perception; it does not have the negative connotations of deindividuation or dehumanisation'.

identity and accountability are submerged in the group.[21] This state has often been associated with the display of aggressive or antisocial behaviour towards out-groups, precisely in the manner that Thucydides describes in the narrative part of the Corcyra affair, where the democrats engage in mass slaughter of their oligarchic rivals (3.81.2–5).[22]

This process of redefining ourselves in terms of a group can thus explain both the atrocities committed against out-groups and the weakening of individual ties of kinship in favour of partisan relations. With regard to the former, the acts of violence associated with the process of deindividuation are often facilitated through the concomitant process of the dehumanisation of the Other, whereby out-groups are deprived of their full humanness and presented as animal-like or as objects which do not deserve to be treated as befits proper human beings.[23] With regard to the latter, as Thucydides explains, in times of *stasis* conventional bonds or in-group categories, such as family and kinship, are substituted by allegiance to one or other of the competing factions. In such circumstances, extreme political polarisation makes people's political stance the defining or salient category of group membership, and adherence to a particular ideology or political position proves more powerful than the natural, as it were, relation of blood. People thus identify more readily with strangers with whom they share their professed political slogans ('popular equality before the law' as opposed to 'moderate aristocracy', 3.82.8) than with their own relatives, if they happen to espouse a different view. We only need to look at recent cases of polarised political dilemmas — the Greek referendum in 2015 or the Brexit referendum in 2016 — and the impact they had on personal relations between friends and family members to acknowledge the validity of Thucydides' observation regarding the priority of political over kin membership in times of *stasis*.[24]

The plague, on the other hand, as a crisis of public health, produces a social situation which resembles but also differs from the conditions of *stasis*. To begin with the differences, the plague belongs to crises of the unpredictable type, as Thucydides' Pericles remarks (ἐλπίδος κρεῖσσον, 2.64.1), whereas the socio-political conditions that eventually lead to open civil war

[21] On the psychological state of deindividuation, see Postmes/Turner (2015) and Reicher/Spears/Postmes (1995) who challenge traditional models of deindividuation that assume a loss of self, and hence of behaviour-control, within a crowd or group, and focus instead on a process of transition from individual identity to social identity and social dimensions of the self.

[22] For a more detailed discussion of the events in Corcyra see the following section of the paper.

[23] On dehumanisation, see Haslam (2006) who also expands its scope beyond intergroup relations and conditions of conflict and traces this practice in everyday interpersonal relations as well.

[24] See, e.g., the findings of the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer at https://www.edelman.co.uk/research/2019-trust-barometer (last accessed 29 April 2025) and a 2016 Guardian survey at https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/20/our-votes-will-cancel-each-other-out-families-falling-out-over-brexit (last accessed 29 April 2025).

may be lurking in a particular society for some time, and from some point onwards, when tensions begin to escalate, war becomes a predictable possibility.[25] More importantly, contrary to internal strife, which is by nature divisive, the plague crisis has the power, potentially at least, to underscore our common, human vulnerability to illness and injury and thereby generate prosocial emotions and concern for others. This is evidenced in the behaviour of *some* of the population:

> For if, on the one hand, people were unwilling to approach one another out of fear, the sick perished in solitude, and indeed many households were left empty because there was no one to care for them. But if, on the other hand, people visited others, they themselves perished, and this was especially the case with those who made any pretentions to virtue; motivated by shame, they were unsparing of themselves in visiting their friends, since in the end even the relatives grew tired of lamenting the dying, overwhelmed as they were by the magnitude of the calamity (2.51.5).

Thucydides, then, attests to two different attitudes that people displayed towards their relatives, friends and fellow citizens. Those who felt ashamed not to tend their close ones contracted the disease and perished, while others, overcome as they were by fear for their own safety, abandoned the sick in their misery and the sick then perished alone.

Interpersonal relations, therefore, prove equally fragile and unstable during the plague as they are in times of *stasis*, but for a different reason. What alienates people from their close ones during the plague is not their stronger identification with another group of like-minded people at the expense of traditional relationships, but the extreme fear for oneself which, as Aristotle observes, tends to drive away concern and pity for others.[26] Thucydides' narrative of the plague is thus marked by the vivid images of the unburied corpses scattered around the city (πολλῶν ἀτάφων γενομένων, 2.50.1), and of people uncared for and neglected (τῶν ἠμελημένων ἀνθρώπων) who 'rolled about' in the streets half-dead and threw themselves into cisterns tormented as they were by insatiable thirst (2.49.5, cf. 2.52.2). The plague, in other

[25] Cf. 3.82.1 on the 'differences' between opposing parties in individual cities (διαφορῶν οὐσῶν ἑκασταχοῦ) which remained dormant in times of peace but were heightened and given full vent in times of war. On Thucydides' emphasis on the unpredictability of the plague, see Marshall (1990) and Hornblower (1991), 323, 339. On predictability as a classification criterion for establishing a typology of crises, see Gundel (2005).

[26] See *Rh*. 2.8, 1385b33–34: 'for those who are utterly terrified do not feel pity, because they are preoccupied with their own suffering (διὰ τὸ εἶναι πρὸς τῷ οἰκείῳ πάθει)'; cf. 1386a23–24: 'for people no longer feel pity when something dreadful is near them (<οὐ γὰρ> ἔτι ἐλεοῦσιν ἐγγὺς αὐτοῖς τοῦ δεινοῦ ὄντος)'.

words, brought about an extreme form of individualism, where people became indifferent to kinsmen, friends and fellow-citizens, and grew excessively concerned about their own safety.[27] This is why it was those who had *recovered* from the plague that, according to Thucydides, had the luxury of feeling pity towards the sick and the dying, both because they knew what the disease entailed (διὰ τὸ προειδέναι) and because they were now themselves safe (ἐν τῷ θαρσαλέῳ) (2.51.6).

This extreme individualism and concern with the self at the expense of others, however, is also what unites the two crises. In his authorial remarks, Thucydides emphasises people's turn to the pursuit of individual pleasure as one of the central negative moral effects of the two situations. In the case of the plague, the fear that people felt for themselves, and the belief that they could contract the disease and die at any moment, urged them to seek to satisfy their immediate (bodily) desires as much as they could before the threat of the disease reached them (ὥστε ταχείας τὰς ἐπαυρέσεις καὶ πρὸς τὸ τερπνὸν ἠξίουν ποιεῖσθαι, ἐφήμερα τά τε σώματα καὶ τὰ χρήματα ὁμοίως ἡγούμενοι, 2.53.2). In the case of *stasis*, on the other hand, it was their hatred for their rivals that made people engage in violent actions of revenge according to their pleasure ('each party setting as their standard the pleasure of the moment', ἐς δὲ τὸ ἑκατέροις που αἰεὶ ἡδονὴν ἔχον ὁρίζοντες), instead of pursuing justice or trying to promote the common good (οὐ μέχρι τοῦ δικαίου καὶ τῇ πόλει ξυμφόρου προτιθέντες) (3.82.8). In both cases, then, the 'pleasure of the moment' that individuals seek is not a benign form of pleasure, but a selfish, short-term pleasure at the expense of long-term, prosocial considerations.[28] As Thucydides puts it in his account of the plague, no one was willing to put effort to, and persevere in, the pursuit of something 'fine' or 'noble', because of their uncertainty as to whether they would still be alive to see their plans come to fruition (καὶ τὸ μὲν προσταλαιπωρεῖν τῷ δόξαντι καλῷ οὐδεὶς πρόθυμος ἦν, ἄδηλον νομίζων εἰ πρὶν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸ ἐλθεῖν διαφθαρήσεται, 2.53.3). Immediate pleasure, therefore, and whatever conduced to it, acquired the status of a superior value and

[27] Paradoxically, then, a form of crisis that underlines our common, human vulnerability tends to produce extreme individualism. Orwin (1988) describes *stasis* and the plague as extreme situations that sit on opposite sides of everyday, normal politics: *stasis* displays the consequences of the 'radical politicisation' of life, whereas the plague the consequences of its 'depoliticisation' [for a similar view, see also Stefanovski/Čavoški (2023), 652–653]. This distinction certainly has a basis on Thucydides' text, but as recent experience has shown even a public health crisis can become a hotly politicised issue and acquire *stasis*-like characteristics: consider the pro- and anti-vaccine controversy during the Covid-19 pandemic and how this new dividing 'political' line (a) was added to existing political divisions and (b) tested individual relations between family members, friends, etc, as Thucydides observes in his analysis of *stasis*.

[28] On the implicit criticism involved in Thucydides' reference to hedonism and the pursuit of immediate results, see Rusten (1989), 191. On the pursuit of (immediate) pleasure as a common theme between the accounts of *stasis* and the plague, see also Hornblower (1991): 326, 486; cf. Macleod (1979), 59 on the 'shrinking of men's view to the present' as a common characteristic between the two (as well as other) war events in Thucydides' narrative.

supplanted all other values (ὅτι δὲ ἤδη τε ἡδὺ πανταχόθεν τε ἐς αὐτὸ κερδαλέον, τοῦτο καὶ καλὸν καὶ χρήσιμον κατέστη, 2.53.3). A corollary of this prioritisation of selfish pleasure (*terpnon*, *hēdonē*, *hēdy*) over *to kalon*, however, is the deplorable state of interpersonal relations in such situations, as *to kalon* is the category of value typically associated in Greek with prosocial action and with doing the right or difficult thing, even at the cost of one's own immediate advantage.[29]

If people's dispositions and attitudes in situations of crisis are so negatively affected, what scope can leadership serve, and how can leaders interfere to forestall or reverse the process of moral and social decay and reinstate positive interpersonal relations between individuals and groups? Thucydides' account of the two events highlights the challenges that leaders can face in such circumstances.

2. LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In the course of the gradual descent of the Athenians into a state of hopelessness (*aporia*) during the plague, political power and leadership are conspicuous by their absence, as there is not a single explicit mention of any specific or general measures taken by magistrates and power holders to control or mitigate the effects of the disease and restore some kind of order.[30] This silence on internal policy during so critical a period when power holders most need to prove themselves is perhaps meant to emphasise the general puzzlement before the magnitude of the disease, and to reinforce Thucydides' statement that 'the general character of the disease was beyond description or expectation' (γενόμενον γὰρ κρεῖσσον λόγου τὸ εἶδος τῆς νόσου, 2.50.1).[31] What matters most for our purposes, however, is that in such circumstances leadership becomes a likely target of people's negative emotions.

Indeed, Pericles, as the most prominent man of his time and the leader of Athens (δυνατώτατος τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἄγων τὴν πολιτείαν, 1.127.3), becomes the main target of the Athenians' anger:[32]

[29] On the strong link between *to kalon* and other-oriented actions, see, e.g., Arist. *Rh*. 1.9, 1366b36–38, 1367a3–6, and *Eth*. *Nic*. 9.8, 1169a6–11, 18–32.
[30] As Rusten (1989), 180–181 observes, Thucydides lists three areas from which help with the plague might have been expected and each of these proved unable to help: medicine (οὔτε γὰρ ἰατροὶ ἤρκουν), 'other sciences' left unspecified (οὔτε ἄλλη ἀνθρωπεία τέχνη οὐδεμία) and the gods (ὅσα τε πρὸς ἱεροῖς ἱκέτευσαν ἢ μαντείοις) (2.47.4).
[31] For the translation, see Hornblower (1991), 323.
[32] Thucydides presents Pericles as the unquestionable leader of Athens up until the time of the plague, to the exclusion of other contemporary figures, most notably Cleon, who must have been politically active at the same time, see Hornblower (1991), 225, 419.

> After the second invasion of the Peloponnesians, the Athenians changed their mind (ἠλλοίωντο τὰς γνώμας), as their land had been ravaged a second time and the disease together with the war pressed heavily upon them; they blamed Pericles (καὶ τὸν μὲν Περικλέα ἐν αἰτίᾳ εἶχον) claiming that it was he who persuaded them to go to war and it was because of him that they had fallen in this misfortune, and they were eager to come to terms with the Lacedaemonians. They even sent some envoys to them who were unsuccessful in their mission. And being now in a state of utter desperation, they vented on Pericles (πανταχόθεν τε τῇ γνώμῃ ἄποροι καθεστηκότες ἐνέκειντο τῷ Περικλεῖ) (2.59.1-2).

The combined effects of the renewed devastation of the countryside, the plague and the ongoing war have a negative impact on the morale of the Athenian population and bring a wave of criticism against Pericles, to whom the Athenians attribute their decision to go to war.[33] This is, in fact, the second expression of the Athenians' dissatisfaction towards Pericles, following their first bouts of anger against him when the effects of his policy began to be felt with the forced removal of the Athenian population into the city and the Spartan's ravaging of the Athenian countryside:

> The city was then in every way in a state of unrest, and people were angry against Pericles (καὶ τὸν Περικλέα ἐν ὀργῇ εἶχον) and remembered none of his previous advice, but they abused him (ἐκάκιζον) for not leading them out to battle, general though he was, and they considered him responsible for all their sufferings (αἴτιόν τε σφίσιν ἐνόμιζον πάντων ὧν ἔπασχον) (2.21.3).

The outbreak of the war and the forced removal of the population into the city walls constitutes the first situation that bears the characteristics of 'crisis' for the Athenians, namely the need to succumb to conditions of necessity, and the deprivation of the ease of everyday life.[34] The ensuing plague can then be described as a new, additional crisis, a crisis *within* a crisis, so to speak, that further aggravates the living conditions of those who face it and takes a further toll on their emotional state.

[33] Cf. 1.127.3 on Pericles: 'he would not allow the Athenians to yield but kept urging them to go to war' (οὐκ εἴα ὑπείκειν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐς τὸν πόλεμον ὥρμα τοὺς Ἀθηναίους).
[34] See above, p. 94: 'These remarks of Thucydides encapsulate the *essence* of what a situation of crisis consists in: first, […], and second […]'.

According to Thucydides' narrative, Pericles was able to handle skilfully this first wave of criticism against him and ensure that his defensive policy would be followed despite the prevailing mood of the populace.[35] With the emergence of the plague, however, and in the face of a renewed and more serious wave of anger against him, Pericles is forced to address the assembly — his third and final speech — in an attempt to assuage the anger of the Athenian people and instil confidence in them (ἐβούλετο θαρσῦναί τε καὶ ἀπαγαγὼν τὸ ὀργιζόμενον τῆς γνώμης πρὸς τὸ ἠπιώτερον καὶ ἀδεέστερον καταστῆσαι, 2.59.3). Indeed, Pericles himself, in the speeches that Thucydides puts in his mouth, appears well aware of the challenges that leaders face owing to the unpredictability of events and the volatility of people's moods and opinions in the face of changing circumstances. This general observation forms the very opening of his first speech in the Athenian assembly, by means of which he tries to persuade the Athenians to go to war:

> I hold to the same opinion as ever, men of Athens, that we should not yield to the Peloponnesians, even though I know that people do not fight a war in action with the same fervour with which they are persuaded to undertake it; rather, they change their resolutions in accordance with circumstances (πρὸς δὲ τὰς ξυμφορὰς καὶ τὰς γνώμας τρεπομένους)… For it is possible that the course of events may progress just as unpredictably as the plans of men. This is why we tend to blame fortune for anything that happens contrary to our expectations (1.140.1).

The truth of this statement is confirmed during the plague, when the Athenians, as we have just seen, overwhelmed as they are by the gravity of the crisis in which they find themselves, change their minds regarding the war and turn against Pericles who instigated it, precisely as Pericles had anticipated:

> I expected the emergence of your anger against me (καὶ προσδεχομένῳ μοι τὰ τῆς ὀργῆς ὑμῶν ἔς με γεγένηται), for I understand its causes, and this is precisely why I called an assembly, so that I may remind you of some things and because I want to castigate you, if you are either angry with me (ἐμοὶ χαλεπαίνετε) or you succumb to your misfortunes without reason (2.60.1).

[35] See 2.22.1–2 with Rusten (1989), 129 and Hornblower (1991), 275–276.

In the remaining of his third speech, Pericles defends himself, his leadership skills and his policy, and tries to restore the morale of his fellow-citizens by reminding them of their duties towards the polis and of the glory of the Athenian empire.[36]

In this attempt at persuasion, however, Pericles was only *partially* successful, as the people of Athens demonstrated an ambivalent stance towards him according to Thucydides. Collectively, or on the level of public policy, they were persuaded by Pericles' arguments and decided to continue the war with renewed vigour (οἱ δὲ δημοσίᾳ μὲν τοῖς λόγοις ἀνεπείθοντο καὶ οὔτε πρὸς τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους ἔτι ἔπεμπον ἔς τε τὸν πόλεμον μᾶλλον ὥρμηντο, 2.65.2). On a personal level, however, both common people and the wealthier citizens continued to feel distressed on account of their sufferings (ἰδίᾳ δὲ τοῖς παθήμασιν ἐλυποῦντο, ὁ μὲν δῆμος […] οἱ δὲ δυνατοί […], 2.65.2). Indeed, the anger of the entire population against Pericles was not assuaged until they imposed a fine on him (οὐ μέντοι πρότερόν γε οἱ ξύμπαντες ἐπαύσαντο ἐν ὀργῇ ἔχοντες αὐτὸν πρὶν ἐζημίωσαν χρήμασιν, 2.65.3) and, possibly, deposed him from the position of the general.[37] The negative emotions that crises generate in people, therefore, are difficult to assuage, and the influential figures whom people consider responsible for their predicament are likely to become the prime targets of these emotions.

The challenges of leadership in situations of crisis emerge also in Thucydides' account of the events in Corcyra. Of particular importance here is the contrast between the two Athenian generals, Nicostratus and Eurymedon, who arrive in Corcyra with detachments of the Athenian fleet and hence acquire *de facto* power to influence the decisions and actions of the Corcyraean demos and their oligarchic rivals. Nicostratus is the first Athenian general to arrive on the island and reaches Corcyra when the *stasis* is already in full swing: the oligarchs have assassinated Peithias, the democratic leader, along with sixty private individuals or members of the Council who were Athenian sympathisers (3.70.6), and two battles have already been fought, the first won by the oligarchs (3.72.2), the second by the democrats (3.74.1). Upon Nicostratus' arrival (παραγίγνεται βοηθῶν ἐκ Ναυπάκτου, 3.75.1), Thucydides employs a sequence of verbal forms to convey Nicostratus' actions in the face of the unfolding events. At first, Nicostratus attempts to persuade the two sides to come to an agreement (ξύμβασίν τε ἔπρασσε καὶ πείθει, 3.75.1) and, having secured a truce or, at least, assurances to that effect, he prepares to depart (ταῦτα πράξας ἔμελλεν ἀποπλεύσεσθαι, 3.75.2).[38] Soon afterwards, however, a power struggle seems

[36] Cf. Rusten (1989), 197.
[37] Thucydides remains rather vague as to whether Pericles was also deposed from his office (as well as fined), see, e.g., 2.65.4 (ὕστερον δ' αὖθις οὐ πολλῷ…στρατηγὸν εἵλοντο) and 2.59.3 (ἔτι δ' ἐστρατήγει) with Rusten (1989), 208–209 and Hornblower (1991), 331, 341.
[38] On the provisions of this agreement and its tentative status, see n. 40 below.

to emerge between himself and the democrats of the island, who seek to make the most of the opportunity and gain a decisive advantage over their rivals. The leaders of the demos (οἱ δὲ τοῦ δήμου προστάται, 3.75.2) ask Nicostratus to leave with them five of his ships as a deterrent against any oligarchic activity and offer to substitute them with Corcyraean ones. Nicostratus accedes to their proposal (καὶ ὁ μὲν ξυνεχώρησεν, 3.75.3) and the democrats begin to man the ships with their own enemies.[39] Fearing that they will be conveyed to Athens, the oligarchs chosen to embark on those ships seek refuge in the temple of the Dioskouri, at which point Nicostratus intervenes again between the two parties and tries to remove the suppliants and provide assurances for their safety (Νικόστρατος δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀνίστη τε καὶ παρεμυθεῖτο, 3.75.4). When his attempt at persuasion fails (ὡς δ' οὐκ ἔπειθεν, 3.75.4), however, the democrats use the suppliants' refusal as a pretext and invade the houses of the oligarchs getting hold of their weapons. At this crucial juncture, Nicostratus, once more, makes use of his power in an attempt to restrain the democrats and prevent them from killing any oligarchs they chance to meet (καὶ αὐτῶν τινὰς οἷς ἐπέτυχον, εἰ μὴ Νικόστρατος ἐκώλυσε, διέφθειραν ἄν, 3.75.4).

As Thucydides' narrative suggests, Nicostratus' actions in Corcyra have a twofold aim: (a) to bring about an agreement that would punish the original offenders (δέκα μὲν ἄνδρας τοὺς αἰτιωτάτους κρῖναι) and avert further bloodshed by establishing a truce between the two sides (τοὺς δ' ἄλλους οἰκεῖν σπονδὰς πρὸς ἀλλήλους ποιησαμένους), and (b) to secure Athenian interests by bringing the island firmly on the side of Athens (καὶ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, ὥστε τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἐχθροὺς καὶ φίλους νομίζειν, 3.75.1).[40] Despite his apparently good intentions, with regard to his first aim at least, Nicostratus' power and his concomitant ability to influence the affairs of the Corcyraeans prove weak in the face of the ongoing *stasis*, as the hostility between the two sides seems to have reached a point were reconciliation and reparation is no longer possible: as Thucydides remarks in his authorial comments, social agents are now motivated primarily by revenge and the desire to prevail.[41] The democrats, who had gained the upper hand in this conflict, prove unwilling to abide by the moderate and conciliatory terms of Nicostratus' agreement and embark on the first stage of the massacre that takes place on the island, which Nicostratus ultimately fails to prevent. This involves the execution of any enemies that the

[39] For a detailed analysis of the numbers of the *oligoi* in Thucydides' account of the Corcyraean *stasis*, see Wilson (1987), 97–98.

[40] Wilson (1987), 114–118 discusses in detail the implications of 3.75 in terms of the alliance between Athens and Corcyra and rightly stresses that Nicostratus' actions were of limited effectiveness with regard to his first aim, which casts a reasonable doubt on whether the second aim was achieved as well, cf. Hornblower (1991), 473–474.

[41] See esp. 3.82.8: 'and striving in every way to prevail over one another (ἀγωνιζόμενοι ἀλλήλων περιγίγνεσθαι) they dared the most terrible things and executed revenges that were even more terrible (ἐπεξῆσάν τε τὰς τιμωρίας ἔτι μείζους)'.

democrats chanced to meet as well as those few of the *oligoi* who had been persuaded to embark on the ships, the summary trial and execution of around fifty suppliants, and the deaths of the remaining ones by their own hands so as not to fall in the hands of their enemies.[42]

Even so, Nicostratus' actions come in stark contrast to the attitude of the other Athenian general, Eurymedon, who arrives shortly afterwards in Corcyra with a fleet of sixty ships (five times Nicostratus' force). Yet, despite his superior capacity to exercise power over the demos, owing to his superior forces, Eurymedon's presence on the island is marked by the complete absence of any reference to action on his part:

> And during the seven days that Eurymedon remained with his sixty ships (ταῖς ἑξήκοντα ναυσὶ παρέμεινε) after his arrival, the Corcyraeans were engaged in the slaughter of those of their fellow-citizens whom they considered to be their enemies (σφῶν αὐτῶν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς δοκοῦντας εἶναι ἐφόνευον) (3.81.4).

Thucydides' notable formulation underscores Eurymedon's glaring inaction — he simply 'remained' on the island — which results in the second stage of the massacre, as the democrats, who now feel entirely in control of the situation, are in no way restrained and people use politics as a mere pretext to settle their personal scores with their rivals. A seven-day generalised slaughter thus ensues, as things are simply left to take the course that they are wont to take in such situations, where death takes all possible forms and every conceivable atrocity is committed (πᾶσά τε ἰδέα κατέστη θανάτου, καὶ οἷον φιλεῖ ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ γίγνεσθαι, οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ ξυνέβη καὶ ἔτι περαιτέρω, 3.81.5).[43]

CONCLUSION

Thucydides' narrative of two major events in the history of the Peloponnesian War offers a glimpse of the impact that situations of crisis can have on interpersonal relations in the communities they affect. Such situations, as Thucydides explains both in his authorial voice

[42] See 3.81.2–3 with Wilson (1987), 90 who stresses that this first stage of the massacre happens during Nicostratus' presence and while the second Athenian squadron under Eurymedon is on its way to Corcyra, which further emboldens the democratic partisans as the introductory sentence to these events suggests (Κερκυραῖοι δὲ αἰσθόμενοι τάς τε Ἀττικὰς ναῦς προσπλεούσας τάς τε τῶν πολεμίων οἰχομένας […], 3.81.2). In this part of the narrative Nicostratus' name is no longer mentioned, a significant omission, perhaps, meant precisely to convey that things have gone out of Nicostratus' control.

[43] Wilson (1987), 104–105 is more disparaging in his evaluation of Nicostratus than Gomme (1956), 366 and charges Nicostratus with incompetence. Still, there is no doubt that Thucydides' narrative intends to convey a more positive image of Nicostratus than of Eurymedon, who simply stands by and allows the massacre to happen, cf. Hornblower (1991), 474, 476.

and through the speeches he ascribes to Pericles, put people's resolutions to the test and generate painful emotions such as anger and fear owing to the frustration of people's desires and designs, and the feeling of uncertainty they generate about the future. These negative emotions inevitably take a heavy toll on positive interpersonal relations that are the rule in everyday life, as people turn their focus on themselves and their own immediate concerns and desires in response to the forced changes in their daily circumstances. Whether through extreme self-concern, as in the case of the plague, or through extreme identification with an in-group, as in the case of *stasis*, situations of crisis make people less likely to think long-term, prosocially and with a view to the common good.

At the same time, Thucydides' account brings to the fore the challenges posed to leadership and individual leaders in such situations. Seeking an outlet for their negative emotions, people may turn against their fellow-citizens, especially those they perceive as out-groups by the criteria most salient to them at that particular time, but also against those influential individuals whom people consider responsible for the difficult situation they experience. A disheartening observation that emerges from Thucydides' description of the two events is that in situations of crisis persuasion ultimately fails and the negative emotions of people tend to prevail. This is all the more easy, of course, when leaders pander to people's desires and exacerbate people's emotions for their own benefit,[44] or when power-holders simply shrink from going against the prevailing mood of the crowd, as Eurymedon does in Corcyra. Yet, even in the case of leaders who *are* prepared to speak against people's wishes at the risk of rousing their anger (καὶ πρὸς ὀργήν τι ἀντειπεῖν, 2.65.8), as Pericles is said to be, it seems difficult to ameliorate people's emotions when people are *already* in a situation of crisis. Despite forewarning the Athenians at the beginning of the war and reminding them of the commitments they undertook when they voted for it, Pericles fails to soften the negative emotions of the Athenians towards him when the war crisis deepens with the emergence of the plague. It is only *after* they give vent to their anger against Pericles by deposing and fining him that the Athenians are able to reassess his administrative skills in a more coolheaded manner and re-entrust him with the affairs of the city. In Corcyra, on the other hand, Nicostratus' conciliatory proposals fail to assuage the fear and hatred of the democrats for their rivals, and, when the opportunity presents itself, people succumb more easily to their basest impulses and drives than taking the harder path of moderation, cooperation and trust.

[44] This is the category of politicians who conduct politics κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας φιλοτιμίας καὶ ἴδια κέρδη, as Thucydides puts it (2.65.7).

This proves the importance of pre-empting a crisis, rather than resigning oneself to reacting to one: self-evident as it may sound, the best way to deal with a crisis is to avoid getting in one in the first place. To achieve that, responsible leaders must work proactively in times of prosperity — when people are in a milder and more hopeful frame of mind — to implement all those measures and policies that allow them to avoid predictable crises and mitigate the negative effects of unpredictable ones.

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Crises of Trust in the *Anabases* of Xenophon and Arrian

Nikos Miltsios

INTRODUCTION[1]

The intertextual relationship between the *Anabasis* of Xenophon and that of Arrian has not received the scholarly attention one might expect, considering Arrian's well-known and frequently acknowledged debts to his Athenian predecessor, but also the established parallels between the two works, which underscore the necessity of investigating further aspects of Arrian's reception of Xenophon's *Anabasis* in his own narrative. I addressed this topic in a previous article, where I endeavoured to demonstrate how often Alexander's leadership behaviour in Arrian's *Anabasis* seems to evoke that of the character Xenophon in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.[2] This present paper may be seen as a complement to my earlier work, as I shall here expand my inquiry to explore how the two protagonists are depicted not in their handling of military operations and challenges, but in their responses to crises of trust within their interpersonal relationships. I shall begin by examining the central role of trust and deceit in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, also paying attention to how intriguing nuances in his treatment of these themes appear to be channelled and employed in Arrian's *Anabasis* in rather unexpected ways.[3]

1. TRUST AND DECEIT IN XENOPHON'S *ANABASIS*

The speech the character Xenophon addresses to Seuthes (7.7.20–47), in order to persuade him to pay the Greeks their due wages, particularly emphasises the issue of reliability and trust. This is Xenophon's final extended speech in the *Anabasis*, and this alone suggests the weighty significance of the themes and ideas it addresses in the work as a whole. Xenophon stresses to Seuthes that the power he has achieved makes it even more imperative that he does not appear untrustworthy (μηδαμῶς ἄπιστον σαυτὸν καταστῆσαι, 7.7.23). The words of untrustworthy people (τῶν μὲν ἀπίστων), he argues, are futile, weak and incapable of producing any result. On the contrary, those who serve the truth can often achieve more with their words than others

[1] All translations quoted in the text are my own. The text of Xenophon's *Anabasis* is cited from the edition of E.C. Marchant (Oxford, 1904), and that of Arrian's *Anabasis* from the edition of A.G. Roos and G. Wirth (Teubner, 1967).
[2] Miltsios (2022).
[3] The significance of the themes of trust and deceit in Xenophon's *Anabasis* has also been discussed by Hirsch (1985), 14–38.

can with force (7.7.24). Xenophon uses Seuthes' recent experience with the Ten Thousand as an argument, stating that they agreed to follow him not because he had offered them anything but because he was considered trustworthy (πιστευθεὶς ἀληθεύσειν) in what he promised them (7.7.25).

In developing his argument, Xenophon reminds Seuthes that it was due to his own reliability that he succeeded in conquering his kingdom, underscoring the magnitude of this achievement and how it held a value far dearer than wealth (7.7.26–27). Reliability, however, remains equally crucial for securing his conquests; otherwise, the loss of power now would prove more painful than if he had never experienced it at all (7.7.28). By cultivating the favour and trust of the soldiers, Seuthes would not only retain their loyal support but also attract new allies, as his reputation for reliability would encourage others to join him rather than discourage them through mistrust (δι' ἀπιστίαν, 7.7.30). This concept also appears at a pivotal moment in Arrian's *Anabasis,* during the council on the Hyphasis, where Coenus advises Alexander that by honouring the Macedonians' request to return home, he would later find new soldiers more willing to follow him on future campaigns, inspired by his treatment of the current forces (5.27.8).

The way in which reliability is linked to the practical benefits that accrue from it, in order to convince Seuthes to keep his promises, is not unfamiliar to Xenophon as a writer.[4] Further on in the same speech, when the character Xenophon emphasises to Seuthes how important moral values such as virtue, justice and bravery are for a ruler, he supports his argument by referencing their practical impact (7.7.41–42):

> But I, Seuthes, believe that nothing is a better or more splendid possession, especially for a ruler (ἀνδρὶ ἄλλως τε καὶ ἄρχοντι), than virtue, justice, and bravery. For whoever possesses them is rich, because he has many friends, and he is also rich because others desire his friendship. And when he prospers, he has people who will share in his joy, but if he falls on hard times, he will not lack those who will help him.

The idea of the benefit a leader can gain from his friends, in order to consolidate his power, also appears elsewhere in Xenophon. In the conclusion of *Hiero*, one of the most detailed developments on this subject, Simonides assures Hiero that, if he cares for the well-being of

[4] Cf. Hirsch (1985), 37: 'It is characteristic of Xenophon to justify the right mode of conduct in terms of both practical and ethical value'.

his friends, he will never be without those who will eagerly fight for his interests as if they were their own; in fact, he will also be safeguarding and increasing his own wealth, and his enemies will not be able to resist him (11.12–14).[5] As is generally the case in Xenophon's theory of leadership, the attitude and behaviours that a (potential) leader is called to adopt toward his subjects aim at the mutual benefit and the promotion of both parties' interests.[6]

Further on in his speech, the character Xenophon seeks to restore Seuthes' trust in his friendly intentions by using as an argument the loss of trust the Ten Thousand have in him, precisely because of the favour he showed him. He mentions that his companions accuse him of being bribed by Seuthes and of primarily serving Seuthes' interests (7.7.44). However, if they had seen any negative feelings toward Seuthes in him instead of goodwill, they wouldn't have blamed him for such things, 'since people believe that one should show favour to those from whom one receives gifts' (πάντας ἀνθρώπους νομίζειν εὔνοιαν δεῖν ἀποδείκνυσθαι τούτῳ παρ᾽οὗ ἂν δῶρά τις λαμβάνῃ, 7.7.45). Xenophon also emphasises his own role in Seuthes' success and expresses the belief that Seuthes will not tolerate being accused by those who have benefited him. Concluding his speech, he once again asks Seuthes to pay the soldiers their due wages, so that he can also restore his own credibility in the eyes of his companions, just as it was when the two of them first met (7.7.47).

The theme of trust and its betrayal is prominently highlighted in one of the most pivotal episodes of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, specifically the arrest and execution of the Greek generals and officers by Tissaphernes near the end of the second book, which constitutes a startling turning point in the narrative. For readers unfamiliar with the events, this development appears rather unexpected, even shocking, due in large part to Tissaphernes' manipulative rhetoric. By employing plausible and self-interested arguments, Tissaphernes indeed manages to give the impression of speaking truthfully. His claim, of course, that 'his ardent desire is to appear trustworthy to the Greeks' (ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως […] τὸ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐμὲ πιστὸν γενέσθαι, 2.5.22) seems rather exaggerated. Yet his bold insinuation at the conclusion of his speech — that with the Greeks at his side he might even aspire to the Persian throne — not only fails to cast doubt on his character but is rather perceived by his interlocutor as an indication of sincerity and trust.

For the more discerning readers, however, the preceding narrative contains signs hinting at the unpleasant turn the situation is poised to take. Tissaphernes' self-assured

[5] Cf. Flower (2012), 166 and Grethlein (2012), 35 for analysis of further resonances between the above passage and other parts of Xenophon's works.
[6] On Xenophon's theory of leadership, see Wood (1964), Due (1989), 147–206, Gray (2007), 1–14, Sandridge (2012), Tamiolaki (2012) and (forthcoming), Buxton (2017), Atack (2020).

statement in his initial address to the Greek generals, that he could successfully request permission from the Persian king to allow their safe return to Greece because he was the first to inform him (πρῶτος ἤγγειλα, 2.3.19) of Cyrus' plans to wage war against him, takes on a different significance when juxtaposed with the narrator's observation in the opening chapter of the *Anabasis* that it was Tissaphernes who had accused Cyrus before his brother, claiming he was plotting against him (διαβάλλει τὸν Κῦρον πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ὡς ἐπιβουλεύοι αὐτῷ, 1.1.3).[7] The descriptions in 2.4.24–25 of rival officials observing the Ten Thousand's movements as they attempt to return to Greece also carry a suspicious or menacing undertone, especially after the revelation of the Persians' earlier attempt to lure them into crossing the Tigris (2.4.15–23). Furthermore, not all the Greeks were as ready as Clearchus to trust Tissaphernes. The narrator repeatedly mentions the Ten Thousand's suspicions of their opponents' intentions (ὑφορῶντες τούτους […] ὑποψίαν παρεῖχεν, 2.4.10, ὑποψίαι μὲν ἦσαν, 2.5.1).[8] On two occasions, the appeals to Clearchus and the other generals not to place their trust in the king and Tissaphernes (2.4.3–4, 2.5.29) seem to echo the Herodotean motif of the wise advisor, who tries — though usually in vain — to dissuade his interlocutor from a disastrous course of action.[9] In this way, Clearchus is depicted as adamantly insisting (ἰσχυρῶς κατέτεινεν, 2.5.30) that the generals attend the meeting with Tissaphernes, despite his soldiers' warnings.[10]

The ominous function of these statements as forewarnings is only confirmed once the reader reaches the episode of Tissaphernes' betrayal and murder of the Greek officers. Until then, readers who are not already acquainted with the events, but are familiar with the conventions of ancient Greek historiography, may suspect or sense impending misfortune, without certainty as to what will unfold.[11] After the deception is revealed, however, certain phrases uttered by characters in the previous narrative — which may not initially seem to convey more than their surface meaning — also acquire a further layer of significance. Only then, for instance, does Clearchus' warning to Tissaphernes about the dire consequences of breaking an oath in 2.5.7 become more than a drastic deterrent:

[7] On Xenophon's use of the verb διαβάλλω, see Danzig (2022), 45 and n. 6, with further bibliography.
[8] Wencis (1977) examines ὑποψία as a structuring motif in Xenophon's *Anabasis.*
[9] On the wise adviser motif in Herodotus, see Bischoff (1932), Lattimore (1939), Immerwahr (1966), 72–75. On advisers in Xenophon's *Anabasis,* see Rood (2006).
[10] For a discussion of the nuances in Xenophon's portrayal of Clearchus, see Hirsch (1985), 28–29.
[11] On 'foreshadowing by convention', see de Jong (2007), 8.

> For, first and foremost, the oaths we have sworn to the gods prevent us from being enemies among ourselves. And whoever among us knowingly breaks his oath, I would never consider fortunate. For I do not know by what means or where one could escape from the gods' punishment, nor in what darkness one might flee, nor in what stronghold one might retreat.

The sombre way in which the consequences of perjury are depicted here is aimed not only at Tissaphernes but also at the readers of the *Anabasis,* enabling them to form an ethical judgment on the gravity of the transgression the Persians are about to commit. Likewise, Tissaphernes' emphatic assurance to the Greeks that they can trust the Persians' intention to assist them proves, in light of his deception, not only misleading but also highly revealing of his character and conduct (2.3.26):

> Now you can trust our promises (πιστὰ λαβεῖν) that we will make our land friendly (φιλίαν) to you and will lead you to Greece without deceit (ἀδόλως), providing you access to supplies.

The accumulation of concepts related to trust, friendship, sincerity, and lack of deceit in Tissaphernes' statement underscores his readiness to manipulate and violate these principles even more strikingly.[12] Furthermore, the masterful presentation of Tissaphernes' deception invites readers to approach with scepticism analogous instances in the text where such idealistic concepts and declarations are employed.

The obituary of Cyrus toward the end of the first book is a section of the *Anabasis* that has occasionally puzzled scholars.[13] The portrayal of Cyrus here is very positive and, at least explicitly, does not contain elements of criticism. In fact, Cyrus seems to embody all of Simonides' exhortations to Hiero in Xenophon's eponymous dialogue regarding the way a tyrant ought to govern to benefit both himself and his subjects. However, on a secondary level, Xenophon's remarks take on a different light when juxtaposed with descriptions of Cyrus' behaviour earlier in the narrative. For example, in the obituary, Cyrus' integrity is presented as exemplary. As noted in 1.9.7–8, he placed utmost importance on deceiving no one in any respect (μηδὲν ψεύδεσθαι), whether in treaties or other agreements. Because of this, he enjoyed the trust of the cities he ruled, individual people, and even his enemies, who felt assured that

[12] As Higgins (1977), 87 observes, Tissaphernes' speech 'is irony perfected to vengeance; his passion to be trusted by them, he assures the Greeks, is what has kept him from destroying them'.
[13] On the obituary of Cyrus, see Sage (1991), Braun (2004), 107–130, Flower (2012), 188–194.

once they reached a truce with him, they would not suffer any harm. Yet, the categorical nature of this statement appears problematic and is open to doubt when one considers that the true aim of Cyrus' campaign was to seize the throne from his brother, an objective he sought to conceal from the Ten Thousand through repeated deception. The emphasis on the harsh punishments he imposed on the unjust and criminal — particularly the detail that, as a result, one often encountered people along the roads deprived of feet, hands and eyes (1.9.13) — also seems intended to prompt reflection on whether this practice indicated a high sense of justice on his part or rather a lack of humanity, restraint and moderation.

The preceding narrative presents instances of punishment imposed by Cyrus. In 1.2.20, it is noted that Cyrus executes two Persian officials on charges of plotting against his life. In 1.6, a detailed account follows of the episode involving the betrayal, arrest and execution of the Persian noble Orontas, where the themes of trust and deception are prominently featured. Orontas attempts to deceive Cyrus through false promises, secretly planning to recruit horsemen and defect to Artaxerxes. To this end, he composes a letter reminding the king of their former friendship and loyalty (τῆς πρόσθεν φιλίας […] καὶ πίστεως, 1.6.3) and entrusts its delivery to a man he considers loyal (πιστῷ ἀνδρί, ὡς ᾤετο, 1.6.3). However, this man delivers the letter to Cyrus, leading to Orontas' arrest, trial, condemnation to death and eventual execution in the tent of Cyrus' most faithful (πιστοτάτου, 1.6.11) attendant.

It is an episode that invites a remarkably wide range of interpretations. The detailed recounting of how Orontas had, even in the past, acted against Cyrus by violating the mutual assurances of trust and friendship they had exchanged — and yet managed to secure Cyrus' forgiveness without facing punishment — might be intended to highlight Cyrus' magnanimity and leniency.[14] However, these details also cast Cyrus' readiness to accept Orontas' proposal (τῷ δὲ Κύρῳ ἀκούσαντι ταῦτα ἐδόκει ὠφέλιμα εἶναι, 1.6.2), despite his prior experiences with the man, as somewhat problematic, creating an ironic tension between the narrative of Cyrus' actions and his obituary, where it is observed, among other things, that he did not allow himself to be deceived by the wrongdoers and the unjust (1.9.13). Even more disturbing is the sense imparted by the description of Orontas' fate from the moment he enters the tent of Artapates to be executed (1.6.11):

[14] Cf. Hirsch (1985), 20: 'The episode also displays the leniency of Cyrus, who forgave the treachery of Orontas on several previous occasions'.

> From then on, no one ever saw Orontas, neither alive nor dead, nor did anyone recount the manner of his execution; others made various speculations; and no one ever saw his grave.

Xenophon mentions Orontas again in Cyrus' obituary, offering as evidence of Cyrus' popularity the observation that no one under his authority ever defected to the King, except for Orontas, who attempted it (πλὴν Ὀρόντας ἐπεχείρησε), whereas many deserted the King for Cyrus instead (1.9.29). Michael Flower perceptively remarks that, when combined with the aforementioned account of the mystery surrounding Orontas' execution, this statement by Xenophon 'takes on an eerie irony', compellingly implying that, in reality, no one ever truly *managed* to leave Cyrus.[15]

It is quite interesting that a similar effect is encountered in Arrian's account of the conspiracy of Philotas in his *Anabasis* (3.26–27). As in the case of Orontas, here too the theme of trust and its loss is prominently featured. In this instance, however, one gains an even stronger impression that the described events are primarily aimed at revealing problematic traits that had gradually begun to manifest in the main character's behaviour. Like Orontas, Philotas undergoes a trial and is condemned to death, even though this was not the first time incriminating information against him had reached Alexander. Previously, Alexander disregarded these accusations 'because of their longstanding friendship, his respect for Parmenion, Philotas' father, and his trust in Philotas himself' (οὐ μέντοι πιστή γε ἐφάνη τῆς τε φιλίας τῆς πάλαι εἵνεκα καὶ τῆς ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐν Παρμενίωνά τε τὸν πατέρα τὸν Φιλώτα τιμῆς καὶ ἐς αὐτὸν Φιλώταν πίστεως, 3.26.1). Now, however, Alexander decides to execute not only Philotas but also Parmenion, reasoning that, on the one hand, it did not seem credible (οὐ πιστὸν ἐδόκει) that Parmenion would not have been involved in the conspiracy when his son was plotting against him, and on the other, that even if Parmenion had not participated, he would now be dangerous, especially after his son's execution, due to the influence he wielded within the army (3.26.4). Arrian also recounts the case of Amyntas and his brothers, who were similarly accused of participating in the conspiracy 'because of their loyalty and friendship toward Philotas' (κατὰ πίστιν τε καὶ ἑταιρίαν τὴν Φιλώτα, 3.27.1). Amyntas was tried and acquitted; yet shortly thereafter, during a siege, he was struck by an arrow and died from his wound (3.27.2–3). Commenting on Amyntas' death, Arrian notes that his acquittal served him only in that he died with his reputation restored (3.27.3). This observation seems intended to

[15] Flower (2012), 194.

raise questions about whether Amyntas may have been deliberately exposed to danger or even regarding the origin of the arrow itself.[16] As Xenophon does in the case of Orontas, so too does Arrian appear here to imply more than he explicitly states. And, most importantly, both writers masterfully convey the atmosphere of suspicion from the realm of action into that of the reader's experience.

2. REBUILDING TRUST IN THE *ANABASES:* XENOPHON AND ALEXANDER

In both *Anabases*, the main characters, upon successfully completing the most demanding part of their enterprises, are shown to experience crises in their relationships with their companions. Xenophon faces the mistrust of the Ten Thousand, who question his sincerity and integrity, even accusing him of accepting bribes. Alexander receives complaints and grievances from the Macedonians regarding his adoption of barbarian customs and behaviours, as well as their perception that he now favoured the Persians over them. Xenophon and Alexander respond to the complaints and accusations of their companions with speeches that display striking similarities in terms of overall spirit and arguments, as well as the presence of specific ideas and motifs, which clearly suggest the intertextual relationship between the two works.[17] Both protagonists seek to refute the accusations of their companions as blatantly unjust and unfounded, and to that end, they describe the adverse situations they had to face and the positive outcomes that resulted from their sound decisions and effective actions, particularly emphasising their personal involvement in the shared efforts and hardships. At the same time, they make sure not to leave unanswered any thorny issues or lingering questions that had cast doubt on their credibility in the eyes of their companions.

Xenophon reminds the soldiers that, before allying with Seuthes, they were out in the countryside in the heart of the winter, facing a great shortage of supplies and money (7.6.24). Furthermore, their forces consisted solely of infantry, while their opponents possessed numerous cavalries and peltasts, rendering them unable to pursue their enemies and, conversely, leaving them under constant pressure (7.6.25–26). Given these circumstances, he points out that if he had secured them an alliance with Seuthes, who had the forces they so desperately needed, even without salary, they should consider themselves fortunate (7.6.27). Indeed, in cooperation with Seuthes, the soldiers spent the winter with sufficient supplies and

[16] Cf. Heckel (1992), 178: 'Suspicions that he (sc. Amyntas) was deliberately exposed to danger can neither be disproved nor proved'.
[17] Xen. *Anab.* 7.6.11–38 and Arr. *Anab.* 7.9–10. A number of striking parallels between the two texts have already been noted by Bosworth (1988), 104 and nn. 45–48.

without fearing their opponents (7.6.28–29). In this way, to the achievements they had gained against the barbarians in Asia, they were able to add the glory of their victories in Thrace (7.6.32). Xenophon emphasises that the Greeks did not lose any comrades during their operations in the service of Seuthes (οὔτε ἄνδρας ἐπείδετε ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντας οὔτε ζῶντας ἀπεβάλετε, 7.6.31).

The last point, slightly altered, seems to be used as an argument by Alexander to his companions in Arrian's *Anabasis* too. Alexander does not claim, of course, that none of his soldiers died during the campaign, but that under his leadership none of them fell in battle while retreating to save their own life (οὐ γάρ τίς γε φεύγων ὑμῶν ἐτελεύτα ἐμοῦ ἄγοντος, 7.10.4). In Alexander's speech, the improvement in the Macedonians' situation is described in detail and in two stages. Alexander first highlights the actions of his father, Philip II, by which he freed the Macedonians from the constant fear of their neighbours, increased their economic and military power and made them rulers of others and arbiters of Greek affairs (7.9.2–5).[18] Then, he moves on to his own achievements, presenting himself as a worthy successor of similar and even greater deeds (μικρὰ δὲ ὥς γε δὴ πρὸς τὰ ἡμέτερα ξυμβαλεῖν, 7.9.6). While in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the operations of the Ten Thousand against the barbarians in Asia are simply referred to as a glorious achievement, magnified by the glory of the subsequent successes in Thrace, in Arrian's *Anabasis*, Alexander's accomplishments are presented in the form of a detailed list of the benefits and regions that the Macedonians have conquered thanks to his strategic prowess (7.9.7–8):

> After I defeated Darius' satraps with my cavalry, I added all of Ionia to your dominion, all of Aeolis, Phrygia, and Lydia [...] Coele-Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia are your possessions; Babylon, Bactria, and Susa are yours; the wealth of the Lydians, the treasures of the Persians, the goods of the Indians, and the outer sea are yours. You are satraps, you are generals, you are brigadiers.

As is frequently observable, patterns of Xenophon's *Anabasis* are encountered in Arrian's *Anabasis* in a more developed and enriched form. This may well be intended to reflect the uniqueness and unparalleled strategic abilities of Alexander, alongside the numerous modifications that these motifs underwent during their adaptation in the various leadership narratives that were produced between the two works.

[18] On this passage, see Bosworth (1988), 108–112, who offers a critical discussion of the historical inconsistencies and exaggerations in Arrian's account of Philip's achievements.

The second common idea between the speeches of Xenophon and Alexander is the emphasis on the personal participation of both men in the efforts, hardships and struggles of their companions. In this case as well, Xenophon's version is shorter and less elaborated. Xenophon conveys his message by reminding his companions that many times he stayed awake on their behalf and that many times he toiled and faced danger alongside them (πολλὰ μὲν δὴ πρὸ ὑμῶν ἀγρυπνήσαντα, πολλὰ δὲ σὺν ὑμῖν πονήσαντα καὶ κινδυνεύσαντα, 7.6.36). The motif of the general who stays awake for his soldiers so they can sleep soundly is also employed by Alexander (προαγρυπνῶν δὲ ὑμῶν οἶδα, ὡς καθεύδειν ἔχοιτε ὑμεῖς, 7.9.9). However, Alexander's participation in the common struggles is further emphasised through a long list of the wounds he received from various types of weapons on different parts of his body during military operations. Alexander challenges anyone who believes they have fought harder than he has to show their scars on their bare body and then compare them (7.10.2):

> There is no part of my body, at least in the front, that remains unscathed, nor is there a weapon, whether for hand-to-hand combat or those thrown from a distance, that has not marked me; I have been struck by swords, arrows, and siege engines; I have been struck many times by stones and by wooden weapons for your sake, for your glory, and for your wealth, while leading you to victory through all the lands, seas, rivers, mountains, and plains.

Despite the evident difference in the length and rhetorical dramatisation of the two versions, their common point lies, unmistakably, in the efforts of both speakers to show that all the hardships and sufferings they endured were for the sake of their companions.

The emphasis on the constant care exhibited by Xenophon and Alexander for the needs of their companions paves the way for the next common theme of their speeches: the protest against the ingratitude they receive from those whom they have benefited. Xenophon points out to the soldiers that now, when they are safe and free to do as they wish, they discuss his execution, whereas, when they found themselves in desperate circumstances, they called him 'father' and promised to always remember him as a benefactor (7.6.37–38). Alexander recounts a series of benefactions he bestowed upon his comrades and their families, followed by an extensive list of the nations and territories he conquered (7.10.3–7), in order to show them the kind of king they are abandoning, 'leaving him to be guarded by the vanquished barbarians' (παραδόντες φυλάσσειν τοῖς νενικημένοις βαρβάροις, 7.10.7). It is noteworthy, moreover, that both Xenophon and Alexander conclude their speeches in the same manner, warning their

companions that their ingratitude is not only morally troubling but also practically harmful, as it is going to brand them as unjust and wicked in the eyes of those who will learn of their behaviour:

> Yet those who have now come to take up your leadership are not so ungrateful either; thus, as I believe, neither will they judge you as the best with such behaviour toward me (7.6.38).
>
> When you say these things, perhaps you will gain great renown among men, and certainly you will appear pious before the gods. So, depart! (7.10.7).

Finally, the fourth theme shared by the two speeches is the orators' attempt to refute the accusations that were hovering over them. Specifically, Xenophon responds to the allegation that he was bribed by Seuthes in order to persuade the soldiers to fight on his side, while Alexander addresses the complaints of his companions that he had adopted a luxurious lifestyle, which differed from that of the Macedonians and more closely resembled that of the Persian kings. However, unlike what we saw with the previous themes, in this case Xenophon's discussion is considerably more detailed and persistent than Alexander's.[19] Xenophon indeed reflects on the beginning of the interactions between Seuthes and the Ten Thousand, reminding them that the decision to fight alongside him was a collective one (7.6.12–14). He then presents a series of logical arguments to convince his comrades that not only was he not bribed by Seuthes, who had withheld their pay, but that he didn't even receive as much as some of them did. He swears twice by the gods that he is telling the truth, calls Seuthes himself as a witness, and emphasises that, if he was ultimately deceived in placing his trust in Seuthes, his conscience remains untroubled, and he harbours no sense of shame. He even lends a moral justification to his stance (7.6.21):

> Yes, by Zeus, I would be ashamed if he were an enemy and deceived me; however, it seems to me that it is a greater shame for a friend to deceive you than for you to be deceived.[20]

[19] See Grethlein (2012), 33–35 for an analysis of the narrative strategies employed in this section of the *Anabasis* to encourage a positive evaluation of Xenophon.
[20] On friendship in Xenophon, see Gray (2011), 291–329, Buxton (2017), Demont (2022).

Alexander, on the other hand, limits himself to responding to the accusation of living in luxury by pointing out that, apart from the symbols of royal authority, he possesses nothing of his own, as all wealth and acquisitions are destined for his companions, and that his diet is even simpler than that of some of them (7.9.9).[21]

The difference in the space allocated in the two speeches to the orators' efforts to respond to the accusations against them is largely related to the gravity of the stakes in each case. Xenophon faces the charge of bribery, which could lead to his condemnation to death by stoning,[22] while Alexander seeks to appease the dissatisfaction and reactions of the Macedonians regarding the disrespect they felt they had received from him. Moreover, it reflects the distinct positions of the two figures within their respective communities. Xenophon, although he often assumed an undisputed leadership role among the Ten Thousand during their adventures, remained one of them. Alexander, on the other hand, despite the atmosphere of equality that characterised his relationship with his companions, was their king.[23] Thus, while Alexander aims to demonstrate to the Macedonians that they are continuously the object of his interest and care, Xenophon is primarily concerned with regaining his companions' lost trust in his integrity and reliability.

It is noteworthy that, just as in his speech to Seuthes, so here too, Xenophon seeks to restore his audience's confidence in his honesty toward them by highlighting the difficulties that have emerged in his relations with a third party — in this case, Seuthes — precisely because of the way in which he has been favouring their interests:

> And when Seuthes began to retract the agreements regarding the wages he promised, if I were to praise him, you would rightly accuse and hate me; but if in the past I was his best friend among all and now I am in the most disagreement with him, how is it possible that, while I take your side instead of Seuthes, I should justly be accused by you concerning the matters I am at odds with him? (7.6.15).
>
> […] and they accused me of being more interested in your affairs going well than in theirs; they even said that I have accepted gifts from you. Yet, do you think they accuse me of having received these gifts from you because they perceived

[21] On the luxurious lifestyle of Alexander's soldiers, cf. Plut. *Alex.* 40.1, 41.1, Ael. *VH* 9.3.
[22] On the seriousness of the accusation, see Azoulay (2004), 293 and n. 12.
[23] On the traditional Macedonian notion of the king as *primus inter pares,* see Ellis (1976), 24, Carney (1983).

> bad intentions on my part towards you or because they saw me showing great preference for you? (7.7.44–45).

Therefore, the character Xenophon in both instances appears to employ the crisis that has arisen in his relationship with one side as a means to resolve the crisis in his relationship with the other. Both of his speeches, much like that of Alexander at Opis, ultimately achieve their intended goal, confirming the remarkable abilities of both men in the handling of crises, not only in the realm of military operations but also on the level of interpersonal relations.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion has further illuminated the close relationship and affinity between the *Anabases* of Xenophon and Arrian, a connection often overlooked, partly due to Arrian's explicit statement that his principal sources for Alexander's campaign were Ptolemy of Lagus and Aristobulus of Cassandreia (1. *Praef.* 1). While Arrian's familiarity with Xenophon's *Anabasis* may have inclined him, perhaps unconsciously, to reproduce certain aspects of his predecessor's approach, I would suggest that many of the passages we examined point more clearly to Arrian's deliberate adaptation of themes, motifs and techniques from the Xenophontic *Anabasis* in his own work. At this juncture, it may be worthwhile to recall Polybius, who, in his attempt to distinguish between the causes, pretexts, and beginnings of wars, mentions that the campaign of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand — during which they traversed all of Asia without any barbarian daring to confront them — was the initial cause of the war between the Macedonians and the Persians (3.6.9–10). Arrian likely shares this perspective, and in recounting Alexander's feats in the East, he often highlights his intertextual dialogue with his most admired predecessor's account of the adventures of the character Xenophon and the Ten Thousand across the same regions.

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PART III: Love Crises in Roman and Hellenistic Literature

The Crisis between Aeneas and Dido in *Aeneid* IV

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INTRODUCTION[1]

As it has been observed, conflict in the 4th book of the *Aeneid* occurs on various levels.[2] On a cosmic level, there is conflict between Fate and the Gods, notably Juno, who opposes the fulfilment of *fatum*. On a heroic level, conflict develops between the decisions of the main protagonists, Dido and Aeneas. On a psychological level, there are clear indications of internal conflict in the minds of the heroic figures themselves. And finally, on a historical level, the conflict which would later develop between Rome and Carthage is symbolically foreshadowed.[3]

Building on these observations, this paper will analyse the actions and responses of the two central heroes in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, as they engage in a romantic relationship in constant conflict of moral, political and social dimensions. By examining each hero's attitude within this context, I will compare their contrasting reactions to their love crisis, which I believe reveal a deeper ideological conflict between emotion and duty, a tension central to Virgil's epic poem. The narrative of Dido and Aeneas' relationship is here divided into chapters, following the linear progression of the plot itself.

1. LOVE AS CRISIS: THE INCEPTION OF THE DIDO–AENEAS RELATIONSHIP

From its inception, the relationship between Aeneas and Dido in the *Aeneid* is marked by instability. It is not a destined union but a deviation from Aeneas' divinely appointed mission (*fatum*) to found a new homeland for the Trojan people in Italy. His bond with Dido is therefore from its nature temporary and subject to the demands of duty.

Aeneas' arrival in Carthage, caused by a divinely orchestrated storm,[4] sets the relationship under the influence of divine intervention from start. Jupiter also intervenes, before

[1] All citations of the original text and all translations are taken from Fairclough (1916); translations are either unedited or slightly modified, unless otherwise stated.
[2] Swanepoel (1995), 33–34.
[3] Ahl (2018) argues that Vergil's *Aeneid* employs a non-linear narrative, merging different historical eras and reinterpreting traditional myths to create a complex, anachronistic portrayal of Italy's history and characters.
[4] There are strong parallels between Odysseus's journey from Troy to Ithaca and Aeneas' trip, particularly in their encounters with unfamiliar lands. Just as Odysseus is delayed by figures like Calypso and Nausicaa, Aeneas faces a similar threat in his encounter with Dido, who could become an obstacle to his divine mission. See Berry (2014), 200.

Aeneas' arrival, to ensure Dido's friendly attitude towards the Trojans (1.299–303). Although both characters are initially drawn to each other's beauty, the narrator gives no indication of deep emotional attachment, at least on Aeneas' part.[5] Dido's love, by contrast, is explicitly imposed by external forces. In Book 1, Venus, concerned for Aeneas' safety, inflicts passion into Dido by having Cupid disguise himself as Ascanius and 'breathe into her a hidden fire and beguile her with poison' (*occultum inspires ignem fallasque veneno*, 1.688). There is no indication whether or not Aeneas is similarly affected at this point.[6] Later, having listened to Aeneas' account of his sufferings in war, she becomes emotionally absorbed in his story. With the end of his narrative and of Book 3, Dido's passion has developed into an affliction that resembles illness.

Book 4 opens with Dido in a state of acute emotional crisis. Her love for Aeneas is immediately depicted as torment. Virgil uses the language of illness and fire to capture her descent: she is 'smitten by a grievous love-pang' (*gravi saucia cura*, 4.1), burning with a 'fire unseen' (*caeco igni*, 4.2). Her mental state is unstable, as she speaks to her sister 'much distraught' (*male sana*, 4.5). She is miserably consumed by an inner flame (*flamma interea*, 4.67–68, *uritur*, 4.69).[7]

At first, it seems that Aeneas does not feel the same way. In a simile by the narrator (4.68–73), we see a Cretan shepherd having wounded a deer with an arrow, without realising it (*nescius*, 4.72). The deer represents Dido 'wounded' by love, and the Cretan shepherd symbolises Aeneas.[8] Aeneas' representation as *nescius* in the metaphor could mean that he is not aware of the harm he is doing.[9] Also, the fact that he assumes the role of the hunter and

[5] Dido is paralleled to Diana in *Aen*. 1.496–504. As Wilhelm [(1987), 44–45] notices, when Venus appears to Aeneas disguised as Diana, it sets the stage for the emotional and symbolic confusion that follows, specifically in how we see Dido. The simile that later compares Dido to Diana is not just about grace or leadership; it reflects her inner struggle. Like the virgin goddess, Dido tries to remain untouched, loyal to her dead husband, and in control. But beneath that composed, almost divine exterior, she is vulnerable. Her Diana-like image becomes a mask hiding a deep personal crisis.

[6] According to Berry (2014), he is not. Berry argues that the commonly accepted view that Aeneas loves Dido is based on uncertain evidence and ambiguous phrasing in only a few verses [(2014), especially p. 213]. However, this paper does not adopt his interpretation; instead, it understands Aeneas' emotional crisis as one driven by a genuine — though conflicted — love, torn between personal desire and public duty, rather than by mere pity for a woman whose love goes unreturned. See Zanker (2023), 64 n. 37, who also finds Berry's argument problematic due to its lack of consideration of '*Aen*. 4.259–264, where Mercury comes across Aeneas actively helping to found Carthage dressed in extravagant Tyrian finery, a gift from Dido'.

[7] This metaphorical representation of love as a kind of sickness or wound has a strong precedent in earlier elegiac poetry, particularly in Sappho 31 and Catullus 51, where love is portrayed as overpowering and physically devastating.

[8] On the simile see Thornton (1996), 390–391, who supports that the purpose of this scene is to enhance the sympathy we feel both for Dido and for Aeneas.

[9] According to *OLD*, *nescius* as used in the syntax of the verse under discussion, could only mean 'now knowing, ignorant, unaware'. See *OLD* s.v. *nescius*.

Dido the role of the victim symbolically suggests that he is not as affected as she is. In any case, we only hear of Dido's feelings at this point, and they are portrayed as an illness, drawing her in an unfair 'battle'. Dido's speech to her sister Anna, in which she passionately declares her love, recalls Aeneas' choice of words in the account of Troy's fall, thereby creating a parallel of her love with the devastation of war.[10]

The following verses mark the first clear illustration of Dido's internal conflict between loyalty to her vows to her late husband, Sychaeus, and the involuntary passion imposed upon her. She stands at a crossroads: a typical *κρίσις*, in the Greek sense.[11] She speaks to her sister, torn between the memory of Sychaeus and her passion for Aeneas (4.24–30):

> 'But rather, I would pray, may earth yawn for me to its depths,
> or may the Almighty Father hurl me with his bolt to the shades —
> the pale shades and abysmal night in Erebus —
> before, Shame, I violate you or break your laws!
> He who first linked me to himself has taken away my heart;
> may he keep it with him, and guard it in the grave!'
> So saying, she filled her breast with upwelling tears.

She initially expresses a desire to remain faithful to her vows (4.24–27), yet her language betrays her uncertainty.[12] Her plea that Sychaeus may have her even in death (4.28) is followed by tears (4.30), suggesting that she subconsciously yields to her passion for Aeneas, even if she insists on restraint. Dido experiences a conflict between her intention to remain faithful and her involuntary love for Aeneas, which is revealed in her tears. This is also suggested in the narrator's comment about Anna's intervention 'loosening the bonds of shame' (*solvit pudorem*, 4.55), suggesting that it enabled Dido to rationalise the decision she already wanted to make.

