PEGASUS

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PEGASUS
ISSUE 48 (2005)

Table of Contents

The editor apologises for the delay in publication, for which he alone is responsible. Due to considerations of space, the Departmental News and Staff Research News sections have had to be omitted from this issue.

Class Prejudice in the Ancient Greek World: Thersites, Cleon, and other Upstarts.

Catherine Andrews Worthington was my grandmother, my mother's mother. She was born in Little Hulton, a village near Bulton in Lancashire in 1975. She attended the village school until the age of 12, then she alternated between working in a nearby cotton mill and helping her mother at home, until she met and married John Dearden, my grandfather, after whom I am named. John was an engine driver, but not a big locomotive on the main railway line – he drove a little colliery engine pulling coal wagons on a branch line from the local pit to a marshalling yard, where the coal was transferred to other wagons. They had several children, of whom two boys died in infancy; my mother Ethel was their youngest child, born in 1912.

Catherine lived as an adult through two world wars, was over 50 before she was able to vote for the first time, and died in 1946 at my parents' then house in Walkden (shortly after my father had returned from service in the navy). She was there when I was born, but, sadly, I hardly remember her at all, and I was dependent on my mother for my knowledge of her. Catherine never went abroad, and, as far as I know, never left the area of south Lancashire, where she was born, lived and died.

An unremarkable life, you might think, typical of the untold millions of ordinary, common people who throughout the ages have lived and died unknown to history. But Catherine was in fact a most remarkable person, the archetypal wise woman. As a young girl she was extremely intelligent – where it came from who can say? – and, according to her village school teacher, the brightest pupil she had ever known. Her teacher was very keen that Catherine should stay on at school and perhaps even go to university, which she was sure she had the ability to do. But in those days that cost money, a lot of money. Catherine's family were not the poorest in the village, but such advancement would cost far more than they had, or could imagine having. Undaunted, her teacher made an appointment to visit Lady Derby, wife of the local squire, the Earl of Derby, who had an estate and a fine mansion not far away. Lady Derby graciously provided tea and sympathy, but declined to offer any financial support; as she said: "Mary dear, I am sure you are right about Catherine, but I will not help her, *because it doesn't do to get above one's station.*"

"Because it doesn't do to get above one's station." Those words subsequently became a catchphrase in our family, one we would repeat to each other - e.g., to defuse family rows - knowing it would have the effect of restoring solidarity through wry (and slightly bitter) laughter.

That was a different age and a different value system, you will say. Maybe a different time, but I'm not so sure about changed values, not deep down. Such class-based thinking is deeply rooted. There was a golden age of education in this country, in the 1960's and 70's, when sheer merit alone did determine (state) educational advancement however far; but the clock has been put back more recently, with the abolition of grammar schools (a vital conduit for bright working-class kids) and the imposition of heavy university tuition fees – two 'achievements', if that is the right word, of Labour governments. Their spinning rhetoric is about "widening participation," their policies say something else.

Relevance? Well my grandmother's story is a purely personal and private one of course, but the concept of 'getting above one's station,' of 'not knowing one's place' in a public context, socially and politically, forms the core of what I want to talk about today.

I have two liked themes. Firstly, I want to look at some passages, from a wide variety of Greek authors, over a wide range of time, which reveal or describe a particular attitude to, and treatment of, those who get above, or try to get above, their station publicly, by posing as leaders of, and associating themselves with, the common people, the *demos*, as a group entity, a class: the so- called demagogues,

or *demagogoi*. I'm going to argue that these reactions, so well attested in the literature, are not the unrepresentative minority view of a small, leisured clique of blimpish, Daily Telegraph reading retired colonels. On the contrary, they are recurrent, persistent, mainstream, *widely held attitudes in the ancient Greek world, at all periods*.

This leads on to my second theme: - that democracy, so far from being the finest and most distinctive Greek achievement, the greatest glory of the 'glory that was Greece,' fundamentally distinguishing Greeks from 'less happy breeds of men,' like Macedonians, Romans, and *barbaroi*, was in fact, and was widely thought by ancient Greeks themselves to be, an aberration, and a reprehensible one at that.

First, some definitions. *Demos* is an ambiguous Greek word. In the 5th and 4th centuries it was sometimes used in an inclusive sense, 'the whole people', 'the entire citizen body'. This is its sense in the many inscriptions which record the passing of (Athenian) state decrees in a common formula phrase, *edoxe toi demoi*, 'it was resolved by the *demos*', i.e., a majority vote of the whole citizen body (or at least that portion of it which had attended the relevant assembly meeting, which all citizens were entitled to do, irrespective of wealth or social class, deciding on the basis of one man, one vote).

Taking *demos* in this sense, *demokratia* meant 'rule of the whole citizen body', government of the people by the people for the people', and this is how, e.g., Pericles uses the word in the famous Funeral Oration recorded in Thucydides Bk. 2.

But *demos* also had a more restricted sense, 'the lower classes', 'the common people'. This seems to have been its original meaning. According to Liddell and Scott, the word originally denoted those who lived out in the countryside, the peasant farmers, people who in very early Greece rarely left their farms and villages, and certainly never participated in such 'government' as existed at all, which in those early days was conducted exclusively by the *aristoi*, the best men, the rich, propertied and landed elite, who met, and did what needed to be done, in the town, the *astu*.

This original, restricted sense of the word *demos* did not become obsolete with the development of the polis and its institutions. On the contrary, it remained strong throughout the archaic and classical periods, as we can see from a plethora of authors; and, taking *demos* in this sense, *demokratia* meant 'rule by the common people (over their betters)', and a *demagogos* was one who 'led on' the common people (or misled them); and for the *aristoi*, the 'best men', these words were pejorative words at all times. Since the poor were more numerous than the wealthy in all Greek states, it was the case that with one man, one vote, the poor could in theory vote *en bloc* and dominate the *aristoi* as a class. So it was all the easier for the terms *demos, demokratia*, and *demagogos* to carry the pejorative connotations that the well-to-do gave them. For them, democracy represented what one might call the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Whether *demokratia* in practice ever did involve discrimination against the *aristoi* as a class is very doubtful – but the point is that it was widely believed (and feared) that it could, and that was bad enough.

A consistent pattern of attitude and reaction emerges from the literary evidence; - it is assumed that there is, and always should be, a firm natural division of social class in all Greek states. On the one hand the *aristoi*, 'the best men', on the other, the *demos*, the lower classes, the common people. Contempt/disdain is invariably felt towards the *demos* by the *aristoi* – this is regarded as a natural state of affairs. As long as the *demos* and its individual members *know and keep to their (subordinate) place*, that is as far as it goes, though even then there is little feeling of overall social or national solidarity transcending class.

But if anyone *tries to get above his station*, that is a serious matter, particularly so if he looks like he has, or will get, support from the fellow members of his class (actual or adopted). In such cases disdain turns into criticism, to allegations of improper behaviour,

senselessness, even madness. This is followed by threats of violence, and often actual violence, until the upstart is dealt with, put back in his place, or permanently silenced. This treatment is particularly satisfying if at the same time the *demos* can be induced to abandon their would-be champion (*prostates*), by losing faith in him, or laughing at his discomfiture.

Let's starts, as one should, with Homer's *Iliad* (late 8th cent. BC), our earliest work of Greek literature. In Bk. 2 of the *Iliad* the Greek army at Troy have mistakenly taken Agamemnon at his word, and have started a mass rush for the ships, in the belief that they are about to go home as he has apparently suggested. This is not at all what Agamemnon intended, and Odysseus has his work cut out to stop the flight. Odysseus' words set the tone for a plethora of later passages, by sharply distinguishing between those of high rank (here the warrior elite of the Greek army), and the *demos* (H. uses this word), the rank and file; and in demonstrating a totally divergent attitude towards these two classes.[1]

A few lines further on (211-77) we are introduced to Thersites ('Mr. Bold'/'Mr. Impertinent') – an individual member of the *demos* whom Odysseus has just collectively chided. Thersites is not mentioned as a fighter elsewhere in the *Iliad*, and the fact that the confrontation between him and Odysseus comes only a few lines after Odysseus' contrasting way of dealing with the elite and the *demos* makes it clear, I think, that we are to view Thersites as a member of the *demos*, the rank and file.

The Homeric Thersites is the prototype demagogue, the first in a long line of such figures, stretching right down to modern times. (One thinks, e.g., of Arthur Scargill and, before he became acceptable again to New Labour, Red Ken Livingstone). Like them with the tabloids, Thersites gets a thoroughly bad press. Homer's introduction weights the scales heavily against him even from the start – he is physically ugly – there is much emphasis on this – it was part of the aristocratic class view of the *demos* that its members were (unlike themselves) naturally physically unattractive.

Thersites is presented (perhaps surprisingly) as a competent speaker (indeed he has a good case, and makes it pungently). But his manner of speaking is annoying, loud-mouthed, over personalised. He is forcefully taken to task by Odysseus, who dismisses him as of unsound mind (note 258, *aphrainonta* from *aphrainô*, a word which has connotations of folly, wildness, even madness). Such a characterisation is a common smear technique. It has the effect of dehumanising one's opponents so that normal restraints in dealing with them can be ignored (cf. *Sun* editorial 6/3/04, justifying Tony Blair: SH "an unstable lunatic" – double whammy!!).

Odysseus, Agamemnon and Thersites

In this case Odysseus does not defeat Thersites by any compelling argument, but by the emphatic restatement of a natural class hierarchy, combined with the application of physical force. This produces a distinctly non-heroic reaction. Thersites reverts to class type, he lapses into fearful, tearful submission, which in turn leads to public ridicule and humiliation amongst his former associates.

A passage from Hesiod starkly illuminates the gulf between the two classes in his day (Greece of the early 7th cent.) – and the freedom of the *aristoi* in his region (he calls them "princes" or "lords") to use force with impunity against the lower orders, if ever and whenever they choose, just as Odysseus had done against Thersites. This is put in the form

[1] *Il.* 2.190-205.

of a fable – a hawk seizing a nightingale.[2] For Hesiod this is wrong; he does not have the same class standpoint as Homer, who clearly approves of the treatment of Thersites. But the only sanction Hesiod can point to against the princes' acting like the hawk in this way is the wrath of Zeus. Justice will come from the gods, not men. Those who think otherwise are fools. Note that the same word is used by Hesiod as in the Thersites passage, here the adjective *aphrôn*, with its implications of misguided, senseless thinking and behaviour.

With the development of the concept of citizenship and written codes of law in most Greek states in the 7th century, that impunity was restricted, but the feeling amongst the *aristoi* that, if necessary, violence was justified, to reassert class hierarchy, preserve the existing social order, and defend their privileged social position against those who aspired to challenge it, did not disappear – and indeed violence was used for just those purposes on several occasions, as we shall see documented in subsequent passages.

I have included a passage from a poem of Solon[3] (early 6th cent.), since it clearly shows that even a moderate like Solon, a man with strong moral principles, who gave legal protection to the Athenian *demos* against arbitrary mistreatment and economic exploitation, still thought in rigid class-hierarchy terms: on the one hand the *demos*, on the other "those with power and wealth". And Solon did not envisage, let alone welcome, a society where the *demos* could make decisions for itself, rather than being told what to do by society's natural leaders. The *demos* aren't mature enough for that; in his view they are "*men not of sound mind*".

All these examples so far have been from early Greece, the 'archaic period' of Greek history. Surely, you may say, things changed in the classical period – i.e., after the Athenian Cleisthenes in 508 had introduced a democratic constitution there. (This was probably the first, but other states followed Athens' lead). Well, only up to a point. Those who got above their station were still made to pay a severe price.

Ephialtes' plans to reform the Areopagus Council (the Athenian House of Lords) in the late 460's were seen as a serious political and constitutional threat by Athenian *aristoi*. I've argued in an article in *Greece and Rome*[4] that Ephialtes was no more than a moderate reformer, not a revolutionary. Nevertheless, his political opponents had him murdered.[5] Why? Because he challenged their conservative traditions, and, by speaking out publicly, used the *demos* in the assembly to get his reforms passed. The language of the Diodorus passage in particular is significant. The implication is that, doing what he did, Ephialtes deserved his fate – he had it coming.

The next significant upstart figure is Cleon, an Athenian political heavyweight in the 420's. Cleon could not be dealt with as summarily as Ephialtes. For some reason he seems to have escaped physical violence at home – he probably made sure he didn't go home from the pub on his own! But, correspondingly, Cleon provoked a torrent of vicious personal abuse and character assassination, as we can see in two famous contemporary authors, Thucydides and Aristophanes.

Introducing him in his narrative (Mytilene debate, 427), Thucydides presents Cleon as an able public orator, just like Thersites but persuasive and influential too – that was the problem.[6] For according to Thucydides, Cleon was remarkable for "*the violence of his character*". So just like Thersites, the reader finds the scales are weighted against this character right from the start, and Thucydides makes sure they stay weighted that way. After Cleon's death in 422 his final comment on him is about his motives for opposing a peace deal with Sparta: they are thoroughly selfish and

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[2] Hes. *WD.* 202-12.

[3] frr. 5-6 West.

[4] 'Ephialtes the Moderate?', *G&R* 40 (1993) 11-19.

[5] [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 25.4; Diod. 11.77; Plut. *Cimon* 15.

[6] Thuc. 3.36.6.

immoral, a pointed contrast with the Spartan Brasidas.[7]

At the end of the Pylos debate in 425 we are told Cleon's promise to bring the trapped Spartans back to Athens as prisoners within 20 days provoked a sceptical laughter in the assembly, but the "*sensible men*" (i.e., the Athenian *aristoi*), of whom Thucydides was one, were pleased that Cleon had been given a special command, since either they would see an Athenian success, or they would "*get rid of*" Cleon (i.e., he would be killed in battle), "*which they rather looked for*" (the Greek verb used here, *elpizon*, implies that the expected outcome is also the preferred one).[8] Note how this group of Athenians actually welcomed an Athenian military defeat, if it would rid them of a political irritant! Cleon's promise, which he actually fulfilled - a terrific military and political triumph for Athens – is flatly described by Thucydides as "mad";[9] note again the contrast between the 'mad', 'foolish' upstart and the 'sensible' *aristoi*. When Cleon actually was killed in battle, at Amphipolis in 422, Thucydides singles him out for behaving like a coward (fleeing, killed by a peltast, not a hoplite),[10] though he seems to have acted no differently from the other Athenian troops, when outmanoeuvred and out-generalled by the exceptional Spartan commander Brasidas.

