

*Nota Bene*



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## Letter From the Editor

We are proud to present the first official post-Covid 19 volume of *Nota Bene*. I would like to start by thanking Professors Tim Brelinski and John Rundin for helping advise in the creation of this exciting project.

*Nota Bene* is a collection that showcases the rich creativity, commitment, intellect, and diversity present in UC Davis' Classics Department. It features contributions from diligent and deserving students who have put in significant effort to achieve excellence. As the Editor In Chief, it was an immense privilege to assemble this selection of pieces and be able to appreciate the insightful works it contains. *Nota Bene* goes beyond traditional academic papers, embracing innovative and imaginative endeavors within the realm of Classics.

I aspire for this volume, much like the one from the previous year, to serve as a stepping stone for future generations and enhance regularity among subsequent publications. I strongly believe in the importance of offering a platform for future Classicists to have their voices heard in the academic world.

Finally, I would like to specifically thank Autumn Wright for serving on the editorial board in this pursuit. Without her, this publication would have been impossible. And again, thank you to everyone who provided submissions and worked on this year's edition of *Nota Bene*.

Libertas perfundet omnia luce.

Sincerely,  
Alessandra Soto  
Editor In Chief  
*Nota Bene* 2022-2023

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Academic Essays  
2022-2023



**This is an ancient science...and jazz *\*jazz hands\**.**  
**- Professor Colin Webster, Ph.D.**

# Death at the Dinner Table: The Connections Between Death and Feasting in Ancient Rome

By Andrew Haley

A unique connection exists between ideas of death and ideas of feasting in ancient Rome. Aside from traditional funeral feasts and social occasions, there is remarkable ideological overlap between feasting with elements of death, in both written accounts and art. This essay will be a brief look into the many forms that death and feasting can take together, and inspect the broader trends in Roman life that allow these forms to be.

## 1. The Social Calendar of Death

Rome's social scaffolding for death and feasting extends from a wider tradition of feasting and celebration,<sup>1</sup> which creates a distinct annual rhythm of social gatherings. The *Silicernium* was a feast undertaken at the graveside, post burial (Cruz, 2022, Lecture 4.2), and at times tomb complexes included kitchens for preparing these meals (Edwards, 2007, p.164). Other feasts associated with the dead were the *dies violaris* or *dies rosalis*, so named for memorial flowers left on graves, consisting of a yearly family gathering (Donahue, 2003, p.428). On a state level, there was the *funus publicum*, paid by the treasury, celebrating notable individuals (Hope, 2007, pp.120-22) during which there were often feasts and games (Donahue, 2003, p.428), as well, as *Parentalia*, a yearly celebration of the dead (Cruz, 2022, Lecture 4.2).

Based on this, a Roman family could easily be expected to celebrate upwards of four death-related gatherings<sup>2</sup> in a given year, which would greatly inform the rhythm of yearly life and attitudes toward death. These strong customs of grieving and remembrance would provide avenues for socially acceptable catharsis and openness about death<sup>3</sup>. As a result, Romans would likely be more attuned to thinking about death, as the social structure and high mortality would make it near impossible to ignore death at these socially sanctioned times<sup>4</sup>. Further, this would likely cause a greater association<sup>5</sup> with death and feasting that is reflected in other aspects of life.

## 2. Death! At the *Convivium*

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<sup>1</sup> See Donahue, J. F. "Toward a typology of Roman public feasting." *American Journal of Philology*, 124(3) (2003): 423-441 for more detail.

<sup>2</sup> My math is as follows: 1 *Parentalia* + 1 *funus publicus* + 1 funeral + 1 *dies violaris*. This is all hypothetical, of course, but I think it is within the realm of possibilities.

<sup>3</sup> A modern American, in contrast, might only grieve individually, on the anniversary of a person's death—with little structure or social scaffolding that would allow them greater support and acceptance from their community.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that Romans were completely free with their grief; Hope (2007, pp.172-210) explains the social expectation of a controlled grief in much more depth than I could. Rather, I argue that these death-related feasts allowed controlled releases of emotion, during which it was proper to display grief and remembrance.

<sup>5</sup> It may also be of interest to consider animal sacrifice in non-funerary celebrations as contributing to this association of death with feasting.

This familiarity with death, along with a propensity for spectacle<sup>6</sup> could perhaps explain the phenomenon of associating *convivia* with death and funerals in texts (historical and otherwise) from the later 1st century CE (Edwards, 2007, p.161).

In Petronius' satire *Satyricon*, a formerly enslaved man makes his *convivium* into a rehearsal funeral, including lying down on a couch as if he had died while musicians play a dirge (Edwards pp.168-69). Among other elements, the humor here is derived from the absurd juxtaposition of a living person at a *convivium* (the very etymology linking having dinner to being "alive"), performing a funeral for himself. It relies on the firm boundaries of what a *convivium* is and what a funeral is, and deliberately mixes them to great effect.

A similar mixing occurs at a funeral-themed *convivium* hosted by Emperor Domitian:<sup>7</sup> dinner was served in a room with black walls and furnishings (funeral colors), and guests were offered dishes which would normally be sacrificed to the dead. During the course of the dinner Domitian only spoke of "death and slaughter", which made all the guests fear being murdered, though none of them actually were.<sup>8</sup> Here the effect of mixing death and feasting is used not for humor, but to invoke mortal terror as a show of power.



Fig.1— Skeleton Server Mosaic from Pompeii. (Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen [Public domain], via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

<sup>6</sup> E.g. gladiator games, the aforementioned *funus publicum*, and the socially accepted forms of suicide as a political statement (Cruz, 2022, Lecture 3.1), many of which utilize death to inspire some sort of extreme reaction in the audience.

<sup>7</sup> As related by Dio Cassius.

<sup>8</sup> This is quite possibly the most shocking account I have read to date about ancient Rome; Edwards, C. *Death in ancient Rome* (Yale University Press, 2007), 162.

This shows that Romans are comfortable using death as a device (literary or symbolic), seemingly regardless of context. Still, the reactions to the context changes are wildly different: Romans are perfectly willing to accept death as a vehicle for comedy; but when death is combined with real social stratification and power dynamics<sup>9</sup>, it can serve as a grim reminder of powerlessness and mortality. This acceptance of death as a concept is in contrast to the avoidance of pollution that is commonly associated with actual cadavers at this time (Cruz, 2022, Lecture 4.2), but it is not necessarily adversarial. Rather, it shows that death can take on many different social aspects.

### 3. Death and Feast in Art

This ideological mixing of feasting and death seeps into visual arts as well, the most apparent of which being depictions of *larvae*<sup>10</sup> (here being used to refer to artistic depictions of skeletons or “skin and bones” figures) and feast elements.

We see this connection most directly with feast objects themselves: mosaic floors from dining rooms, like the *larva* with two serving jugs (Fig.1), or the reclining *larva* (presumably dining) with the words “ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ” written above (Cruz, 2022, Lecture 0.1). Two unique silver cups from the “BoscCoreale Treasure”(Fig.2) feature *larvae* imagery and date to circa 1st c. CE (Weber, 1922, p.35). These cups have inscriptions of varying seriousness, from “Enjoy yourself while you are alive” to “be reverent to dung” (Weber, 1922, p.37).



Fig.2— Two Roman, one-handed wine cups from the BoscCoreale Treasure (Source: [artstor.org](https://artstor.org)).

<sup>9</sup> After all, a ruler having a funeral-themed dinner party is not necessarily cause for fear in a non-Roman context. It’s the cultural interplay between the emperor’s power as host, and Roman ideas on death, that inspires fear in Domitian’s guests. Edwards (163) describes the Roman host’s power in more detail.

<sup>10</sup> In the style of Weber: in footnote 35 (35), he justifies that this term is what the Romans would have called such a figure, as opposed to the “σκελετόν σῶμα” in Greek.



All of these pieces (mosaics and cups) metareference the *convivium*, making the party guest suddenly a casual observer of their own mortality. They straddle the line between serious thought and lighthearted conversation— all of them seem to present attention-grabbing concepts<sup>11</sup> in a tidy way that avoids over-philosophizing. Though the cups appear to be a little more playful (akin to the *Satyricon convivium*), all of them seem relatively neutral, in comparison to the sharp emotions evoked by the *convivia* of *Satyricon* or Domitian. These pieces are made to inspire individuals to voice their own thoughts on death in a restrained way, whether it be disgust, fear, amusement, or intellectual curiosity. This speaks to the reality that death as a concept wouldn't just exist on the two exceptional extremes of humor and terror, but that it can also exist as a daily part of life, in the household.