Before moving on, a crucial question should be addressed, concerning the extent of Dido's agency. Does Venus' earlier intervention (1.688) deprive her of responsibility, or does she still act by choice? The extent of personal agency is one of the most complex issues in the *Aeneid*.[13] While Dido's feelings are divinely inspired, her *actions* appear less predetermined. Specifically, Cupid instigates love in the heroine but does not compel her to act on that love.

[10] Bono (1987), 112–113.
[11] Chaniotis (2026).
[12] Austin (1955), 34.
[13] See Zanker (2023) for an extensive analysis of this matter in the *Aeneid*, and especially Chapters 2 and 3 in relation to this paper.

Dido could have remained silent, preserving her loyalty to Sychaeus and allowing Aeneas to fulfil his destiny. Instead, she consciously embraces her passion, after having received favourable omens from her sacrifices (4.56–68). In this respect, she retains a degree of agency within the framework of divine influence.[14]

2. THE POLITICAL CRISIS

The initial effects of Dido's passion for Aeneas extend beyond her private experience to the civic sphere, as works in Carthage are 'broken off' (*pendent opera interrupta*, 4.85–89). It is only after Dido's love for Aeneas starts affecting Carthage that the two goddesses, Juno and Venus, conspire to formalise the two heroes' union with marriage. This progression also supports the earlier argument concerning *fatum* and Dido's agency: it is her choice that provokes Juno's intervention and sets in motion the following episodes.[15] Ultimately, the goddesses reach a compromise, appearing to consent to the marriage, though each pursues her own agenda: Juno seeks to bind Aeneas to Carthage to impede his heroic fate, while Venus wants Juno's favourite to suffer (4.90–128).[16]

The ceremony simultaneously displays the greatness of the union and its problematic nature. Both heroes are in the fullness of their youth: Dido is depicted in terms evoking Diana (4.133–137), and Aeneas is likened to Apollo (4.138–150). However, Virgil quickly transitions from the celebratory imagery of the lovers to the ominous tone of the following scene: a 'turmoil of a wild uproar' (*magno murmure*, 4.160),[17] 'rain mingled with hail' (*commixta grandine nimbus*, 4.161) and 'torrents rush down from the heights' (*ruunt de montibus amnes*, 4.164). The storm and rain lead Aeneas and Dido to seek shelter into the same cave; then, Juno initiates the ritual.

The ritual is formally correct but simultaneously unsettling.[18] Instead of singing, the nymphs howl (*nymphae ululārunt*, 4.168); rather than wedding torches, storms flash (*fulsere ignes*, 4.167), and, instead of a gathered crowd, the wind serves as the legal witness (*conscius*

[14] As supported by Williams (1972), 210: 'It would be a great mistake to think of Dido as powerless to resist the divine plan; a set of circumstances encompass her which she can accept or resist. The circumstances which have arisen are not her responsibility, but her reaction to them is. At each point in the narrative the decision is hers'.
[15] As Sternberg [(2006), 286–287] states, the use of the word *limen* by Vergil, in the context of her marriage to Aeneas (*ad limina,* 4.130), emphasises the sense of a decision that Dido must make, while the crossing of that *limen* depicts the start of a bigger crisis.
[16] See Zanker (2023), 80–99 for the representations of Juno and Venus as opponents and proponents of the Stoic World Fate.
[17] The vocabulary used here recalls *Aen*. 1.120–130, the storm that causes Aeneas' ship to reach the shore of Carthage.
[18] Austin (1955), xi.

aether conubiis, 4.167–168).[19] The verb *ululārunt* is particularly well chosen. Although it can refer to ritual cries, it more often denotes howls of grief or horror; its use marks the ritual as ill-omened.[20] As Austin notes in his commentary on verse 4.169, Virgil makes it plain that all the succeeding misery of both Dido and Aeneas stems from the way in which both regarded the events of this critical day: neither Dido nor Aeneas fully grasped the implications of what had occurred, nor did they share a common understanding of what the event signified.[21]

The 'marriage' thus immediately triggers a political crisis. *Fama* — rumour deified — circulates rumours of how both heroes have allowed passion to take over their duty; Aeneas has forgotten his divinely ordered mission and Dido has neglected her role as queen.[22] Their indulgence in luxury (*hiemem inter se luxu fovere*, 4.193) has made them forget their kingdoms (*regnorum immemores*) and be captivated by a shameful passion (*turpique cupidine captos*, 4.194). Their union violates two areas of responsibility: first, Aeneas fails to uphold his obligation to fulfil fate's command, and second, Dido abandons her public role, leaving Carthage vulnerable. These rumours create real-world consequences leading to a political crisis, most notably the threat posed by Iarbas, whose jealousy and anger create further instability (4.198–218).

3. AENEAS' DREAM

The 'marriage' between Dido and Aeneas, while ceremonially correct, is never truly approved by the higher order that governs the *Aeneid*. Though Juno and Venus conspire to unite the heroes for their own purposes, their scheme is only temporary. At the highest level of the divine hierarchy, Jupiter, whose will aligns with *fatum*, does not approve of this union. As the mouthpiece of destiny,[23] Jupiter cannot allow Aeneas to be diverted from his mission to found a new Trojan line in Italy. Thus, he sends his messenger to intervene.

Mercury's descent recalls a similar moment in Homer's *Odyssey*, when Hermes is dispatched to liberate Odysseus from Calypso's island and restore him to his journey home (*Od*. 5.85–147). In this Virgilian echo, Aeneas has likewise lingered too long in an 'illusory paradise'. Mercury reproaches him for indulging in luxury and neglecting his responsibilities

[19] On the intentional ambiguity of the ceremony, see Bird (2000), 3 with bibliography and Agnell (2004), 105–106.
[20] See *OLD* s.v. *ululo*, 2c and 2a respectively.
[21] Austin (1955), 69.
[22] This is actually a 'stock characteristic' of lovers in Roman elegy, as well as the loss of *fama* that will follow. See Saylor (1986), 74–75.
[23] See Zanker (2023), Chapter 3.2 on Jupiter as a mouthpiece of the Stoic World Fate.

(4.267). Most notably, Aeneas is reminded of his obligations not only to Fate, but to his son Ascanius, whose future kingdom depends upon Aeneas' immediate action (4.275–276). The divine message is clear: his personal desires must be sacrificed for the sake of history.

This divine intervention causes Aeneas' internal crisis. While Dido's emotional turmoil had already consumed her, now it is Aeneas' turn to face a moral and psychological dilemma. The text marks this moment with physical and emotional shock: 'aghast at the sight, he was struck dumb; his hair stood up in terror and the voice choked in his throat' (*aspectu obmutuit amens arrectaeque horrore comae et vox faucibus haesit*, 4.279–280). Aeneas is struck and overcome with fear, which is expressed physically as well as psychologically. He understands the seriousness of the gods' command, and he does not question its legitimacy. However, he does not proceed to an automatic submission to Fate. Aeneas is clearly torn between his desire and his duty. The phrase *ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras* ('he burns to flee away and quit that pleasant land', 4.281) reveals his internal conflict: he burns to leave, but the land he must abandon is 'sweet'. The word *dulcis* offers a rare glimpse into Aeneas' true feelings, since it is not Carthage as a strategic location but the emotional weight of his bond with Dido that makes the land 'sweet' and his departure painful.[24]

Aeneas' mental state is expressed vividly. He is found in a state of confusion (*heu quid agat?,* 'Ah, what to do?', 4.283), not only struggling with the demands of fate but also with his own conscience and emotions. What makes his crisis so intense is his evident concern for Dido's feelings. He searches for the right approach: 'With what speech now dare he approach the frenzied queen?' (*quo nunc reginam ambire furentem audeat adfatu?*, 4.284). This question shows his awareness of the pain his departure will trigger, as well as his fear of causing her anger or despair. The consciousness that his duty to leave is also a betrayal of the trust for Dido is painful to him.

Virgil conveys this paralysis of mind through an image of movement: *animum nunc huc celerem nunc dividit illuc in partisque rapit varias perque omnia versat* ('he casts his swift mind this way and that, takes it in different directions and considers every possibility', 4.285–286). Aeneas is not literally in motion, instead he is caught inside the painful 'space' of decision-making.[25] This moment of hesitation perfectly illustrates a crisis in the Greek sense

[24] Austin (1955), 92: 'Aeneas at once recognises its dictates, and he does not question obedience. But his cruel dilemma is also clear. He loves Dido (291), Carthage is sweet to him (281), and although he knows from the first that he must and will go, his chief concern is to soften the blow that is to fall on Dido'. See also Lelièvre (1997), where the metrics and the literary style of Aeneas' stunned reaction are examined and it is argued that he genuinely loves Dido in return.

[25] This reminds us of Dido's similar situation, where she had to decide between submission to Sychaeus' memory or to act on her passion with Aeneas. See Sternberg (2006), 286–287.

once again: a crucial turning point, where the hero must choose between action and inaction, between the demands of emotion and of duty. In sum, one could support that the depth of Aeneas' care for Dido makes the reader empathise with him. His struggle is not simply about obeying the gods; it is about how to softly let down someone he loves and who in turn loves him. His hesitation shows that he does not take this lightly; this is a man who carries the weight of destiny and the weight of compassion simultaneously.

Although Aeneas' fate is predetermined by Jupiter's decree, his hesitation suggests that the execution of fate allows some liberty to human agents.[26] His anxiety and concern for Dido's reaction imply that, within the limits of *fatum*, the poem preserves a space for limited choice. In this respect, Aeneas' decision to depart does not contradict his humanity, but it reveals a kind of heroism by the submission to divine obligation, even if personal desire commands differently.[27] Although struggling emotionally, he orders the secret preparation of ships and begins to plan how to best break the news to Dido (4.288–295).

4. DIDO'S PERSONAL CRISIS

From Dido's perspective, Aeneas' decision to leave Carthage secretly is perceived as a betrayal: 'the queen divined his guile' (*regina dolos praesensit*, 4.296–297). This misunderstanding ignites her anger, throwing her into an emotional crisis. Without waiting for any explanation, she immediately loses all self-control, and her grief and fury erupt violently. Virgil vividly portrays her as helpless and consumed by rage (*saevit inops animi incensa*, 4.300) and frantically roaming the city in a state of madness and despair (*totamque per urbem bacchatur*, 4.301). This raw emotional outburst sharply contrasts with Aeneas' duty-bound behaviour, highlighting the fundamental difference between their characters.

As Giusti notes, Aeneas brings with him a Dionysiac crisis that unsettles Carthage at every level: political, emotional, and cultural.[28] His arrival mirrors that of Bacchus in Euripides' *Bacchae*, a foreign god whose presence leads to the damage of a city and the downfall of its ruler, as Dido takes on the wild energy of the Maenads too. Indeed, Virgil powerfully captures her descent into emotional chaos, as she rages, similar to a Bacchant stirred by divine frenzy

[26] While he is commanded by gods, he hesitates on what to do; he does not immediately and blindly prepare his ships to depart. See Nash (2017), 184–194 who argues that Aeneas here is not Stoically exercising *ratio*.
[27] According to Austin [(1955), 92], this is the pivotal contrast between Aeneas and Dido: she silences her inner voice of conscience and gives in wholly to desire, while he, though deeply conflicted, obeys the call of destiny.
[28] Giusti (2016), 52–55.

(*bacchatur*, 4.301). This parallel from Euripides not only notes her loss of control but also renders her suffering tragic.[29]

Dido confronts Aeneas with a speech that exposes the full extent of her emotional status; her speech is the verbal 'mirror' of her emotions. She alternates between anger and sadness, accusation and pleading, thus reflecting her frustration. She begins with a direct accusation: 'False one! Did you really hope to cloak so foul a crime, and to steal from my land in silence?' (*dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide, tantum | posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra?*, 4.305–306). This is a charge of betrayal and cowardice, delivered with a sharp, rhetorical question. But some verses later, the same voice 'trembles' with desperation: 'Is it from me you are fleeing?' (*mene fugis?*, 4.314) and 'nor the doom of a cruel death for Dido [restrains you]?' (*nec moritura tenet crudeli funere Dido?,* 4.308). With this last verse, Dido is — in modern terms — using emotional 'blackmail' on Aeneas,[30] since she employs the threat of suicide as a means of persuading him to stay. These pleads do not only aim to arouse pity; they expose a woman in grief, still hoping to persuade the Trojan hero.

Throughout the monologue, her speech swings between extremes, from invoking their shared past as means of persuasion (*per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos*, 'by the marriage that is ours, by the nuptial rites begun', 4.316) to condemning him as a cause of her political and personal ruin (*te propter Libycae gentes* [...] *odere,* 'because of you the Libyan tribes hate [me]', 4.320). She appeals to memory, love, social obligations, and divine witness in a rapid succession. The instability in her speech reflects her internal emotional chaos, as she is grasping at any means that might persuade Aeneas to stay.

And yet, Dido does not remain entirely passive in her pleas. She attempts to control over this crisis by proposing a solution. She negotiates with Aeneas: if he must leave, she says, he could at least leave behind a child (4.327–328). Her proposal carries symbolic 'weight': a child would serve as a living bond between them, as a means of continuity, memory and redemption. This imaginary *parvulus Aeneas* ('little Aeneas') is Dido's attempt to soften the pain of abandonment by asking for a compromise.

By invoking figures like Hypsipyle and Andromache, women who were left behind by their hero-husbands but remembered through their children, Dido tries to reframe herself not as an abandoned lover, but as part of a heroic narrative. In doing so, she takes a more active

[29] Of course, the speech is not influenced only by Euripides' *Bacchae*. One can see the influence of Euripides' *Medea*, Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, Catullus (64) and Ovid as well (*Her*. 7), though the date of this work is debated.
[30] Rondholz (2004), 238.

role: instead of reacting to what happens to her, she confronts the situation directly and attempts to reshape it on her own terms. However, her proposal is met with silence and rejection by Aeneas (4.331–332).

In sum, Dido's speech is an active, although desperate, attempt to confront and resolve a psychological and moral crisis. She challenges her fate and tries to negotiate a different ending.[31] Aeneas' lack of emotional engagement only intensifies Dido's sense of abandonment, as will be examined below.

5. AENEAS' RESPONSE

When Aeneas responds to Dido, he does so with restraint and distance, but this outer calm conceals an internal struggle. Before he even begins to speak, Virgil presents his torn state through subtle physical cues: *tenebat immota lumina Jovis monitis* ('he held his eyes steadfast on Jove's command', 4.331). The phrase directly attributes his composure to Jupiter's commands: his obedience to fate requires him to remain unaffected, even after having heard such an emotionally intense speech from Dido. Virgil then offers us another glimpse into Aeneas' feelings: *obnixus curam sub corde premebat* ('with a struggle [he] smothered the pain deep within his heart', 4.332). The participle *obnixus* implies resistance, strain; he is actively pressing down the grief he feels. Aeneas' apparent insensitivity can therefore be interpreted not as an absence of feeling, but as a suppression of it.[32] As Braund concludes, the imperfect tenses of *tenebat* and *premebat* emphasise Aeneas' continuous effort to suppress his emotional reaction.[33]

When Aeneas finally speaks, he says only a few words (*pauca refert*, 4.333). The shortness of his speech may be interpreted as a deliberate choice in order to control his emotions. It recalls the *Iliad*, where Hector also speaks briefly to Andromache (6.381–502), knowing that to indulge in his emotions could weaken his determination. In both of these cases, duty comes before love. However, like in the *Iliad*, Aeneas' speech will eventually not be that short: as Braund observes, it is the longest speech of Aeneas, second to his narrative of the sack of Troy.[34] Aeneas' *pauca* are carefully chosen too. His first lines emphasise that he has not

[31] The appeal to Aeneas' emotion is interpreted in this paper as an attempt on Dido's part to reconciliate, or to resolve the crisis. This comes into contrast with other views, such as Braund (1998), 130, who references Heinze and Lyne and argues that Dido's and Aeneas' speeches 'only serve to drive the characters further apart'. While this may be eventually true, since there is no reconciliation at the end, however they both try to resolve the crisis: Dido tries to change Aeneas' decision with her pleas and Aeneas tries to soften Dido's emotions with his excuses.
[32] Bono (1987), 122–123.
[33] Braund (1998), 132.
[34] Braund (1998), 132–133.

intended to deceive her, nor to leave without due respect (4.337–338). He acknowledges her kindness (4.333–334) and claims that the memory of Dido shall 'never be bitter' (*nec me meminisse pigebit Elissae*, 4.335). This is the closest he comes to a confession of affection.

Yet this is followed by a much colder, devastating assertion: *nec coniugis umquam | praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera veni* ('I never held out a bridegroom's torch or entered such a compact', 4.338–339). With these words, Aeneas sets their relationship apart from any formal binding union.[35] His choice of words results in a brutally pragmatic, even legalistic statement.[36] For Dido, their union was a marriage in every sense that mattered emotionally and socially. For Aeneas, it was not. His denial of marriage marks an important point in their interpersonal crisis, as it becomes clear that they disagree on the very nature of their relationship.

In this moment, Aeneas' perspective is fully revealed to Dido. What she sees as a sacred union, he frames as an informal relationship. As appears from her reply later on, she also sees him as selfish and indifferent to her feelings. However, for the reader, Aeneas could be also seen as struggling. He experiences love and sorrow, but at the same time he is committed to a higher necessity: *Desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis | Italiam non sponte sequor* ('Cease to inflame yourself and me with your complaints; It is not by my wish that I make for Italy', 4.360–361). Both characters are therefore consumed by anguish (*incendere*), and Aeneas' departure is ordered not by desire but by duty.

The above verses show the complex tension between divine command and human agency in the *Aeneid*. Although *fatum* is certain and pre-decided, it does not render human choice irrelevant. The gods intervene to remind Aeneas of his destiny, but they do not physically 'drag' him away from Carthage. Mercury's visit to Aeneas indicates that fate, while certain in outcome, still depends on the wilful cooperation of its agents. Aeneas' hesitation, emotional struggle and evident sorrow show that he is not passively following orders but actively 'wrestling' with them. Virgil thus presents fate not as a mechanical, inevitable force, but as an order that requires painful acceptance from its agents. Aeneas is later called *pius* (4.393–396) precisely because he actively chooses duty over desire, instead of silently obeying orders, even when that choice causes suffering to both himself and others. And it is precisely this moment of recognition — where he understands that his desire must be sacrificed in favour

[35] See Ahl (2018), 58–60 who describes the 'perfidy' of Aeneas as the breaking of a 'legal contract'. He also interestingly mentions that 'accusations of perfidy are fundamental to Roman propaganda against the Carthaginians during the Punic Wars'.
[36] See *OLD*, s.v. *foedus*. See also Treggiari (1991), 54–57, 146–147, 161, 165.

of an abstract, distant destiny — that epitomises Aeneas' personal crisis. His conscious decision to leave is what confirms his *pietas* as a tragic hero.

In this exchange, Virgil presents two opposing forces: *amor* and *fatum*, personal desire and historical destiny. Both are serious and both cause suffering. Aeneas' controlled response is not heartless; it reflects the responsibilities of leadership and the burden of being the founder of the new Troy. According to Austin, Aeneas' speech is Virgil's way of showing the conflict between Dido's uncontrolled emotion and Aeneas' pale cast of thought; it is the Roman answer to the conflict between two compelling powers, duty and desire.[37]

6. DIDO'S RESPONSE

Aeneas' controlled, measured response pushes Dido further into emotional collapse. The narrator presents her reaction through both physical and psychological cues: *aversa tuetur, huc illuc volvens oculos, totumque pererrat luminibus tacitis* ('she gazes on him askance, turning her eyes to and fro, and with silent glances scans the whole man', 4.362–363). She no longer responds rationally.[38] The scene evokes literary parallels, most notably the *Iliad*, where Paris is rescued from the battlefield by Venus, and Helen 'turns her eyes elsewhere' (ὄσσε πάλιν κλίνασα, *Il*. 3.426) before delivering a reproaching speech to him (3.428–436). The turned-away gaze similarly marks the moment before Dido's outburst.

Dido exclaims again the accusatory *perfide!* ('False one!', 4.364), a word that reappeared in the beginning of her speech, bringing it full circle. She asks: 'For what greater wrongs do I hold myself back?' (*Quae me ad maiora reservo?*, 4.368). This line recalls tragic women like Andromache or Tecmessa in Homer and Sophocles, who try to hold their warrior-lovers to domestic responsibilities through appeals to pity, reason, or the threat of death.[39] Her anger turns bitterly ironic: *Nunc* […] *interpres divum fert horrida iussa per auras* ('now the messenger of the gods [...], brings through the air this dread command', 4.378). Her tone ridicules how suddenly Aeneas invoked the divine will, accusing him of having used the gods as a convenient excuse to justify her abandonment.

Dido's language becomes darker as she curses Aeneas: *Cum frigida mors anima seduxerit artus, omnibus umbra locis adero* ('when chill death has severed soul and body,

[37] Austin (1955), 104.
[38] Farron (1984), 83–85.
[39] *Il*. 6.369–529, Soph. *Aj*. 485–544. See also Hallett (2021), 186 on the similarities of Dido's language with Phoenicium's language in Plauto, *Pseudolus*. According to Hallett, Dido employs words to obtain an emotional hold of Aeneas, much as Phoenicium does in *Pseudolus*.

everywhere my shade shall haunt you', 4.385). This statement foreshadows her later appearance in the underworld (Book 6) and Carthage's lasting rivalry with Rome historically. Her emotional crisis then reaches a breaking point, as she physically collapses: *suscipiunt famulae conlapsaque membra marmoreo referunt thalamo stratisque reponunt.* ('Her maids support her, carry her swooning form to her marble bower, and lay her on her bed', 4.391). Her feelings are no longer internal, as rage and despair become manifest in her body as well.

7. AENEAS' EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

Although Aeneas does not express his emotions openly, the narrative reveals a significant internal conflict. He is described as left behind wanting to speak but hesitating to do so: *linquens multa metu cunctantem et multa parantem dicere* ('leaving him in fear and much hesitance, and ready to say much', 4.390). His inability to speak mirrors his inner confusion,[40] wanting to console her although reluctant (4.393–396):

> At pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentem
> solando cupit et dictis avertere curas,
> multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore,
> iussa tamen divum exsequitur classemque revisit.

> But loyal Aeneas, though longing to soothe and assuage her grief
> and by his words turn aside her sorrow, with many a sigh,
> his soul shaken by his mighty love,
> yet fulfils Heaven's bidding and returns to the fleet.

Aeneas leaves only because he must carry out the divine commands he receives. He complies to them, yet the complexity of his emotional state is acknowledged in the words *lenire dolentem* and *avertere curas*. They both expose sensitivity towards Dido on his behalf, since the narrator voices Aeneas' internal thoughts. Even though he remains inactive, his wish (*cupit*) to soothe her pain with words reveals his care for her. More importantly, the narrator's observations that Aeneas sighed (*gemens*) and that he was wounded by love in his soul (*animum labefactus amore*) are undeniable signs of his suppressed feelings.

[40] Austin (1955), 120.

The use of *pius* here is significant.[41] Notably, Virgil withholds this term throughout Book 4 until this moment, suggesting that Aeneas' true *pietas* is only now being tested and affirmed. Austin highlights that *pius* does not simply mean 'dutiful' in a superficial sense but rather signals a profound moral and emotional tension. For instance, in Book 10 Aeneas calls himself *pius* after he kills Lausus: *quid tibi nunc, miserande puer, pro laudibus istis, quid pius Aeneas tanta dabit indole dignum?* ('What now, unhappy boy, will loyal Aeneas give you in recognition of these glorious deeds of yours?', 10.826). The hero fulfils his duty, but experiences compassion for the dead boy, thus leading to an inner conflict. The use of the term in both contexts emphasises that being *pius* does not exclude suffering; on the contrary, it often implies the painful conflict of personal desire and higher obligations.

In this scene, then, *pius* encapsulates the essence of Aeneas' internal struggle. He must abandon Dido despite his affection for her, not because he wishes to, but because the gods command it. His crisis remains largely unspoken, but it is visible in the narrative. It is this silent, suppressed emotional conflict that defines Aeneas' tragedy and the cost of fulfilling his *fatum*.[42]

8. DIDO'S FINAL ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS

Following Aeneas' initial rejection, Dido does not immediately surrender to despair. Instead, she actively seeks a resolution to the crisis by attempting once more to delay his departure. Her persistence shows that she has not yet abandoned hope; persuasion, or at least a temporary compromise, might still be possible. In verse 4.415, after a failed plea to Aeneas, Dido turns to her sister Anna. This is a significant development, as it was Anna who had originally encouraged Dido to pursue a relationship with the Trojan (4.24–55). Now, Dido appeals to Anna's pity and shared responsibility in the situation: *Miserae hoc tamen unum exsequere, Anna, mihi* ('Yet this one service, Anna, do for me', 4.420–421).[43] The tone expresses desperation, but also strategic pleading, since Dido does not ask for a full reversal of Aeneas' decision, only a delay.

Her request is a brief postponement of his departure: *tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori, dum mea me victam doceat fortuna dolere* ('for empty time I ask, for peace

[41] Austin (1955), 121–122.
[42] See Zanker (2023), 63–64 for all the instances indicating Aeneas' love for Dido and his struggle to follow fate's commands exactly because of this conflicting emotion.
[43] In verse 4.423, Dido says that Anna is the only one who knows how to soften Aeneas' harshness. On the erotic affair of Anna and Aeneas — a traditional literary model from Varro — lurking in these lines, see McCallum (2019), 23 with bibliography.

and reprieve for my frenzy, till fortune teach my vanquished soul to grieve', 4.433–434). She seeks time to process and to become accustomed to her grief. This language suggests a degree of rationality within her emotional crisis: she is not attempting to escape destiny altogether, but rather to soften its impact.[44] Her desire to delay — rather than prevent — the separation indicates a continued effort to manage the psychological tension and to have some control over the outcome.

Despite this reasonable and emotionally based request, Aeneas' mind remains unchanged. Anna negotiates, but her attempts are futile (4.438). The narrator makes it clear that Aeneas is not being cold by choice and that he is prevented from responding by external forces. Virgil explains his unyielding attitude as a result of divine interference: *fata obstant placidasque viri deus obstruit auris* ('Fate withstands and heaven seals his kindly, mortal ears', 440). At that point, the gods are actively obstructing Aeneas' ability to be influenced by emotion and compassion.

Nonetheless, Aeneas' emotional conflict is again not absent. He is shown to feel the weight of the situation in his heart (*magno persentit pectore curas*, 'in his mighty heart feels agony', 4.447) and this weight is physically manifest in tears: *mens immota manet, lacrimae volvuntur inanes* ('his mind stands steadfast; his tears fall without effect', 4.449).[45] These lines confirm that Aeneas' coldness is not the result of emotional detachment but of restraint. He feels sorrow but suppresses it; he wants to respond to Anna's pleas, but he cannot.

The reference to Aeneas as *heros* (4.447) further reinforces this interpretation. It marks him not only as a protagonist of epic status but also as one who must endure profound personal cost to achieve a greater historical purpose. His victory is not over an external enemy, but over his own desires.[46] The gods assist him, but the burden of emotional endurance is his alone. This act of self-suppression is a central aspect of Virgil's portrayal of his heroic virtue. Aeneas does not choose his path freely, but he accepts it, and in doing so he fulfils the Roman ideal of *pietas*.

In conclusion, Dido's active attempt to resolve the crisis is met with Aeneas' passiveness. To resolve this interpersonal crisis, she negotiates and proposes compromises. On the contrary, he remains unmoved, not because he does not feel, but because the fulfilment of his fate requires the subordination of his emotions.

[44] Austin (1955), xii: 'her miserable attempt to gain time to be "schooled to sorrow"'.
[45] Even though it is not clear whose tears those are, there have been scholars who support that these could be Aeneas' and I agree with them. See Fairclough in his translation and Braund (1998), 135–136 with bibliography.
[46] See Zanker (2023), 65–66 for Aeneas' emotional struggle due to the conflict between love and fate, as well as Aeneas' effort to comply with *fatum*, even though involuntarily at first.

Although he continues to refer to duty and divine command, he does not appear to act with full control or determination. He is delaying his departure by sleeping on the shore (4.554–556): this is an important detail, since even after his divine visit from Mercury, he has not yet departed. A second divine intervention is required to restore his determination. The message is direct and forceful: *Heia age, rumpe moras* ('Up then, break off delay!', 4.569). The fact that he needs to be roused to 'break off delay' shows that he is not very determined to do so on his own.

Moreover, the divine voice makes an explicitly misogynistic claim: *varium et mutabile semper femina* ('A fickle and changeful thing is woman ever', 4.569–570). This claim attempts to portray Dido as unpredictable and dangerous and implies that she might harm Aeneas if he remains longer in Carthage. However, this is a misrepresentation of Dido. Although her emotional reactions have been intense, she has never shown intention to physically harm Aeneas.[47] This distortion serves, in my opinion, to highlight the degree to which the gods must manipulate Aeneas into action.

As the ships finally set sail, Dido's response combines ritual mourning and physical violence towards herself: she beats her chest and tears her hair, gestures typical of ancient expressions of grief (4.589–590). In a moment of fury, she considers setting the Trojan fleet on fire and launching a military attack. However, she restrains herself and instead utters a curse on Aeneas and his whole bloodline. Her final speech is no longer marked by emotionality but by a cold and calculated revengeful tone. The target of her anger now shifts from Aeneas as a person, to the entire Trojan race (4.622–629):

> tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum
> exercete odiis, cinerique haec mittite nostro
> munera. nullus amor populis nec foedera sunto.
> exoriare, aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor,
> qui face Dardanios ferroque sequare colonos,
> nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore vires.
> litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas

[47] Even in her most emotionally charges speech towards Aeneas, she does not express intention to harm him, only perhaps to harm herself (4.368) or to wish for revenge upon him by Fate and the gods (4.384–387). See also Austin (1955), 168: 'In spite of her wild moods she had never ceased deep within her to love Aeneas, and she had no plots against him to do him personal injury'.

imprecor, arma armis; pugnent ipsique nepotesque.

‘Then do you, Tyrians, persecute with hate his stock
and all the race to come, and to my dust offer this tribute!
Let no love or treaty unite the nations!
Arise from my ashes, unknown avenger,
to harass the Trojan settlers with fire and sword —
today, hereafter, whenever strength be ours!
May coast with coast conflict, I pray, and sea with sea,
arms with arms; war may they have, themselves and their children’s children!’

Virgil clearly frames Dido’s curse as the mythical origin of the historical conflict between Rome and Carthage, the Punic Wars. Dido’s personal crisis, promoted by Aeneas’ departure to follow fate’s commands, becomes the basis for a national and historical enmity. The tension between love and duty reaches its climax with Dido’s suicide,[48] but its political implications are extended across centuries.

In this way, Virgil aligns the two heroes’ individual emotional crises with the broader structures of Roman history. The crisis between Dido and Aeneas is not confined to the private realm, but functions as an aetiological myth that explains historical conflict through the lens of divine will and human suffering.[49]

10. EPILOGUE: THE UNDERWORLD ENCOUNTER

In Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, the encounter between Aeneas and Dido in the Underworld offers a retrospective view of the emotional crisis of Book 4. When Aeneas sees Dido among the souls of the dead, he addresses her with sincere emotion and expresses profound sorrow over the consequences of his departure. He repeats that he left ‘against his will’ (*invitus*, 6.460), echoing the similar verse from Book 4 (*Italiam non sponte sequor*, 4.361), as if still trying to defend himself. His speech suggests a need to be understood (*nec credere quivi hunc tantum tibi me discessu ferre dolorem*, ‘nor could I deem my going thence would bring on you distress so

[48] According to Ketterer (1992), 21–23 the rainbow after Dido’s suicide symbolically marks the resolution of their interpersonal crisis.
[49] See Braund (1998), 142–145 on how the public and private *personae* of these two characters are brought out in moments of crisis. Aeneas faces internal conflict and returns to his public *persona*, while Dido’s emotional conflict pushes her to choose a private resolution of that crisis, namely suicide.

deep', 6.463–464) and his tears suggest affection (*prosequitur lacrimis longe et miseratur euntem*, 'Aeneas attends her with tears afar and pities her as she goes', 6.475–476).

However, Dido does not respond. Aeneas almost repeats Dido from Book 4: *quem fugis*? ('whom do you flee?', 6.466), reminding us of Dido's earlier question: *mene fugis?* ('is it from me you are fleeing?', 4.314). She does not look at him (*illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat*, 'she, turning away, kept her looks fixed on the ground', 6.469), recalling Aeneas' 'steadfast gaze' in verse 4.331. She turns away and seeks out her first husband, Sychaeus, thereby rejecting Aeneas (6.474).[50] This reversal of roles is evident, as Dido is now the silent and impenetrable figure, while Aeneas assumes the position of the rejected and regretful lover. As T. S. Eliot notes in *What is a Classic?* (1945), 'Dido's behaviour appears almost as a projection of Aeneas' own conscience: this, we feel, is the way in which Aeneas' conscience would expect Dido to behave towards him'.[51]

This moment does not reopen the crisis of Book 4, but it places it in a new context. In the Underworld, the gods are absent, and the pressure of destiny is no longer present. What remains is the emotional cost for both heroes as a result of fate. While the earlier crisis focused on the conflict between desire and duty, the Underworld scene highlights the raw emotional consequences of that conflict.

CONCLUSION

As Bobby Xinyue observes, *amor* and *arma* are constantly placed in opposition throughout Book 4 of the *Aeneid*.[52] In the same way, desire and duty are in tension, and Aeneas' decision becomes critical for the unfolding of the epic. The crisis between him and Dido arises, firstly, from Aeneas' deliberate choice to prioritise his duty over his desire for Dido, and secondly, from Dido's inability to understand the profound dilemma in which he is trapped. She believes that Aeneas is leaving her because he no longer loves her, failing to comprehend the internal emotional struggle he is suffering.

In a sense, Dido's death following Aeneas' departure functions both as the climax and the resolution of their crisis. Aeneas resumes his journey to Italy, while Dido exits the narrative in a dramatic way, creating space for Lavinia, Aeneas' future wife in Latium. Their relationship begins and ends in Carthage, not transcending the geographical and symbolic boundaries of the

[50] For a thorough examination of body language and gestures in this episode, see Muecke (1984). For a comparison of the scene with the meeting of Odysseus and Ajax in the Underworld, see Fratantuono (2014).
[51] Eliot (1945), 21, Schiesaro (2019), 22.
[52] Xinyue (2018), 224–225.

East. As many have observed, Dido represents the threat of the foreign: Carthage, Rome's most dangerous rival in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, as well as Cleopatra, the eastern enemy of the 1st century BCE.[53] Aeneas' commitment to his *Fatum* — to found a homeland for his people and his son — will not permit this eastern threat, even in the form of a woman he loves, to stand in the way of his destiny. Ultimately, the threat posed by Dido is confined: it dies symbolically with her in Carthage, and historically with the end of the Punic Wars and Rome's eventual triumph.

In conclusion, the emotional struggles of Dido and Aeneas in Book 4 of the *Aeneid* reflect an interpersonal crisis created by conflicting desires and obligations. Dido's deep attachment to Aeneas conflicted with her vows to remain faithful to Sychaeus and with her political obligations to her queendom. Aeneas was torn between his personal desire to remain with Dido and his commitment to a divinely ordered future,[54] embodying the Roman ideals required to create an empire, albeit with a cost. Virgil aligns these two heroes' emotional cost with the larger moral logic of Roman imperialism, where individual suffering is subordinated to historical purpose. Through this interpersonal crisis, Virgil calls for a broader reflection on the tension between emotion and historical necessity, especially significant in the framework of war.

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[53] For the most recent and extensive discussion on the representations of Carthage and the *Aeneid* in relation to Dido, see Giusti (2016). The connection between Dido and Cleopatra is widely accepted, see Benario (1970), Bertman (2000); for fundamental bibliography on the subject, see Giusti (2018), 14 n. 54.

[54] For Zanker [(2023), 49], Dido's attitude towards fate is expressed in the language of Epicureanism, while Aeneas' resistance towards desire and his commitment to fate represents Stoicism. Although this paper does not explore Aeneas' and Dido's attitudes under the scope of Hellenistic philosophy, this view is plausibly supported by Zanker and could be considered another way to interpret the two heroes' conflicting attitudes towards the crisis they face.

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Sexual Dysfunction, Women and a Condemned Protagonist: A Multifaceted Crisis in Petronius' *Satyrica* (126–140)

Sofia-Elena Floros

INTRODUCTION[1]

Petronius' *Satyrica* are a sui generis fragmentary novel by Petronius from the imperial period, distinct due to their complex and innovative character.[2] The novel cannot be classified as an example of a certain literary genre and, whilst being associated with many different literary traditions, it also consists of an interesting combination of narrative techniques and vocabulary choices.[3] The plot revolves around the protagonist Encolpius' wanderings in southern Italy in the form of episodes. As a highly educated protagonist with a vast literary knowledge, Encolpius faces the seemingly decadent and depraved world of the first century AD, not actually fitting into society and constantly having to deal with uncomfortable and rather grotesque situations.

The focus of this paper lies on the passages 126 to 140. During this part of his adventures, Encolpius stays at the city of Croton, where he is pursued by the maid Chrysis on behalf of her mistress Circe. Encolpius meets the seductive lady but has to suffer twice from the failure of erectile dysfunction (= sexual impotence), an instance of *paralysis*.[4] The two consulted elderly sorceresses, Proselenus and Oenothea, are unable to cure him.

The occurrence of Encolpius' erectile dysfunction equals a multifaceted crisis:[5] Encolpius' impotence can be considered as a biological crisis — concerning his physical condition — the erectile dysfunction is the climax of Encolpius' possibly weak sexual performances in earlier episodes of the novel, at least according to textual evidence.[6]

[1] Any cited passages and translations are taken from Petronius, Seneca (2020) (ed. and transl. Schmeling).
[2] I use the term 'novel' in a traditional sense, a frequently used characterisation in bibliography when it comes to the *Satyrica*. There does not exist any kind of academic consensus regarding the genre of the text.
[3] See Rosenmeyer (1991), 403. Regarding a relative, indicative bibliography, see Vannini (2007), 192–214.
[4] In ancient literature, erectile dysfunction is regarded as sexual impotence. The *Satyrica* are the only surviving Latin text in which the term *paralysis* is used in the context of erectile dysfunction.
[5] For the ancient perception of crisis, especially with the decisive and the climactic element, see Koselleck (1972), 617–619.
[6] Regarding Encolpius' sexual performance, references can be found that prove an intense sexual activity (with men and women) in Encolpius' past without an indicator concerning the question whether the mentioned instances take place in a lost part of the novel or not (9.8–10: *gladiator* […] *percussor* […] *cum fortiter faceres* […] *frater fui*, 10.7: *libido* […] *ut veterem cum Gitone meo rationem reducerem*, 106.2 and 113.3: seduction of Hedyle, 113.7–8: *amicam*, *aliquando gratum sibi amatorem*, 128.18: *Dorida vetus amator*, 129.1: *qua quondam Achilles eram*, 130.1: *numquam tamen ante hunc diem usque ad mortem deliqui*). In 9.8–10 the intense sexual activity is expressed with terms of battle. Apart from the traditional interpretation of these terms with a sexual tone, the phrase 9.9: *cum pura mulie re pugnasti* ('you fought ~ had sex with a clean woman') confirms the reference to

Furthermore, the appearance of the dysfunction and the immediate need for treatment constitute a decisive moment for the protagonist, as his role in society is at stake; Encolpius clashes with the cultural stereotypes and expectations concerning a male member of society, another climax provided that he is an anti-hero from the beginning of the novel.[7] Finally, the occurring love crisis must not be overlooked, as the sexual act remains unfulfilled and the counterpart, seductive Circe, remains unsatisfied, thus leading to friction and conflict.[8] The scene in Croton is a decisive scene concerning Encolpius' sexual capability, masculinity and his relationship with society. However, the crisis is limited to the specific episode and comical notes defuse the situation for the involved characters. Therefore, although Encolpius is challenged and suffers, we must not take the situation too seriously. Unfortunately, due to the fragmentary state of the text, we cannot know for sure how the situation develops, we can just assume that the sexual capability will ultimately be restored (140.12). This paper aspires to explore the emergence of the crisis in the Croton episode as well as the way it affects the interpersonal relationship between Encolpius and the women of the episode. Therefore, I will draw from selected exemplary passages. Furthermore, I have made the choice for this paper to solely focus on the women's crisis management rather than Encolpius'. This is due to the fact that Encolpius' way of facing his crisis can be mainly regarded as a personal approach whereas the women's behaviour unveils all kinds of possible difficulties on a social and interpersonal level.

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the erotic act. For the interpretation of the symbolism of the sword (*gladius*/ *gladiator*) as a man's genitals, of the terms of battle and of the word *percussor* ('murderer') with possible sexual undertones, see Adams (1990), 20–21, 147, 219. For passage 9.8, see Obermayer (1998), 318 n. 312 referring to Opelt (1965), 46. The antithesis between Encolpius' past as a virile gladiator and his present in the Croton episode where he is likened to effeminate actors is distinctive (126.6), see Edwards (1993), 129. In passage 130.1 death metaphorically seems to reference sexual dysfunction, resulting in Encolpius' claim that for the longest part of his life he has been sexually able.

There are instances in which Encolpius faces difficulties regarding his sexual performance, even prior to the Croton episode. However, characters who hint at a weak sexual performance are mainly characters in conflict with Encolpius and therefore there is an uncertainty regarding the credibility of their claims (9.8–9: *de ruina harena dimisit, tum* […] *cum*), see Obermayer (1998), 318. Regarding passage 9.8: *de ruina harena dimisit* ('[whom] downfall expelled from the arena'), see Petronius (transl. Schmeling) (2021), 83 n. 22.

In other passages, Encolpius appears to fall short in comparison with others when it comes to having a decent sexual performance. This does not necessary mean that he suffers from erectile problems (80.5–7, 80.7: *sine gladio*, 91.8–9: *duos armatos viderem, ad fortiorem confugi*). For 80.7: *sine gladio* ('without a sword'), see Petronius (transl. Schmeling) (2021), 237 n.114. Passage 128.7 is an exception, however, we do not know which episode Giton is referring to and whether it belongs to the Croton episode.

The only other confirmed instance of sexual dysfunction, apart from the Croton episode, can be detected in the episode with the priestess of Priapus, Quartilla (19.3: *frigidior hieme Gallica*, 19.6: *mors non dubia*, 20.2: *mille iam mortibus frigida*). 19.3, 19.6, 20.2: The metaphor of chill and death for erectile dysfunction returns in 132.8, v. 5: *frigidior rigente bruma* ('colder than the harsh winter') / v. 8: *mortifero timore* ('from deadly fear'), compare McMahon (1998), 198, Murgatroyd (2000), 347–348, Dehon (2001), 316.

[7] In Roman thought, a socially accepted male has to play the dominant, insertive role during the sexual act, in order to serve the desired stereotype of masculinity. This concept is a central idea of Williams' monography, see Williams (1999), e.g. 7, 18, 125.

[8] Koselleck (1972) stresses the aspect of separation, but also of fighting and condemnation which the verb κρίνω might also have [see Montanari (2013), κρίνω 1δ].

Consequently, I will not comment on characteristic scenes such as 132.7–15, when Encolpius reflects on his situation and reproaches his phallus for failing him.

1. HOW DOES THE CRISIS EMERGE?

The main crisis incident is undoubtedly Encolpius' inability to perform sexually as the insertive partner. In the extant text of the *Satyrica*, Encolpius suffers from erectile dysfunction exclusively in passages that contain encounters with women in an erotic context, i.e. the scene with Quartilla, a priapic priestess, and the Croton episode.[9] Other scholars have come to the conclusion that the god Priapus who seemingly chases Encolpius is responsible for the protagonist's condition.[10] Furthermore, other possible (medical) reasons for Encolpius' condition might not be excluded. Considering the fragmentary state of the text, I contend that mainly the female characters in the *Satyrica* — and especially the women of the Croton episode — are responsible for Encolpius' erectile difficulties and that they predetermine his sexual role.

It is crucial that the women of the Croton episode systematically associate Encolpius with effeminate character traits, even before the instance of the failed intercourse takes place. The accusation of being effeminate must not be confused with sexual dysfunction. Everybody who is not (fully) regarded as a male member of society belongs to the group of effeminate men, regardless of the character trait that is assessed as 'typical for the female gender'.[11] In Roman thought, the stereotypical concept of masculinity dictates that a socially accepted male has to play the insertive role during erotic encounters, regardless whether he has intercourse

[9] It remains unclear who Giton is talking to in passage 128.7 and which instance he is referring to. I have decided not to deal with the Quartilla episode, although there also can be detected sexual practices which torture Encolpius who shows signs of sexual dysfunction (21.2, 23.2-5, 23.5: *frustra*). However, the Quartilla episode has to be excluded from the present research due to significant differences with the Croton episode. First, in the Quartilla episode Encolpius is not the only one to suffer from sexual dysfunction. Secondly, the sexual practices do not only aim to torture Encolpius, but also his fellows Ascyltos and Giton (19.6: *miserorum*, 20.1: *debeamus torti perire*, 20.4: *nostros*, 21.1–2, 22.1, 24.4, 24.6–7). Thirdly, the Quartilla episode contains comical elements (20.6: *risu meo*, 20.7–8, 24.5: *risu dissolvebat ilia sua*). This results in the fact, that not the condition of sexual dysfunction is emphasised, but the grotesque and theatrical character of the episode, s. Obermayer (1998), 325, for further bibliography, s. Panayotakis (1994), Aquati (2003). Lastly, I decided to leave out the Quartilla episode due to the inability to connect it with the Croton episode as a prequel to it. This is due to the many *lacunae* in the extant text as well as the many changes of places between the different episodes. Finally, Encolpius does not seem to be bothered about his condition in the Quartilla episode, whereas exclusively in the Croton episode it is the central topic.

[10] The theory that Encolpius' condition is a result of him being chased by Priapus is based on passage 139.2, which has been widely discussed. The theory has found a multitude of supporters, but also, and especially in recent years, many scholars express their opposition to the theory. See e.g. Klebs (1889), 623–635, Sullivan (1968), 216, Rankin (1969), 225–230, Baldwin (1973), Coccia (1982), 85, Obermayer (1998), 313–317, Connors (1998), 24–33, Rimell (2002), 98–99. See an indicative bibliographical list in Obermayer (1998), 314 n. 290, 291. Karakasis (2012), 327–330 argues that Encolpius' *hybris* against Zeus is a possible reason for the erectile dysfunction (126.18).

[11] Williams (1999), 126.

with a man or a woman.[12] He has to take on the role of the active sexual partner, a necessary prerequisite which is depicted in the 'hyper-masculine' god Priapus and his aroused enlarged genitals.[13] The conclusion is that every man who is unable to play the active, insertive role during the sexual act, necessarily is not regarded as a real man with an intact masculinity. Encolpius suffers from sexual dysfunction, thus his masculinity is violated, and the protagonist is linked to effeminacy.[14]

The pictures created by the women of the Croton episode do not simply foreshadow sexual failure, but foster the connection between Encolpius, effeminacy and the female sex, i.e. they predetermine Encolpius as a man whose masculinity is questioned. The terms of limpness that describe the protagonist do not appear simultaneously with his sexual failure with Circe but discretely underlie the plot from the beginning of the Croton episode, as I will show below. In this way the impression is created that Encolpius from the beginning is forced to take on the role of the effeminate — and, later, by extension sexually incapable — man in Croton. In addition, as I will show, literary intertexts are used in such way as to enforce Encolpius' identification with the female gender.

In particular, beginning from their first encounter with Encolpius, the women in the Croton episode seem to emphasise the protagonist's specific effeminate character traits. Through the connection between Encolpius and characteristics which describe an effeminised individual, it is questioned whether Encolpius is able to conform to the prerequisites and expectations regarding the socially accepted concept of masculinity. I contend that there exists a causal connection between the women's remarks about masculinity and Encolpius' sexual dysfunction.

I would like to stress that being regarded as effeminate does not presuppose or assume specific sexual practices or sexual dysfunction.[15] Regardless, it seems to be precisely this

[12] One of the central ideas in Williams (1999), e.g. 7, 18, 125.
[13] Williams (1999), 18, 86–91. Priapus is often admired as the absolute example of masculinity in Roman thought. Furthermore, he appears to be the most important deity within the *Satyrica*.
[14] In Herodotus sexual impotence is characterised as the 'female illness' (*Histories* 1.105: θήλεαν νοῦσον). Also, Encolpius, after the first impotence incident with Circe, states that he does not feel 'like a man' (129.1: *non intellego me virum esse*/ see also Ovid *Amores* 3.7.19–20) – a sexually impotent member of society is not a real man, thus necessarily functioning as a female member, the logical opposite of the man. In Roman thought, a man is connected to power and strength, whereas the embodiment of the man's opposite are slaves and women, Williams (1999), 135.
[15] At least based off the textual evidence. Taking blatantly on the role of the passive sexual partner is the main indicator for effeminacy in men. However, not every man who is accused of effeminacy is necessarily linked to playing the role of the passive lover. The accusation of effeminacy can even be linked to appearance, excessive physical grooming, clothing, gait, and the need to expose oneself in front of an audience for the purpose of its entertainment, the inability to exercise self-control (excessive display of fear, mourning). Consequently, effeminacy is interpreted as a man's inability to fulfil the stereotype of masculinity as it has been established and defined socially, see Williams (1999), 125–159. It is important to note that it only takes one point at which a man

repeated association of Encolpius with effeminacy on the women's behalf that ultimately leads to dysfunction. In the ancient texts that I am familiar with, the cause of male dysfunction is almost always attributed by the man himself to external factors (witchcraft [indicatively *Odyssey* 10.299–306 at the beginning of a longstanding tradition of magical causes], summer heat [*Works and Days* 582–588, Alcaeus fr. 347 LP vv. 1–4, 6–8], divine punishment [Herodotus *Histories* 1.105], specific home remedies [Hippocratic corpus *Airs, Waters, Places* 22], fatigue [*Palatine Anthology* 5.47, *Carmina Priapea* 26 Holzberg, Martial 12.97], old age [*Palatine Anthology* 12.240, Martial 11.46], the romantic partner's repulsive physical appearance [Martial 6.23, 7.75, 9.37, 10.90, 11.29, 11.97, Horace *Epodon Liber* 8, 12, *Carmina Priapea* 46, 57 Holzberg, 83.26–37 Bücheler = *Appendix Vergiliana Priapea* IV Fairclough], certain sexual practices [Martial 1.46]) which affect his sexual performance. However, sexual dysfunction is never attributed to negative or disparaging remarks.[16] Encolpius is driven to impotence after repeated attacks on his masculinity. At the same time, this attack does not mean that women aim to drive Encolpius into sexual impotence, but that they question him as a man who fulfils the stereotypes.

The Croton episode begins with a description of Encolpius by the maid Chrysis. In her opening speeches, Chrysis gives detailed descriptions of Encolpius appearing as a slave and prostitute, her mistress Circe and herself. Therefore, Chrysis' portrait of Encolpius can be perceived as a proem to the Croton passage, like a proem of a comedy which determines everyone's role.[17] From the outset, it is established that Encolpius has assumed the role of the effeminate man. A close reading of Chrysis' description of Encolpius reveals that the parallel texts that are used and the stereotypes that are mentioned typically refer either to women or to effeminate men who sometimes play the role of a passive sexual partner.[18] Chrysis characterises the grace and charm of Encolpius with the term *Venus* (here: 'attraction', 'charm') (126.1: *quia nosti venerem tuam*) which appears in Catullus' description of Lesbia (*Carmina* 86.6) and in Horace's description of Lyce's lost beauty (*Carmina* 4.13,17).[19] Encolpius' apparent pride has its literary model in Ovid, when Lotis despises Priapus (*Fasti* 1.419: *fastus*

fails to satisfy the stereotype of masculinity to be considered effeminate [Williams (1999), 142]. It is worth noting that there is a character named Encolpos who is a slave (cf. the role of Encolpius in Croton) and a passive lover in Martial's *Epigrams* (1.31, 5.48).

[16] I am referring to the texts studied by Obermayer (1998) and McMahon (1998). McMahon (1998), 26 believes that Hipponax attributes the cause of an incident of erectile dysfunction to the behaviour of an opponent, which, however, is not specified (fr. 41 Gerber).

[17] Schmeling (2011), 471.

[18] For additional parallel passages, see Williams (1999), 129–159.

[19] The same term is used for Circe, see 132.1.

inest pulchris, sequiturque superbia formam, 126.1: *superbiam captas*).[20] The elegiac *topos* of lamentation for the 'sale' of charm and carnal love, detected in Chrysis' introduction of Encolpius, is usually addressed to women or sexually passive *eromenoi* of an elegiac poet who are selling their love and good looks (Ovid *Amores* 1.10,11, 1.10,17, 1.10,21–24, 1.10,31–34, Tibull *Elegiae* 1.4,59–60, 1.9,77 – 126.1–2, 4).[21] In particular, the criticism of Encolpius' artificial beauty and behaviour is reminiscent of a text by Propertius in which his love interest Cynthia is criticised for her appearance and manners, which are appropriate for a *meretrix* ('courtesan') (Propertius *Elegiae* 1.2,1–8 and 1.2,23–25 and 1.2,31 – 126.2).[22] The image of Encolpius' elaborately styled hair recalls descriptions of women from elegies who are associated either with the stereotype of the *meretrix* or with infidelity towards their lover (Tibullus *Elegiae* 1.9,67–68, Propertius *Elegiae* 1.2,1, disparaging description of Paris, see Horace *Carmina* 1.15,14).[23] The expression used for Encolpius' makeup indicates an equally feminine presence, corresponding to that of Quartilla's *cinaedus* in an earlier episode of the novel (23.5: *acaciae rivi, et inter rugas malarum tantum erat cretae*) and recalls Ovid's title *Medicamina Faciei*, which addresses women through the topic of their cosmetics (126.2: *facies medicamine attrita*). It is not surprising that, according to some classical Latin authors, the use of makeup in combination with perfumes and elaborate hairstyles is a sign of effeminacy in men (Cicero, *In Pisonem* 25: *erant illi compti capilli et madentes cincinnorum fimbriae et fluentes purpurissataeque buccae*, Propertius *Elegiae* 1.2,3, Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 1.505–509). Added to the overall picture is Encolpius' gaze, which, full of desire, also places him in a group of men who are considered effeminate (126.2: *oculorum quoque mollis petulantia*). For this reason, Chrysis has used a description that in the *Satyrica* is applied only to Paris (138.6) and resembles other descriptions of effeminate men in Latin texts (cf. later Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 3.5.2).[24] The seductive gaze is often part of the appearance of women wearing makeup with a captivating gaze (Apuleius, *Apologia* 76.5). Finally, Encolpius' gait is also attributed with sexual connotations, as it is associated with the appearance of a woman-*meretrix* or a feeble man (Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 49 on Clodia: *ita sese gerat non incessu solum* […] *ut* […] *proterva meretrix procaxque videatur*, Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 114.3: *Si ille effeminatus est, in ipso*

[20] Dimundo (1998), 51.
[21] Dimundo (1998), 51.
[22] For a detailed comparison of the images and structure of the two texts, see Dimundo (1998), 51–52.
[23] It should not be forgotten that Ovid criticises elaborate hairstyles for men, cf. *Ars Amatoria* 1.505-509, and that Cicero considers them a sign of the effeminate appearance (*In Pisonem* 25).
[24] For Horace's disparaging description of Paris, see *Carmina* 1.15,14. In Gellius' later description, we also find references to well-groomed hair and an alluring gaze.

incessu adparere mollitiam? – 126.2: *quo incessus arte compositus*).[25] Most of the details in Encolpius' description (hairstyle, gaze, gait) are found in a speech from the same period by an unknown author who accuses a soldier of effeminacy ([Quintilian] *Declamationes Maiores* 3b.5: *feminam cutis curam in milite* [...] *petulantiam oculorum* […] *furtivos et oblicos intuitus* […] *crines arte compositos* […] *affectatam gestuam seu verborum mollitiem* […] *remissiorem incessum* […] *ad lenocitamentum spectare*).[26] In this light, Chrysis, in the prologue to the episode of Croton, has necessarily predetermined Encolpius' role as that of a man who may not be able to respond to the usual erotic and sexual demands. Indeed, the protagonist will act like a woman in his romantic encounters, who by definition cannot take on the active sexual role.[27] We shall have a look at some of these encounters.

Encolpius is not only presented as a soft man through the mentioned intertextualities (126.1–2). There are explicit comments on his lack of masculinity, with Chrysis taking the lead and calling Encolpius' gaze *mollis* ('soft') (126.2). The significance of this adjective is not limited to his gaze but also extends to the protagonist's sexual performance and behaviour. Later, the sorceress Proselenus will confirm that Encolpius is 'soft' when the problem of dysfunction has become apparent (134.2). Encolpius' introduction to Chrysis as a slave who prostitutes himself does not necessarily refer to erectile dysfunction. However, Chrysis' repeated reference to passivity whilst pursuing the 'slave Encolpius' on behalf of her mistress Circe may be an allusion to the absence of a sexually active role.[28] In particular, Encolpius offers himself and is 'bought' as an object for erotic purposes and for the satisfaction of others (126.1: *vendis*, 126.2: *vendas*, 126.4: *vendis*, *mercator*). In addition, passivity is reinforced through references to theatrical performances and viewing. Encolpius is likened to a group of people who are part of the lower class and are exposed, for example, in the arena on the occasion of various social events.[29] With their lascivious gaze, the women of Croton gaze at their audience, being in a more powerful position, with the result that the men become objects of viewing, a visual satisfaction for the women (126.5: *viderint*, 126.6: *histrio scaenae ostentatione traductus*). Passivity, therefore, is another characteristic that is predetermined from the beginning of the episode through Chrysis, a woman.[30]

[25] For texts in which a person's gait may imply sexual messages, cf. Dimundo (1998), 55, Schmeling (2011), 473.
[26] For the authorship and chronology of the text, see Petronius (1995) (ed. Müller), XXXV.
[27] Cf. Fedeli (1988), 68, Plaza (2000), 190–192, 323, Dimundo (2007), 184–185, Richlin (2009), 84, Karakasis (2012), 323.
[28] In part, erectile dysfunction is equated with passivity: Johnson/Ryan (2005), 163.
[29] These are people (actors and slaves) who are by definition associated with the category of femininity, see Williams (1999), 7, 31, 41.
[30] In the legal and ethical context of the imperial era, the bodies of free citizens should not be subjected to sexual penetration (except for the bodies of Roman women by their lawful husbands). The bodies that were penetrated

Another aspect of the predetermination of erectile dysfunction through women's behaviour is systematic gender reversal, that is, the management and adoption of literary motifs and models in such way that Encolpius ends up in the role normally assumed by a woman in the literary model. Chrysis plays a key role in this gender reversal, often with the procuresses of the elegiac tradition as her literary background.

Specifically, in her first encounter with Encolpius, Chrysis' descriptions resemble the advice of a procuress addressing a woman who is attempting to become a *meretrix*.[31] In such an environment, Encolpius pretends to be the elegiac *puella* ('girl') and not the lover. The same effect of gender reversal is achieved by the connection of Ovid's procuress Dipsas with the sorceresses Proselenus and Oenothea. The two elderly witches attempt to help Encolpius have sexual intercourse with Circe, while Dipsas advises the elegiac *puella* (*Amores* 1.8). Then, after the first sexual failure between Encolpius and Circe, Chrysis enables the exchanging of letters between the lovers, like Ovid's servant Nape (129.3, 129.11, *Amores* 1.11,3–5, 1.11,7–8, 1.11,17–24). The main difference, however, between Encolpius and the elegiac poetic voice is that Encolpius is not the sender of the letter. Instead, Circe, like the elegiac lover, sends her faithful servant with her letter to her lover. Ovid lets Nape advise Corinna what to reply to her lover, whereas in the case of the *Satyrica*, Chrysis advises Encolpius what to write. Here, too, the roles of man and woman are deliberately reversed. A third example of role reversal is the romantic relationship that seems to have developed between Encolpius and Chrysis at a later point in the Croton episode (139.4). In the Ovidian corpus the poetic voice is accused of having a romantic encounter with Corinna's servant Cypassis. The poet initially rejects this accusation only to admit it immediately afterwards (*Amores* 2.7,17–18, 2.7,19–28, 2.8). In the case of the *Satyrica*, it is Chrysis who initially rejects Encolpius, denying that a romantic relationship could develop between them, only to eventually succumb (126.8–10). The result of these situations is that Chrysis takes the place of the elegiac poet in the *Amores*, while Encolpius, the subject of discussion for a possible romantic relationship, takes on the role of Cypassis.

Another interesting prospect along these lines is Circe's sexual lust. The first attempt of consummation is paralleled to the ἱερὸς γάμος ('holy matrimony') scene in the *Iliad*, when

were those of slaves, with the result that sexual passivity was associated with femininity and slavery. Morally and legally, any man who prostitutes himself or takes on a confirmed sexually passive role bears the stigma of *infamia* (official dishonour), which is equivalent to defamation, social degradation, and, in some cases, the deprivation of certain rights, cf. Richlin (2009), 83. Furthermore, men who prostitute themselves are often considered equal to women who prostitute themselves, see Williams (1999), 38–47. In Roman thought, men are associated with strength and power, while slaves and women are the embodiment of the opposite of men, Williams (1999), 135.

[31] For *lenae* ('procuresses') who give extensive advice, cf. Propertius *Elegiae* 4.5,19-62, Ovid *Amores* 1.8.

Hera seduces Zeus on mount Ida (*Iliad* 14.346–351, 127.9).[32] Zeus' lust is described with the phrase *toto concepit pectore flammas* ('in his whole heart he caught flames'). This phrase usually applies to enamored women (Catullus *Carmina* 64.92, Virgil *Aeneid* 7.356, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.17).[33] Thus, it seems that Circe is not just likened to Hera in this literary example. She is paralleled with Zeus in the ἱερὸς γάμος scene. Yet again, this inversion has consequences for the protagonist Encolpius who is necessarily taking over Hera's role.

Now we should turn our attention to another important interpersonal dynamic: the sexual roles. The sexual behaviour of women highlights the sexually passive role of Encolpius. Circe, in particular, but also the other women of Croton, are characterised by a sexually active attitude, which Encolpius is unable to handle.[34] Consequently, women dominate him romantically, depriving him of the typical active sexual role of a free man.[35] This deprivation is added to the series of parameters which, through the actions of the women of Croton, contribute to the deconstruction of the stereotype of Encolpius as a sexually active man (*vir*).[36] Therefore, the protagonist's condition reflects the lack of typical male characteristics in a sexual context. This passive attitude of Encolpius reappears in the method of treatment performed by Oenothea and Proselenus, which has obvious sexual symbolism (138.2).

Circe directly and explicitly expresses her erotic passion for Encolpius, while he does not reveal similar feelings or the intention to claim the woman as a sexual partner.[37] Specifically, Circe uses the first-person singular to openly express her desire (127.4: *ego te volo*). Her intense desire is also expressed through the image of the fire that devours the women of Croton who desire men of the lowest social class (126.5: *accendis desiderium aestuantis*, *libidinem concitant*, 126.6: *accendit*, 127.7: *magna fax surgit*, 127.9: *toto concepit pectore flammas*). This image, as described mainly by Chrysis, foreshadows the peculiar role of Encolpius as an object of desire. Even Chrysis later addresses Encolpius with undisguised desire (139.4: *tu desiderium meum*, *tu voluptas mea*). However, the feelings do not seem to be reciprocal. When Circe presents her love for Encolpius through the epic model of the homonymous sorceress of Aiaia and Odysseus, she speaks only of the feelings of the Homeric

[32] See, for example, Collignon (1892), 319, Beck (1973), 58, Blickman (1988), 13, Fedeli (1988), 70–71, 76, Slater (1990), 125, 173–174, Adamietz (1995), 321–322, Conte (1996), 92–93, Connors (1998), 40–42, Setaioli (1999), 247, Plaza (2000), 195, Rimell (2002), 145–146, Setaioli (2011), 199–200, Schmeling (2011), 485, Karakasis (2012), 329.
[33] Schmeling (2011), 486.
[34] Cf. Wesolowska (2014), 216.
[35] Women who are sexually active beyond socially defined norms are considered a threat to male (sexual) superiority and power, Johnson/Ryan (2005), 163.
[36] Walters (1997), 30–32, Richlin (2009), 82–83.
[37] 132.1: *me ad se vocante* ('calling me to her') expresses Circe's natural attraction.