Aristophanes is just as bad; no - much worse! The whole of his *Knights* (424) is a relentless onslaught on Cleon, presented in his play as a cowardly, greedy, lying leather-selling slave (the lowest social class and occupation imaginable). None of this is accurate, of course. Cleon was an Athenian citizen, from probably the highest wealth class – his father had built up a tannery business (hence Aristophanes' idea of Cleon as a crooked leather-goods huckster in the market place).[11] Cleon was not traditional landed-gentry, he was a *nouveau riche*, and politically he pandered to and associated himself with the common people, the *demos*, even though technically he didn't come from it himself. There is an excellent book by Connor on these *nouveau riche* politicians of the late 5th century, and their presentation by hostile sources.[12]

The *Knights* was an obvious attempt to damage Cleon politically by exposing him to sustained public ridicule – that was its intention. The play did make the audience in the theatre laugh, it won first prize - but it had no political effect. A few months later Cleon was re-elected general – an unpalatable event which Aristophanes later complained loudly about in the *Clouds*.[13]

After Cleon's death there was no let up. The portrayal of him as a physically repulsive Tolkienesque monster in *Peace* of 421 is a masterpiece of vindictive bad taste.[14] This was a man who had just died fighting for Athens. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*? – you must be joking!

In the late 5th century there were several 'mini' Cleons in Athens – demagogues who tried to ape his successful career. Two of them, Androcles and Hyperbolus, were summarily dealt with.[15] They were both murdered by oligarchs in 411, Androcles because of what he was, Hyperbolus, despite the fact that he was in exile in Samos, and had lost his political clout at home. Significantly, in his account, Thucydides does not merely not condemn the oligarch perpetrators of these crimes – in the case of Hyperbolus he goes out of his way to stigmatise the victim.

The last 5th century demagogue to get the violent treatment was the more substantial figure of Cleophon, when he was a stumbling block to the unconditional surrender demanded by Sparta in 404. A sympathetic press in the modern era might have presented Cleophon as a Churchillian figure (*"we will fight them on the beaches"* and all that). But we don't get

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[7] 5.16.1.

[8] 4.28.5.

[9] 4.39.3 (Gk. *maniôdês*).

[10] 5.10.9.

[11] Ar. *Eq.* 125-43.

[12] Connor, W.R., *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens*, Princeton, 1971.

[13] *Nub.* 581-87.

[14] *Pax* 751-60 ('camel's arse', 'unwashed balls')

[15] Thuc. 8.65.2; 8.73.3.

that line in our sources (after all Cleophon had made his money from making and selling fiddles!). He was condemned to death on a trumped-up charge by a packed jury and executed.[16] Once again it is the victim who is castigated. 'Aristotle' tells us that Cleophon has even shocked people by appearing drunk in the assembly, theatrically wearing a breast-plate. So obviously he deserved to be got rid of. Quite unlike Winston, who never stage-managed an appearance, or let a drop of liquor pass his lips!

A particularly frank and stark example of oligarchic class-hierarchy thinking can be found in a short pamphlet (probably 420's) by pseudo-Xenophon, or the 'Old Oligarch'. Simplistic and exaggerated some of the arguments may be, but the unknown author's overall viewpoint is certainly not untypical.

Like so many others, he sees Greek, in this case Athenian, society as fundamentally divided into two mutually opposed social classes, the *aristoi* or *oligoi* (his own class, naturally superior) and the *demos*, naturally inferior. Just three references to illustrate my theme today: - a) 1.6. In his crude class-contrast the 'natural' characteristics of the *demos* are all reprehensible (note 'lack of discipline'); b) 1.9 If the 'educated' and 'best men' (i.e. the *aristoi*) gain power, they will not allow 'mad' people to play a role in politics; indeed they will, quite properly, reduce the *demos* to slavery; c) 1.10. The *demos*' dress and looks are dowdy – so much so that out and about they cannot visually be distinguished from slaves.

This last point leads me on to a famous, or infamous passage, in Plato's *Republic*.[17] Despite the disastrous failure of the two brief oligarchic regimes at Athens (in 411 and 404-3), the anti-democratic, anti-demagogic gut sentiments of the "best men" still lingered on in the 4th century, and can clearly be see e.g. in the right wing political prejudices of the (very influential) philosopher Plato, who in his list of preferred constitutions in Bk. 8 of the *Republic* (c.380) puts democracy 4th out of 5, below oligarchy of wealth, and only above tyranny. In the passage referred to, his mouthpiece Socrates explains that too much freedom (something taken for granted as typical of democracy) is intoxicating. The *demos* cannot handle it, they haven't got the head for it - like too strong wine, it makes them unrestrained and disordered; *and the same effect can be seen in Athens' animals too*![18] The implication here surely is that for Plato and his ilk there is little difference between the common people and animals, just as for the Old Oligarch there is little difference between them and slaves, and in Aristophanes' *Knights* Cleon is presented as no more than an uppity foreign slave and/or low life huckster.

Finally, a passage from Xenophon's history, the *Hellenica*, this part written probably in the 350's.[19] In 386 the Spartans had attacked their supposed ally, Mantinea, on a flimsy pretext: it had not been as dutiful as it should have been. After a siege, they forced its surrender, and then enforced a sort of class-cleansing, by which the town dwellers, mostly democrats, were forced to go and live in oligarchically controlled villages in the countryside. The democratic party and their leaders, the *demagogoi*, tramp off, demoralised, to the unseemly delight of the local, pro-Spartan oligarchs. The Spartans themselves behave better. According to Xenophon, they leant on their spears and did them no harm, "though they hated them" (20). But why? They were the aggressors – surely any hatred justifiably felt at this situation should have been by the Mantinean democrats *against* their invaders and conquerors? No. It is the innate class hatred of the *aristoi* (here the Spartan warrior elite) for the *demos*, and *demos*, which Xenophon sees as natural and understandable, and he comments on it. The feelings of the victims here do not count. Truly, as Engels said, there is no hatred so strong as that felt by the rich and powerful towards the poor and weak, if ever they challenge their privileges. That

[16] [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 34.1; Lys. 13.12, 30.10.

[17] Pl. *Resp.* 8.562b-63d.

[18] 8.562e3-5.

[19] Xen. *HG.* 5.2.6-7.

is why, 20 years this week, the British miners went, at a stroke, from being the salt of the earth to "the enemy within".

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Democracy – an aberration

To see democracy as characteristically Greek, to posit a defining contrast between Greek democracy as against Macedonian autocracy, Roman authoritarianism, barbarian despotism, is a gross over-simplification. It's often been done, but wrongly so. Democracy, the rule of the *demos*, was actually a historical aberration in the Greek world – a form of government only *successfully* and *continuously* practised in one *polis* out of seven hundred. Yes, we do hear of it elsewhere, but apart from Athens, the evidence suggests that democratic government elsewhere is invariably precariously established, always under threat from within and usually short-lived – sustained in these *poleis* only by the influence, direct or indirect, of its one successful and powerful practitioner. It is clear from the sources that this is true of e.g. Argos in the 470's and 460's, Corcyra in the early 420's, Megara in 446 and 424, the smaller cities of Boeotia in the 450's, and all the Aegean island and coastal states in the later 5th century. When we hear of democratic government in any of these states, it is always under threat, and usually dependent for its survival on the political and military support of Athens.

The natural form of polis government for a Greek was some sort of oligarchy – rule of the wealthy, propertied elite, the few, the "best men", the *aristoi*, often (though not always) also "well-born" (aristocratic in the modern sense); and for Greeks of all periods that was not just natural, but also right and proper. It was widely believed, not just by extremists, that in all states there were two classes, the rich, educated *aristoi*, and the poor, ignorant *demos*; and the latter were, and should always be, politically subordinate to the former.

We are dazzled by the overwhelmingly bright star, the shining example of Athens – overwhelming because of its intellectual and cultural magnetism, its dynamic literature, its powerful philosophy, its unrivalled architecture, art and sculpture. But the politics of Athens were, in most Greek eyes, an aberration, a deviation from the norm (cf. Old Oligarch 1.1 – only a slight exaggeration). That's why Pericles is rather defensive about Athens' uniqueness in the *Funeral Oration*. When the Macedonian Antipater, after the death of Alexander, abolished democracy at Athens in 322 by a ruthless act of 'class-cleansing', expelling many thousands of the poorest class, the Thetes, to Thrace, and set up a property-owning oligarchy, he was not just ensuring a politically compliant Athens (on the correct assumption that the wealthier classes looked more favourably on Macedonian rule), he was also restoring Athens to what was widely considered in the Greek world to be a more natural and proper form of government. And, despite a few hiccups over the next 50 years, that's how things stayed there in effect for the rest of antiquity.

And without Athens ecclesial democracy could not, and did not, survive anywhere else, not in its full form, or for an established period of time.[20] It shrivelled and died. This was partly a result of brute power, of course: Macedonian generals, Hellenistic monarchs, Roman governors – none of these had any great ideological affinity with democracy. But it was also *a matter of will*, or *lack of it*. The last thing the

[20] But cf. P.Rhodes, *Decrees of the Greek States*, Oxford, 1997, 531-6.

Greek propertied class wanted was a rebirth of full blown democracy anywhere they lived. It was they who set the political and social norms – as they always had, almost everywhere. When Plato in the *Republic* ranked democracy 4th out of 5 in his preferred order of constitutions, lower than a conventional oligarchy of wealth (despite the recent excesses of the rule of the 30) and above only tyranny, probably the only place in the Greek world where that was regarded as controversial was his home city itself!

The best men, the *aristoi*, the rich few, could see that they were richer, better educated, better dressed than the *demos*; they thought they were physically handsome, too, and perhaps mostly they were, because they could afford a better diet. Hence they took it for granted that they were both politically abler and morally superior to the *demos*. They therefore should rule, and the *demos* should be ruled. The *demos* was expected to accept this, and doubtless *many of them did*. The deference factor has always been strong in politics, ancient and modern. Until quite recently many working class people in this country voted Conservative on that basis – "Tories know how to rule, they are born to it." In a perceptive article on the Mytilenean debate in *Phoenix* (1962) Antony Andrewes shrewdly argued that throughout history the upper classes have dominated society so thoroughly that they have made any deviation from *their* speech and *their* habits seem ludicrous, *however widespread* (I would also add *their* dress, pastimes and values). Thus it was in the Greek world. The *aristoi* at all periods has a profoundly class-based view of politics and society – they were naturally superior, and they naturally should rule; and many members of the *demos* shared that view, or at least acquiesced in it. There is an interesting little book by Starr.[21] He and I are in agreement on this – where we differ is he applauds it, I do not.

Dêmokratia crowns the dêmos

But then came 5th century Athens to upset the applecart for a while, and give *demos's* everywhere a different perspective. It didn't last, even in Athens, where many *aristoi*, like the Old Oligarch, never really came to terms with the system, even though they themselves were allowed a very free rein within it, and several flourished politically (e.g., Aristides, Cimon, Pericles). The trouble was that democracy left the way open for others, non-*aristoi*, demagogues, upstarts, troublemakers, Cleon and his ilk or worse, to deceive and exploit the gullible *demos*, and incite them to criticise *them*, and cause *them* grief. It had to stop, and eventually, with a little helping hand from the Macedonians and the Romans, it did – and the *demos*' of the Greek world reconciled themselves once again to the natural order of things, *whereby everyone knew and accepted their political and social place, and one didn't get above one's station*.

John Marr

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[21] Starr, C., *The Aristocratic temper of Greek Civilization*, New York, 1992.

Gender Reversal in Greek Tragedy

Why does gender role reversal happen in Greek tragedy? What is its aesthetic and emotional effect? The theatre can be viewed as a mirror that reflects social and cultural organisation, consolidating the audience's knowledge of the society around them and thus comforting them with its familiarity. However, the question lies in whether we look into the mirror for an 'accurate' representation or whether we question "the nature of the mirror itself and its ability to reflect what is increasingly seen as an unstable, non-unified self", thus rendering the theatrical mirror an 'empty frame' and thus open to alterations of the society within it.[1] Sophocles' tendency to 'run over' formal distinctions, including the positive value that the Greeks placed "on the silence of women and on silence about women",[2] 'run over' also by other dramatists, involves "the appearance of women on the stage...disclosing...uncomfortable truths that the society and particularly the men of society might prefer to keep hidden". Hippolytos, in Euripides' play, called women "a counterfeit coin" [616], and his wish that women do not speak publicly or even have servants to speak for them [645-58] is granted by the convention that eliminated women's actual voices and bodies from the production. The silence that is associated with women is interestingly broken in tragedy, and may be part of the complexities of gender role reversal in Greek tragedy. We can understand 'gender-bending' in the context of Greek dramatic conventions. Effeminacy in men was not perceived in the same way and, as in Elizabethan times, it is understood that women were not allowed on the stage. It is the modern absence of "some dominant tragic conception",[3] that therefore allows gender-bending and its ensuing aesthetic and emotional effects to be sustained with

continuing success, not just regarding the audience but the actors themselves.

John Colliers' Clytaemnestra.

Gender inversion in tragedy, very simply put (although of course this basic description does involve various tangents), seems to involve men appearing effeminate and un-masculine, or women not fulfilling the roles that Greek society wants them to fulfil, or that they feel destined to fulfil. The three tragedians and Aristophanes certainly made use of these conventions. In Euripides' *Alcestis* occurs the phrase "Does he really seem a man?" [957], and similarly in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, the lamentation runs: "Pity me...moaning and weeping like a girl; and none can say that he ever saw Heracles do this before; nay I ever followed trouble's lead without a sigh. But now - ah me! - instead of that, I have been found a

[1] Dolan, J., 'Gender Impersonisation on Stage: Destroying or Maintaining the Mirror of Gender Roles?', in Senlick, L. (ed.), *Gender in Performance*, Hanove 1993, 3-5.