#### 4. Conclusion

The amount of death and death-related events in Rome provides a near constant reminder of death and mortality to Romans, which creates familiarity and a strong association between feasting and death. This then allows Romans to surpass ideas of pollution and to permit the concept of death in various forms into their social lives, their art and literature, and their households.

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<sup>11</sup> Not unlike graphic T-shirts with edgy phrases on them today.

## Expanding Medicine to Visualize Parallels Throughout Its History

By Audrey Telkamp

Only once we allow for a broadened definition of medicine, beyond the limited scope of doctors in a hospital, does it become clear that the values of our historical authors align with and build up the foundation of healthcare in the modern era.

A limited modern view of medicine focusing on the treatments of a doctor in a hospital outlined my restricted thinking coming into this course. But in ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, Arabia, and other regions from the 16th Century BCE into the 16th Century CE, medicine was not just the accumulation of treatments and medications from a licensed physician. Instead, medicine in these periods encapsulated every action of the average person to maintain their health. The treatises from this course expand medicine to include diet and exercise rising through specialized regimens, emotions and politics spurring from different medical spectacles, and disagreements and experimentations kickstarting discoveries. These broadened concepts of medicine derived from our historic authors intertwine with a range of common health practices used today.

When you are a little kid and your head starts to throb, your throat feels a little fuzzy, your face turns red and feverish, or your stomach churns and flips, a loved one probably guided you to limit your eating habits to probiotic yogurt for your stomach, maybe some ice cream or apple sauce for your throat, or possibly some fresh noodle soup. Just like our modern day remedies to cure the common cold, Hippocratic authors of the 5th Century BCE advised sick patients to consume weaker foods consisting of liquids similar in constitution to the yogurt or soup of today. In *Ancient Medicine*, the Hippocratic author outlines how diets should change depending on the sickness of a person: “Take a person sick with a disease that is neither severe and unbearable, nor yet altogether mild, but such that it is likely to become pronounced if he goes astray (sc. in his regimen), and suppose that he were to resolve to eat bread and meat, or any other food that is beneficial to people in health, not much of it, but far less than he could take if he was well” (Hippocrates, *Ancient Medicine* 1.8). Diets were to be tailored to the individual’s level of strength for the person to become their healthiest with their specific physis. Our modern day sick meals include a range of soft, liquid, easy-to-eat foods, coinciding with the weak foods Hippocratic authors support.

Not only does the Hippocratic regimen align dieting with individual physis but also exercise and lifestyle. “Whether they are bilious, or phlegmy, or raw, and each kind requires its own particular regimen” (Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic II* 2.4), the Hippocratic author in *Prorrhetic II* argues that exercise and routine should be specialized for each type of person to suit their body best. A range of workers, like nutritionists, influencers, doctors, or trainers, spend their lives tailoring specific workouts for an individual’s body depending on several factors like body shape, height, weight, biological sex, age, past injuries, chronic conditions, and more. While modern factors going into designing special regimens have changed from the past, the original Hippocratic concept of specializing both diet and exercise for physis builds the foundation for expanding regimens based on new medical advances and technologies.

Surrounded by a raucous crowd of fellow medical intellectuals crammed into a massive columned building, anatomist Andreas Vesalius calmly slices into the uterus of a deceased criminal on display, triggering stares and murmurs from his colleagues as he slyly eyes the reader. This boisterous spectacle is depicted on the front cover of his treatise written in 1543 titled *On the Fabric of the Human Body*. Vesalius’ artwork portrays the high emotional stakes of a human dissection on display. For Vesalius, medicine in dissection is not just the act of learning

the parts inside the human body, it includes the emotions and performance within the spectacle.

Additionally, Galen's numerous animal dissections in the 2nd Century CE were also famously carried out in front of an audience with the purpose of causing a scene. Once you have located the intercostal nerves of a vivisected pig for example, "Then you can show that the animal cries out when struck, but that it suddenly becomes silent after the nerves have been tied. The spectators are astonished" (Galen, *On Anatomical Procedures* 1.4). Evoking emotion in public display is an essential component of Galen and Vesalius' medicine, a component continuing into modern medicine. Similarly, today's media is filled with heroic acts of medicine meant to be witnessed by millions on a large screen, drawing tears to every eye. Medical dramas like *The Good Doctor*, *Scrubs*, or *Grey's Anatomy* show gory surgeries, last-minute medical calls, touching relationship storylines, and new medical advances in action. These television shows along with many realistic and fictitious movies, articles, and stories alike, intertwine the emotions of everyday patients with the technical medicine of today, much like how Galen and Vesalius interlock the emotions of their audience with their logical anatomical procedures.



Figure 1: Andreas Vesalius' *On the Fabric of the Human Body* cover page.

Galen and Vesalius' method of medicine via spectacle cannot escape the politics and ethics surrounding their dissections. When encouraging others to embark on finding human specimens for dissection Galen writes that they should "Make it rather your serious endeavor... to examine assiduously with your own eyes the human bones themselves. This is quite easy at Alexandria... try to visit Alexandria" (Galen, *On Anatomical Procedures* 1.2). According to Galen, the

political law of Alexandria claims dissections to be ethical, but that other cities might not be so lenient. Galen reveals how political legislature established to legally define ethical behavior can restrict medical dissections. Since Galen, medicine has always been a major topic of political conversation, and more recently in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Quickly becoming one of medicine's largest spectacles, the COVID-19 pandemic evoked major emotional, political, and ethical feelings in the modern Western world of medicine. Emotions ran rampant regarding the health and safety of individuals, families, and communities. Different political parties argued strongly for wildly different levels of governmental involvement, like mask mandates, lockdowns, and closures, to minimize the impact of spreading the virus. Widespread vaccine mandates, even though vaccines have been around for centuries, suddenly became a major source of ethical debate. Initially, COVID-19's medical impact might seem within the boundaries of patients and doctors, but the pandemic involved medicine at a much broader level, from emotional to political to ethical, very similar to Galen and Vesalius' dissections.

Disagreements among medical professionals lead to new experimentation and new understandings of medicine. Many of Galen's experiments were birthed to refute a point made by a previous medical author. For example, through extensive animal vivisections, Galen tests Asclepiades' theory on urine absorption directly through the bladder. After many vivisectional experiments involving clamping body parts, Galen finds that urine takes a direct root from the kidneys down into the ureters before it ends up in the bladder. Only by designing experiments based on a discrepancy between medical beliefs was Galen able to find new medical theories, some that we consider truthful today. This trend continued into later centuries as authors claim fault in some of Galen's theories and experiments. In his text *Doubts About Galen*, Persian physician Rhazes in the 9th and 10th Century CE "grieves me to oppose and criticize the man Galen from whose sea of knowledge I have drawn much" (Rhazes, *Doubts About Galen*). While he respects Galen and his ideas, Rhazes makes contrary points to improve his medicine. Even into the 16th and 17th Century CE, physician William Harvey recreates Galen's experiments and finds different results. "The experiment of Galen is thus... If you find the same blood in the arteries which is in the veins... conclude, that the arteries do contain the same blood which the veins" (Harvey, *Anatomical Exercise on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*). With the same experimental setup, Harvey's conclusions reject Galen's arterial theories. Today, scientists agree and disagree on topics all the time; they publish their findings to refute each other, peer-review each other's conclusions, dispute and back up new results, design and redesign experiments, and more. Scientists throughout time make discoveries in healthcare and medicine when disagreements are tested through experiments.

By expanding the framework of how we think about medicine, we can draw on how the history of healthcare parallels and propels medicine today. The texts we have read in class don't look as wildly different from today's medical scene as I expected. We still consider diet and exercise as essential to healing the mind and body; emotions and politics structure our culture of medical spectacle; disagreements and experimentations drove and continue to drive scientists to push the frontier of medical knowledge. As we continue to make medical progress with new insights, the roots and foundations of modern Western medicine will continue to reflect the values and practices of our past authors in new, modernized forms.

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## Dissection According to Celsus' Empiricists

By Audrey Telkamp

In Celsus' *On Medicine*, he contrasts the two main belief sets of physicians in Rome in the First Century CE: the views of the Rationalists and the Empiricists. Rationalists support dissections to help them discover the causal explanation for diseases which they believe is essential in order to treat them. However, Empiricists claim that dissections are problematic for treating diseases as they believe it is unnecessary to find the causal explanation before treating diseases. This paper discusses how the Empiricist values of gaining lived experience, eradicating cruelty, and maintaining the body for observation reject the act of human dissection.