Circe. This choice leaves Polyaenus/Encolpius uninvolved in the feeling of love (127.7: *Polyaenon Circe amat*). The protagonist of the *Satyrica* does not seem to share the intense feelings of Circe (126.8: *me amat*), but only tries to satisfy her sexually (130.6: *placebo tibi*).[38]

During their interaction, the women take on the active erotic role, demonstrating clear dominance over Encolpius. In particular, this dominance is highlighted through the image of Circe and Oenothea taking the initiative in erotic acts, while Encolpius is limited exclusively to receiving kisses and embraces (127.7: *sume ergo amplexum*, 127.2~128.1: *osculum meum*). Initially, they openly declare their intention to engage in sexual intercourse with Encolpius and invite him to make love (131.10: *invitantem*, 134.11, 134.11: *nisi illud tam rigidum reddidero quam cornu*). Circe offers herself sexually to Encolpius, while earlier Chrysis tried to win the protagonist for her mistress (126.4: *peto*, 127.1: *concilio tibi sororem*). Then, they take the initiative for sexual acts, as shown by the corresponding verbs in the active voice in the third person singular and the personal pronoun *me* ('me') as the object. Encolpius seems almost uninvolved in the erotic act, as he is only the object of the women's erotic pursuit and sexual activity (126.7: *transilit* [...] *quaerit quod diligat*, 126.10: *osculantur*, 132.1: *me ad se vocante trahebat ad venerem*, 135.2: *me* […] *basiavit*, 139.4: *amplexuque effusissimo me invasit*).[39] Even in the narration of the sexual scene during the second encounter with Circe, there is a lack of emotion on the part of Encolpius (131.11–132.1). Contrary to the expected expressions of lust and desire to claim Circe, Encolpius simply falls into her arms and enjoys her kisses, without any record of his participation in any erotic act (131.11: *totoque corpore in amplexum eius immissus* […] *osculis fruor*).

One of the most fundamental passages regarding the sexually active role of the women is passage 127.8. Beyond Circe's initiative to initiate the sexual act (127.8: *me* [...] *deduxit in terram*), special emphasis should be placed on the expression *bracchiis mollioribus pluma* ('with arms softer than feathers') (127.8). As has been noted in the literature, the feathers to which Circe's arms are compared refer to Zeus' plumage when, as a swan, he seduces Leda.[40] Therefore, in the love scene, Circe takes on the role of the man, while Encolpius plays the role of the woman. Added to this is the special treatment of the Iliadic passage on sacred marriage in this particular scene. In the *Iliad*, the woman seduces the man, but Zeus does not remain

[38] It is not certain whether Encolpius actually feels the desire described as Zeus' emotion in passage 126.18, as Dimundo (1998), 79, claims, or whether it is a feeling that he should normally and objectively feel because of Circe's beauty, while his weapons are cast aside.
[39] Only in passage 127.10 *lusimus* ('we played amorously, we flirted') is there a hint of sexual activity on the part of Encolpius ('kissing'), which, however, referring to Catullus *Carmina* 5, serves to identify Circe with an elegiac *puella*. Even Chrysis presents herself as sexually active (126.10: *sedeo*).
[40] Setaioli (1999), 255, Karakasis (2012), 330.

passive; instead, he takes on the active sexual role that traditionally befits him. Zeus explicitly proposes sexual intercourse and then embraces his wife, just as Circe embraces Encolpius (*Iliad* 14.346). Furthermore, there is an explicit display of affection on the part of Zeus (*Iliad* 14.294, 313–316, 328). The embrace and the display of affection reinforce the reversal of sexual roles, with Circe in the position of the god.[41]

Finally, emphasis should be placed on a scene depicting an attempt to cure Encolpius' erectile dysfunction (138.1–2).[42] Specifically, it is an act in which Oenothea fictitiously assumes the role of the active lover and definitively determines the sexual role of the protagonist as that of a woman or a passive lover. She penetrates Encolpius' anus with a leather phallus, while at the same time pouring a liquid containing nettle seeds, which are referred to by the term for human sperm (*semen*) (138.1–2: *scorteum fascinum, semine, insere ano meo, perfusisque inguinibus meis*). This is a clear imitation of intense ejaculation, with large quantities of fluid, with Oenothea in the role of the man (138.2: *spargit* [...] *umore, sucum, perfusis*).[43] Encolpius is explicitly identified with the position of a woman, as evidenced by the deliberate use of the plural form of the noun *femen* to describe his thighs. This choice constitutes a deliberate pun on the homophone *femina* ('woman') (138.2).[44] As for Oenothea's sexual aggressiveness and directness, it is worth drawing attention to the meaning of the verb *caedere*, which, apart from its common use as 'to strike', also carries the meaning of 'to make love' (138.2).[45] This completes Oenothea's clearly active stance in an erotic context.

2. HOW DO THE WOMEN REACT TO ENCOLPIUS' PROBLEM?

After the occurrence of the erectile dysfunction, the women of Croton react to the protagonist's problem, evaluate it, and try to cure it. It appears that the Croton episode is part of a tradition of texts dealing with this specific condition.[46] The women's behaviour can be analysed in the context of their reaction to the condition, and, specifically, in comparison with other texts in

[41] Fedeli (1988), 68, 76, Setaioli (1999), 254.
[42] Two passages from Hipponax (fr. 41, 92 Gerber) have been cited as parallel passages, see McMahon (1998), 26–27. The first passage appears to contain a threat against a person who will be transformed into a sexually dysfunctional man. The second passage focuses on the context of the treatment of possible erectile dysfunction. The genitals and the buttocks are mentioned, but without explicit reference to the penetration of a phallus. The humiliation of placing Encolpius in the position of a passive sexual partner is comparable to the practice of Rhaphanidosis. Anal penetration with a leather phallus is not attested in relevant texts as a treatment for erectile dysfunction, see Richlin (2009), 92.
[43] Sandoz (2006), 567. Another scene of ejaculation, not of a priestess of Priapus, but of a statue of Priapus, is found in passage 60.4-6.
[44] Sandoz (2006), 567–568.
[45] Tromaras/Nikitas (2019), *caedo* 2.
[46] For an indicative corpus, see McMahon (1998), 19–59, Obermayer (1998), 255–313.

which there are reactions from romantic partners to erectile dysfunction (such as Ovid's *Amores* 3.7).[47] In addition, the women of Croton attribute Encolpius' condition to poisoning and to the sympathetic affinities between Encolpius and his environment, i.e., in terms of contamination, which is an essential part of ancient magical-religious thought. The justification and treatment of the condition has been studied and interpreted within the framework of this popular thinking (128.2: *veneficio contactus*, 131.4–5, 134.1, 137.10, 138.1–2).[48]

For the purposes of this study, I will focus on how women's behaviour renders Encolpius' erectile dysfunction a problem and a topic of discussion among the characters in this episode, highlighting the dimension of the problem as a central element of the plot. In particular, in a male-dominated society, where women are confined to the home and men occupy the public sphere, it is of paramount importance for men to fulfil all the social demands placed on their gender. Among these is the requirement to be sexually active and capable, while women are expected to be sexually passive. Once this dichotomy is disrupted due to erectile dysfunction, the social definition of masculinity is jeopardised. As a result, dysfunction threatens the position and power of men vis-à-vis women and necessitates a discussion about the place of sexually dysfunctional men in society.[49]

In the *Satyrica*, the private issue of sexual failure penetrates the public sphere, as a discussion develops about the social position of a dysfunctional man. The personal issue of sexual failure breaks down the dividing lines of privacy, and the protagonist's condition becomes a defining characteristic of his in Croton. In the Croton episode, women refer to Encolpius' condition as a punishable offense and use other related terms that express their disappointment and anger.[50] Encolpius is not only confronted with the problem itself, but is also degraded to the status of a criminal guilty of failing to fulfil his sexual obligations. This image is supported by the concept of the punishable offense (*iniuria*) and insult (132.2: *contumelia*).[51] The concept of injustice prompts Encolpius to describe his situation in legal

[47] See Hallett (2012).
[48] See McMahon (1998). The elderly witches of Croton, in contrast to the evaluation of the condition in social contexts (see Circe and Chrysis, 128.1, 128.3), treat the condition as a curse (134.1, 134.8). Magic can, of course, also be a weapon used by women to provoke erotic feelings (similarity of Proselenus' gesture to Aphrodite's removal of her embroidered breastplate, 131.4 – *Iliad* 14.214-215, 131.11: *praecantatis*, 134.11–12). In passage 134.8, Proselenus invokes luck and astrology to justify Encolpius' affliction.
[49] In ancient thought, erectile dysfunction is associated with loss of control and power, see Skinner (1992), 5. Therefore, erectile dysfunction threatens the power that is normally an integral part of a man's social role, at least as this role has been shaped by the man himself, see Johnson/Ryan (2005), 163.
[50] Based on the texts known to me, the treatment of erectile dysfunction with legal vocabulary is unusual.
[51] In some Latin texts, these two concepts also appear with the meaning of *hybris*, see Tromaras/Nikitas (2019), *contumelia* 3, *iniuria* 4b. Encolpius' crime therefore also affects the reputation of the offended women, as Encolpius seems to deny the attractiveness of Circe, as she herself believes.

terms. Specifically, Circe is the victim of injustice, as emphasised as an indisputable fact not only by herself, but also by Chrysis and Encolpius (*iniuria*, 129.8, 129.11, 131.10). Therefore, the verbs *offendere* ('to harm') (128.1) and *peccare* ('to err') (128.3) for Circe's possible transgressions to cause Encolpius' condition are meant rhetorically. On the contrary, it is Encolpius who is condemned (129.10: *convicium*) and has committed errors, as Proselenus judges (134.2: *peccare*) and he himself admits (132.4: *sciebam quid meruissem*). For these offenses, Encolpius is punished by Circe (132.2: *ultionem*, 132.3–4). In fact, a woman from Circe's circle, probably Chrysis, refers to Encolpius' offense in terms of a legal dispute (139.3: *noxam, daturumque serviles poenas, laesus, querela*).[52] Circe treats Encolpius' problem as if it were a crime, as evidenced by her choice of flogging as punishment (132.2, 4, 6: *catomizari, verberibus, verberum notas*). Earlier in the *Satyrica*, flogging is the ultimate mark of a criminal (126.10). Erectile dysfunction is presented as an illegal act, as it has negative implications for Circe and Proselenus. The attractiveness of Chrysis' mistress is publicly questioned (128.1, 128.3, 132.2: *manifestis*, 134.10), while Proselenus' magical abilities are exposed as ineffective (134.2: *mihi deos iratos excitasti*).[53] Their social roles are therefore called into question, with the result that their reputation in Croton is damaged — if the episode is understood as a plot with specific predetermined characters, such as Circe as an elegiac *puella* and Proselenus as a skilled witch. As for Circe's suspicion that Encolpius questions her beauty, this is based on several texts in which a woman's ugliness renders a man incapable of sexual intercourse (Martial 6.23, 7.75, 9.37, 11.97, Horace *Epodon Liber* 8, 12, *Carmina Priapea* 46, 57 Holzberg, 83.26–37 Bücheler = *Appendix Vergiliana Priapea* IV Fairclough). On the other hand, there are examples where a man is sexually dysfunctional despite the undeniable beauty of his partner (*Palatine Anthology* 5.47.3). Erectile dysfunction, even metaphorically, is treated as a serious offense, which is judged by women. Consequently, the issue of the condition takes on social dimensions and goes beyond the simple disappointment of an individual partner. On the contrary, a whole group of women inflates and amplifies the problem, giving it collective weight. It is significant that, apart from Oenothea, all the women in the episode of Croton use legal terminology to describe Encolpius' sexual failure. In this way, emphasis is placed on the public dimension that a legal dispute naturally has, as it involves individuals beyond the disputing parties. The acquisition of public speech in the form of legal terminology by women is radical in itself, as their gender, especially in the case of respectable *matronae* ('women,

[52] Schmeling (2011), 539.
[53] The seriousness of the questioning of Circe's beauty is shown in the metaphorical whipping (132.2: *verberata*).

often married and of a superior rank'), requires them to abstain from political life.[54] The women in the episode of Croton, apart from playing an active role in love life, now also have the opportunity to develop public discourse against Encolpius, depriving him of two basic conventional elements of a man's social role.

Encolpius' first failed romantic encounter with Circe reflects Ovid's *Amores* 3.7, as is commonly noted in relative bibliography.[55] When interpreting Petronius' text, it is necessary to take into account selected parallel points that help understand the function of the accusatory stance, mainly that of Circe towards Encolpius, and, specifically, how this reception makes Encolpius' problem one of the central issues in Croton.[56] Initially, like Circe, the poetic voice of *Amores* 3.7 poses a series of rhetorical questions in rapid succession, attempting to attribute the erectile mishap to a physical imperfection of the lover (3.7,1–2: *at*–anaphora as in 128.1: *numquid*–anaphora).[57] The poetic voice's intense preoccupation with his companion's external appearance and attractiveness corresponds to Circe's obsession with her appearance during the act of love (3.7,55–59 – 128.1, 128.3–4, 129.9). The use of the term *crimen* ('reproach', 'accusation', 'offense') (3.7,4), with which Ovid's poetic voice identifies itself, should not be overlooked. The term is in line with the legal vocabulary used by the women of Croton. Furthermore, Proselenus, like Ovid's poetic voice, explicitly attributes the problem of dysfunction to witches (3.7,29: *sagave* – 134.1: *striges*) and uses the term *nervi* ('tendons', 'muscles') for sexual energy (3.7,35 – 134.1). Finally, the sense of shame of the Ovidian poetic voice (3.7,4, 3.7,37, 3.7,66–72) and the reference to paralysis (3.7,13–16) and death as a concern (3.7,65) are also explicitly expressed by the women of Croton, who, on the one hand, treat Encolpius with contempt (132.3–4, 138.2) and, on the other hand, call him dying and paralysed (129.5–7, 131.3, 131.11, 134.2). After examining these, one gets the impression that the women of Croton condemn Encolpius in a similar way to how the poetic voice of *Amores* condemned itself for erectile dysfunction. Ovid's erectile dysfunction, from a moment of personal weakness, is externalised in Petronius and becomes a problem that is discussed publicly and addressed by other characters beyond the erotic couple. The public dimension of Encolpius' problem is also evident when compared to another point in Ovid's text. After the failure of their sexual encounter, the lover of Ovid's poetic voice takes refuge in a bath, seeking

[54] Johne (1996), 152.
[55] Indicatively: Sullivan (1968), 190, Pacchieni (1976), 86–87, Adamietz (1995), 321, Sommariva (1996), 63, Conte (1996), 99, McMahon (1998), 9, 77–85, 189–192, Courtney (2001), 155, Rimell (2002), 148–151, Panayotakis (2009), 55–56, Schmeling (2011), 471, Hallett (2012), Antoniadis (2013), 190, Bather (2016), 199–211, Agócs/Lightfoot (2023), 2.
[56] For a detailed comparison of the two texts, see Hallett (2012).
[57] Schmeling (2011), 489.

to eliminate the feeling of shame that afflicts her (3.7,83–84).[58] Circe, on the other hand, does not hide her experiences, but shares them with those close to her. In particular, Chrysis emphasises that everyone in Circe's household has sensed that their mistress is dissatisfied with Encolpius' performance (129.11). After the second failure, in fact, Circe's servants are forced to participate in Encolpius' public stigmatisation (132.2–5). In conclusion, the romantic failure is not covered up, as in Ovid's model, but the inhabitants of Croton are informed of Encolpius' problem. Encolpius' erectile dysfunction is not judged merely as a momentary transgression, but as a physical condition that will lead Encolpius to social exclusion and social death.

Encolpius is not only judged publicly, but is also placed in a social position befitting a sexually dysfunctional man.[59] The terms that present the risk of death are essentially medical terms and are not meant metaphorically (129.5, 8: *medici, medicinam*). However, by referring to this risk, the women, and especially Circe, exclude Encolpius from society. In every episode of the surviving text, Encolpius is an antihero who is not integrated into his social environment. The same is true in Croton, where erectile dysfunction marginalises him. Encolpius' social death is conveyed through the image of gradual paralysis, as seen in Circe's letter, in which Encolpius' condition is diagnosed as requiring medical treatment (129.4–9: *languori* […] *tuis pedibus perveneris domum* […] *negant enim medici sine nervis homines ambulare posse* […] *paralysin cave* […] *aegrum* [...] *misero* [...] *vis sanus esse* [...] *vale, si potes*).[60] The imminent danger of death describes Encolpius' situation (129.6–7: *magno periculo* [...] *peristi* [...] *frigus* [...] *tubicines*). Illness and death as a threat of social exclusion for Encolpius are recurring motifs when the women address him (131.3: *fastose*, 131.11: *paralytice*, 134.2: *debilis, lassus*). With his second sexual failure, Encolpius, who has already undergone various therapeutic procedures (130.7–8, 131.4–7), is now considered dead and exiled. This conclusion is based on the fact that imminent death is not used as a metaphor for his condition, but rather a tomb, in which he was recently buried and beside which he mourns with Oenothea for the impasse of his seemingly incurable erectile dysfunction (134.7: *recens bustum, lugentes*).[61] Finally,

[58] Encolpius reacts similarly, see 132.6.
[59] Malits/Fuhrer (2002), 92–93. For the social exclusion from an androcentric society, see indicative references in McMahon (1998), 10, 15. Erectile dysfunction is also used metaphorically for social marginalisation, Skinner (2005), 293.
[60] There is a belief in ancient folk thought that the knees are directly linked to sexual ability, cf. Hesiod (*Works and Days* 586-587), Alcaeus fr. 347 LP, see McMahon (1998), 25, 95.
[61] Encolpius himself notes in passage 129.1: *funerata est illa pars* ('that part was buried').

Encolpius' sexual performance is restored by the psychopomp Hermes (140.12), but there is no evidence in the text as to whether sexual restoration is accompanied by social restoration.[62]

CONCLUSION

The Croton episode is a very interesting episode in terms of interpersonal dynamics and crisis development. It is not a typical crisis, as we must always keep in mind that the narrator has a rather delicate problem which is described in colourful, comical tones. Thus, we can acknowledge the general humoristic note without devaluing Encolpius' experience as simply parodic. Furthermore, the narration is subtle, based on many allusions, certain word fields and literary reception. Coming to Croton the protagonist has already been an anti-hero multiple times in the novel, in Croton itself this situation is exacerbated. It is important that crisis often is connected to interpersonal relations. Specifically, in Encolpius' case, it is directly linked to the social definitions of being a man and a woman. Thus, Encolpius' crisis seems to be triggered by the way the women perceive him and challenge him on a sexual level. Their behaviour could be categorised as follows: subtle allusions with intertexts, literary reception, inversion of roles. We have seen that Encolpius' problem directly affects all the characters in Croton as a discussion begins about how to socially position a sexually impotent man. Illness and jurisdiction are the main word fields as the women decide to outcast him. The women in Croton seem to overpower Encolpius whilst dealing with the crisis as they decide the outcome. Thus, on the one hand we have a crisis which employs the notions of the ancient term on many different levels, but this happens in a very unusual and modern context.

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[62] See Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.238–244, on Hermes' ability to send the dead to Tartarus or bring the dead back to life. With Hermes' appearance in the *Satyrica*, the socially and metaphorically dead Encolpius returns to life. Bowersock (1994), 113 identifies in the erection the physicality of the (metaphorical) resurrection of the dead.

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Slave of Love: Interpersonal Relationship in Crisis in Herodas' 5th Mime *The Jealous Woman*

Maria Kofina

INTRODUCTION[1]

'And if I am to live | a life in slavery — so be it — | let me be, I say, a slave to love'.[2] Isn't the literary representation of the intense pathology of love, which often leads to irrational reactions, especially when unreciprocated, strikingly timeless? It is this perspective that the present paper seeks to affirm, examining a case of romantic rejection that leads to a complex interpersonal crisis, as a woman falls in love with her slave, only to ultimately become herself a slave of love.

1.1. HERODAS' MIMES

Herodas, a Hellenistic poet of the 3rd century BCE based in Alexandria, Egypt, is renowned for his *Mimes*, which first came to light on papyrus only in 1889. Herodas' mimes embody the literary and refined form of the mime genre, which is a type of dramatic comic genre that depicts everyday, often burlesque scenes in a format akin to street theatre. The more precise designation *mimiambi* for Herodas' work indicates his use of the *choliambic* verse, a choice that reflects the influence of the archaic poet Hipponax, who employed this metrical form in his satirical poetry.

Herodas' seven complete mimes — with an eighth one surviving in highly fragmentary form — vividly portray scenes of everyday life in dialogue form, frequently dramatising trivial or not so respectable incidents — an approach well aligned with the thematic conventions of the mime genre. The central figures in these works are predominantly women, while slaves appear in five of the seven mimes, either as active participants or as silent, background presences. Notably, one mime features a slave in a leading role — this is the one under examination in the present study.

[1] All ancient excerpts from Herodas' mimes and their translations cited in this paper are based on the edition and translation by Rusten/Cunningham (2002).
[2] These three translated verses constitute the concluding verses of a poem entitled 'Personal' (Προσωπικό), written by the Greek poet Michalis Gkanas. See Gkanas (1989).

1.2. THE JEALOUS WOMAN

In the 5th Mime by Herodas, titled *The Jealous Woman* (Ζηλότυπος) and consisting of 85 verses, the central characters are the free woman Bitinna and her slave, Gastron, between whom a personal conflict arises. Two additional speaking roles are also present: two other slaves of Bitinna, namely Cydilla and Pyrrhias. The text begins in medias res of the crisis, in which Bitinna, who is having an affair with Gastron, has a heated conflict with him and ardently wishes to punish him, for having cheated on her. Specifically, she orders her other male slave, Pyrrhias, to strip Gastron naked, tie him up, and take him to the place where the slaves are punished, so that he can be beaten. Later, she decides that she also wants him to be branded with a tattoo on his forehead as part of the punishment. However, due to the intervention of her female slave, Cydilla, she postpones the harsh punishments for another time.

2.1. CRISIS ANALYSIS: TYPE & LANGUAGE

2.1.1. ROMANTIC CRISIS

At first glance, the nature of this interpersonal crisis appears to be romantic. A woman has been betrayed by her lover, who has a rather speaking name. The name Gastron is derived from the word γαστήρ *(gaster)*, meaning 'belly', and could be translated as 'glutton', denoting a lecherous person who is governed by his lower pleasures.[3] In order to take revenge, Bitinna wishes to punish him harshly for shaming her, treating him not only with violence but also with vulgarity.[4] In the first three verses of the mime for example, she provocatively asks her unfaithful lover whether his sex organ is so insatiable (ὑπερκορὴς, 1)[5] that it is no longer enough for him that she moves her own legs for his sake (οὐκέτ᾽ ἀρκεῖ τἀμά σοι σκέλεα κινεῖν, 2)[6] and whether that is why he lies with another woman (1–3). Gastron initially denies all accusations (4–5) and begs her not to punish him (19).

While he is tied up, he asks for forgiveness, admitting that he made a mistake (26–27). However, Bitinna remains unmoved and continues to give orders for his punishment until he asks her, using quasi–legal terminology,[7] to verify the truth of his words (ἐλέγξασα | εἴτ᾽ ἔστ᾽

[3] Austin (1922), xvi.
[4] The name Bitinna appears frequently as a courtesan's name and could have originated from the term βία *(bia)*, meaning 'violence' [Austin (1922), xvii].
[5] Trans. 'over-full'.
[6] Trans. 'it is no longer enough for you to move my legs'.
[7] For a forensic analysis of the confrontation between Bitinna and Gastron, see Fountoulakis (2021), 37.

ἀληθέα πρῶτον εἴτε καὶ ψευδέα, 35–36).[8] She quickly silences him, reminding him that he had just admitted his wrongdoing, while he defends himself by saying he did so only to calm her anger (39). After this verse, he does not speak again until the end of the mime.

This confrontation is a typical case of a romantic crisis between two lovers, arising after the discovery of infidelity, where the betrayed partner, filled with rage and jealousy, seeks revenge on the other, who often tries to conceal his misdeed. In the field of psychology, this pattern of behaviour is associated with Post-Infidelity Stress Disorder (PISD),[9] a condition frequently marked by episodes of destructive anger, which may range from verbal outburst and yelling to physical violence and, in extreme instances, even homicide.[10] Bitinna's reactions align closely with this neurological condition, as she exhibits sadistic behaviours towards her lover functioning as a defence and coping mechanism for processing the trauma she has endured.

2.1.2. SOCIAL CRISIS

At a deeper level, however, the interpersonal crisis between these two is not only of a romantic nature but also has another dimension. The injury that Bitinna feels does not simply stem from the fact that she was betrayed by her lover, but more profoundly from the fact that the betrayer happens to be a slave. The reversal of the social status dynamics between the two characters, with the mistress being deceived by her slave, triggers the crisis that erupts in Bitinna's household.

In order to restore, as best as she can, the disturbed social balance, Bitinna uses all the authoritarian power granted to her by her social role as the owner of a slave. It is important to mention that in the Hellenistic world, women enjoy far greater liberty and privileges compared to earlier periods, and as a result, assume increased responsibilities.[11] In many cases — such as in the Herodean mime — the woman appears as the mistress of the household, independent of any male authority, and thus takes on duties traditionally assigned to men, including the restoration of domestic order through the punishment of a disobedient slave.

[8] Trans. 'proving first whether this is true or false'.
[9] The term was introduced by Ortman (2005), by analogy to the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as he identified infidelity as a traumatic event capable of significantly undermining the quality of one's life.
[10] For a specialised study on the pathology of the PISD, see Hollenbeck/Steffens (2024), while for an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of homicide subsequent to the revelation of infidelity, see Arnocky/Davis/Locke/McKelvie/Vaillancourt (2022).
[11] Regarding the status of women in the Hellenistic world, see Pomeroy (1975), 120–148.

Since slaves were regarded as property of their masters, their body was entirely subject to the slaveholders' disposal, and as such, physical violence emerged as one of the most common disciplinary practices. Whipping, chaining, branding, and tattooing were among the most frequent manifestations of violence toward slaves — most of which Bitinna appears to employ.[12] Putting emphasis on his objectification (21), she seeks to assert her dominance over the slave who has offended her. Her brutality, bordering on sadism,[13] knows no bounds: she repeatedly orders the slave Pyrrhias to strip Gastron naked (τὴν ἁπληγίδ' ἐκδύσας, 18,[14] ἔκδυθι, 20)[15] and tie him up (δῆσον, 10, 18)[16] so tightly at the elbows that they would almost break in two (σύσσφιγγε τοὺς ἀγκῶνας, ἔκπρισον δήσας, 25).[17] Shortly thereafter, she instructs him to take Gastron to the place where slaves are punished and to have him receive a thousand lashes on his back and another thousand on his stomach (χιλίας μὲν ἐς τὸ νῶτον ἐγκόψαι | […] χιλίας δὲ τῆι γαστρί, 33–34),[18] a command she furiously repeats also later (χιλίας ὦδε | καὶ χιλίας ὦδ' ἐμβαλεῖν, 48–49).[19] Her demand to summon a tattooer to brand an inscription on Gastron's forehead is the ultimate expression both of his humiliation and of her absolute dominance over him (ἐλθεῖν τὸν στίκτην, 65,[20] ἐν τῶι μετώπωι τὸ ἐπίγραμμ' ἔχων, 79).[21] Nevertheless, perhaps the most insidious form of violence lies in the public shaming that Bitinna strives to impose upon Gastron, since she fervently desires to disgrace the disobedient slave throughout the land (καταικίσασα τῆι σ' ὅληι χώρηι, 12).[22] This punitive method — widely prevalent and favoured in antiquity — appeared particularly effective, as it also succeeded in intimidating other slaves.[23]

Through all these actions, Bitinna seeks to mitigate the damage inflicted upon her social role by a social inferior. Gastron implores his mistress to show mercy and relieve him from the torture by falling at her knees (μὴ μή, Βίτιννα, τῶν σε γουνάτων δεῦμαι, 19);[24] yet she remains unyielding. However, the deeper reason for her behaving so brutally towards her slave is not merely to instil fear in him into not repeating the offense, but much more because she herself

[12] For more details of both verbal and physical violence towards slaves, see Hunt (2016).
[13] For an analysis of sadism in Hellenistic poetry, see Hose (2009).
[14] Trans. 'take off his cloak'.
[15] Trans. 'take it off'.
[16] Trans. 'tie him'.
[17] Trans. 'Bind his elbows tightly; saw them off with the ties'.
[18] Trans. 'a thousand blows into his back and a thousand to his belly'.
[19] Trans. 'a thousand here and a thousand here'.
[20] Trans. 'the tattooer to come'.
[21] Trans. 'he has this inscription on his forehead'.
[22] Trans. 'make you an example to the whole country'.
[23] Hunt (2016), 136.
[24] Trans. 'No, no, Bitinna, by your knees, I beg you'.

fears the disruption of the established order that distinguishes slaves from free people. She, like all slaveholders in antiquity, remains haunted by the persistent fear of becoming unable to preserve the social hierarchy that gives her existence its very meaning — for to be a master necessarily entails being master over someone.[25]

2.1.3. IDENTITY CRISIS

As demonstrated thus far, the interpersonal conflict between the two protagonists arises both from the romantic crisis and from the social one, which were triggered by the disclosure of the slave's infidelity. However, it is the intersection of those two forms of crises that deepens the issue: the fact that a free woman and her slave have engaged in a sexual relationship challenges their very moral values, ultimately resulting in a profound identity crisis.

In the context of erotic relations in ancient Greece, sexuality is not determined by the object of desire, but rather by the role each participant assumes within the sexual act. Specifically, the penetrated partner is attributed the feminine gender role, while the penetrator the masculine one — irrespective of their biological sex. Consequently, the active sexual partner is associated with notions of power and dominance, whereas the passive is aligned with subordination and submission.[26] In the case of Herodas' 5th Mime, given that the relationship depicted is heterosexual, Gastron assumes the gender role of the penetrator, while Bitinna that of the penetrated partner. This dynamic destabilises their social roles and generates a significant confusion of identities: although Bitinna as a free woman holds social superiority over her slave, she becomes sexually subordinate, whereas Gastron, despite his inferior social status, exerts dominance through his active role in the sexual encounter.

It is precisely this injury to her reputation, and thereby to her identity, that Bitinna seeks to heal, resorting to obscene language and acts of violence against Gastron. Notably, she does not refrain from directing blame towards herself, as she was the one that placed him among humans (14–15). By this, she implies that by making a slave her lover, she simultaneously elevated him to the status of a human, as he asserted sexual dominance over a free woman, and degraded herself by assuming the sexually passive role with someone of servile status.[27] Her humiliation, however, both as a woman and as a mistress, reaches its peak when her slave ultimately betrays her by engaging in an affair with another woman!

[25] On the fear of slaves, see duBois (2007).
[26] The terms 'active' and 'passive' are used within the conceptual framework of ancient sexual ideologies. For a detailed study on ancient sexual attitudes, see Dover (1989).
[27] Konstan (1989), 273 and Fountoulakis (2007), 259–260.

The confusion in which both characters are immersed seems to extend even to the language employed, particularly evident in their use of the terms ἄνθρωπος (human) and δούλος (slave). Bitinna, for instance, after asserting that she herself has placed Gastron 'among humans' (σε θεῖσ' ἐν ἀνθρώποις, 15),[28] points out shortly thereafter that he must recognise his true nature as a *slave* (εἰ<ς> δοῦλος, 20),[29] adding that she purchased him for three *mina*. At one point, she even mockingly refers to him as a 'sevenfold slave' (ἑπτάδουλον, 75).[30] Nevertheless, just three verses later, she declares her intent to have a tattoo inscribed on his forehead, as this *human* has failed to understand himself (οὐκ οἶδεν, | ἄνθρωπος ὤν, ἑωυτόν, 77–78).[31] This statement stands in strong contrast to her earlier claim that he is, in fact, a slave. This inconsistency not only disorients the reader but also mirrors the inner turmoil and possible disarray that Bitinna herself may be experiencing. This equation that Bitinna subtly makes here between Gastron's social status and her own eventually reflects her own identity crisis.

On the other hand, Gastron initially acknowledges that, as a slave he is entirely at his mistress disposal, to be treated in whatever way she wishes (δοῦλός εἰμι, 6).[32] Later, however, when begging the ruthless Bitinna for mercy, he exclaims that he is human and therefore fallible (ἄνθρωπός εἰμ', 27).[33] Some scholars have interpreted his self-identification as human as a way to distinguish himself from the divine, highlighting that he, unlike a god, is capable of error.[34] While this interpretation may hold, the fact that the conversation heavily centres on his transcendence from a servile status to that of a human lends his statement a different, perhaps provocative, nuance, one that may be construed as a manifestation of his own identity crisis.[35]

Moreover, of particular interest is the use of the word ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*), meaning 'error', by both protagonists. Each of them acknowledges having erred: Bitinna, who made her slave her lover, elevating him, thereby, to the status of human (ἐξήμαρτον, 16),[36] and Gastron, who cheated on her (ἄφες μοι τὴν ἁμαρτίην ταύτην, 26,[37] ἥμαρτον, 27).[38] The actions of the

[28] Trans. 'by having set you among men'.
[29] Trans. 'you are a slave'.
[30] Trans. 'sevenfold son of slaves'.
[31] Trans. 'though human, he does not know himself'.
[32] Trans. 'I am a slave'.
[33] Trans. 'I am human'.
[34] Headlam/Knox (1922), 241.
[35] Of particular interest are the three qualities Stern attributes to Gastron — those of the slave, the male, and the human — each of which he further associates with a different type of punishment: 'That he is her slave she demonstrates by having him bound […] and by threatening an impossibly harsh beating […]; that he is male she demonstrates by having him stripped naked […]; that finally he is ἄνθρωπος she threatened to demonstrate by having him tattooed with the Delphic motto […]' [Stern (1981), 207–209].
[36] Trans. 'I was wrong'.
[37] Trans. 'excuse me this mistake'.
[38] Trans. 'I went wrong'.

two protagonists appear to conform, as Fountoulakis observes, to the Aristotelian definition of *hamartia* as a fault stemming from lack of self-restraint or misevaluation — an act which, though morally wrong and harmful, is not committed with malicious intentions.[39] At a first level, their error lies in their uncontrollable erotic desire, which led to social and identity crisis, as shown: Bitinna, lacking self–restraint, slept with a slave, and Gastron, equally driven by erotic passion for somebody else, betrayed his mistress. Upon closer examination, however, their greater error is their misunderstanding of each other's actual social roles, a factor that allowed them to engage in these acts, wounding the traditional social values.

Another key element Aristotle attributes to *hamartia* within the context of tragedy is its role in leading a character — who is neither exceptionally good nor bad — from happiness into misery.[40] In Herodas' case, however, the situation differs, as the literary genre is comic and aims at provoking laughter rather than evoking pity and fear. Although both protagonists of the mime experience intense emotions such as anger, jealousy and shame, the situation portrayed is one that will, sooner or later, be brought under control and pacified. Their lack of self-restraint does not result in irreversible disaster; instead, it is parodied through the representation of both the nature of their transgression and the way it is addressed, thus aligning with the conventions of the comic genre of mime.[41]

2.2. CRISIS ANALYSIS: SOLUTION

What is the outcome of this crisis? Where does this relentless conflict, now resorting to violence, finally lead? The intervention of a third party finally provides a solution and prevents further harm. This intervention comes from the slave Cydilla,[42] who manages to persuade her mistress to postpone the severe punishment for a later time. Cydilla speaks for the first time in the mime when Bitinna orders her to call back her fellow slave, Pyrrhias, who is dragging Gastron across the streets, as Bitinna has just decided to add the torment of tattooing to his punishments. Cydilla then calls out to Pyrrhias, reprimanding him for the brutal way he is dragging his fellow slave and cursing him to find himself in chains once again if he continues to act this way (55–62). Subsequently, she intervenes in Bitinna's actions, respectfully begging her to leave Gastron and to forget his 'error' (ἀμαρτίην, 73). Her response reflects a woman

[39] Fountoulakis (2021), 6.
[40] Arist. *Po.* 1453a [Halliwell/Fyfe/Innes/Rhys Roberts/Russell (1995), 70].
[41] Fountoulakis (2021), 29, 35.
[42] The name Cydilla is likely derived from the word κύδος or κῦδος (*kydos*), meaning 'glory', and, as Austin notes, it is etymologically appropriate to the individual character, since Cydilla appears to wield the greatest influence over all other figures of the mime [Austin (1922), xvi].

who feels compassion for her fellow slave and is critical of another slave who mistreats his peer.

In order to persuade Bitinna, Cydilla appeals to her emotions, specifically wishing that her daughter marries and gives her grandchildren, if she now shows generosity to Gastron and forgives him (69–73). Bitinna, however, remains unyielding until Cydilla mentions that a religious festival is approaching in five days, implying that punishments are not permitted during this time (80). This is enough to persuade Bitinna to compromise by postponing the punishment until the festival period has passed, granting Cydilla's request, as she puts it, with whom she has an emotional bond, since she raised her from a young age (81–85).

What is especially intriguing about this successful intervention is that it comes from a slave. For the second time, Bitinna finds herself guided by a slave, ultimately giving in to the slave's demands. It is irrelevant whether she insists that she will carry out the punishment after the festival or explains that she is granting Cydilla's request out of emotional attachment. The essential point is the outcome: once again, Bitinna fails to understand her social role and cannot resist the emotional manipulation she experiences.

Cydilla constitutes yet another figure in this mime who appears to transcend her assigned social role, thereby disrupting the established social hierarchy. Her intervention in both the world of slaves — through criticising Pyrrhias — and the world of free people — through preventing Bitinna from punishing harshly Gastron — affirms her liminal, transgressive role that operates between these two realms.[43]

3. DELINEATION

In delineating the two principal characters involved in this interpersonal crisis, the female protagonist is depicted as authoritarian, tyrannical, and aggressive in her handling of her slave's error, since she exhibits vulgar and violent behaviour towards him. This stems from her feelings of anger and humiliation, both as the owner of a slave who deceived her and as a woman betrayed by her lover. An underlying, perhaps unconscious, sense of fear may likewise be present within the dynamics of the master–slave relationship. Moreover, the fact that she finally surrenders to the wishes of her female slave as well, reveals a profound lack of balance in all aspects of her decision-making.[44] Gastron, on the other hand, is also prone to bodily pleasures

[43] Stern (1981), 210.

[44] Bitinna misevaluates the social role of all three of her slaves, thereby committing a threefold *hamartia* in Aristotelian terms. As Stern elucidates, 'Gastron, a slave, had been raised by becoming his mistress' lover to a higher status as ἄνθρωπος and had then overextended himself into ἁμαρτία. Cydilla, a slave […] had through her

and shows audacity in attempting to gaslight his mistress. Nonetheless, he also feels fear when he realises the extent of his punishment.

Additionally, a key trait shared by both protagonists is their lack of self-restraint, which leads them to flawed perceptions and misguided decisions, as already shown.[45] The classical value of moderation, which permeates every aspect of ancient Greek life, is inverted in this Hellenistic mime — particularly through the figure of Bitinna, who, as a free independent woman, would be expected to uphold moderation without exception. As aptly noted by Konstan, 'she violates the Classical (Athenian) ideal of management both of herself, by submitting to be ruled by her baser passions, and of her domestic establishment, by elevating a slave to the position of consort'.[46] This subverted and thus parodied dramatic situation beyond serving the comic purpose of the mime genre, also reflects the tendency of Hellenistic literature to deviate from the ideals of the Classical world.

Lastly, another common characteristic that defines them is the deconstruction of each one's gender stereotype — a theme in alignment with the world of Hellenistic literature, where characters with fluid gender identities are frequently depicted.[47] Fountoulakis further elaborates on this concept, demonstrating that '[Gastron's] biological sex appears unable to help him overcome the barriers set by his social status. Similarly, Bitinna's sexual subordination to her male slave cannot overshadow the superiority imposed on her by social rank'[48] and ends by affirming that 'gender operates as a social construction developed mainly within a culturally produced system of social hierarchy and power'.[49] Consequently, the gender stereotypes traditionally linked to their biological sex are, on the one hand, subverted by their respective social positions; on the other hand, their social statuses are likewise destabilised as a result of the *hamartia* committed by both protagonists. Thus, their identities assume a degree of fluidity that blurs the boundaries regarding which gender ultimately holds dominance within the dynamics of their relationship.

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mistress' love been raised even above the status of 'human' to become a foster-daughter to Bitinna […]. She now extends herself to speak boldly to her own mistress […]. Pyrrhias too, […] had once been enchained in a servile position below that which he presently holds […]; he too had been raised (we may naturally assume by his owner Bitinna) and now overextends himself in his violent treatment of Gastron' [Stern (1981), 209–210].

[45] Cf. 2.1.3.

[46] Konstan (1989), 280.

[47] On gender fluidity in Hellenistic literature, see Burton (1995).

[48] Fountoulakis (2007), 263.

[49] Fountoulakis (2007), 264.

4. INTERTEXTUALITY: *THE ADULTERESS*

Finally, worth noting is the significant influence that this particular mime had on a later anonymous popular mime, titled *The Adulteress* (Μοιχεύτρια), originating from the imperial period and dated to the 2nd century CE.[50] The plot centres on a mistress who desires her slave Aesopus, but he rejects her due to his love for another slave. Enraged, the mistress orders brutal punishments, including their supposed execution, and later conspires with a trusted slave to murder everyone in the household, beginning with her husband through poisoned wine. However, her plans are thwarted by two other slaves, who orchestrate a series of deceptions, including the substitution of the poison and the staging of false deaths. In the end, her husband survives, exposes the mistress' crimes, and restores order, likely leading to the mistress' punishment and a final celebratory song.

The thematic parallels with Herodas' 5th Mime are particularly striking, with the dominant motif built upon a woman who desires a slave, only to be rejected in favour of another woman, thereby provoking a response marked by violence — verging on sadism. More specifically, the protagonist of the *Adulteress* orders the slave to be whipped (μαστιγία,[51] 7;[52] τὰς μάστιγ(ας), 9; 10)[53] and bound (προσδήσατε, 16),[54] strongly reminiscent of the cruel actions of Bitinna. However, the mistress in the anonymous mime appears to be even more vulgar (με βινήσηι, 3;[55] ὁ ἐμός σοι κύσθ(ος) σκληρότερ(ος) ἐφάνη τῶι γυναικε(ίωι) γέν(ει) συντεθραμμ(ένωι), 15)[56] and crude than the jealous Bitinna, as she goes a step further by actually commanding the slave and his lover to be dragged to the trees, where they will be hanged together to die (16). It should as well be emphasised that the majority of the characters in both mimes are slaves, whose actions are crucial in advancing the plot and shaping its outcome. In a manner analogous to Cydilla's intervention to calm Bitinna's rage and save her fellow slave, two slaves in the anonymous mime intervene in their mistress' plans by deceiving her in order to save their master, whom she intends to kill.

Although romantic desire and the ensuing anger occupy only a portion of the overall plot of the *Adulteress* — marking a key difference from Herodas' mime, which deals exclusively with this theme — a similarly multifaceted interpersonal crisis unfolds, closely

[50] Tsitsiridis (2011), 186.
[51] All ancient excerpts from the popular mime *The Adulteress* and their translations cited in this paper are based on the edition and translation by Rusten/Cunningham (2002).
[52] Trans. 'whips'.
[53] Trans. 'the whips'.
[54] Trans. 'tie them'.
[55] Trans. 'fuck me'.
[56] Trans. 'my cunt has appeared harsher to you who were raised in womanly fashion'.

resembling the situation in the *Jealous Woman*. The violent outburst of the mistress reflects, on the one hand, the romantic crisis caused by the rejection and jealousy she experiences, and, on the other, the social crisis that arises from the fact that the one who has wounded her pride is her own slave, thereby disrupting the established social hierarchy. Much like Bitinna, the mistress attempts to restore order and balance in her household by resorting to the murder of the slave. Her excessive rage leads her to irrational decisions, including a conspiracy to kill everyone within her household, her own husband among them. However, her plan is ultimately exposed by two of her slaves, and in the end, it is the mistress herself who is punished. Social order is once again reversed: the slaves seize control and treat their mistress in the same punitive manner she had earlier intended for them. The resulting identity crisis, wherein the distinctions between the statuses of masters and slaves are fluid and blurred, remains a central thematic concern here as well.

Even though the *Adulteress* and the *Jealous Woman* differ both in their textual form — where the anonymous mime is considered the individualised script intended to be read for the role of the mistress,[57] in contrast to the more fully developed compositions of Herodas — and in terms of their quality — where Herodas' mimes represent the literary form of mime, as opposed to the popular mime, the *Adulteress* — the striking thematic similarities lead to the conclusion that the later mime must have been aware of Herodas' work and was influenced by the interpersonal conflicts that serve the comic purpose of the mime genre.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this paper has attempted to show how Herodas' 5th Mime presents an interpersonal relationship in a multi-layered crisis. Initially, infidelity leads to a romantic crisis, manifested through vulgar language and violent threats. Gradually, however, violence escalates reflecting a broader social crisis triggered by the disruption of established hierarchies and the ensuing fear of a permanent inversion of social order. At a third level, the *hamartia* committed by both central characters — namely, their confusion regarding their own ontological statuses — results in a profound identity crisis. At the pivotal moment, just before the slave faces his most humiliating punishment, the intervention of a liminal figure further highlights the female protagonist's disorientation. The analysis also shed light on the aspects of the heroes' lack of

[57] Tsitsiridis (2011), 197.

self-restraint and the deconstruction of traditional gender roles, both operating as inverted versions of classical ideals.

At the same time, although the suffering of the characters involved in this crisis may be painful and psychologically devastating, Herodas presents it in a comic and mocking manner. Through vulgar language and slapstick violence — elements that traditionally entertain the audience at the heroes' expense — he successfully elicits laughter. Nevertheless, the text is far from simplistic: it represents a refined and sophisticated version of the mime genre. As is well known, Herodas' mimes were aimed at an educated audience, which explains the meticulous attention to language and verse, as well as the psychological and social plausibility in the portrayal of human reactions under crisis. Thus, in blending entertainment with literary refinement, Herodas — a *poeta doctus* of the Hellenistic period — innovates within the genre of mime, not highly esteemed until him. The 5th Mime, in particular, seems to have laid fertile ground for the development of later mimes with similar plots, such as *The Adulteress*.

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PART IV: Family Crises in Ancient Greek Literature

Fractured Bonds: The Crisis of Kinship in the Inheritance of Hagnias

Roberta Dainotto

INTRODUCTION[1]

Crisis in the ancient Greek world represented a multifaceted, pervasive and all-encompassing phenomenon, typically triggered by unforeseen and destabilising events that significantly affected society and its members. These events frequently emerged from conflicts between individuals and/or communities. Their magnitude was directly proportional to the extent of their impact on the system they disrupted, and their relevance was consistent with the idiosyncrasies of the legal procedures that framed them. Since crises occurred at an economic, political, and social level, investigating them is crucial to understanding ancient society, the interpersonal dynamics that led to ruptures and the broader implications of such events reverberating through public and private domains. When these ruptures occurred within the *oikos*, they symbolised pivotal moments that reconfigured family structures. Generally, they followed the development of jarring situations among its members and the abrupt dissolution of a previous state of order. The *oikos*, being a foundational institution that structured social, domestic and economic life and that functioned as a scaled mirror of the polis, exemplifies a vital lens through which to analyse how Athenians were involved in interpersonal tensions in private affairs and how they handled complex family dynamics.[2]

Far from being a static unit, the *oikos* was a lively entity, continually reshaped by the historical and familial circumstances in which it was embedded.[3] It may be defined as an elaborate institution and a jural–political structure wherein variously related individuals coexisted, interacted and expressed their rights, responsibilities, and social roles. The intricate nature of the *oikos* was evident in its composition: it included not only the nuclear family but also enslaved people, orphaned children, and relatives who were no longer part of their original households.[4] The sheer diversity of an *oikos* suggests a varied network of relationships and interactions between its members, which, at times, could encourage the emergence of fault lines

[1] For the text of Isaeus 11 I use the edition and translation of Edwards (2007) and for [Demosthenes] 43 I use that of Scafuro (2011).
[2] On the interdependence and mutual derivation between family and polis, see Lacey (1968), 73–76, Sealey (1987), 29, Pomeroy (1997), Patterson (1998), Strauss (1993), 36–53, Roy (1999), 1–17, Brock (2013), 25–42, Kapparis (2019), 117–119, Ojakangas (2020), 1–17.
[3] Cf. Kapparis (2019), 120.
[4] See MacDowell (1989), 10–21, Cox (1998), 130–208.

leading to animosities. As Roy aptly observed, the *oikos* 'could be deeply divided, and might therefore generate stress for the household rather than giving it strength'.[5] Whereas an *oikos* naturally sought to preserve its internal stability, such balance was not guaranteed, and individuals often became entangled in interpersonal rifts that endangered the stability and the cohesion of kinship ties. The disruption of the domestic order threatened the continuity of lineage, the transmission of property, and ultimately the household's identity. A primary cause for the rise of crises in the *oikos* was the individual pursuit of personal gain at the expense of other relatives, which arose in cases concerning inheritance when some members disputed their proximity to deceased kin. These crises display a realm where personal ambitions, family obligations, and legal ambiguity intersect.

This article examines intra-family crises, specifically focusing on inheritance conflicts in which individuals challenge kinship by attempting to establish their proximity to the deceased. In doing so, they devote significant attention to interpreting the laws governing succession and genealogical reconstructions to establish their role as heirs, regardless of their actual legitimacy and overlooking legal boundaries.[6] Before discussing interpersonal feuds within the *oikos,* it is important to emphasise that each family was considered to descend from a common ancestor, from whom it was possible to trace a genealogical tree that formed a kindred unit governed by a defined hierarchy known as *anchisteia.*[7] This network encompassed all family members, distinguishing between close and more distant kin. It composed related individuals from paternal and maternal lines and ranked them according to proximity. A brief outline of the succession rules in classical Athens will help us better understand the breaking point that marks the onset of family crises.

1. *OIKOS* AND THE LAW OF *ANCHISTEIA*

The head of each *oikos* was the *kyrios*, who managed the household's resources and had power, responsibility, and authority over the members and property of his family.[8] Upon his death, he was succeeded by his legitimate male descendant (*ekgonos, gnesios uios*), whether natural (*homaimos*) or adopted (*eispoiesis*), who was appointed to continue the *oikos*. If a *kyrios* had

[5] Roy (1999), 3.
[6] For an overview of inheritance laws and practices, see Ruschenbusch (1962), 307–311, Asheri (1963), 1–21, Lacey (1968), 125–150, MacDowell (1978), 92–108, (1989), 10–21, Cox (1989), 34–46, Foxhall (1989), 22–44, Just (1989), 83–104, Todd (1993), 216–231, Gagliardi (2002), 5–59, Humphreys (2002), 340–347, Kapparis (2019), 163–181.
[7] On *anchisteia*, see Harrison (1968), 143–149, MacDowell (1978), 98–99, Cantarella (2011), 337–339, Littman (1979), 5–31.
[8] See Lacey (1968), 21–22, MacDowell (1978), 84–86.

more than one child, the estate was divided equally among them, each establishing a new *oikos* genealogically linked to the original (*klēronomia kata genos*, see Is. 6.26, [D.] 43.19, D. 36.11, [D.] 48.12–13). Thus, through perpetual divisions, the foundational *oikos* evolved into several branches. Whenever a *kyrios* had a daughter, succession followed a slightly different logic (see Pl. *Lg*. 924d-e, And. 1.117–119, Is. 1.39, [D.] 43.54). When the *kyrios* died, his daughter became an *epiklēros*.[9] She was always under the guardianship of a man (either an appointed guardian or a close relative) who would provide for her safety and find her a husband if she was unmarried or widowed (see Is. 3.42, 48, 68, 74, 10.13). If she were the only child, her future husband was adopted into her family and became his wife's tutor and father of her heir (*thugatridous*) until their offspring reached adulthood and could become the direct descendant of the maternal *oikos* ([D.] 46.20).[10] Thus, women were expected to give birth to a son who would inherit their father's property and continue the *oikos*. Without direct descendants or an uncontested will, the deceased's property passed to his nearest kin through the bilateral kindred system, with male relatives prioritised in each generational tier. The law outlining this structure is preserved in [Demosthenes] 43.51, though the surviving version is incomplete and textually corrupt: [11]

> 'Νόμος
> ὅστις ἂν μὴ διαθέμενος ἀποθάνῃ, ἐὰν μὲν παῖδας καταλίπῃ θηλείας, σὺν ταύτῃσιν, ἐὰν δὲ μή, τούσδε κυρίους εἶναι τῶν χρημάτων. ἐὰν μὲν ἀδελφοὶ ὦσιν ὁμοπάτορες: καὶ ἐὰν παῖδες ἐξ ἀδελφῶν γνήσιοι, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς μοῖραν λαγχάνειν: ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀδελφοὶ ὦσιν ἢ ἀδελφῶν παῖδες, * * * ἐξ αὐτῶν κατὰ ταὐτὰ λαγχάνειν: κρατεῖν δὲ τοὺς ἄρρενας καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῶν ἀρρένων, ἐὰν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν ὦσι, καὶ ἐὰν γένει ἀπωτέρω. ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ὦσι πρὸς πατρὸς μέχρι ἀνεψιῶν παίδων, τοὺς πρὸς μητρὸς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς κατὰ ταὐτὰ κυρίους εἶναι. ἐὰν δὲ μηδετέρωθεν ᾖ ἐντὸς τούτων, τὸν πρὸς πατρὸς ἐγγυτάτω κύριον εἶναι. νόθῳ δὲ μηδὲ νόθῃ μὴ εἶναι ἀγχιστείαν μήθ' ἱερῶν μήθ' ὁσίων ἀπ' Εὐκλείδου ἄρχοντος'.

[9] On *epiklēros* see Gans (1824), 338–339, Harrison (1968), 9–12, 105–107, 113, 117, 132–138, 193–196, 309–311, Schaps (1975), 53–57, MacDowell (1978), 95–98, Gould (1980), 41–42, Sealey (1990), 24, Rubinstein (1993), 87–104, Lambert (1993), 178–188, Ferrucci (2006), 190–192, 194–197, Kapparis (2019), 169–171. On the *epiklēros'* dowry, see Wolff (1944), 43–95, Blundell (1995), 115–116, Schaps (1979), 74–88, Biscardi (1988), 225–235, Foxhall (1989), 22–44, Ingalls (2002), 246–254.

[10] Asheri (1963), 16 describes an *epiklēros'* husband as 'a pious' individual. See [D.] 43.12–14, 46.20, Is. 3.73, 8.31, 10.12, 11.49, fr. 25 Talheim; cf. Hyp. fr. 192 Blass, Plu. *Sol*. 20.2–5; cf. Men. *Aspis* 258–273. See Rubinstein (1993), 88–92, Lindsay (2011), 347–348. In the case of divorce, a husband had to return his wife's dowry to her new *kyrios*. See Harrison (1968), 108–109, Lacey (1968), 108–109, Pomeroy (1975), 64–65, MacDowell (1978), 88, Millett (1991), 62–63.

[11] Its provisions are discussed in Is 6.46, 7.20–22, 11.1–3, 11–13, where the law is either partially mentioned or paraphrased.

[law]

Whenever a man dies without leaving a will, if he leaves behind female children, [the estate goes] with them,[85] but if not, the following are entitled to have the estate. If there are brothers [of the deceased] born of the same fathers, and legitimate children are born of the brothers, they are to obtain their father's portion. And if there are no brothers or children of brothers * * * <those born>[12] from them are to receive a portion in the same way. And the males are to take precedence, and the children born from the males, if they are from the same [direct ascendants], even if they are further away regarding kin circle. And if there are no [kinsmen] on the father's side [of the deceased] as far as the children of cousins, those on the mother's side are entitled to inherit similarly. And if there is [no one] on either side within these [kin circles], the one who is nearest on the father's side is entitled to inherit. And there is no right of succession [*anchisteia*] for any illegitimate child, male or female, either regarding religious rites or civic privileges, from the time of the archonship of Eucleides.[13]

This law details the deceased's successors following a strict hierarchical order.[14] The text as it stands does not allow us to determine how far *anchisteia* extends and presents a certain level of ambiguity, such as around the interpretation of the dictate 'children of cousins'. In fact, the term *anepsios* encompasses both first and second cousins. Hence, it is not clear whether it refers to 'children of first cousins' or 'children of a parent's first cousin'. This vagueness was mainly because 'Athenian laws were not tightly worded',[15] thereby enabling interpretative flexibility, which created the space for interpersonal rifts to emerge among kin who arrogated to themselves the right to succeed the deceased based on their alleged legitimacy according to the law of succession.[16] It could be argued that although the law's content and authoritative truth were based on the existing definition and may have been clear to its drafters, they ultimately

[12] Several scholars have tried to fill the gap in the text (marked by the asterisks). See Lipsius (1905–1915), 553 and n. 43, Wyse (1904), 680, Harrison (1968), 130–149, Scafuro (2011), 27–30 and n. 56, 58.
[13] The translation is from Scafuro (2011).
[14] The law starts referring to *epiklēroi*. Sons are not mentioned, either because the law has been abbreviated or since they could succeed the deceased father without applying to the Archon, making the reference to them superfluous.
[15] Edwards (2008), 51.
[16] For a discussion about the confusion generated by this terminology, see Wyse (1904), 566–569, Harrison (1968), 144–147 and 146 n. 2, Todd (1993), 217–221, Cohen (1995), 178–179, Scafuro (2011), 27–28 and n. 57.

failed to express it unambiguously, rendering it 'bewilderingly vague'.[17] As a consequence, individuals interested in succeeding a deceased were able to arbitrarily interpret the law of succession at their convenience, to reach a *desideratum*.[18]

The questionability of one's entitlement to the estate could become complicated by the evolving dynamics within a family. Changes such as marriages, adoptions, births and divorces shift individuals' positions and further alter the structure of the *oikos*. This constant evolution demonstrates that the *oikos* was never static. Within this context, aspiring successors often felt unconstrained by rigid kinship structures. The absence of direct heirs created a competitive environment where 'a contest open to all in which no result was final' allowed participants to challenge prior claims whenever they deemed it fit.[19]

Legal records indicate that succession disputes, particularly in the absence of surviving adult male heirs, could escalate into significant conflicts, undermining familial cohesion and leading to internal crises. Various kin, motivated by their interests in the estate, exploited the fluidity of the *oikos* to assert their demands, reshaping family ties according to their convenience rather than adhering to strict guidelines and manipulating the succession law. Thus, the smaller scale of individual concerns was mutually linked to the broader dynamics of the entire *oikos*.

In what follows, I discuss two case studies in which the law of succession is interpreted differently by litigants who manipulate its clauses to serve their purposes, and relationships are complicated by an articulate *stemma*. The long-term effects of these disruptions depict an *oikos* marked by resilience and vulnerability.

2. MANIPULATING KINSHIP: THE CASE OF HAGNIAS

In the previous pages, I argued that despite the law of *anchisteia* being intended to define the order of succession unquestionably, individuals involved in inheritance trials exploited its vague framework and linguistic ambiguities, making its clauses open to interpretive contention and a source of forensic wrangling. To illustrate how litigants manipulated the law of *anchisteia* and how it was open to a range of plausible interpretations, I will examine two successive legal contests concerning the same estate: *On the Estate of Hagnias* (Isaeus 11) and *Against Macartatus* ([Demosthenes] 43). Both speeches deal with the same genealogical framework.

[17] Scafuro (2011), 124. Cf. MacDowell (1978), 107, Cohen (1995), 178.
[18] On the manipulation and indeterminacy of Athenian law, see Sickinger (2008), 99–112, Harris (2000), 27–79, Aviles (2011), 19–42, Arnaoutoglou (2017), 129–158, (2018), 181–197, Hatzilambrou (2018), 336–351.
[19] Cohen (1995), 163.

The litigants involved in these trials were related to a various degree with the deceased, Hagnias II, and, basing their claims on *anchisteia*, respectively sought to prove that they were his only suitable heirs.[20]

The case concerning the succession of Hagnias II is particularly articulated, especially given the many contenders who clashed with each other throughout the years. Before delving into the specifics of the cases, it is helpful to learn more about this *oikos* to understand the relationships between the claimants and the deceased. The speakers reconstruct the family tree as far as Bouselus of the deme Oeum Ceramicum, Hagnias II's great-grandfather, providing an overview of the *stemma* by referencing only persons directly involved in the cases and displaying the extent of the familial crisis. In this way, speakers offer a cohesive conceptual framework to illustrate the onset of enmity between family members.

Bouselus of Oeum sired five sons. Upon his death, his estate was divided among his offspring. Each son established an independent household and his own group of descendants ([D.] 43.19). These brothers, with their wives, children, and grandchildren, lived separately, each possessing their own property. Thus, five *oikoi* came from one original *oikos* and headed five independent families. The resulting *oikoi* maintained their common lineage and connection, forming an extended network. The depiction of these *oikoi* suggests the entangled relationships between relatives and clarifies the composite structure within which the feud occurred. As Scafuro rightly notes — referring to the speech *Against Macartatus* —, the speaker 'is not presenting a mere genealogical table of families but something more sophisticated, namely, a word picture of 'successional genealogy'.[21] In a sense, he is boxing the 'circles of inheritance' with separate houses filled with linear descendants as far as children of first cousins'. The spare references to the *stemma* enable the litigants to outline family connections and craft compelling arguments that underscore their proximity to the deceased.

One of these sons, Hagnias I, fathered Polemon and possibly Phylomache I, though the latter's parentage is questioned by Theopompus ([D.] 43.21, 29, 39–40; cf. Is. 11.17). Polemon was the father of Hagnias II, whose valuable estate continued to be feuded over throughout the first three quarters of the fourth century. The catalysed succession processes concerning his estate destabilised the equilibrium of his *oikos* by igniting a series of overlapping and often contradictory claims involving several relatives. The duration and intensity of these disputes

[20] On Hagnias and his family, see Wyse (1904), 671–713, Broadbent (1968), 61–112, Davies (1971), 77–89 n. 2921, MacDowell (1978), 103–108, Cox (1998), 3–10, Thompson (1976), Edwards (2008), esp. 49–53, Cobetto Ghiggia (2012), 421 n. 1.
[21] Scafuro (2011), 134.

attest to the structural fragility of kinship in the face of material stakes. As Cobetto Ghiggia states, the case concerning Hagnias II's estate represents 'lo svolgimento della successione probabilmente più complessa pervenuta nell'ambito del diritto attico'.[22] Indeed, the numerous trials over Hagnias II's estate highlight the controversial succession, which hardly finds a conclusive solution.

Scattered references in both speeches shed light on decades of entrenched animosities among kin vying to succeed Hagnias II. Since Hagnias II was childless and had no direct descendant, before his departure as an ambassador, he drafted a will adopting his niece as his daughter and heiress (*epiklēros*).[23] According to this will, if anything were to happen to her, the estate would pass to Glaucon, Hagnias II's half-brother by the same mother, who would be posthumously adopted as his son (Is. 11.8). This latter bequest would imply testamentary adoption of Glaucon rather than succession *per se.* The provisions of the will confirm that the childless man thought of all contingencies to avoid his *oikos* from becoming extinct. Initially, no one contested the niece's right and Hagnias II's will ([D.] 43.5). However, following the deaths of both Hagnias II and his niece (Is. 11.9), the testament and the entitlement of the estate to Glaucon were swiftly discredited. Eubulides II, a second cousin to Hagnias II on his father's side and a first cousin on his mother's side, lodged a claim, taking advantage of the fact that if there had been no will, in intestate succession, the patriline took precedence over matriline. However, the case never reached the court due to his untimely death (Is. 11.9, [D.] 43.43–45).[24]

The challenge initiated by Eubulides II was maintained in the interest of his daughter, Phylomache II, by her husband Sositheus, who had claimed her hand as her closest male relative. Phylomache II obtained the estate of *ab intestato*, on the basis that she was Hagnias II's first cousin once removed on his father's side, thereby a closer kin than Glaucon, over whom she had priority, in compliance with the principle of precedence to the relative from the male line over the female (Is. 11.9, 18, [D.] 43.3, 6, 30–33). As a consequence, the estate became adjudicable (intestate). Due to the overturning of the will, an array of disgruntled relatives of Hagnias II prompted further claims against the woman to contest her title (Is. 11.10, 16–18 [D.] 43.1, 7–10, 28–30). Ultimately, the estate was adjudicated to Theopompus, a second

[22] 'The handling of succession, likely the most complex, within the context of Attic law', Cobetto Ghiggia (2012), 421.