[2] Taken from a paper presented by Sheila Murnaghan at the Tantalus Symposium, University of Pennsylvania, 30/10/00.

[3] Kitto, H.D.F., *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study*, London 1939, 312.

woman" [1074-1078]. In Euripides' *Helen*, however, this inversion becomes more complex, Menelaos saying in lines 1017-23 that: "I cannot bring myself to fall to the ground/ and hug your knees and let loose floods of tears - / such abject, weak behaviour would disgrace / the memory of Troy. And yet they say / that high-born men in deep distress have wept / without dishonour. All the same, I spurn / this doubtful style of manhood."

This is despite him proudly speaking earlier of tears of joy. If this is compared to Greek epic, which admittedly came earlier In the *Odyssey*, the opening scene of book 5 where Odysseus is seen crying is generally interpreted as being humanitarian rather than weak, as it was set in a time where it was deemed acceptable for men to display more feminine characteristics. This, while perhaps endorsing its acceptability among male actors, also emphasises the polarity between the epic and tragic genres - there are no blatantly feminised men in Homer. The gender inversion is restored to its simplicity somewhat in Sophocles' *Ajax*, via the phrase "I...have been softened like a woman in my speech" [649, 651] - although later on the instruction is issued that the characters are "not [to be] like women when [they] should be men" [1183]. For a similar kind of reproach one can compare *Il.* 7.96, 8.163. Conversely, however, at *OC* 1368 Oedipus says that his daughters are men, not women; but at *El.* 997 Electra is reminded that she is a woman, not a man. This is where instances of subversion of the female role begin to creep in. Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusai* sees one woman saying that "A woman can't do any of the things she used to do in the old days" - this can be interpreted as a wish to subvert the order of things back again. However, sometimes the role is subverted involuntarily - that is to say, by men; in Euripides' *Hecuba* ("man-murdering women" [1119]) and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* ("the female is the murderer of the male" [1231]), the example of a murdering woman is held up almost disbelievingly, to show women breaking the silence, breaking out of their social position, and thus acting antithetically, controversy perhaps serving as a reason for the persistent survival of tragedy. Feminine power is perhaps paradoxically masculine because it is powerful - and this is something that does appear in epic, Athena frequently being portrayed wearing armour.

To consolidate further the idea of women assuming 'male' qualities, there are examples where 'female' reputations are shunned involuntarily in order to make the characters stronger in the eyes of men. Polymestor says to Hecuba, "Quarters I can trust? A place without men?" [1071], and Clytemnaestra, in *Agamemnon*, says affirmatively, "Such is my boast, a boast replete with truth, / Not shameful for a noble lady to utter" [612-3] - both phrases employing irony in a time where women were more likely to be associated with deceit. The ensuing choral echo allows identity and gender to be questioned, and the spirit of the phrase itself shows that such inversion of characteristics is in constant flux. The same play introduces "a woman's man-counselling, ever hopeful, heart" [11], and thus the idea that women can support men, as well as the other way around, and thus having a 'useful' purpose.

However, in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, we find an instance of gender-'reduction', rather than inversion (that is to say, becoming 'less' of a woman if one of the prerequisites of womanhood is removed). There is, in this play, a great emphasis on barrenness as the women lament over the loss of their children ("They are childless" [11]; "Artemis, helper of childbirth, will not speak / Her word of cheer to our barren lives" [961-2]). It is expressed as if barrenness is indicative of almost being a 'fallen' woman, and this can be interestingly cross-referred to Federico Garcia Lorca's play, *Yerma*,[4] where the eponymous heroine does not feel that she will 'become' a woman and thus acquire a 'complete' identity unless she has a child. It is interesting to speculate on whether this psychological process is reversed in plays like *Suppliant Women*, where children are lost rather than gained.

[4] Lorca, F.G., *Yerma*, London 1987 (trans. Peter Luke).

Simone de Beauvoir's consolidating quote, "On ne nait pas femme, on la devient" emphasises the recurring idea throughout literature, drama and philosophy that gender and sex are separable. Here it would be worthwhile to introduce the theory that actors who were willing to play female parts were perhaps slightly effeminate anyway. The gender of a female character does not depend on or correlate with 'her' sex, and this is compounded further by the masking convention of tragedy. In reversing gender roles, then, a challenge is thus constituted to the fixity of gender and sex.

This flexibility allowed for subjectivity or objectivity to come into the audience's viewing of the play, as well as into the minds of the actors. Objectivity, or 'authorial' acting would have been necessary if they had wanted to emphasise dramatic irony. This is particularly pertinent to Euripides' *Bacchae*, as well as Aristophanes' *Thesmophorizusai* ("But when you speak, mind you put on a real feminine voice") - the audience, perhaps the 'authorial' rather than the 'narrative', would have been all too aware of male actors playing women, so the horror expressed by male characters in these plays at having to do so only compounds the irony that is only enabled by gender reversal. The very existence of tragedies such as these shows the extent to which transvestivism was built into the beginnings of theatre.

Another unanimously agreed anomaly in Greek tragedy is that of Medea. All critics seem to agree that she is an enigmatic figure, but while she does return to the crux of her maternal roots, showing that she is "a real woman...a mother who is prepared to violate the deepest instincts of her womanhood", it is blatant that she feels "betrayed by the womanhood that she has come to hate".[5] She deliberately imitates the brand of heroic masculinity that surrounds her, and has tried to suppress this voice for too

Margot Serowy's Medea.

long. "In addition, she has come to envision all that is female as despicable",[6] and this, in a perverse way, would reinforce the validity of Greek masculinity at the time of it being written - now, it would not be considered a bad thing that Medea seeks male substance, given the modern viewpoint that females are not expected to retain the passive, submissive stance that they once were. Another interesting idea is that "Tragedy gives voice to choices or persuasive arguments made from a perspective it defines as female (eg. Electra, Antigone, Iphigenia, Aethra, Hecuba, Jocasta) or sometimes (as in the case of Aeschylus' Clytemnaestra or Euripides' Medea) androgynous, as well as male".[7] The concept of androgyny on the stage diverts from the male, without completely digressing to the female, and

[5] Galis, L., 'Medea's Metamorphosis', *Eranos* 90 (1992) 65-81.

[6] Foley, H.P., *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, Princeton 2001, 180.

[7] ibid., 1.

thus permitting diversity, traditional male and female roles being subverted and queried.

It has been suggested that "in Euripides' *Hippolytus* or *Bacchae*, the blurring of gender boundaries has permanent and tragic consequences. For the sexuality and mature experience of Helen and Alcestis only marginally compromise their dramatic representation. In the past, the happy denouement of these tragicomic plays is permitted because Helen and Alcestis cross gender boundaries in the service of their marriage and their husbands...tragic play with gender is permitted in a sphere carefully circumscribed and authorised by the structures of myth and ritual, but ultimately subject at its conclusion to the constrictions of social and political reality".[8] It can be hypothesised, then, that the beauty and success of tragedy partly lies in the crossing of gender boundaries, but retaining the realistic qualities that allow the audience to appreciate the dramatic irony that tragedy entailed and perhaps still entails today, even if perhaps not in the same way. In John Barton's epic play cycle *Tantalus*, "the treatment of Achilles' son Neoptolemus draws on ancient conceptions of becoming female as, for a man, a form of demoralisation. When Neoptolemus is corrupted...we see him adopting the role of a woman, pretending to be Pyrrha, and through that very pretence becoming womanish". If, as it has been argued (by Jack Winkler in 1990, and, perhaps on a similar plane, more recently (albeit perhaps more biologically speaking), Rebecca Langlands, in her paper Women in Antiquity, gender was on a continuum for the Greeks, and there was a risk that the normative male could, by being softened, end up female, the male actor of female roles might be one site of crossover or leakage.

Moreover, this very principle permitted men to free themselves, temporarily at least, from the need to be masculine. "The cross-dressed actor was crucial, a sign of the conventional nature of the drama. Male playing female is inevitably distanced from the role and makes it clear that the role of the woman is an idealisation, not a realisation. Men could play women, but it is vital that the audience remembers: no matter how realistic their portrayal of the woman, this does not make them female. Nevertheless, gender reversal in Greek tragedy permits, in this way, the acquisition of understanding of the opposite sex, and therefore gaining an interior dimension. Strengthening this is the presence of characters involved in magic or prophesying (eg. in Euripides' *Bacchae*), which, if one considers other dangerous and magical women in Greek literature as a whole, such as Circe, can clearly be read as feminine characteristics. To compound this further as I move towards my conclusion, Peter Ackroyd points out in his book *Dressing Up* that shamans dressed as women were men appropriating female power, symbolically striving for their own androgynous unity while rejecting the actuality of women.[9]

At the time this may have been seen as re-inscribing patriarchy and being something of a site of resistance to it. "The transformation from male to female was significant to the ancient Greeks because they took gender differences as a framing dichotomy through which to interpret the world. And while the categories slave/free and non-Greek/Greek provided similar axes, gender is especially prominent as an overt issue in the plays' plots."[10] Although this dichotomy is merely one among others in the Greek world (the male/female schism operating alongside the human/animal and mortal/immortal polarities e.g. "you are like an animal" - *Bacchae*), despite the possibility of it becoming more blurred since suffragism, still exists nonetheless, explaining the inherent controversy in such plays as Caryl Churchill's play, *Cloud Nine*, where "Betty, Clive's wife, is played by a man because she wants to be what men want her to be. Edward, Clive's son, is played

[8] ibid., 331.

[9] Ackroyd, P., *Dressing Up: The History of an Obsession*, New York 1979.

[10] Rabinowitz, N., *The Male Actor of Greek Tragedy: Evidence of Misogyny or Gender-Bending?*, Didaskalia supp. 1, 1995.

by a woman...partly to do with the stage convention of having boys played by women...and partly with highlighting the way Clive tries to impose traditional male behaviour on him." An appropriate recapitulation of this point lies in a line from the play, "My skin is black but oh my soul is white", and perhaps serves as an indication of the efficacy of gender-bending, which has clearly led to a successful progression to possible race inversion in modern theatre too.

Bianca Summons
1st Year Classical Studies

The Curse of the Gallic Gold

[*I found this text (written in biro on re-used foolscap) at the back of the filing cabinet as I was moving my stuff out of Queen's Building last September. It was written forty years ago, when I was Assistant Lecturer in Classics at the University of Leicester, and it was intended as a lecture for a non-specialist audience (though I don't think it was ever given). I've resisted the temptation to rewrite it, and added only the genealogical diagram, which I think is essential to be able to follow the plot.*]

Toulouse, in Haute-Garonne in the south-west, is the fourth city of France, and celebrated for the manufacture of Gauloises. More important, it controls the route from Provence (the Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis) to Bordeaux and the coast of the Bay of Biscay. In ancient times it was Tolosa, the tribal capital of the Tectosages, one of the warlike Gallic tribes which frequently threatened and always terrified the Romans until Caesar finally subjected them in the fifties BC.

We don't know if the Tectosages were among the Gauls led by Brennus who captured Rome in 390 and were bought off by Camillus; but they were certainly one of the contingents under another Brennus who invaded Greece and sacked the sanctuary at Delphi 110 years later, in 279. The Tectosages were supposed to have brought back immense plunder from Delphi – although Brennus' force was defeated and scattered on its way home through Thessaly – but the story went that as soon as they returned the whole tribe was struck by a mysterious and deadly epidemic, and that the priests declared that this sacrilegious loot should be dumped in a nearby lake.

Other versions say the plunder was installed in the temples, which were the normal treasure-houses in ancient times; however, the Gauls notoriously worshipped in the open air, and it's quite possible that the lake, like sacred woods and groves, was dedicated to some deity, and that the story of the plague was just Roman rationalisation. But anyway, there was the treasure, in the lake. One version says it was 100,000 pounds' weight of gold and 10,000 of silver; another, five million pounds' weight of gold, 110,000 of silver.

Whether or not it was from Delphi, it was certainly spoils of war; this was the way Gallic tribes made their wealth. As such, it must have been dedicated to the god Esus, whom the Romans equated with Mars. For Caesar, in his description of Gallic customs, says that all booty won in war was sacred to Esus, and any warrior who was discovered failing to declare his loot was tortured to death (*grauissimum ei supplicium cum cruciatu constitutum est*). Esus was

evidently a jealous god, not used to being cheated of his rights.

The Romans conquered Provence in a series of campaigns between 125 and 120 BC; they made an alliance with the Tectosages and put a garrison into Tolosa. Ten years later, however, a new force appeared in southern Gaul. The Cimbri and Teutones, probably from Jutland, left their homes to look for more attractive territory. They first marched south into Jugoslavia, but were turned back by the Scordisci. A Roman army sent out to keep them out of northern Italy rashly attacked them in 113 and was defeated, but luckily the tribes went north of the Alps, entering Gaul and picking up the Tigurini (a Celtic tribe) as allies. By 109 they were threatening Narbonensis.

This was very welcome to the Tectosages, who imprisoned their garrison and allied themselves with the invaders. The consul of 107 was sent out to drive them back. He succeeded in discouraging the Cimbri from attacking Narbonensis (for the time being), but was defeated and killed in the Garonne valley, and the Tectosages stayed independent. The following year, 106, the consul Q. Servilius Caepio was despatched to the north. He had better luck, and captured Tolosa – and the treasure.

The Gallic gold now, of course, belonged to the Roman treasury, and Caepio sent it under guard to Massilia (Marseilles) to be shipped to Rome. At least, he *said* he did: the gold mysteriously disappeared. There was subsequently a court of enquiry at Rome, in which many people were convicted of purloining the gold, and it's pretty clear that it was in fact looted by the Roman soldiers – with the commander in chief getting the biggest cut. Hardly surprising: the lowest estimate of the value of the treasure would make it worth 400 million sesterces, and a soldier's pay was 480 sesterces per annum, less stoppages for food and equipment. Even centurions only got 960.