Celsus defined an Empiricist outlook as someone who deems it unnecessary to find the causal explanation of diseases in order to treat them. Understanding the causes of diseases is futile as "they contend that inquiry about obscure causes and natural actions is superfluous, because nature is not to be comprehended" (Celsus, *On Medicine, proem.* 15-17). The objective purpose of a dissection outlined by Celsus is to open the body to learn more about how diseases originated. But because Empiricists claim it is unnecessary to find the origin of a disease, a dissection is therefore unnecessary. Instead, Empiricists believe that physicians should focus on gaining lived experience to treat diseases. Comparing present patients to past cases and prescribing similar treatments will most effectively and directly heal the patient according to Empiricist beliefs. Depicting the anatomy of the human internal organs through dissection does not tell an Empiricist anything about how to treat the disease, whereas relating previous experiences and their successful treatments to present cases does forge a path to finding a new successful treatment. Empiricists value gaining lived experience and comparing these to current patients' diseases in order to determine treatment, which is a value that cannot be achieved by wasting time on dissections.

Empiricists also emphasize the cruelty of dissections, making it an unethical mode of an investigation into the human body. In order to perform any dissection, a physician must "cut into the belly and chest of men whilst still alive, and to impose upon the Art which presides over human safety someone's death, and that too in the most atrocious way" (Celsus, *On Medicine, proem.* 23). Vivisections and surgeries, especially in the First Century CE, had no anesthesia or methods of reducing pain, so Empiricists strongly argue that these types of dissections ignore any sense of safety and humanity. Even dissections of the dead "are sought for with so much violence" (Celsus, *On Medicine, proem.* 23). The act of dissection involves prioritizing someone's death over finding a treatment for them while they are still alive. For Empiricists, dissections of any kind are cruel, unsafe, and unethical, and instead, physicians should find ways to treat diseases that eradicate this cruelty.

Maintaining bodily structure and function to fully observe the body in its entirety is an essential value of the Empiricist argument, which further highlights how problematic a dissection is to Empiricists. A dissection mutilates the internal organs of the body upon the first cut, "for when the body had been laid open, colour, smoothness, softness, hardness and all similars would not be such as they were when the body was untouched" (Celsus, *On Medicine, proem.* 23). Empiricists believe that to find a treatment, physicians must be able to observe the body fully and accurately. But when the body is cut into, "the more internal parts, which are far softer, and to which the very light is something novel, should under the most severe of woundings, in fact

mangling, undergo changes” (Celsus, *On Medicine, proem.* 23). The changes that a body undergoes in a dissection change the way that the body appears and how the disease can be seen on the body, making any observations made about the disease and how to treat it tampered. A current diseased person’s case should be compared to past cases in order to prescribe a treatment, but this Empiricist method cannot be undertaken because the body has been changed by dissection. Observations of the body cannot be completely accurate when a dissection distorts the body, so an Empiricist who values the accuracy of observation would claim that dissections are harmful.

Dissections are a problematic mode of investigation according to Empiricists because dissections fight against the very values of Empiricist thinking: learning through lived experience, minimizing human cruelty, and observing the untouched body accurately.

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## *De Cubiculo*

By Terek Walker

Tommy Wiseau's 2003 movie *The Room* is widely regarded as one of the worst films ever made. Its terrible writing, atrocious acting, and nonsensical editing have propelled it into a cult classic for the masochistic. However, if one looks beyond these glaring faults and examines the way in which the character of Lisa is portrayed, one can begin to see the semblance of an artistic product, one which has ancient and lofty precedents. For Lisa, a stand-in for some nameless woman who presumably hurt Wiseau in a pretty profound way, can be said to be part of a long tradition of creating female literary personae in order for men to vent their frustrations. When viewed through this lens, there is remarkable similarity between the characters of Lisa and Propertius's Cynthia. By examining the ways in which the two characters are depicted, one can come to understand the ways in which men like Propertius and Wiseau use such characters to process their emotions through their art.

In order to properly understand Lisa's similarities with Cynthia, it is important to describe the way in which Wiseau characterizes her. Simply put, she is a cartoon character, a villainess whose callous and manipulative nature is so laughably absurd that it beggars belief that she is intended to be anything other than some sort of poorly executed parody. Her motivations are arcane, and her actions are erratic. Even in moments when she is given an opportunity to explain herself, she does so poorly, offering the viewer no real insights into why she feels the way she does. An example of this can be seen quite early in the film, in her first interaction with her mother. During their conversation, Lisa confides that she does not love her fiancé Johnny, played by Wiseau himself, anymore, but when pressed for a reason all she can say is: "He's so boring," with no further elaboration (*The Room*, Directed by Tommy Wiseau, Wiseau Films, 2003 10:32-5). In the following scene, Lisa arranges a rendezvous with Johnny's best friend Mark, where she begins aggressively flirting with him, building up to a passionate declaration of: "Please don't leave. Please don't leave. I need you. I love you. I don't want to get married anymore. I don't love Johnny. I dream about you. I need you to make love to me," which is then followed by an awkward three-minute session of fully clothed "sex" on a spiral staircase (*The Room*, 15:55-19:19). To say that this development is sudden would be a massive understatement. In the course of two scenes, Lisa betrays her fiancé and initiates an affair, all while never making an attempt to explain how she feels to him. This is because she does not have feelings nor was she ever intended to. She is a caricature, an externalized abstraction upon which all the failings of the relationship can be blamed. When viewed through this lens, her false domestic violence accusations and other generally distasteful actions begin to make sense. She is inherently irrational and malevolent, eventually driving Johnny to suicide. His final words: "Why? Why is this happening to me? Why? It's over. God, forgive me," (*The Room*, 1:31:50-1:33:30) show that Lisa's motives remain a mystery and that neither he, nor the audience, can comprehend the machinations of her mind.

While it might at first seem hard to believe, Propertius's Cynthia has quite a bit in common with Wiseau's Lisa. Obviously, Cynthia's depiction by Propertius is much more nuanced than the malevolent one-dimensional caricature presented in *The Room*, but her role within the Propertian corpus is remarkably similar. As with Lisa, her motives are rather obscured. In Book One, the couple seems to be together, but by Book Two, the relationship appears to have ended, with Cynthia seeing a new man, a *praetor* from Illyria. This change is quite sudden, although that suddenness could be a result of the way in which Bowditch's reader is formatted and there could be specific poems which provide more detail which are not included



in her collection. However, as it stands, there is little in the way of evidence as to why or how the relationship between Propertius and Cynthia ended, although one can speculate based on the contents of Elegy 1.3. In this poem, Propertius demonstrates a degree of self-awareness by giving Cynthia her own voice and allowing her the opportunity to voice some displeasure at him. In the final lines of the elegy, she says: "...abandoned, I was often lamenting your long delays in an outside love: while deep sleep impelled me with pleasant wings. That woman was the ultimate worry of my tears," (...*deserta querebar / externo longas saepe in amore moras: / dum me iucundis lapsam sopor impulit alis. / illa fuit lacrimis ultima cura meis*, 1.3.43-6). While these lines at first seem to provide a clear motive for ending the relationship, one cannot say for certain. The last line, which is the most damning, may contain textual corruption. As Bowditch notes in her commentary, the *illa* may in fact be *ille*, referring to the deep sleep of the previous line, with the implication being that only sleep can calm Cynthia's worried mind. If this is the case, then Propertius's infidelity is only hinted at, as opposed to directly stated. Nevertheless, this moment of self-awareness is notable, as it is conspicuously absent in subsequent elegies. In Elegy 2.16, Cynthia takes on a more Lisa-esque role, that is to say, she is an abstraction upon which Propertius hurls abuse. She no longer gets a voice, and the reader becomes immersed in Propertius's perspective, one in which he is the aggrieved party who must sit and watch as the woman he loves parades around with another man, the aforementioned *praetor*. Near the end of the elegy, he invokes Jupiter and threatens that: "Then that god [Jupiter] is accustomed to punishing perjurious girls, since deceived, even that god himself cried. Therefore, let there not be to you Sidonian clothing of so great a value, so that you are afraid whenever the cloudy South Wind will be," (*Periuras tunc ille solet punire puellas, / deceptus quoniam flevit et ipse deus. / quare ne tibi sit tanti Sidonia vestis, / ut timeas, quotiens nubilus Auster erit*, 2.16.53-6). The idea that Cynthia, in accepting gifts from her new lover, must watch the heavens with dread lest Jupiter punish her, is a powerful one, thus demonstrating the degree to which she has become an object of Propertius's ire.