[23] Likely, he was despatched from Athens on an embassy during the Theban War, 378–371 BCE and was eventually captured and executed by the Lacedaemonians (Is. 11.8).

[24] As Cox (1998), 6–7, suggests, 'legally speaking, in terms of succession, Euboulides II, the son of Phylomache I, who claimed that she was the homopatric half-sister of Hagnias II's father, would have had every right to claim the estate over Glaucus and Glaucon, the homometric half-brothers of Hagnias. Hagnias flagrantly attempted to undercut the legal norm by naming Glaucon as his second heir and, possibly, by stipulating that Glaucon marry the niece whom he, Hagnias, had adopted as his first heir'. Cf. Harrison (1968), 144–146, Cox (1998), 7 n. 11.

cousin of Hagnias II, although the process by which he won the estate is obscure. Theopompus was later accused of mistreating his ward, the son of his brother Stratocles (Is. 11), and was prosecuted by Sositheus on behalf of Phylomache II (Is. 11.16–18). Theopompus prevailed on both trials. Upon his death, the estate passed to his son Macartatus II, who was later prosecuted by Sositheus on behalf of Eubulides III ([D.] 43).

This summary aptly reflects the prolonged and escalating familial crisis that involved different branches and actors. Even though the acceptance of Hagnias II's will, Sositheus' guardianship towards Phylomache II who was an *epiklēros* and the disputes for the definition of the deceased's closest relative confirm some of the rules concerning succession mentioned above, the numerous transitions of the estate and the persistent legal challenges, with their far-reaching side effects, illustrate the ephemerality of such rules whenever personal interests came to light. Davies describes the intense disputes concerning Hagnias' *oikos* as 'squalid protracted family quarrels, notable even by Athenian standards'.[25] These words emphasise the severity of the animosities in Hagnias' family and their consequences for its reputation and social standing.

I shall now focus on the divergent interpretation of the same law by Theopompus and Sositheus, each seeking to establish their claim to Hagnias II's estate in two successive trials. In *On the estate of Hagnias* (Isaeus 11), we are presented with Theopompus' defence against the accusation of having wrongfully excluded and mistreated the orphaned son of his brother Stratocles, for whom he had served as a guardian.[26] This charge reveals the pervading crisis between an uncle and a nephew, whenever the former is accused of not protecting, but instead of abusing the latter. The case is particularly relevant and showcases kin divisions in the line of succession.

At the heart of the accusation lies the allegation that Theopompus defrauded his nephew of half of Hagnias II's estate. The charge posits that Theopompus and Stratocles, as brothers equally related to Hagnias II, should have jointly inherited the deceased's estate, and that, since Stratocles died, his son was entitled to receive his father's share. This claim originates from a prior informal agreement between Theopompus and Stratocles, possibly forged in anticipation of their legal contest against Phylomache II ([D.] 43.7). While details of this agreement remain speculative, Theopompus vehemently denies its existence (Is. 11.20–26, 33) and dedicates his entire speech to refuting the accusation through a meticulous rebuttal (Is. 11.13, 14, 35; cf. [D.]

[25] Davies (1971), 77.

[26] After the death of Stratocles, his son passed under the joint guardianship of Theopompus and another relative (possibly a brother of Stratocles' wife). The other guardian acts, in this trial, on behalf of the orphan against Theopompus. The case was an *eisangelia kakōseōs orphanou*. Cf. Harpoc. s.v. *eisangelia*. The lawsuit is addressed with the generic term *graphē* at Is. 11.28, 31, 32, 35. On the procedure, see MacDowell (1978), 94.

58.32). Thus, he asserts his exclusive entitlement to the estate, relying on references to prior litigations after which he was publicly adjudicated as the only legitimate heir according to the law (Is. 11.8–10, 13–19, 25). By referencing these past lawsuits, he strategically aims to garner support from judges, inviting them to supply the meaning and be mindful of previous verdicts.

Theopompus' central argument mainly rests on confirming his right under the *anchisteia* system (Is. 11.37–50). The law of succession is presented at the outset of the speech, and its interpretation guides the entire speech (Is. 11.1–5, 11–12).[27] This allows him to state, with no restraints, to be Hagnias II's rightful heir, since he was the sole surviving member of the paternal kindred (λείπομαι δ' ἐγὼ μόνος τῶν πρὸς πατρὸς ὢν ἀνεψιοῦ παῖς, ᾧ μόνῳ κατὰ τοὺς νόμους ἐγίγνετο ἡ κληρονομία, πάντων ἤδη τῶν ἄλλων ἐκλελοιπότων, οἳ ταὐτὸν ἐμοὶ τῇ συγγενείᾳ προσήκοντες ἐτύγχανον, Is. 11.10; cf. 7, 11, 13, 18, 35).[28] According to his reading of the law, in fact, in the absence of closer paternal kin, the estate should devolve to paternal relatives up to the third degree before passing to maternal relatives (ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ὦσι, τρίτῳ γένει δίδωσι τὴν ἀγχιστείαν, ἀνεψιοῖς πρὸς πατρὸς μέχρι ἀνεψιῶν παίδων, Is. 11.2; cf. 11).[29] Conversely, his opponent was outside the circle of kin, and lacked any right over Hagnias II's estate (ὁ νομοθέτης οὐκ εἶπεν, ἐὰν μηδεὶς ᾖ πρὸς πατρὸς μέχρι ἀνεψιῶν παίδων, τοὺς τῶν ἀνεψιαδῶν εἶναι κυρίους, ἀλλὰ ἀπέδωκε τοῖς πρὸς μητρὸς τοῦ τελευτήσαντος, ἂν ἡμεῖς μὴ ὦμεν, τὴν κληρονομίαν ἤδη, ἀδελφοῖς καὶ ἀδελφαῖς καὶ παισὶ τοῖς τούτων καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις, κατὰ ταὐτὰ καθάπερ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἦν ὑπειρημένον : τοὺς δὲ ἡμετέρους παῖδας ἔξω τῆς ἀγχιστείας ἐποίησεν, Is. 11.12).[30]

The crux of Theopompus' argument lies in the interpretation of the clause 'as far as the children of cousins' (μέχρι ἀνεψιῶν παίδων; cf. Is. 11.8, 10), which is conveniently interpreted to play to his advantage. According to Theopompus, this clause extends only to the children of first cousins (i.e., second cousins). This group includes himself but excludes the subsequent generation (i.e., the children of first cousins' children), thus Stratocles' son. According to the

[27] This beginning of the speech opening is 'unparalleled' in Attic oratory. The choice to start the speech with the quotation of the law aims to suggest to the jury that he had the law on his side; cf. Wyse (1904), 678–679, Usher (1999), 154, Edwards (2007), 176.
[28] 'In their absence, it gives the right of succession to the third degree, cousins on the father's side as far as children of cousins'.
[29] 'The lawgiver did not say that if there is no relative on the father's side as far as the degree of the children of cousins, the children of first cousins' children are to inherit, but he assigned the right of inheritance now, in our absence, to the relatives of the deceased on the mother's side, to brothers and sisters, their children, and so on, in the same order as was set down at the start. But he placed our children outside the prescribed degree of kinship'.
[30] 'The lawgiver did not say that if there is no relative on the father's side as far as the degree of the children of cousins, the children of first cousins' children are to inherit, but he assigned the right of inheritance now, in our absence, to the relatives of the deceased on the mother's side, to brothers and sisters, their children, and so on, in the same order as was set down at the start'.

genealogical reconstruction, since his father, Charidemus, and Hagnias II's father, Polemon, were first cousins, he met the criteria stipulated by the law of succession. Conversely, Stratocles' son, as a member of a later generation, was excluded from the circle of the deceased's close kin and thereby from the line of succession (Is. 11.1, 3, 7, 12–13, 16, 19, 28–29). However, Theopompus' interpretation of the law is questionable, as he appears to exploit the inherent ambiguity in the definition of 'cousin', encompassing second cousins rather than solely first cousins once removed. While he styles himself as 'the son of a cousin', he overlooks that he is the son of Charidemus, a cousin of Hagnias II's father. He thus expands the statement's boundaries through persuasive rhetoric to suit his own agenda.

To make his thesis more convincing, Theopompus takes his reasoning to the extreme by arguing that not even his death would grant his opponents any right to the inheritance, and establishes that, especially since he is still alive, his opponent has no claim to it (Is. 11.11–12). The argument is complex, insofar as it contains an antithesis followed by a comment on his opponents' unlawful demand (Is. 11.13–14). The speaker uses 'vitriolic terms' to shape his argument and make it engaging. As Arnaoutoglou claims, 'in this way he sets the pieces, like a skilful director, for the 'answer my question' game and at the same time establishes his dominance'.[31]

Theopompus remains unwavering in preserving his rights and opposing his nephew, thereby continuing an internal conflict within his family that shows no signs of resolution. The whole argument is uneasy and, as Wyse points out, 'Theopompus is walking on quicksands, but by dexterous play with an ambiguity of phrase, by economy of truth and suppression of genealogical details, by sliding from exposition into renewed onslaughts (§§ 11–14) on the bad title of his ward and the shamelessness of the prosecutor, he contrives to cloak the fact that he was himself excluded by the very law which he invokes against his opponent'.[32] While Theopompus' argumentative prowess, which hinges on his explication of the law, establishes seemingly irrefutable connections, it simultaneously skirts or disregards crucial contextual nuances and limitations within the legal framework. His strength lies in a rigorous, almost pedantic approach that disregards alternative interpretations of the law of succession.

The court ultimately accepted Theopompus' reasoning, validating his interpretation of the law. Following his death, his son Macartatus II succeeded him. However, this did not end the legal saga, and the family crisis was far from resolved. Sositheus, acting on behalf of his

[31] Arnaoutoglou (2018), 32.
[32] Wyse (1904), 676.

wife Phylomache II and representing their son Eubulides III, mounted a new challenge against the estate's current holder, which is presented in the speech *Against Macartatus* ([Demosthenes] 43). As this latter charge was brought within five years of the Macartatus II judgement, it was allowed to proceed as it was within the statute of limitations (cf. Is. 3.58, [D.] 43.16). Hence, this attempt must be interpreted as the ultimate confirmation of the long-standing feud between kin, who seek bureaucratic and legislative advantages to gain material benefits.

Sositheus and his wife, Phylomache II, sought to reclaim Hagnias II's estate through an ingenious use of posthumous adoption practice. The strategy centred on formally adopting Eubulides III as the son of his deceased maternal grandfather, Eubulides II. Phylomache II, being the only child of Eubulides II, had become an *epiklēros* upon her father's death ([D.] 43.16, 20, 55–56).[33] Making one of her four sons her father's adopted son and heir, rather than merely his biological grandson, she could ensure the continuation of his *oikos* as provided by the rules of succession. Since Eubulides II was Hagnias II's first cousin, through adoption, Eubulides III became a first cousin once removed of the deceased, thereby his closest kin.

When Eubulides III reached maturity, he was introduced into the *phratry* without opposition ([D.] 43.11–14, 81–82). The adoption went smoothly despite the reluctance of his opponent, Macartatus II. Likely, Macartatus II had understood Sositheus' plan for his son and had urged his fellows to commit perjury. However, he refrained from obstructing the ritual and preventing the introduction of Eubulides III by removing the sacrificial victim, an action expected if the boy's status were considered invalid ([D.] 43.14, 82; cf. Is. 6.22). In fact, Macartatus II could not reject the son of an *epiklēros* to be adopted as her father's child. The reason is straightforward: the *phratry* members were not called to vote on whether the boy was the heir of Hagnias II, but rather on whether he was born legitimately and, possibly, whether his mother was the daughter of Eubulides II.[34] Consequently, Macartatus II could do nothing but voice his complaints about the acknowledged plot of his adversary.

Macartatus II's failure to protest Eubulides III's admission into the *phratry* was used as a tool by Sositheus. Not only did it undermine Macartatus II's subsequent legal resistance, but it also implicitly validated the legitimacy of the adoption. In a legal culture where symbolic acts bore juridical weight, such omissions were rhetorically weaponised by the opposing party. Sositheus framed his argument by highlighting the opponent's acceptance to reconsolidate

[33] This adoption served multiple ends. Since Eubulides III, through adoption, could no longer inherit from his natural father, Sositheus could also increase the portion of his other sons' estate (cf. [D.] 42.21).
[34] Cf. Thompson (1976), 71, Rubinstein (1993), 37, Scafuro (2011), 146 n. 48.

material assets and familial honour through calculated legal tactics. It is noteworthy that the introduction of Eubulides III into the *phratry* did not indicate his legitimacy to the inheritance but rather his and his parents' status. Likely, this confusion was intentionally overlooked.

The timing and legal positioning of Eubulides III as Eubulides II's son suggest that the adoption was part of a deliberate inheritance strategy. While it may be argued that over 18 years had passed since Eubulides II's death, and neither Sositheus nor his wife had shown any concern for perpetuating his *oikos*, we cannot dismiss the possibility that Eubulides II, lacking male offspring, had already planned the adoption of his nephew before his death ([D.] 43.12; cf. Rubinstein, (1993), 88–92). Likely, they needed to wait for Eubulides III to reach the age of majority before introducing him into the *phratry*. In this way, the adoption was separate from any family grievances stemming from past events and had nothing to do with the death of the main antagonist, Theopompus.

Despite Sositheus' claims that the adoption was meant to ensure the preservation of the *oikos* from falling into extinction ([D.] 43.11, 83), it is evident that the couple seized the tempting opportunity to recover Hagnias II's estate following the death of a much-feared opponent. Previous trials over the estate of Hagnias II confirm the deep animosity between the parties, with this lawsuit being merely the latest manifestation ([D.] 43.1–4, 7–10, 38; cf. Is. 11.9, 16–18).

By redefining Eubulides III's position within the lineage, Sositheus seeks to secure the deceased kin's estate by exploiting the ambiguities of the law and establishing his natural son as the closest living male relative of Hagnias II, insofar as he now shared with him the same relational status as his biological mother, i.e., 'child of a cousin' (ἐὰν γὰρ ἐπιδείξω Θεοπόμπου τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ Μακαρτάτου γένει ὄντας Ἀγνίᾳ ἐγγυτέρω Εὐβουλίδην τε τὸν παῖδα τουτονὶ καὶ Φυλομάχην, ἥ ἐστιν μήτηρ τῷ παιδί, Εὐβουλίδου δὲ θυγάτηρ, καὶ οὐ μόνον γένει ἐγγυτάτω ὄντας, ἀλλὰ τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲ ὄντα οὐδένα ἀνθρώπων ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τῷ Ἀγνίου ἄλλον ἢ τὴν μητέρα τοῦ παιδὸς τουτουὶ καὶ αὐτὸν τοῦτον τὸν παῖδα, [D.] 43.17; cf. 21–28, 32).[35] Indeed, through adoption, Eubulides III was no longer the grandson of a cousin of the deceased but a first cousin once removed, thereby placed within the legally privileged circle of closest kin and most direct legitimate successor to Hagnias II ([D.] 43.21–26, 35–37, 42–46, 49, *contra* Is. 11.17; cf. [D.] 43.39).

[35] 'If I demonstrate that this boy, Eubulides [III], and Phylomache, who is his mother and also the daughter of Eubulides [II], are nearer by kin circle to Hagnias [II] than Theopompus the father of Macartatus — and not only that they are nearest by kin circle but also that not a single living being, none at all, belongs to the house of Hagnias except for the mother of this boy and the boy himself'.

Eubulides II and Hagnias II were related through their parents, since Phylomache I (Eubulides II's mother) and Polemon (Hagnias II's father) were siblings.[36] Sositheus' assessment of Phylomache I's status was of the utmost importance, since her pedigree had been impugned by Theopompus in the former lawsuit against Phylomache II and represented his central point to undermine the latter's position in the *anchisteia*. Theopompus had argued that Phylomache I was not a full sister of Polemon but only a half-sister by virtue of sharing the same mother. In this case, her position in the family was outer, making her belong to the maternal ring rather than the innermost ring. Accordingly, Phylomache II — as well as Eubulides III after adoption — was only a child of a second cousin of Hagnias II, being Eubulides II the son of Philargus, who was a first cousin of Polemon (Is. 11.17; cf. [D.] 43.29, 39).

The confinement of Phylomache I outside the nuclear family of Polemon and of Phylomache II as a second cousin once removed – the very same degree of kinship held by his opponent Macartatus II – seriously undermined Phylomache II's claim and eventually led to Theopompus winning the former case. Conversely, if, as Sositheus attempts to demonstrate in this new trial, it was acknowledged that Phylomache I was the full sister of Polemon (ὁμοπατρία καὶ ὁμομητρία) and, consequently, paternal aunt of Hagnias II, then Eubulides III, as Eubulides II's adopted son, was closer to Hagnias II and could have access to the estate ([D.] 43.22, 24, 26, 29, 32, 35f., 49, 63). Sositheus posits that Theopompus lied about Phylomache I's status to undermine his opponent's claim ([D.] 43.29, 39–40). Davies argues that the judges' former decision towards Theopompus 'was certainly a blunder and may have well have been corruptly procured'.[37] However reliable this hypothesis may be, it is unrelated to the evaluation of Phylomache I's kinship and does not entirely disprove Theopompus' contention.[38]

Sositheus' strong insistence on Phylomache I's tie with Polemon (which is supported by a series of testimonies, [D.] 43.35–37) enables him to challenge the previous verdict and, by extension, question Macartatus II's entitlement to the deceased's estate.[39] In his interpretation of the law, the clause 'as far as the children of cousins' is restricted to the offspring of first cousins. Since Charidemus, Theopompus' father and Macartatus II's grandfather, was a cousin of Polemon but not of Hagnias II, Theopompus did not qualify as a child of Hagnias II's cousin as required by law, being the second cousin to the deceased, and

[36] On Phylomache I, see Davies (1971), 79 n. 2921, Thompson (1976), 19–20, 63, 78, 79.
[37] Davies (1971), 79. Cf. Wyse (1904), 673.
[38] Cf. Edwards (2007), 184 n. 29.
[39] Scafuro (2011), 129 questions the reliability of second-hand evidence, since 'surely there can be no living witness to attest the circumstances of her birth'. See also Humphreys (1986), 64–67.

therefore was excluded from the defined limits of 'close relatives' ([D.] 43.47–48, 50, 52, 61). Theopompus' right was thus retroactively undermined (διαρρήδην λέγει ὁ νόμος, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, οἷς δεῖ τὴν κληρονομίαν εἶναι: οὐ μὰ Δί᾽ οὐ Θεοπόμπῳ οὐδὲ Μακαρτάτῳ τῷ Θεοπόμπου υἱεῖ, τοῖς μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ οὖσι τῷ Ἀγνίου. ἀλλὰ τίνι καὶ δίδωσιν; τοῖς ἐκγόνοις τοῖς Ἀγνίου, τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τῷ ἐκείνου, [D.] 43.52).[40]

This interpretation of the law makes Sositheus not fear the competition of Macartatus II, since Eubulides III was the child of a first cousin of Hagnias II on the father's side ([D.] 43.26, 29, 32, 34, 49, 55, 61, 63). Sositheus' argument also relies on the inclusion in the kinship chain of the descendants derived from the same house as Hagnias II only. The emphasis on this normative aspect further excludes Macartatus II from the circle of suitable heirs, since he had been adopted posthumously into the *oikos* of his maternal grandfather. Although he later returned to his original *oikos* after installing his son as successor in the adoptive *oikos* ([D.] 43.77–78; cf. Is. 11.49), this adoption temporarily altered the configuration in the original family and thereby weakened Macartatus II's connections to his father's kin.[41] It is noteworthy that even though Sositheus claims that this is what the law states (ταῦτα καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει), in the text of the law, there is no mention of the *oikos* ([D.] 43.51). Therefore, it appears that Sositheus was exploiting the legal language to invite the judges to favour his son.

To modern sensibilities, it may seem surprising that inheritance disputes could endure across generations, with claimants emerging who were not even born at the time of the relative's death, as is the case with Eubulides III.[42] In the Athenian context, this was not uncommon since procedures such as succession and — as in the case of [Demosthenes] 43 — posthumous adoption permitted individuals to re-shape the *oikos* even after many years had passed. The flexibility of Athenian inheritance law allowed litigants to manipulate the boundaries of kinship, often exploiting familial ambiguity to assert conflicting claims, thereby generating tensions within the *oikos* rather than reinforcing its unity. The existence of interpersonal crises between family members and their persistence over decades ultimately

[40] 'The law, judges, explicitly says to whom the inheritance should belong. It does not, by Zeus, belong to Theopompus, nor to Macartatus his son, men who in no way belong in Hagnias' house. But to whom, really, does the law give the inheritance? To the descendants of Hagnias, to those who are in his house'.

[41] An adoptive son could not inherit from his natural father; cf. n. 25. Even though Macartatus II had moved back to his original *oikos* leaving a natural son as heir into the adopted *oikos* and could thus claim the estate of Theopompus, which included that of Hagnias II, his former adoption into the family of his mother's brother, was never regarded favourably. Cf. Humphreys (1986), 65.

[42] The speech *Against Macartatus* was delivered thirty or more years after the death of Hagnias II on an embassy that is mentioned in Is. 11.8. On the date of the speech, see Humphreys (1983), 224–225, Scafuro (2011), 136–138.

proves that, far from being a bastion of familial harmony and a rigid structure, the *oikos* frequently became the arena for bitter contestations and deeply rooted crises.

CONCLUSIONS

As the case studies illustrate, the ancient family was a complex network of kinship, characterised by relationships that were neither immutable nor uniformly cohesive. Its dynamic nature subjected stability to ongoing tensions, disruption and negotiations, often arising from the very mechanisms intended to preserve it, such as inheritance. While the *oikos*, with its rules, was primarily designed as a source of strength and continuity, it frequently became a stage for division and conflicts. The resulting rifts among kin led to enduring crises that display a delicate balance of trust and betrayal.

In this paper, I examined two instances centring on Hagnias II's estate, in which family members manipulated succession laws to assert their claims, even beyond established legitimacy. The two lawsuits portray a fragmented *oikos* trapped in a persistent crisis that reverberates across generations, shedding light on its dual nature as a site of continuity and rupture, as well as solidarity and suspicion. The disputes concerning Hagnias II's estate underscore the complexities associated with kinship borders. In their speeches, the opponents seek to demonstrate their entitlement to the estate through detailed genealogical reconstructions and the wielding of intricate explanations, creating the impression of strict adherence to the law while embedding a rhetorical framework. Their competing claims relied on manipulating normative assumptions and intestate succession law, which failed to provide an irrefutable delineation of who was entitled to inherit in the absence of legitimate sons.

The crux of both arguments revolves around the interpretation of the sentence 'children of cousins', which could refer either to 'children of first cousins', namely 'first cousins once removed' ([D.] 43.27) or 'children of a parent's first cousin', namely 'second cousins' (Is. 11.8–12). The opposing interpretations of the clause highlight its malleability, stemming from an inherent vagueness. Such interpretations influenced the adjudication of the disputed estate, as evidenced by the inconsistent verdicts rendered by judges addressing the same estate for different claimants over the years, thereby prolonging the family crisis.

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When the Sons hit the Fathers: The Evolution of a Relationship in Crisis in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and *Wasps*[1]

Emmanuelle Jégo

Physical violence is more present, when talking about the comedies of Aristophanes, in the relationships between sons and fathers than in the rest of the relationships between characters who are related by birth. Although the daughters are sometimes present on stage,[2] they are merely victims of the violence, whereas the sons are characters in their own right, who manage to rival their father and use physical violence to their advantage. They also feature more prominently in the violent acts offstage. Two comedies, in Aristophanes' corpus, focus on the violence of sons towards their fathers: *The Wasps* and *The Clouds,*[3] two plays in which 'their [father and son] relationship is explicitly thematised by Aristophanes, and placed at the centre of the dramaturgical workings'.[4] They are constructed around two main themes: 'feeding and punishment'.[5]

His son spends all his money: this is the main problem that Strepsiades, the protagonist of *The Clouds*, faces and it's the one that drives him to seek solutions from Socrates. But this turns to his disadvantage, and Phiddipides, the son, armed with Socratic knowledge, justifies his growing violence against his father; even worse, proudly announces that he can justify hitting his own mother. To resolve this new problem, Strepsiades turns to Hermes, and the god suggests to him that he should burn Socrates' house — which he does. In *The Wasps,* the son, Bdelycleon, tries to help his father, the protagonist Philocleon, who is passionate about jurisdiction to the point of madness. To do this, he locks him in their house and tries to get rid of the chorus of old jurors who have come to their comrade's rescue. Once reconciled, after a heated debate, the situation escalates again when father and son attend a banquet.

[1] Unless otherwise specified, all translations are by the author. The ancient text edition is by Wilson (Oxford University Press, 2007a and 2007b).
[2] In *The Acharnians* and *The Peace*, for example. Also, in *The Thesmophoriazusae*, even if the daughter turns out to be a wineskin.
[3] Of the 11 plays by Aristophanes that we have, these two are the 3rd (*The Clouds*, 423 BC) and the 4th (*The Wasps*, 422 BC) chronologically. *The Clouds* came 3rd (and therefore last) in the comic competition. Aristophanes wrote *The Wasps* for the following year's festival, in retaliation for the previous failure, and won , prize. It's no coincidence that both plays feature a father–son relationship, and the differences and similarities are all the more relevant to study.
[4] Morosi (2021), 145: 'In alcuni casi, addirittura, il loro rapporto è espressamente tematizzato da Aristofane, e posto al centro del funzionamento drammaturgico di alcune commedie'.
[5] Morosi (2021), 148: 'l'alimentazione e la punizione'.

The initial crisis between the father and the son ends up provoking, when one tries to solve it, a constant escalation in violence, culminating, for *The Clouds,* in the most violent final scene in the comedies of Aristophanes that we have retained. *The Wasps,* while presenting a son trying to help his father, also follows a conflict between a father, Philocleon, and his son, Bdelycleon. The domestic crisis between father and son is at the heart of the comedies: it triggers the action, determines the ending, and remains partly unresolved after the plays. It is also the source of much of the violence that runs through the action. This paper will analyse the two domestic relationships in crisis, and how it reflects in each one, through the use of violence, a struggle to take centre stage between the father and the son.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP AT THE HEART OF THE COMIC ACTION, AND THE REASON THE PLAY EXISTS

In *The Clouds*, in the prologue, the violence is not visible — because it is symbolised by fleas by which Strepsiades is 'bitten' (δακνόμενος, 12) and 'which we have to assume are both real and, above all, metaphorical'[6] — and mediated for the audience by the victim. Strepsiades says he is being bitten by those fleas, that are also a metaphor for the creditors to whom he owns money. This is the initial problem: the son, Pheidippides, spends all his father's, Strepsiades', money. The first solution for the protagonist is to convince Pheidippides to learn from the Sophists and from Socrates ways to fend off the creditors and to manipulate them, so they'd stop harassing Strepsiades about the debt. But Pheidippides refuses, so Stepsiades goes to the Sophists' home instead. Physical violence is the reason of the comic action in *The Clouds*, contained in the initial comic problem, and a result of the miscommunication and bad relationship between Strepsiades and Pheidippides.

The second problem arises because of the first solution. Strepsiades is too old, cannot be taught, and suffers from the Sophists' ways. He finds a second solution: Pheidippides accepts to go when his father asks him again, he learns from the Sophists, helps his father to defeat the creditors thanks to the Unjust Reasoning learned at the Sophists' house, and thanks to physical violence exercised by Strepsiades.[7] At first glance, the initial comic problem is solved, along with the second problem that arose from it. The violence directed against Strepsiades because

[6] Orfanos (2009), [§11]: 'que l'on doit supposer à la fois réelles, mais aussi et surtout métaphoriques'.
[7] Dover (1968), 238–239: 'Although Strepsiades had proved a hopelessly forgetful pupil, and the whole point of giving Pheidippides sophistic training was that Pheidippides should do his arguing for him (cf. 1228–1229), it is actually Strepsiades himself who carries off these scenes — confusedly (1247-1258, 1278-1284) and with recourse to insolence (1237–1238, 1260–1269) and violence (1296–1303), but his memory considerably improved'.

of his son's spending leaves the stage at the same time as the creditors – never to return. The relationship between father and son seems similarly restored. But the third problem arises: Pheidippides uses his new knowledge to justify beating his father and his mother. This form of violence is a progression after the first two — the first being the violence against Strepsiades, bitten by fleas symbolising creditors, and the second the violence against those creditors, struck down by the comic hero. What's more, Pheidippides leaves the stage before his father has had time to find a solution to this new form of violence, this third problem. The third solution**,** which constitutes the end of *The Clouds*, seems to have no connection with the problem itself: Strepsiades burns Socrates' and the Sophists' house, and hits the fleeing residents with the help of his slave.

The dynamic in *The Wasps* is a little different: it is the son who is bothered by the father's actions, and who in turn tries to help him. 'In the prologue [Aristophanes] in fact assigns the role of δεσπότης to Bdelycleon, and not to Philocleon'.[8] The struggle between Philocleon and Bdelycleon precedes the comedy. The slaves are on guard from verse 1 to prevent the old man from escaping from the home – this is the second solution to the first problem*,* identified by Bdelycleon before the start of the play. The slaves relate the steps taken by Bdelycleon to cure his father, 'in relation to civic and then panhellenic cults'[9] — the first solution, which turns out ineffective — before the comedy begins. Thus, the comedy starts *in medias res,* and the relationship between the father and the son is in a deeper crisis than the one between Pheidippides and Strepsiades in *The Clouds.* The comic stakes are made clear by Philocleon's declaration of frustration, when one of his attempts to escape has just failed, in verses 166–167:

> πῶc ἄν c' ἀποκτείναιμι; πῶc; δότε μοι ξίφοc
> ὅπωc τάχιcτ', ἢ πινάκιον τιμητικόν.
>
> How could I kill you? How? Give me a sword,
> quick! Or a voting tablet!

Then again in verse 190:

> Φι. εἰ μή μ' ἐάcεθ' ἥcυχον, μαχούμεθα...

[8] Morosi (2021), 148: 'Nel prologo assegnano infatti il ruolo di δεσπότης a Bdelicleon, e non a Filocleone'.
[9] Delavaud-Roux (2012), [§8]: 'en relation avec les cultes civiques puis panhelléniques'.

Ph: If you don't leave me alone, we are going to fight.

Philocleon, in fact, repeatedly states his intention to commit a violent act against himself or his adversaries, but never actually does so. During the assault on the house by the chorus of wasps –jurors who have come to rescue him –[10] he is hit but does not strike. He tries to escape by the windows and the roof but is prevented to do so by the guarding slaves. The violence here is not directly between the father and the son, but only indirectly: Bdelycleon exercises violence against the chorus of jurors-wasps, the allies of his father; Philocleon suffers at the hands of the slaves, following Bdelycleon's orders. While being held captive, he threatens to kill himself but does not. The second solution to the first problem almost fails: Philocleon tries to escape, helped by the chorus, and the scene turns into physical violence between the son and his father's allies, created by this tentative solution. Bdelycleon tries a third solution: a debate with his father, to show him the errors of his ways. After the assault, during the debate, Philocleon announces in verses 522–523:

Φι. καὶ ξίφος γέ μοι δότε.
ἢν γὰρ ἡττηθῶ λέγων cου, περιπεσοῦμαι τῷ ξίφει.

Ph: Give me a sword.
If I lose the debate, I'll fall on it.

However, once he lost the debate, he does not use a weapon and does not take his life. There is a form of violence transferred from physical to verbal during the debate, after they have come to blows. This violence seems more tragic than comic: using a sword or letting himself fall on his sword is a way of committing suicide in the face of dishonour — we might think here of Sophocles' *Ajax*, where the eponymous character kills himself on his sword offstage. Verse 166 'looks like a tragic quotation or parody'[11] and verses 522–523 are 'a melodramatic utterance,

[10] It is interesting to note that the animal chosen for this chorus is the wasp, which immediately embodies danger and violence, since this animal in Athens had the reputation of being 'irritable and quick to sting at the slightest provocation' ('[irritable] et [prompte] à piquer à la moindre provocation', Corbel-Morana (2012), 145), and that the old men in the chorus are described by the most important limb of wasps, namely a stinger (κέντρον […] ὀξύτατον, 'a sharp sting', 225–226), which is attached to the hips (ἐκ τῆc ὀcφύοc, 225), 'a sign of their anger, but the word for their stings, κέντρα, is also of course, a euphemism for *phalli',* Allen (2003), 89. The comparison between the two shows 'the old men's anger' ('la hargne des vieillards'), Corbel-Morana (2012), 146.
[11] MacDowell (1971), 154.

of which nobody takes any notice'.[12] The old man is not listened to, and at first cannot act on his own, even when he threatens to exercise the ultimate form of violence against himself.

Philocleon finds an opportunity for action after the physical violence; he is no longer restrained by slaves and can begin to act on his own. Apparently reconciled — Philocleon, having lost the debate, accepts his son's fourth solution to prevent him from going to the court, which is to judge the household affairs at home — father and son decide to go to a banquet together: 'this symposium thus acts as a potential third main locus of justice in the play, after the city's law-courts, comically discussed in all their horror in the first part, and the domestic trial, an opposite kind of justice dispensed by a sin'.[13] This is the first time that Bdelycleon lets his father leave their house/the *skene*:[14] 'space is opened up and structured, and hope is born' for the old man.[15] On the way home, however, Philocleon attacks passers-by and comes back with an aulos player: this is the second problem of *The Wasps*. Bdelycleon tries to offer a first solution to this second problem, by taking away the aulos player and negotiating with the passers-by. But Philocleon thwarts this attempt by menacing him, mocking and hitting the passers-by. The old man's solution works for the second problem — the passers-by flee — but not for the first one: Bdelycleon takes away his companion. He is fed up and decides to force Philocleon back into their house. The third problem appears: Philocleon refuses to stay in the house/*skene,* returns to the stage and engages in a dance contest with Carcinos and his sons — a contest that remains unresolved.

Taking aside the apparent disconnection between the third problem of *The Clouds* and its solution on stage, and the third problem of *The Wasps* and the apparent absence of resolution — we shall revisit this later in this paper — we can see that the relationship in crisis between father and son constitutes the action of both the comedies and their driving force: it is to escape Strepsiades' creditors, who are coming to claim the debts he has incurred because of his son, that Strepsiades wants to resort to the Sophists, and it's because he wants to prevent his father to judge that Bdelycleon keeps him inside, thus attracting the jurors' anger. It's because Strepsiades can't convince his son to go himself that he must go to Socrates. Too old to learn properly, he finally convinces his son; it is Pheidippides' new-found ability to master Unjust Reasoning that allows him to hit his father and that would justify hitting his mother. This scene,

[12] MacDowell (1971), 202.
[13] Bowie (1997), 11.
[14] This relation to the *skene*, in this comedy, is in direct contrast as to what is supposed to happen between a father and a son in the civic space: 'Parental authority [...] is also perimeter authority, which consists of the ability to prohibit (or force) certain movements on the children's part', Morosi (2021), 146 (translated from Italian).
[15] Jay-Robert (2003), 442: 'Avec ce déplacement enfin autorisé et réalisé — même s'il ne conduit pas Philocléon là où il l'aurait souhaité —, l'espace s'ouvre et se structure, l'espoir naît'.

that takes place just before the burning down of Socrates' home, crystallises the tension at the centre of the play, and reflects the struggle between father and son to become master of the stage and of the comic action. In the same way, the struggle between Philocleon and Bdelycleon after they come back from the banquet is what proves that Philocleon is not equipped for the comic stage.

2. VIOLENCE AND THE STRUGGLE TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE

Both fathers show in their relationship with their sons and through the use of physical violence that they are doomed to fail, if they keep their ways. Strepsiades has had to rely on his son to understand the lessons of the Sophists. This is, for us, why he cannot face his son between verses 1321 to 1451. For Philocleon, his defeat is heralded by his fear of physical violence:

Φι. μηδαμῶc.	1252, bis
κακὸν τὸ πίνειν· ἀπὸ γὰρ οἴνου γίγνεται	1253
καὶ θυροκοπῆcαι καὶ πατάξαι καὶ βαλεῖν,	
κἄπειτ' ἀποτίνειν ἀργύριον ἐκ κραιπάληc.	1255

Ph: Never!
Alcohol is bad. All you get from wine
are broken doors, beatings and injuries,
and then pay for the damage with a hangover.

Both father and son embody, in *The Wasps*, the violence that can erupt at a banquet if the guests do not contain themselves. But where Bdelycleon sees the destructive power of verbal violence, Philocleon envisages the damage caused by physical violence. However, physical violence is a staple in Aristophanic comedy, and the comic characters need to master it to win.

In *The Clouds,* what Strepsiades shouts as he enters the scene followed by his son,[16] clearly indicates to the audience the dynamic between them. As soon as the two characters return to the stage, from being allies in the face of the creditors, Strepsiades has become a victim of Pheidippides's violence, in a scene that 'calls into question the very foundations of society' in Athens at the time.[17] The difference between victim and actor can also be seen in

[16] Ἀμυνάθετέ μοι τυπτομένῳ πάcῃ τέχνῃ ('I'm being beaten, come to my aid, any way!', 1321).
[17] Thiercy (2007b), 185: 'La scène est à la fois drôle et sérieuse, car battre ses parents remet en cause les fondements mêmes de la société'.

the posture each of them adopts, which is revealed by the text: 'Strepsiades rushes frantically out of the house, clutching his head and his face and shouting for help', whereas 'Pheidippides is nonchalant, self-possessed, and dominant'.[18] This dynamic is not new to spectators: 'father/son tension' is the 'conflict type' of Aristophanes' comedy.[19] The conflict between the two of them is 'a contest similar in form'[20] to the debate between the two Reasonings, but this time concerning the father-son relationship.[21] Strepsiades keeps on reminding his son of their relationship (τύπτεις τὸν πατέρα, 'you strike your father?', 1325; τὸν πατέρα τύπτεις, 'your father, you strike him?', 1332), but to no avail. Pheidippides took control of the action during the banquet, when the conflict changed from verbal to physical. While they were fighting verbally, Strepsiades could stand his ground. But the ending of the fight at the banquet (εἶθ' οὗτος ἐπαναπηδᾷ,|κἄπειτ' ἔφλα με κἀσπόδει κἄπνιγε κἀπέτριβεν, 'then this one leaps,| and he crushes me, he strangles me, he hits me!', [1375-1376]) shows the difference in the use of physical violence between the two of them: Pheidippides has mastered it, while Strepsiades is helpless.[22]

When onstage, the argument is back to being verbal: both argue about education, the need to hit a child to make him learn, which — for Pheidippides — proves that he can now hit his father to make him learn. The relationship between father and son reverses around the issue of education. If Strepsiades must resign himself to this because he is not capable of arguing with his son, the idea that Pheidippides would now try to prove he would be in his right to strike his mother makes him react. One explanation for this indignation can be found in Aristotle's theory, as analysed by A. Damet: 'Aristotle further refines his presentation of the degrees of *philia*: maternal love is said to be superior to paternal love because only mothers, who have borne their children and been as close to their offspring as possible during pregnancy,

[18] Dover (1968), 247.
[19] Damet (2019), 63: 'la "tension père/ fils" est le "type conflictuel" par excellence de la comédie d'Aristophane'. Then, further on the same page: 'Because classical comedy, of which Aristophanes is the most eminent exponent, reflects the daily and political immediacy of the Athenians, the family conflicts it presents focus on the father/ son duo, this 'male/ male' pair symbolising power rivalries and the transmission of civic and patrimonial values, but also mirroring the solidarity between father and son necessary for the smooth running of the city' (translated from French).
[20] Dover (1968), 247.
[21] Although it seems interesting to note that, according to Olson's commentary on *The Clouds*, the two Reasonings are dressed as an old man (for the Just) and a young, rich one (for the Unjust), 'the deliberate visual contrast with the Stronger Argument suggests that he is also represented as much younger. The two Arguments are thus in many ways onstage mirror-figures of Strepsiades and Pheidippides in the play's opening scene in particular', Olson (2021), 176.
[22] For a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between mastering physical violence and the comic action, see Jégo (2025).

'know better that children are theirs'. Or that mothers, because they have suffered during childbirth, love their children more'.[23]

While the relationship between son and father, as portrayed on stage, can be comically reversed, hitting one's mother reaches a climax that even the comic hero, though defeated by his son's other arguments, can only refuse, and Pheidippides leaves mocking him.

For *The Wasps,* the dynamic is fully reversed: the father uses a form of violence that the son tries to refrain from. Philocleon's escapade into the banqueting space seems to have equipped him for comedy, and given him a second youth, and he 'regains the manners of a young man'.[24] This is completed by the fact that he seems to now want to assume the role of the son: he says to the flute-girl accompanying him that 'when [his] son dies, [he]'ll buy her as concubine' (ἐγώ c' ἐπειδὰν οὑμὸc υἱὸc ἀποθάνῃ, λυcάμενοc ἔξω παλλακήν, 1352–1353). He 'talks as if he were young, so that the words 'father' and 'son' appear to have exchanged meanings'.[25] There is a real inversion of the typical father-son dynamic, which reveals that the banquet has not helped Philocleon, who is now trying to take on a role other than his own. He does play his part against the accusers who come to take him to court with varying degrees of success, and against his son who tries to take his courtesan away from him but, ultimately, he fails. Philocleon is facing passers-by who have just suffered the physical violence he inflicted on them. Even before they arrive on stage, the public can hear the protagonist threatening them in the *parodos*:

> Φι. ἄνεχε, πάρεχε.
> κλαύcεταί τιc τῶν ὄπιcθεν ἐπακολουθούντων ἐμοί·
> οἷον, εἰ μὴ 'ρρήcεθ', ὑμᾶc,
> ὦ πόνηροι, ταυτῃὶ τῇ δᾳδὶ φρυκτοὺc cκευάcω. 1330
>
> Ph: Make way, out of the way!
> The people on my heels are going to regret this!
> If you don't get off my back,
> good-for-nothings, I'm going to roast you with this torch!

[23] Damet (2019), 40: 'Aristote affine encore sa présentation des degrés de *philia*: l'amour maternel serait supérieur à l'amour paternel car seules les mères, qui ont porté leurs enfants et ont été par la grossesse au plus près de leur progéniture, 'savent mieux que les enfants sont à elles'. Ou encore, les mères, parce qu'elles ont souffert lors de l'accouchement, aiment davantage leurs enfants'.
[24] Byl (1977), 72: 'Philocléon retrouve les manières d' un jeune homme'.
[25] MacDowell (1971), 307.

From the outset, even though the altercation has not yet reached the stage, Philocleon shows that he is not completely in control: he is unable to dissuade his pursuers from following him, despite his threats. The man's answer, just as he decides to leave the stage, makes this clear:

> ΑΝΗΡ ἦ μὴν cὺ δώcειc αὖριον τούτων δίκην
> ἡμῖν ἅπαcιν, κεἰ cφόδρ' εἶ νεανίαc.
> ἀθρόοι γὰρ ἥξομέν cε προcκαλούμενοι 1333
>
> Man: You're going to answer for what you've done to us tomorrow,
> even if you've found a second youth.
> We'll be turning out in force to take you to court.

Indeed, the second woman who enters refers to him as 'the man who lost me | by hitting me with a torch' (ἀνήρ ἐcτιν ὅc μ' ἀπώλεcεν | τῇ δᾳδὶ παίων, [1389-1390]). Philocleon does not threaten her with physical violence, but tells her a story about Aesop, which contains the seeds of verbal violence. Similarly, for the accuser who follows, who cites him in court 'for *hybris*' (ὕβρεωc [1418]), Philocleon acknowledges 'assault and battery' (πατάξαι καὶ βαλεῖν, [1422]), while Bdelycleon tries to prevent this conversation (μὴ μὴ καλέcῃ πρὸc τῶν θεῶν, 'Don't sue him, for pity's sake!' [1418]). In all three cases, Philocleon acknowledges the assault, but instead of coming to an agreement with the accuser, he recites fables and makes them flee by threatening them with violence. Bdelycleon has to grab his father and drag him offstage, while the old man continues to recite his nonsensical tales. As for the accuser, he returns to the space outside the theatre. Bdelycleon is not an ally for his father, contrary to Pheidippides at this stage of the action.

Philocleon is no longer, as he was in the first part of the play, completely at the mercy of his son's will. In the end, however, Bdelycleon has the upper hand and takes his father back to the *skene*. At this point, Philocleon's integration into the comedy seems highly compromised, for he has failed to join the chorus of wasps-jurors — because of his son, who was holding him back in the liminal space of the *skene* —, then he has failed to understand the court parody played out by his household when his son arranged for him to judge at home, and he has just now failed to play his part at a banquet. Philocleon is ill-suited to the comic stage, as can be seen from his use of physical violence, which makes him paradoxically comic and ridiculous.

There are differences between the two old fathers in these scenes. First, Philocleon uses objects in the extra-scenic space, but not the scenic space — the torch — and attacks the objects

carried by the other characters — the loaves of bread —, whereas Strepsiades has sufficient control over the dynamic with the creditor to adapt his choice of objects to his opponent's vocabulary — the goad, since he talks to him about horses. While Strepsiades uses violence adapted to the arrival of his creditors, Philocleon does not use the same violence onstage as he does off, contenting himself with threats. Finally, the adversaries who arrive on stage have been created for Strepsiades, by his son; now, he must respond to a problem that predates the beginning of the comedy. Philocleon, on the other hand, has just created these opponents — the second problem of *The Wasps*, as we have seen — by using violence against them in an abusive manner; they had not approached him, at least according to the textual clues, and he is trying to get rid of them without using physical violence, but with incoherent or disjointed speeches.

3. AN UNRESOLVED RELATIONSHIP?

In both cases, we can see that Strepsiades and Philocleon are not the masters of physical violence they claim to be at this stage of the plot, and this maladjustment to the comic stage justifies the end of the comedy. The difference in the way the two old men deal with the troublemakers who come on stage explains the difference in the way they are treated at the end of the play. These differences highlight the disparity between the situation of Philocleon and that of Strepsiades regarding their sons. Philocleon will fail in his initiation, because he uses physical violence extra-scenically and purely gratuitously, as he sees fit, and he will always lose against his son. On the other hand, Strepsiades, while still needing to realise the necessity of physical violence, is more open to initiation,[26] and he might have a chance at fighting Pheidippides. Philocleon, however, already appears to be a lost cause.

At the end of the play, the relationship between Strepsiades and his son seems unresolved: Strepsiades has decided that his real antagonist is Socrates and his disciples, and his son has left the stage having seemingly won the debate — and the physical fight — with his father. Nevertheless, even if this dispute has not been resolved head-on, it can be seen as indirectly resolved in the final scene of the play. For Philocleon, the case is different: the old man comes out at the end to try his hand at dancing against Carcinos and his sons. Philocleon refers to the tragic actors as his 'rivals' (κἀνταγωνιστὰς, 1497). His final return to the stage thus sees him fully embracing his status as an actor, and he is not afraid to take his opponents

[26] We are talking here of the initiation to physical violence. For other forms of initiation in the Old Comedy, see for example Byl (2007), Thiercy (2007a), Germain (2017).

on in combat, this time in the rules of ritual, namely the dance at the end of the play. But can Philocleon really be said to emerge victorious from this initiation into physical violence?

Strepsiades, throughout the comic action, searches for his place and his real antagonist: is it the flea-creditors? Pheidippides, his son, who spent his money and caused his father's debts? The Sophists? His attitude cannot be analysed until we know who the comic hero's real enemy is. In this play, physical violence struggles to find a target, and the possible reactions, ranging from fleeing to fighting, are determined by this uncertain identification. Strepsiades tries to fend off the characters who present themselves to him as antagonists but struggles to determine who the real antagonists in his comedy are, and as a result is beaten by his son. Pheidippides, on the other hand, has clearly taken control of physical violence and the means of legitimising it. He leaves the stage, thinking he has defeated his father, who remains onstage to lament. In the final scene, however, his father has a flash of insight that leads him to consider the third solution mentioned above, burning the Sophists' house, as he converses with a statue of Hermes that he claims to hear:[27]

ὀρθῶc παραινεῖc οὐκ ἐῶν δικορραφεῖν,
ἀλλ' ὡc τάχιcτ' ἐμπιμπράναι τὴν οἰκίαν
τῶν ἀδολεcχῶν. 1485

You rightly advise me not to bring more lawsuits against them,
but to burn down the house
of these smooth talkers.[28]

The old man climbs onto the roof of the *skene* and, with the help of a slave, sets fire to it, then hunts down the Sophists who try to escape. His violence progresses and is now directed not at the person directly responsible for his third problem — Pheidippides, who wants to strike his father and mother — but at those who have taught him Unjust Reasoning. But more than that, it's not just the Sophists and their teachings that Strepsiades is up against, it is also a remnant of the second problem: his inability to understand them, and hence his inferiority to the Sophists in the hypothetical time of the comedy. By rising above them, both materially and through the use of violence, he definitively solves his second problem simultaneously with the third. In his

[27] Statues of Hermes were often found at crossroads, because of the god's functions.
[28] Strepsiades to Hermes.

final act, he demonstrates his mastery of violence, which places him above the Sophists, Socrates, and their pupil — his son.

In *The Wasps*, Philocleon clearly fails in his mastery of physical violence as mastery of the stage, because he has failed — and continues to fail — to take control of violence and therefore of stage space. The entire comic action of *The Wasps* can be read as a struggle for stage space between Bdelycleon and Philocleon, the former refusing to let the latter enter the stage. His action is obvious, first recounted by the slaves, then made explicit by Bdelycleon himself from verse 136 on, who wants to prevent his father from leaving the *skene* and entering the stage. This theme is reinforced by the arrival of the chorus, and more particularly by verses 251 to 257, during which a father hits the son carrying the lamp. The latter threatens to leave them staggering in the mud:

Χο. τί δὴ μαθὼν τῷ δακτύλῳ τὴν θρυαλλίδ’ ὠθεῖc,
καὶ ταῦτα τοὐλαίου cπανίζοντος, ὦνόητε;
οὐ γὰρ δάκνει c’, ὅταν δέῃ τίμιον πρίαcθαι.
Πα. εἰ νὴ Δί’ αὖθιc κονδύλοιc νουθετήcεθ’ ἡμᾶc,
ἀποcβέcαντεc τοὺc λύχνουc ἄπιμεν οἴκαδ’ αὐτοί·
κἄπειτ’ ἴcωc ἐν τῷ cκότῳ τουτουὶ cτερηθεὶc
τὸν πηλὸν ὥcπερ ἀτταγᾶc τυρβάcειc βαδίζων.

Chorus: But who taught you to push the wick in with your finger!
This is no time to be wasting oil, you idiot!
It’s clear that you don’t have to spend an arm and a leg to buy at that price!
The child: Well, if you’re going to reprimand us with your fists,
We’ll turn off the lamp and go home,
and then, left in the dark, with no light, you’ll stagger around
in the mud like pigeons and you’ll run into each other.

Here too, it is the sons who allow or deny their fathers access to the stage: without them, there would be no lamp or light, and therefore no passage from the dramatic space to the stage through the liminal spaces. The fathers must therefore refrain from using violence against them if they want to keep this access. This failure foreshadows the failure of Philocleon.

Bdelycleon controls the stage; he enters and leaves the *skene* at will, directs the action of his slaves — whom he sends out onto the *skene* to bring his father inside or into the stage area to confront the jurors — gives staging orders (παῖε [...] ἀπὸ τῆc οἰκίαc, 'Strike [...] to keep them away from the house', 456 and οὐκ ἄπιτε, 'Clear the floor!', 458) and seems to control the space by means of physical violence. One character apparently escapes his control: despite his best efforts, his father does not obey and constantly tries to decide his own movements. The confrontation between the household and the jurors is therefore a struggle over whether or not to allow Philocleon to enter the comic stage and join the chorus, a central element of the comedy. His attempts keep failing, and the struggle shifts from the physical to the verbal, through debate. Philocleon injects a violent aspect, however, with the mention of the sword on which he will fall if he loses (523). After being convinced by his son, Philocleon agrees to judge the affairs of his house. Bdelycleon thus sets up a parody of a court on stage. His father finds himself caught up in a game of shadows and puppets. He performs a play within a play without realising it, and his decisions do nothing to advance the comic action. The first part shows a — temporary? — victory for Bdelycleon, who has succeeded in confining his father to the *skene* and preventing him from leaving the stage, thanks to a parody of a courtroom that testifies to his talent for staging. In purely comic terms, Philocleon does not stand a chance against his son. The apparent strangeness of the end of *The Wasps* finds a possible resolution here: if he cannot confront his son on the level of physical comic violence, Philocleon must turn to the other Dionysian genres and try to find there the mastery he lacks in the scenic space. After his outing to the banquet, and when he returns to the stage, his maladjustment is all the more obvious. We have seen his attitude towards the plaintiffs, which culminates in Bdelycleon's declaration, as he forcibly removes him from the stage, echoing the beginning of the play, in verses 1442–1445:

Βδ. οὔτοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρ' ἔτ' ἐνταυθοῖ μενεῖc,
ἀλλ' ἀράμενοc οἴcω cε —
Φι. τί ποιεῖc;
Βδ. ὅ τι ποιῶ;
εἴcω φέρω c' ἐντεῦθεν· εἰ δὲ μή, τάχα
κλητῆρεc ἐπιλείψουci τοὺc καλουμένουc. 1445

Bd: You're not going to stay on stage, by Demeter,

I'm going to pick you up and take you out -
Ph: What are you doing?
Bd: What am I doing?
I'm going to take you inside! If you don't,
those accusing you will end up not finding enough witnesses!

Philocleon is once again removed from the stage and confined to the liminal space of the *skene* — for good? Not at all. He emerges, as we said, once again. Will he, like Strepsiades, realise the need to use physical violence wisely in order to take control of the comic action and put an end to all or part of his troubles? As Olsen asks, 'is Philocleon meaningfully transformed by the events of the play' and by his initiation to physical violence, 'or is his dance-mania simply a new permutation of his previous enthusiasm for jury service?'[29] It seems to be the latest. Philocleon takes the opposite decision to Strepsiades, abandoning the idea of integrating himself into comedy through physical violence, and throws himself into a third Dionysian genre: dance and pantomime. This dance places the character halfway between old age and youth: this 'is not a piece designed for just any old person, but a choreography created for an exceptional dancer despite his age, particularly the movements involved in the choreography'.[30] It 'defies the laws of old age and the laws of nature, and is representative of the madness of the main character in *The Wasps*'.[31] Even 'before Philocleon himself emerges to dance, Xanthias' report paints a troubling picture of his activities',[32] and 'his performance of dance as an individualistic enterprise is baffling, confusing, and unsettling to others'.[33] The slave constantly denies the way in which the master describes his dance: 'while Philocleon claims that his movements, poses, and gestures reflect old tragic style, Xanthias insists that they indicate insanity'.[34]

His escape from the *skene* does not make him any better at mastering physical violence. Much of the action in *The Clouds* is also centred around the *skene*. Nevertheless, Strepsiades is not confined to it: there is less rivalry for control of the stage in this father-son duo.

[29] Olsen (2020), 111: 'Is Philocleon meaningfully transformed by the events of the play or is his dance-mania simply a new permutation of his previous enthusiasm for jury service?'.
[30] Delavaud-Roux (2012), [§4] '[cette danse] n'est pas un morceau conçu pour n'importe quelle personne âgée mais une chorégraphie réalisée pour un danseur d'exception en dépit de son âge, notamment les mouvements impliqués par la chorégraphie'.
[31] Delavaud-Roux (2012), [§6] elle 'défie les lois de la vieillesse, les lois de la nature et est représentative de la folie du personnage principal des *Guêpes*'.
[32] Olsen (2020), 113.
[33] Olsen (2020), 115.
[34] Olsen (2020), 116.

Strepsiades directs his own movements – albeit prompted by an outside force – and Pheidippides is slow to make his entrance, which he does only backwards at his father's urging. This is the cause of the old man's loss for a time, as he is beaten by his son. Strepsiades, however, finds some hope of resolution at the end of the play, when he opts for physical violence by setting fire to the *skene*. The endings of the two comedies could not be more opposite: Strepsiades destroys the *skene* from which his problems originate (the fleas and his son when the *skene* represents his home, the Sophists when it represents the Sophists' home). By destroying this *skene*, he prevents his son, who enters and leaves it, from reappearing on stage. In comic terms at least, Strepsiades is safe in the comic space. Philocleon is not so certain: he is still 'unable to find his place in time and space', and 'he remains a prisoner of a time and space that have become mortifying, symbolised by the circular and repetitive movement of the 'spinning top'.[35]

CONCLUSION

In *The Cloud*s, Strepsiades is saddled with debt because of his son Pheidippides' spending. In *The Wasps*, Bdelycleon tries to help his father Philocleon overcome his passion for the courts, against his will. In both cases, the comic action is created by this conflict, and the whole play is a development of the interactions between father and son.

The crisis-ridden relationship between Strepsiades and his son is the comic source, since it is Pheidippides' incessant spending that creates Strepsiades' problems. It also provides the basis for the rest of the comic plot, with Strepsiades facing his son's refusal, then his acceptance, and ultimately his physical violence. Finally, this relationship determines the end of the comedy: after suffering at the hands of his son, Strepsiades must make his decision. *In extremis*, he succeeds in taking control of the action and becomes the comic hero in his own right. The relationship between Philocleon and Bdelycleon is also a father-son relationship marked by violence, but in *The Wasps* the son tries to help his father. By the end of the play, however, Philocleon has failed to control the action, and the relationship seems to have reached a complete standstill. While *The Wasps* present an explosive and violent situation that is resolved by debate and by some scenes of less important violence, *The Clouds* follow the opposite pattern, progressing from blow to blow until the most violent final scene in the entire

[35]Jay-Robert (2003), 443: 'Impuissant à trouver sa place dans le temps et dans l'espace, Philocléon ne peut donc accéder à ce mouvement spirale générateur de progrès et d'avenir, si bien qu'il reste prisonnier d'un temps et d'un espace devenus mortifères, symbolisés alors par ce mouvement circulaire et répétitif de la "toupie"'.

Aristophanian corpus: the old man, Strepsiades, in a rage, sets fire to the Thinkery and beats up the Sophists who escape.

In both plays, the protagonist is introduced to physical violence, which is essential if he is to play his role properly: Strepsiades and Philocleon both begin the play as victims of their sons' violence — one to his detriment, the other to his aid. The two old men gradually learn not to fear physical violence and to use it. Nevertheless, where Strepsiades succeeds, at the very end, in mastering this violence and becoming a comic hero, Philocleon's status remains much more ambiguous after the comedy ends. This difference between the two characters can already be seen in the way they deal with outside troublemakers two-thirds of the way through the play; Strepsiades sends them away, with the help of his son, while Philocleon makes a series of mistakes and ends up being forcibly removed from stage by his son Bdelycleon, who carries him into the *skene*. This same *skene* represents the heart of the conflict: the sons enter and leave it with ease, while the violence against the two old men by their sons comes mostly from the *skene*. Strepsiades solves the problem by setting fire to the *skene* and controlling access to it once and for all. Philocleon, locked up twice by his son, manages to escape from the *skene* in the final scene, but takes advantage of his new-found freedom to enter a dance contest with the tragic poet Carcinos, without understanding the terms of the — comic — play in which he finds himself. From all points of view, he has failed.

Through this study of two father-son relationships in Aristophanes' corpus, we can see that the comic hero who succeeds in his initiation to physical violence also succeeds in his integration into comedy and can stand out as master of the stage space and the staging. He interacts with the objects, gives orders to the other characters on stage, and dominates the comic action. Conversely, anyone who fails this initiation is not part of the action, and all attempts to solve the initial comic problem are temporary and doomed to failure.

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Married Couples in Crisis in Ancient Greek Tragedy: The Case of Procne – Tereus (Sophocles' *Tereus*) and Medea – Jason (Euripides' *Medea*)

Charoula Dandolou

INTRODUCTION[1]

In ancient Greek tragedy, marriage, both as an institution and as a ritual, is a significant and recurring theme that often carries negative connotations. Rather than a joyful event, marriage is frequently associated with unhappy experiences, particularly for women, while marital relationships are often portrayed as being in crisis. This crisis is commonly caused by the infidelity of one of the spouses, the presence of a new lover or the introduction of a concubine into the household, a new marriage of convenience, or by actions that violate fundamental familial bonds, such as the sacrifice of a child for political or social reasons.[2] In this context, my purpose in this paper is to bring to the fore relationships of tragic married couples that are in a love crisis, examining the problematic marital relationship of two renowned cases of tragic couples, i.e. Tereus and Procne on the one hand, and Jason and Medea on the other; they both become the subject of two famous tragic plays — one by Sophocles, and the other by Euripides. In these tragedies — Sophocles' fragmentary *Tereus* and Euripides' *Medea* respectively — both married couples are in a love crisis. Indeed, in both cases the husbands betray their wives, and the betrayed wives take revenge on their husbands by murdering their own children. In this paper, I will attempt a comparative examination of the causes that lead to these crises, as well as the characters' behaviour, motives, and actions within this frame of crisis, the 'solutions' devised by the two betrayed women in order to take revenge on their husbands and the outcomes of these actions, which lead to the final dissolution of both marriages.

To better understand these crises, a brief overview of the content of these two tragedies is necessary. In Sophocles' *Tereus*, Tereus, the king of the Thracians, is married to Procne, the daughter of Pandion, the ruler of Athens. When Tereus travels to Athens to bring Procne's sister, Philomela, to Thrace, because her sister, Procne, wanted to see her, he falls in love with

[1] I would like to warmly thank Professor Athena Kavoulaki for her valuable assistance, as well as the Organising Committee of the conference 'Interpersonal Relationships in Crisis in Greco-Roman Literature' for their helpful comments. Any errors or shortcomings are, of course, my own responsibility. For Sophocles' *Tereus,* I use the edition of Radt (1999), and for Euripides' *Medea* the edition of Diggle (1987). For the translation of Sophocles' *Tereus,* I cite Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006 and 2010), and for Euripides' *Medea* Mossman (2011). Where I slightly modify the translations, I mention it.

[2] Cf. indicative cases: Agamemnon–Clytemnestra (Aesch. *Ag.*, Eur. *I.A.*), Tereus–Procne (Soph. *TGF* 4 *frr*. 581–595b: *Tereus*), Jason–Medea (Eur. *Med*.), Theseus–Phaedra (Eur. *Hipp*.).

Philomela and rapes her. To prevent her from revealing the truth, he cuts out her tongue. However, Procne learns the truth through a weft woven by Philomela, on which there were embroidered images or words. In order to take revenge on Tereus, Procne kills and cooks their own son, named Itys, and serves him to Tereus, who eats him in his ignorance. Upon discovering the truth, Tereus pursues the two sisters, but a god intervenes and transforms all three of them into birds: Tereus becomes a hoopoe, Procne a nightingale, and Philomela a swallow.

On the other hand, in Euripides' *Medea*, Medea and Jason are exiled to Corinth — where Creon is king — after the Argonautic campaign and the killing of King Pelias of Iolcus. There, although Jason is married to Medea, he marries Creon's daughter, Glauce, thereby abandoning Medea and their children. At the same time, Creon decides to exile Medea along with her children. In order to punish and take revenge on Jason, Creon, and his daughter, Medea not only kills Glauce and Creon with a poisoned robe and a golden wreath but also murders her own sons. In the end, Medea departs on her grandfather Helios' chariot for Athens, where she finds refuge with Aegeus.

1. THE BEGINNING OF THE CALAMITIES

In examining the causes that led to the love crises and the disruption of marital relationships, it is worth noting that in both cases the main reasons seem to have been the husbands' infidelity and betrayal: Tereus was unfaithful to Procne by raping her sister, while Jason betrayed Medea by entering into a new marriage with Creon's daughter and abandoning her. In both instances, the introduction of a new female figure into the household triggers a crisis in the couple's relationship, ultimately leading to the dissolution of the marriage.