Well, Esus was robbed of his treasure, and we know what happened to men who cheated Esus. And in fact the story grew up in Rome – for good reasons, as we shall see – that whoever touched any of the gold from the sack of Tolosa died a wretched and agonising death. *Quisquis ex ea direptione aurum attigit misero cruciabilique exitu periit.* Let's see how the vengeance of Esus worked itself out.

The Cimbri had only temporarily retired, and Caepio and his thieving army stayed on to protect Narbonensis against their return. They were joined by a second army led by Cn. Mallius, consul of 105. Now, Caepio was a noble and a patrician; Mallius was a nobody, a *nouus homo*. Although the consul outranked him, Caepio disdained to co-operate with such a lowly character, and refused to join forces. He could only just bring himself to camp within a mile or two of Mallius' army, and that only because he was afraid that Mallius might get for himself alone the glory of defeating the Cimbri.

The Senate sent envoys to reconcile the two men, but Caepio wouldn't listen. The Cimbri sent envoys asking for peace and lands to settle in, but Caepio chased them away. With such lack of liaison, the result was inevitable – at Arausio (now Orange in Provence) on October 6th 105 BC, Rome suffered her worst defeat since Cannae, a century before. Eighty thousand legionaries and forty thousand other military employees and camp followers were slaughtered. Not many of the plunderers of Tolosa can have lived to enjoy their gains.

Caepio himself, however, was not killed. He was recalled to Rome and stripped of his command, then, with Mallius, accused of treason and condemned. His property was confiscated and he went into exile. One account (Valerius Maximus) says that he died in prison and his corpse was exposed in the

Forum to the horror and execration of his fellow Romans. This would fit the story of the curse, and it would be pleasant to believe it. Cicero, however, says that Caepio went into exile at Smyrna on the coast of Asia Minor; how he finally met his end we don't know.

His confiscated property, however, was later used by the popular tribune L. Saturninus to finance colonial schemes. So Saturninus should have inherited the curse – and indeed he met a most unpleasant end not four years later. After a riot in the Forum in which he and his followers had murdered a candidate for the consulship, he was besieged on the Capitol and then allowed to take shelter in the Senate-house. But a lynch mob gathered, tore a hole in the roof of the Senate-house and stoned him to death with bricks and tiles. His lieutenant Norbanus, who had been the actual prosecutor in the trial of Caepio, escaped this uproar, but met a violent end eighteen years later. Defeated by the invading proconsul L. Sulla, he was proscribed, fled to the island of Rhodes, and only avoided Sulla's executioners by committing suicide.

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120,000 war casualties, a general disgraced and exiled, two men who used his property dying violent and unpleasant deaths. But the story of the Gallic gold doesn't end there. As soon as he was recalled, Caepio must have seen the writing on the wall, and it's unlikely he kept all his share of the loot to be confiscated by Saturninus and his friends. Like modern aristocrats with death duties, so this Roman patrician will surely have distributed his money to his family and friends before the state could claim it. The account of the curse given by the Alexandrian historian Timagenes says that not only was Caepio disgraced, but his daughters became prostitutes and died shamefully. This, as we shall see, is (*a*) an exaggeration and (*b*) in all probability about Caepio's *grand*-daughters, but at least it shows that the curse for the father's crime was thought to be visited on the children. They too must have touched some of the deadly treasure.

We don't know much about Caepio's friends – the only one we hear of, L. Reginus, joined him in exile and may have died there (no details recorded) – nor about his wife. We can, however, account for most of his descendants [see the family tree], and observe how they fared against the wrath of Esus.

Caepio had been a champion of the reactionary senatorial faction against such *populares* as Saturninus and his predecessors. Another pillar of the Senate was M. Livius Drusus, who had opposed the popular hero of the previous generation, C. Gracchus, in 122. The senatorial establishment was largely based on family ties, personal friendships and intermarriages, and Caepio and Livius Drusus (who died in 109) offer a good example of this.

Caepio's daughter was married to Drusus' son, and Caepio's son (in his late twenties at the time of his father's trial) to Drusus' daughter Livia. A double alliance – but it didn't last long, because young Caepio, an energetic and unscrupulous young man, devoted himself to intense political activity after his father's disgrace in order to rescue his family's fortunes, and in doing so deeply offended his brother-in-law, the young Drusus. Details unknown, and they don't concern us here, but Livia and Caepio junior were divorced, and Livia married a certain M. Porcius Cato about 95 BC. One broken friendship, one broken marriage – and worse to come.

Cato died young, we don't know how, and left his two small children in the hands of his brother-in-law, Drusus. Drusus, however, was married to Caepio's daughter, whose dowry no doubt included gold from the treasure of Tolosa. Dangerous stuff, and Drusus was the next victim. He was tribune at a time when the Italian allies were demanding political equality with Rome, and he was a close friend of the Italian leader Q. Poppaedius Silo. Drusus proposed reforms to give the Italians what they wanted. One morning, when he was receiving his visitors in the usual Roman way, someone in the crowd stuck a shoemaker's awl between his ribs. He died – aged about thirty-five – and the murderer was never found.

Another untimely death, and an important one, because the long-suffering Italians now lost patience and made war on Rome (90 BC, the Social War). One of the Roman generals in this was none other than the late Drusus' late brother-in-law, young Caepio, now about forty years of age but as impetuous and arrogant as ever. He was conducting a campaign against the late Drusus' late friend Poppaedius Silo, when suddenly Silo himself rode up to the camp and announced that he wanted political asylum. He could lead Caepio, he said, to wipe out the now leaderless rebel army. Caepio believed him, and marched straight into an ambush. He and most of his force were cut to pieces by Silo's men.

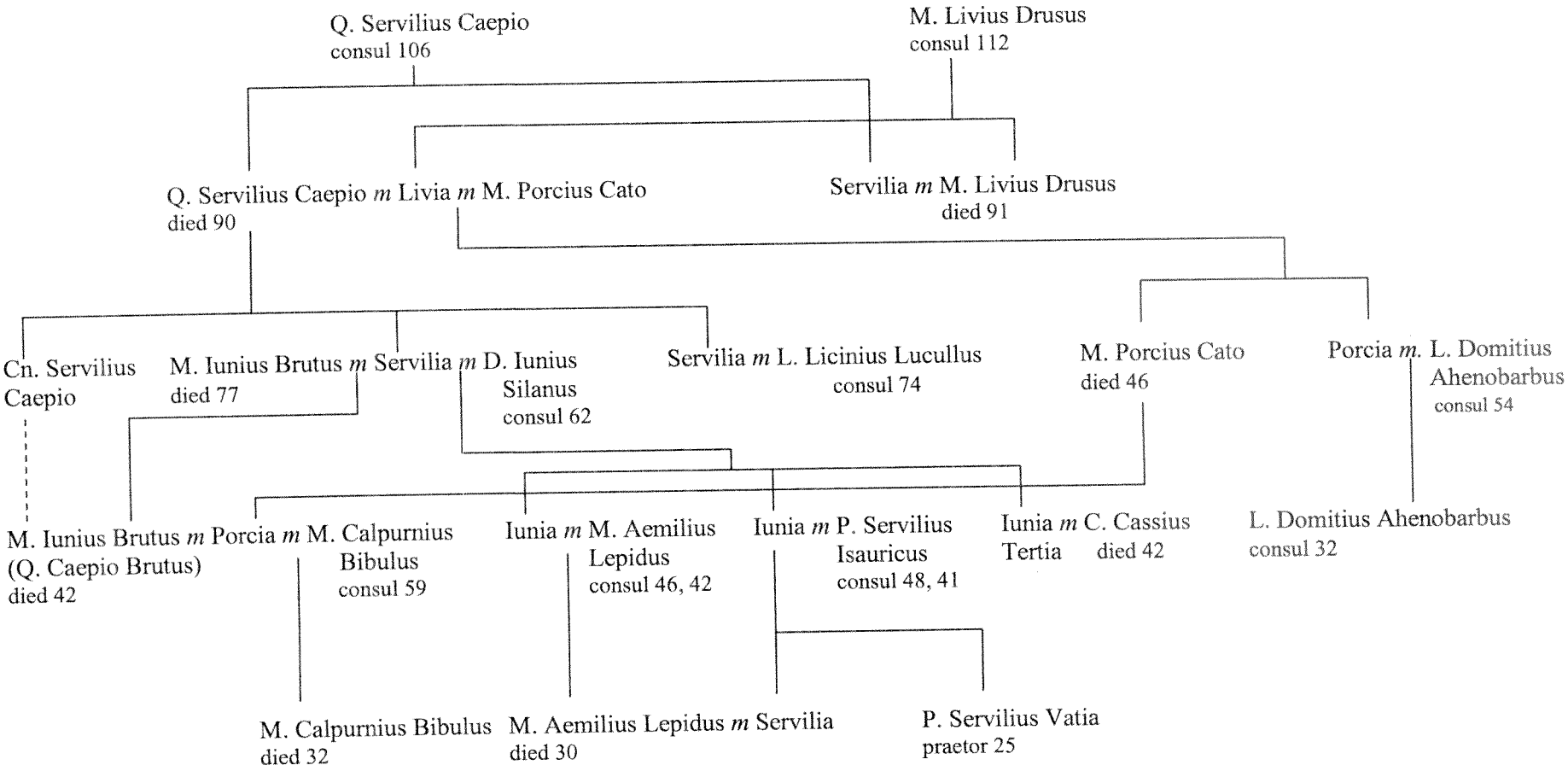
This was of course a crippling blow for the Servilii, but the family survived; for the younger Caepio had three children, two of them daughters, admittedly, but one son, to carry on the name of the Caepiones. These three were brought up with Livia's other family, the son and daughter of M. Cato; and the two boys, young Caepio and young Cato, though only half-brothers, were in fact very close. The eldest of all the five, however, was one of the two Serviliae, who was probably about twelve or thirteen when her father was killed, and who not long afterwards married a certain M. Iunius Brutus. This Brutus therefore assumed responsibility for the orphaned brothers and sisters of his young bride, but her deadly dowry soon settled his hash too.

The dictator Sulla, who had seized power by a military invasion not long after the end of the Social War (Norbanus, whom we've already mentioned, was one of his opponents and one of his victims), died in 78 BC. There was an immediate movement to cancel his reactionary reforms, led by M. Aemilius Lepidus, one of the consuls of that year, and his right-hand man, Servilia's husband Brutus. The other consul of the year invoked Pompey, a brutal and unprincipled young man who had made a brilliant military reputation fighting for Sulla, to put down this rising. Lepidus was defeated but fled to Sardinia, Brutus was besieged by Pompey in Mutina in north Italy, and surrendered to him. Pompey, however, didn't play by the rules of war, and had him murdered. So Servilia, now in her early twenties, was left a widow, with a young son and three daughters – and a long career of politics and intrigue ahead of her. Her brother Caepio inherited the dangerous position of head of the family.

Pompey's brutality and treachery had earned him the hatred of Servilia's family (particularly Cato), but Pompey became powerful, and the Servilii desperately needed powerful support. When young Caepio was old enough to hold public office, it seems that he swallowed his family's grudge for the sake of its ambition, and went out to serve as quaestor under Pompey in Asia in 67. On his way there, he fell ill at a place called Aenus in Thrace. His beloved half-brother Cato braved tempestuous seas to be at his bedside, but regrettably arrived a day too late; Caepio was dead, at the age of thirty. His heirs were his small daughter, and Cato – proof enough that he had no son. But the name of Caepio could be preserved: his sister's son, M. Iunius Brutus the younger, is also called Q. Caepio Brutus in our sources, so his uncle must have adopted him, no doubt in his will.

Now that the male line of the Caepiones had been destroyed, it might seem that the ghostly guardian of the Gallic gold could consider his work finished, and indeed the luckless

Genealogical Table



descendants of the man who sacked Tolosa seem to have had nearly twenty years free from battle, murder and sudden death before disaster struck again. Let's fill up those twenty years by looking at the two Serviliae, sisters of the last Caepio.

You remember that according to Timagenes, one of the proofs of the efficacy of the curse was that the daughters of the first Caepio became prostitutes. However, he only had one daughter, and we know nothing to her discredit. But his two grand-daughters, these Serviliae, had rather poor reputations for marital fidelity – which, given the freedom and virulence of slander at Rome, can easily account for Timagenes' exaggerated charge.

Brutus' mother was notoriously the mistress of Julius Caesar (still a junior senator at this time, in the sixties), hence the later suspicion that Brutus was Caesar's illegitimate son. There are several stories about these two, and the liaison was sufficiently well known to earn Servilia Timagenes' unsavoury epithet. Her sister was no better: the great general Lucullus, who defeated Mithridates in the East before being superseded in his command by the ambitious and ubiquitous Pompey, divorced his first wife Clodia for infidelity as soon as he returned to Rome in 66, and married the younger Servilia. It was out of the marital frying pan into the fire, however – Lucullus was now nearly sixty, and Servilia was no more scrupulous than her predecessor in looking for entertainment elsewhere. Lucullus put up with this for a long time out of regard for Cato, but eventually had to divorce her.

To be fair to the Serviliae, there was probably more to this than mere immorality. They were as proud and ambitious as the ill-fated menfolk of their family had been, and in the sophisticated and corrupt society of the late Republic, adultery was almost as regular a means of political alliance as the traditional system of dynastic marriage.

Both techniques are startlingly illustrated in the years 62-59, the years of Pompey's triumphant return from the East and his attempts to install himself as the number one man in Roman politics. The resentful Lucullus, whose command Pompey had usurped, was mustering the conservatives against him, and all the cliques of the Roman nobility were watching carefully to see what moves would be most profitable. This produced a bewildering profusion of alliances – marital and otherwise – as the various factions and pressure-groups manoeuvred for power.

Pompey himself, as soon as he returned, divorced his wife Mucia for her adultery with Caesar, and asked for Cato's two marriageable nieces (the two elder Iuniae on the family tree, Servilia's daughters) for his son and himself, but was indignantly refused. He had, after all, murdered their father. The young P. Clodius, brother of Lucullus' first wife, was pursuing an affair with Caesar's wife Pompeia; another of his sisters, married to Mucia's half-brother Metellus Celer, was said to be negotiating for a marriage alliance with Cicero; Caesar divorced Pompeia; Pompey married Caesar's daughter, previously engaged to young Caepio Brutus; Brutus was offered instead Pompey's own daughter, although she was betrothed to Faustus, the son of Sulla. Meanwhile C. Memmius, who was married to Faustus Sulla's sister and related by marriage to Pompey, succeeded in seducing Lucullus' wife, the younger Servilia, and also the wife of Lucullus' brother.