Herein lies the point. Both Cynthia and Lisa are, for lack of a better term, objects. They are not people, but instead, artistic representations of people filtered through the perceptions of the men in their lives. In short, they are whatever Propertius or Wiseau need them to be. While it is true that there are differences in each woman's characterization, they nevertheless serve the same role. They act as an external focus of blame for the aggrieved men. Propertius, while more self-aware, still chooses to primarily look outward, attacking Cynthia for her disloyalty and even going as far as to blame lapsed morals as the cause of his relationship's failure, he laments, echoing Cicero, by saying: "O excessively happy Rome in our time, if one girl acts against our customs!" (*O nimium nostro felicem tempore Romam, / si contra mores una puella facit!* 2.32.43-4). While Wiseau does not go so far as to blame society, he takes looking outward to an extreme by not exhibiting the slightest hint of self-awareness anywhere in his work. For him, it is Lisa who is responsible for everything, a point which he makes clear when he says: "I treat you like a princess, and you stab me in the back. I love you, and I did anything for you to just please you, and now you betray me! How could you love him!" (*The Room*, 1:29:33-46). While these two quotes are quite different, they nevertheless both express a deeply rooted frustration toward their respective targets, with no attempt being made at introspection.

That is because introspection is not the point. Both *The Room* and Propertius's love elegies can be understood as a sort of cathartic performance art, whereby a man, spurned by the perceived caprice of a woman, creates a work of art to vent his frustration at a constructed literary persona. Neither Cynthia nor Lisa are real people; they are mere impressions. While it is clear that they are based on real people, as fictional characters could never elicit such strong responses, it is impossible to know their true natures. This is by design. The goal is not to present

an objective truth, but to present a truth, the truth of Propertius and Wiseau respectively. Both men, despite nearly two millennia of separation, are thus engaged in the same fundamental act. They are aggrieved lovers creating art to express their feelings. While the quality of that art certainly varies, it is the therapeutic act of creation which unites them.

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## Achilles and Helen: Two Sides of the Same Coin

By Katelynn Xu

Within Homer's *The Iliad*, Achilles and Helen parallel each other in such a way that the effect of their genders on their characterization—and, further, the impact gender has on the roles all of the epic's characters play—can be pinpointed and analyzed. For two characters who do not interact, there is a startling amount that they have in common: they outrank all others in their respective categories, serve incredibly important parts in the Trojan War, have divine lineage, and display the most character depth.

In beauty, Helen far surpasses all other mortals, and is regarded as akin to the gods themselves. Although modern audiences may find it unreasonable that an entire war was fought over her, it's clear within *The Iliad* that, despite many cursing her name and lamenting the unfortunate fates of their comrades, she is beautiful enough to inspire such bloodshed. Here, atop the towers of Troy, in the midst of war, time is taken to comment on her sheer beauty,

And catching sight of Helen moving along the ramparts,  
they murmured one to another, gentle, winged words:  
“Who on earth could blame them? Ah, no wonder  
the men of Troy and Argives under arms have suffered  
years of agony all for her, for such a woman.  
Beauty, terrible beauty!

A deathless goddess—so she strikes our eyes!” (3.185-91)

Similarly, Achilles is famous for his skill in battle, appearing to best all others in combat and leadership. Although there are certainly other skilled warriors on the battlefield—in fact, several have their own *aristeia*, including Diomedes, Hector, Agamemnon, and Patroclus—even the mere threat of Achilles' appearance is enough to strike fear into the Trojan army,

...all their courage quaked, their columns buckled,  
thinking swift Achilles had tossed to the winds  
his hard rage that held him back by the ships  
and chosen friendship toward the Argives now.  
Each Trojan soldier glancing left and right—  
how could he run from sudden, plunging death? (16.328-33)

Although there are, of course, various factors that contribute to the start of the Trojan War, it can be said that Helen is the beginning, while Achilles' role is as the end, however temporary it may be. As the last book of the epic comes to a close, there's an air of finality as the primary conflict, that of Achilles and Hector, is resolved and both sides enact a period of peace in order to perform last rites for their dead.

Throughout the epic, Achilles' strongest asset is consistently shown to be his divine parentage. Thetis, his devoted mother and sea goddess with favors to cash in on Olympus, is all-too-willing to aid him in his endeavors. Despite being his mother, the power dynamic of their relationship is tilted in favor of Achilles, who is able to demand that she do certain things for his benefit,

“Remind [Zeus] of that,  
now, go and sit beside him, grasp his knees...  
persuade him, somehow, to help the Trojan cause,  
to pin the Achaeans back against their ships,  
trap them round the bay and mow them down.  
So all can reap the benefits of their king—  
so even mighty Atrides can see how mad he was

to disgrace Achilles, the best of the Achaeans!” (1.483-90)

Although there are no other mother-son relationships with the same weight as that of Achilles and Thetis, it can be assumed that gender plays a significant role in shaping their interactions, especially given the social hierarchy that is established multiple times. Namely, that the gods always take precedence over mortals, a rule which their relationship does not abide by. In any case, Thetis remains largely an extension of Achilles, as if she were his divinity personified rather than an individual with her own motivations and goals. Not only is she seen supplicating Zeus, she does the same with Hephaestus in order to supply Achilles with godly armor, further enhancing his performance on the battlefield. The love and support Thetis gives to her son is sharply contrasted with the complete lack of interaction between Helen and her own divine father, Zeus.

It may be more apt to compare Helen and Sarpedon when it comes to analyzing Zeus’ treatment of his children. Helen’s only interaction with the world of the divine is with Aphrodite, who she finds herself at odds with—this will be explored further. It is there that audiences hear Helen acknowledged as “Helen the child of Zeus / whose shield is storm and lightning” (3.497-8). Such a brief inclusion that it might’ve easily been missed in the drama following. Not so is Sarpedon’s role as the son of Zeus: he is highlighted several times as an outstanding fighter and Zeus actively debates and laments his tragic fate,

“My cruel fate...

my Sarpedon, the man I love the most, my own son—  
doomed to die at the hands of Menoetius’ son Patroclus.

My heart is torn in two as I try to weigh all this.  
Shall I pluck him up, now, while he’s still alive  
and set him down in the rick green land of Lycia,  
far from the war at Troy and all its tears?

Or beat him down at Patroclus’ hands at last?” (16.514-21)

There are several factors that may make the difference in treatment more reasonable. Helen, for all that she is despised and internally torn, is safe. No matter who wins, she will live and keep her high status. Sarpedon is embroiled in the war, with no chance of making it out alive. That both Helen and Sarpedon are, in a way, mere pawns for the gods to use in their war games, is likely due to the general attitude of gods towards mortals more than anything personal. Even so, gods with personal stakes in the mortals that are being put in play have been seen to intervene when others use them too extremely. Bar defying the fates, it seems gods have the ability to involve themselves whenever they deem necessary. And, Zeus as the ruler of the gods, has more than enough leeway to acknowledge Helen in some way, or restrict Aphrodite from inflicting more troubles on his daughter. Instead, she can only depend on the kindness of the family she’s been forced into.

On the topic of gods: for the most part, mortals remain respectful of the divine, in spite of their trouble-making and ill treatment—likely because they have no other choice. Both Helen and Achilles, however, rebel against this system, though the result in both cases is failure. Helen’s verbal attack is striking, and enhances her character, elevating her from the single-emotioned characterization that other women in the epic are given. To Aphrodite, she says,

“Maddening one, my Goddess, oh what now?  
Lusting to lure me to my ruin yet again?  
Where will you drive me next?  
Off and away to other grand, luxurious cities,  
out to Phrygia, out to Maeonia’s tempting country?”

Have you a favorite mortal man there too?" (3.460-5)

One can imagine the sheer frustration Helen feels in this moment. Like everyone else who'd been eagerly awaiting the end of the war only to be bitterly met with another act of divine intervention, she is yet again a victim. Perpetually isolated and vilified, her rebellion is deeply personal. On the other hand, Achilles lashes out as a result of his single-minded blind rage following Patroclus' death, in a way that's almost comedic. When he realizes that his fight against the river god Scamander is in vain, he prays desperately to the gods to save him,

"Father Zeus! To think in all my misery not one god  
can bring himself to rescue me from this river!

...