More specifically, in Sophocles' *Tereus*, the beginning of all the calamities and distresses lies in Tereus' love for Philomela, his wife's sister, that led to her rape and subsequent mutilation. According to the ancient *hypothesis* of the play, Tereus [ἠράσθ]η{ι} τῆς παιδ | ός [...] | διεπαρθένευ[σεν [...] | ἐγλωσσοτόμη[σε τὴν παῖδα.], 'he became enamoured of the girl […], he deflowered her […] and cut out the girl's tongue' (Soph. *Tereus*, *hypothesis* 15–19). Moreover, on the basis of a passage from Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* (παλαίων Ἀφροδίσιον πάλην, 'wrestling the wrestling of Aphrodite', which quotes a fragment of the play perhaps slightly modified, Ach. Tat. 5.3.5),[3] Tereus raped Philomela, while she struggled in

[3] Liapis (2008) suggests that the passage 5.3.5 from Achilles Tatius (Θρᾷξ ὁ Τηρεὺς ἐνύφαντο Φιλομήλᾳ παλαίων πάλην ἀφροδίσιον, 'The Thracian Tereus struggling with Philomela in a lustful strife') might come from

vain to escape. To prevent her from speaking, screaming, and revealing the truth and his horrible deeds, he cuts out her tongue (κείρει τε φωνῆς ἄνθος, 'he cuts off the flower of her voice', another Sophoclean fragment, which is perhaps quoted slightly modified in Ach. Tat. 5.5.4);[4] the tongue is the most dangerous part of a woman (her one powerful member),[5] as it signifies speaking, an activity curtailed in the historical reality of the Greek polis.[6] Indeed, if the suggestions of scholars are correct and the slightly modified passage from Achilles Tatius (ἔδνα τῶν γάμων | δίδωσιν αὐτῇ μη τι γηρύειν ἔτι, 'he offers her as a wedding gift the deprivation of her speech', 5.5.4) derives from Sophoclean *Tereus*,[7] it seems that one of Tereus' two crimes, the mutilation of Philomela, was described in the play in nuptial terms, as an inverted and paradoxical wedding gift.[8] This negative gift would apparently reciprocate Philomela's denial of Tereus, her unwillingness to succumb to his passion. Hence, Philomela does not marry Tereus, but she is raped and mutilated by him. In this case, Tereus not only dishonours his wife, Procne, and the institution of marriage, but he also fails to keep his pledge (ὁ δὲ τὰ πισ[τὰ οὐ φ]υλάξας, '[not k]eeping his pled[ge]', Soph. *Tereus*, *hypothesis* 16), which he had probably given to Pandion to ensure Philomela's safety on their journey to Thrace.[9] Instead, he rapes Philomela and cheats on his wife with her sister, dishonouring both Philomela and her entire family by raping her,[10] which will lead to a series of crimes committed by Procne in order to avenge her husband and defend her natal family.[11]

However, the origin of this dysfunction in Procne and Tereus's marriage might, in fact, be attributed to the very circumstances under which their marriage was arranged. As reflected in Procne's famous speech (*fr*. 583.1–12),[12] where she laments both her fate and the fate of all

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Sophocles' *Tereus*. See Liapis (2008), 335–336. A proposed reconstruction of the Sophoclean text by Kovacs (*per litteras* to Liapis), supported by Sommerstein and Talboy, is παλαίων Ἀφροδίσιον πάλην. See Sommerstein/Talboy (2010), 263. In this case, this line could be considered as euphemism for sex. For Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, I use the edition of Hercher (1858), and for the translation, I cite Gaselee (1969).

[4] Liapis (2006) also argues that the passage 5.5.4 from Achilles Tatius may conceal another quotation from Sophocles' *Tereus*. See Liapis (2006), 237–238.

[5] Burnett (1998), 185.

[6] On this issue and women's speech in Greek tragedy see also McClure (1999).

[7] See n. 4 in this paper. See Liapis (2006), 222–227, (2008), 335. For the translation of this fragment, see Liapis (2006), 222.

[8] For the perverted gift, see Liapis (2006), 222–226.

[9] See Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 174.

[10] For the connection between female and male honour, see Cairns (1993), 120–125.

[11] For reasons that I will support in the second part of my paper, I agree with Burnett, who argues that 'Procne killed her boy […] in order to restore the honour of her paternal house, in retaliation against a husband who had broken faith with her father'. Burnett (1998), 179.

[12] The *TGF* 4 *fr*. 583 quoted in Stobaeus' *Anthology* 4.22.45 (in the section titled Ὅτι οὐκ ἀγαθὸν τὸ γαμεῖν) together with a new papyrus fragment published in 2016 (*POxy.* 5292, early second century, Slattery 2016), which is a continuity of *fr*. 583, constitute the most extensive fragment that survives from Sophocles' *Tereus*. For the new fragment, see Gonis/Maltomini/Henry/Slattery (2016), 8–14. In this fragment, the new evidence (*POxy.* 5292) indicates that Procne is the speaker, and she is probably addressing other women — a female Chorus — before a

married women,[13] their marriage seems to have been forced rather than freely chosen (Soph. *TGF* 4 *fr*. 583.1–12):

νῦν δ' οὐδέν εἰμι χωρίς. ἀλλὰ πολλάκις
ἔβλεψα ταύτῃ τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν,
ὡς οὐδέν ἐσμεν. αἳ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς
ἥδιστον, οἶμαι, ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον·
τερπνῶς γὰρ ἀεὶ παῖδας ἀνοία τρέφει.
ὅταν δ' ἐς ἥβην ἐξικώμεθ' ἔμφρονες,
ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
θεῶν πατρῴων τῶν τε φυσάντων ἄπο,
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,
αἱ δ' εἰς ἀγηθῆ δώμαθ', αἱ δ' ἐπίρροθα.
καὶ ταῦτ', ἐπειδὰν εὐφρόνη ζεύξῃ μία,
χρεὼν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

Now, however, I am nothing on my own. But often I have regarded the whole female sex in this way – that we are nothing. As young girls in our fathers' homes, I think, we live the most pleasant life of all mortals; for ignorance always gives children a happy upbringing. But when we come to adolescence and awareness, we are pushed out and sold, away from our parents and our family gods, some of us to foreign men, some to barbarians, some into homes empty of joy, some into homes full of abuse. And this, when a single night has yoked us, we have to approve and regard it as good.

(trans. Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy)

In the extant portion of her lament, Procne begins referring to her own personal experience and situation (*fr*. 583.1) before moving on to the experiences of the entire female sex (*fr*. 583.3–

Shepherd enters the scene to inform her of something. See Coo (2020), 49–50, Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 182, Wright (2019), 121.

[13] It is worth noting that Procne's lament is composed in iambic metre, in contrast to the 'typical' laments which are usually composed in lyrical metres. This indicates that, while lamenting, Procne is fully aware of what she is saying and doing. Regardless of the metre, however, this passage expresses Procne's intense feelings.

12),[14] experiences which also seem to allude to her own;[15] thus, she gradually presents the stages that girls go through until they reach the appropriate age for marriage. Procne appears to be in an intense emotional state, stressing that she is now nothing, separated (νῦν δ' οὐδέν εἰμι χωρίς, *fr*. 583.1),[16] possibly referring to a long–standing separation from her sister, her family, and, by extension, her homeland, as she now lives in Thrace far from her natal home.[17] Then, in *fr*. 583.3–12, Procne generalises her lament by consistently using the first–person plural verbs (ἐσμεν, ζῶμεν, ἐξικώμεθ', ὠθούμεθ', διεμπολώμεθα, 3–12) instead of the singular (εἰμι, 1),[18] showing that the entire female sex is in the same situation as her (ὡς οὐδέν ἐσμεν, 'we are nothing'), and shares common experiences from childhood to adulthood. Specifically, young girls, still living in their parents' home, live the happiest of lives (*fr*. 583.3–5), but when they grow up and reach the appropriate age for marriage, their parents drive them away (ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω, 'we are pushed out') and sell them (διεμπολώμεθα, 'we are sold') to foreign or barbarian men who marry them. Given that Procne uses the first–person plural 'we' in most of her speech, indicating that she is including herself in the experiences she describes, it is possible that she is alluding to and recalling her personal experiences. Correspondingly, Athenian Procne gets married to the barbarian Tereus and is forced to live in the foreign and inhospitable land of Thrace, cut off from her family and her homeland.

Thus, in Procne's speech, marriage is portrayed as a negative and unpleasant experience — rather than as a pleasant one — for both herself and other women.[19] It is presented as equivalent to slavery (*fr*. 583.7), in which women are dependent on their husbands (*fr*. 583.9–10).[20] In particular, the use of the verbs ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω ('we are pushed out') and διεμπολώμεθα ('we are sold') indicates that young girls who are to be married are treated as slaves by their families.[21] Brides appear to be 'objectified', and their marriages seem to be both forced and mercenary rather than a personal choice.[22] As girls who are under their fathers' protection, they

[14] See Coo (2020), 50.
[15] See Coo (2020), 51.
[16] See Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 182. See *LSJ* s.v. χωρίς.
[17] In this point, according to Coo, with whom I agree, it is possible that Procne was not informed of the false news of Philomela's death, and her lament 'can only refer to her separation from her natal home and/ or from Philomela'. Coo (2020), 50.
[18] See Coo (2020), 50.
[19] In tragedy, it is common for marriage to be an unhappy event for the woman or to be inverted through the interpenetration of nuptial and funerary rituals. For the interpenetration of these rituals in tragedy, see Seaford (1987). For example, another tragedy in which marriage carries negative connotations is Aeschylus' *Supplices*. In this tragedy, the Danaids refuse the marriage with their cousins and reject it; they wish to remain eternally virgins and prefer to die rather than marry them (cf. Aesch. *Supp*. 787–791, 802–805).
[20] Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 181. Cf. Eur. *Med*. 232–247.
[21] See Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 182.
[22] The verb διεμπολάω can be used metaphorically to describe a mercenary marriage; see *LSJ* s.v. διεμπολάω.

lack the freedom to choose a husband and are expected to obey their fathers — the *kyrios* of their *oikos* — and consider that they have to approve their marriage (χρεὼν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν, 'we have to approve and regard it as good', *fr*. 583.12). Consequently, under these circumstances, and considering the contrasts drawn at Procne's speech, between past and present, pleasant and unpleasant events, childhood and adulthood, as well as the correspondence between her experiences and those of the whole womankind, it seems that Procne's marriage must have been neither a joyful experience nor a personal choice, but rather an enforced duty that causes trauma: the trauma of losing one's own home and beloved ones. Nonetheless, she obeyed her father, married Tereus, and fulfilled her duties as a wife by remaining faithful and bearing a son, in contrast to the disloyal Tereus who betrayed her by exerting violence to her sister, i.e. one of the beloved persons Procne valued most.

On the other hand, Medea not only married Jason out of fervent love for him (ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσ', 'smitten in her heart with love', Eur. *Med*. 8), but she did not even hesitate to kill her brother and oppose her father, in order to be with him. Moreover, although she had left her homeland and family to marry Jason (living with him in exile) and had fulfilled her conjugal duties by bearing two sons and remaining loyal wife,[23] Jason ultimately betrayed and abandoned her by marrying Creon's daughter, princess Glauce. However, Jason claims that he contracted this royal marriage as a wise, sensible man, and a great friend to Medea and his children (Eur. *Med*. 547–550), aiming at benefiting them. He argues that his decision to get married was not driven by the hate for Medea's bed (λέχος) nor by the desire for a new bride or the competition of having many children (Eur. *Med*. 555–557); instead, he wanted to save Medea and secure the continuity of his lineage by uniting their children with future royal offspring (to be born from his new marriage), who would protect his house and ensure a better and happier future for them (cf. Eur. *Med*. 560–567, 595–597).

Nevertheless, Medea's understanding of the situation regarding Jason's second marriage is totally different and contrasts with his stated motives and claims about its benefits. According to Medea, it seems that Jason not only failed to benefit her but also betrayed her. Specifically, by frequently using throughout the tragedy terms and phrases such as τολμῶσ' ἀδικεῖν ('such unjust things do they dare to do to me', 165), ὑβρίζομαι ('I am abused', 255), ἐς εὐνὴν ἠδικημένη κυρῇ ('she has met with injustice in her marriage–bed', 265), προύδωκας ἡμᾶς ('you have betrayed me', 489), ὕβριζ' ('insult away', 603), προδοῦσά σε; ('by betrayed you?', 606), ἀδικεῖ μ ('wrongs me', 692), ἀλλ' ὕβρις, οἵ τε σοὶ νεοδμῆτες γάμοι ('no, but your

[23] For the fulfilment of Medea's conjugal duties, see Swift (2021), 318.

outrageous behavior and your newly–won marriage', 1366), Medea seemingly seeks to define and characterise her situation following Jason's new marriage, thereby emphasising that he betrayed, insulted, and wronged her through this act, i.e. his new marriage.

In fact, the only one who truly benefits from this marriage is Jason himself, whose motives seem to have been selfish, despite the impression he gives of acting with his family's best interests at heart; his concern for his lawful wife, Medea, and their children is superficial, in contrast to his desire to gain royal offsprings and establish ties with a royal house. According to Medea, the reason for his betrayal was his intense desire to establish a kinship with royalty — in particular with Creon, the king of Corinth — through this marriage (μέγαν γ' ἔρωτα, πιστὸς οὐκ ἔφυ φίλοις | ἀνδρῶν τυράννων κῆδος ἠράσθη λαβεῖν, 'oh, very much in love; he was not faithful to his dear one | he fell in love with making a marriage tie with royalty', Eur. *Med*. 698, 700). In this way, Jason would be able to reintegrate into society and assume a position of leadership, since, like Medea, he was an exile in Corinth and held no active political power.

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF INFIDELITY

After examining the causes behind the love crises in the tragic marriages of Tereus and Procne, and Jason and Medea, it is equally important to examine the devastating consequences of the husbands' infidelity and betrayal on their marriages. In these instances, the marriages end in catastrophe, as the two betrayed wives, Procne and Medea, in an attempt to restore justice, take revenge on their husbands in the most painful way — by killing their own children.[24] However, behind this attempt to restore justice, a closer examination of each case individually reveals that the two women are driven by different motives, rooted respectively in the defence of familial honour on the one hand and of personal honour on the other.

To take Procne's case first, it is worth noting that Procne seems to take revenge on Tereus with the aim of restoring her sister's honour after her rape. According to the play's *hypothesis* (Soph. *Tereus*, *hypothesis,* 24–30), when Procne learns the truth that Tereus raped and mutilated her sister, Philomela, she decides to avenge her husband's double crime by killing their son, Itys, and serving him as a meal to Tereus. Unfortunately, no relevant passages survive from the scenes of Procne's reunion with Philomela, the planning of the revenge, or her words

[24] According to Swift, 'the motive for Medea's actions should be sought in the traditional ancient Greek attitude toward revenge, and the desire to harm one's enemies was an accepted part of ancient Greek morality and was often characterised as the foundation of justice'. Swift (2021), 320.

and emotions before or after the murder (passages which would have provided more insight into this moment); nonetheless, Procne's actions (mentioned in the *hypothesis*) seem to reflect known beliefs of the time regarding the significance of sibling relationships. More specifically, Procne, like other women such as Althaea and Antigone, prioritises her bond with her sister over the ties to her son or husband.[25] Hence when her husband rapes and mutilates Philomela, she chooses to punish him in the most violent way and to defend her sister, as well as her natal family, by harming both her husband and son. In this way, it seems that for Procne, the honour and love for her father's house outweigh those for the family she has created in Thrace: in order to vindicate her sister and restore her honour, Procne does not hesitate to kill her own child,[26] and even to maltreat its dead body by handling it like an animal, cooking and serving it as a meal.

On the other hand, Medea seeks to defend her own personal honour after being betrayed by her husband. As noted above, Medea married Jason out of fervent love for him — a passion that drove her to abandon her home in order to help him, and to commit serious crimes many times before their arrival in Corinth; after Jason's faithlessness, she feels hurt, betrayed, dishonoured and scorned, and her love turns to anger.[27] Medea considers his faithlessness both unjust and offensive, because not only did she save him in the past but they also had children together. In her view, a new marriage might be pardonable in the case of childlessness (εἰ γὰρ ἦσθ' ἄπαις ἔτι, | συγγνώστ' ἂν ἦν σοι τοῦδ' ἐρασθῆναι λέχους, 'for if you were still childless, it would have been pardonable for you to long for this marriage', Eur. *Med*. 490–491). Thus, Medea decides to kill Creon, Glauce, and her own children for revenge and restoration of her honour, as she is not only a betrayed wife but also a powerful female figure of royal descent and divine origins, a granddaughter of Helios, empowered with witchcraft, who refuses to be mocked.[28] Indeed, she believes that the murder of her children is the only way to spite her husband (οὕτω γὰρ ἂν μάλιστα δηχθείη πόσις, 'yes, for in this way my husband would be most wounded', Eur. *Med*. 817; cf. Eur. *Med*. 803–809, 816–817).[29] For her, this action is inevitable

[25] Cf. Hom. *Il*. 9.565–571, Soph. *Ant*. 905–915. In these cases, it seems that for both women their brothers are more important than their sons or husbands. Specifically, Althaea cursed her own son, Meleager, and prayed to Hades and Persephone for his death, because he had killed her brother. In Antigone's case, she argues that her brother, Polynices, is very important for her, and that she defied Creon's decree in order to bury him, whereas she claims that she would not have done the same if it had been her child or her husband, since she could have another child or remarry. But she could never have another brother, as her parents are dead. For the case of Antigone, see Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 154–155 n. 46.

[26] See Burnett (1998), 179. For a more detailed discussion of Procne's revenge, see Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006), 153–157.

[27] For the anger of Medea, see Hose (2011), 87–88.

[28] Cf. Eur. *Med*. 402–406, 1049–1051.

[29] See March (2000), 134.

as a means of taking revenge. Despite the profound pain it might cause her, her anger overcomes maternal emotions ('Do I want to make myself a laughing–stock by letting my enemies go unpunished? I must have the endurance to do this; what cowardice, even to admit soft words to my mind', Eur. *Med*. 1049–1052).[30] Consequently, her decision reflects the intensity of her emotional turmoil, where the desire to restore justice (and ensure justice and honour to her descendants)[31] and to punish her enemies outweighs her maternal emotions and love for her children. On the contrary, in the heated conversation between Medea and Jason, following the child–murder (1292–1417), it seems that Jason underestimates the consequences of a second marriage, believing that his new marriage was not a serious cause for the murder of their children (λέχους σφε κὴξίωσας οὕνεκα κτανεῖν, 'you really thought it right to kill them because of marriage?', Eur. *Med*. 1367),[32] and considers that Medea's attitude is rooted in sexual jealousy.[33]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it seems that both couples — Procne and Tereus, and Medea and Jason — had a failed and dysfunctional marital relationship. In these cases, the husbands were unfaithful. This led to clashes between the members of the couples and both betrayed women committed a series of crimes to take revenge on their husbands in the most painful way. The most terrible of these acts was the child–murder, as this action — among other things — not only deprives their husband of the possibility to continue their lineage but also severs the last remaining bond between the two spouses. What clearly distinguishes the two cases is the way the murdered children are treated: with dishonour in an inhumanly way in Procne's case; with superior honour and in a heroic way in Medea's case. Hence, the antithetical destinies that awaited the two mothers and couples: Procne, Philomela and Tereus were downgraded to the status of animals, while Medea was saved along with the bodies of her children in the chariot of Helios at the finale of the play.

[30] See Hose (2011), 87.
[31] At the end of the play, Medea, after murdering her children, announces that she will bury them in the precinct of Hera Akraia in order to prevent her enemies from insulting them by tearing down their tombs, and that she will establish a new cult in honour of her deceased children in Corinth (cf. Eur. *Med*. 1378–1383).
[32] Translation of Euripides' *Medea* by Mossman (2011), slightly modified by me.
[33] See Mastronarde (2019), 488.

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PART V: Family Crises in Latin Historiography

Mother and Son: Livia Drusilla, Tiberius Caesar, and the Politics of *Discordia* in the Ruling *Domus*

Christos Argyropoulos

INTRODUCTION

Roman historiography and biography of the imperial era place great emphasis on the private lives of the emperors and their kin,[1] in order to reveal not only their individual characters, but also the nature of the imperial system itself.[2] Interpersonal strife and family life are inherently intertwined, both in real life and in literature. Thus, complex dynamics and tensions are to be expected even among the members of the ruling dynasty — at least in the literary reconstructions of their lives.

This paper examines the intensely antagonistic relationship between mother and son within the Julio-Claudian dynasty (27 BCE–CE 68); it is a crisis that involves Livia Drusilla — the wife of Rome's first sole ruler, Octavian Augustus — and her son, emperor Tiberius. It is important to clarify that I do not seek to debate the historicity of their rivalry.[3] Rather, my primary aim is to analyse it, by presenting its full scope and placing it within its appropriate sociopolitical context. Through this analysis, I hope to draw conclusions about the portrayal of Livia and Tiberius in the works of Tacitus (*Annales*) and Suetonius (*Vita Tiberii*),[4] and to demonstrate that in Roman imperial historiography and biography the private life of the Julio-Claudians is closely linked to the public life of Rome. According to the ancient writers, the desire of both mother and son to accumulate political power ultimately destroys their familial bond, while their private feud endangers the stability of the regime.

Firstly, the prior dynamics between mother and son are examined, with particular focus on Livia's unofficial campaign to secure the Roman throne for Tiberius. Then, I remark upon the interpersonal as well as political nature of the crisis in question, since Livia, the tenant of discreet power, wanted to participate openly in Tiberius' rule — something he resisted. In this context the interplay between gender and political activity is taken into consideration. Naturally, emphasis is placed on the climax of the struggle, which is attested by Suetonius, and

[1] The critical editions of the ancient texts are listed in the bibliography. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.
[2] Edwards (1993), 26–30, Joshel (1995), 73.
[3] On that, see Barrett (2002), 73–99.
[4] For an analysis of the Julio-Claudians as literary constructs in the works of Tacitus and Suetonius, see: Baar (1990), Joshel (1995), Barrett (2002), Ginsburg (2006), Pryzwansky (2008), Dircksen (2020), Garrett (2021).

its consequences in the daily life of the Julio-Claudian *domus* and the emperor's public image. Last but not least, some attention is given to the language used by the ancient authors, in order to construct the psychological profiles of both mother and son.

1. AUTHORIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Before investigating the relationship in question, it is essential to examine the authorial and political contexts of both the *Annales* and the *Vita Tiberii*.

Publius Cornelius Tacitus was a member of the senatorial class in the early second century CE.[5] More than one hundred and fifty years before his time, during the Republican era of Rome, the senatorial aristocracy held primary authority over policy, effectively ruling the state. However, since the civil wars of the Late Republic and especially with the rise of the Julio-Claudians, the first imperial family, one-man rule was established in Rome, a process that fundamentally transformed the political landscape. Octavian Augustus and his successors gradually amassed power, stripping the patrician aristocracy of its traditional key role in government and diminishing the influence of the Senate.[6]

In view of these developments, Tacitus, as a member of a class whose speech and actions were constrained by the power of the *Princeps*, adopted in his works a characteristically anti-imperial stance. In the *Annales*, the Principate is presented as intrinsically corrupt, as political deliberations that were once conducted in the public sphere — such as in the Senate and various assemblies — had become private affairs, carried out within the home (*domus*) of the ruler. The ancient author particularly abhorred the ruling family's arbitrary and covert access to Rome's governmental structures, which allowed even women to influence state policy, albeit unofficially.[7]

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, on the other hand, was a member of the equestrian order on his father's side,[8] and his grand-father moved on the periphery of Caligula's court circle.[9] As a result, he also belonged to the upper echelon of Roman society and had a distinguished career in the imperial bureaucracy under Trajan and Hadrian in the early second century CE.[10] His duties suggest that he was deeply involved in the world of emperors, yet he too came from a social class that had been politically eclipsed by the ruling dynasty. Suetonius' unique position

[5] On Tacitus' life, see Syme (1958), 59–74, Martin (1981), 26–38.
[6] Wallace-Hadrill (1995), 99.
[7] Santoro-L'Hoir (1994), 5–12, Joshel (1995), 53.
[8] Suet. *Otho* 10.1.
[9] Suet. *Calig.* 19.3.
[10] Wallace-Hadrill (1995), 1.

formed his perspective on the Julio-Claudians in a manner distinct from that of Tacitus. Although he did not openly criticise the imperial system, he was concerned with the emperor's role within Rome's sociopolitical hierarchy, which remained shaped by its Republican past. He maintained that the ruler must always respect the state's traditional institutions, such as the Senate, along with its exclusively male officers. The emperor was to uphold the position of 'first among equals' (*primus inter pares*), without arbitrarily favouring any individual or group. At the same time, Suetonius also argued that the Republican elites, both senatorial and equestrian, merited special treatment.[11]

Tacitus and Suetonius, despite their different authorial and political agendas, both stress the importance of recognising and upholding the traditional — Republican — sociopolitical order. To illustrate the dangers of disrupting this order, both authors turn to the beginning of the Empire, to the relationship between Livia and Tiberius, shedding light in complementary aspects of it. Their perspectives on the interplay between family and state affairs, as well as between the private and public spheres, are strikingly similar.

2. THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS

I would argue that the imminent crisis between Livia and Tiberius arises primarily from the empress' keen interest in her son's prospects.

Livia is depicted as deeply invested in Tiberius' future — her firstborn by her first husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero — even before his birth. According to Suetonius, she sought omens to determine the gender of her unborn child and confirmed it would be a boy by warming an egg in her hands until a male chick hatched. More notably, she was informed by the astrologer Scribonius that her son would become a king, but without the traditional symbols of kingship.[12] Up to this point, Livia's behaviour aligns with societal expectations. It was customary for Roman mothers to devote their lives and energy to their children.[13]

When Livia married her second husband, Octavian Augustus, she ensured that Tiberius became an integral part of his regime. Not only did she 'plead' with her son not to leave Rome (Suet. *Tib.* 10.2: *neque aut matri suppliciter precanti*), when he wanted to escape the pressures of office, but she also interceded with Augustus to secure a position for him as an imperial envoy (*legatus*) in Rhodes in 6 BCE.[14] After that, Livia became even more involved in politics;

[11] Wallace-Hadrill (1980), 68–76.
[12] Suet. *Tib.* 14.2.
[13] Cenerini (2009), 166.
[14] Suet. *Tib.* 12.2.

even though her son showed little interest in holding power — at this stage, at least — she was determined to make him Augustus' heir in the Principate. According to Tacitus, her campaign was relentless, yet 'covert' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.3.3: *obscuris matris artibus*). In both sources, the empress successfully persuaded her husband to formally adopt the young man through persistent pleading (*precibus uxoris*),[15] and made sure that all other rival claimants were eliminated from succession. Tacitus repeatedly insinuates that Livia may have played a role in the mysterious deaths of Augustus' blood-relatives; mainly in the untimely demise of his grandsons and potential heirs, Gaius, Lucius and Agrippa Postumus.[16] Suetonius, who does not generally attribute murderous intent to the empress,[17] also notes that Postumus' assassination may have been ordered by Livia herself, supposedly acting in her husband's name.[18] In the *Annales*, the ambitious mother's ruthless strategy ultimately culminates in the murder of Augustus himself, so that Tiberius swiftly succeeds him.[19] The historian explicitly refers to Livia's illicit tactics as 'crimes' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.5.1: *scelus uxoris*). However, it is important to examine her actions within the context of her identity as both wife and mother in a prominent aristocratic household.

Roman society and literature evaluated the conduct of married women (*matronae*) based on their adherence to the *mos maiorum*, a vague and historically reinterpreted set of traditional values and norms derived from Rome's past.[20] According to these principles, *matronae* were expected to embody virtues, such as chastity (*pudicitia*), modesty (*modestia*), obedience to the husband (*obsequium*) and skill in wool-working (*lanificium*). All these qualities were directed towards the service of the family and the members of the household, and they frequently appear in funerary inscriptions of women from the Republican and early Imperial eras, constructing the image of the 'ideal wife' (*exemplum bonae coniugis*).[21] Notably, the model matron was required to abstain from involvement in public affairs, particularly in matters of state policy. This view — adopted by both Tacitus and Suetonius — was grounded in the belief that all women were characterised by *levitas animi*, meaning they were mentally 'deficient' and, thusly, not only inferior to men, but also unfit to rule.[22] This created an essential symbolic dichotomy

[15] Tac. *Ann.* 4.57.3, Suet. *Tib.* 21.2: the phrase appears verbatim in both texts.
[16] Tac. *Ann.* 1.3.3, 1.6.2.
[17] Barrett (2002), 236.
[18] Suet. *Tib.* 22.1.
[19] Tac. *Ann.* 1.5.1.
[20] Bettini (2000), 261.
[21] See the *Epitaph of Claudia* (*CIL* I² 1211), and the *Laudatio Turiae* (*CIL* 1527= *ILS* 8393), Cenerini (2009), 17–35.
[22] Hallett (2021), 78.

in Roman life: women were associated with, and confined to, the domestic sphere, while men engaged in politics and war.[23]

As previously established, the sources indicate that Livia actively sought to influence the mechanisms of dynastic succession, thereby entering the political sphere — despite the cultural expectation that she ought not to. Moreover, her pursuit of power on behalf of Tiberius compelled her to reject the very ideals she was meant to embody as a *matrona*. Rather than demonstrating dutiful devotion to her family, the empress — as Tacitus puts it — 'hastened the downfall' of her own relatives (Tac. *Ann*. 1.6.2: *caedem festinavisse*).

In the same passage of the *Annales*, Livia is described as acting with the 'hatred of a stepmother' (*novercalibus odiis*), a phrase that explicitly links her to the literary figure of the *saeva noverca*. The 'wicked stepmother' was a well-established type in Mime and Roman Comedy, which contributed to her codification as a stock-character in declamation.[24] As a conventional figure, she was primarily concerned with advancing the interests of her biological children, often at the expense of her husband and stepchildren.[25] Tacitus' portrayal of Livia closely aligns with this archetype, rendering her a 'burden on the house of the Caesars as a stepmother' (Tac. *Ann*. 1.10.5: *gravis domui Caesarum noverca*).

Although Suetonius does not associate Livia with the *saeva noverca* character,[26] he also conveys disapproval of her actions. He does this by contrasting her with Augustus' mother, Atia. As scholars have observed, Suetonius' *Lives* are designed to be read in relation to one another, allowing the reader to assess the representation of each ruler by drawing comparisons. Augustus, as the first formal emperor, serves as the standard against which his successors are measured, with their approval or criticism contingent upon the extent to which they align with or diverge from his example.[27] Given the exemplary role of the first emperor in the overarching narrative of the *Vitae Caesarum*, it possible to view Atia also as an *exemplum* against which Livia's conduct is implicitly assessed.[28]

Like Tiberius' mother, Atia was greatly concerned for her son and, on at least one occasion, sought to influence his future. Following the assassination of Julius Caesar, the young Octavian decided to return to Rome from Apollonia in order to claim his inheritance, despite the clear dangers posed to him by his status as the dictator's grand-nephew and adoptive son.

[23] Hemelrijk (2004), 188.
[24] Watson (1995), 131.
[25] Watson (1995), 92–93.
[26] Barrett (2002), 242.
[27] Edwards (2000), xix.
[28] Pryzwansky (2008), 59.

Although Atia did express her 'concerns' (Suet. *Aug.* 8.2: *dubitante matre*), she ultimately refrained from taking any further action to dissuade him. After this episode, Atia assumes a passive role in the narrative and practically disappears from it until her death, which occurred during her son's first consulship.[29] Despite being Julius Caesar's favoured niece,[30] she is not depicted as orchestrating Octavian's rise as his heir, nor does she interfere with the political decisions of the powerful men around her. In other words, Suetonius' portrayal of Atia, constructed as the 'ideal' mother of the 'ideal' emperor, emphasises her complete detachment from political affairs.[31]

By contrast, the ambitious, persuasive, scheming and possibly murderous Livia — as portrayed by Suetonius, but also by Tacitus — defies the traditional expectations of Roman matronhood and transforms into a subversive figure; a woman who ventures into the 'realm of men'.[32] The empress seems unwilling to remain conveniently apolitical, a stance that ultimately fuels her bitter rivalry with her son.[33] The connection to Atia is particularly relevant here; Suetonius notes that Augustus demonstrated marked devotion to his mother during her lifetime and paid her the highest honours after her death.[34] This harmonious relationship stemmed, at least in part, from Atia's alleged willingness to conform to the ideals of the *mos maiorum*.

3. THE CRISIS

Ultimately, Livia's efforts to ensure her son's succession after Augustus proved successful. Nevertheless, both texts make it clear that Tiberius' autocratic rule (*dominatio*) was largely established through his mother's decisive intervention. Tacitus cynically remarks that the Roman throne was merely a 'gift' (Tac. *Ann*. 4.57.3: *donum eius*) bestowed upon him by Livia. It is in this very context that the mother-son conflict emerges.

Livia, having previously exerted influence only discreetly and from behind the scenes, now aspired to 'an equal share' in absolute rule (Suet. *Tib.* 50.2: *partes sibi aequas potentiae uindicantem*). The *Annales* claim that she sought to be her son's 'partner in government' (Tac. *Ann.* 4.57.3: *dominationis sociam*), desiring to formally step into the political spotlight. Interestingly, the term *socius* signifies political cooperation between men,[35] highlighting

[29] Suet. *Aug.* 61.2.
[30] Suet. *Aug.* 4.1.
[31] Pryzwansky (2008), 60.
[32] Purcell (1986), 86.
[33] Baar (1990), 111.
[34] Suet. *Aug.* 61.2.
[35] Hellegouarc'h (1963), 83.

Livia's ambition to overstep her gendered boundaries. To complicate matters further, following the death of the first emperor, Livia inherited the title of *Augusta* according to the terms of his will — an honour originally conferred upon Octavian by the Senate.[36] Since the title had no precedent, its boundaries remained unclear. Specifically, it was uncertain whether, for women, it was merely honorary, or if it allowed for active involvement in politics.[37]

To Livia's surprise, Tiberius rejected her request to co-rule. His justification reflects the aforementioned views of the writers themselves: politics was an area reserved solely for men. Consequently, Livia was to refrain from 'affairs of importance and unbecoming of a woman' (Suet. *Tib*. 50.3: *maioribus nec feminae conuenientibus negotiis*). Once again, Suetonius' text highlights the tension between femininity and political activity. Beyond that, a pragmatic concern also shaped Tiberius' refusal. Livia's direct involvement in her son's administrative duties — her 'womanly elevation', as Tacitus describes it (Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.2: *muliebre fastigium*) — would diminish his own authority as emperor. It would be regarded as a 'depreciation of himself' (*in deminutionem sui accipiens*). Allowing his aging mother to wield power openly would reflect negatively on him, making him appear weak-willed and entirely dependent on her. In his *Vita*, Suetonius depicts the emperor as concerned that his subjects might 'perceive him as being ruled' by Livia (Suet. *Tib*. 50.2: *regi uideretur*).

The situation is further exacerbated by the psychological characteristics ascribed to both mother and son. Tacitus describes Livia as an 'unruly mother' (Tac. *Ann*. 5.1.3: *mater impotens*). *Impotentia muliebris*, much like *levitas animi*, was a stereotypical trait attributed to women, signifying a lack of self-restraint and a reluctance to subordinate personal desires to social expectations.[38] In Tacitus' narrative, the noun *impotentia* and its derivatives recur as defining features of Livia's character, serving as thematic framework for the Tiberian section of the *Annales* (Books 1–6). The term first appears in Book 1 as a fundamental trait of Tiberius' mother (1.4.5: *matrem muliebri impotentia*) and reemerges (4.57.3: *matris impotentia*) at a pivotal moment in Book 4, his self-imposed exile — an episode that will be examined later in this essay. Lastly, in his obituary assessment of the empress in Book 5, the historian pointedly employs the adjective *impotens* (5.1.3: *mater impotens*) to encapsulate her nature.[39] Through the strategic repetition of this term and the broader portrayal of Livia, she is framed as a woman out of control, unwilling to conform to social norms and unsatisfied with the already

[36] Tac. *Ann.* 1.8.1.
[37] Barrett (2002), 151–154.
[38] Santoro-L'Hoir (1994), 17.
[39] Goodyear (2004), 124, on Tac. *Ann.* 1.4.5, Woodman (2017), 55 on Tac. *Ann.* 5.1.3.

exceptional honours of being the widow and mother of an emperor.[40] Livia was greedy, 'eager for power' (Tac. *Ann*. 4.12.4: *potentiae anxiam*), and as previously observed, she never hesitated to employ illicit tactics to achieve her ambitions. Notably, the Latin term *potentia*, which signifies extra-legal power associated with arbitrary political acts, further underscores the empress's illegitimate authority.[41]

At this stage, Tiberius also appears increasingly anxious to acquire and maintain his power. As emperor, he is associated in both sources with another archetypal figure: the tyrant (*tyrannus*). The *tyrannus* as a literary construct epitomised political behaviour that was fundamentally antithetical to Roman ideas.[42] He wielded power selfishly, disregarding the needs of the community, and lacked the essential virtue of self-control (*continentia*), rendering him unfit for sound decision-making.[43] Furthermore, he exhibited hubris towards the gods and was innately cruel (*saevus*), a disposition that led him to commit acts of violence against his subjects. His brutality was not simply an abuse of power, but also a serious moral and social transgression. Physical violence was considered incompatible with the identity of the free-born Roman citizen, as it was an indignity reserved solely for slaves (*servi*).[44] Thus, the tyrant's violence against members of the body politic symbolised their loss of freedom (*libertas*) under an oppressive political system.[45] Another defining characteristic of the tyrant, central to the focus of this paper, was his resentful envy (*invidia*) towards anyone he perceived as a threat to his position, as he was intensely protective of his absolute authority.[46]

In both the *Annales* and the *Vita Tiberii*, Tiberius exhibits all the aforementioned negative traits — the inevitable and dramatic consequence of his corruption by absolute power. Similar to the literary tyrant, he is depicted as using his immense power to gratify his personal desires. He not only indulges in luxury and excessive drinking and eating,[47] but also exploits and abuses his subjects — primarily young boys and married women — by leveraging his exalted status through bribes, threats and orchestrated abductions.[48] Suetonius further recounts an episode of extreme brutality that also showcases Tiberius' hubris towards the gods. During a sacrificial ceremony, he is said to have sexually and physically violated a young acolyte, as

[40] Santoro-L'Hoir (2006), 111.
[41] Barrett (2002), 133, Woodman (2018), 119 on Tac. *Ann.* 4.12.4. Suetonius, in his *Vita Divi Augusti* (69.1) also refers to Livia's *potentia*.
[42] Baar (1990), 188–191.
[43] Icks (2014), 83–96.
[44] Walters (1997), 41.
[45] Walters (1997), 441, Cohen (2014), 192–193.
[46] Flory (1988), 350.
[47] Suet. *Tib*. 42.1–2.
[48] Tac. *Ann.* 6.1.1–2, Suet. *Tib.* 45.1.

well as the boy's brother.[49] Thus, the emperor displays the behaviour of a stereotypical tyrant in both narratives, which no doubt affects his relationship with his mother. Tacitus explicitly states that the *Princeps* harboured 'envy' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.2: *anxius invidia*) towards his mother's power and influence, which is partly why he prohibited her involvement in public life.[50]

4. PRIVATE AND PUBLIC STRUGGLES

The aforementioned factors seem to intensify the complex issue of female participation in politics, transforming the disagreement between mother and son into a full-scale struggle for power between a violent autocrat and his power-hungry mother. Unsurprisingly, Livia and Tiberius develop a strained and antagonistic relationship, both privately and publicly.

According to Suetonius, the emperor deliberately distanced himself from his mother by avoiding her, 'shunning frequent meetings' (Suet. *Tib.* 50.2: *et congressum eius assiduum uitauit*) and 'long and confidential conversations' with her (*et longiores secretioresque sermones*). He made no effort to seek her counsel, despite the biographer noting that 'every now and then he needed it' (*ne consiliis, quibus tamen interdum et egere* […] *solebat*). Nevertheless, Livia continued to pressure him, attempting to impose her political ideas. For example, she urged him repeatedly to appoint one of her favourites among the jurors.[51] Her constant interference left the emperor feeling 'vexed' or 'oppressed' (Suet. *Tib.* 50.2: *grauatus*), as it restricted his ability to exercise power freely. The sense of oppression particularly underscores Livia's role in the narrative as an 'overbearing' mother. This characterisation is reinforced by Tacitus, who interprets her insistence as a demand for compensation for the pivotal role she played in Tiberius' rise to power (Tac. *Ann*. 4.57.3: *idque Augusta exprobrabat, reposcebat*). As in Suetonius' narrative, the *Princeps* could not 'rid himself' of his mother (*neque depellere poterat*).

In the *Annales*, the empress is described as 'a burden on the state as a mother' (Tac. *Ann*. 1.10.5: *postremo Livia gravis in rem publicam mater*). With this concise phrase, the historian encapsulates multiple layers of meaning regarding Livia's 'maternal' role within both the Julio-Claudian household and the Roman state. The empress is characterised as a *gravis mater* not only in relation to her son — whose political affairs she continually disrupts — but

[49] Suet. *Tib.* 44.2.
[50] While Suetonius also describes Tiberius' malignant jealousy towards his relatives (Suet. *Tib.* 50.1), he does not explicitly link it to Livia.
[51] Suet. *Tib.* 51.1.

also to Rome itself. Her possible involvement in the elimination of the previous ruler, along with his potentially more competent and morally upstanding heirs, facilitated the ascension of a tyrant to the throne. Consequently, Tacitus appears to hold her partially accountable for the state's present misfortunes.

Furthermore, this phrase subtly alludes to the empress' role as 'mother of the country' (*mater patriae*), a title proposed in her honour by the Senate.[52] The designation *mater patriae* functioned as the female counterpart to *pater patriae*, 'father of the country' — an honorary title that formally acknowledged a man's exceptional contribution to the state, signifying his moral authority over Rome, similar to his authority over his family (*patria potestas*).[53] Livia, as the 'mother' or 'parent of her country' (Suet. *Tib.* 50.3: *parentem patria*), appears to have implicitly gained privileges reserved for men, thereby affirming her authority over the state.[54] In my opinion, this very status rendered her a 'burden' (*gravis*) on the state in the eyes of Tacitus, since it was fundamentally incongruous with ger gender identity. The term *gravis* may also allude to Livia's newly acquired *gravitas*, a quality that denoted the sternness and prestige of men who held public office and wielded social influence. As a virtue, *gravitas* signified an individual's ability to fulfil his obligations towards the state and command respect as a patron (*patronus*).[55] The empress' association with this traditionally 'masculine' attribute was, in itself, problematic.

It is worth noting that Tiberius refused to formally ratify the aforementioned honours bestowed upon his mother. According to Suetonius, he prohibited her from assuming the *parens patriae* title and from receiving various public distinctions (Suet. *Tib.* 50.3: *non ullum insignem honorem recipere publice passus est*). He was also very offended by a senatorial decree that proposed he be designated in honorary inscriptions not only as the 'son of Augustus' (*Augusti filius*), but also as the 'son of Livia' (*Liviae filius*).[56] This title had significant ideological implications, since it elevated, in effect, the empress' status to the level of her deceased husband.[57] In this way, Tiberius' authority as a ruler appeared to derive not only from his predecessor, but also from his mother.

In Tacitus' version of the story, the emperor, insisting that 'honours for women should be given in moderation' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.2: *moderandos feminarum honores*), forbade the

[52] Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.2, Suet. *Tib.* 50.3, Barrett (2002), 156.
[53] Augustus accepted that title in 2 BCE, after multiple refusals. See *RG* 35.
[54] Bauman (1992), 250.
[55] Hellegouarc'h (1963), 297–294.
[56] Suet. *Tib.* 50.2.
[57] Barrett (2002), 157.

above-mentioned and did not even allow a *lictor* to be assigned to Livia. After his death, Augustus was deified, while his widow was designated as his stepdaughter and appointed priestess.[58] The presence of a *lictor*, serving as a civil servant-bodyguard, was directly associated with her role as the head of the imperial cult, as *lictores* also accompanied the *Virgines Vestales*.[59] The refusal of this honour is portrayed in the narrative as an example of Tiberius' malignant envy (*invidia*), but also as an instance of his hypocrisy. To justify his decision, he declared that he would exercise the same restraint in the honours bestowed upon him — a sentiment that stands in stark contrast to his identity as a corrupt *tyrannus* in the *Annales*.[60] Thus, it is evident that, in both texts, in the public sphere, Tiberius deliberately sought to curb his mother's ever-increasing political prominence and influence.

Tacitus depicts Livia as similarly attempting to 'undermine' her son's 'sovereignty' (Tac. *Ann*. 3.64.2: *inferius maiestate principis*), thereby enhancing her own public standing. When she dedicated a statue of Augustus near the theatre of Marcellus, she put her own name above the emperor's on the dedicatory inscription (*Tiberi nomen suo postscripserat*). Tiberius, for his part, allegedly took this action as a personal 'affront' (*offensione*), though he concealed his true feelings.

The private estrangement and public struggle between mother and son illustrate a complete reversal of their earlier roles: at this juncture, Livia is no longer devoted to her son's success, while Tiberius actively opposes her. The emperor's opposition to his mother stands in marked contrast to what Tacitus describes as his 'deep-rooted obedience' towards her (Tac. *Ann.* 5.3.1: *Tiberio inveteratum matrem obsequium*). The empress once held 'parental authority' (*auctoritati parentis*) over Tiberius, but this no longer appears to be the case. The same is evident in the *Vita Tiberii*, which records only one instance in which the emperor dared to defy his mother's wishes — when, as a young man, he chose to abandon his promising political career and leave Rome. His determination to depart for Ostia was so great that, when his stepfather, Augustus, tried to detain him, he resorted to a four-day hunger strike.[61] However, even in that occasion, he resumed his public duties as a *legatus* through his mother's strategic intervention and returned to Rome eight years later with 'great and certain confidence in his future' (Suet. *Tib.* 14.1: *magna nec incerta spe futurorum*) — a future that Livia helped to realise. Suetonius notes that the emperor believed in a grand destiny, foretold by the very omens

[58] Tac. *Ann.* 1.8.1, 1.10.8.
[59] Barrett (2002), 144, 160–161.
[60] Tac. *Ann.* 14.2.
[61] Suet. *Tib.* 10.2.

and prophecies that Livia had sought while pregnant.[62] Previously, mother and son had embraced the same imperial vision; yet, their competing ambitions for political power have now driven them apart, endangering the stability of the state.

The concept of *concordia* is particularly significant in this context. In Roman thought, *concordia* was crucial to both private and public life. In the private sphere, it denoted the harmonious coexistence and cooperation among household members, founded on mutual respect and goodwill for the well-being of the family.[63] At a political level, it symbolised concord in public affairs, maintained through unity, agreement and reconciliation among the members of the community.[64] As already demonstrated, *concordia* is absent in this case, replaced by its opposite, *discordia*, which threatened both the family unit and the state. The discord between mother and son contributed to a particularly tense private life, while their mutual attempts to consolidate power at the expense of one another resulted in what appears to be a political crisis. Instead of elevating the ruling house's overall profile by honouring each other, Livia and Tiberius endanger the Julio-Claudian regime, by undermining each other's political influence. In the sources, the private and public aspects of *concordia* and *discordia* merge into one, as, in the context of the imperial family, a domestic crisis inevitably carries significant political implications.[65]

It is implied that both the *Princeps* and the *Augusta* were aware of this; their hatred for each other was carefully 'concealed' (Tac. *Ann*. 3.64.1: *occultis odiis*). According to Tacitus, Livia was generally 'a good match for the hypocrisy of her son' (Tac. *Ann*. 5.1.3: *et cum […] simulatione filii bene composita*), something that no doubt helped to keep the public, both the Senate and the People, uninformed about their personal frictions. Nevertheless, since this conflict was not merely personal, but also a battle for dominance over Rome, tensions inevitably spilled into public life. Songs of unknown authorship circulated in Rome, satirising the emperor's 'discordant heart with his mother' (Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.3: *discordem cum matre animum*).

5. THE BREAKDOWN

Suetonius documents the dramatic culmination of this bitter struggle for power between mother and son, as their 'enmity escalated to the most extreme degree' (Suet. *Tib.* 51.1: *dehinc ad*

[62] Suet. *Tib.* 14.1–4.
[63] Flory (1984), 316–317.
[64] Temelini (2002), 4–8.
[65] Rutland (1978), 19–20.

simultatem usque processit hac).[66] According to the biographer, after Livia had 'repeatedly urged' (*instanti saepius*) the emperor to enrol into the decuries a man who had been granted citizenship, he firmly refused, doing so in an unexpectedly defiant manner. He stated that he would comply only on the condition that an official public record be made, declaring that this decision had been 'forced upon him by his mother' (*extortum id sibi a matre*). Tiberius merely stated the obvious truth, but the domineering *Augusta* was 'enraged' (*illa commota*) by what she perceived as his insolence. In her fury, she drew from the household's private shrine and read some old letters written to her by her second husband, in which he criticised Tiberius' 'harsh and stubborn character' (*de acerbitate et intolerantia morum eius*). Livia's action emerges as particularly vindictive and spiteful; however, like everything else in this interpersonal crisis, it carried significant political implications.

It is unclear in the narrative whether Livia intended to hurt her son emotionally by simply highlighting his flaws, or she sought to manipulate him into submission by threatening to circulate the old letters. Nevertheless, it is certain that if such private documents were made public, Tiberius' position on the throne could be seriously compromised. The Senate and Rome's magistrates played no substantial role in the process of his appointment as ruler, only in the ratification of his ascension.[67] Consequently, his imperial rule did not derive from Rome's traditional Republican institutions but relied on his perceived approval by his deified predecessor. Indeed, this is why Suetonius took care to include the detail that Tiberius spent an entire day in private with the ill and soon-to-die first emperor.[68] It is worth noting that Tacitus also mentions Livia hastily summoning her son to her ailing husband's bedside through a brief missive.[69] In both instances, this final meeting between the emperor and his successor was intended to be perceived by the Roman citizens as an unofficial transfer of power — with Augustus entrusting the state into the hands of his stepson.[70] What is evident from the aforementioned is that any doubt concerning Augustus' satisfaction with his heir would inevitably call into question the legitimacy of the latter's imperial authority from the outset.

This incident served as a catalyst for the complete breakdown of the maternal-filial relationship and marked a turning point in Tiberius' rule. As noted by the *Vita Tiberii*, the emperor 'bore heavily' his mother's verbal assault (Suet. *Tib.* 51.1: *grauiter tulit*), particularly

[66] Baar (1990), 113.
[67] Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.1, Suet. *Tib.* 24.1–2.
[68] Suet. *Tib.* 21.1.
[69] Tac. *Ann.* 1.5.3. However, the historian notes that it has not been proven whether Tiberius discovered Augustus still alive or already deceased.
[70] Levick (1999), 48.

the fact that she had preserved these letters 'for so long' (*tam diu*) and revealed them with 'so much malice' (*tam infeste*). Livia's behaviour had put such a strain on him that, according to Suetonius, some believed this to be 'one of the reasons of his withdrawal' to Capri — if not 'the primary reason' (*ut quidam putent inter causas secessus hanc ei uel praecipuam fuisse*). Although the *Annales* do not specifically recount the above-mentioned episode, they nonetheless present Tiberius' self-imposed exile as a consequence, at least in part, of his volatile relationship with his mother; it is Livia's *impotentia* that drove him away from Rome (Tac. *Ann.* 4.57.3: *matris impotentia extrusum*). Thus, in both cases, a significant sociopolitical subversion is presented: the meddlesome and illegitimately influential woman displaced the man from his rightful position in Rome, the centre of political life, thereby forcing him into an apolitical existence.[71]

Female action and male inaction in the public sphere ultimately led to identical, fundamentally private outcomes. Livia's pursuit of power — initially on behalf of her son and later for her own benefit — compelled her to harm her closest relatives, rejecting her traditional role as the household's principal caretaker. Similarly, Tiberius' retreat from power will now push him to relinquish his own familial responsibilities. In the narratives of Tacitus and Suetonius, mother and son come to mirror one another.

Roman thought placed great emphasis on the proper conduct of children towards their parents. The virtue of *pietas*, which encompassed not only religious duty, but also a sense of responsibility, devotion and respect for one's parents in life and their memory after death, was paramount in the moral evaluation of individuals.[72] Consequently, it was frequently employed across various literary contexts, including historiography and biography, to either celebrate or condemn a person's character.[73] As will be discussed, Tiberius is portrayed not only as avoiding his mother in her old age, but also as wholly disregarding the duties (*officia*) of *pietas* — a depiction that both Tacitus and Suetonius use to underscore his immorality.[74]

According to Suetonius, following the explosive letter-incident, Livia spent the final three years of her life in Rome, while her son remained in Capri. During this period, the emperor saw his mother only once, and then only 'on a single day for very few hours' (Suet. *Tib.* 51.2: *uno die paucissimis vidit horis*). When the *Augusta* fell ill — by that point, according to Tacitus, she was 'extremely old' (Tac. *Ann.* 5.1.1: *aetate extrema*) — Tiberius 'made no

[71] Rutland (1978), 21.
[72] Hellegouarc'h (1963), 276.
[73] Ries (2012), Bryan (2014), Kowalski (2021).
[74] Baar (1990), 37.

effort to care for her' (Suet. *Tib.* 51.2: *ac mox neque aegrae adesse curavit*). The *Annales* cynically observe that he was unwilling to 'alter the pleasantness of his life' (Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.1: *nihil mutata amoenitate vitae*) in seclusion, which also explains his absence at her death. Tiberius ultimately 'missed the final duties to his mother' (*supremis in matrem officiis defuisset*), meaning he was not present at her passing. In Roman society, attending a dying relative — especially a parent — held symbolic significance. Great importance was placed on the moribund's last words, as well as the final kiss. The act of kissing, in this context, was not merely an expression of familial affection, but was also believed to capture the last breath (*spiritus*) of the deceased, symbolising the firm bond and shared existence of those within the household.[75]

In the *Vita Tiberii*, the emperor's filial negligence escalates into indifferent cruelty. After Livia's death, he delayed her funeral by holding out hope that he would return to Rome from Capri. Ultimately, the *Augusta* was buried only after several days, as the state of her 'decomposing corpse' (Suet. *Tib*. 51.2: *tabido corpore*) made it impossible to postpone the rites any longer. Tacitus uses Tiberius' absence from his mother's funeral as evidence of his *simulatio*, his hypocrisy; purportedly, the emperor excused himself via letter, citing 'the magnitude of his business' (Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.1: *magnitudinem negotiorum per litteras excusavit*). Livia's funeral was markedly 'modest' (Tac. *Ann.* 5.1.4: *funus eius modicum*) and was eulogised not by her son, but by her great-grandson — and Tiberius' future imperial heir — Gaius Caligula.[76]

These actions are intended to be perceived by the reader as deliberate acts of posthumous retribution on Tiberius' part. In both sources, he is depicted as disrespecting Livia's memory and disregarding her final wishes. In the *Annales*, he not only curtailed the lavish honours voted to the *Augusta* by the Senate, but also refused to sanction the establishment of her divine worship — a decision likewise noted by Suetonius.[77] Both texts emphasise the emperor's *simulatio*, as he claimed that these were his mother's specific instructions.[78] Neither author corroborates this assertion, thereby implying that he remained intent on obstructing Livia's *muliebre fastigium*.[79]

According to Suetonius, Tiberius further disregarded the provisions of his mother's will (*testamentum*) and even went so far as to target all of her remaining 'friends and intimates'

[75] Treggiari (1991), 484.
[76] Tac. *Ann.* 5.1.4.
[77] Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.1, Suet. *Tib.* 51.2.
[78] Tac. Ann. 5.2.1: *sic ipsam maluisse*, Suet. Tib. 51.2: *quasi id ipsa mandasset*.
[79] Woodman (2017), 57 on Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.1.

(Suet. *Tib.* 51.2: *omnisque amicitias et familiaritates*), including those whom she had personally entrusted with overseeing her funeral arrangements. One particularly unfortunate favourite of hers, an anonymous equestrian, was condemned to perform manual labour in a watermill.[80] Tacitus similarly refers to Livia's 'womanly friendships' (Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.2: *amicitias muliebris*), which were targeted following her death, notably highlighting the case of the consul Gaius Fufius.[81] Fufius had previously mocked the emperor with sharp witticisms yet, as the historian notes, 'the memory of the powerful is long' (Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.2: *praepotentis in longum memoria est*). Tiberius, it appears, neither forgot and nor forgave the insult, choosing instead to retaliate when the opportunity arose. The same can be said of his treatment of Livia: liberated from her overbearing *impotentia*, he exacted his revenge through his characteristic *saevitia*.[82]

CONCLUSIONS

The intensely antagonistic relationship between Livia and Tiberius functions as a narrative device in Roman historiography and biography, through which the inherent challenges of the imperial system are critically examined. In their literary works, Tacitus and Suetonius respond to the effective symbolic 'relocation' of political authority from the *forum*, where the traditional Republican institutions once operated, to the *domus* of the emperor. In this context, public governance is perceived as a 'private' concern of the ruling dynasty, resulting in the crucial interplay between state affairs and familial relationships.

The *Annales* and the *Vita Tiberii* aptly demonstrate how politics affect the interpersonal dynamics between the members of the imperial family. Livia's ambition to exert control over Rome clashes with Tiberius' zealous protection of his own authority as emperor, something that ultimately damages their maternal-filial bond irrevocably. At the same time, the aforementioned works provide insight into how problematic private relations like these influence the political sphere. The *discordia* between mother and son manifests in mutual efforts to undermine each other's political influence and visibility, thereby threatening the public pre-eminence of the Julio-Claudian house.

Both authors articulate concerns regarding the precarious nature of the Principate, since the transmission of power is not derived from Rome's Republican institutions — institutions to which the emperor was still expected to show deference — but rather from the internal

[80] Suet. *Tib.* 52.1.
[81] Woodman (2017), 58 on Tac. *Ann.* 5.3.1.
[82] Woodman (2017), 57 on Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.1.

dynamics of the ruling *domus*. Livia, an individual who, by virtue of her gender, lacked institutionally recognised power, is portrayed as 'gifting' the imperial throne to her son. This fact calls into question the legitimacy as well as the stability of such a system, as it relies primarily on the harmony and cohesion of the imperial household. This, in turn, depends upon the private conduct of its members. The crisis at hand carries significant public implications, as it portrays the authority of the *Princeps* as being undermined by a woman who transgresses the boundaries of her prescribed role.

The empress' transgression derives from the virtual deconstruction of the concepts of 'private' and 'public', as it allows for the subversion of familial and gender roles. Livia, in her pursuit to enter and conquer the political arena, rejects her domestic duties and actively harms her relatives, instead of selflessly devoting herself to them. Tiberius, reacting to his mother's inability to supress her illegitimate political instincts, refuses to perform his own duties towards her, rejecting the role of the *pius filius* and abusing her memory in a way that demonstrates his tyrannical *saevitia*. It seems, thus, that the 'problematic' political system of the Principate creates a 'problematic' mother, who, in turn, creates a 'problematic' son.

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A Family Drama: The Fratricide of Geta in an Echo of the Theban Myth

Maria-Eirini Zacharioudaki

INTRODUCTION

Herodian composes in the 3rd century CE the *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus,* and in 8 books he narrates the series of imperial successions and usurpations over approximately sixty years, specifically from the death of Marcus Aurelius (CE 180) to the ascent of Gordian III (CE 238). The reference to a series of different rulers in a relatively short time span immediately indicates an ongoing, all-pervading grave crisis in the Empire, and thus a period of growing instability due to continual sociopolitical fermentations and challenges. In his proem (Hdn. 1.1.1−5), Herodian underscores the disproportionate number of rulers (Hdn. 1.1.5)[1] and states that his work will — among others — abound with civil and foreign wars (πολέμων ἐμφυλίων τε καὶ ξένων, Hdn. 1.1.4), upheavals in the provinces (ἐθνῶν τε κινήσεις, Hdn. 1.1.4), numerous conquests (πόλεων ἁλώσεις, Hdn. 1.1.4), and, most importantly, an unparalleled consecutive succession of reigns (Hdn. 1.1.4) [2]. In this article, which constitutes a part of my PhD thesis,[3] I will begin with a brief introduction to the Severan family, emphasising Septimius Severus' ascent, and then focus on the fraternal dispute between Caracalla and Geta, the unfortunate outcome, and its striking tragic resonances.

1. THE MAKING OF AN ANTONINE: SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS ON THE THRONE

Septimius Severus (CE 193–211), the Libyan commander of Pannonia, emerges in the narrative towards the end of the second book. Herodian introduces him as a brave, high-spirited administrator (γενναῖος ἅμα καὶ θυμοειδής, Hdn. 2.9.2) with shrewd judgment (νοῆσαί τε ὀξὺς, Hdn. 2.9.2, τὸ ἀγχίνουν τῆς γνώμης, 2.14.2) and an impressive endurance in adverse conditions

[1] μερισθεῖσα γὰρ ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ ἐν ἔτεσιν ἑξήκοντα ἐς πλείους δυνάστας ἢ ὁ χρόνος ἀπήτει: 'In a period of sixty years the Roman empire was shared by more rulers than the years warranted'. All editions used for the ancient texts are mentioned in the bibliography list below. Concerning Herodian's text, I use the translations of the Loeb edition (Whittaker 1969 and 1970), unless indicated otherwise.

[2] […] οὐκ ἂν εὕροι […] βασιλειῶν οὕτως ἐπαλλήλους διαδοχὰς: 'It is impossible to find "similar succession of reigns"'.

[3] My ongoing doctoral dissertation is part of the research project 'Ein Kommentar zu Herodians *Geschichte des Kaisertums nach Marc Aurel*', funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – Projektnummer 415492189 (director: Jun.–Prof. Dr. Mario Baumann).

(Hdn. 3.6.10)[4] or hardships (πόνοις τε ἀντέχων ῥᾷστα, Hdn. 2.9.2).[5] When he is notified about the current unrest in the political arena, Septimius Severus considers this to be the right moment for him to 'seize the Roman Empire, since it is hovering' (μετέωρον, Hdn. 2.9.3)[6] over two idle and dissolute men: Julianus, the official emperor, who actually bought the Empire (ὠνησάμενος τὴν ἀρχήν, Hdn. 2.6.12)[7] in a disgraceful auction,[8] and Pescennius Niger, who is merely chosen in the absence of a better contender for Julianus (Hdn. 2.7.2−3). Septimius Severus gains the support of his troops, broadcasting that divine providence is summoning him to rule (θείᾳ προνοίᾳ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν [αὐτὸν] καλεῖσθαι, Hdn. 2.9.7),[9] especially emphasising a dream that can be interpreted as a figurative proclamation (Hdn. 2.9.5−6; cf. D.C. 75[74].3.3).[10] In particular, the soon-to-be emperor envisions formally inheriting the power from Pertinax in the *Forum Romanum* and simultaneously gaining the approval of the populace.[11]

According to Rollinger, there is 'a prevalent tradition that used a horse omen to legitimate a new king'.[12] Thus, the reference to a horse, 'adorned with the imperial trappings' (Hdn. 2.9.5)[13] carrying out the 'ceremony' brings Septimius Severus' biggest concern to the fore: the issue of legitimisation. In this regard, the reference to Pertinax is far from accidental.

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[4] 'He thought slightly of cold or heat' [my transl.].

[5] 'He would readily bear any affliction' [my transl.]; see also Hdn. 2.11.1, 2.14.2, 3.14.3; for Septimius Severus, 'the test for soldiers is endurance' (δοκίμιον δὲ στρατιωτῶν κάματος, Hdn. 2.10.6).

[6] […] τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν μετέωρον φερομένην ἁρπάσαι <διενοήθη>, [my transl. above]. This is not the first time that a potential usurper emphasises the precarious and unsettled state of the Empire (μετέωρον, Hdn. 2.9.3), hinting at the ongoing sociopolitical upheavals. A little earlier, Pescennius Niger, using the participle σαλεύουσα, had similarly referred to the Empire as being 'tossed by the storms' (Hdn. 2.8.4). Both of these men, implicitly pointing to themselves, address the need for a leader (ἥ τε ἀρχὴ σαλεύουσα καὶ παρὰ μηδενί πω βεβαίως ἱδρυμένη, 'the Empire is not firmly anchored to any one person', Hdn. 2.8.4, οὐδενὸς ὄντος τοῦ γενναίως ἢ κατ᾽ ἀξίαν αὐτὴν διοικοῦντος 'there is no noble or worthy leader to control it', 2.9.7) who would revive the untended Empire (ἐρριμμένην, Hdn. 2.8.2, ἔρριπται, 2.9.7, ἐρριμμένην, 2.10.2); on Severus' and Niger's *sunkrisis*, see Hidber (2006), 207−210, Hekster (2017), 119−122, Pitcher (2018), 246, Chrysanthou (2022b), 183−239.