Cato and the Serviliae were deeply involved in all this confused political in-fighting, but Cato himself, ever the unbending and selfrighteous guardian of public morality, thundered in the Senate in 59: 'It is intolerable that the leadership of the state should be prostituted in this way, and that men should help each other to provinces, armies and commands by means of women.' It was sour grapes – his own family had got little or nothing from these hectic permutations, and the alliance of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus now dominated Roman politics. But if the Serviliae had failed, it was not for want of trying; and indeed, with Caesar's mistress in the family it was arguable that

they had not failed at all – though Cato could hardly be expected to boast of *that*.

Before we leave the fascinating Serviliae, let's see how far they succeeded in infecting their various menfolk with the lethal heritage of Caepio. The elder Brutus, as we have seen, was murdered; Servilia's second husband, D. Iunius Silanus, died in middle age, details not known. Lucullus, married to the other Servilia, was one of the richest men in Rome, and seemed to have everything; but Pompey cheated him of political dominance, both his wives were unfaithful to him, and he went insane and died at the age of about 68. His wife's one identifiable lover, C. Memmius, tried to buy the consulship of 53 for ten million sesterces, was exiled (despite trying to get round Pompey through *his* wife – he never gave up), and was dead before he was fifty. As for the lover of the other Servilia, we know what happened to him: twenty-three dagger wounds, one of them mortal, on the morning of March 15th 44 BC.

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This, however, is getting ahead of events. Let's get back to 59, when, as I said, the alliance of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus became the dominant element in Roman politics, designed to frustrate the conservative and aristocratic faction (the *boni*) which was now led by Cato and his family – in particular, Cato's son-in-law M. Calpurnius Bibulus and his brother-in-law L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, both implacable enemies of Caesar. Caesar was in fact the main opponent of the *boni*; Pompey had always had a hankering to be accepted by the nobility as one of them (or better still, their leader), and by playing on this, and on his incipient jealousy of Caesar, Cato and the *boni* succeeded during the fifties in alienating the two dynasts. (Crassus died in 53.)

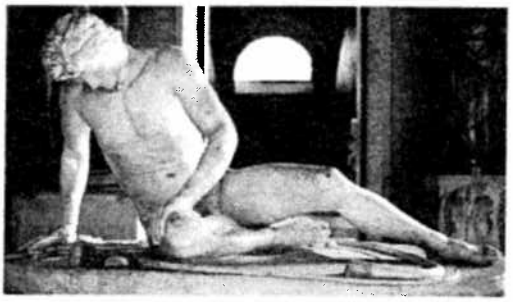
Caesar, away in Gaul, became more and more certain that his political future in Rome would be dim indeed if the faction of Cato overcame their repugnance for Pompey and allied with him against Caesar himself; so he took the initiative and crossed the Rubicon into Italy during the winter of 50-49 BC. Civil war – and the *boni* fled with Pompey to Greece. How did Cato and his kinsmen fare, related as they were so dangerously closely to the doomed Servilii?

Bibulus, to take him first, was put in charge of a fleet operating in the Adriatic to cut Caesar off from the Pompeian headquarters in Greece. During the winter of 49-48 he died at the age of fifty-one, worn out by hard work and cold (*labore atque frigore confectus*, says Caesar). The following autumn, Ahenobarbus was commanding the right wing of Pompey's army in the first full-scale clash with Caesar, at Pharsalus; Pompey's line broke before the grim and silent sword-work of Caesar's veterans, and Ahenobarbus fled. But Caesar's cavalry rode faster, and they hacked him down.

Pompey escaped, but was murdered in Egypt. Cato gathered the remnants of the Pompeian forces and retired to north Africa. Two years later, Caesar landed in Africa and began to march on Utica, Cato's headquarters. The local garrison fled, and Cato supervised the evacuation of his forces before returning with his friends to dinner, where the conversation turned to philosophy. Cato gave a homily on the Stoic doctrine that only the good man is free, and then retired to read Plato's *Phaedo*, the dialogue on the soul. During the night he got hold of a sword and tried to thrust it into his heart. He failed, knocked over a table and woke his physicians, who rushed in and tried to save him. But Cato tore the wound open with his own hands, and died. He was forty-eight.

Caepio Brutus, now in his late thirties, had fought at Pharsalus and escaped, but was pardoned by the victorious Caesar for the sake of his mother Servilia. Indeed, and not surprisingly, Caesar showed great favour to the family of Servilia; her two eldest daughters were married to two of Caesar's most trusted officers, Lepidus and Servilius Isauricus, and the third to a younger man, the 'lean and hungry' C. Cassius. Caesar was supposed to be suspicious of Cassius, but he trusted him – like Brutus – with a praetorship in 44.

However, the ideas of Cato and the *boni* lived on in Brutus, who had more than a streak of his uncle's fanatical Stoicism, and his devotion to Cato's memory is proved by his marriage to Cato's daughter, Bibulus' widow Porcia. So Brutus and his brother-in-law Cassius headed the conspiracy that cut down the dictator, and subsequently fled to the East to prepare forces against Caesar's heirs, Antony and the young Octavian.



If you know your Shakespeare, you know what happened. The two forces met at Philippi in 42 BC; Cassius thought that Brutus' wing was losing, and fell on his sword; Brutus arrived, saw the corpse, and fell on *his*. A *miser cruciabilisque exitus* indeed. 'O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet – Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords To our own entrails.' So Shakespeare makes Brutus speak over Cassius' body – but if anyone's spirit was walking abroad that day, surely it was that of old Caepio and his ill-gotten treasure that killed Brutus, his great-grandson by adoption, and Cassius, the husband of his great-granddaughter.

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The next and final stage of the civil wars was the duel between Antony and Octavian. This accounted for two of the minor characters, Cato's nephew, the younger Ahenobarbus, who deserted to Octavian just before the battle of Actium in 31, and died mysteriously in his thirties, and Cato's grandson, the younger Bibulus, who commanded in Syria for Antony and died – perhaps of the heat – at twenty-eight. But it was on the blood of *Caepio* that the curse rested above all, and there were still three people in whom (through the female line) that blood still flowed.

The two eldest daughters of Servilia were married to the Caesarian henchmen Isauricus and Lepidus. Both men achieved double consulates, but though Isauricus may have lived and died in honour, Lepidus was ambitious, and put himself on a level with Antony and Octavian as Triumvir. Not for long – Octavian seized the first opportunity to have him deposed and his army added to Octavian's own. Lepidus had been fighting above his weight – however, he was not killed, but lived on in obscurity and disgrace for twenty more years.

Now, the son of Lepidus and Iunia married his first cousin, the daughter of the other Iunia and Isauricus. Both carried the deadly inheritance of Caepio; more important at the time, perhaps, they reminded Octavian and his ministers of Cato, Brutus and Lepidus, and that was dangerous. So while the young master of the world was mopping up Egypt after the suicides of Antony and Cleopatra in 30 BC, his faithful Maecenas, that cultured and sophisticated gentleman, conveniently discovered a plot hatched by the young Lepidus – who can hardly have been more than twenty – to assassinate Octavian on his return from the East. Maecenas had Lepidus arrested and sent out under guard to his master's camp, where the young man was executed out of hand. His wife, who bore the fateful name of Servilia, was kept at Rome to await Octavian's return. She was carefully kept away from such implements as knives and ropes, but that didn't stop her. She took her own life by swallowing lighted coals. *Non humilis mulier*, as Maecenas' protégé remarked about another woman who preferred not to entrust herself to Octavian's tender mercies.

And then there was one – P. Servilius Vatia, great-great-grandson of the man who sacked Tolosa. He abandoned politics – and who can blame him? – and retired to his villa on the bay of Naples, no doubt to contemplate the vicissitudes of life. There he lived to a great age, outliving his sister's murderers to become a byword for sloth, and survival. For during the worst years of

Tiberius' reign, when first the opponents and then the followers of Sejanus were being executed, men at Rome exclaimed: *O Vatia, tu solus scis uiuere!* Evidently the curse of the Gallic gold was finished.

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Every story should have a moral, and this one is no exception. It's no accident that the series of disasters that befell Caepio and his family begin in the late second century and end (with the death of the young Lepidus and his wife) in 30 BC; nor that most of the deaths involved took place in civil war, factional rioting or political assassination. For this was the century of the Roman revolution, the long-drawn-out suicide of the Roman Republic, and the Servilii were just one out of dozens of aristocratic families that entered this period at the height of their power, and left it, finished – either extinct or politically crippled.

They fell because the old Roman Republic, dominated by the noble families, had become rotten and corrupt. The nobility had developed into an inward-looking, inefficient, nepotistic establishment interested in power, wealth and privilege rather than good government. Provinces were mismanaged and looted for private gain; the noble families took their new empire's wealth, and put nothing back. And just as they had made their fortunes by war, against the native tribes of the lands they conquered, so it was the new war-lords – the big, bad dynasts of the late Republic, Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, Antony, Octavian – who destroyed their power.

So this story of the revenge of Esus, a provincial god of war, upon the family of the Roman aristocrat who robbed him of his wealth, is more than just an improving fable. It's symbolic of the downfall of an entire political system; and the moral it points is as true now as ever, that those who live by the sword perish by the sword.

Peter Wiseman

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Troy: A Review

Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* is the second film (the first being Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*) which has heralded a return of the 'sword and sandals' genre to the cinema. Headlining with many big names (Pitt, Bana, Bloom et al), plus boasting a colossal budget of $180 million, it was a film which promised much but, in the end, it was a film which came up with very little.

My argument with the film is not that it is unfaithful to the Homeric plot (and in places, it is perhaps *too* unfaithful), but simply that it is not even a decent film; it could have been superb, but it was distinctly disappointing and mediocre.

Let us start with the good bits: there are some decent fight sequences; the duel between Achilles (Brad Pitt) and Hector (Eric Bana) springs particularly to mind. We are also treated to excellent shots (albeit CGI) of the 'thousand ships' sailing across the Aegean, and sweeping vistas of the beaches of Ilium complete with grounded triremes and Achaean troops.

I thought that the casting, at first glance, was good: Orlando Bloom was a good choice for the cowardly Paris, especially considering his role as the archer-elf, Legolas, in *LoTR*. Eric Bana was another good choice for the Trojan champion, Hector, also in hindsight of his angry, hard man role in *Hulk*. And who else to play the aged Priam other than Peter O'Toole? Sean Bean provided a thoughtful and pragmatic Odysseus, whilst Julie Christie was to be the divine and enchanting Thetis. Brad Pitt, of course, was for the main role and it remained to be seen if he could pull off a part as complex and as profound as Achilles. Bronze Age Troy is re-created with some realism and size, particularly the massive walls, whilst the Trojan horse especially good: it was a

realistic and practical touch, taking note of what the Greeks probably would have had to hand.

However, I cannot allow this praise to continue and thus I lead you to the kernel of this article: the immense poverty of the film in almost every aspect. The most guilty culprit here (almost to the point of rendering every other point bad as a result of this one) is the script and its creator, David Benioff. *Troy* was 'inspired' by the *Iliad* and I understand with a work of this size, some form of adaptation is needed. But this does not give Mr Benioff free licence to utterly desecrate such excellent literature. The script is so grossly awful that you are left simply incredulous. I find it difficult to tell as to whether the actors were simply poor actors, or were trying to make the best of dire dialogue; even Peter O'Toole, an actor of his pedigree, struggled to look competent. Bana and Diane Kruger (Helen) were given particularly appalling lines and thus I reserve judgement on their acting. The script is of *such* poor quality that it affects the film in almost every way. If you haven't seen it, or are watching it for another time, I advise finding some way of doing so without the dialogue.

Next in my line of fire is Diane Kruger. She played Helen. Famously she is the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium: I apologize, but I wouldn't even launch a blow-up lilo for this pathetically bland and woefully two-dimensional woman. Helen, to my mind, is supposed to be this powerful, wilful and sexually formidable lady; Christopher Logue in his *War Music* describes her as wiping the sweat from under her big breasts: Helen is a slut and a bitch and should be played as such. But Kruger fails at every turn: admittedly, she has a pretty face but there it ends. I shan't criticize her acting as I feel the script is such a hindrance, but I believe that Petersen and whoever the casting director was made a very poor choice in casting her.

Next are the usual plot interferences: Menelaus is slain by Hector, Agamemnon by Briseis, a war of ten years reduced to a couple of weeks. Briseis in fact, seems to have amalgamated with Chryseis whilst also providing Achilles with a love interest; and of course, his homosexual relationship between Patroclus is relegated to that of a cousinly one. (PS – watch out for Aeneas' cameo appearance, right at the end.)

Eric Bana and Orlando Bloom as Hector and Paris.

Hmm...what shall I say about Brad Pitt? Shall I mention that his wife owns the production company Plan B, a company, I might add, which helped to produce this film. (Not that I'm insinuating a bias or anything.) Pitt provides excellent eye-candy but little else: his mourning for Patroclus is over in seconds, whilst the twang of his American accent in his line of, 'Immortality! Take it! It's yours!' was naff and risible. Although, there is a pleasing scene between him and Peter O'Toole, in which the Trojan king comes to ransom his son's body.

Overall, no one can deny that *Troy* was nothing more than a complete and utter disappointment. Considering the quality of the material that Petersen et al were given, coupled with an almighty budget, it beggars belief that they came up with some mindless trash. Yet come up with it, they did. I think the *Iliad* is one of those works of literature which, in film adaptation, requires either almost slavish following, or a very intelligent updating. Anything in between, just doesn't cut it. But what wounds most of all is that, it was *such* a distinct disappointment; I went into the auditorium with such high hopes and came out with them completely dashed. And for all our Brad Pitts and budgets of nearly $200 million, and after 2, 700

years, a blind poet from Chios is still teaching us how to tell a decent story.