Now look what a wretched death I'm doomed to suffer,  
trapped in this monstrous river like some boy, some pig-boy  
swept away, trying to ford a winter torrent in a storm!" (21.308-20)

Unlike Helen, he is the constant recipient of goodwill from the gods, and so invokes them knowing that he will be saved. The way that gender affects their degree of safety—however *safe* the gods can be, at any rate—comes down to the inherent roles that they assume as a product of their gender. The only two roles that a woman can be in *The Iliad* are possession or caretaker; their life's purpose is always attached to a man. Every man is a soldier, an authority figure, or both. There is more value ascribed to a warrior because he is a man, and to a man because he is a warrior, or at least, always has the potential to be one; in the same vein, less value is ascribed to a woman because she can never be anything more than something to be owned or directed.

Women are more currency than individuals, and countless women are traded around as rewards and trophies. The conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon begins with a fight over a woman; not because they were particularly attached to her as a person, but because she is a physical representation of their pride,

"But let this be my warning on your way:  
since Apollo insists on taking my Chryseis,  
I'll send her back in my own ships with *my* crew.  
But I, I will be there in person at your tents  
to take Briseis in all her beauty, your own prize—'" (1.214-8)

The two women named in their exchange, Chryseis and Briseis, are so-called due to their fathers Chryses and Briseus; they have no names of their own. When Agamemnon attempts to make amends, he does so by offering more nameless women,

"Seven women I'll give him...along with them will go  
the one I took away at first, Briseus' daughter,  
and I will swear a solemn, binding oath in the bargain:  
I never mounted her bed, never once made love with her

...

and choose for his pleasure twenty Trojan women

...

Three daughters are mine in my well-built halls—  
Chrysothemis and Laodice and Iphianassa—  
and he may lead away whichever one he likes" (9.153-76).

Not even his own daughters are spared the fate of being simple tools for the use of their father, who wouldn't have been in such dire straits that the situation necessitated this had he not been so prideful and quick to anger. However, Helen, by virtue of being a main character, is granted the chance to express herself. She speaks of being separated from her "marriage bed, my kinsmen and my child, / my favorite, now full-grown, / and the lovely comradeship of women my own

age” (3.211-213). It’s not difficult to extend similar laments to the women being passed around with no say in the matter, most of which have had their entire families ransacked and exterminated, although the circumstances are different.

By exploring the parallels between Achilles and Helen, the effect of gender on *The Iliad*’s characterizations becomes increasingly apparent. Above all, it is that women and men are restricted to certain roles that assign to them an intrinsic value. Men are more valuable than women, and for that reason, they are given more benefits; namely, basic human rights and more-often-than-not beneficial divine intervention. The likelihood of receiving life-saving help tends to be based on heroism status. Women are unable to achieve any sort of heroism in *The Iliad*, which is why Helen is constantly a slave to the will of Aphrodite, who heaps rewards onto her favored male mortals, at absolutely no cost to herself.

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## Roman Attitudes Toward the Germani and the Parthians

By Boao Zhang

As the Empire expanded far beyond the familiar territories of the Mediterranean, the Romans inevitably encountered various distinct cultures residing on the periphery of the classical world. These groups were often in conflict with the Romans. Some rival civilizations were subjugated, while others, such as the Germani and the Parthians, remained unconquered. The Romans, following the traditions of earlier Greek writers, often referred to other civilizations they encountered as ‘barbarians,’ regarding them as either culturally or militarily inferior to their own. Examining the Roman perception of these labeled “others” holds significant importance, especially since the primary sources about these people often come from classical Roman authors. Moreover, the Roman attitudes toward these groups offer valuable insights into their self-perception. Studying how the Romans viewed the Germani and the Parthians, both of whom were considered unconquerable and distinct from Rome, allows a deeper understanding of Roman identity and how they perceived themselves in contrast to these external groups. From extant Roman sources, it becomes evident that these portrayals were not merely neutral observations but rather reflections of the Romans’ self-image. The Roman classical texts’ depictions of the Germani as unsophisticated and the Parthians as socially effeminate served the purpose of reinforcing the idea of Roman cultural and military superiority. Thus, these portrayals were part of a broader narrative that depicted Rome as the pinnacle of civilization, capable of resisting and subduing other supposedly inferior and corruptive forces. Analyzing these historical perspectives helps in better understanding the complexities of Roman society and its interactions with neighboring cultures.

The Romans, in general, perceived the Germani as simple ‘barbarians’, as they were often portrayed to live in an unsophisticated stagnant society with no culture or history, as distinct from the superior culture of Rome. In Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, he described the Germani as having spent most of their time hunting and not familiar with farming (Caesar, 347). The Germani also had no wealth, according to Tacitus, and saw value not in gold or silver, but in cows, which were their most valued possessions (Tacitus, 369). Even the few possessions they had, they tended to give away to their leaders (Tacitus, 371). Furthermore, it was believed that the Germani, when they were not hunting, dedicated their time to sleeping and eating and did nothing else (Tacitus, 371). The bravest fighters among them were no different in this regard, sharing an obsession of idleness with the rest (Tacitus, 371). In terms of their aesthetic tastes, Tacitus described the Germani as having no such thing as an appreciation for beauty because they never considered appearance or attractiveness in constructing their buildings (Tacitus, 371). Moreover, the Germani were famous among the Romans for not living in cities, and they enjoyed living at a distance from each other rather than together (Tacitus, 371). Tacitus portrayed the Germani in a manner unfamiliar to the Romans. In contrast, the Romans favored urban life, not only because it reflected their typical way of living but also because Rome’s most remarkable inventions and achievements occurred in urban settings. Archaeological evidence clearly demonstrated that Romans built rigid grid-pattern *civitas* and rectangular houses typical of Roman urban life in newly expanded territories on the periphery of the empire, indicating their strong preference for urban living. One prime example is the *civitas* capital of Viroconium in Roman-occupied Britain (Hingley, 89). This city featured strict grid-patterned streets, paved roads, continuous defensive walls, and various public buildings, representing the complex and sophisticated Roman living style and serving as an integral part of the Roman identity. The centralized state structure and control were heavily emphasized in this way of social organization. For instance, the continuous wall surrounding the *civitas* allowed easy regulation of

the flow of goods, including vital necessities like food and water, in and out of the city (*Hingley*, 90). The grid-patterned streets and close proximity of residents made maintaining order easier compared to dispersed settlements. In stark contrast, native living centers in pre-Roman controlled Britain, known as *oppida*, bore a close resemblance to the organization of the Germani, as the latter preferred living away from each other (*Hingley*, 90). The Romans viewed the Germani and the native people's decentralized and less sophisticated way of living as inferior because it lacked the benefits that a *civitas* offered. It resulted in difficulties in maintaining order, controlling trade, and the absence of significant public buildings, indicative of a weak or absent centralized structure, a direct opposite of the powerful central power structure in the Rome Empire. These depictions by Roman classical authors, as well as the belief that the Germani had no written history but only ancient songs, demonstrated the usual Roman attitudes that associated the Germani with primitiveness (Tacitus, 368). In the Roman imagination, the Germani were the 'uncultured' others as they had an 'unsophisticated' society with no money, literature, or urban communities.

As seen in the Roman sources, the Germani were often perceived as simple creatures. It should be noted, however, that this portrayal of the Germani people was the result of Roman authors advancing their own agenda— i.e., not the Germani people in reality but in the Roman imagination. Thus, Caesar depicted them as 'barbaric' but they were also viewed as noble by Tacitus. Caesar wrote that the Germani used guile and treachery to hide their true intentions as they secretly planned to attack (Caesar, 349). Caesar, as brilliant as he was portrayed in his own book, saw through their plans and described the Germani as "dishonest and grudging as ever" (Caesar, 349). Tacitus, on the other hand, focused on the noble qualities of the Germani people, stating that in their simplicity, they received known or unknown guests with equal generosity and considered it wrong to prevent anyone from staying at their houses (Tacitus, 373). Tacitus viewed this practice favorably, as the Romans, influenced by the Greeks' concept of *Xenia*, placed great importance on *Hospitalitem*, which emphasized hospitality in the guest-host relationship. The practice of receiving guests by the Germani people undoubtedly aligned with the Roman values. Tacitus continued to state, with evident favor, that in marriage, the Germani were faithful to each other (Tacitus, 371). This reflected how the marriage customs of the Germani people were comparable with the Augustan ideal of prioritizing the family unit and faithfulness, as it was believed to contribute to high social stability. Furthermore, in battles, the Germani were reported to have carried the bodies of their dead comrades back, even at the risk of their own safety (Tacitus, 370). In a society in which the military played an unparalleled role, as in Rome, similar values promoting camaraderie in battles were not difficult to find. It should be noted that all virtues attributed to the Germani people recorded by Tacitus were in line with already existing Roman values, and his account conflicted with the one Caesar had. In contrast, some sources considered the Germani to be 'barbaric' creatures who hid their intentions in secret and were dishonest while others discussed how they received everyone with generosity and were faithful to each other. There were notable discontinuities in the portrayal of the Germani people by different Roman authors. One likely interpretation would be that the Roman texts were written in such a way that was far from being objective, but each attempted to deliver a message to their own audience based on the authors' contemporary politics. Caesar wrote it in the way it was presented because he wanted to make himself appear as the defender of Roman civilization against dishonest 'barbarians' for his very own political interest, whereas Tacitus, 150 years later, criticized the ever-increasing extravagance of Imperial Roman society by describing how noble the Germani were without an obsession with wealth. Tacitus was making a self-criticism to what he perceived as the ills of Roman society at the time. He believed that the obsession with wealth was problematic, and considered the Germani, without such concerns, to be noble for two