[7] For the proclamation of Julianus in terms of financial transactions, see Hdn. 2.6.4−5, 2.6.12−14, 2.7.6, 2.8.5, 2.10.4.

[8] The soldiers, after murdering Pertinax, announce that the Empire 'was up for sale' (Hdn. 2.6.4: ὤνιον τὴν βασιλείαν) and eventually 'exchange it with money' (Hdn. 2.6.13: χρημάτων ἀντικαταλλαξάμενον τὴν ἀρχήν) [my transl.]; for the whole episode see Hdn. 2.6.4−11.

[9] Septimius Severus also encourages his soldiers to put 'faith in divine predictions' (θείαις τε προρρήσεσι πιστεύοντες, Hdn. 2.10.9); for Septimius Severus as a staunch supporter of astrology, see Hist. Aug. *Sev.* 3.9; Birley (1988), 41, 52, 72–73, 92, 108, 183, Langford (2013), 70 n. 78; cf. Rubin (1980), 27−40, 130, 137−138; for Septimius Severus as a recipient of divine providence, see also Hdn. 2.10.9, 2.15.6, 3.3.6−8, 3.9.7−12.

[10] Septimius Severus was already prompted by numerous prognostic signs to arrogate the Roman throne (Hdn. 2.9.3−4). However, according to Herodian, this dream constitutes the deciding omen, since 'it reveals to the man that he has good grounds for hope' (ὅπερ αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἐλπίδα πᾶσαν ὑπέφαινεν ὄναρ, Hdn. 2.9.4) [my transl.]; for more dreams of Septimius Severus that were interpreted as prophetic, see D.C. 75[74].3.1−2, cf. Hist. Aug. *Sev*. 1.8−10, 3.4−5, 10.3−6.

[11] A horse shakes and tosses Pertinax off his back (τὸν ἵππον ἀποσεῖσασθαι μὲν τὸν Περτίνακα καὶ ῥῖψαι, Hdn. 2.9.6), and lifts Septimius Severus instead, 'for everyone to see and honour' (τὸν Σεβῆρον ὡς ὑπὸ πάντων ὁρᾶσθαί τε καὶ τιμᾶσθαι, Hdn. 2.9.6).

[12] Rollinger (2018), 145.

[13] […] ἵππον βασιλικοῖς φαλάροις κεκοσμημένον. The image *per se* invites us to picture the horse as the personified Empire.

To begin with, Pertinax ascends to the throne after the murder of Commodus and is portrayed, up to an extent, as Marcus Aurelius' *alter ego*. Being aware that the Illyrian soldiers still fondly think back on the man's governance,[14] Septimius Severus sets Pertinax as the exemplar for his reign,[15] and also presents the retaliation for the old emperor's murder to be the main reason for his current efforts to gain power.[16] However, soon enough the devious, deceitful character of Septimius Severus unfolds (ὕπουλον αὐτοῦ ἦθος, Hdn. 3.5.6)[17] and the readers realise that his overemphasised allegations about the aimed fair punishment of Pertinax's murderers are just a pretext, a πρόφασις (Hdn. 2.9.10).[18] Septimius Severus actually 'exploits' Pertinax's name[19] and popularity to his advantage assuming that by reviving the memory of the jointly revered man he could easily secure the goodwill of both the Illyrian army and the Roman populace (οὐ μόνον ἤλπιζε τοῖς Ἰλλυρικοῖς εἶναι κεχαρισμένον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ δήμῳτῶν Ῥωμαίων διὰ τὴν ἐκείνου μνήμην, Hdn. 2.10.1).[20] In other words, he is merely concealing his true aspirations of power under the veil of a necessary administration of justice.[21]

At the same time, by adopting the role of Pertinax's avenger, Septimius Severus automatically becomes the alleged continuator of Marcus Aurelius' regime (Hdn. e.g. 2.14.3). As a result, when he is officially proclaimed Roman emperor around CE 195,[22] Septimius Severus builds his propaganda on a fictitious birthright claim to the throne,[23] originating from

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[14] Hdn. 2.9.8: ᾔδει δὲ πάντας τοὺς κατὰ τὸ Ἰλλυρικὸν στρατιώτας μεμνημένους τῆς Περτίνακος ἡγεμονίας, 'He realized that all the troops in Illyricum remembered Pertinax's command'; see also Hdn. 2.9.9, 2.10.4: τῆς ἀνδρείας τε καὶ χρηστότητος ἔτι ἔτι ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡμῶν ἡ μνήμη ἐνέστακται, The remembrance of his 'courage and integrity is even now instilled into our hearts'.

[15] Hdn. 2.10.1, 2.10.9, 2.14.3.

[16] Hdn. 2.9.8: ἔλεγέ τε δεῖν ἐπαμῦναι καὶ ἐπεξελθεῖν τῷ Περτίνακος φόνῳ, He declares that 'the murder of Pertinax ought to be avenged and punished', 2.14.3: ἥκειν μὲν ἔκδικος τοῦ Περτίνακος φόνου, 'He had come, he said, to avenge the murder of Pertinax'; see also Hdn. 2.9.8−10, 2.10.1−2, 2.10.4, 2.13.

[17] Hdn. 2.9.13: ἱκανώτατος δ' ἦν ἁπάντων ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα προσποιήσασθαί, 'He was an absolute expert at deception', 3.5.5: ἄνδρα ἀπατεῶνα σοφόν τε πρὸς ἐπιβουλήν, 'a treacherous and artful schemer'. The extended use of the verbal forms of προσποιοῦμαι and ὑποκρίνομαι (e.g. Hdn. 2.14.4: ὑποκρίνασθαί τε καὶ προσποιήσασθαι; see also 2.9.11, 2.15.3, 3.8.7) points to Septimius Severus' excellence in pretentious behaviour, while the participle ἐξαπατήσας (Hdn. 3.5.3) and the noun σόφισμα ('ingenious contrivance'; see Hdn. 2.13.1, 2.13.11, 2.13.12, 2.15.2, 3.2.3) indicate his readiness in scheming and deceiving others; cf. *LSJ*, s.v. σόφισμα.

[18] Hdn. 2.9.8−9, 2.10.4, 2.13, 2.14.3.

[19] Hdn. 2.10.1: Σεβῆρόν τε Περτίνακα ἑαυτὸν ὀνομάσας, 'he assumed the name of Severus Pertinax'.

[20] See also Hdn. 2.9.10: ταύτης δὴ τῆς προφάσεως λαβόμενος ὁ Σεβῆρος εὐμαρῶς αὐτοὺς ἐς ἃ ἐβούλετο ὑπηγάγετο, 'Seizing upon this excuse, Septimius Severus had no difficulty in winning the soldiers over to his objective'.

[21] Hdn. 2.9.10: προσποιούμενος οὐχ οὕτω τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀντιποιεῖσθαι, οὐδ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἐξουσίαν μνᾶσθαι, ὡς θέλειν ἐπεξελθεῖν τοιούτου βασιλέως αἵματι, 'he pretended that his aim was not so much to lay claim to the Empire or to win personal power as the desire to avenge the murder of so fine an emperor', see also 2.9.8−9, 2.10.2, 2.10.4, 2.13, 2.14.3−4; for Septimius Severus' imperialistic tendencies, see Hdn. 3.9.1−12, 3.14.1−5; for his love for fame and ostentation, see Hdn. 3.9.1, 3.14.2.

[22] On the date see e.g. Baharal (1989), 575 and (1996), 20−21, 34, Zimmermann (1999), 146, Kemezis (2014), 56 n. 73.

[23] Cooley (2007), 385; cf. Hdn. 2.10.2−3, 2.14.3. For a discussion on Septimius Severus' propagandistic elements, see Lusnia (2014), 31−90, 117–154.

his invented adoption by Marcus Aurelius.[24] In particular, Septimius Severus advertises himself as 'the son of Marcus' Aurelius [CIL 6.1033: *M(arci) Fil(io)*] in his own accord,[25] appropriating a genealogy 'reaching as far back as the divine Nerva':[26] [*M(arci) Antoni]ni* […] *filius* […] | *divi Antonini Pii nepos divi Hadriani* | *pronepos divi Traiani Parthici* | *abnepos divi Nervae adnepos* (CIL 14.113);[27] knowing that his ascent was nothing more than an act of usurpation, Septimius Severus rightly believes that the affiliation of his newly founded dynasty to the Antonine house is the only way for his imperial power to appear legitimate, but also for his sons to be considered as rightful successors.[28] Therefore, the close family members are enlisted to this 'bid for unchallenged dynastic power':[29] Julia Domna is promoted as 'heir' of Faustina the Younger and Crispina'[30] as well as 'the mother of future Severan emperors',[31] while Caracalla takes the name Antoninus, after Marcus Aurelius (Ἀντωνῖνον ὠνόμασε, Hdn. 3.10.5)[32] and becomes the intended successor,[33] which brings us to the main topic of the article: the dysfunctional Severan family.

[24] On Septimius Severus' self-adoption see e.g. Baharal (1989), 573−580 and (1996), 20−42, Ando (2000), 29−34, 182−188, Cooley (2007), Kemezis (2014), 16−17, 57−69, Hekster (2015), 144−148, 205−221.
[25] Being the son of Marcus Aurelius entails the much less complimentary kinship with Commodus, whom now Septimius Severus presents as his brother (τοῦ τε Μάρκου υἱὸν καὶ τοῦ Κομμόδου ἀδελφὸν ἑαυτὸν ἔλεγε, D.C. 76 [75].7.4, *Divi Commodi Frater*, CIL 14.113). Even though he admits that Commodus' proclamation signals the decadence of Marcus Aurelius' decent ruling (ἡ πρότερον μὲν μέχρι Μάρκου σεμνοπρεπῶς διοικουμένη σεβάσμιος ἐφαίνετο, ἐς Κόμμοδον δὲ μεταπεσοῦσα, Hdn. 2.10.3), the new emperor not only attempts to absolve him of any responsibility blaming his young age and sinister entourage (Hdn. 2.10.3), but also shamelessly orders his deification. As Kemezis (2014), 65 rightly notes, this man was 'a still-valuable strand of Antonine propaganda' and thus Septimius Severus was, up to a point, compelled to purge Commodus of any fault that would probably affect his own reputation; for Commodus' deification see Hist. Aug. *Sev*. 11.3−5, 12.8, *Comm.* 17.11.
[26] Baharal (1996), 34.
[27] Septimius Severus, 'the son of Marcus Aurelius, the grandson of Antoninus Pius, the great-grandson of Hadrian, the great-great grandson of Trajan and the great-great-great-grandson of Nerva'.
[28] Septimius Severus' conscious and constant attempt to promote himself as an 'immediate heir of the Antonine dynasty' [Baharal (1989), 579] is also reflected in his portraiture and the adoption of Marcus Aurelius' physical characteristics. On the topic see Kleiner (1992), 319−321, Baharal (1996), 23−32, 36−37, Hekster (2015), 210, 212−215.
[29] Hekster (2015), 210.
[30] Hekster (2015), 146−147. On the titles that Julia Domna shares with Faustina and Crispina, especially the title of *Augusta* and *Mater Castrorum* see e.g. Baharal (1992), 110, 113, Levick (2014), 78−79, Kralidis (2018), Marzo (2019), Ando (2000), 184−185, Boatwright (2021), 33, 35−36, 111−113, 205, 249, 268−273, 279−280; for their similar representations in portraits and coinage see e.g. Hill (1979), 40−41, Baharal (1992) and (1996), 28−31, Lusnia (1995), Rowan (2011), 249−256, Hekster (2015), 143−153, 159, 210.
[31] Hekster (2015), 147; cf. Lusnia (1995), 138.
[32] Septimius Severus 'wanted him to bear the name of Marcus' (Μάρκου θελήσας αὐτὸν προσηγορίαν φέρειν, Hdn. 3.10.5). The real name of Caracalla was Bassianus, see Hdn. 3.10.5; for a different reason for the renaming of Caracalla, see Hist. Aug. *Sev*. 3.6, 10.4, *Geta* 1.3–5, *Diadum*. 6.8.
[33] Hekster (2015), 210; cf. Rubin (1980), 73.

2. A CORRUPTED PATERNAL FIGURE: THE FRATERNAL STRIFE UNFOLDED

In Herodian's *History*, Septimius Severus' career and reign interestingly appear to be divided into his public and private life. To be exact, once this man has eliminated every enemy who could threaten his power, Herodian shifts the focus from Septimius Severus as an exceptional general, though greedy and ruthless emperor, to his role as a fatherly figure, bringing his whole family to the epicentre of the narrative. At first, the paternal anxiety of Septimius Severus is triggered by the realisation that his sons are now adolescents (ἐς ἡλικίαν ἐφήβων ἤδη τελοῦντας, Hdn. 3.10.1) and already corrupted (τὰ ἤθη διεφθείροντο, Hdn. 3.10.3), since they display 'an improper fervor for shows and performances' (τῇ περὶ τὰ θεάματα ἀπρεπεῖ σπουδῇ, Hdn. 3.14.1),[34] as well as an unrestrained desire to seek all sorts of pleasures (ἐς πάσας ἡδονῶν ὀρέξεις ἁπλήστως ὁρμωμένους, Hdn. 3.13.6). According to our text, Septimius Severus has no intention of appointing anyone else as his successor.[35] Being thus distressed by the boys' current dissolute lifestyle,[36] he concentrates on chastening and recalling them to their senses (σωφρονίζειν ἐπειρᾶτο, Hdn. 3.10.4).[37] The fact that Herodian purposefully fixates the narrative on Septimius Severus' new role as the sole educator for his children allows the readers to focus on and attend to his efforts to morally reform his sons' characters and especially his subsequent failure, since every attempt is pointless:[38] Caracalla and Geta are irreversibly

[34] [my transl.]; Hdn. 3.13.1: περὶ τὰ θεάματα ἐσπουδακότας ἀπρεπέστερον ἢ βασιλεῦσιν ἥρμοζεν, Septimius Severus 'saw that their enthusiasm for the shows was more disreputable than was proper for emperors', see also 3.10.3, 3.13.2.

[35] Hdn. 3.9.1: τούς τε υἱεῖς αὐτοῦ κοινωνοὺς τῆς βασιλείας καὶ αὐτοκράτορας ἀποδείξας. In this passage (c.a. CE 197), Herodian mentions that Septimius Severus has already appointed Caracalla and Geta as his 'ruling partners and conferred upon them the title of Augustus' [my transl.]; on the inaccuracy of the statement, see below.

[36] The young age and the consequent probable inability of a μειράκιον, namely a young boy, to successfully shoulder the burden of the Roman throne constitutes a leitmotif in Herodian; for similar beliefs see Sen. *Tro*. 250: *Iuvenile vitium est regere non posse impetum* ('Young men have the failing of being unable to govern impulse') and Hist. Aug. *Tac*. 6.1−9. The readers immediately recall the deathbed speech and the inner thoughts of Marcus Aurelius, in which he expresses similar concerns about Commodus, underlining the lurking dangers behind the proclamation of a young boy, inexperienced in the sociopolitical arena and prone to divert from a dignified way of life (ῥᾷστα γὰρ αἱ τῶν νέων ψυχαὶ ἐς ἡδονὰς ἐξολισθαίνουσαι ἀπὸ τῶν παιδείας καλῶν μετοχετεύονται, 'young men's passions are easily diverted from learning moral values and slip into a life of pleasure', Hdn. 1.3.1. For the whole episode 1.3.1−1.4.4). The fact that Commodus instantiates the pessimistic scenario of his father with his eventual stance heralds the forthcoming failure of Septimius Severus' sons; for an overview of *prolepsis* in Herodian, see Baumann (2025).

[37] Septimius Severus' provision for their education and moral principles (τούς τε υἱεῖς παιδεύων καὶ σωφρονίζων, Hdn. 3.10.2) is especially indicated with the verb σωφρονίζω (see also Hdn. 3.10.5, 3.13.5), which can be translated as 'recall a person to sense, chasten, or learn self-control' (*LSJ* s.v. σωφρονίζω).

[38] For a discussion on Septimius Severus as educator and the given emphasis to his role, see Zimmermann (1999), 194−200, 199 n. 243, Kemmers (2011), 282 n. 46, Chrysanthou (2020), 630−631 and (2022a), 43−46, 204−205, 215−216.

corrupted[39] in their opulent way of life[40] and hate each other dreadfully (ἐμίσουν, Hdn. 4.3.1, μῖσος, 4.4.1).[41]

Herodian declares that the fraternal loathing was obvious already in the early stages of the brothers' life, and soon enough the childish 'mutual antagonism' (τὰ πρῶτα μὲν ὑπὸ παιδαριώδους φιλονεικίας, Hdn. 3.10.3)[42] turns into an implacable, open hostility (παίδων ἀλλήλοις ἐρίζοντες, Hdn. 3.10.3, ἔριδος καὶ ἔχθρας, 3.13.2). During the last years of his reign, Septimius Severus desperately attempts to resolve this dispute and reconcile his sons (συνάγειν ἐπειρᾶτο, Hdn. 3.13.5).[43] In particular, citing the necessity of the brotherly cooperation in ruling Rome, the emperor urges Caracalla and Geta 'to live in harmonious concord' (προτρέπειν ἐς ὁμόνοιαν καὶ συμφωνίαν, Hdn. 3.13.3; [my transl.]). Moreover, he explains that, even though Rome's immense wealth[44] and large, mighty army[45] could guarantee an enduring and stable reign for them, a civil war could dash any such hopes.[46] Nevertheless, the fact that he foregrounds the necessity of his sons'— and only his[47]— harmonious coexistence not as an appropriate and moral way of ruling but as merely the only way to maintain, increase, but also enjoy the already established power and wealth, brings the problematic aspects of Septimius Severus' role as a paternal figure to the fore; for Septimius Severus considers money and power to be the guarantors of a long-lasting reign, and at this moment appears to project onto his sons what he himself is enthusiastically pursuing.

As I already mentioned, Herodian portrays Septimius Severus as a brave and highly proficient general, but also as a devious, greedy and short-tempered man. His flawed, immoral

[39] Hdn. 3.13.5: ἀφηνίαζον δὲ καὶ ἐπεδίδοσαν ἐς τὸ χεῖρον, 'They grew worse as they threw off all restraint'.
[40] Hdn. 3.10.3: ὑπὸ τῆς ἐν Ῥώμῃ τρυφῆς καὶ διαίτης […] τὰ ἤθη διεφθείροντο, 'They were corrupted in their habits by the life of luxury in Rome', 3.13.6: ἅτε δὲ νεανίας σφριγῶντας καὶ ὑπὸ βασιλικῆς ἐξουσίας ἐς πάσας ἡδονῶν ὀρέξεις ἀπλήστως ὁρμωμένους: 'They were young men, bursting with health, and, because of their position in the imperial house, they were encouraged to seek every kind of pleasure without restraint'; for Caracalla's and Geta's corrupted and immoral life, see Hdn. 3.10.3−4, 3.13.1−2, 3.13.5−6, 3.14.1−2.
[41] For the ineducable students in Herodian, see Baumann/Zacharioudaki (2025).
[42] Herod. 3.10.3: πρός τε ἀλλήλους ἐστασίαζον οἱ ἀδελφοί, 'there was a quarrel between the brothers' [my transl.], 3.10.4: φιλονείκως, 3.13.2: φιλονεικία ('rivalry'), 4.1.1: στασιάζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους, στάσις ('discord'); see also Hdn. 3.13.5, 4.3.1, 4.3.4, 4.4.1.
[43] Hdn. 3.10.4: συνάγειν […] ἐπειρᾶτο, 3.13.3: αὐτὸς δὲ ἐπειρᾶτο συνάγειν ἀεὶ τοὺς παῖδας ἐς φιλίαν.
[44] Hdn. 3.13.4: θησαυρούς τε καὶ νεώς, πάντας ἐδείκνυ χρημάτων πλήρεις, πλοῦτόν τε καὶ δύναμιν ἔσεσθαι ἔξωθεν ἐπιβουλεῦσαι, 'He showed them the treasuries and the temples full of money and pointed out that they would have the finance and the power to repel any external conspiracy […]'.
[45] Hdn. 3.13.4: τῆς τε ἐν Ῥώμῃ δυνάμεως αὐτῆς τετραπλασιασθείσης, 'The troops in Rome had actually just been quadrupled'; thus 'there was such a strong garrison stationed just outside the city that there was no external power left competent to be a rival force in terms of manpower, physique or resources' (καὶ στρατοπέδου τοσούτου πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ἱδρυθέντος ὡς μηδεμίαν μεῖναι δύναμιν ἔξωθεν ἐχέγγυον μηδ' ἀντίπαλον πλήθει στρατοῦ μήτε μεγέθει σωμάτων μήτε χρημάτων περιουσίᾳ, Hdn. 3.13.4).
[46] Hdn. 3.13.5: πλὴν οὐδὲν ὄφελος τούτων πάντων ἔλεγε στασιαζόντων πρὸς ἀλλήλους, τοῦ τε πολέμου ἔνδον ὄντος, 'But none of this was any use, he said, if they intrigued against each other and there was civil war'.
[47] The harmonious coexistence of Caracalla and Geta with their subjects does not seem to lie in Severus' interests.

character seems to have predetermined the failure of his successor(s), who unfortunately follow their father's vices and behavioural patterns. To begin with, the brothers now covet the sole power, albeit knowing that this development would require the elimination of one son.[48] As a result, in an unceasing, blind rage, they openly turn against each other, employing the same cunning schemes that their father devised to be rid of his own enemies. For instance, Septimius Severus schemes against Albinus (Hdn. 3.5.3−8) and attempts to assassinate him through—among others—a covert poisoning (δηλητήρια φάρμακα, Hdn. 3.5.5)[49] which definitely evokes the brothers' mutual poisoning attempts (δηλητήρια φάρμακα, Hdn. 4.4.2).[50] Interestingly enough, the emperor, except for the destructive influence that seems to have wielded over his sons, might have also been responsible for the fraternal rivalry *per se*, due to his favour for Caracalla and the consequent uneven distribution of offices.[51] Based on our source, Septimius Severus 'appoints his sons as ruling partners and assigns them the title of Augustus' (τούς τε υἱεῖς αὐτοῦ κοινωνοὺς τῆς βασιλείας καὶ αὐτοκράτορας ἀποδείξας, Hdn. 3.9.1, [my transl.]; cf. *Hist. Aug. Sev*. 20.1: *duos Antoninos pari imperio rei publicae relinqueret*).[52] This decision can be interpreted as an honest desire to appoint both brothers as his succeeding co-rulers who would lead Rome on equal terms. However, historical evidence suggests otherwise, and probably Septimius Severus was the one who sowed the seed of competitiveness among the brothers. As a matter of fact, only Caracalla is climbing the Empire's official ranks, and acquires the honorary title of Augustus, becoming co-emperor in or around some point after CE 198.[53] On the contrary, at approximately the same time, Geta is appointed Caesar (CE 198)[54]

[48] Hdn. 4.3.1: πάντα τε ἔπραττεν ἑκάτερος πειρώμενος τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἀποσκευάσασθαι ἐς αὐτόν τε μόνον περιαγαγεῖν τὴν ἀρχήν, 'Each brother tried every way to get rid of the other and secure a change of power in favour of himself alone'; on their murder attempts, see Hdn. 3.15.5, 4.1.1, 4.4.2.

[49] Septimius Severus additionally provides the dispatch carriers, whom he sends to murder Albinus, with 'deadly poisons', even though, according to the official plan, these men were supposed to commit a surprise attack against the British general.

[50] πάντα τε εἴδη ἐπιβουλῆς ἐξήρτυον, οἰνοχόους τε καὶ ὀψοποιοὺς ἀνέπειθον ἐμβαλεῖν δηλητήρια φάρμακα, 'They were up to every kind of intrigue trying to persuade cupbearers and cooks to mix some deadly poison for each other', see also Hdn. 4.1.2: πολὺ δὲ τὸ ὕποπτον ἐν ἅπασιν ἐδέσμασί τε καὶ πόμασι, μή τις αὐτῶν προλαβὼν καὶ λαθών, ἤ τινας ἀναπείσας τῶν ὑπηρετῶν, δηλητηρίῳ χρήσηται φαρμάκῳ, 'Each was extremely circumspect with everything he ate and drank in case the other quietly made the first move or persuaded some of the attendants to administer a fatal dose of poison'.

[51] See e.g. Kemmers (2011), 270−274, Bingham/Imrie (2015), 85−90, Berghammer (2022), 74−76. Cassius Dio also notes that Septimius Severus 'betrayed his other son' (τὸν ἕτερον ἐν τούτῳ παῖδα προέδωκε, 77[76].14.7).

[52] In *Historia Augusta*, we read that Septimius Severus was content to leave 'two Antonini to rule the state with equal power'; see also Whittaker (1969), 367 n. 1. Moreover, in coinage, the alleged fraternal *Concordia* was likewise trumpeted, see e.g. RIC IV GETA 40 and 134b.

[53] See Whittaker (1969), 315 n. 3, Johnston (1983), 56, Birley (1988), 130, 215, Levick (2007), 82, Berghammer (2022), 63, 74−76.

[54] See Guey (1948), 61, Birley (1988), 130, 218 n. 22; see also Hist. Aug. *Sev.* 16.3−4. Whittaker [(1969), 315 n. 3] believes that Herodian merely confused the dates and assigned honours.

and receives the title of Augustus, thus equalising his brother's rank twelve years later (ca. CE 208–210).[55]

Judging by the discussion above, it might be no coincidence that Caracalla is portrayed as the most docile student of Septimius Severus' dubious practices, notably when he crowns himself as the sole emperor.[56] To be exact, he not only adopts but also exaggerates all of the negative qualities attributed to his father by Herodian.[57] Particularly, he turns Septimius Severus' aggression (ἐκθύμως, ὀργῆς, Hdn. 3.6.1[58] and ἐμβριθῶς, θυμοειδῶς, ὀργῇ, 4.3.4)[59] and cruelty[60] into a savage, ruthless bloodthirstiness,[61] while he becomes an expert in stratagems and hypocritical attitude.[62] In addition, Caracalla is inspired by his father's unquenchable desire to assume even greater power and glory. It suffices to mention the horrible massacre against the Parthians, which he stages merely to obtain the title of 'Parthicus' (ἐπιθυμήσας […] Παρθικὸς κληθῆναι, Hdn. 4.10.1) and boast about it.[63] Similarly, Septimius Severus had likewise insisted on attacking Britain out of zealous ardour 'to win a British victory and title' (βουλόμενος προσκτήσασθαι τὴν κατὰ Βρεττανῶν νίκην τε καὶ προσηγορίαν, Hdn. 3.14.5). We can hence easily draw a reasonable conclusion: based precisely on our text, both boys indeed do not follow the advice of Septimius Severus, who preaches about the benefits of an ethical lifestyle, a respectful cooperation between brothers and moderation (σωφροσύνη). The keyword behind their morally deprived stance can be found in the purposefully selected verb 'preach'; for Septimius Severus promotes these virtuous principles only in theory, without implementing them in his own everyday life.[64] As a result, the unsuitable paternal figure

[55] See mainly Birley (1988), 177, 187 and 218 n. 22; cf. Levick (2007), 82−83, Kienast/Eck/Heil (2017), 160, Berghammer (2022), 90 n. 70−72. This unequal ranking is nicely summarised in the inscription RIB 722 (dated ca. CE 205–208), where Caracalla is inscribed as *Imp(eratori) Caesari* (v. 3) while Geta as *nobilissimo Caesari* (v. 5); for a list of the offices held by Caracalla and Geta see Kienast/Eck/Heil (2017), 156, 160.
[56] Zimmermann (1999), 213.
[57] Zimmermann (1999), 207.
[58] πάντα μὲν ἐκθύμως πράττων, ὀργῆς δὲ ἥττων ὢν φύσει, Septimius Severus 'did everything with fervency and was short-tempered by nature' [my transl.].
[59] ὁ δ' Ἀντωνῖνος ἐμβριθῶς τὰ πάντα καὶ θυμοειδῶς ἔπραττε […] ὀργῇ τε πάντα πράττων, Caracalla 'did everything in a vehement, fiery manner […] and a furious temperament' [my transl.].
[60] See Hdn. 3.2.3−5, 3.8.1−3, 3.8.7−8.
[61] The most pertinent examples are the two massacres that Caracalla carries out against the Alexandrians and the Parthians, see 4.8.4−4.11.9; for other instances of this man's ruthlessness, see Hdn. 3.13.2, 3.15.4, 4.4.1−3, 4.6.1−5, 5.1.2−3; cf. *Hist. Aug. Carac.* 9.3: *Fuit male moratus et patre duro crudelior*, 'His character was bad and he was more brutal even than his cruel father'; for a short analysis, see Zimmermann (1999), 213−214.
[62] For Septimius Severus' and Caracalla's scheming see 2.9.5−10.4, 2.9.11, 2.13, 2.14.3−4, 2.15.2−3 and 4.4.5−4.5.7, 4.8.9−4.11.8 respectively.
[63] Hdn. 4.10.1: Ῥωμαίοις ἐπιστεῖλαι ὡς χειρωσάμενος τοὺς κατὰ τὴν ἀνατολὴν βαρβάρους, 'He wanted to report to the Romans that he had mastered the barbarians in the East'.
[64] cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.17: τοὺς διδάσκοντας […] αὐτοὺς δεικνύντας τε τοῖς μανθάνουσιν, ᾗπερ αὐτοὶ ποιοῦσιν ἃ διδάσκουσι, καὶ τῷ λόγῳ προσβιβάζοντας, 'all teachers show their disciples how they themselves practice what they teach, and persuade them by argument'.

accounts for Caracalla's and Geta's corruption,[65] and it is the father's immoral character, rather than sanctimonious lectures, that eventually sets the brothers' behavioural patterns.

Fixating the discussion on Caracalla, as the son who survives the dispute, it must be highlighted that he establishes a reign of terror, turning out to be a tyrannical caricature of his father ('tyrannisches Zerrbild seines Vaters').[66] Most importantly, he murders Geta, instigated by the desire to ensure the sole ascendancy (ὑπὸ τῆς περὶ τὴν μοναρχίαν ἐπιθυμίας ἐλαυνόμενος, Hdn. 4.4.2), an outcome actually foretold by Septimius Severus. Based on our source, the old emperor underscores the plausible calamity entailed in a fraternal enmity, making an example of reputed royal brothers whose disastrous mutual strife constitutes the plot of many ancient myths and (tragic) plays.[67] With this reference, Herodian again forms an intriguing *prolepsis* for his readers, since Caracalla and Geta will soon take on the roles of Polynices and Eteocles.[68]

Before delving into the indirect reanimation of the Theban cycle in Rome, we should focus on the fraternal strife that reaches its pinnacle after the death of Septimius Severus. Julia Domna now emerges as the parent who, in vain, attempts to reconcile the brothers (συνάγειν αὐτοὺς ἡ μήτηρ ἐπειρᾶτο, Hdn. 3.15.6).[69] The only outcome is an artificial 'agreement': Caracalla ἀνάγκῃ μᾶλλον ἢ γνώμῃ ('compelled rather than persuaded', Hdn. 3.15.7) accepts to share the throne with Geta, albeit 'in a more feigned than genuine spirit of goodwill and harmonious cordiality'.[70] During their journey back to Rome, and while holding the urn with their father's remains, Caracalla and Geta, as was expected, carry on with their conflict.[71] Herodian portrays them counting down the days until their arrival,[72] which would signal the coveted and relieving mutual distancing through the partition of the palace (Hdn. 4.1.2)[73] and

[65] See Zimmermann (1999), 207; cf. Kemmers (2001), 282 n. 46.
[66] Zimmermann (1999), 207; for a detailed discussion on the topic of fatherly figures and sons in Herodian, see Baumann/Zacharioudaki (2025).
[67] Hdn. 3.13.3: μύθων τε ἀρχαίων καὶ δραμάτων ὑπεμίμνησκεν, ἀεὶ βασιλέων ἀδελφῶν συμφορὰς ἐκ στάσεως διηγούμενος, Severus tries to reconcile his sons also 'by reminding them of plays and tales of long ago where the story always ends in disaster as a result of the enmity between royal brothers'.
[68] In our text, though, Caracalla will survive the fraternal dispute.
[69] See also Hdn. 4.3.4 and 4.3.9: συνάγειν ἐπειρᾶτο.
[70] [my transl.]; Hdn. 3.15.7: ἐς ὁμόνοιαν καὶ φιλίαν ἐπίπλαστον μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθῆ περιήγετο.
[71] Hdn. 4.1.1: οἱ δ' υἱεῖς αὐτοῦ […] ἤδη μὲν κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν στασιάζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους, '[…] already on the return journey there were serious differences between them'.
[72] Hdn. 4.1.1: ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην ἠπείγοντο, they 'hurried back to Rome', 4.1.2: ταύτῃ γοῦν καὶ τὴν ὁδοιπορίαν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἤπειγον, 'there was even greater haste on the journey'.
[73] ἀδεέστερον ἑκάτερος βιώσεσθαι προσδοκῶν, εἰ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ γένοιντο καὶ τὰ βασίλεια διελόμενοι, 'They both believed they would breathe more safely when they reached Rome and divided up the palace'. As Herodian remarks, 'they […] were never seen together except occasionally for brief appearances at public functions' (οὐδὲ συνιόντες εἰ μὴ πρὸς ὀλίγον, ὅσον δημοσίᾳ, εἴ ποτε, ὀφθῆναι, Hdn. 4.1.5).

the leading of separate lives.[74] Despite the division of the capital, the young co-emperors cannot tolerate their mere coexistence in the same city. As a result, they now decide to divide the whole Empire (νείμασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν […] διαιρεθῆναι τὴν βασιλείαν, Hdn. 4.3.5)[75] and move even further away from each other, not in different residential areas but on different continents.[76]

In the middle of the brothers' quarrelling, Julia Domna intervenes. With a poignant speech (Hdn. 4.3.8), she desperately attempts to affect her children and hopefully reconcile them (συνάγειν ἐπειρᾶτο, Hdn. 4.3.9). However, Caracalla and Geta are adamant: not only do they remain unmoved by their mothers' heartwarming words and wailing tears (μετὰ δακρύων καὶ οἰμωγῆς, Hdn. 4.3.9), but also their mutual hatred and rivalry grow even more (τὸ δὲ μῖσος καὶ ἡ στάσις ηὔξετο, 4.4.1). After numerous mutual murder attempts,[77] Caracalla wields his sword and performs a fratricide to, at last, be rid of Geta's presence once and for all.[78]

3. FROM ROME TO THEBES: FOUR ROYAL BROTHERS IN QUARREL

The story of Caracalla and Geta pertains to a fraternal dispute and a broader familial crisis with a tragic end. This seems to be the substance of tragedy itself. According to Aristotle, tragedy aims to describe 'terrible or pitiable' incidents (δεινὰ ἢ […] οἰκτρὰ, *Poet.* 1453b14, φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν, 1452b32), which can chiefly be found in cases of harm inflicted among kin.[79] One of the most fabled stories is the conflict between Eteocles and Polynices.

The abovementioned framework and mainly the description of a fratricide in Herodian's text subtextually links the *History* to other texts that integrate aspects of the Theban cycle into an imperial story.[80] However, the key element is found later in the narrative, when the Alexandrians refer to Julia Domna as Jocasta (τὴν πρεσβῦτιν Ἰοκάστην καλούντων, Hdn. 4.9.3), a name that definitely alludes to the myth of Oedipus. There are three possible aspects

[74] Hdn. 4.1.2: καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἑκάτερος διάγοι, 'they could each live their separate lives according to their own interests'. After their father's burial, they return to the palace, where 'they lived separate lives' (διελόμενοι δὲ αὐτὰ ἑκάτερος ᾤκει, Hdn 4.1.5).
[75] On the division of the Empire, see e.g. Marasco (1996), 122 n. 22–24 and (1998), 2853, 2871−2872, 2906−2907, Zimmermann (1999), 204 n. 265, Galimberti (2019), 67−68; cf. Whittaker (1969), 387 n. 3.
[76] The two brothers 'have found a method of partitioning the land and the sea' (γῆν […] καὶ θάλασσαν […] εὑρίσκετα ὅπως νείμησθε, Hdn. 4.3.8) and plan to divide the continents (τὰς ἠπείρους διῃρῆσθαι, Hdn 4.3.6). Caracalla is to rule Europe and its provinces, while Geta the eastern provinces, namely Asia (Hdn. 4.3.5). However, their plan is not approved by the council (Hdn. 4.3.9).
[77] Hdn. 4.4.2: πάντα τε εἴδη ἐπιβουλῆς ἐξήρτυον, 'they devise every kind of scheme' against each other.
[78] Caracalla settles the quarrel 'with his sword and by bloodshed' (διὰ ξίφους […] καὶ φόνου), Hdn. 4.4.2).
[79] Aristot. *Poet.* 1453b19−22: ὅταν δ' ἐν ταῖς φιλίαις ἐγγένηται τὰ πάθη, οἷον ἢ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφὸν […] ἀποκτείνῃ ἢ μέλλῃ ἤ τι ἄλλο τοιοῦτον δρᾷ, ταῦτα ζητητέον, 'What tragedy must seek are cases where the sufferings occur within relationships, such as brother and brother […] when one kills (or is about to kill) the other, or commits some other such deed'; cf. Belfiore (2000), 3−9, 13−20, Griffiths (2014), 498, Papadopoulou (2014), 455.
[80] See Braund (2006) and Criado (2015).

at which the Alexandrians are hinting by choosing this nickname for the empress: they might solely refer to the wedded themes of brotherly mutual enmity, succession and bloodshed, which are definitely compatible with the two royal brothers who die over the Theban throne;[81] they might imply that Caracalla murdered his father citing Oedipus' patricide against Laius; they might even underline a potential incest committed in the Severan palace between Julia Domna and Caracalla, pointing to the incestuous relationship between Jocasta and Oedipus, which completes the storyline.[82]

To begin with, Oedipus leaves the Theban ground after the striking revelation of his true identity and grave sins. The kingdom of Thebes is now bestowed upon his sons, Eteocles and Polynices, who decide to rule in alternate orders (ἐνιαυτὸν ἀλλάσσοντ', Eur. *Ph.* 74; cf. νείμασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν, Hdn. 4.3.5).[83] Eteocles is the one to trigger this deadly conflict by refusing to concede the throne to Polynices when his provisioned tenure is over.[84] In a frenzied rage, Polynices seeks retribution for such unfair treatment (Soph. *OC*. 1329)[85] and raises a huge army against his brother,[86] signalling the beginning of the fraternal ἔρις κακή ('evil rivalry', Soph. *OC.* 372;[87] c.f. Hdn. 3.10.3: ἐρίζοντες, 3.13.2: ἔριδος καὶ ἔχθρας). The hostility between

[81] Eteocles and Polynices constitute the only case of royal brothers who fight and murder each other for their inherited power (Sen. *Phoen.*, Antigone 53−54: *Labdaci claram domum,* | *opulenta ferro regna germani petant*, 'Let my brothers strive with the sword for Laius' glorious house and his rich kingdom', *Oed.* 302: *regno pectus attonitum furit*, 'in their hearts is a raging frenzy for the throne').

[82] For a brief overview, see Marasco (1996), 122−126.

[83] Eteocles and Polynices are forced to grow apart in order to avert the fulfilment of the paternal curse (see e.g. cf. Aesch. *Th.* 785−791, 816−819, 832−833, 944−946, Soph. *OC.* 1370−1396, Eur. *Ph.* 67−74, 473−475). On the contrary, mutual hatred is what leads Caracalla and Geta to the same decision; for, as we read, they similarly divide the Empire, although spatially (Hdn. 4.3.5−9) and not by setting time frames in ruling. In the end, their plan fails: Caracalla murders his brother, and similarly, both Theban kings fall dead in a mutual fratricide (ὧδ' ἐτελεύτασαν ὑπ' ἀλλαλοφόνοις | χερσὶν ὁμοσπόροισιν, 'They have perished thus at each other's fraternal, slaughtering hands' Aesch. *Th.* 931−932; see also Soph. *Ant*. 14, Eur. *Ph.* 1288−1289, *Supp.* 401−402, Sen. *Phoen*. 435−437); in both cases, the conflict over land and inheritance is settled by a sword, as is nicely pictured in Aeschylus' and Euripides' plays (διέλαχον σφυρηλάτῳ | Σκύθῃ σιδήρῳ κτημάτων παμπησίαν, They 'have had the whole possession of their inheritance divided between them by hammered Scythian iron', Aesch. *Th.* 816–817 and γαῖαν δ' ὀδὰξ ἑλόντες ἀλλήλοιν πέλας | πίπτουσιν ἄμφω καὶ διώρισαν κράτος, 'They lie fallen near each other, mouthfuls of earth between their teeth: thus they divided the sovereignty', Eur. *Ph.* 1423−1424).

[84] Soph. *OC*. 374−376: χὠ μὲν νεάζων καὶ χρόνῳ μείων γεγὼς | τὸν πρόσθε γεννηθέντα Πολυνείκη θρόνων | ἀποστερίσκει, κἀξελήλακεν πάτρας, 'The younger son, inferior in age, is depriving the first-born, Polynices, of the throne and has chased him from his country'; Eur. *Ph*. 523: ὡς οὐ παρήσω τῷδ' ἐμὴν τυραννίδα, 'For I shall never surrender my kingship to him' (Eteocles), 601: ἀπαιτῶ σκῆπτρα καὶ μέρη | χθονός, 'I demand of sceptre and the share of land' (Polynices).

[85] τῷδ' ἀνδρὶ τοὐμοῦ πρὸς κασιγνήτου τίσιν,/ ὅς μ' ἐξέωσε κἀπεσύλησεν πάτρας, 'I set out to take vengeance on my brother, o drove me out and robbed me of my country'.

[86] Sen. *Phoen*. 324−325: *nam regna repetens frater et pactas vices* | *in bella cunctos Graeciae populos agit*, 'For one brother, demanding his turn on the throne as agreed, is stirring all the nations of Greece to war'; see also Eur. *Ph*. 754−56: καί μοι γένοιτ' ἀδελφὸν ἀντήρη λαβεῖν | καὶ ξυσταθέντα διὰ μάχης ἑλεῖν δορὶ | κτανεῖν θ', ὃς ἦλθε πατρίδα πορθήσων ἐμήν, 'May it be my lot to find my brother facing me, close with him, conquer him in battle, and kill him, since he came to sack my city!' (Eteocles); see also Aesch. *Th.* 631−32.

[87] See also Aesch. *Th*. 726: παιδολέτωρ δ' ἔρις ἅδ' ὀτρύνει, 'this strife that will destroy his children is hastening it on'; Eur. *Ph.* 81: ἔριν, 'strife', 374: δεινὸν ἔχθρα […] οἰκείων φίλων, 'What a dreadful thing […] is hatred between members of one family'.

Caracalla and Geta is also usually indicated with the nouns στάσις (Hdn. 3.13.3, 4.4.1) and ἔρις (Hdn. 3.13.2) as well as the verbs στασιάζω[88] and ἐρίζω,[89] words that denote not only discord and disunity but also a — civil — strife, simmering beneath the surface. At the same time, the repetitive references to the two brothers as mutual enemies (ἐχθρὸς σὺν ἐχθρῷ, Aesch. *Th.* 675)[90] recall the reciprocal ἔχθρα of Septimius Severus' sons.

It is widely known that Caracalla declares Geta a public enemy after his death (πολεμίου καὶ ἐχθροῦ, Hdn. 4.4.6),[91] an important reference that reminds us of Polynices, whose corpse remains unburied (ἄταφος, Eur. *Ph.* 1655)[92] exactly because he is considered to similarly be an enemy of the state (πόλεως ἐχθρὸς, Eur. *Ph.* 1652).[93] Even though Geta's corpse is not subjected to any indignities, at least that we know of,[94] the willing or coerced approval of his *damnatio memoriae*[95] leads to the typical erasure of his name and occasionally his face or figure from coins and inscriptions (D.C. 78[77].12.6).[96] On top of the above, Herodian notes that Caracalla executes the daughter of Marcus Aurelius, Cornificia (Hdn. 4.6.3;[97] cf. D.C. 78[77].16a), because she grieved along with Julia Domna for the death of Geta (αἰτίαν ἐπαγαγὼν ὡς δακρυσάσῃ παρὰ τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ τοῦ παιδὸς φόνῳ, Hdn. 4.6.3). In a similar sense, Cassius Dio reports that Caracalla issues a command for the corpse of Geta to remain unmourned (78[77].2.5).[98] This is what conceptually recalls the well-known stance of Creon against Polynices' body, since lament was an integral part of funerary rites.

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[88] Hdn. 4.1.1: στασιάζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 4.3.1: ἐστασίαζον πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 4.3.4: στασιάζοντας δὲ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς.

[89] Hdn. 3.10.3: πρός τε ἀλλήλους ἐστασίαζον οἱ ἀδελφοί, ἀλλήλοις ἐρίζοντες, 'As brothers they were also mutually antagonistic, they quarreled […] with each other'.

[90] Eur. *Ph*. 357−358: φρονῶν εὖ κοὐ φρονῶν ἀφικόμην | ἐχθροὺς ἐς ἄνδρας, 'It was sensible of me to come to meet my enemy—and also mad' (Polynices); see also Sen. *Phoen*. 492, 644.

[91] See also Hdn. 4.5.5: ἠμυνάμην ὡς πολέμιον, 'I defended myself by treating him as an outlaw', 4.5.6: τὸν ἐχθρὸν, 4.4.8: οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται […] τὸν Γέταν καλοῦσι πολέμιον, 'The soldiers […] declared Geta a public enemy'.

[92] Aesch. *Th*. 1007−1008: Ἐτεοκλέα μὲν […] | θάπτειν ἔδοξε γῆς φίλαις κατασκαφαῖς, 'It has been resolved that Eteocles […] shall be buried in the loving recesses of the earth', 1013–1014: τούτου δ' ἀδελφόν, τόνδε Πολυνείκους νεκρόν, | ἔξω βαλεῖν ἄθαπτον, 'His brother, the dead Polynices here, is to be cast out unburied', see also Soph. *Ant*. 21−99, 192−210, 450−470, 692−698, 1064−1071.

[93] See e.g. Aesch. *Th.* 1017−1020, Soph. *Ant*. 182−183, 522.

[94] According to Varner [(2004), 168], the only reason why 'Geta's corpse was not subjected to the public indignities of a *poena post mortem* was the respect towards Julia Domna'.

[95] Hist. Aug. *Carac.* 1.1: *Geta hostis est iudicatus*, 'Geta was declared a public enemy'; on Geta's *damnatio memoriae* see Varner (2001), 51−52 and (2004), 168−184, de Jong (2007), 99−110, Krüpe (2011), 13−16, 177−244, Calomino (2016), 119−148. One of the most well-known representations is found in the tondo of Berlin, see Andreae (2012), 237.

[96] τοῖς τὰς εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ βαστάσασι λίθοις ὠργίζετο, καὶ τὸ νόμισμα τὸ προφέρον αὐτὸν συνεχώνευσεν, 'He vented his anger upon the stones that had supported his statues and melted down the coinage that displayed his features'; cf. Varner (2004), 168.

[97] τήν τε Κομμόδου ἀδελφήν, πρεσβῦτιν ἤδη καὶ πρὸς πάντων βασιλέων ὡς Μάρκου θυγατέρα τετιμημένην, ἀπέκτεινεν, 'He also murdered Commodus' sister who was now an old woman and had been held in honour by all the emperors as Marcus' daughter.'.

[98] τῇ Αὐγούστῃ […] οὐδ' ἰδίᾳ που ἐπὶ τηλικούτῳ παθήματι δακρῦσαι ἐξῆν, 'The Augusta […] was not permitted to shed tears even in private over so great a sorrow'; cf. Zimmermann (1999), 208 n. 285.

The presence of a caring mother who constantly seeks to reconcile her beloved children constitutes a crucial similarity in both the historiographical and dramatic contexts. Jocasta strives to resolve the dispute (συγγόνων λύσεις ἔριν, Eur. *Ph.* 1277) and, particularly, convinces Eteocles and Polynices to meet in person and negotiate a potential solution to their feud (Eur. *Ph.* 81−82).[99] The young men, though, and especially Eteocles, agree on attending this family meeting only to gratify their mother (Eur. *Ph*. 446−447: μῆτερ, πάρειμι· τὴν χάριν δέ σοι διδοὺς | ἦλθον).[100] Likewise, Julia Domna, probably deceived by Caracalla's murderous plan (ἡ μὲν οὕτως ἀπατηθεῖσα, D.C. 78[77].2.4), organises the final, tragic meeting of her sons (D.C. 78[77].2.2),[101] which Geta attends only out of affection for his mother (cf. Hdn. 4.4.3: διὰ στοργὴν). At this point, we follow the report of Cassius Dio (78[77].2.2–4), since Herodian's version concerning the murder of Geta and the actual events right before it remains a mystery. The text is fragmentary and contains a *lacuna* in the climactic, crucial moment of the murder. The only sentence that we read is ἀναγκαίαν ἡγήσατο τὴν κινδυνώδη τε καὶ ἀπεγνωσμένην <...> τῆς μὲν διὰ στοργὴν τοῦ δὲ δι' ἐπιβουλήν. We can certainly deduce that Caracalla decides to 'undertake a dangerous and desperate' endeavour, namely, to kill his brother.[102] The next and last phrase can only be interpreted with the help of Cassius Dio's storyline, who clearly pictures Julia Domna and her sons being in a room together before the murder (μόνους σφᾶς ἐς τὸ δωμάτιον, 78[77].2.2).[103] Therefore, the phrase might announce the motives behind the boys' participation in the meeting: Geta is there for the sake of his mother, whom he adores (διὰ στοργὴν, Hdn. 4.4.3), and Caracalla attends only to follow through with his plot (τοῦ δὲ δι' ἐπιβουλήν, Hdn. 4.4.3).[104]

Nevertheless, the failure of both mothers to settle the fraternal conflict is widely known. Hearing that her sons intend to completely bisect the Empire, Julia Domna, in a dramatic

[99] ἐγὼ δ' ἔριν λύουσ' ὑπόσπονδον μολεῖν | ἔπεισα παιδὶ παῖδα πρὶν ψαῦσαι δορός, 'To try to end their strife I persuaded the one son to come to the other under a truce before taking up the spear'.
[100] Eteocles: 'Mother I came only as a favour to you'; see also Eur. *Ph.* 273: ἥτις μ' ἔπεισε δεῦρ' ὑπόσπονδον μολεῖν, 'She persuaded me to come here under a truce' (Polynices).
[101] ἔπεισε τὴν μητέρα μόνους σφᾶς ἐς τὸ δωμάτιον, ὡς καὶ συναλλάξουσαν, μεταπέμψασθαι, Antoninus 'induced his mother to summon them both, unattended, to her apartment, with a view to reconciling them'.
[102] Cassius Dio reports that Geta is assassinated by some centurions who, following Caracalla's orders, rush into the meeting room and commit the gruesome crime (78[77].2.3). Due to the corruption of our text, we are not sure if Herodian points to Caracalla as the murderer or not. However, we can argue that he is the perpetrator, mainly judging by the phrase κατεργασθέντος αὐτῷ τοῦ φόνου (Hdn. 4.4.3), which Herodian uses to possibly underline Caracalla's active complicity in the murder; in addition, later on, Caracalla emphatically presents the murder as merely an act of self-defence (τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἠμυνάμην, Hdn. 4.5.6), which further strengthens the argument, especially when combined with the passage 4.5.4 (see the following note), an implicit statement concerning the lack of attendees at the incident.
[103] In our source, Caracalla, pretending to be the victim of this whole situation, falsely declares that Geta, with many armed men, made an attack when he (alone) was with his mother (μοι παρὰ τῇ μητρὶ, Hdn. 4.5.4).
[104] Cf. Whittaker (1969), 391 n. 2 and the interpretation of *Codex Monacensis*.

scene,[105] asks Caracalla and Geta how they plan to divide her body and presence (τὴν δὲ μητέρα πῶς ἂν διέλοισθε, Hdn. 4.3.8). In other words, Julia Domna encourages her sons to split her up into two pieces, so that they would be able to share her as well, just like they did with the land and the sea.[106] After her speech, the grieving mother embraces and enfolds in her hug both Caracalla and Geta, as a last-gasp attempt to reconcile them (μετὰ δακρύων καὶ οἰμωγῆς, ἀμφοτέροις τε τὰς χεῖρας περιβάλλουσα καὶ ὑπὸ τὰς ἀγκάλας λαβοῦσα, Hdn. 4.3.9). In Seneca's version of the story, Jocasta has a similarly dramatic, tearful reaction when she arrives on the battlefield and witnesses Eteocles and Polynices eager and ready to commit a mutual full-scale attack. Being desperate to prevent the imminent clash, she plans to physically stand in between her sons' drawn weapons (Sen. *Phoen*. 407−408)[107] so that whoever attacks his brother, 'must attack his mother first' (*petere qui fratrem volet,* | *petat ante matrem*, Sen. *Phoen*. 408−409). Jocasta, like Julia Domna, is portrayed as a mother lamenting for her children's enmity (Sen. *Phoen*. 440−441)[108] and pleads for their reconciliation, similarly embracing her sons, though not simultaneously (*misera quem amplectar prius?*, Sen. *Phoen.* 460).[109]

In both cases, the maternal hug takes the form of a farewell and a portent of death; soon enough, Geta is executed, while Eteocles and Polynices murder each other. In addition, Julia Domna and Jocasta will not live long in a childless status. Specifically, Julia Domna spectates her younger son's death, but, according to Herodian, commits suicide only when she receives the urn with Caracalla's ashes, since this is the moment when she has lost both of her children.[110] In this regard, Jocasta falls and wails over the fatally wounded bodies of Eteocles

[105] See Marasco (1996), 122.
[106] Hdn. 4.3.8: πρῶτον δὴ ἐμὲ φονεύσατε, καὶ διελόντες ἑκάτερος παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ τὸ μέρος θαπτέτω· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν μετὰ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης ἐς ὑμᾶς μερισθείην, 'Very well, kill me first and each of you take a part of my torn body to your territory and bury it there. In this way I can be shared out between you along with the land and the sea'.
[107] *Ibo, ibo et armis obvium opponam caput,* | *stabo inter arma,* 'I shall go and interpose my body against their weapons, take my stand between their weapons'.
[108] *aniata canas mater ostendit comas,* | *rogat abnuentes, irrigat fletu genas*, 'The mother displays and tears her white hair, begs as they shake their heads, drenches her cheeks with tears'.
[109] 'Poor woman, whom shall I embrace first?'. Jocasta first hugs Polynices (*Iunge complexus prior*, 'You must be first to join me in an embrace', Sen. *Phoen*. 464), a scene also described by Euripides (ἀμφίβαλλε μα- | στὸν ὠλέναισι ματέρος, 'Clasp your mother's breast to yours', Eur. *Ph*. 306−307). Her hug to Eteocles is only implied by Seneca (*Phoen*. 460, 464, 480−483), while in the text of Euripides, it is not clear if she ever embraces him.
[110] Hdn. 4.13.8: ἐκείνη δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς τῶν παίδων ὁμοίαις συμφοραῖς […] ἀπεκαρτέρησε, 'With both of her sons dead under similar circumstances, she committed suicide'.

and Polynices;[111] right after their last breath (ἅμ᾽ ἐξέπνευσαν ἄθλιον βίον, Eur. *Ph.* 1454), she joins them in death, embracing their corpses.[112]

3.1 THE TALE OF INCEST AND PATRICIDE

The issue of incest constitutes the second part of the comparison between the Roman and Theban family crisis. Jocasta is probably the most notorious mythical case of a mother who marries her son, Oedipus,[113] and thus the choice of Alexandrians to call Julia Domna 'Jocasta' most probably alludes to her incestuous relationship with Caracalla.[114] Davenport provides the most comprehensive and detailed argumentation on this topic.[115] According to his research, 'Caracalla's unmarried and childless status**,** coupled with the prominent public position of his mother, constituted an ambiguous situation in the minds of Roman audiences'.[116] This is hence what results in the circulation of rumours among not only the Alexandrians but also elite Roman circles about a potentially ongoing incestuous relationship.[117] Based on archaeological sources and especially numismatic and epigraphic evidence, after Septimius Severus' death Julia Domna undertakes — at least seemingly — the role of Caracalla's 'female counterpart […] as if they were a new imperial pair';[118] they now are an Augustus and an Augusta [*d(i) t(e) s(eruent) in perpetuo, Aug(usta)! Aug(uste),* CIL VI 2086, v. 19],[119] acclamations usually used for husband and wife.[120] In addition, Julia Domna receives the title *Pia Felix*, a title 'clearly designed to emulate Caracalla's *Pius Felix*'[121] (*Pio Felice* […] *Pia Felice*, CIL VIII 2370).[122]

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[111] Eur. *Ph*. 1434: προσπίτνουσα δ᾽ ἐν μέρει τέκνα | ἔκλαι᾽ ἐθρήνει.
[112] Eur. *Ph*. 1457−1459: διὰ μέσου γὰρ αὐχένος | ὠθεῖ σίδηρον, ἐν δὲ τοῖσι φιλτάτοις | θανοῦσα κεῖται περιβαλοῦσ᾽ ἀμφοῖν χέρας, 'She thrust the iron blade through the middle of her throat and now lies dead among her beloved sons, embracing them both in her arms'; see also 1577−1578. On the contrary, in Sophocles' play *Oedipus Tyrannus* and in Seneca's play *Oedipus*, Jocasta kills herself when Oedipus' real identity is revealed.
[113] For similar descriptions of the incest, see e.g. Aesch. *Th.* 750−757, 926−932, Soph. *OC*. 510−540, 982−990, *OT.* 419−425, 457−459, 1357−1358, 1403−1407, Eur. *Ph.* 53−54, 868−869, 1047, 1609, Sen. *Phoen*. 262, *Oed.* 801−881, 934−942, 1009−1023, *Her F*. 387−391.
[114] Davenport (2017), 78 n. 16.
[115] See also Hohl (1950), 15−16 n. 11, Marasco (1996), Penella (1980), Levick (2007), 98−99, 195 nn. 64–70, 72, and 196 n. 73.
[116] Davenport (2017), 79. Hekster [(2015), 148] highlights that 'no mother had been honoured more frequently with coin types before Caracalla's reign'.
[117] Davenport (2017), 90, 96 with Marasco (1996), 120.
[118] Davenport (2017), 81.
[119] 'May the gods keep you safe forever, Augusta! Augustus!', see Scheid (1998), 284, inscr. 99a with Davenport (2017), 81.
[120] Davenport (2017), 81.
[121] Davenport (2017), 80.
[122] See also *ANTONINVS PIVS FEL AVG* (RIC IV Caracalla 206) and *IVLIA PIA FELIX AVG* (RIC IV Caracalla 373a).

The narratees understandably might wonder whether Herodian believes that this scenario of incest has a degree of credibility, and the answer is probably positive. First of all, the fact that he includes even such a discrete allusion to incest,[123] deviating from his typical tendency to silence any scandalous information and/or gossip about his protagonists throughout the work,[124] shows an — up to some extent — belief in the rumour's truth. Moreover, Herodian implicitly interprets the *ab initio* outraged reaction of Caracalla to his mother's derisive new name (Hdn. 4.9.3), and the consequent brutal avenging massacre against the Alexandrians (ἐγένετο φόνος, Hdn. 4.9.8)[125] as almost a confession that the nickname's connotations are accurate. In particular, the historiographer explains that 'people will be deeply offended by such caustic, scornful comments only when they capture and expose the true essence of their flaws or sinful actions'.[126] On top of the above, the nickname Jocasta is presented as one of the Alexandrians' typical witticisms.[127] The accuracy of the rest narrated lampoons, though, namely Caracalla's fratricide (Hdn. 4.9.3)[128] and his humiliating imitation of Alexander and Achilles (Hdn. 4.9.3 with 4.8.1 and 4.8.4)[129] adds to the tale's plausibility.[130] Even so, the veracity of this libelous scenario of incest cannot be historically confirmed in any way.[131] We can only be sure that Herodian had his reasons to hint at such an ambiguous rumour, most probably to enrich and lay even more emphasis on the dramatic resonances already apparent from the description of the fratricidal murder.

The attempted patricide is what folds the tragic triptych of the Theban disaster and this discussion about the similarities in the storylines of the two brotherly pairs. As the name Jocasta always carries the stigma of incest, Oedipus is equally etched in every reader's mind as a son

[123] Davenport (2017), 78; cf. Penella (1980), 382.
[124] Marasco (1996), 119−120; cf. Marasco (1998), 1907−1908, Davenport (2017), 77−78, Kemezis (2016), 364.
[125] For the whole scene of the massacre, see Hdn. 4.9.6−8.
[126] [my transl.], Hdn. 4.9.2: τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων κνίζει μάλιστα ὅσα ἐλέγχει τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων τὴν ἀλήθειαν.
[127] Hdn. 4.9.2: πεφύκασι δέ πως εἶναι φιλοσκώμμονες καὶ λέγειν εὐστόχους ὑπογραφὰς ἢ παιδιάς, 'It was a natural feature of the people to indulge in lampoons and repetition of many pungent caricatures and jokes belittling the authorities'.
[128] πολλὰ τοίνυν ἐκείνων αὐτὸν σκωψάντων ἔς τε τὴν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ἀναίρεσιν, 'Many of their lampoons against Antoninus referred to the destruction of his brother'.
[129] Hdn. 4.9.3: ἐκεῖνον δὲ χλευαζόντων ὅτι δὴ μικρὸς ὢν Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ Ἀχιλλέα γενναιοτάτους καὶ μεγίστους ἥρωας ἐμιμεῖτο, They were 'jeering at him for imitating Alexander and Achilles who were very strong, tall men, while he himself was only a small man'. As we will see, Caracalla marches to Thrace and 'becomes' Alexander the Great (Ἀλέξανδρος ἦν, Hdn. 4.8.1; for the whole episode, see 4.8.1−3); to enhance his invented link to the notorious Macedonian general, Caracalla orders the production of some 'ludicrous pictures' (χλεύης εἴδομεν ἀξίας εἰκόνας, Hdn. 4.8.2), where he is represented sharing a body with Alexander. Later on, Caracalla arrives at the tomb of Achilles and starts imitating the Homeric hero (Ἀχιλλέα ἐμιμεῖτο, Hdn. 4.8.4; for the whole episode, see 4.8.4–5), causing the derision of the attendees (πάνυ […] ἐγελᾶτο, Hdn. 4.8.5).
[130] Davenport (2017), 78; cf. Penella (1980), 382.
[131] Levick (2007), 98.

who marries his mother after killing his father, Laius.[132] In Herodian's work, Caracalla is desperate to hasten the death of Septimius Severus (ὡς ἂν θᾶττον αὐτοῦ ἀπαλλαγείη, Hdn. 3.15.2);[133] to this end, he strives to persuade the doctors and the servants, who are nursing his father, to mistreat him.[134] Only some sentences later, and for the second time, Herodian points to Caracalla as the aspiring, though unsuccessful, abettor of his father's murder. To be exact, the historiographer reveals that after Septimius Severus' death, 'Caracalla eliminates the doctors who disobeyed him, and neither mistreated the old man nor caused his premature death'.[135] It is important to note that Cassius Dio reports an actual murder attempt (ὁ δ' Ἀντωνῖνος ἀποκτεῖναι αὐτὸν ἄντικρυς αὐτοχειρίᾳ ἐπεχείρησεν, 77[76].14.3).[136]

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the 'Theban megatext'[137] but also the fraternal, deadly struggle between Septimius Severus' sons illustrate the multifaceted issue of intrafamilial crisis and its sociopolitical ramifications. After all, a conflict between two ruling brothers factionalises the entire society and warns of a lingering civil war.[138] It is interesting to observe how Herodian describes the demeanour of Caracalla during his rather unapologetic defence speech after the heinous crime (Hdn. 4.5.2−7), when the soon-to-be sole emperor forms an ingenious argument to avoid the accusation of murder; for Caracalla not only portrays himself as the victim of the attack, who merely successfully fought for his own life (Hdn. 4.4.4–4.5.7), but also classifies the act of fratricide among steadfast, warranted procedures to safeguard the Empire from a conspirator.[139] To further strengthen his argument, the young man wheels out a series of brotherly quarrels over the throne that end with fratricide, reaching back to the case of Romulus and Remus (Dion.