Henry Box
3rd Year Ancient History

A Captive Audience? Prisoners and victims at the Roman Triumph[1]

The Jackson Knight lectures, taken together, are an extraordinarily varied and interesting collection, and in reading them through them I have learned a huge amount. But if there is a single one that I would most like actually to have *attended*, it is (surprising as this may be) the sixth lecture, given in 1972 by the then warden of All Souls in Oxford, the indefatigably

conservative John Sparrow.[2] Entitled 'Dido vs Aeneas: the case for the defence', this was a bravura display of Roman legal, and other, learning — all marshalled to the cause of exonerating Virgil's hero Aeneas of any possible charge of wrongdoing when he dumped Dido in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. Sparrow scrunitises Roman law on marriage, betrothal, breaking of promises and interrogates the text, as his witness, to find no evidence whatsoever

that in Roman terms Aeneas put a foot wrong, nor that what he did would even remotely have offended Roman social or gender norms (though Sparrow, of course, did not use the word 'gender') . 'Surely Dido's case against him would have fared no better in a court of morals than in a court of law?' is his resounding conclusion and the last words of the lecture.

The reason that I would love to have been a fly on the wall on this occasion is partly to discover exactly what tone the lecture was delivered in, to find out if there really was an ironic twinkle in the eye as he mounted his defence. Was Sparrow being trenchantly male? Or was he enjoying being naughty? But I am also struck by the fact that, in a way, Sparrow was doing what I am trying to do: that is, he was turning a subject upside down and having a look at it from an unfamiliar angle. He was spotlighting Aeneas' propriety instead of the usual preoccupation with Dido's pain. I am going to be looking at the Roman ceremony of triumph, but shifting our view from the victor and triumphant general to the captives and prisoners who walked, rode or were carried along in chains in his triumphal procession. It's a lecture, in other words, in which Camillus, Aemilius Paullus, Pompey the Great and Octavian have been pushed out of the limelight — and Teutobodus, Thusnelda, Perses, Vercingetorix and Arsinoe, all of them foreign captives, have been brought to centre stage instead.

But if one of the pleasures (and terrors) of giving a lecture in a series such as this is reading the lectures of your predecessors, another is reflecting on how the person commemorated would have reacted to what you have to say. In my case I have convinced myself that the extraordinary Jackson Knight would have been intrigued by some of the things I have dug out about the history and reception of the triumph. But I also have a sneaking suspicion that, however wide-ranging this lecture aims to be (and it *will* move from ancient Rome to nineteenth century Germany, via Renaissance Italy and Hampton Court), it would nonetheless seem a little narrow to a man such as Jackson Knight, whose own published work included not only his still famous

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[1] This is the text of the Jackson Knight lecture I was honoured to give in May 2004., only slightly amended for publication and very lightly footnoted. It is part of a longterm research project on the Roman Triumph (funded by the Leverhulme Trust) which will be published by Harvard University Press; a different version of these reflections on triumphal victims was given as the Syme Memorial Lecture in Wellington, New Zealand in 2004 and will be published in the Syme lecture series.

[2] J. Sparrow, *Dido v Aeneas: the case for the defence*, delivered at the University of Exeter, 1972. (Abingdon on Thames, 1973).

studies of Virgil, but criticism of contemporary poetry, ventures into anthropology and folklore, Romano-British archaeology, Greek religion — not to mention the spiritualism and psychical research, the 'Talking to Virgil' that Peter Wiseman describes in his essay of that name.[3] Reading Jackson Knight's bibliography is, I must confess, a little humbling.

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The overall subject of my lecture this afternoon is one of the best known of all Roman institutions: the triumph, an honour granted to Roman generals who had scored particularly notable victories (or — to see it from the other side — particularly bloody massacres). It involved the victorious general, in his chariot, riding in procession through the streets of Rome, up to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill: behind him came his troops (the story was that they sang often ribald songs at their general's expense: 'Romans watch out for your wives, the bald adulterer's back in town' was one of the chants that accompanied one of Julius Caesar's triumphs, for example); in front of him, came the spoils, sometimes cartfuls of it, coin, bullion, statues, precious bric à brac of all sorts, even the flora and fauna of the conquered territories; over and above these spoils themselves, placards were carried detailing such things as the towns captured, enemy tribes defeated, the sums added to the Roman treasury; and there were artworks too — paintings and models — showing the key moments of the campaign or representing the towns and geographical features which the Romans had overcome. And amidst these spoils, often directly in front of the general's chariot, the enemy captives who are the main theme of this lecture took their place in the show. The whole ensemble was one of the key ways in which Rome represented to itself its military power and geo-political dominance. Empire and its margins were here re-played in the imperial capital.[4]

As a ceremony the triumph plays a unique part both in Roman history and culture, and in our understanding and representation of that culture. During the Republic, there was a triumphal procession on average almost every two years. The Christian historian Orosius, gloating over Titus and Vespasian's triumph over the Jews in 71 AD calculated that this was the 320th triumph in the history of Rome; and that figure more or less agrees, so far as we can now tell, with the inscribed record of triumphs put up in the Roman Forum in the reign of Augustus (which, of course, may be where Orosius had got his information from directly or indirectly; it is not necessarily independent confirmation).[5] But, whatever the history and reliability of the *figures*, the important point is that this is a Roman ritual with *a history* stretching back into the mists of the Roman past — and lasting, albeit performed less frequently, so long as Rome was Rome. It is also a ritual on which the Romans expended an enormous amount of cultural energy: historians lavished pages on the description of the triumphs of famous generals, Roman intellectuals speculated (much as we do) on the origins of the ceremony and the reasons for some of its characteristic oddities and quirks, while the Roman stage seems to have re-enacted notable celebrations and Roman poets retrojected the ceremony back into the time of myth: Theseus in Statius' epic *Thebaid* celebrated a Roman-style triumph over the Amazons; the god Bacchus' victorious return from India became increasingly written up in Roman triumphal terms, just as Bacchus himself became conscripted as the mythic founder of the ceremony. More widely than that the triumph seeped through Roman culture: Seneca refers to a

[3] T. P. Wiseman, 'Talking to Virgil', in *Talking to Virgil: a miscellany* (Exeter, 1992), 171-209.

[4] A succinct up-to-date account of the triumph is given in E. Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge, Ma., 2003), 210-15. The jokes about Caesar are recorded in Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 51.

[5] Orosius, *Histories against the Pagans* 7, 9, 8; the inscriptions are collected in A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae* XIII.1 (Rome, 1947), 1-142, 346-571.

gladiator optimistically called "Triumphus"; a town in the province of Spain went under the name "Triumphale"; Vegetius, in his military handbook, cites the phrase "Emperor's triumph" as a typical army security password. And, appropriately enough, during Rome's war against Hannibal two prodigious infants were supposed to have uttered the words traditionally chanted in the triumphal procession. "io triumphe": the first, aged six months, the second — even more incredibly — *in utero*. [6]

Detail of the Dacians in Hadrian's column.

The triumph has also seeped through into our own culture. This has partly been a matter of historical speculation. At least since the renaissance, western scholars and academics have delved into its history and customs; Gibbon's short essay on the triumph is still one of the best things to read on it and Panvinio's sixteenth century handbook still beats most other collections of sources on the ceremony.[7] But it has not only been a subject for academics. There has hardly been a monarch, dictator or autocrat in the history of the west who has not tried to recreate the ceremony, with self-conscious 'accuracy' or not, from the holy Roman emperors through Napoleon to Hitler and Mussolini. Renaissance illustrations show how Henri II's triumphal entry into Rouen in 1550 fed off the Roman ceremony (model towns or forts were carried aloft 'Roman style'). And it is a transatlantic phenomenon too. In 1899 Admiral Dewey celebrated his victories in the Spanish American war with a triumphal march through New York complete with a wood and plaster triumphal arch in Madison Avenue. [8]

Western artists, writers and movie makers have also chimed in with this preoccupation — building and designing triumphal arches, recreating ancient triumphs and capturing modern ones in pencil, paint and celluloid. My personal favourite is the triumph in the 1951 film version of *Quo Vadis*. But the most famous and influential of these in general are Mantegna's series of canvases depicting the Triumphs of Julius Caesar, now in Hampton Court, careful reconstructions of the ancient ceremony from ancient literary sources, all done with an eye to flattering the fame of Mantegna's original patrons the Gonzaga family of Mantua. Though that is not the only style of recreation in paint: the late nineteenth century German extraganza of the painter Karl von Piloty, for example, offered a splendidly powerful version of the triumph of Germanicus in 17CE. Other artists took an even more imaginative route. Prompted in large part by the humanist Petrarch's poetic series of allegorical triumphs written in the fourteenth century — the triumph of love, the triumph of chastity, the triumph of death and so on — generations of artists produced more and more extraordinary fantasies of triumphs. A marvellously evocative version is Maarten van Heemskerck's 'Triumph of Patience' from the mid-sixteenth century: Patience rides on her triumphal chariot,

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[6] For varied allusions to the triumph and triumphal culture, see for example, Statius, *Thebaid* 12, 519-98; Seneca, *On Providence* 4, 4; Pliny, *Natural History* 3, 10; Vegetius, *Art of War* 3, 5; Livy, *History* 21, 62; 24, 10; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 1, 6, 6.

[7] E. Gibbon 'Sur les triomphes des Romains' first published in 1764, but included in *Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon* (John Lord Sheffield, ed) (London, 1796), vol. 2, 361-401; O. Panvinio, *Fastorum libri V a Romulo rege usque ad Imp. Caesarem Carolum V Austrium Augustum* (Venice, 1558)

[8] M. M. McGowan (ed.), *L'Entrée de Henri II à Rouen* (Amsterdam, 1973); M. Malamud, 'The Imperial Metropolius: Ancient Rome in Turn-of-the-Century New York', *Arion* 3rd series, 7 (1999-2000), 64-91.

pulled by Hope and Desire, with blind Fortuna tied up behind as Patience's victim.[9]

This intense culture of the triumph, this continual re-investment in the ceremony from antiquity on is of course what makes the triumph a peculiarly rich subject of study, not only as a ritual but as a way of thinking and seeing Rome, Roman culture, Roman power. To use the old cliché: the Roman triumph has been 'good to think with' for most of western history; and for that reason alone it's worth a lot attention. But inevitably too (especially if we are interested in 'what happened' at the ceremony) it creates problems. It is very hard for us now not to see the triumph through the eyes of Mantegna and other artists, who were themselves drawing on the extravagant ecphrases of triumphal ceremonies written by ancient writers usually long after the ceremonies they claimed to describe. It is one of the most important paradoxes of the Roman triumphal ritual, in fact, that all our extended ancient accounts of it come from a period when it was no longer a regular sight on the Roman streets: the first emperor Augustus restricted the celebration to emperors and their immediate family, which meant that, instead of there being a procession every other year or so, decades might now pass without a triumph taking place; when Plutarch or Appian enthused about the triumphs of Aemilius Paullus or Pompey they were re-imagining a ceremony that was now a rarity. How 'accurate' any of this was as a reflection of what happened on the day is any one's guess (and you do not have to be too sceptical to suspect a considerable capacity for embellishment or to realise that of the 320 triumphs counted by Orosius, the norm must not have been the block-buster spectaculars recreated for us by writers and painters but much more modest and less memorable occasions, with half a cartload of loot, a handful of prisoners and a squadron of more or less willing Roman soldiers bringing up the rear). Like it or not, our discussion of the Roman triumph is always going to be as much about the triumph as it took place in the Roman imagination, as about the triumph on the ground.

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Most modern work on the Roman triumph has concentrated on the figure of the victorious general, standing in his chariot, dressed in the costume (or so it seems likely) of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. An enormous amount of scholarly effort and ingenuity has been devoted to working out exactly what this figure stands for: was he really impersonating a god? or was the costume actually drawn from the early kings of Rome? or was it a combination of the two? and what does any of this say about the origins and meaning of the ceremony? The focus of this lecture is quite different. I shall not be able to keep the general entirely out of the picture, but I shall concentrate instead on the prisoners and captives who are generally assumed to have taken their place immediately in front of the triumphal chariot.[10]

I should emphasize at this point that by turning the focus onto these captives we are not getting the captives' own viewpoint on the ceremony; beyond guesswork and sheer fantasy that is irretrievably lost to us. Even when the captives are apparently given a voice (as when Cleopatra is said to have committed suicide rather than be displayed in a Roman triumph[11]), it is always Roman

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[9] A. Martindale, *Triumphs of Caesar by Andrea Mantegna* (London, 1979); K. Lankheit, *Karl von Piloty, Thusneld im Triumphzug des Germanicus* (Munich, 1984); I. M. Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism in the Sixteenth Century* (Amsterdam, 1977), esp. p. 62, ill. 39.

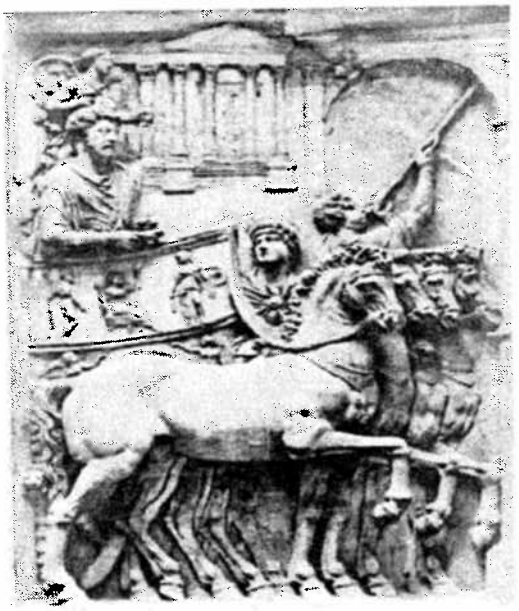
[10] The classic study of the ambiguity of the triumphing general is H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus: an inquiry into the origin, development and meaning of the Roman triumph* (Leiden, 1970), 56-93 (for a critique, see M. Beard, 'The Triumph of the Absurd: Roman street-theatre', in C. Edwards & G. Woolf (eds.) *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge, 2003), 21-43, esp. pp. 27-8.