reasons. The first reason was philosophical, as Tacitus followed Stoicism, which upheld moderation and living in harmony with nature. In contrast, extravagance and excessive indulgence were seen as harmful deviations from the natural order. The second reason was practical, as the Romans feared that the pursuit of wealth would corrupt and undermine the very foundation of Rome's success. However, whether the Germani people were actually this way was likely of no interest to the Roman authors but it served to advance their agenda.

In contrast, the Roman attitude towards the Parthians was very different. Whereas the Germani were perceived as uncivilized 'barbarians,' the same could not be said about the Parthians. Instead, the Romans thought of people from the East as effeminate, soft, and extravagant. Again, whether the Parthians were actually this way was likely of no interest to the Roman authors. The portrayal did show, however, that the Romans tried to establish an imperial narrative against the Parthians similar to the one they had over the Germani, in which the Romans were consistently superior in every way. Livy, in his work, described Alexander conquering Persia without a fight because the Persian army consisted of eunuchs and women (Livy, 231). The wealth from the East, including but not limited to the gold and the purple cloths, weakened the Persians to an extent that the war was won without bloodshed (Livy, 231). Even though Alexander's Macedonians were not the Romans, nor were the Achaemenid Persians, the Parthians, as described in Livy's texts, the stereotype about the East and its people undoubtedly remained. In Lucan's *Civil War*, for example, the Parthians were also described as effeminate, but this time not because of the corruption in their extravagant wealth, but their fighting styles. The Parthians were said to have fought like cowards by constantly fleeing from the Romans, so they could pour a rain of arrows from afar, and that they did not have enough courage to fight hand-to-hand, whereas the Romans were portrayed as masculine and as strong as the swords they waived in battle (Lucan, 235). Despite being criticized as cowardly at warfare, the Parthians proved themselves to be a formidable enemy to the Romans. According to the Roman historian Plutarch, when Crassus marched the Romans against Parthia, the Parthians managed to defeat him and completely destroyed a detachment of the Roman army led by Crassus' son (Plutarch, 239). The rest of the Roman troops fled in fear and chaos. Crassus himself was later killed as well (Plutarch, 241). Even though this proved to be a significant defeat, Plutarch criticized the fighting style of the Parthians as being cowardly, dishonest, and despicable, as also seen in Lucan. Plutarch wrote that the Parthians initially planned to attack with their pikes to fight the Romans in close quarters, until they realized the Romans were steadfast and abandoned their plans, pulled back, and used their bows (Plutarch, 236). Here the Roman texts suggested that the Parthians were scared to fight with swords, indicating that the Romans would have won if the Parthians had not used their despicable tactics. In Lucan, similar criticisms could be found describing the Parthians to be soft— i.e., weak and fragile— that they could not withstand heat, nor persevere through the harsh environment. Nor did the Parthians know how to swim or climb mountains, only to flee and use their bows (Lucan, 235). Such stereotypes against the Parthians were likely because the Romans needed an excuse for their terrible defeat at the battle of Carrhae. It was a way of proclaiming to the rest of the empire and reinforcing the imperial narrative that had the Parthians fought with their swords as the Romans did, the Romans would have won. However, the Parthians resorted to cowardly and despicable tactics, causing the "honorable" Romans to have lost. Additionally, the narrative created by Roman authors also emphasized the Romans' role in defending the empire against perceived corruptive forces from the East, not only physically but also spiritually. They regarded the Parthians as linked with 'womanly characters' and employing cowardly, unmanly tactics, while Rome prided itself on being 'manly' and viewed masculinity as vital to their self-identity. For instance, Augustus presented himself as a strong, powerful, and masculine leader, aiming to convince his subjects

that he could lead the empire to victory in foreign wars, maintain peace within its borders, and safeguard Roman values. This perception of preserving masculinity held immense importance for the Romans, as they attributed it as a pillar for Rome's past and ongoing success. They believed that Eastern riches and despicable tactics that were often associated with the Parthians would weaken Rome's representative masculinity and erode the will to fight, threatening the very foundation of Rome.

The Romans held distinct perceptions of the Germani and the Parthians. They viewed the Germani as simple, primitive, and uncultured, while the Parthians were often depicted as effeminate and soft. These contrasting attitudes can be attributed to both the genuine differences between the two groups and the Roman desire to establish a sense of superiority over any "others" they encountered. On their Northern border, the Romans emphasized their more sophisticated lifestyle to assert dominance over the Germani. However, when facing the Parthians, a formidable opponent with comparable sophistication and imperial status, the same could not be said. As a result, the Romans resorted to criticizing the Parthian riches as an effeminate value and their fighting styles as cowardly to distance themselves from the Parthians. It is crucial to acknowledge that these portrayals in Roman texts lacked objectivity due to political motivations influencing the authors. Consequently, descriptions were biased, contributing to the construction of an imperial narrative or even self-criticisms that aimed to warn the Romans of their perceived coming dangers that threatened Roman society and identity. The stereotypical depictions of the Germani and the Parthians were instrumental in establishing the idea that the Romans represented the pinnacle of civilization, bravely resisting 'barbaric,' effeminate, and corruptive forces from the outside. This served to justify their perceived superiority and reinforced their cultural identity. The Roman attitudes toward "others" are important because it allows for a deeper understanding of Roman civilization. Their attitudes towards "others" served as a mirror that reflected upon themselves, which offered valuable insights that revealed more about themselves than about the true nature of foreign cultures.

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**Creative Works**  
**2022-2023**



**The Romans—they took over everything. They could do that. They had aqueducts, viaducts. They can move ducks around faster than anyone ever had.**

**- Suzy Eddie Izzard, Comedian**

**The Sapphic Lovers**  
By Christine Daniels



## Caligula's Possession

By Timothy Gibbs

To Posterity,

As of late, my father Germanicus has invaded my dreams and overwhelmed my thoughts. For the past two years, he has continuously hounded me to avenge his wrongful death against the perpetrator; Tiberius. My father, attempting to avenge himself against his adopted father and my uncle... It is enough to make someone go mad. I have been overwhelmed by this vengeful spirit but I cannot ignore it. How could I? Mars Ultor would never forgive me for denying vengeance to my father. I still can't believe my father was assassinated by his adopted father, do blood ties mean nothing in this decadent world? Today, my father, Germanicus Julius Caesar, came to me during my slumber and implored me to avenge him, restore our family's honor, and affirm the wishes of the Roman people and Senate. With this final appeal and a threat from Mars himself in my dreams, I gave in. My father told me that to avenge him, I must collect a number of ingredients and mix them in a cauldron in order to create a poison strong enough to kill the divine Tiberius. I began to have my doubts; was this really my father? The great Germanicus, conqueror of Germania, Caesar of the Empire, and giant among men, reduced to a scheming druid in the afterlife? Though I despise my uncle and all the horrors he has put me through on this island, he is still of the divine Julio-Claudian family, a god amongst men, a living symbol of the strength of our empire, and a personal choice of the divine Jupiter. I could not believe what I was being told. Murdering one's own family is the worst crime in the eyes of the judges of the afterlife. In order to test if this spirit was truly my father, I questioned him rigorously; I asked him questions that had answers only he would know. I asked him about our lineage, I asked him about the wars in Germania, and I asked him who killed him and how it happened. He answered me with the answers I knew to be true. I knew that my father was standing before me. I also asked about how the divine Julius Caesar and Augustus were faring in the afterlife; my father told me that they were living as gods beholden only to the mighty Jupiter himself.