[132] Soph. *OT*. 459−460: γυναικὸς υἱὸς καὶ πόσις, καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς | ὁμόσπορός τε καὶ φονεύς, '[…] to his mother both a son and a husband, and to his father a sharer in his wife and a killer'; Eur. *Ph*. 1608-9: κτανὼν δ' ἐμαυτοῦ πατέρ' ὁ δυσδαίμων ἐγὼ | ἐς μητρὸς ἦλθον τῆς ταλαιπώρου λέχος, 'having killed my own father I came to my poor mother's bed'; see also e.g. Aesch. *Th.* 750−757, 779−84, Soph. *OT.* 316−344, 1398−1403, *OC*. 542−548, 969−981, Eur. *Ph*. 10−66, Sen. *Oed.* 276−402, 1032−1033, 1042−1045, *Phoen*. 134−137, 267−271, 274−275.
[133] 'He wanted to be rid of his father as soon as possible'.
[134] Hdn. 3.15.2: ἀνέπειθέ τε ἰατροὺς καὶ ὑπηρέτας κακουργῆσαί τι περὶ τὴν θεραπείαν τοῦ γέροντος, Caracalla 'tried to persuade his doctors and attendants to do him some mischief while they tended the old man'.
[135] [my transl.]; Hdn. 3.15.4: τούς τε ἰατροὺς ἀνελών, οἳ μὴ ὑπήκουσαν αὐτῷ κελεύσαντι κακουργῆσαι καὶ τὸν θάνατον ἐπεῖξαι τοῦ γέροντος.
[136] 'Antoninus attempted to kill his father outright with his own hand'.
[137] Lamari (2010), 23. On the analysis of the term, see Segal (1986), 47−74.
[138] On the analogy and an inextricable correlation between fraternal and civil strife, see Bannon (1997), 149, with Hopkins (1983), 81.
[139] Hdn. 4.5.5: ἀμύνεσθαί τε τοὺς ἐπιβουλεύοντας οὐ μόνον δίκαιον ἀλλὰ καὶ σύνηθες, 'Self-defence against plots is not only justified but natural'; see also 4.5.3: εὕροι ἂν ὁμοῦ καὶ εὔλογον καὶ ἀναγκαῖον τὸν μέλλοντα πείσεσθαι δεινὸν ἀμύνασθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπομεῖναι, 'it is logically necessary for a person who would be harmed to defend himself and not remain passive'.

Hal. 1.85.6,[140] Cic. *Off.* 3.41[141]) and thus the foundational myth of Rome *per se.* In this way, Caracalla forms the breeding ground for a rhetorical question: why is he held accountable for Geta's murder, when even Romulus, 'the founder of Rome', killed his brother, 'unable to keep up with Remus' intolerably offensive stance towards his actions'?[142] Hardie fairly highlights that 'Rome, like Thebes, is founded in fratricide',[143] and, as we saw, Septimius Severus' sons integrate themselves in this long lineage of blood. Last but not least, the historiographical text further facilitates the comparison between these two storylines, since Herodian's 'dramatic mode of narrative'[144] and the plethora of theatrical elements wedded to a vivid writing style prompt the narratees to envision the *History* as a stage performance.

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[140] ἐκ δὲ τῆς φιλονεικίας ταύτης ἀκοινώνητος εὐθὺς ὑπεδηλοῦτο φιλαρχία, 'From this rivalry their unsociable love of rule immediately began to disclose itself'; see also Enn. *Ann*. 1.72−96, Diod. Sic. 8.6, Liv. 1.6.3−1.7.3, Plut. *Rom.* 9−11.

[141] *cui cum visum esset utilius solum quam cum altero regnare, fratrem interemit*, 'When he decided that it was more expedient for him to reign alone than to share the throne with another, he slew his brother', Remus; see also Hor. *Epod*. 7.17−20, *Carm*. 1.35.33−38, Liv. 1.7.2. For the different versions of Remus and Romulus' story, see Wiseman (1995), 1−17 and Bannon (1997), 158−172; for the couple's adaptation in different texts, see Pontone (1986), Bannon (1997), 172−183, 186−188.

[142] [my transl.]; Hdn. 4.5.5: αὐτὸς γοῦν ὁ τῆσδε τῆς πόλεως κτίστης Ῥωμύλος οὐκ ἤνεγκεν ἀδελφὸν ὑβρίσαντα μόνον ἐς τὰ ἐκείνου ἔργα.

[143] Hardie (1990), 230.

[144] Baumann (2022), 71.

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PART VI: Sociopolitical Crises in the Greek and Roman World

Negotiating Spheres of Power — Ambrosius and the Emperors as reflected in his Correspondence

Claudia Tiersch

1. EPISTOLOGRAPHY, NEW ACTORS AND THE CRISIS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE[1]

In Late Antiquity, the Roman Empire underwent multiple crises and upheavals. The mounting military pressure on the external borders required a significant degree of mobility on the part of the emperor, the army and the administrators. Furthermore, recurring attacks necessitated the concurrent presence of ruling power in disparate regions of the Empire, frequently characterised by considerable rivalries among the office holders. The result was fragmented centres of power in several residences. Attempts at usurpation, often supported by members of the senatorial aristocracy, posed a further threat to imperial power.[2] The phenomenon of politically unexperienced child emperors, which had become more prevalent since the CE 370s, shifted real power, especially in the Western Empire, to members of the civil bureaucracy and the *magistri militum* in the *consistorium*. However, the cooperation between these groups remained contentious at times.[3]

Constantine's conversion led to an expansion of the political sphere to encompass the Christian Church. This shifted the traditional Roman balance between religion and politics enormously, particularly because the approach adopted by Constantius II of subordinating bishops as ecclesiastical leaders to political structures gave rise to considerable conflict.[4] Consequently, there was a growing theological coordination and institutional union among the bishops, which enabled them to assign greater weight to their own demands.[5] Current debates rightly emphasise the interlocking of the rather locally limited power of the bishops and the supra-regional imperial power, which gradually developed over time.[6] However, there were considerable regional and temporal differences in this regard.

This study focuses on the negotiation processes in the mutual spheres of power of the Church and the state, using the example of the correspondence between Ambrosius and the

[1] All text editions used are cited in the bibliography list below.
[2] Moser-Gerber (2018), Szidat (1979), Lizzi Testa (2022), Davenport/McEvoy (2024), Wienand (2015), Humphries (2020), Weisweiler (2015), Barnes (1997), Bang (2013), Kulikowski (2019).
[3] Bendle (2014), Maier (2019), (2023), Kuhoff (2012), McEvoy (2013).
[4] Markschies (2017), 112, 125, (1998), 449–451.
[5] Smolin (2024), 317–338. See, for example, Neil (2023) on the growing power of bishops in Italy.
[6] Drijvers/Manders/Slootjes (2020), 9–18.

emperors of his episcopate: Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I. Ambrosius and his correspondence are relevant in several respects. The former governor of the province of Aemilia Liguria had been chosen as bishop of Milan while still unbaptised, in the midst of a deeply divided community at one of the imperial residences. Over the following years, he not only succeeded in gaining theological authority, but also in establishing an unusual position of power, which at times was also directed against the emperor. This was based on close relationships with his community as well as civil officials, bishops inside and outside Italy and some members of the court. His correspondence was a crucial instrument in this regard. Ambrosius was regarded as a steadfast and ultimately triumphant defender of the superior sphere of God against earthly claims to power.[7] But is this attribution really accurate?

To answer this question, this essay examines the letters between Ambrosius and his courtly correspondents, both because of the considerable number of letters from and to Ambrosius that have been preserved and because of their specific significance. These letters, as well as other documents in the 10th book of his collection of letters and in some letters published outside this collection, primarily focus on the relationship between Church and State.[8] It is probably no coincidence that Late Antiquity is generally considered a golden age of epistolography.[9] This can partly be ascribed to the often accidental circumstances surrounding the transmission of information; however, other factors must be taken into consideration when assessing the significant role that letter communication plays. These include regionalisation and thus the resulting expansion of centres of power and their growing mobility, which rendered long-distance communication by letter increasingly important.[10] Additionally, the increasing number of political actors who, like the bishops, were by no means always integrated into clear command hierarchies, but often negotiated the assertion of power by establishing relationships, needs to be taken into account.[11]

In this context, the question of whether the growing number of Christian correspondents in Late Antiquity led to a Christianisation of epistolary literature, which has been increasingly

[7] Liebeschuetz (2005), 39 rightly emphasises how skilfully Ambrosius himself created this aura through the publication of his corpus of letters.
[8] Discussions on the structure and intention of the collected letters can be found in Canellis (2012), Nauroy (2019), Liebeschuetz (2005), 27–46. The publication of the letters probably originated with Ambrosius himself, who had been considering the idea in the last years of his life; *Ep*. 32, Liebeschutz (2005), 27. Zelzer (1989), 203–208 points out that Ambrosius may have modelled his collection of letters on that of Pliny. Like Pliny's, his collection comprised ten books, the tenth of which was devoted to political affairs.
[9] Sogno/Storin/Watts (2017).
[10] Marien (2020).
[11] Weisweiler (2012), Baker-Brian (2020).

discussed in recent research, takes on a double meaning.[12] On the one hand, it is clear that bishops, too, had to adhere to traditional forms of communication in their letters in order to convince their often non-Christian correspondents of their concerns. Neil McLynn has convincingly demonstrated this for the correspondence between Ambrosius and Symmachus.[13] Nevertheless, a Christian tradition of letter conventions had been in existence since Paul and Ignatius of Antioch. This tradition relied on pastoral exhortation and utilised sacred forms of self-legitimisation.[14]

This study will therefore examine the concerns Ambrosius communicated in his letters, the ways and methods he used to pursue these concerns and how successful he was in doing so. What do the letters to correspondents such as Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I reveal about communication in times of crisis, about power-related negotiation processes and about Ambrosius' effectiveness?

2. AMBROSIUS AND GRATIAN — ENTERING THE SPHERE OF IMPERIAL POWER

In November CE 375, just one year after Ambrosius' election as bishop, Valentinian I, Emperor of the Western Roman Empire, died unexpectedly, probably of a stroke. He had appointed his sixteen-year-old son Gratian as his successor. Competing circles under the Germanic *magister militum* Merobaudes additionally introduced his four-year-old half-brother Valentinian II to the public eye, who came under Gratian's guardianship.[15]

Following the initial two-year period of Gratian's reign, which was spent in Trier, a location chosen for its strategic importance as a defensive stronghold along the Rhine, the Gothic invasions compelled him to relocate to Illyricum.[16] It seems plausible that this strategic change of position may have resulted in an augmented significance of the Milan residence from the perspective of the emperor, who was already caught up in theological controversies.[17]

Gratian's first request to Ambrosius for a treatise on the faith was sent from Sirmium in the winter of CE 378/379.[18] The two letters between the bishop and the emperor preserved in the Corpus of Ambrosius already suggest a close, extremely trusting relationship. Gratian's

[12] Allen/Neil (2013), (2020).
[13] McLynn (1994), 263–275.
[14] Huizenga (2023), Neil (2015), Ebbeler (2012) on pastoral intervention strategies in Augustine.
[15] Amm. Marc. 29.6.3, 30.6.1–6, 10.1, 5, Ruf. *HE* 11.12, Ps.-Aur. Vict. *Epit*. 45.10, Socr. *HE* 4.31.7, Zos. 4.19.1, Kelly (2013), Girardet (2004) on the elevation of Valentinian II in CE 375/376. On Gratian, cf. Seeck (1912), Gottlieb (1983), McEvoy (2013), discussed 49–70.
[16] Amm. 31.10.20, 11.6, Zos. 4.24.3.
[17] On the shift in strategic axes depending on the theatres of war, cf. Lenski (2023).
[18] Dating points for the emperor's presence are *CTh* 7.12.2 and *CTh* 10.2.1.

letter to Ambrosius expressed the emperor's desire to convene with the bishop once more, a sentiment that stemmed from the spiritual affinity he had already perceived between them.[19] Furthermore, Gratian described himself as a humble believer under the grace of God and expressed his willingness to praise the greatness of God.[20] Further remarks to Ambrosius indicated his readiness to profess Christianity in the Nicene form. He also requested the bishop to send him the continuation of the writing that had already been sent, which was intended to provide further clarification about the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[21]

Ambrosius' reply letter responded in kind. He praised the emperor for his faithfulness, assured him of his devotion and support in almost flattering terms, and promised to send him the desired text.[22] At the same time, however, some of his remarks hint at the bishop's conflict: Ambrosius not only praised Gratian effusively as particularly gifted, but also created a kind of inverse role reversal and marginalised his own position in order to elevate that of the emperor: He, Ambrosius, had benefited greatly from the emperor's grace, an indication of Gratian's special closeness to God.[23] He also praised Gratian's achievements in limiting the influence of 'heretics' and expressed his hope for further efforts, for which the following writings on the Holy Spirit were intended.[24]

However, his remarks that he did not greet the emperor in person when he entered Milan, but only in spirit, seem strange. Ambrosius apologises profusely for this and promises to travel to the emperor as soon as possible.[25] In my opinion, however, this has been correctly interpreted by researchers as an indication of Gratian's religious–political decisions, which Ambrosius did not approve of and therefore responded to with his absence.[26]

Despite the mutual praise expressed in the correspondence, it is indicative of tense power struggles. These were determined on the one hand by Ambrosius' limited scope for action, as he had not yet succeeded in gaining privileged access to Gratian and the centre of power at his court, since he did not yet know how to make an effective offer of support. On the other hand, however, he had a strong desire to gain decisive influence over the young emperor and was by no means content with a regional role. Neil McLynn has therefore rightly warned against overestimating the intensity of the relationship between Gratian and Ambrosius, as the

[19] *CSEL* 79.3–4.1 (Ambr. *Spir*.) = *CSEL* 82.103, XCVI.
[20] *CSEL* 79.3–4.2.
[21] *CSEL* 79.3–4.3.
[22] Ambr. *Ep*. *e.c.* 12.1, 12.7.
[23] Ambr. *Ep*. *e.c.* 12.2–5.
[24] Ambr. *Ep*. *e.c.* 12.8, 12.9.
[25] Ambr. *Ep*. *e.c.* 12.1.
[26] Gottlieb (1973), 39–40.

request for the letter could also be interpreted as a test of the theological competence of the Bishop of Milan, which he passed with flying colours, but without thereby rising to Gratian's inner circle of advisors.[27]

Ambrosius later stated that Gratian had demonstrated his faith by returning a basilica that had previously been taken away from the Orthodox.[28] In this respect, these two letters are an indication that, despite his theological interests and his contacts with Ambrosius, Gratian tended to favour religious and political neutrality for the sake of self-assertion. Something that is also reflected in his legislation.[29] Due to differing political interests, he pursued ambitions that were by no means consistent with those of the Bishop of Milan, who was initially unable to exert any significant influence over the emperor.

The balance shifted when Gratian came under pressure from an unexpected source in CE 381.[30] After the death of his uncle Valens, Gratian had elevated Theodosius, a general from Spain, to Augustus in the Eastern Empire on 19 January CE 379. Theodosius was a man with strong Nicene sympathies, but also an unmistakable will to assert his own regional sphere of influence in both political and theological terms.[31] Although agreements had been made with Gratian to hold a joint council of bishops in Aquileia, Theodosius decided to convene a council of bishops from the eastern half of the Empire in Constantinople in order to resolve the religious tensions in his eastern realm.[32] Now it was Ambrosius who succeeded in convening bishops for a parallel council in Aquileia, thereby saving Gratian's reputation.[33] Gratian's repeated stays in Milan in the following years further strengthened relations.

There is no doubt that during Gratian's reign, Ambrosius' political influence as an authoritative bishop and skilled mediator had grown considerably, but Gratian's unexpected death in battle against the usurper Magnus Maximus in CE 383 ended this relationship and shifted the centre of political power back to the court in Trier.[34] The Spanish-born usurper Magnus Maximus had deliberately exploited Gratian's absence from Gaul and Britain to launch

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[27] McLynn (1994), 115–118, 148–149, 152.
[28] Ambr. *De spir. Sancto* 1.20–21: *Nec superioris temporis damna deploro, quandoquidem sequestratio illa basilicae cuiusdam faenoris traxit usuras. Etenim basilicam sequestrasti, ut fidem probares*. McLynn (1994), 121, Gottlieb (1973), 41.
[29] For example, the 'Tolerance Law', which granted freedom of worship to all communities except the Eunomians, Photinians and Manichaeans. McLynn (1994), 91, Socr. *HE*. 5.2.1, Soz. *HE* 7.3.1, Theod. *HE* 5.2, but which he restricted again the following year: *CTh* 16.5.5.
[30] On the events, McLynn (1994), 124–137.
[31] Ps.-Aurel. Vict. *Epit*. 47.3, 48.1, Oros. 7.34.2, Theod. *HE* 5.5.2, Them. *Or*. 14.224, Socr. *HE* 5.2, Lippold (1973), 841.
[32] Socr. 5.8, Soz. 7.7.
[33] Ambr. *Ep*. 12, McLynn (1994), 124–137.
[34] Zos. 4.35.2, 36.5, Amm. 31.10.18–19, Ruf. *HE* 11.13, McLynn (1994), 153.

a rebellion: after the soldiers in Britain proclaimed him the new ruler, he crossed over to Gaul. Gratian was abandoned by his troops and murdered by one of Maximus' generals,[35] leaving his half-brother Valentinian II as Augustus of the Western Empire.

3. AMBROSIUS AND VALENTINIAN II — SUPPORT THE STATE POWER OR OPPOSE IT?

Valentinian II had initially resided in Sirmium, however, he was compelled to relocate to Milan by CE 378 at the latest due to the growing threat posed by the Goths, bringing him closer to Ambrosius. It is not certain whether the Arian-minded imperial mother Justina entrusted Valentinian II to him, as Ambrosius later claimed.[36] However, their relationship intensified when, after the death of his half-brother, Valentinian II was ultimately summoned to Maximus' court in Trier where the usurper sought to gain control over him and thus consolidate power over the Western Empire. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that Theodosius initially consented to recognise Maximus as second Augustus in the Western Empire, thereby conferring upon him jurisdiction over the transalpine provinces, thus effectively dividing the legitimacy of rule in the Western Empire.[37]

In view of this precarious situation, Ambrosius, in the service of Valentinian II, travelled to the court in Trier in CE 383 to obtain Maximus' recognition of Valentinian II, or at least to gain time for the necessary consolidation of political power. In a later letter to Valentinian II, Ambrosius boasted of how he had managed to stall Maximus in the consistory through skilful manoeuvring. Ambrosius had come to negotiate peace, and because of the approaching winter, a journey across the Alps was unreasonable for Justina and her son.[38] However, as relations between the two courts were marked by mistrust, Ambrosius travelled to the court in Trier again in CE 384, but this time he acted much more energetically and decisively, because Valentinian II could now count on the loyalty of *the magister militum* Bauto.[39] When Maximus asked why he now wanted a private audience, whereas previously he had appeared in the consistory, Ambrosius replied that at that time he had been negotiating for peace as the emissary of a

[35] Sulp. Sev. *Chron*. 2.49.5, *vit. Mart.* 20.3. Oros. 7.34.9. Ps.-Aurel. Vict. *Ep*. 47.7. Zos. IV 35.2–5, Ruf. *HE* 11.14. Pacat. *Paneg*. XII 23.24, 38, Ambr. *in Psalm*. 61.17, Hieron. *Ep*. 60.15.
[36] Ambr. *De ob. Val*. 28, Socr. *HE* 5.11.10, Enßlin (1948), 2208.
[37] Gottlieb (1973), McLynn (1994), 149–157 on the rise in Ambrosius' importance under Gratian, particularly due to the Council of Aquileia. On the influential presence of Magnus Maximus and his recognition, especially in Britain, cf. Craven (2023).
[38] *Ep*. 24.3.
[39] *Ep*. 30 (*Maur*. 24).

lower-ranking official, but now he was the envoy of an equal.[40] The basic tone of the letter conveys the prevailing atmosphere surrounding Maximus, characterised by insults, demotions and pervasive mistrust among those involved, particularly Ambrosius. Ambrosius' depiction of his mission for Valentinian II is characterised by a series of hardships and inconveniences that ultimately culminated in failure.[41]

The content of the letter can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the letter contained an implicit warning, which the bishop explicitly reiterated at the end of the letter. This warning was against an unpredictable and abusive usurper, into whose care Valentinian II should under no circumstances consider placing himself.[42] Here, the interests of the bishop, who owed considerable influence and power to Valentinian's frequent presence in Milan, were intertwined with the interests of Valentinian, who might have considered yielding to Maximus' pressure but was confronted with the risks involved. The symbolism of this message was unmistakable: Ambrosius positioned himself as loyal to the Roman Empire and its young monarch, but ultimately also saw himself as obligated to him.[43]

The bishop's growing desire for power is evident in *Ep*. 17, in which Ambrosius vigorously urged the emperor not to grant Symmachus' request to reinstall the statue of Victoria in the Roman Senate: should a Christian emperor collaborate in the restoration of a pagan altar and a pagan cult, it is likely that subsequent church visits would either lead to an absence of a priest or one who would resist him.[44] The phrase 'in military matters, one must expect the opinion of a man accustomed to battle, but in matters of religion, one must think of God' was a direct attack on the pagan *magister militum* Bauto, one of the young emperor's most important supporters. Nevertheless, Ambrosius remained stubborn: he requested a copy of the Senate's petition and immediately drafted a response.[45] Valentinian II rejected the Senate's request.[46] However, the fact that he considered Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and Bauto, two pagans, for the next consulships showed that a policy of compromise remained essential for the emperor's stability of power.[47]

It is precisely in this context that the event that caused relations between the emperor and the bishop to escalate must be seen: the contentious debate that transpired between the

[40] *Ep*. 24.3.
[41] *Ep*. 30.2–11.
[42] *Ep*. 30.13.
[43] This is particularly clear in *Ep*. 7.9 in his description of his defence of Valentinian II against Maximus.
[44] *Ep*. 17.13, 57.2.
[45] *Ep*. 17.13, 18.1, 22–23.
[46] *Ep*. 18.1, 57.3.
[47] Symm. *Rel*. 12.4, 10.1, 11, 12, Hier. *Ep*. 23.2–3.

emperor, administrative officials and the bishop in CE 385/386 considering the use of a basilica for the court's Easter service, a subject that is further elaborated on in four further letters from Ambrosius, serves to underscore the bishop's assertion of his authority over pivotal domains in Milan.[48] The dating of the letters remains controversial among researchers. However, Timothy Barnes and Gunther Gottlieb have put forward convincing arguments for a chronological sequence based on a two-phase conflict, placing *Ep*. 76 — a letter from Ambrosius to his sister Marcellina, probably from the year CE 385 — at the beginning.[49] The remaining epistles, designated *Ep*. 75, 75a and 77, are more likely to date from the subsequent year. These epistles include an attack on Valentinian II, a sermon to the congregation disguised as a letter, which urged them to persevere, and a triumphant message from Ambrosius to Marcellina. In this message, Ambrosius reports not only on the emperor's defeat in the basilica dispute, but also on the miraculous discovery of two martyr relics. These relics ultimately reinforced the bishop's position.[50]

The sequence and tone of the letters reveal Ambrosius' self-image, which was deeply rooted in the superiority of episcopal power as sacral over imperial rule. In this widely interpreted area, Ambrosius was unwilling to accept any compromises, even at the risk of escalation. A fundamental change in his communication with Gratian is unmistakable and possibly an expression of his own strengthened social position in recent years.[51] The first letter already refers to this tension. The imperial demand for the surrender of the Basilica Portiana and the Basilica Nova for the Passion and Easter services of the emperor and his court certainly posed a threat to Ambrosius. Valentinian II did not yet threaten to replace him with a colleague loyal to the court, but the understanding of the church that emerged here implied a continuation of the court church model established by Constantius II, a form of church organisation for which Ambrosius was not essential and which functioned independently of him.[52]

In his letter, Ambrosius left no doubt that he viewed the ensuing conflict as a contest between two fundamentally different systems of power. Valentinian II issued administrative decrees demanding that Ambrosius surrender the two basilicas, forbade his officials from attending Ambrosius' services, symbolically took possession of the Basilica Portiana by hanging curtains across it, and had soldiers surround the Basilica Nova.[53] Ambrosius, on the

[48] Rufinus, *HE* 11.15, Soz. 6.13.5–6. On the conflict, see Lukkari (2024), Barnes (2000).
[49] Barnes (2000), 282–299, Gottlieb (1985), 37–55.
[50] On the events, cf. McLynn (1994), 387–396.
[51] McLynn (1994).
[52] *Ep*. 76, Markschies (2017), 125, Smolin (2024), 333.
[53] *Ep*. 76.1–12.

other hand, relied on local support, which he skilfully deepened theologically. He strengthened his congregation's will to persevere through his constant presence in the Basilica Vetus and through sermons that underpinned his behaviour with sacred absoluteness. Numerous other supporters entered the Basilica Nova, unhindered by the soldiers, who were apparently unwilling to use force against nonviolent civilians on behalf of the emperor in this conflict. When the situation threatened to escalate after children tore down the curtains in the Basilica Portiana, the emperor withdrew his measures and relinquished the Basilica for the time being.[54]

Ambrosius described his successful public appearance to a confidante, his sister Marcellina. The letter was therefore not merely an exchange of views between two correspondents, but, as was often the case with Ambrosius, a manifestation of triumph. What is particularly noteworthy about this letter, however, is that the bishop very decisively presented himself as the central actor in this conflict. He rejected all imperial accusations of *contumacia* in a manner that was both ostentatious and effective. At the same time, he effectively thwarted imperial claims through communication and behaviour.[55] In his letter, he attributed the main blame to the Arian-minded imperial mother Justina, but he considered the emperor to have lost authority, which is why Ambrosius, without withdrawing his claim, expected the situation to escalate further.[56]

The second letter, *Ep*. 75, was addressed directly to Valentinian II and further reinforced Ambrosius' offensive communication. The background to this was that Valentinian, in response to his defeat, had legally established freedom of assembly for Arians[57] and had also gained a cooperative Arian bishop in Auxentius of Durostorum as a direct supporter, whom Ambrosius perceived as a threatening rival.[58] With reference to this law, Ambrosius was summoned to appear before an imperial *consistory* to face a religious dispute and charges relating to his refusal to attend the basilica, which he flatly refused.[59]

Ambrosius addressed the problem that this refusal was more difficult to justify because it now violated applicable law by attempting to flagrantly question both the emperor and his legislative authority on this topic. His fundamental premise was the 'bishop's right', a superior right of bishops in matters of faith, to which he also subsumed this conflict. He directly denied

[54] *Ep*. 76.13–17, 20, 24, 26.
[55] *Ep*. 76.10, 19, 22–23. Athanasius pursued similarly subversive strategies toward Constantius II; Cain (2024), 37–48.
[56] *Ep*. 76.27.
[57] *CTh* 16.1.4, 4.1 from 23 January CE 386; Ambr. *C. Auxent*. 2, 16, 25, *Ep*. 21.9, 14, Rufin. *HE* 11.14, Soz. *HE* 7.13.2, 5, Zonar. 13.18, Enßlin (1948), 2217.
[58] *Ep*. 75.6, 8. It can be dated to the beginning of the year CE 386: Liebeschuetz (2005), 128–129.
[59] *Ep*. 75.1–3.

Valentinian II the right to make decisions or enact laws on this issue. Ambrosius' critique of the emperor was twofold. Firstly, he highlighted his alleged immaturity, citing his youth and un-baptised status as factors contributing to this perception. Secondly, he drew parallels between the emperor and his deceased father, portraying the latter as a role model who entrusted matters of faith exclusively to bishops. He even predicted that provinces would defect if it became known that enforcing the Catholic faith by law would result in the death penalty. Despite the fact that Ambrosius had repeatedly asserted that any allegations of insubordination or even usurpation against him were baseless, he nevertheless left no doubt about his readiness to resist to the utmost.

The culmination of this confrontational attitude is outlined in the follow-up letter, *Ep*. 75a, which is addressed to Auxentius, but actually reproduces an Easter sermon in which Ambrosius justified and interpreted his congregation's refusal to appear in court. He motivated this with the intention of dispelling his congregation's concerns about the imperial threats against him. This enabled him, on the one hand, to stylise himself as a heroic and unwavering athlete in the service of the Catholic faith, but on the other hand, to make his behaviour theologically plausible by anchoring his actions in several biblical narratives.[60] At the same time, he was able to stylise the danger of imperial punishment as martyrdom and thus make it more difficult to enact. Accompanying this, he painted a terrifying picture of Auxentius as the Antichrist.[61] However, the last part of his sermon also touched on the relationship between the emperor and the church. In this section, Ambrosius invoked the parable of the coins from the Gospel of Matthew and explicitly delineated the emperor's role as a subordinate to the church, thereby placing him under the authority of the episcopacy in matters of faith.[62]

Although Ambrosius' powerful presence in Milan may have prevented further imperial action, the situation remained tense. The 'discovery' of the relics of the two martyrs Gervasius and Protasius in June CE 386, which Ambrosius integrated into the newly built basilica, contributed to a marked gain in position for the bishop. Research has already pointed out that in *Ep*. 77, which recounts these events, Ambrosius avoids any description of how he learned of the location of the martyrs' bones, but instead goes into great detail about the great significance of the event, the immense relevance of these first two martyrs from Milan and the enthusiasm of the community.[63] He described the two as a garrison (*praesidium)*, as protectors and

[60] *Ep*. 75a.6–9, 11–14.
[61] *Ep*. 75a.20, 22–29.
[62] *Ep*. 75a.33–37.
[63] Ausbüttel (2020), 56, 58.

defenders of Milan, thereby establishing a sacred rivalry to the emperor's military protective power.

He also took the opportunity to draw parallels between the positive impact attributed to the martyrs and the rejection of the concept of saints by the Arians, a denial stemming from divergent theological presuppositions.[64] The strategic combination of these meticulously orchestrated actions served to fortify the position of the episcopal authority to a considerable extent, while concurrently eroding the standing of the emperor and the court. This outcome stood in contrast to the subsequent expressions of accord between the imperial court and the bishop.[65] Knowing of these events, Maximus immediately wrote a letter to Valentinian, saying that if he were not so well disposed towards his co-emperor, it could only be to his advantage what was happening in his part of the Empire.[66] In the early months of CE 387, Valentinian II returned to Milan. However, shortly afterwards, Maximus utilised the pretext of the Ostrogothic incursions into Pannonia to march into Italy himself, under the guise of coming to Valentinian II's aid.[67] Valentinian II then left Milan for Thessalonica to seek Theodosius' support against Maximus.[68] Ambrosius had thus asserted his local dominance in Milan, but significantly weakened his contact with the imperial court and the authority of the emperor.[69]

4. AMBROSIUS AND THEODOSIUS I — OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS OF EPISCOPAL POWER

This success, along with further victories in the process of the removal of the Altar of Victory, additional gains in bishop elections and social networking with other actors clearly increased Ambrosius' willingness to exert power and influence on a larger scale. Already in the context of the Council of Aquileia, in a letter to Theodosius I, Ambrosius had called for the convening of a general council in Rome.[70] Theodosius I, who saw the emperor as the highest authority in deciding ecclesiastical disputes, brusquely rejected this demand and instead convened another council for CE 382 in Constantinople, a clear indication of his intention to upgrade the

[64] *Ep*. 77.7, 10.
[65] McEvoy (2013), 117–127 has shown that adjustments were made to the virtues formulated for rulers in order to correspond to the capabilities of the child emperors. Religious merits were part of this. However, the Basilica conflict discredited Valentinian II precisely in this sensitive area.
[66] *CA* 39, Ruf. *HE* 11.16, Theod. *HE*. 5.14. Escribano (2021) elaborates on how skilfully Maximus attempts to delegitimise Valentinian II in religious categories, as *persecutor*.
[67] Zos. 5.42.3–5.
[68] Zos. 4.42.3–7, Soc. 5.11.11–12, McLynn (1994), 217–219.
[69] For the political consequences of the permanently travelling imperial courts cf. Slootjes (2024).
[70] *Ep*. 13.

bishopric of Constantinople.[71] In fact, in CE 382, there was not one imperial council, but two separate councils in Rome and Constantinople. Although the Eastern bishops invited by the West had declined the invitation, a delegation from the East came to Rome, professed its faith, defended ecclesiastical policy decisions in the East, and emphatically rejected the accusations made by Ambrosius against the Council of Constantinople.[72] Theodosius I's interest in delimiting his sphere of influence in terms of church policy was evident.

Ambrosius' unwillingness to accept this division is evident in his actions in the context of the so-called Kallinikon affair in CE 388/389, which is documented in three letters — *Ep*. 74, *Ep. extra coll*. 1 and *Ep* 75. The background to the conflict was that Christians, probably at the instigation of the local bishop, had burned down the synagogue and stolen temple implements in Kallinikon, a city on the Euphrates. In addition, monks had taken revenge on the Christian sect of the Valentinians, who had stood in the way of one of the monk's marches by destroying the sect's temple.[73] The *comes Orientis* had asked Emperor Theodosius for instructions on how to punish the two cases. Emperor Theodosius, who after several years in the East was now staying in Aquileia following his victory over the usurper Maximus, and thus within Ambrosius' sphere of influence, had decreed by law that the *comes Orientis* had to investigate the case in court. The bishop had to rebuild the synagogue. The monks were to be punished.[74]

The fact that Ambrosius intervened in this conflict is remarkable for several reasons: He was interfering in unrest that had taken place outside the Western Empire, far away from Milan. In fact, the addressee of his letters was Emperor Theodosius I, emperor of the eastern part of the Empire, which may be taken as an indication of how little Ambrosius wanted to limit his episcopal reach to the western part of the Empire. In addition, his demand as bishop for the repeal of measures that ultimately concerned sanctions for violations of public order was diametrically opposed to the regulatory interventions that he himself would have had to take as governor.

Epistle 74 instead offers a completely undisguised call to Emperor Theodosius to place the sphere of faith above that of secular law and public order in this conflict. Ambrosius justified his intervention with parrhesia, the episcopal right, indeed the duty, to advise the

[71] *Ep*. 14.4, Lippold (1973), 857.
[72] Theod. *HE*. 5.8, Soz. 7.11.3, Lippold (1973), 860.
[73] Chin (2016), Lippold (1973), 879, Leppin (2003), 138–143.
[74] Ambr. *Ep*. 40.6, 16, Paul. *VA* 22.

emperor in matters in which he threatened to go astray.[75] With an almost overwhelming abundance of arguments, the bishop then attempted to plead why an imperial order to rebuild the destroyed synagogue by the bishop of Kallinikon would be counterproductive, even downright dangerous: it would embolden those Jews who denied Jesus and encourage those who had already destroyed Christian buildings in recent years to continue doing so.[76] Ambrosius did not shy away from pointing out to the emperor that he owed his recent victory over the usurper Maximus to the grace of God. Maximus, however, had had a Jewish synagogue in Rome rebuilt before his defeat. The emperor should appreciate the supportive role of Christian clergy for the state and, as bishop of Milan, give him the opportunity to present his case in court.[77]

Although two different versions of this letter have been preserved, his request was not met with a positive response from Theodosius. Ambrosius then resorted once again to the strategy of public confrontation during a church service, the success of which he commented on in his letter to Marcellina — *Ep. extra coll*. 1 and *Maur*. 41 — with the words: 'Everything ultimately went according to his wishes'.[78] However, this coup proved to be a Pyrrhic victory, because the renunciation of punitive measures, enforced under episcopal pressure, contradicted imperial interests, which were primarily concerned with enforcing public order, especially between members of different religions. Moreover, it did not in any way remedy the fundamental problem of repeated attacks by various groups against each other. Theodosius addressed this issue years later with a law that strictly prohibited attacks on Jewish buildings and gatherings.[79]

The extent to which Theodosius felt cheated as ruler by the unwanted influence of the bishop is also evident in his immediate reaction after the service: he forbade Ambrosius from entering the court and prohibited court officials from passing on any information to the energetic bishop, which significantly limited his scope of influence and authority as an influential power broker in Milan.[80] His subsequent letter to Theodosius — *Ep. extra coll*. 11 — then adopts a visibly changed tone and attempts to regain influence with the emperor by offering a compromise. The ban on contact is mentioned and regretted, but even met with

[75] *Ep*. 74.1–4. Rees (2018) analyses the coercive intent behind this approach, which effectively reduces the emperor to an audience for the explanations.
[76] *Ep*. 74.6–12, 18–21.
[77] *Ep*. 74.24–33.
[78] Ambros. *Ep. e.c.* 1.28.
[79] *CTh* 16.8.9 (393), Ausbüttel (2020), 41.
[80] *Ep. e.c.* 11.3, 51.2.

understanding, while the bishop asserts the fundamentally good relations between the emperor and the bishop, and the mutual benefits.[81]

To this end, he cleverly refers to a catastrophe that occurred months earlier, the so-called 'massacre of Thessaloniki'.[82] Residents of the city had slaughtered Gothic auxiliary troops, and the emperor had transferred the punitive action for this to members of the affected troops, which in turn led to acts of revenge by the soldiers against the citizens. These became a cruel symbol of imperial vengeance, but at the very least marked the emperor's loss of control. Both outcomes were equally disastrous for imperial authority.[83] News of the bloodbath reached Milan while Theodosius was away from the city, but at the same time a council of bishops was in session. Ambrosius took the initiative to admonish the emperor, but the council did not make any public accusations against Theodosius I.[84]

Instead, in his letter Ambrosius offered the emperor a compromise to repair the damage to the emperor's image: his remarks outlined a way to recode the loss of political control as an emotional act of imperial anger,[85] and to atone for it through a public act of imperial penance with episcopal forgiveness.[86] This form of penance, according to Ambrosius, would free the emperor, as it once did King David, from the shame of being perceived as a cruel, vengeful ruler. For Ambrosius, this approach not only offered the opportunity to restore his relationship with the emperor and regain influence, but also to demonstrate the power of the Church over secular authority in a publicly visible act.

Since he acted much more diplomatically on this occasion — i.e. the letter was in fact an unofficial communication,[87] the tone remained diplomatic and the subsequent act of penance became part of a protocol carefully negotiated with court officials — Theodosius accepted the bishop's offer.[88] The so-called 'Act of Penance of Milan' became an iconic event in world history. It cemented Ambrosius' reputation as a bishop who outshone everyone else, who had even succeeded in triumphing over state power, but the emperor's reputation also gained from

[81] *Ep. e.c.* 1–2. It is not possible to date the letter precisely, but it can be assumed to be from April or May CE 389 or CE 390, Ausbüttel (2020), 65.
[82] Soz. *HE* 7.25, Theod. *HE* 5.17, 18, August. *De civ. D.* 5.26, Ambr. *De ob. Theod*. 34, Paul. *VA* 24, Lippold (1973), 887, Leppin (2003), 153–161.
[83] August. *De civ. D.* 5.26, Paul. *VA* 24, Ruf. *HE* 11.18, Soz. 7.25.1–7, Theod. *HE* 5.17.1–18.25, Leppin (2003), 153–155.
[84] Ambr. *Ep*. 51.1, 5, 6
[85] *Ep. e.c.* 11.3–5. Cf. the ingenious analysis by McLynn (1994), 315–330.
[86] *Ep. e.c.* 11.7–17.
[87] *Ep. e.c.* 11.14 explicitly stated that Ambrosius had written this with his own hand so that only the emperor should read it.
[88] *Ep. e.c*. 11.14.

this act, in which Theodosius publicly expressed remorse for what had happened and was readmitted to communion after a period of penance.[89]

Although it is this image that has entered world history, it only partially reflects the actual realities, as Neil McLynn has already pointed out. He noted that although Ambrosius gained influence through his achievements, he never became the emperor's spiritual advisor, and his power declined with the emperor's departure the following year.[90] Some of Theodosius' later decisions were by no means in line with Ambrosius' wishes.[91] His return to Constantinople in CE 391 was accompanied by the further expansion of this centre of power, which became an effective stage for the splendid representation of Theodosius I's ambitions as a ruler.[92]

However, in the years that followed, the Western Empire was plunged into domestic turmoil, which was characterised by Valentinian II's lack of leadership skills. He was outdone in his residence in Trier by the powerful presence of the *magister militum* Arbogast, who determined personnel policy at will and had decisive influence over the army.[93] The conflict between the two apparently escalated when Valentinian II wanted to use barbarian incursions into Italy to free himself from Arbogast's grip.[94] However, since Italy, like Africa and Illyricum, was considered the domain of Theodosius, this would have required an official request from the Milanese elites in order to overcome Arbogast's resistance. After the refusal of the Praetorian Prefect Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, Ambrosius agreed to this mission, but then shied away from it.[95] Faced with a hopeless situation and his own powerlessness, the young emperor presumably sought to take his own life: in May CE 392, he was found dead in his palace in Vienne.[96]

Epistle 25, a surprisingly defensive letter from Ambrosius to Theodosius, suggests that this death was a blow to the bishop's authority and was perceived as such by Theodosius.

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[89] On the act of penance, cf. Ruf. *HE* 11.18, Paul. *VA* 24, Theod. *HE* 5.18.5, Joh. Mal. *Chron*. 13.42, Soz. *HE* V.25, Ambros. *De ob. Theod*. 34, Ausbüttel (2020), 67–68.

[90] On the circumstances, see McLynn (1994), 330–335, 353–356. Lippold (1973), 890–891 also rightly commented: 'It was only the weakness of Theodosius' successors that favored the legend formation about the events of 390, which was already very pronounced in Theodoret (op. cit.). It was not from Theodosius' Bupakt, but only from the legend about it that claims to the supremacy of the Church over secular power could be derived in later centuries'.

[91] Such as laws against the obstruction of the execution of capital punishment by clergy: *CTh* 11.36.1, 7, 31. Even in the case of the Antioch schism, in which Ambrosius had opposed the recognition of Bishop Flavian, he failed due to the emperor's resistance; Lippold (1973), 894–895.

[92] Cf. for example the inauguration of the Forum Tauri, *Chron. Pasch*. for 393 and 394, On the decoration of the city, see Them. *Or*. 18.222, Lippold (1973), 901–902.

[93] Zos. 4.53, Greg. Tur 2.9, Joh. Ant. *Fr*. 187, Bileta (2020), 92.

[94] Ambr. *De ob. Val*. 2, 22, Leppin (2003), 203–205.

[95] Ambr. *De ob. Val*. 23–25, 27, 79.

[96] Ruf. *HE* 11.31, Zos. 4.34.3–4 is implausible in his account of the murder. Croke (1976), 235–244, 237–239, McLynn (1994), 337.

Perhaps in response to Theodosius' accusations regarding his responsibility, Ambrosius extensively addresses his grief over the death of the young emperor and the silence that he maintained in response. It is through this silence, he asserts, that he derived comfort and solace.[97] However, the elegiac tone of his letter is remarkable, in several respects even revealing. Ambrosius indulges in expressions of grief over the death of Valentinian II, because the latter had not only undergone a process of improvement and conversion, but had also sought to strengthen his relationship with Ambrosius, whom he had previously rejected. In this way, he had attained the maturity of older years.[98]

However, the bishop also explicitly mentions that he did not comply with Valentinian's wish to come to Vienne to support him and baptise him; he even declares the wish to be unreasonable.[99] Although he does not disclose the reasons for this,[100] the consequences weighed heavily on him: He had previously often expressed his willingness to martyrdom and his role as a pillar of the state in numerous letters, treatises, and sermons, but now refused to play a politically supportive role. The fact that Ambrosius' lack of support for Valentinian was probably one of the reasons for the emperor's suicide proved to be a warning sign for the bishop of Milan, who had often expressed his interest in imperial influence and in acting as a political player, but had now failed in precisely this role in a personal crisis situation for Valentinian II.

This was clearly the subject of Theodosius' previous letter, which has not been preserved. This is indicated not only by Ambrosius' lengthy and seemingly static expressions of regret, horror and powerlessness, but also by his attempt to bring Theodosius on board as a participant. He praises not only Theodosius' effective support for Valentinian II, which had in fact been rather limited in previous years, but also his contribution to the young emperor's conversion to Nicene Christianity.[101] According to the bishop's message, both Theodosius and he had done their best for the young emperor, but the deeply mourned misfortune had been unavoidable.

However, Ambrosius' uncertainty about this interpretation is symbolized by his following statement, in which he leaves the assessment of the episcopal role to Theodosius.[102] In addition, he assures in an almost submissive manner that now that the imperial rescript has

[97] *Ep*. 25.1.
[98] *Ep*. 25.2–3.
[99] *Ep*. 25.3.
[100] McEvoy (2013), 96 suspects that this was due to his concern about angering Theodosius, as he would have been officially asking Valentinian II to cross the border into Italy, which Theodosius claimed as his sphere of influence.
[101] *Ep*. 25.3.
[102] *Ep*. 25.3.

arrived, he will hasten to arrange for the burial of the deceased, that he has already found a suitably representative coffin, and that he will also ensure that the precious clothes of the mourning imperial sisters, who are after all Theodosius' sisters-in-law, are not further damaged.[103] Finally, Ambrosius even describes himself as Theodosius' representative, a role he must uphold.[104] This misfortune had clearly damaged Ambrosius' image, especially in view of his previously very pronounced ambitions for empire-wide influence, and Theodosius may have addressed the dimensions of the suicide. In fact, Theodosius considered this loss of control in the prefecture he claimed over Africa, Italy and Illyricum alarming. As a consequence, he withdrew responsibility for Africa and Illyricum from the praetorian prefect Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, transferred it to Apodemius, and left Flavianus with only Italy.[105]

The situation in the Western Empire deteriorated in the following years, as the death of Valentinian II had left a political vacuum of legitimacy. Arbogast, effectively the most powerful man in the Western Empire, had asked Theodosius to send his elder son Honorius as the legitimate regent, but Theodosius did not comply with this request.[106] Arbogast then established the Roman senator Eugenius as Augustus and emperor of the Western Empire on 22 August CE 392, supported by numerous other former officials such as Nicomachus Flavianus.[107] All efforts to persuade Theodosius to recognise Eugenius failed. The emperor of the Eastern Empire finally proclaimed his son Honorius emperor of the Western Empire but initially adopted a wait-and-see attitude[108] and did not move into the Western Empire to suppress the usurpation until the summer of CE 394. On 5/6 September CE 394, the Battle of Frigidus, which Theodosius won, took place in what is now Slovenia. Arbogast and Nicomachus Flavianus committed suicide and Eugenius was killed by Theodosius' soldiers.[109]

For Ambrosius, the period leading up to the suppression of the usurpation was precarious. Arbogast and Eugenius had taken over the entire Western Empire, and Ambrosius had also openly accepted Eugenius. Eugenius had established himself in Milan since the beginning of CE 393 and, although a Christian himself, had been forced by Theodosius' lack of recognition to rely increasingly on pagan members of the Roman senatorial aristocracy and

[103] *Ep*. 25.4–5.
[104] *Ep*. 25.6.
[105] *PLRE* 1, Apodemius, 3, Slootjes (2021), 227.
[106] Ruf. *HE* 11.31, Zos. 4.55.4, Szidat (1979), 491.
[107] Eugenius, a former teacher of grammar and rhetoric, was *magister scrinii* at the court of Valentinian II before CE 392: Soz. 5.25.1, Zos. 4.54.1, Joh. Ant. *Fr*. 187.
[108] Szidat (1979), 487–508.
[109] The battle reports are strongly influenced by the pro-Christian bias of most sources: Soz. 7.24.3–7, Socr. 5.25.14–16, Claud. *III Cons. Hon*. 87–101, August. *De civ. D*. 5.26, Oros. 7.35.10–27, Ambr. *Expl. Psalm*. 36.25.2–4, Theod. 5.24.5–14, Ruf. *HE* 11.33, Zos. 4.58.1–9, Joh. Antioch. *Fr*. 187.

to make certain concessions to them.[110] Ambrosius cited Eugenius' religious position as the reason for his reserved attitude,[111] but in fact it was primarily a political problem: since it was impossible to predict whether Eugenius would ultimately prevail, a clear position on the part of the bishop could only be detrimental. Ambrosius therefore decided to leave Milan, staying away from his bishopric for a year and a half. He embarked on a theological and missionary journey through central and northern Italy, performing a miraculous healing and transferring martyr relics from Bologna to Florence.[112]

However, this decision also raised questions, because the bishop, who had so forcefully defended Milan's sacred sites against a reigning Roman emperor in the Basilica Controversy, abandoned them in view of a usurper. Theodosius probably addressed this circumstance as well as questions of Ambrosius' political loyalties in a letter to Ambrosius that has not been preserved, written after his victory at Frigidus. His two replies have been preserved — *Ep e.c.* 2 and 3.

Both letters are again written in a very defensive tone, completely contrary to Ambrosius' letters in the Basilica or Kallinikon affair. Right at the beginning, Ambrosius has to justify himself against Theodosius' accusation that he was not in Milan, nor was he at the decisive battle, but stood out through his absence.[113] The bishop's justification that he had instead provided spiritual support to Theodosius sounds unconvincing, even though he thanked both Theodosius for his victory and God for Theodosius' victory.[114]

Theodosius had even given Ambrosius the express order to hold a thanksgiving service for the victory in Milan, an instruction that Ambrosius promised to comply with immediately, and which, according to his own statement, he had already partially anticipated: 'Although I am unworthy and unequal to such a great task and to the celebration of such solemn prayers, I nevertheless write to you what I did: I brought the letter of your piety personally to the altar, I placed it on the altar myself, I held it in my hand myself when I offered the sacrifice, so that your faith might speak through my voice and the imperial letter itself might perform the task of the priestly sacrifice'.[115]

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[110] This concerned the elevation of pagan senators to high office and the restitution of stolen temple property. It is possible that sacrifices could once again be offered in Rome and that a temple was built in Ostia. It is uncertain whether the altar of Victoria in the Senate Curia was restored; Symm. *Ep*. 7.104, Ruf. *HE* 11.33, AE (1948), 127, Szidat (1979), 497–499.
[111] *Ep. e.c.* 2, Paulin. *VA* 27, 31, especially also in his *Ep*. 57 to Eugenius; Salzman (2010), 207.
[112] Paulin. *VA* 27–29, McLynn (1994), 347–353, Cameron (2011), 83, 99, Ausbüttel (2020), 62.
[113] *Ep. e.c.* 2.1–2. On the circumstances surrounding this letter, see Liebeschuetz (2005), 255–256, Salzman (2010), 207.
[114] *Ep. e.c.* 2.1, 3.
[115] *Ep. e.c.* 2.4–5.

At the end of the letter, Ambrosius once again pays tribute to the victorious emperor: 'The Lord is truly well disposed toward the Roman Empire, since he has chosen such a prince and father of princes, whose bravery and power have been placed at the head of a triumphant reign and are based on such great humility that he surpasses the emperor in bravery and the priest in humility'.[116] At the same time, as in *Ep*. 3, he asks for leniency or forgiveness for the guilty, especially for refugees from Eugenius' camp: 'For your victory will be judged according to ancient custom, according to the old miracles, as with St. Moses and St. Joshua, with Samuel and David, not on the basis of human esteem, but through the outpouring of heavenly grace. I demand a piety commensurate with this victory, through whose merit such a great victory has been achieved'.[117] Did he include himself in his reference to those seeking mercy?

Ultimately, Theodosius' success became a triumph for both the emperor and the bishop. At Theodosius' request, Ambrosius travelled ahead to Milan to prepare everything for the victory celebrations, which were celebrated in grand style. Theodosius sent his son Honorius to Milan and established Stilicho, his trusted general, as *magister militum* in the Western Empire and Honorius as Augustus of the West. Immediately afterwards, he died.[118] In his funeral oration, Ambrosius praised him as the most Christian prince, whom he loved as much as he loved God, and whose sons he wanted to serve.[119] Sources for the remaining two years until Ambrosius' death portray him as an influential man at court, but one who also experienced the limits of his power in the face of state interference during this phase.[120] At the same time, he ensured the publication of his letters, which, together with other testimonies, established Ambrosius' image of victory. However, as the examination of the letters cited here has shown, the relationship between Ambrosius and the emperors was not only marked by changing political tides, but above all by a manifest overestimation of his episcopal role, which he was apparently only willing to correct under the threat of political setbacks.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the political letters from Ambrosius' corpus proved revealing in several respects. On the one hand, it showed that Ambrosius sought to manifest himself as an influential and powerful champion of God's cause through a skilful selection of letters. However, it also

[116] Ep. *e.c.* 2.6.
[117] Ep. *e.c.* 3.4.
[118] Socr. *HE* 5.25, Ps.-Aur. Vict. *Epit*. 48.10.
[119] Ambr. *De obit. Theod*. 17–22, 33–35, McLynn (1994), 358–359.
[120] Paul. *VA* 34, McLynn (1994), 361–367.

became clear that his attempt to establish a position of power with sacred connotations that transcended the regional boundaries of a diocese in order to function throughout the Empire as a permanent spiritual advisor to the emperors of his time in his prophetic self-image failed. Ambrosius took advantage of the period following the end of the imperial church system under Constantius II and the growing self-assurance to attempt to reverse the balance of power: his self-image as a 'prophet and spiritual adviser' was intended to transfer and expand his previous position as *consularis* into the sacred realm.

Symptomatic of the prophetic self-image that pervaded almost all of the letters analysed was his self-stylisation as a spiritual advisor to the respective emperors, often associated with wishes or demands for changes in imperial behaviour. Although the tone and sharpness of the letters varied depending on the occasion and the bishop's scope for action, there are always references to biblical examples, to which Ambrosius considered himself a witness. He always decreed his actions to be justified, even necessary for the fulfilment of God's will.

He achieved considerable success in this regard. This included the organisation of the Council of Aquileia, his support for Valentinian II through the embassy to Maximus, the assertion of the basilica, his influence in the Kallinikon affair, and the face-saving restoration of the emperor's reputation after the massacre in Thessaloniki. Further interventions on behalf of petitioners can be added to this and general influences on the religious legislation of Theodosius I also seem plausible.

However, his ambitions were confronted with two problems. On the one hand, his letters, as in the case of Auxentius of Durostorum, reflect a situation of courtly rivalry in which Ambrosius had to assert himself. His influence depended largely on whether he was perceived by the respective emperors, if not as an *amicus,* then at least as a useful partner in dealing with complex problems. As the correspondence in the case of the basilica affair shows, an overly forceful approach not only led to civil war-like threats to urban order with corresponding accusations against the bishop; it also led to a break in contact on the part of the emperors who had been attacked, such as Valentinian II or Theodosius, who, in the case of the Kallinikon affair, rightly saw his regulatory policy requirements threatened by Ambrosius. However, Ambrosius' importance also depended on this proximity to the political centre of power. The emperor's and the court's absence for several years significantly reduced this.

A second problem which his letters clearly reveal was that his sacred, even charismatic ambitions for power, with their claim to influence throughout the Empire, were limited by his regional ties to the bishopric of Milan as a political partner to the fragile, fragmented power constellations of the Western Empire. His letters about the embassy to Maximus and about the

act of penitence for the massacre of Thessalonica indicate that he was aware of the political relevance of his role and was prepared to use it for the emperors and the presence of the court in Milan. However, through his strategy of escalation in the basilica affair and his unwillingness to travel to Vienne in CE 392 to negotiate a compromise between Arbogast and Valentinian II, Ambrosius also contributed to the further erosion of political power in the Western Empire. The result was a power vacuum which, at the latest with the usurpation of Eugenius and his alliance with pagan senators in Rome, threatened Ambrosius' freedom more than an Easter service of the Arian community in a Milanese basilica. The defensive tone of the last letters analysed left no doubt that Ambrosius was forced to redefine his role in an unstable time, which now defined it more as partnership than as prophetic dominance. In this respect, his letters, with their more personal form of communication, offer clues to negotiation processes that modify Ambrosius' heroic aura.

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‘To trust is good, to not trust is better (Or is it?)’ — Relationships of *Clientela* in Moments of Crisis: The Case of Cicero’s Exile[1]

Cesare Barba

This paper investigates the underlying set of principles governing the conduct and behaviour of members of the Roman Republican elite in moments of crisis. In particular, it will explore how relationships based on a reciprocal exchange, which followed the moral framework of *clientela*, could provide essential support during times of difficulty. It will be argued that it is especially in moments of crisis when these exchanges become visible to the historian. First, we will need to elaborate who could be referred to with the word *cliens*. Then, we will briefly introduce the concept of *clientela* before turning to the case-study of Cicero’s exile and recall. The goal will be to identify in his overcoming of the crisis patterns of behaviour of the actors involved. As will be shown below, the help that Cicero received in this moment of desperate need had far-reaching consequences for his future political outlook and actions.

First, it might be useful to briefly describe some aspects of the societal landscape of the Late Roman Republic, which are directly relevant to the topic of interpersonal relations. When exploring the world of the Roman Republic, one is quickly struck by how rudimentary, even primitive of a society it must have been. One illuminating example is the fact that the Roman Republic did not know any form of crime-prevention such as a police-force.[2] The legal system was only reactive and there was no institutional body with the task to enforce the law. An equally impactful feature of the Roman Republic’s primitive nature was the total lack of bureaucracy, that is an apparatus which is designed to distribute resources in society. It was not only the institutional structure which was absent in Republican Rome, but even that objective, rational and impersonal mindset characteristic of bureaucracy and which, according to Max Weber, forms the defining quality of modern states.[3] The Roman Republic not only lacked a

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[2] Flaig (2003), 14, cf. Nippel (1988).

[3] Weber (1922), 658–659.

bureaucracy, but many other impersonal institutions too, such as banks and insurance. Even the abstract idea of a 'state' was unknown to the Roman mind, which was only conscious of the *res publica*, literally 'the common thing'. This meant that various societal functions were performed through personal channels, through interpersonal relationships.[4] A Roman official, for example, distributed resources as personal favours.[5] Today, the public and personal sphere tend to be strictly separated in the administration, and any crossing of this boundary can potentially form a suspicious act of corruption. The ancient Roman official, in contrast, neither felt this pressure nor was he even aware of such a dichotomy between 'public' and 'private'. Not only was he expected to aid his friends when he had the capability to do so, it was his duty as well.[6] The letters through which governors distributed resources resemble rather private letters than official documents.[7] What this points towards is the omnipresence of interpersonal relationships in Roman society, especially in those contexts which our modern mind associates rather with institutions than persons. One might say that the state, or better, the *res publica* rested to an extraordinary degree on its society. In other words, the state itself was strongly personally shaped, which had repercussions on all sectors of daily life.[8] This applied also to exceptional moments, such as times of crisis. In these situations, interpersonal relationships were the first and last resort. In a crisis, it is imperative for anyone to activate all the resources which could assist in preventing or overcoming said crisis. Today, we can seek out aid from family and friends but also banks, insurances and the government. Considering the lack of a bureaucracy and, more generally, of any type of impersonal institutions for the provision of services in times of crisis, one was forced to rely on personal favours from various kinds of people in the Roman Republic. This contribution focuses on one category of such people, namely clients.

The term *cliens* does not itself exactly define a particular group of people or a distinct status. On the one hand, most references involving clients refer to unnamed persons of a clearly lower social background, who appear gravitating around individual members of the elite. On the other hand, the term *cliens* could seamlessly be applied to a member of the elite in the context of a court setting. The former consul Vatinius, for example, wrote to Cicero: 'Do you

[4] On the existence of bankers in ancient Rome and more generally on the primitivist vs. modernist debate on the ancient Roman economy see Rathbone (2001); for the Roman business-culture based on *fides* see Rathbone/Temin (2007). For studies on the importance of the ethics of friendship in financial intermediation, see Verboven (2002) and Rollinger (2009).
[5] Deniaux (1993).
[6] Saller (1982), 30.
[7] See Cotton (1986), in particular on the dispersion of justice.
[8] Meier (1980), 59.

keep up your practice of standing by old clients? If so, here comes one of them by the name of P. Vatinius (*P. Vatinius cliens*), who wants an advocate to take his case'.[9] Throughout the Late Republic, advocates in court are called *patroni* and those on whose behalf they speak are called *clientes*. The word *cliens* is rarely applied at a member of the elite outside of the courts, for the strong sense of hierarchy that the term implied. It would have been impolite to openly use this word when directly referring to someone who was of equal footing.[10] Independence and self-sufficiency were characteristics which distinguished and defined the ancient Roman gentlemen, and the use of the word *cliens* would have risked undermining this.[11] One could explicitly mention the cliental status of someone else's clients, but never their own.

In a letter to Atticus, written in 49 BCE, Cicero depicts the horror-scenario that would follow a victory of Caesar: 'Shall I be able to bear the sight of Gabinius speaking beside me in the Senate, and even called upon to speak before me? Can I stand the presence of your client Cloelius and *'s client Plaguleius (*clientem tuum Cloelium, †Cateli† Plaguleium*) and the rest?' (Cic. *Att*. 10.8.3 SB 199). The text is made problematic by a significant lacuna, and it is not known why these two men are called *clientes* of Atticus.[12] Still, they were senators and Cicero was able to call them *clientes*. We can contrast this with how Cicero speaks of Manius Curius, a businessman in Patrae, who in a letter refers to Cicero as *patronus* in the general sense of 'protector', as — from what we know — Cicero did not defend him in court.[13] When talking about Curius to third parties, Cicero, of course, never calls him explicitly a client but rather states that he is 'on the closest and most familiar terms' (*mihi familiaris*) with him, that they have exchanged many 'favours' (*officia*) and that 'there is a cordial and reciprocal affection' (*summus inter nos amor et mutuus*) between them (*Fam*. 13.50.2 SB 266). This clarifies that the word *cliens* was rather a relational term. One might suggest that the word merely denoted a particular position in which one happened to find himself in, namely one characterised by the moral obligation to assist a *patronus*, that is a benefactor, when called to do so.

Clientela is the term which describes the relationship between the two parties, between *patronus* and *cliens*.[14] This relationship might be characterised as the ancient Roman form of

[9] Cic. *Fam*. 5.9 SB 255 (trans. Loeb). While they had been enemies, Cicero ended up defending Vatinius on Pompey's behalf, see Cic. *Fam*. 1.9.19 SB 20 and below.
[10] Saller (1982), 9.
[11] Behind the ideals of independence and self-sufficiency felt by the Roman elite lies a greater discussion on the connection between morality and wealth, elaborated recently by Mouritsen (2023), especially p. 87.
[12] Both had been partisans of Clodius, see on the former who was also a scribe Cic. *Dom*. 25, 47, 50 and Shackleton Bailey (1981). On the latter, see Cic. *Dom*. 33.
[13] *Ergo, patrone mi, bene vale* (Cic. *Fam*. 7.29.2 SB 264).
[14] The literature on *clientela* is vast and there is not enough space to elaborate the topic fully in this context. Suffice it to say regarding the scholarly debate on *clientela*, that from Gelzer (1912) onwards, this concept remained the

patronage, that is a relationship based on a reciprocal exchange and traditionally defined by three distinct characteristics: it is personal, reciprocal and asymmetrical.[15] Relationships between *patroni* and *clientes* are attested in different forms throughout ancient Roman history. Supposedly, during the Early Republic, it was a formalised system which saw the respective obligations sanctioned by law. The only survival of this legal aspect of *clientela* is a law from the *Twelve Tables* of the fifth century BCE, where it is stated that 'if patron shall have defrauded client, he must be solemnly forfeited' (*si patronus clienti fraudem fecerit, sacer esto*, *Twelve Tables*, 8.21). This legal aspect was to disappear in the following centuries as *clientela* developed into an extra-legal relationship. Yet it remains significant for later periods that the origin of *clientela* was surrounded by a cloud of myth and religion. The Romans perceived this concept to be as old as the *urbs* itself.[16] It was none other than Romulus himself who was credited with having first instituted this practice.[17] *Clientela* then experienced a rapid growth during the period of Roman expansion, when it likely took over a function of integration of newcomers to Roman society.[18] The juridical aspect, as seen in the *Twelve Tables*, disappeared by the Late Republic. *Clientela* had by then become an extra-legal relationship. But the moral construct on which these early laws had been based survived in the Roman mind. Virgil in his *Aeneid* placed those who betrayed their clients in Tartarus, perfectly echoing the provision already found in the *Twelve Tables*.[19] Still in the second century CE, Gellius deemed it a controversial subject whether one owed more allegiance to a client or to family members and he devoted to it a section in his *Noctes Atticae*.[20] In the Late Republic we observe a highly unformalised system, which collects various types of relationships all under the same term, *clientela*: from patron and client, advocate and defendant in court, to patronage over whole cities and communities and, later on, artistic patronage.