[11] Horace, *Odes* 1, 37, 29-32; Ps.-Acron, on Horaces *Odes* 1, 37, 30; Livy, *Summaries* 133; Velleius Paterculus, *Histories* 2, 87, 1.

ventriloquism that we're dealing with; it is, in other words, what the Roman writer would like to think the prisoner would say or feel, not the authentic voice of the oppressed. We cannot now see the triumph from the bottom up (any more than we can understand the gladiatorial arena from the gladiator's point of view). What we *can* see is how the Romans presented and debated the role of the victims in the procession and how victims figured in the Roman culture of triumph.

The limits of our knowledge about these captives is clearly exposed, when we attempt to answer some basic practical questions about them and their role in the procession. How many, for example, were there on any occasion? Ancient figures are notoriously unreliable and we usually choose not to believe them if they do not suit our purpose. In this case we have little choice whether to believe or not, because hardly any figures, reliable or not, are given at all — apart from a few vague claims about thousands of prisoners (up to 8000 on one occasion[12]) in processions of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The accounts of the later spectacular shows certainly mention prisoners, but they concentrate not on numbers but on celebrities and on exotic names. Appian, for example, in describing the triumph of Pompey over Mithradates and the pirates in 61 BCE, refers in passing to 'hosts' of captives in the procession, but lingers on the names of the elite captives only: 'Tigranes the son of Tigranes, the five sons of Mithradates, that is Artaphernes, Cyrus, Oxathres, Darius and Xerxes, and his daughters, Orsabaris and Eupatra.' For an ancient audience, these names must have been even more resonant than they are for us; for almost every one of the children was called after a great Eastern hero or heroine of the past. The roll-call must have brought to mind their yet more famous namesakes and any number of earlier conflicts with Persia and the East — the whole history of Western victory over Oriental 'barbarity'.[13]

In fact, however, even when we are given individual names there are clear inconsistencies and debates in the tradition. According to Livy, for example, Polybius claimed that the Numidian prince Syphax had been exhibited in Scipio Africanus' triumph of 201BC; Livy on the other hand claims to know better — that Syphax had actually died at Tibur before the triumph took place. In the third century CE, there was the same problem over Queen Zenobia of Palmyra and different traditions over whether she had, or had not, taken part in the triumphal procession of the Emperor Aurelian. Some said she had, others assumed otherwise.[14]



Whatever the debates over their identity, the usual modern assumption is that only a selection of those taken prisoner can generally have been paraded in the procession: the big names obviously and enough of the others to make a show. Josephus, for example, in recounting the victory of Titus and Vespasian over the Jews, refers to the tall and goodlooking captives being hand-picked to appear in the triumph, the rest being disposed of or sold off in the usual way.[15] It must always have been a balance between creating a powerful impression on the day and the

[12] Eutropius, *Summary of Roman History* 2, 5, 2.

[13] Appian, *Mithradatic War* 117.

[14] Livy, *History* 30, 45, 4-5 (but cf. 45, 39, 6-8); SHA, *Aurelian* 34, 3, *Thirty Tyrants* 30, 4-12; Zosimus, *New History* 1, 59.

[15] Josephus, *Jewish War* 6, 416-19

expense, inconvenience and practical difficulties of transporting, guarding and managing a large number of unwilling captives. In fact we have no idea at all how the practical arrangements were handled. Where were the captives kept, for example, before the triumph? This is an especially pressing question when in the late Republic there was regularly a delay of months or even years between the victory and the actual parade.

The ultimate fate of the prisoners in the show, or at least for the most celebrity ones, looks at first sight better documented. Josephus, again, describing the triumph of Titus and Vespasian in 71 (one of the very few contemporary, even if not necessarily eye witness, accounts of a triumph that we have) refers to the generals waiting on the Capitoline hill 'according to ancestral custom' until they heard that the execution of the enemy leader had been announced. And Cicero seems to tell a similar story when he writes in his attack on Verres about triumphing generals who 'as their chariots swing round to leave the Forum to go up to the Capitol, bid their captives be led off to the prison, and the day that ends the military authority of the conqueror [for after the triumph he returns to civilian life] also ends the lives of the conquered'.[16] The idea is, as most modern accounts have it, that as the procession was reaching its last lap, going through the forum and about to ascend the Capitoline, the most important (or dastardly) captives were taken off to the *carcer* (or prison) and killed.

This supposed custom has given rise to a number of predictable theories; some have seen it as a remnant of human sacrifice, others as a form of judicial punishment against Rome's enemies, here redefined as 'criminals'. In fact, the whole tradition is rather harder to pin down than those theories would suggest. There are very few clear and unequivocal examples of those put to death in the way Josephus describes: Jugurtha, for example, is killed in this way at the triumph of Marius according to Livy, but Plutarch has him being imprisoned after the triumph and dying of starvation several days later; according to Appian Aristoboulos was the only prisoner put to death in Pompey's procession in 61 'as had been done at other triumphs' — but other sources actually have him living another good decade and finally dying in 49 BCE.[17] More often, as we shall see, even the most illustrious captives live, if not to fight another day, then at least to start some kind of new career. How far the tradition of the regular execution of the chief captives is more than a Roman invented tradition is impossible, I think, to say; but it is not quite as simple as at first meets the eye.

But if the practical details of the victims and their treatment is tantalizingly elusive, not so other aspects of their cultural, ideological and imaginary role in the procession. And it is these I want to concentrate on now, first looking at wider issues of representation and mimesis. I have argued elsewhere that the triumphal procession acted as a hot-spot in Roman culture for parading issues of representation, imitation, pretence and disguise: from the general dressed up as Jupiter Optimus Maximus to the models of rivers and towns carried in the procession and the paintings depicting the battles of the campaign.[18] The victims were part of the representational extravaganza too. There was partly a practical purpose to this: namely, if you wanted to put on show a victim who for some reason could not be there, you could resort a model or a painting. So, for example, according to Appian, at Pompey's triumph Mithradates (who was already dead) and Tigranes who was already installed as a puppet ruler out East were seen as paintings. While in 46 BCE Julius Caesar likewise displayed paintings of the suicides of his famous Roman adversaries in the civil war. Cato disembowelling himself cannot have been a pretty sight and Appian claims that the spectators groaned -- though in an interesting glimpse into Roman hierarchies of representational strategies, Appian emphasises that Caesar did not display the

[16] Josephus, *Jewish War* 7, 153; Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.5, 30, 77.

[17] Livy, *Summaries* 67; Plutarch, *Marius* 12; Appian, *Mithradatic War* 117; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14, 92-6; Dio 39, 56, 6.

[18] Beard, 'The Triumph of the Absurd' (n. 10)

names of these victims in writing, as if that would have been even more offensive. The most famous model, of course, was that of Cleopatra, whose suicide (if that is what it was) prevented her adorning Octavian's triumph in 29 BCE. To fill the gap, Octavian had a replica made of the queen as she died (complete with snakes), so that as Dio said 'in a kind of way she was there with the other prisoners'. Renaissance scholars were fascinated with the idea of this particular model, which indeed they believed they had tracked down in the statue in the Vatican we now usually know as the 'Sleeping Ariadne'.[19]

But the play of representation went further than simply having models of absent enemies. The other side of the representational games was to see live captives as if they were models themselves. Josephus writes of the extravagant floats that were a major element in the triumph of Titus and Vespasian: each one represented a part of the campaign and on each one Josephus notes an 'enemy general was stationed . . . in the very attitude in which he was captured'. So if one representational gambit was to model or paint the conquered leaders in the attitude in which they died, another was to make the real general act out his own history on the stage of the triumph. We have perhaps a hint of this in some of the small relief sculptures showing the procession: apparently 'real' captives crouched down next to bits of spoils and being carried along shoulder high, as if they were objects of spoil themselves.[20]

The procession in other words, or at least as it was written up, offered different versions of the captives: as real live walking, talking people, images representing people, people representing images. The final twist of course comes with the stories of the emperors Gaius and Domitian. Both of these scored hollow victories and planned, even if they did not actually celebrate, equally hollow triumphs. But where were the victims to come from? According to Suetonius, to celebrate his triumph over the Germans, Gaius planned to dress up some Gauls to impersonate *bona fide* German prisoners: he was going to get them to dye their hair red, and learn the German language and to adopt German names so that they could convincingly pull the charade off. True or not, this anecdote (repeated about Domitian) is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the culture of representation that surrounds triumphal victims.[21]

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This story also shows clearly the importance, for the prestige of the triumphing general, of an impressive array of appropriate victims. A good victory always requires a worthy enemy: no glories comes from thrashing a feeble opponent. Roman writers stress time and again the high status of those paraded *ante currum*, 'before the chariot' — as the almost technical term had it. I have already rehearsed the list of Eastern potentates in Pompey's triumph. Augustus in his *Res Gestae* also brags that he paraded nine kings and children of kings in front of his chariot. But just as emphatically as their high status, writers stress the exotic quality as well as the outstanding physique of the those in the parade. If the assorted foreign flora and fauna put on display served to mark out the role of the 'Other' at the heart of Roman imperialism, so also did the human captives, who seemed to have required weird names and striking attributes: Teutobodus, for example, in Marius' triumph over the Cimbri and Teutones, was according to Florus an 'extraordinary spectacle' in the procession — so tall that he towered over the trophies of his own defeat; some years earlier, again according

[19] Appian, *Mithradatic War* 111; *Civil War* 2, 101; Propertius, *Elegies* 3, 11, 53-4; Dio 51, 21; F. Haskell & N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique: the lure of classical sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven & London, 1981), 184-7.

[20] See, for example, the late Antonine/Severan relief sculpture illustrated by R. Brilliant, '"Let the trumpets!" The Roman Triumph', in B. A. Bergmann & C. Kondoleon, *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Washington National Gallery of Art, New Haven & London, 1999), 221-9 (p. 227).

[21] Suetonius, *Caligula* 47; Tacitus, *Agricola* 39, 1; Pliny, *Panegyric* 16, 3.

to Florus, in Fabius Maximus' triumph over the Averni in 120 BCE, the king Bituitus starred in his brightly coloured armour and silver chariot.[22]

Predictably enough, it is in the symbolic inflation of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* that we find the most extravagant example of this, in the account of the triumph of Aurelian in the late third century CE: here there was not only said to be a display of living Amazons (matching Statius' mythic presentation of the Amazons in the triumph of Theseus), but Queen Zenobia (assuming, with this version, that she turned up) was decked out with jewels and golden chains, so heavy that they had to be carried by others. This obviously raised the question, to which I shall return, of whether she counted as a victim or a victor. It also underlines the importance within the culture of the triumph of the unbowed victim: victories were best when they were scored over dignified enemies.[23]

Occasionally that dignity was taken to be the reason for a notable absence. I have already referred to the claims of ancient writers that Cleopatra killed herself because she was determined not to undergo the humiliation of a triumphal procession. Far from some *bona fide* insight into Cleopatra's own psychopathology, this is a Roman fantasy projected also onto Mithradates.[24] But it is an important fantasy, which serves to up the stakes of the procession, and to underline the ideological victory in simply having any of these elite victims on display. Roman power correlates with its ability to produce the proudly defeated monarchs in Rome; their only escape is suicide.

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But it was not quite so simple. Victims could be a risky commodity for the general, capable of detracting from as well as enhancing his reputation. In the competitive world of Roman elite politics, it would obviously be a mark against the general's glory if he failed to muster a sufficiently impressive display of the defeated. Hence the story of Pompey in 61BCE, who, by some clever talking, is said to have managed to get his hands on a couple of notorious pirate chiefs, actually captured by one of his Roman rivals for victory over the pirates, Metellus Creticus, who had been hoping to show them off in his *own* triumphal parade. At a stroke, he had robbed Metellus' triumph of two of its stars, while enhancing the line-up in his own.[25] But there were risks in other senses too. According to Appian, Caesar nearly shot himself in the foot by the apparently humiliating paintings he displayed of his erstwhile Roman enemies — there was a difficult line to be drawn between the impressive display of one's success and the frankly bad taste of displaying Roman citizens disembowelling themselves (even if you refrained from actually naming them).[26] But a more basic structural problem was quite simply that the more glamourous the victim the better in one way for the triumphing general, but at the same time the more likely the victim was to steal the show and to upstage the general. This is the problem with all mass spectacle: how do you control the gaze of the spectators?

Several accounts of the victims in the triumphal procession focus on just this issue. In the triumph of Aemilius Paullus in 167 BCE it was, according to Plutarch, the pathos of the child victims, the children of the defeated king Perses, that stole the show: 'out of compassion, the Romans held their eyes on the innocents and many of them ended up shedding tears, and all of them found the spectacle of pain and pleasure until the children had gone by'. Even more notoriously, in Caesar's triumph of 46 BCE the young Egyptian princess, Arsinoe was carried on a bier or *ferculum* — like a piece of regular booty. The sight of her in chains, in Dio's account at least, aroused the

[22] Augustus, *Res Gestae* 4; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History* 1, 38, 10; 1, 37, 5-6.

[23] SHA, *Aurelian* 34, 3; *Thirty Tyrants* 30, 34-7.

[24] Appian, *Mithradatic War* 111.

[25] Dio 36, 19.

[26] Appian, *Civil War* 2, 101.

spectators to pity, and prompted them to lament their own misfortunes.[27]

The fundamental question is who in the procession manages to dominate the gaze of the spectators; this underlies the repeated slippage we find between triumphing general and the chief captive. In a Roman triumph imagined by Ovid from exile in *Tristia* 4, 2, the description of the enemy leader (apparently raised up high and dressed in purple) blurs significantly into the figure of the victorious general (likewise elevated, likewise purple clad).[28] Similarly, Seneca exploits exactly that slippage to grind home a moral point: that in the end, from a moral point of view, triumphal victor and triumphal victim are indistinguishable. You can, he writes, show virtues whether you are the one who triumphs, or whether you are the one dragged in front of the chariot, so long as you are 'unconquered in spirit'. And on another occasion, in a bold (or disconcerting) piece of anachronism, he ventriloquizes Socrates to make a similar point about virtue transcending misfortune; Socrates claims that he would be no more humbled when driven in front of the triumphal chariot of another than when he was the triumphing general himself.[29] The triumph in other words does not simply hierarchize its participants, but questions the basis of that hierarchy. It asks you to wonder who the hero really is.