After this, he told me that he cannot rest peacefully while his murder remained unavenged and that I must help to lay him to rest. His speech angered me, how could a father betray his own son like Tiberius did to my father? Tiberius deserved to die. Killing one's own kin combined with the murder of Jupiter's chosen ruler should have deterred me, but it did not, I felt the flame of Mars spring to life in my chest. Was I, a son of the great Germanicus, standing by and cowardly waiting for Tiberius to kill me too? Should I allow my father to suffer for eternity? Would I allow the house of Germanicus and the legacy of the divine Augustus to be shattered by this madman? No, I had to avenge my father, I had to rid the world of this evil tyrant. Rome must once again be ruled by virtue and dignity! My uncle Tiberius lived as a pig, engaging in all of the worst debaucheries and decadence imaginable. It was at this point, when my anger burned at its absolute brightest, that my father informed me of what Tiberius had done to my sisters. Mars himself appeared in front of me and tried to hold me back, for I was grabbing a sword and was preparing to kill Tiberius. It was only at the appearance of the divine Augustus himself telling me "now was not the time" that I regained hold of my senses. At this, I gathered all the ingredients my father requested. They were as follows: a dead stag's heart, a live Barbary monkey, a tooth of an African Elephant, a strand of hair from Tiberius, a strand of my own hair, a rose from the Garden of the Caesars, and a mixture of a handful of Augustus's and my father's own ashes. I gathered these in secret, for if Tiberius or that scoundrel Macro discovered my actions, they would butcher me like they did my father. When I had gathered these things and mixed all of them together, I inhaled the scent of the mixture and allowed it to envelop me. Everything faded to darkness, I woke up and saw my body was moving when I wasn't telling it to. I completely

lost control of my body. I tried screaming, but I had no voice. I could not move, I could not speak, I could not smell, I could not taste, I could not do anything except see. I had become a passenger in my own body. It was at this point that my father's voice spoke to me and told me that we were not going to poison Tiberius, but rather, my father would personally kill his adopted father with my hands. I had been tricked into bringing my father back from the dead! My father sensed my anger and calmly assured me that avenging him was favored by Jupiter himself and my service would grant me the privilege of being a god amongst men.

My father, in control of my own body, walked to Tiberius's chamber and proclaimed that Germanicus's revenge was finally here. He proclaimed that the house of Germanicus was taking back what belonged to it and that Tiberius had done the worst thing imaginable: killing his son. As he looked down at Tiberius's face, shocked, white as marble, he closed my hands around Tiberius's throat and I felt as one with him. At this point, Tiberius had started writhing, searching for words that would not come to him. My father suffocated the Emperor Tiberius and stared in his eyes the entire time, taking delight in the evil man's life slowly seeping out of his worthless body. This man was no god, nor was he divine. He was a twisted murderer and destroyer of everything good and decent in this world. After the act was finished, we collapsed and I woke up in the kingdom of the gods. Jupiter, Mars, and the divine Augustus and Julius Caesar embraced me and told me that my father was finally at peace. He appeared in his legendary armor, saluted me, and then embraced me. It was then that Jupiter lifted me up and announced to the heavens that I had attained godhood and was being sent down to Rome to rule as a god among men.

**Pliny Letter**  
By Andrew Haley

C. Pliny sends his greetings to Gary May,

You both admire and revere our friend Gunrock, as do I by equal measure. Is there any aggie among us who does not admire and revere him? My love for Gunrock is of the greatest sort. We came to know each other in my first year at University of California: Davis, and our love for one another grew with the passing years, strengthened by hardship and our shared passion for the poetic arts. Perhaps you too can relate, having known Gunrock for nearly as many years as I have, through his work in litigation. A stallion of the highest caliber and the most blue of color, he truly is a testament to the excellence of character in our community.

Therefore it pains me to even consider that our beloved Gunrock is so hated by the common student that they would consider giving his office to a common cow of no great repute. And so the purpose of my writing is to request of you that you put a stop to this disparagement at once: that our beloved Gunrock might be spared of their vitriol, and that the voices of reason will ring out his endorsement. For only the most refined of individuals have the good sense necessary to drive such a lofty institution. I have furnished the school with interest-free loans out of awareness of the good work our Gunrock does here, and I wish to continue doing so in good conscience. Please ensure that my charity was not in vain. Farewell.

# Top 10 Twitter Threads Before Disaster: #10 Mt. Vesuvius

By Andrew Haley

**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

@official\_tacitus so you asked what happened when my uncle left me at misenum

84 5.4K 60K

**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

not much, really. i read some books because i am studious. slept terribly that night because the ground was trying to flip us like a pancake

39 27 952

**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

Then my mom and i went out to the porch. i asked for one of livy's books (... i was 18, ok?) and i read it. one of my uncle's friends came over and yelled at us for just sitting there, but i ignored him (i love livy)

193 86 4.1K

**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

then the sun rose, and the earth started shaking again, and we got kinda worried that the buildings would collapse. so we decided to leave, and everyone else in town had the same idea

32 10 350

**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

the cars were parked on flat ground but they were still moving in two different directions. the sea receded and you could see a bunch of sea animals stuck on the sand.



4 8 23





**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

and a scary black cloud opened up above us, like it was breathing fire. my uncle's friend told us "your uncle would want you to live even if he died", but we didn't really care about our own safety if we didn't know about his. so he gave up on us and left.



1.5K

9.8K

30.2K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

the cloud covered the sea, and my mom told me to go on without her because she would slow me down. but i told her i wouldn't leave without her, so she came with me.

37.3K

43.4K

46K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

by now ash was falling, and blackness followed us like a flood. so we moved aside, so that the crowd wouldn't crush us in the darkness.



39

27

952





**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

that darkness was like a room with the light turned out. Women wailing, children screaming, men shouting, searching for each other, recognizing familiar voices.

27

1.1K

16.9K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

people mourned their misfortune, prayed for their deaths, prayed to the gods. still more believed this was the end of days, that the gods were no longer. some spread terrible rumors about the destruction of parts of town, about fire, and people believed them.

2

2

21



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

a sliver of light appeared, but we thought it was fire drawing closer, not daylight (the fire had actually stopped further away)



6.2K

6.8K

54.8K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

yet the darkness came back, and so much ash we had to shake it off, over and over, or be buried alive. despite it all i was so brave. i didn't even cry once.

342

771

12.5K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1

...

still, i did believe that i was going to die, and the rest of the world would die with me, which was somewhat comforting.

377

26.1K

262.6K





**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1



finally the darkness dissipated into a cloud. the sun was shining weakly like it does during an eclipse. ash coated everything like snow.



1.6K 8.4K 57.2K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1



so we went back to misenum and spent the night hopeful, but overwhelmingly on edge. the earth kept shaking, and some people were still making wild predictions. we still had no intentions of leaving, until we heard about my uncle.

156 484 2.3K



**ego ille plinius** @plinythegr8 · Jun 1



this probably isn't worth putting in your article, or even of this thread. but you're the one that asked me to write it, so if it's boring it's on you

16 50 399

## **Have You Heard?**

By Jessica Iwuoha

Have you heard the sweet whispers of our savior goddess?

She whispers to those that devote their life to her,

“You shall live a blessed life, live under my protection a life of glory,

And worship me when you reach the end of your time and go to the underworld.”

Have you heard of the joyous rituals that are devoted to her?

We celebrate her on beautiful and sunny days,

With white robes adorned and sweet, spring flowers in bloom.

We trod along the holy path, carrying candles, lamp, and lights,

In favor of our goddess whose origin is of the starry night.

Have you heard the sweet melody of our goddess’ music,

With the strains of music through the pipe and flute?

The choir follows the honey-dipped sound,

Dressed white as the pure, radiance of life.

Have you heard the sweet blessings of the Camenae,

With their musical vows and dedication to Sarapis?

O how gracious of them to give her praise!

Singing over and over again a lovely song!

Have you seen the attire of our sweet members?

Women and men of every rank and age, shining in pure, white radiance of life.

With the men’s head shaved clean and the maidens dripping with honey fragrance,

They decorated the air with the sistrum rattles of bronze, silver, and gold.

Have you seen our sweet priests that lead us?