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standard explanation of the power of the Roman nobility. It was first Brunt (1988) who noted a significant lack of evidence for the importance attributed to *clientela*, see also Millar (1998). Ever since the so-called debate on the 'Political Culture of the Roman Republic' which Millar's work catalysed, the topic has largely disappeared from scholarly focus. Nippel (2000–2002), 137 observes that the explanatory power of *clientela* for the Roman Republic is widely doubted, while it counts as an accepted cornerstone of the society of the Principate.

[15] Gellner/Waterbury (1977).

[16] When referring to practices traditionally connected to *clientela* in the *Pro Murena*, Cicero adds the rhetorical question: 'Am I the man to ask what is the need of something that we have always had?', see Cic. *Mur*. 69–71.

[17] Dionysius of Halicarnassus' description best renders the mythical aura of early *clientela*, see Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 2.9–11.

[18] One might add here that these ties are probably best covered by the concept of *hospitium,* even though the dividing line is rather a blurred one; for an attempt at constructing a chronology of the development of *clientela* through Republican history, see Meier (1980), 24–33.

[19] Verg. *Aen*. 6.609.

[20] Gell. *NA*, 5.13.

In addition, we have seen how in the Late Republic the term *cliens* could also be applied to members of the elite. These make out a somewhat particular type, because the participants were of equal rank. Even though the Roman elite was hierarchically structured, such as the rest of society, the aristocracy tended to maintain an impression of equality among its members. Thus, we find the dynamics of *clientela* lurking behind relationships of *amicitia* among seemingly equals, such as the ones in Cicero's letters. There was still an asymmetry between the partners, but it was less pronounced because it was based on the ability, or lack thereof, to access a certain resource. This situation could and did often change over time. Moreover, as mentioned above, it was simply not good taste to use the language of *clientela*, which was openly hierarchical, to persons of similar standing. Even though the words *patronus* and *cliens* never occur, we can still detect the moral template and language of *clientela*: of someone who grants a favour (*beneficium*) with magnanimity and someone who receives it, acknowledging the moral duty (*officium*) to return the favour with gratefulness (*gratia*). The biggest difference is that these relationships are described in the sources as exchanges between friends. This makes it very difficult for the historian to detect these ties, since they must look for dynamics of a relationship which the actors themselves are trying to hide, due to rules of politeness. Moreover, when things run smoothly and the actors trust each other, there is no real reason why these ties would be made explicit.

Crucially, this is different in moments of crisis. We must take into consideration that in the Late Republic these relationships were not enforceable by law but were, instead, extra-legal. Thus, these ties of obligation relied to a large degree on trust (*fides*) between the two partners. The concept of *fides* (which can denote 'trust', 'trustworthiness', 'faith' and even 'credit') is far too extensive to receive sufficient treatment in this context.[21] Some consideration of it is necessary, however, for it showcases the mechanism which upheld these ties.

From a sociological perspective, the primary function of trust is to reduce the social complexity confronting actors in a transaction. By doing so, it lowers so-called transaction costs — that is, the resources, time and effort that would otherwise be required for monitoring and control.[22] More importantly, trust as a sociological concept becomes explicit during

[21] On *fides* as a religious concept see Hölkeskamp (2000) and Morgan (2013); for *fides* in political discourse see Hellegouarc'h (1963); for *fides* as the base of Roman contracts (*pacta*) see Michel (1962), 552.
[22] The basis to this sociological layer of the discussion is the work of Nicklas Luhmann, in particular Luhmann (2014).

crises.[23] It is exactly in these moments, when doubt clouds the mind of the actors, that the dynamics of these relationships are most visibly encountered.

Additionally, in ancient Rome, it was particularly important in moments of crisis to ascertain how strong one's moral claim over other people's support was. It was in these moments when things became concrete, when trust (*fides*) could either materialise or vanish, to then be replaced by mistrust and enmity. One needed to consider these factors in order to make an informed decision about one's future actions. Therefore, moments of crisis can bear much useful information to the historian. For it is in these moments when dynamics that had been lying dormant in silence suddenly need to be made explicit: links activated, positions confirmed, friendships rekindled. As such, we must be aware of the particular sensitivity of these moments which can, still, shed much light over the ways in which members of the Roman elite navigated these particular relationships based on reciprocal exchanges.

Cicero's exile offers itself as a well-documented case-study for a crisis which we can follow in detail thanks to his correspondence.[24] By following the matter in his private letters, we are able to better grasp how these exchanges were negotiated and by what societal factors they were influenced. We have to keep in mind that the nature of the evidence — the extant and edited letters — gives us only a minor glimpse into a much wider picture which would have been also shaped by further written communication such as pamphlets, oral communication, rumours, gossip and public opinion. The dynamics which we can detect in the letters, when they rise to the surface in moments of crisis, provide us, nevertheless, with valuable insights into something which, as this paper argues, heavily shaped the decision-making process and political behaviour of men like Cicero. We will first look at the support that Cicero received during the crisis: the very practical things to ensure his safety. After that, we will analyse the political support that he received to overcome the crisis, to organise his recall to Rome. This case gives us a shift of perspective, because Cicero incurred obligations which, potentially to the surprise of the modern reader, led him to practically become a client himself.

To understand what this crisis meant for Cicero, we must remember what he had achieved and where he had come from. From the small mountain city of Arpinum he made his way to being elected consul of Rome, at the minimum required age and voted unanimously by all tribes. He did this without the aid of a noble family or military achievements, thus taking an

[23] See Timmer (2017) for an elaborate analysis of the role of trust (*fides*) in the society of the Roman Republic; especially relevant to this point is p. 23.
[24] For general surveys over this period of Cicero's life see Gelzer (2014), 135–139 and Mitchell (1991), 98–138.

unprecedented path to glory. When facing prosecution for having executed Roman citizens without trial during the Catilinarian conspiracy, Cicero choose to go into voluntarily exile.[25] His archnemesis, Clodius, quickly passed two laws, one that forbid to grant him water and fire, that is shelter and food, and one that forced him to stay at least 400 miles away from Rome.[26] Through his exile Cicero had lost everything that he had built. His property was confiscated. The new villa that Cicero had just recently bought himself on the Palatine, a symbol of his standing among Rome's highest circles, was destroyed by Clodius who even dedicated a temple to *Libertas* on the site. Cicero had to leave his family and closest friends behind. He did not know when he would be able to see them again. Moreover, Cicero was risking his life in Greece, which was the typical location chosen by Roman senators for exile. The Catilinarian senators that had been sent into exile by Cicero himself in the aftermath of the conspiracy were staying in Greece as well. This sets the context to Cicero's desperate letters from exile, where he even contemplated suicide.[27]

In such a situation, Cicero was required to take any help that he could get, by both recurring to old obligations of gratitude and by incurring new ones. Of course, this was not the only form of aid he could rely on in this moment of difficulty. Cicero received financial assistance from his family by his brother Quintus, who provided him funds from his command. In addition, his best friend Atticus gave Cicero a loan, which, from what we can tell, he never had to pay back. It is surely wrong to assume that all relationships described as friendships (*amicitia*) were necessarily imbued with a power-dynamic of *clientela*. Cicero's exile is the ultimate proof for the existence of 'real' or genuinely altruistic friendships from figures such as Atticus, who was basically family to Cicero. Still, in the past as well as today, even the most ardent friendships require a certain degree of reciprocity for them to work. Trust can only be present if there are no doubts that the other party possesses at least the disposition to reciprocate. It is here, one could argue, that the moral code of *clientela* overlaps with that of *amicitia*. Cicero himself writes that the ideal friendship ought to be based on virtue and not the hope for future rewards. Still, he concedes that 'love is further strengthened by the receiving of a kindly service' (*beneficio accepto*) (Cic. *De amic*. 29). In the end, 'this mutual interchange is really inseparable from friendship' (*proprium amicitiae*) (Cic. *De amic*. 26). In the following section, we will focus our enquiry on those relationships which involved a reciprocal exchange.

[25] Therefore, he was actually never properly condemned, voluntary exile rather exhibited the Roman elite's ideal of *concordia*, see Kelly (2006), 9.
[26] Cic. *Att*. 3.4 SB 49.
[27] Cic. *Att*. 3.7.1–2 SB 52, cf. Cic. *Q.fr*. 1.3.1–2 SB 3.

It must be emphasised, however, that these formed only one of many alternative routes through which Cicero could gain the support he required during the crisis of his exile.

At the beginning of the crisis, Cicero was even unsure as to where to live out his exile. First, he planned to escape to Sicily. He had already served as governor there and had acted as advocate (*patronus*) on behalf of the inhabitants of the island in their prosecution of Verres. This would have been the safest and most logical choice, had not the local governor, a good friend of Cicero, advised him to not travel to Sicily: it was too close to Italy and, therefore, not safe. Cicero was now at Vibo, in modern day Calabria, where he enjoyed the hospitality of Sicca, his former *prefectum fabrum*.[28] He was anxiously awaiting letters from his best friend Atticus in the hope that he would be able to travel with him. Not being able to wait too long in unsafe territory, Cicero decided to head for Brundisium in order to then take ship to Greece. On his land journey through Italy, he received safe passage from all *municipia* from Vibo to Brundisium.[29] There, he spent the night in the house of a Laenius Flaccus, a businessman with whom he had ties and who ordered him a ship to Greece. Figures of the financial elite such as Flaccus would have provided for a Roman politician an important fall-back in moments of crisis. We find various individuals whose financial interests Cicero would further through recommendations, and on whom he could rely in moments of difficulty.[30] They provided a sort of insurance policy for the Roman elite-member. Cicero made sail for Dyrrhachium, where he landed on the 23rd of May 58 BCE. Receiving news of the danger that awaited him in Greece — the remaining Catilinarians in exile — he quickly joined Plancius, the governor of Macedonia at the time, and remained in Thessalonica for most of his exile under his protection.

As soon as he landed in Greece, Cicero also started to organise his recall. In Rome he had two figures who continuously fought out his fight against Clodius on the streets of Rome, Sestius and Milo, both tribunes for the year 57 BCE. Even though Cicero was now in exile, he was still a man of consular rank, with important connections to the *equites*, the financial elite, as evidenced above. Most importantly, however, he was the leading advocate of his day, which could come in handy. Cicero's oratorical skills provided a strong incentive for other politicians to ingrate themselves with him. In fact, all three Roman senators mentioned above, Plancius,

[28] Cic. *Att*. 3.2 SB 48; cf. ibid. 3.4 SB 49 and Plut. *Cic*. 32. In 44 BCE, Cicero was again to take refuge at Sicca's; see Cic. *Att*. 16.6.1 SB 414.
[29] Cic. *Planc.* 97.
[30] Other such figures could include Cn. Pupius, agent of the Bithynian company of *publicani*, L. Castronius Paetus, a very rich member of the municipality of Luca, the *equites* Cn. Otacilius Naso and L. Egnatius with business interests in Sicily and Asia respectively, and many more. We see Cicero advancing their interests in various letters of recommendations, respectively Cic. *Fam*. 13.9 SB 139. 13.13 SB 280, 13.33 SB 304, 13.45 SB 271. For further examples, consult Deniaux (1993).

Sestius and Milo were later defended by him.[31] This can surely be seen as done out of the obligation of gratitude that Cicero incurred during his exile, the pay-off for their various forms of assistance.[32] Cicero's recall was, however, by no means an easy endeavour. He required support from more powerful players. With the help of Atticus, Cicero secured himself the support of the consul of 57 BCE, Lentulus Spinther, member of a strand of one of the most noble families of Republican Rome. Clodius was still a considerable obstacle to surmount, as he still exerted influence through his violent methods. On the first day of Spinther's consulship, the matter was immediately raised at the first Senate meeting. The other consul, Metellus Nepos, a former enemy of Cicero, had been persuaded by Spinther and Atticus to not oppose the business.[33] But when the proposal stood before the *concilium plebis*, in January 57 BCE, Clodius, assisted by his brother Appius, stormed the forum with slaves and gladiators. During the riots, Cicero's brother Quintus was pushed down the *rostra* and barely escaped for his life.[34] Once the news of this event reached Cicero, he considered himself 'utterly finished', as he wrote to Atticus from Dyrrachium (Cic. *Att*. 3.27 SB 72). This letter is the last one that survives from Cicero's exile. The fights on the streets continued during the following months, up to the point when Pompey had had enough of Clodius and decided to support Cicero's recall.[35] Towards the end of May, the senate, on Spinther's initiative, called all citizens to appear to vote on the matter of Cicero's recall.[36] The issue was brought up again at the beginning of July and it was supported by Pompey as well. All senators, except for Clodius, spoke in favour of it.[37] On the 4th of August 57 BCE, the final bill was passed by the centuriate assembly under protection of Milo's gangs.[38] Cicero landed in Brundisium on the 5th of August, thus ending his 17 months of exile on the same day of his daughter's birthday. One month later, he entered Rome, was greeted by jubilant crowds, and he ascended the Capitolium to thank the gods.[39]

Not only the gods, however, were to be the recipients of Cicero's gratitude**.** For a different form of thanksgiving was just starting. This was rendered public at the two speeches,

[31] These speeches have come down to us as the *Pro Plancio*, the *Pro Sestio* and the *Pro Milone*. In each speech Cicero acknowledges the debt that he owed these men for their assistance and presents his defence as an *officium*, see Cic. *Plan*. 1, Cic. *Sest*. 4 and Cic. *Mil*. 100.
[32] See for example Cic. *Q.fr*. 2.4.1 SB 8 for Sestius' trial: 'Well, you may rest assured that my conduct in that trial has made me pass for a model of gratitude' (*omnium gratissimi iudicaremur*).
[33] Cic. *Prov. cons*. 22, cf. Cic. *Att*. 3.22.2–3 SB 67; Metellus Nepos had opposed Cicero as tribune in 62 BCE by also preventing him to hold his final speech as consul, see Plut. *Cic*. 23.1–2.
[34] Cic. *Sest*. 76–78, cf. Cic. *Att*. 4.3.2 SB 75.
[35] Plut. *Pomp*. 49.4.
[36] Cic. *Red. sen*. 24.
[37] Ibid. 26–27.
[38] Ibid. 28, Dio Cass. 39.8.3.
[39] Cic. *Sest.* 131.

one addressed to the senate and one to the people, that Cicero gave on the 5th of September — respectively the *Post reditum in senatu* and *Post reditum ad Quirites*. He thanked the senate, the whole of the Roman people, the magistrates but, in particular, his deepest gratitude went to Spinther and to Pompey.[40] Milo and Sestius are also mentioned separately, but it is always emphasised how Spinther led the business and how it could not have been completed successfully without Pompey.[41] How exactly did Cicero describe his obligation towards these two men? And can we detect an impact on the dynamics of their relationships after the period of Cicero's personal crisis?

As Cicero asserted publicly in the two thanksgiving speeches, to these men he owed a debt that was virtually unrepayable.[42] To Pompey he owed a 'debt such as it is scarce lawful for one human being to owe to another' (Cic. *Red. pop*. 17). Cicero specified regarding the obligation he owed Spinther that not even the 'the united efforts of all my dear ones' (*omnes mei gratiam*) could reciprocate what he had done for him (Cic. *Red. sen*. 24). One century later, the Younger Seneca was to write that 'it is disgraceful to be outdone in benefits, it is not right to accept a benefit from most powerful men whose kindness you are unable to return' (Sen. *De ben*. 5.2). Seneca's statement is to be understood as a warning against the exact situation in which Cicero found himself in. We could understand Cicero's proclaimed inability to recounter these *beneficia* as mere rhetorical exaggerations, designed to flatter Pompey and Spinther. On the other hand, one might suggest that between these lines there lies a quite important message: Cicero's public acknowledgement of the particular position towards these men, a redefinition of their relationship. It is important to stress the public nature inherent in the occasion of this acknowledgement, namely the speeches to the senate and the people of Rome. The public expression of this debt provided an essential form of protection.[43] If one failed to uphold the respective obligations, one risked the social punishment of shame: the reputation of an ingrate. We will be able to see below how impactful this mechanism could be in a traditional honour society, such as that of ancient Rome.

When looking at the way in which Cicero describes his obligation to Pompey and Spinther, it is particularly noteworthy that Cicero uses the word *pietas* (literally 'sense of duty') on several occasions. Right at the beginning of the first preserved letter to Spinther, written in

[40] For Pompey see Cic. *Red. pop.* 16–17 and Cic. *Red. sen*. 5; for Lentulus see Cic. *Red. sen*. 8 and Cic. *Red. pop*. 11–12.
[41] For Milo and Sestius see Cic. *Red. pop*. 15 and Cic. *Sest*. 144.
[42] Cic. *Red. sen*. 24.
[43] On a smaller scale, this is comparable to the basic form of a Roman contract which required only a verbal agreement in front of a witness, see Rathbone/Temin (2007), 381 and Verboven (2002), 40. For a sociological analysis of the role of trust at the core of contractual law see Luhmann (2014), 41–43.

January 56 BCE, Cicero makes an important distinction when describing his obligation to him. When asserting that his efforts in reciprocation would never be sufficient, Cicero specifies that these are performed less out the sense of duty arising from *officium* — this being the word we would most expect here — but rather from a sense of *pietas*.[44] Around one year later, in February 55 BCE, Cicero writes to Spinther that his alignment with Pompey had been dictated by *pietas utilitasque*, that is 'sense of duty and expediency'.[45] In a famously long letter to Spinther, written in December 54 BCE, where Cicero painstakingly justifies his political stand, *pietas* towards Spinther is mentioned multiple times (Cic. *Fam*. 1.9 SB 20). Cicero refers to a preceding letter of Spinther in which he could perceive with delight how his benefactor recognised his *pietas*.[46] He also stresses how *benevolentia* would not be enough to cover the size of his debt towards Spinther, even *pietas*, 'this solemn, sacred word' (*gravissimum et sanctissimum nomen*), seems not sufficiently heavy as a term (*levius*).[47] In Cicero's eyes, Spinther should not even be grateful for Cicero's cooperation, for he was merely doing 'what it would be rank villainy (*nefario scelere*) to leave undone'.[48] Later on, in the same letter, we learn that Cicero had even written a three-book poem, entitled *De temporibus meis*, which served as a testament for eternity to Spinther's support and to Cicero's *pietas*.[49]

The term *pietas* closely resembles concepts such as that *officium*. Both denote a sense of moral duty to reciprocate what one has been given, and they both imply, to a different degree, a sense of loyalty and trust. The difference between them lies rather in the intensity of the connection and, thus, in the strength of the moral obligation. Gratefulness towards one's parents, to the fatherland, and even to the gods, constituted a stronger bond than to friends or clients. Most importantly, *pietas* implies a clear hierarchical structure, for it is always performed from the bottom to the top, whether towards the gods, parents, the fatherland, or, as in the case of Cicero, a benefactor during a moment of crisis.[50] By the use of this term, Cicero

[44] *Ego omni officio ac potius pietate erga te ceteris satis facio omnibus, mihi ipse numquam satis facio* (Cic. *Fam*. 1.1.1 SB 12): 'In all that is due to a friend, or rather a benefactor, my efforts on your behalf seem adequate to everyone except myself; for me they are never enough'.
[45] *Ut debeo et ut tute mihi praecepisti et ut me pietas utilitasque cogit* (Cic. *Fam*. 1.8.2 SB 19): 'my prescribed course, the course which you advised and which gratitude and expediency dictate'.
[46] *Periucundae mihi fuerunt litterae tuae, quibus intellexi te perspicere meam in te pietatem* (Cic. *Fam*. 1.9.1 SB 20): 'I am very glad to have your letter, which shows that you appreciate my *pietas* towards you'.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.; Cicero was helping Spinther in securing a potentially lucrative command in Egypt. He could not provide effective aid for Pompey had set his eyes on this command, too. Cicero found himself dealing with conflicting obligations towards his two chief benefactors.
[49] *scripsi etiam versibus tris libros De temporibus meis* […] *sunt enim testes et erunt sempiterni meritorum erga me tuorum meaeque pietatis* (Cic. *Fam*. 1.9.23 SB 20): 'I have also written a poem in three books *On My Vicissitudes* […] for it is, and will be to all eternity, evidence of your services and of my gratitude'. In the end, Cicero decided not to publish it because the list of his benefactors would have had no end to it.
[50] Mouritsen (2014), 52.

was openly acknowledging his inferior position or, put differently, his status as a client of both Pompey and Spinther. If one accepted favours that one could not repay, such as the life-saving *beneficia* in moments of crisis, this would tie the receiver in a permanent, submissive status to the giver. Publius Syrus put it more dramatically: 'To accept a favour (*beneficium*) means to sell one's freedom' (Publ. Syrus, 61). In this regard, Cicero is a perfect example. He might not have realised the severity of the situation immediately after his return, but the following years were to prove that he had in tragic fashion lost his independence, a crucial characteristic around which the identity of the Roman elite was constructed, in a desperate attempt at saving it.[51]

There are several events following Cicero's recall from exile which visualise the weight of the obligations that he incurred. For even though he would have never been able to fully reciprocate this favour, neither Spinther nor Pompey nor his other supporters would have made this effort out of pure altruistic benevolence. We have already mentioned that Cicero was to defend some of the main architects of his recall (Sestius, Milo, and Plancius).[52] He also had to defend their friends and their friends' interests, which could lead him into embarrassing inconsistencies. For example, Pompey wanted Cicero to reconcile (*reditu in gratiam*) with Gabinius, one of the men who had been primarily responsible for Cicero's exile as consul in 59 BCE. Cicero felt that this would never happen until he had but 'a scrap of personal independence' (*ullam partem libertatis*) left in him (Cic. *Q.fr*. 3.1.15–16 SB 21). When in 54 BCE Gabinius was facing prosecution, it was even suggested that Cicero should defend him which he felt to be an abominable idea.[53] Just recently, during a heated senatorial debate, Gabinius had attacked Cicero by calling him an exile.[54] Nevertheless, Cicero ended up having to defend Gabinius in 54 BCE which — as one can easily deduce — must have been a source of great shame for him. At least, some saw his half-hearted defence as one of the reasons why Gabinius was ultimately convicted on a charge of extortion.

Another such inconsistency dictated by the obligations which Cicero had incurred to overcome the crisis of his exile is reported about in a long letter written to Spinther (*Fam*. 1.9 SB 20). The latter was demanding an explanation of why Cicero had defended Vatinius towards the end of August 54 BCE, Vatinius being the tribune who had cooperated with Clodius to bring about Cicero's exile.[55] This must have moved Spinther, one of the main supporters of Cicero's

[51] On the ideal of independence and self-sufficiency as a core characteristic of the Roman elite-member see Mourtisen (2023).
[52] Cicero also supported Milo's run at the consulship, see Cic. *Q.fr.* 3.7.4 SB 27, cf. Cic. *Fam*. 2.6 SB 50.
[53] Cic. *Q.fr.* 3.5.5 SB 25.
[54] Cic. *Q.fr.* 3.2.2 SB 22.
[55] Cic, *Fam.* 1.9.4 SB 20, Cic. *Q.fr.* 2.16.3 SB 20. Pompey had forced a reconciliation with Appius, see Cic. *Fam.* 2.13.2 SB 93.

recall, to the point of demanding an explanation. By doing this, Spinther somehow overrides the relationship of *amicitia* behind which lay the real dynamic between the two. As his benefactor in a time of crisis, he was entitled to an explanation. By mentioning Cicero's *pietas*, one might suggest, Spinther's letter seems almost to intend to remind Cicero of his obligation.

Cicero himself appears to be more than aware of the inconsistency of his actions, which is why he felt the need to get his record clean in front of Spinther and, most likely, of the public as well, in an exceptionally long letter.[56] In this letter, Cicero claimed that he sought reconciliation with Vatinius at Pompey's request and that he defended him on Caesar's urging.[57] In addition, Cicero tells Spinther about a meeting between Pompey and Cicero's brother Quintus, who at the time was a legate under Pompey in Sardinia.[58] Pompey had just come from the conference at Luca where he had become aware of Caesar's irritation at Cicero speaking against his interests in the senate.[59] Once back in Sardinia, he told Quintus about the matter. Pompey urged him to speak with his brother Marcus and to remind him to not oppose Caesar. It is here that we learn that Quintus had been vouching for Cicero's political conduct. Pompey reminded Quintus of his past services towards his brother, Marcus (*sua merita commemoravit*), of the fact that Quintus had pledged himself for his brother's conduct (*sibi is de me recepisset in memoriam redegit*) and that Quintus' efforts to bring back his brother had been possible only through Caesar's approval. Quintus was to recommend to Cicero (*commendaret*) Caesar's interests and to tell him to at least not attack Caesar's legislation (Cic. *Fam*. 1.19.9 SB 20). This unleashed a conflict of obligations in Cicero's mind, one that he described to Spinther as between, on the one hand, his duty towards his country and, on the other, towards his benefactors (*officium meum memoremque in bene meritos animum*) and his brother's word (*fidemque fratris mei*).[60] One can also note the presence of various terms that have traditionally been taken to signal a patronal relationship, such as *merita*, *commendaret* and *officium*.[61]

It seems that clear terms had been stipulated at the negotiation which led to Cicero's recall and Pompey was there reinstating them before Quintus. To put it differently, he was bringing Cicero back in line. For Cicero this was a cold reminder of his position towards Pompey, namely that of a client. Later in his life, he would describe this as a humiliating and

[56] The letter is so well-prepared that an intended wider circulation seems likely.
[57] Cic. *Fam*. 1.9.19 SB 20.
[58] In Sardinia, where Quintus was on a commission under Pompey's grain command, originally offered to Cicero, see Cic. *Att*. 4.1.7 SB 73 and ibid. 4.2.6 SB 74.
[59] This referred to Cicero presenting himself as independent from Caesar.
[60] Cic. *Fam.* 1.19.10 SB 20; at the beginning of the Civil War, Cicero was to go through a similar dilemma, see Brunt (1986).
[61] Saller (1982), 126.

deeply degrading moment: 'when I lay at his feet [Pompey] would not so much as ask me to rise, whose plea it was that he could do nothing against the other's [Caesar's] wishes' (Cic. *Att*. 10.4.4 SB 195). This would have long-lasting repercussions as this debt was unrepayable, that is permanent. Cicero had to stick to Pompey's line. Later when the Civil war between Pompey and Caesar broke out, after a long period of painstaking deliberation, Cicero decided to follow Pompey to Greece and to leave his country once again behind 'so that nobody shall think me ungrateful towards a man who brought me out of the troubles into which he himself had plunged me' (Cic. *Att*. 9.19.2 SB 189).[62] So damning was the social stigma of ingratitude. In a theoretical work on the topic, Cicero would later write: 'For generosity is of two kinds: doing a kindness and requiting one. Whether we do the kindness or not is optional; but to fail to requite one is not allowable to a good man' (*viro bono non licet*) (Cic. *Off*. 2.47–49). In a certain sense, one might say that Cicero acted according to the principles which he was to put to paper later in his life. One might argue, however, that Cicero's decision also demonstrates how ingratitude ran completely against the ideals which constituted the Roman elite. Later on, Seneca too was to hold that the reputation of being an *ingratus* was worse than that of being a client.[63]

Cicero's obligation to Pompey is probably the most far-reaching obligation which he incurred to confront the crisis of his exile. We see it playing out its effects almost a decade after Cicero's return. The ties we have listed are not all equal in how they came about or in what they entailed. They are at different points of the spectrum, which runs from clear and permanent submission to daily favours that one dispenses without too much thought behind them or without the conscious deliberation of a repay. Moreover, as we have seen above, this obligation is quite unique as clear terms seem to have been set. Most of the time, however, this would have not been the case. Obligations, as argued above, would have been rather left unexplicit due to the prescribed social conduct of the Roman elite. We must also consider that these types of exchanges were not performed on a strict *quid–pro–quo* basis.[64]

Rather, the focus laid on the relationship instilled by the exchange.[65] Since matters were left unexplicit, the system of *clientela* was also prone to misunderstandings and ambiguities.

[62] This is one of those rare moments where Cicero sees Pompey as responsible for his exile as well. In most other occasions, it almost seems that he could never really come to terms with the idea that Pompey stood behind his crisis.
[63] 'While they fear the reputation of being a dependent, they incur the more painful one of being an ingrate' (*dum opinionem clientium timent, graviorem subeunt ingratorum,* Sen. *De ben*. 2.23.2–3).
[64] Sen. *De ben*. 3.9.1–3.
[65] See Dixon (1993), 451–542 on the role of gifts and loans 'in forming and expressing relationships of reciprocal and continuing obligation'.

Again, this aspect can be traced in the example of Cicero's exile, in particular when looking at how it had come about in the first place. In fact, it is striking how much Cicero was caught off-guard by this crisis. He felt betrayed by those who, so he thought, were obligated to aid him — these include senators like Pompey or Hortensius who did not do anything to oppose Clodius. In a letter to Quintus, Cicero describes how much he had, mistakenly, relied on the support of other senators: 'My only fault lay in trusting men in whom I thought it would be an abomination (*nefas*) to deceive me or even imagined that it was not in their interest to do so' (Cic. *Q.fr*. 1.4.1 SB 4). Cicero thought it unconceivable that these men would let him down, because of the social stigma that he expected would fall upon them. He felt that the crushing of the Catilinarian revolt entitled him to their gratitude.

Even though the importance of Cicero's consular year was self-explanatory to him, there were many people who critiqued the execution of the Catilinarians. A *homo novus*, a newcomer to the elite, who put to death members of some of the most noble families of the Roman elite, such as Lentulus Sura, a member of the same ancient strand as Lentulus Spinther, was controversial, to say the least.[66] This explains why, after his consulship in 63 BCE, Cicero used every occasion to defend the principles of his actions as consul in order to legitimise the debt that the *res publica* owed him. When Cicero defended his consular colleague, Antonius Hybrida, a notorious plunderer of provinces, Cicero needed to remind everyone of the gratitude that he and Hybrida were entitled to. Nothing survives from Cicero's defence-speech (most likely because he lost the case) but we can gather from other texts what seems likely to have been part of his argument, in particular from the *Pro Caelio*. When Cicero recounts Caelius' life to the jury, he comes to speak of the time when the latter had acted as lead prosecutor at the trial of Hybrida in 59 BCE. Regarding this event, Cicero writes that Caelius 'accused Gaius Antonius, my colleague, that unfortunate man, to whom the recollection of a signal service rendered to the State (*in rem publicam beneficia memoria*) was of no avail, while the suspicion of an intended crime did him great harm' (Cic. *Cael*. 74). Cicero needed to make sure that Hybrida's — and, by extension, his own — actions during 63 BCE would count as favours (*beneficia*) towards the *res publica*. In the end, Hybrida was convicted and exiled. As we have seen, Cicero too would not be able to find any gratitude for his saving of the Republic when he was in desperate need of support, namely when he was facing exile himself. His disappointment demonstrates how the system was characterised by internal contradictions and ambiguities.

[66] Much of the *Pro Sulla*, held at the beginning of 62 BCE, is concerned with Cicero rejecting the accusations of tyranny (see Cic. *Sul*. 21–35).

When studying the phenomenon of *clientela* in the Late Republic, one must be warned that the system would be affected by a great deal of imbalances. We have seen how important the impression of equality among the elite was for the system. Relationships which were originally asymmetrical were expressed and perceived in a context of equality around the concept of *amicitia*. The great generals of the Late Republic formed a destabilising factor in the system, since their accumulation of resources posed the risk of making this impression of equality unrealistic. To put it differently, they overstretched the boundaries of the system. Still, we were also able to see how Cicero could rely on various ties of *clientela* during the crisis of his exile. Clients, whether their status was made explicit or whether, as in most cases, the inequality would be veiled behind the curtains of *amicitia*, could provide decisive aid. It is most often in situations of crisis that these ties become visible in our sources. By bearing their implications in mind, we can gain valuable insights into those factors which heavily shaped the Roman elite's decision-making. At the same time, moments of crisis also gave birth to new ties of this nature. We have seen how Cicero was forced to enter ties of *clientela* as a client in order to overcome the crisis. Moments of this kind also offered the possibility to renegotiate relationships. To ingrate oneself with someone in need would bind them to gratitude. Therefore, these acts were seen as investments. As such, they are also a moment of opportunity for bystanders who would readily provide their support with a calculated expectation of future repay. This clarifies the position of these ties in Roman Republican society and the way in which they could impact interpersonal relationships.

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Social-Cultural Crisis in New Comedy: Comic Characters' Social Status and Behaviours about Wealth and Human Relationships

Evgenia Kompocholi

INTRODUCTION[1]

Several studies have been produced on the analysis of New Comedy plays, its comic themes and the representation of the characters.[2] Attention has been given to the individual, the family and its relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, neighbours and friends. Furthermore, internal and contradictory socio-cultural situations drive the comic plots and provide information about Greek and Roman traditional reflections on human relations.[3] In parallel with this, Menander and Plautus have structured their comedies around the portrayals of their characters and the romantic interest between two young lovers who differ socially. The purpose of this paper is to sketch these socio-cultural examples that to my knowledge have previously not been discussed. New Comedy plays provide much information about status, gender, human relationships and laws on property. They offer an insight into the contemporary 4th century BCE and 3rd century BCE Greek and Roman society respectively, and illustrate comic figures who belong to different social and cultural classes. With these arguments in mind, I will re-evaluate the dynamic of specific characters, namely the rich and the poor, as well as their thoughts and reactions concerning the themes of wealth, marriage and human relationships.

I will bring Plautus' comedy *Aulularia* and its comic characters, Euclio and Megadorus, together, in order to examine them more closely as well as to study their opinions about wealth and human affairs. Secondly, I will lay stress upon the social and cultural context of Menander's *Dyskolos* by focusing on the characters of Gorgias and Sostratos, who represent the same opposing social dipole. How feasible is the human connection between the rich and the poor and what are the notions about wealth and marital relationships? How do Menander and Plautus dramatise social issues and how do these characters affect the development of the plays? With these two comparative exemplary interpersonal relationships, I will attempt to analyse their contradictory portrayals and to make clear that the socio-cultural crisis in *Aulularia* and

[1] I use de Melo (2011) Loeb's edition and translation for Plautus' *Aulularia* and Arnott (1979) Loeb's edition and translation for Menander's *Dyskolos*, as well as my own English translations.
[2] For the nature of New Comedy and its comic characters see also Goldberg (1980), Gomme/Sandbach (1973), Hurbánková (2014), James (2020), Konstantakos (2016), MacCary (1970), (1971).
[3] Silva (2009), 2.

Dyskolos is an important social and comical motif in the literary genre of New Comedy, in terms of both characters' overall development and the evolution of the plots.

1. *AULULARIA* – THE EXAMPLE OF EUCLIO AND MEGADORUS

Before my socio-cultural analysis between the poor old Euclio and the rich Megadorus, it is noteworthy to summarise the plot. Euclio is a poor old man who has recently discovered a pot of gold buried in his house, by the aid of Euclio's household deity, *Lar Familiaris*, and he has become obsessed with the hidden treasure. His daughter, Phaedria, is pregnant by a young man named Lyconides, but Euclio is completely unaware of his daughter's situation. Megadorus, an elderly rich man and the uncle of Lyconides, desires to get married to Euclio's daughter. Despite Euclio's distrust, he is persuaded to betroth his daughter to his wealthy neighbour. Eventually, after a series of misunderstandings, Lyconides decides to tell the truth to Euclio about the ravishing of Phaedria, and to reconcile with the old man. The ending of the *Aulularia* has not survived, but, according to the fragmentary summaries of the play, Lyconides and Phaedria end up happily married and Euclio gives the pot of gold to his daughter's wedding as a dowry.

Euclio is a poor, obnoxious, miserly character, who has recently discovered a pot of gold and who prefers hiding it to using it. The Guardian Spirit gives him a chance to redeem himself by showing the place the gold is hidden, in order for it to be used as a dowry for his daughter's marriage. Nevertheless, Euclio continues behaving badly towards everyone and especially to his old woman servant (Plaut. *Aul*. 37–38), due to his miserable way of thinking. On the other hand, Megadorus is an elderly rich man who is not concerned about wealth and dowries, because he is rich enough thanks to the gods and his ancestors (Plaut. *Aul*. 166). Eunomia, Megadorus' sister, is in search of an upper-class wife for her brother, namely a wife who possesses an 'enormous dowry' (*cum maxuma possum tibi, frater, dare dote,* Plaut. *Aul*. 158). However, Megadorus does not care about women with sumptuous dowries.[4] More particularly, he replies to his sister: 'I don't care about those great social connections, their pride, their sumptuous dowries, their shouting, their commands, their carriages decked with ivory, their mantles and their purple clothing; such women drive their husbands into slavery with their expenses' (*istas magnas factiones, animos, dotes dapsilis, clamores, imperia, eburata uehicla, pallas, purpuram,* Plaut. *Aul*. 167–169). Megadorus' complaint about such wives pinpoints the

[4] See Rallo (2021), 102–106; Plautus' dowered wife (*uxor dotata*) is an upper-class woman with financial capabilities. As a result, men complain about their marital condition as they are under the power of their wives, who appear to dominate their husbands.

problems of women's excessive luxury.[5] Whereas Megadorus is rich, he is not avaricious, but a man who sharply criticises women's prodigality. Therefore, he desires to be married to Euclio's daughter. Even though he is aware of the family's poor condition, as he repeatedly addresses Euclio as a 'poor', 'old' fellow (*senem Euclionem* […] *pauperculum,* Plaut. *Aul*. 171–174) who has a 'poor' daughter (*pauperem. haec pauper,* Plaut. *Aul*. 171–174), he is not bothered by the low social status.

It is noteworthy to analyse more closely the dialogue between Euclio and Megadorus, a scene full of arguments about human relationships between the rich and the poor. Euclio is wary of Megadorus' motives, because it is unusual for a rich man to 'address' a poor one in such 'a flattering way' (*salutat blandius,* Plaut. *Aul*. 184–185). He is convinced that Megadorus is aware of the gold and, thus, the latter's motives are self-serving. More specifically, he argues that 'he does not trust a rich man who speaks to a poor one politely' (*nemini credo qui large blandust diues pauperi,* Plaut. *Aul*. 196) and who promises to aid him unconditionally (Plaut. *Aul*. 194). He believes that the only reason Megadorus would speak to him is because he may have uncovered the former's secret about the pot. Otherwise, Megadorus would not even greet him. Therefore, he starts complaining about 'the miserable life' of him and of his daughter (*meam pauperiem,* Plaut. *Aul*. 191) and the fact that he 'cannot offer a dowry for his daughter's wedding, in order for her to be properly married' (*dote cassam atque illocabilem, neque eam queo locare quoiquam,* Plaut. *Aul*. 192). At this point, it is necessary to mention that the dowry system was highly important for both divided classes.[6] Eunomia and Euclio concentrate on this typical procedure, but each other's motives are quite different; Eunomia desires to guarantee that his brother will have a financially equal wife, whereas Euclio pretends poverty (Plaut. *Aul*. 238, 256, 258–259), in order to make sure that Megadorus' interest is not poor Euclio's inheritance.[7]

Furthermore, Euclio employs proverbial expressions to characterise the insincere behaviours of affluent individuals. At this juncture, he does not address Megadorus as a rich

[5] Silva (2009), 8–9.
[6] Konstan (1983), 18–24: Rules and values such as the cultural system, marriage, the civic status, the legislation of social values are important in Greek and Roman New Comedy plots. The theme of *ius conubii*, the right of marriage, and *ius commercii*, the right of trade is of high essence (ibid., 40). In the relations of the community, the dowry is the exemplary use of wealth, for it represents the exchange of kin and property (ibid., 43). See also Plautus' *Trinummus*, where the young, impoverished Lesbonicus expresses his anxiety to his friend Lysiteles. The former cannot betroth his sister to the latter without a dowry, because this union would be a concubinage, an appropriation, rather than marriage (Plaut. *Trin*. 689–691). The dowry is the sign of the communal and legal sanction.
[7] Duckworth (1952), 244. The playwright is primarily interested in portraying Euclio's fears and suspicions of his household and of his neighbours as he endeavours to keep his riches from being discovered; hence Euclio insists upon his poverty and maintains that he cannot give a dowry to his daughter.

man, in order to denote latter's social status; he does not explicitly identify him as a wealthy individual. He points out that, generally speaking, a rich man behaves in a way where 'in one hand he is carrying a stone, with the other he is holding a bread' (*altera manu fert lapidem, panem ostentat altera,* Plaut. *Aul*. 195). This expression was applied to those who pretended to be friendly to a person and at the same time they were doing them mischief. These people make no genuine effort to assist those in need by offering a loaf of bread, as their concurrent willingness to hold a stone signifies hostility and insincere intentions. Secondly, Euclio considers the behaviour of rich people and thus Megadorus' one to be similar to the octopus; 'as soon as they have touched something, they hold on to it' (*noui polypos qui ubi quicquid tetigerunt tenent,* Plaut. *Aul*. 198). Because of the big quantity of legs, the many-footed sea creature has the ability to grab things easily.[8] Obviously, Plautus compared the octopus to rapacious rich men who desire to benefit against 'poor ones' (*hominem pauperum pauperrumum,* Plaut. *Aul*. 227), as the latter do not possess 'resources' (*ut inopem,* Plaut. *Aul*. 221). Euclio believes that Megadorus behaves respectively, as soon as he has discovered Euclio's pot of gold. Although he is well-off, he does not hesitate to *grab* the poor fellow's hidden fortune, just like the octopus does, in order to catch its prey.

On the other hand, Megadorus is not a profiteer. He is willing to marry without a dowry, a practice that was not broadly acceptable in social terms.[9] Euclio suspects that Megadorus has devious plans whereas the latter's concern is to get married to a poor, good wife. He justifies Euclio's doubts, because the old man is unfamiliar with encountering well-to-do individuals.[10] Euclio must have thought that Megadorus is trying to deceive him and to 'make fun of him' (*sese a me derideri,* Plaut. *Aul*. 205), when he asks him to betroth his daughter to him (Plaut. *Aul*. 205). Once again, the theme of poverty and social disparity is illustrated through the speech of Megadorus and the fact that poor man's doubts about his elderly rich neighbour's intentions arise from Euclio's impoverished condition and resulting suspicion:[11] 'no one's more tight-fisted than him today because of poverty' (*neque illo quisquam est alter hodie ex paupertate parcior*, Plaut. *Aul*. 206).

He believes that the poor old man 'scorns' him (*fastidit mei,* Plaut. *Aul*. 244–245), because he assumes that Megadorus makes fun of him due to his upper social status and his

[8] See also the disposition of the octopus in Ov. *Hal*. 32.
[9] Rocha (2023), 142.
[10] Euclio is aware of his inferiority towards him, and he does not miss the chance to reply to his criticism: 'people who have splendour corresponding to their wealth and a reputation corresponding to their abundance remember where they come from' (Plaut. *Aul*. 541–544).
[11] Cic. *De or.* 2.287: 'an extremely economical and moderate and thrifty person' (*parcissimus, modestissimus, frugalissimus esset*), Suet. *Tib*. 46: 'in money matters he was frugal and close' (*pecuniae parcus ac tenax*).

opulence. No wealthy man 'wants to be friends' (*suam amicitiam uelle,* Plaut. *Aul*. 244–245) with poor fellows, because rich men gain nothing from the latter. Euclio should think that the wealthy man goes out of his way to get a poorer one's regard. He highlights that 'if a wealthy man goes out of his way to get a poorer one's regard, the poor one is afraid to approach him and harms his own interests out of fear' (*nam si opulentus it petitum pauperioris gratiam, pauper metuit congrediri, per metum male rem gerit*, Plaut. *Aul*. 247–248).

Ultimately, Euclio resorts to a fable that conveys reflections and general remarks on divided classes.[12] He invokes the simile of 'the ox and the donkey', that is two animals that represent the wealthy and the destitute, respectively, in figurative terms (*te bouem esse et me esse asellum,* Plaut. *Aul*. 229). The wealthy man — who is portrayed by an ox — 'will not take a notice of the donkey' (*tu me bos magis hau respicias,* Plaut. *Aul*. 231) — that is the poor one— when the latter cannot carry the burden 'the same way' (*partier,* Plaut. *Aul*. 230), and eventually it 'will lie in the mud' (*iaceam ego asinus in luto,* Plaut. *Aul*. 230) helpless. Not only will the donkey 'be turned into a laughingstock' (*irrideat,* Plaut. *Aul*. 232–233) and will it 'be torn up tenaciously' by its own kind (*asini me mordicibus scindant,* Plaut. *Aul*. 234), but 'the oxen also would try to harm the donkey with their horns' (*boues incursent cornibus,* Plaut. *Aul*. 234). Through this comparison, Plautus presents 'the major danger' (*hoc magnum est periclum,* Plaut. *Aul*. 235) in attempting to 'cross over' (*transcendere,* Plaut. *Aul*. 235) social boundaries from the lower to the upper class, focusing in particular on the donkey's ambition to create amicable relations with the oxen (Plaut. *Aul*. 235).[13] Nevertheless, Euclio eventually agrees to betroth his daughter to Megadorus on condition that the marriage will take place on that day. It is interesting to mention that Euclio deliberately uses the word/phrase 'agreed' (*pactum*) four times, in order to make sure that Megadorus would not break his promise (*pactum non pactum est, non pactum pactum est,* Plaut. *Aul*. 260). He believes that rich people might change their point of view and, therefore, Euclio must be certain that Megadorus will keep his promise and that the wedding will be held as soon as possible. It is clear that Euclio does not fully trust Megadorus' intentions and he does not miss the chance to pinpoint the non-equivalent relation between the poor and the wealthy. Euclio is portrayed as both a miserly old man and one of limited financial resources, whose social condition is formed and guided by the poor's typical frugal lifestyle.

[12] Arnott (1964), 235–236.

[13] Euclio's suspicion is also presented when he reprimands Megadorus' cooks who have come to his house without his permission, in order to prepare the wedding dinner. He pinpoints the non-equivalent relationship between the poor and the wealthy, anew: 'a poor man (*pauper*) who begins dealings or some business with a wealthy one (*opulento*) begins a daring undertaking' (Plaut. *Aul*. 460–461).

On the other hand, Megadorus replies to Euclio's suspicion with a monologue. He expresses the opinion that 'if other people who are well off did the same — marrying the daughter of poorer people without dowry — the city would become much more harmonious, we would suffer less from envy that we do now':

nam meo quidem animo si idem faciant ceteri
opulentiores, pauperiorum filias
ut indotatas ducant uxores domum,
et multo fiat ciuitas concordior,
et inuidia nos minore utamur quam utimur

(Plaut. *Aul*. 478–482)

et nos minore sumptu simus quam sumus

'and we would spend less than we do now'

(Plaut. *Aul*. 484)

The contradictory pair of *opulentiores* and *pauperiorum* depicts the potential social compatibility between them. He suggests that rich men should marry poor women in order to balance society.[14] Otherwise, husbands would be dependent to rich wives. Moreover, he puts his emphasis on the value of virtuous women and the fact that he highly esteems virtue, honesty and good manners, instead of women's wealth and possessions.[15] He is in favour of having a poor one, because these women have a 'better character' (*mores meliores,* Plaut. *Aul*. 492). Megadorus reflects the notion that poor people are moral and sincere, whereas wealthy ones are corrupted and dishonest.[16] Euclio's poor daughter has a good character and Megadorus reasonably claims her to be his lawful wife. She holds no dowry and no belongings. Megadorus continues his argument, concluding that 'the disadvantages are numerous' (*aliae multae* […] *incommoditates,* Plaut. *Aul*. 532–533), citing the 'unsustainable expenses' associated with wealthy wives (*sumptusque intolerabiles,* Plaut. *Aul*. 533) along with the consequential 'misery and loss of a husband's property' (*malo et damno uiros,* Plaut. *Aul*. 535), when a man decides

[14] Silva (2009), 8–9.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Arnott (1964), 116.

to get married to a woman who possesses 'a substantial dowry' (*in magnis dotibus,* Plaut. *Aul*. 532).

By analysing the contradictory socio-cultural relationships between these two characters through the play, I argued that Plautus used this dramatic device in order to reflect the social and financial nuances that contribute to the development of his characters.[17] The illustration between comedy and reality is shown through the contrast between the 'poor', old Euclio (*Euclionis pauperis,* Plaut. *Aul*. 603) and his unsubstantiated accusations of upper-class society, and the middle-aged, rich Megadorus who prefers marrying poor and virtuous wives to socially equal and endowed ones.[18] Plautus is willing to change that type of deeply rooted, socio-cultural tradition and unite the divided social classes by means of marriage. Although the young and affluent Lyconides, the nephew of Megadorus, is about to marry Euclio's daughter in order to restore both Phaedria's moral integrity and the comic balance of the play, Plautus employs the theme of conflicting social statuses to highlight prevailing Roman attitudes towards class disparity, as presented in the contrast between Euclio's impoverished household and the wealthier family of Lyconides and Megadorus.

2. *DYSKOLOS* – THE EXAMPLE OF GORGIAS AND SOSTRATOS

The comic plot concerns a wealthy young man named Sostratos, who falls in love with a poor girl and decides to marry her. However, her father, the curmudgeonly Knemon, stands as a barrier to this marriage. Fortunately, with the help of the poor young Gorgias, Knemon's stepson, Sostratos agrees to behave and look like a poor farmer, in order to encounter Knemon. The opportunity will come when the old man absurdly falls from the well and the young man goes to rescue him. In the end of the comedy, Sostratos receives Knemon's blessings to marry his daughter, as well as poor Gorgias to marry Sostratos' sister.

The theme of contradictory social statuses is also present in Menander's *Dyskolos* and, more specifically, the dichotomy between wealth and poverty.[19] Gorgias represents an extreme in poverty, a hardworking farmer, while Sostratos represents a well-to-do citizen.[20] In Act 2, when Gorgias is informed that a young man was speaking with his half-sister, he decides to confront him, because he feels responsible for his half-sister's chastity. The upcoming meeting

[17] Arnott (1964), 232.
[18] Zagagi (1994), 111–113.
[19] Cox (2002), 351.
[20] Ibid.

reveals some of the qualities that Menander distinguishes between the rich, urbane young man and the poor, hard-working farmer.

Initially, Gorgias singles out Sostratos' visual appearance, that is the latter's 'elegant cloak' (τὴν χλανίδ', Men. *Dys*. 257), an attire that suits the wealthy.[21] He is furious with the unknown young man, on the grounds that he believes that the rich young man has no good intentions for his sister. He addresses him as a 'mischievous person' when he makes 'his appearance' towards him (κακοῦργος εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ βλέμματος, Men. *Dys*. 258), due to his outfit that indicates prosperity and economic success. Sostratos is not socially equal to Gorgias — that is he is not a farmer — and hence he is untrustworthy and fraudulent.

Then, the young farmer delivers a soliloquy — more like a lecture — that reflects some ideas concerning wealth and poverty. Instead of reprimanding Sostratos, he focuses on the differences between people who have prosperity and good fortune and people who live in poverty. He pinpoints that even though rich people are 'successful' and well-off (τῷ μὲν εὐτυχοῦντι, Men. *Dys*. 274), 'their fortune can be switched into decline' (τὴν μεταβολὴν τὴν εἰς τὸ χεῖρον λαμβάνειν, Men. *Dys*. 276–279) if they succumb to vice as a consequence of their wealth. On the other hand, the 'less successful and poor ones' (τοῖς δ' ἐνδεῶς, Men. *Dys*. 280), who keep clear of evil, will be honoured and 'they will expect their goods to improve' (βελτίον' εἶναι μερίδα προσδοκᾶν τινα, Men. *Dys*. 283). Generally speaking, Gorgias attempts to give advice to Sostratos. That is to say, although Sostratos is 'very rich' (εἰ σφόδρ' εὐπορεῖς, Men. *Dys*. 284), he does not have the right to 'disrespect the poor ones' (μήτε τῶν πτωχῶν πάλιν ἡμῶν καταφρόνει, Men. *Dys*. 285–286). Gorgias forms a judgment about Sostratos based on the latter's birth and class and on his assumptions that opulence makes the wealthy disregard the poor ones.[22]

Moreover, wealth turns the abovementioned contempt into harmful deeds against the poor. Conscious of his social inferiority, the poor young farmer gives a moral and intellectual speech, diametrically opposite to his low status. He does not make direct accusations, but he chooses to be polite, careful and gentle with Sostratos.[23] He misjudges Sostratos' love interest due to the belief that any relationship between people who belong to opposing social classes is not sincere and serves unethical motives against the poor. Gorgias is convinced that Sostratos' motives are 'immoral' (φαῦλον, Men. *Dys*. 289), on the grounds that the rich young man will attempt to 'seduce a free young girl' (ἐξαμαρτεῖν παρθένον ἐλευθέραν, Men. *Dys*. 290–291).

[21] Arnott (1964), 114–115.
[22] Rosivach (2001), 128–130.
[23] Arnott (1964), 119.

He assumes that Sostratos' love interest is nothing but a whim in order to ridicule him and his half-sister's chastity. Gorgias closes his lecture with a warning. He refers to 'the destitute ones', who 'when they are unfairly treated, they become the bitterest foe of all' (πτωχὸς ἀδικηθείς ἐστι δυσκολώτατον, Men. *Dys*. 296), as they count this injustice more like a personal insolence, a *hybris* ([ὕβριν, Men. *Dys*. 298).[24] According to Rosivach, Gorgias states that 'the poor will not rest until whoever has wronged him is punished and his honour is restored'.[25] In parallel with this, Arnott notices that the young farmer 'falls into the prejudice of thinking that poverty and morality are necessarily connected, with the corollary that wealthy and immorality go together'.[26] Gorgias demonstrates an unambiguous partiality toward the affluent, asserting that they are indifferent to the anxieties of the lower classes and are willing to employ ethically objectionable means to fulfil their desires. Sostratos, on the other hand, is not that kind of man. He is a 'free-born and wealthy man' (ὢν ἐλεύθερος, βίον ἱκανὸν ἔχων, Men. *Dys*. 306–307) who wishes to marry the young girl 'without a dowry' (αὐτὴν ἄπροικον, Men. *Dys*. 308). He has no evil intentions. It becomes evident that Sostratos is more upset with Gorgias' biased notions towards the well-to-do people and his premises that wealthy individuals like himself have immoral motives against the poor ones than by his genuine interest to marry the farmer's stepsister (Men. *Dys*. 313–314). Therefore, this meeting is a plea for reconciliation between them as long as rich people respect the poor.[27] Thus, after the juxtaposition of their arguments and the acknowledgement of Sostratos' truthful motives towards Knemon's daughter, Gorgias is willing to assist the young man in approaching the ill-mannered father of the girl, who possibly wants to betroth his daughter to a bridegroom who belongs to the 'same social status' and shares the same poor outlook with Gorgias — that is, a farmer's one (ἂν ὁμότροπον αὐτῷ νυμφίον λάβῃ, Men. *Dys*. 337).

Therefore, Sostratos should alter his external appearance, because Knemon 'will not even look at him in all his ease' (σχολὴν τρυφῶντά τ', οὐδ' ὁρ[ῶν ἀν]έξεται, Men. *Dys*. 357). Sostratos' apparel escalates the social contradiction between the hard lifestyle of the poor and his luxurious' one**.** That is why, Gorgias' slave suggests Sostratos start digging, because this agricultural occupation signifies 'the life' of the typical 'poor farmer' (εἶναι τῷ βίῳ πένητ',

[24] Dover (1974), 110: the poor man is both desperate as well as 'vindictive', 113, the antithesis between 'the countryman' whose speech is 'brutal' but 'honest' and 'upright' and the city man who is more careful of what he is about to say, 173: 'in Greek literature, the man who is proud to call himself a "worker" (κὰργάτης, Ar. *Ach*. 611, οὐργάτης, *Peace*, 632) is the farmer; it was always respectable to be a good "farmer" (γεωργός, Lys. 20.33) who raised the value of his land by hard work, intelligence and frugality'.
[25] Rosivach (2001), 129.
[26] Arnott (1964), 116.
[27] Rosivach (2001), 134.

Men. *Dys*. 370). Although Sostratos is an urbane, rich man, he is willing to follow the plan and dress accordingly**.** It is noteworthy to be mentioned here that this exterior alteration is highly considerable for Sostratos and the development of their upcoming meeting with Knemon. The rich young man abandons his fancy attire and noble manners, in order to face suffering, poverty, and hard-working experience. Menander uses the shift of contradictory social statuses so that Sostratos can speak to Knemon on equal terms and win the girl.[28]

Furthermore, Sostratus, just like Megadorus in *Aulularia*, does not seek to marry a wealthy wife. He focusses on the girl's virtues, that is, sincerity and morality, characteristic qualities that Phaedria has been taught by her poor father 'who hates knavery' (μισοπονήρου τῷ τρόπῳ, Men. *Dys*. 388). Even though Knemon's daughter is not financially equal to him, she is virtuous (Men. *Dys*. 385–387). That is why he decides to bear the hardship of working farmers by using 'the mattock', (δίκελλ', Men. *Dys*. 390) a common equipment that (poor) farmers use for agricultural activities.

The final case study addressing the theme of the differences between wealth and poverty is centred on the dialectic interaction between Kallipides and Gorgias. Although Knemon ultimately consents to the marriage between his daughter and Sostratos, the union remains unconventional, as it was atypical for a wealthy man to choose a woman of lower social and economic standing to be his legitimate wife. Through this relation, Menander offers a subtle critique of existing and ruling social norms by presenting an alternative perspective on conjugal unions. The play reflects the concerns of differing wealth that leads to marital connections.[29] Therefore, one could consider that Menander's sensitivity to social issues provides a clear disapproval against the practice of marrying one's social and financial equal.[30] Sostratos' father, Kallipides, who is addressed as 'a wealthy man' by Gorgias (πλούσιός γ' ἀνήρ, Men. *Dys*. 774), represents that kind of conventional, social notion. He wants to wed his son and daughter with a wife and a husband respectively, who are socially equal to them. As he states, 'he has no wish to acquire two paupers-in-law as one is quite enough':

[28] Even though he would suffer from the rustic adversities, the pampered young man volunteers to be guided by the poor Gorgias and his servant [Post (1960), 159].
[29] Cox (2002), 391–394.
[30] Cox (2002), 356.

νύμφην γὰρ ἅμα καὶ νυμφίον πτωχοὺς λαβεῖν
οὐ βούλομ', ἱκανὸν δ' ἐστὶν ἡμῖν θάτερον.

(Men. *Dys*. 795–796)

The socio-cultural contradiction is evident. Although Kallipides' words are outspoken, he belongs to the upper class and, therefore, he is reasonably worried. However, thanks to Sostratos' soliloquy, which comes to dissolve the preconception that any human relationship between people who belong to different social statuses is unfeasible (Men. *Dys*. 797, 800–801, 803–804, 806–808, 809–810, 811–812), Kallipides is persuaded to give his daughter to Gorgias.[31]

Nevertheless, Gorgias does not ignore his rural roots.[32] He still believes that he cannot marry Sostratos' sister, because he 'cannot take on things too big' for him, let alone wish for them (μείζω δ' ἐμαυτοῦ πράγματ' οὔτε βούλομαι, Men. *Dys*. 825). He has too much self-respect and he 'cannot accept a life of luxury won by others' labours, but only the things he has earned himself' (τρυφᾶν ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις πόνοις δοκεῖ, συλλεξάμενον δ'αὐτόν, Men. *Dys*. 830).[33] Due to his poverty and rustic way of life, he is convinced that he is not worthy of this unequal marriage. Furthermore, he 'is incapable of taking so much dowry as he has so little to offer' (λαβεῖν δε πολλὰ μίκρ' ἔχοντ' οὐκ ἄξιον, Men. *Dys*. 834). He acknowledges that his impoverished position and low status stand as a barrier to the possible marital union between him and Sostratos' sister. He still exhibits hesitation concerning the suitability of this marital arrangement. However, according to the conventions of comedy, virtue and sincere motives must be rewarded. Kallipides persuaded the poor farmer to set his pride aside and marry Sostratos' sister (Men. *Dys*. 838–840). He is worthy of the girl no matter the socio-financial differences. Therefore, he offers a 'three-talent dowry' for his daughter's wedding (προῖκά τε δίδωμ' ἐπ' αὐτῇ τρία τάλαντ', Men. *Dys*. 844) and he advises his son-in-law to 'keep the talent dowry intact' (μὴ δῷς σὺ λίαν, Men. *Dys*. 846) as well as 'the farm' (τὸ δὲ χωρίον κέκτησ'

[31] I deliberately omit Sostratos' monologue towards his father, because in this paper I attempt to put my emphasis on characters who differ socially and financially, namely the rich and the poor. Sostratos and his father belong to the same social status. Nevertheless, Sostratos' speech is highly important for the persuasion of Kallipides to betroth his daughter to Gorgias. Sostratos' speech underscores the importance of friendship and mutual generosity over material wealth and possessions.

[32] It is interesting to mention that Sostratos, unlike Gorgias, is able to fall in love. Gorgias' hardships do not allow him to feel accordingly (Men. *Dys*. 343–344). Because of his agricultural occupation and poverty, he cannot be in love. Gorgias implied that only the rich have 'the leisure' (ἀνάπαυσιν, Men. *Dys*. 344) for love, while the poor like himself are too busy working. Once again, Menander illustrates opposed social implications of birth and background between these two soliloquists. That is why he cannot understand Sostratos' feelings; this kind of leisure is suited to prosperous men who have the right to act and feel accordingly.

[33] Rosivach (2001), 133.

ὅλον, Men. *Dys*. 847–848). The poor Gorgias proved his value through his selfless effort to assist Sostratos in approaching Knemon and his self-sacrifice to save Knemon's life. He is a decent man who acts willingly and truthfully based on his stepsister's own good and happiness. These are some of poor Gorgias' virtues that Sostratos — and later Kallipides — notice and decide to betroth the girl to him.

CONCLUSION

To conclude with, these are some exemplary references between rich and poor characters in the different plays. Both Menander and Plautus are a good source of depicting social practice by means of constructing marital unions.[34] My aim was to analyse how they made use of the dramatic theme of contradictory classes, in order to create a comic and social framework that does not ignore the pre-established conventions.[35] They combine reality and fiction so as to reflect different perceptions of cultural customs between the divided classes by means of repetitive literary patterns, such as antithetical linguistic terms between opulence and poverty, literary similes, maxims and stereotyped notions. Finally, I hope to have illustrated how *Aulularia* and *Dyskolos* focus on the contrast between human relations and values that show not only poets' social concerns about the coexistence of wealth and poverty, but also the possible ideal of reconciliation. Menander and Plautus construct a redefined socio-comical *milieu* that bridges the gap between impoverished rural families and the wealthy urban elite, creating a literary and comic setting in which differing values and expectations surrounding wealth, status and human behaviour are brought into concord. By depicting interactions between characters of contrasting economic and social backgrounds, the two playwrights explore and evaluate the deeply integrated assumptions that govern interpersonal relationships. These comedies do not merely juxtapose poverty and affluence; rather, they examine how these conditions shape moral attitude and social relationships.

Through this thematic analysis, New Comedy plays offer a portrayal of status-oriented tensions, testing class distinctions by presenting scenes of rapprochement across socio-economic topics. The dramatic structure relies on the resolution of conflicts that stem from such disparities, thereby positioning poverty and wealth as integral parts in the development of both plot and character. The varied depictions of social status underscore a broader ideological stance innate in the genre, that is moral virtues, generosity and friendship. In this way, New

[34] Cox (2002), 356, Rocha (2023), 131–133.
[35] Rocha (2023), 142–143.

Comedy *dramatis personae* articulate a vision of social cohesion in which unity and mutual understanding become possible, not through economic equality, but through shared ethical values and characters' rectitude. Ultimately, *Aulularia* and *Dyskolos* reflect the social realities of their time, offering both a portrayal of the Greek and Roman contemporary society and an opportunity to reconsider the dynamic of social divisions.

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