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The triumphal procession begs the question of what happens next. Modern concentration on the ceremony itself tends to obscure the fact that the triumph is one element of a more extended narrative for general and victim alike. One answer to that question we have already noted. However often, in fact, the leading victims really were finished off in the prison while the general made his way up to the Capitol, that story of execution offers a powerful narrative closure to the victims' participation in Roman history; the triumph, as Cicero says, is their end. A competing version, however, casts the triumph very differently, not so much as an end, more a *rite de passage* — the process by which an enemy captive becomes Roman. Many ancient authors in fact choose to tell a rather domestic story of what happens next to the victims on parade: one of those sons of Perses who evoked the tears in the procession went on to learn metalwork and Latin and to become a secretary to Roman magistrates; Zenobia settled down (in one version at least) to the life of a middle aged matron in a villa outside Rome; young Juba who was carried as a babe in arms in Caesar's triumph of 46 BCE went on to get Roman citizenship, to write extensive historical works and eventually to be re-instated on the throne of Numidia. It is a theme that is also hinted at in Statius' treatment of the mythic triumph of Theseus over the Amazons: when Theseus appears anachronistically as a Roman triumphing general in Book XII of the *Thebaid*, one of his victims (Hippolyte) is well on the way to becoming his wife.[30]

This aspect of *rite de passage*, however, is most vividly encapsulated in the career of Ventidius Bassus, who celebrated a triumph over the Parthians in 38 BCE. This was a notable event in being the first triumph Romans had ever celebrated over that particular enemy. But it was even more notable for another reason. For Ventidius Bassus himself was a native of the Italian town of Picenum and years earlier had been carried as a child victim in the triumph of Pompeius Strabo for victories in the Social War. As several Roman writers insist (and Aulus Gellius devotes a whole chapter of the Attic Nights to this) his was an

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[27] Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus* 33, 4; Dio, *Roman History* 43, 19, 2-4.

[28] Ovid, *Tristia* 4, 2 -- discussed by M. Beard, 'The triumph of Ovid', in A. Barchiesi, J. Rüpke & S Stephens (eds.), *Rituals in Ink: a conference on religion and literary production in ancient Rome* (Stuttgart, 2004), 115-26.

[29] Seneca, *Letter* 71, 22; *On the Happy Life* 25, 5

[30] Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus* 37; SHA, *Thirty Tyrants* 30, 27; Plutarch, *Julius Caesar* 55; Appian, *Civil War* 2, 48; W. von Christ et al., *Geschichte des Griechischen Litteratur* (6th ed., Munich, 1920), 401-3.

extraordinary career; for he was the only Roman ever to have taken part in a triumph both as victim and victor. His is the limit case in other words of the triumph as a *rite de passage* into Romanness, the triumph as part of the narrative process of Romanization. But not only that, it's also the limit case of the potential, and potentially subversive, identity of the triumphing general and his victim.[31]

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So far, most of the triumphs and victims I have discussed have been rooted in history. That is not to say that the stories and elaborations I have quoted are historically accurate in a narrow sense. Far from it; the point about the Roman triumph is precisely that it was constantly replayed, reworked and reinvented in Roman writing and in the Roman imaginary. None the less, with few exceptions, the triumphal ceremonies I have touched on all take their cue from the roster of triumphs that made up the 'history' of the ritual at Rome. It would be misleading to finish though without looking briefly at how triumphal victims appeared in triumphs that had not even that tangential relationship with 'reality'; triumphs entirely in the head.

The allegorical tradition of the triumph is well known in European art and literature since Petrarch: the triumph of love, chastity, fame, death, and so forth. But allegories of this type are not renaissance inventions; for the ancients too exploited the complicated sense of power and hierarchy that triumphal processions represented to discuss other forms of social and moral virtue, power and control and to think of the idea of victimhood in a different sense. Seneca, as I have already suggested, repeatedly uses the image of the triumph to focus on ideological conflicts: *clementia,* clemency, he at one point defines as 'a triumph over victory itself' (another neat reversal of the victim and the victor that I've been referring to).[32] But the classic example of this, and almost certainly the direct ancestor of Petrarch, is the use of the triumph in Ovid especially, as a metaphor for victory and defeat in love. The best known example of this is *Amores* 1, 2, where — as in Petrarch — Cupid is in his triumphal chariot, with the captive youths and maidens in front. Amongst the captives of course is the poet himself — part of the god's human spoils (*praeda*), complete with his chains and recently inflicted wounds of love. And he is accompanied by other notable victims who have resisted the army of Love.

'*You too can celebrate a glorious Triumph*
with young men and girls as your prisoners of war

and I'll be among them wearing my new chains
nursing this open wound — your abject slave.

Conscience and Common Sense and all Love's enemies
will be dragged along with hands tied behind their backs.

You'll strike fear into all hearts.
The crowd will worship you, chanting Io Triumphe.'[33]

It is a brilliantly subversive variant on the elegaic theme of the *militia amoris*: conscripting the most aggressive celebration of Roman militarism into a celebration of its very opposite; and resignifying the whole idea of what it might mean to be one of *love*'s victims.

But it is even more subversive than in might seem at first sight. For in the new Augustan Forum of Augustus, a monument loaded with triumphal imagery, one of the display masterpieces was a painting of Alexander the Great by the Greek artist Apelles. This no longer survives, but Roman descriptions of it do. However its original subject had been intended or understood at the time of Alexander and Apelles, it was interpreted in its Roman context as an allegory of the Roman triumph: Alexander standing in his

[31] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 6, 9, 9; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 15, 4, 4; Velleius Paterculus, *Histories* 2, 65; Pliny, *Natural History* 7, 135.

[32] Seneca, *On Clemency* 1, 21

[33] Ovid, *Amores* 1, 2, 27-34 (trans. Guy Lee).

triumphal chariot, in front of him the personified figure of War (an alternative version says Fury), as a triumphal victim, hands tied behind her back. The stress on 'hands tied behind the back' is almost certainly significant, and ties it directly into Ovid's account. It looks as if Ovid's subversion is not only to play with the whole notion of triumphal militarism, but also to play with an artistic masterpiece, parading war as the triumphal victim of the greatest general the world had seen, which had pride of place in the showpiece monument of the Augustan regime. It shows how far the shifts and twists of trumphal victimhood could go.

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Karl von Piloty's 'Thusnelda im Triumphzug des Germanicus'

So what of the voice of the oppressed? I emphasised at the beginning that there was no way we could hear the voices of Roman triumphal victims. The passage I have just quoted might suggest that I was, strictly speaking, wrong: if we can count Ovid as a victim, then we have a victim's voice. But if that is short of convincing, the best I can do is to move forward almost two millennia, to a period when European countries were rediscovering the old native enemies of Rome and investing them with all the charge of contemporary nationalism and giving them a new voice as national heroes and heroines. It is a familiar list: Boudicca, Vercingetorix, Arminius. There's one painting in particular, now in Munich, that takes over the triumph and heroizes the very characters who were Rome's victims and it seems an appropriate place to end this lecture. It's the painting, done between 1869 and 1873, of Germanicus' triumph of 17 CE by Karl von Piloty to which I have already referred. In this, the Romans are marginal characters on the canvas. Centre stage is Thusnelda, the wife of Arminius, defeater of the Romans, mastermind of the 'Varian disaster' and still in 17 (when this triumph took place) at large. She entirely dominates the Roman background not so much in the name of pathos (this is not another pathetic Arsinoe) but in the name of German pride and nationalism and unbowed (almost Senecan) composure.

It can only be a fantasy. But it is, nonetheless, an enticing hint at what another side of the triumphal story can be made to look like.

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Eteocles and Polyneices – has politics changed in 2500 years? A political musing.

Allow me to set the scene. Two major political power-players, having reached the top, agreed to share the running of the country between them. Person A (as he will be known for now) would rule for a set amount of time and would then step down, and then Person B would take over the reins of leadership. Unfortunately Person A decided that life at the top was too enjoyable to share. Person B became sulky and irate, drawing an opposition faction behind him. Person C, alarmed at the infighting amongst the ruling class, tried to mediate between the two factions. But alas, it was too late – the knives were drawn. It was clear that there was room for only one at the top.

You may think from reading this that I am describing (albeit in a simplified way) the main plot of Euripides' *the Phoenician Women* (Theban princes Eteocles and Polyneices agree to share

kingship after their father's abdication but come to blows), but I am not. I refer rather to the fabled 'Granita deal' between Anthony Blair P.M. (Person A) and his Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown (Person B). The third figure is not Jocasta, mother of Eteocles and Polyneices, but the somewhat less pulchritudinous figure of John Prescott, who has attempted to heal the rift through private meals between the two.

The issues that I wish to address are twofold – 'Has politics changed since 409BC?' and 'What does this mean for our perceptions of democracy?'

Let us begin by addressing the first question. One could argue 'Yes! We are members of an enlightened secular society and one of the foremost democracies in the world. What a stupid question.' Or one could argue 'No! We are members of a godless society, and by the way we're a parliamentary monarchy – not a democracy, you idiot.' It is perfectly possible to fall down on either side of this debate, although I would ask the reader to note that we have no Bill of Rights here in Great Britain. Make of this what you will.

The play was composed by Euripides and performed around 409 BC in Athens, a democratic society far removed from our own. There all male citizens would vote on important issues, and politicians would have had to go to war alongside the common man if a war was deemed necessary (if only we had the same system now – we might have been spared the Iraq war). Today in Great Britain, with our population around the 60 million mark it would be impossible to have a referendum on everything, and so what we have is a system of representative democracy. Euripides however did not set his play in democratic Athens, but instead set it in Thebes. Athenians did not like Thebans, and of the Greek tragedies that survive, there are quite a few examples of the Thebans portrayed as barbarians. This play is one of them, with the Thebans ruled over by two tyrants, who fall out and in doing so cause civil war. The notion of a tyrant (with their unconstrained power over their subjects' lives) to a free Athenian was repellent. Thus by comparing this 'Granita deal' with a portrait of a savage, un-democratic society, would it be possible to say that this does not exactly present our claim to democracy in the most convincing way? Thus we could perhaps say that despite all the wonderful progress we have made in other areas (such as cable T.V, novelty condoms and the atom bomb), we are still woefully behind the ancient Athenians in other areas.

So what does this mean for our perceptions of democracy? Are we really all being duped, led to believe that we are free when we are not? That would be rather drastic. We are essentially a democracy, but like any national institution of great age our democracy has a few bad habits (a bit like that batty aunt everyone has who disgraces herself after three glasses of sherry). People need to be ruthless and cunning to rise to the top in politics, and as such people need to make alliances, and that is what this restaurant deal was all about. However, behaviour that was acceptable in a (mythical) tyrannical society of ancient times is not so acceptable in a society that if not wholly democratic at least has the trimmings. Eteocles and Polyneices were members of the autocratic ruling family of Thebes. Hence the decision to split power between the two is less surprising because the subjects could not have had any say over who ruled them anyway. Today people expect to have a choice in who leads them, and so any decision of this kind made behind closed doors is deeply un-democratic.

So as I have shown, there are some striking similarities between the two cases, something that is hardly flattering for Britain, as Euripides was intent on portraying an un-democratic barbarian form of government. What lessons could be gleaned from this for Blair and Brown? Eteocles and Polyneices killed one another. While we dare not dream of such serendipity coming our way, I would advise Tony Blair to watch his back. By the way, if Gordon Brown usurps Tony Blair before this is published, you read it here first. If not, then you read it in the *Daily Mail*.

Karl Adamson, MA in Hellenistic Culture

Z H T H T A I

hoi zetetai (hoi sdɛ:tɛ:tai) *pl n*, the seekers – i.e. of knowledge, [from Greek *zêtêô* (sdɛ:tɛ:o:), to seek, search for].

On the 28th May 585 BC, ancient philosophy was born: such a precise date is found because, on that day, Thales of Miletus predicted an eclipse of the sun.

Zetetai, I am afraid, cannot boast such a cosmic birth. This is largely due to the fact that it was established by myself and Paul Scade on a cold January day in 2003 following a philosophy seminar.
The idea came to me from my disillusionment with the philosophy module that I was taking at the time: there just didn't seem to be any philosophic activity going on: it was simply academic mastication and regurgitation. Thus I went to Paul and asked him if he, or any others, would be interested in meeting privately to give papers. He was: thus a couple of weeks later on a Friday morning at eleven o'clock, Paul gave a paper on paradoxes.
This was followed by several pints in the Ram.

After the initial paper, we have had a grand total of fourteen subsequent ones: from the ancients of Cicero, Empedocles and Plato, to bastions of modern philosophy in Hegel, Mill, Montaigne, Marx, Nietzsche and Sartre. Not to mention some thought-provoking discussions on the social construction of reality in the Greek world, ancient Sparta and democracy, the fear of death, the aesthetics of popular music and the influence of logical positivism on the philosophy of religion

Incidentally, our perhaps pompous-sounding name simply means 'the seekers' in ancient Greek; its original title started out as 'philosophy discussion group' but that sounded a bit bureaucratic. Robert Bostock however, in his Hellenic and linguistic wisdom, suggested 'zetetai' (pronounced '*zd*ētētai', 'ZHTHTAI' being the Greek upper case form) and thus saved us from total obscurity.

Don't be put off by the occasionally austerely named papers; *Zetetai* is just a meeting of like-minded people who are interested in intellectual exercise and debate. There are no restrictions as to who may come (staff are equally as welcome as students), or what may be given as a paper. The stress is upon the uncovering of new and interesting areas of knowledge to which one may or may not have been exposed before. Papers are informal, with a Q&A session at the end normally over a pint.

If you have been interested by anything you have read in this article, contact Randolph.Howard@exeter.ac.uk or, even better, look out for posters on the classics notice board and come along.

Henry Box
3rd year Ancient History