One carrying a sistrum and kyathos, another with a hydrid,

Careful to not directly touch the sacred item as another,  
Held a hierogrammateus and the last priest held a serpent and situld.

Have you felt the sweet care of our priest who leads us,  
With his strict observance of the rules of faith?  
Despite the nature of his ways and role as a priest,  
He means well for you and I in the name of our savior goddess.

Have you heard the sweet revelation of our savior goddess?  
Known by many names both in Greek and Egypt;  
Eldest daughter of Kronos. Sister-Wife of King Osiris. Inventor of crops for humans.  
Rises in the Dog Star, as Mother of King Horus. Mistress of the river, winds, and sea.  
Founder of sanctuaries for gods and ender of murders and rules of tyrants.  
The one we call Thesmophoros, who raised islands to the light and who fate listens to.

Have you heard the sweet whispers of our savior goddess?  
Whom with worship with such praise and honor.  
With her own rites, she alone stands fair of them all.  
Through the sweet whispers of our savior goddess, Queen Isis!

## Medea in the Garden of Hekate

By Alexandra Meyer

[OUTSIDE A SHRINE TO HEKATE, IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT. MEDEA STANDS ALONE, SCANNING THE GROUND FOR SOMETHING]

MEDEA:

“Hekate, night-wanderer,  
Hekate, evil-averted,  
Hekate, witch-mother,  
I come before you as suppliant,  
As daughter.  
Guide me with your soil-stained hands,  
Guide me to that place,  
Where the blood of Prometheus watered the Earth,  
Where the eagle of Zeus rent his innards,  
Where ichor fed the flower of immortal flesh.”

HEKATE: [SPEAKING FROM OFF-STAGE, SHOULD BE RECEIVED AS A DIS-EMBODIED VOICE]

“Look before you, my daughter,  
Look to the maw of the cave,  
To the towering stem,  
Tall in immortal stature,  
Golden as my saffron robes.”

MEDEA:

I see the bloom of tortured Prometheus,  
Bleeding golden ichor upon its petals,  
Held aloft by twin stalks.  
Pray, Hekate, give me your strength,  
That I might uproot this mighty plant.

[MEDEA UPROOTS THE FLOWER, STRAINING SLIGHTLY. A FLESHY, TUBEROUS ROOT EMERGES FROM THE GROUND]

This root pulses with a beating heart,  
And is the darkened brown of dried blood.

[MEDEA CLUTCHES HER CASPIAN SHELL CLOSE TO HER FOR A MOMENT BEFORE CALLING OUT TO HEKATE]

Brimo! Infernal mistress, heed my call.  
I summon you near with secret names,  
Those words spoken through the ether:  
PHORBA PHORBA BRIMO AZZIEBYA!  
The dread queen, Brimo:  
MOUPHOR PHORBA!

The night-wanderer, Brimo:  
EALANINDO ATEES ENIDELIDIMA MEDIXA EMITHENIO!  
The blood-drinker, Brimo:  
AKTIOPHIS ERESCHIGAL!  
The flesh-eater, Brimo:  
NEBOUTOSOUALETH PHORPHORBA SATRAPAMMON CHOIRIXIE!  
The soul-devourer, Brimo:  
NEBOUTOSOUALETH IOI LOIMOU LALON!  
The evil-averted, Brimo:  
ASKEI KATASKEI ERON OREON IOR MEGA SAMNYER BAUI!  
ASKEI KATASKEI ERON OREON IOR MEGA SAMNYER BAUI!  
ASKEI KATASKEI ERON OREON IOR MEGA SAMNYER BAUI!  
Come to me now, terrifying queen!  
Guide my hand as I cut the son of Iapetus,  
As I bleed the root of its power,  
As I see my lover safe from bullish flames:  
PHOBANTIA SEMNE!

[MEDEA CUTS THE ROOT OPEN WITH A BOWKNIFE AND ALLOWS THE JUICE TO COLLECT IN HER SHELL. A BELLOWING SCREAM ERUPTS FROM THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE AS SHE DOES SO]

Farewell, Prometheus, and many thanks.  
Your pain here shall stopper a thousand cries from my lips.  
And to fearsome Hekate, I pour this offering upon the Earth.  
Bringer of the first breath and taker of the last,  
Blood for blood and flesh for flesh, with honeyed wine and words of thanks.

[MEDEA CUTS OPEN HER PALM AND ALLOWS HER BLOOD TO DRIP UPON THE SOIL. SHE THEN POURS A MEASURE OF WINE FROM HER SKEIN UPON THE GROUND]

χαιρετώ τὴν δεινὴν Ἐκάτην!  
χαιρετώ τὴν δεινὴν Ἐκάτην!  
χαιρετώ τὴν δεινὴν Ἐκάτην!

[MEDEA LEAVES IN A GOLDEN CHARIOT. THE NEXT SCENE OPENS OUTSIDE THE ROYAL PALACE OF COLCHIS, WITH MEDEA INSIDE A DIMLY LIT TEMPLE]

MEDEA:  
The stars may be the only light for me now.  
My father cannot know what I do here,  
So I pray the gods will be my only witness.  
I have stained my palms black with ink,  
Just as I have stained the papyrus.  
May these words have half as much power as ichor!  
May they protect Jason, beloved by Hera,  
Now beloved by Medea.

Hekate, I call you back once more,  
One final time on this dark moon,  
Teacher and guide,  
Torch-bearer and illuminator of shades,  
Show me each letter, each arrangement,  
That will shield Jason from all harm.

HEKATE:

Let words spill forth from your bleeding heart, my daughter.  
A word for each part of him:  
His head crowned with Ares' helm,  
His chest hugged by Hephastus' bronze,  
His arms bearing Athena's aegis,  
His legs wrapped in godly greaves.  
Write him invincible, write Khalkotauri weak.  
Then, burn the scroll in the flames.  
Collect its ashes, and mix them into a paste with Prometheus' flower.  
This will shield your Jason from the fire and more.

MEDEA: [WRITING WHILE SPEAKING]

Then let each word I write be armor against his skin:  
By the blood of immortal Prometheus,  
May Jason be invincible to all that brings harm against him,  
May he choke the flames,  
May he crack the stones,  
May he end each trial alive and well.  
Protect each piece of him:  
His lovely crown,  
His earthy eyes,  
His honeyed lips,  
His graceful neck,  
His powerful shoulders,  
His rippling chest,  
His beating heart,  
His sturdy back,  
His sinewy arms,  
His regal hands,  
His virile loins,  
His robust thighs,  
His muscled shins,  
His steady feet.  
Let each letter be his shield, let each word be his spear.  
Let the fire of the Khalkotauri turn to smoke against his skin,  
Let the warriors sown from Drakon's teeth crumble before him.  
By the gods high upon Mount Olympus,  
By the gods deep within the belly of the Earth,  
If ever I have sacrificed in your name,  
If ever I have sung your praises,



If ever I have done well by you,  
Protect Jason, son of Aeson, from all harm!

[MEDEA SETS THE CORNER OF HER SCROLL ON FIRE, LETTING IT BURN IN A METAL BOWL BEFORE HER. ONCE IT IS REDUCED TO ASHES, SHE TAKES THE JUICE FROM THE FLOWER AND POURS IT INTO THE BOWL]

MEDEA:  
Lady Hekate, wise in pharmacopeia,  
Bless this potion with your strange powers,  
That it may do all it is intended for and more.  
When Jason anoints his godlike form with ash and ink,  
With herb and blood,  
May he be safe always.

[MEDEA MIXES THE PASTE AND BOTTLES IT. END OF SCENE]

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## A Contemporaneous Reimagining of A Scene From Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

By Alessandra Soto

Scene: First, in front of Leslie's (*Lysistrata*) and Callie's (*Calonice*) houses, somewhere in Washington, D.C., America; after the background building will be reidentified as the front of the Capitol building. It is in the early morning.

(Leslie exits her house looking really annoyed.)

Leslie: Just imagine if it had been a sale at Marshalls or Ladies Drink Free Night at the bars or even a March for Bodily Autonomy, you know all the most popular events. You wouldn't have been able to move for all the screaming and pushing attendants. But yet— there's not a single woman here right now. [Callie's front door opens and she comes to join Leslie.] Wait, here's my neighbor now. Good morning Callie.

Callie: Back at ya, Leslie. What's got your knickers in a bunch? You're going to give yourself wrinkles.

Leslie: Sorry Callie, but I'm pissed off beyond belief. I'm disappointed in all women. All our men think we're such conniving bitches-

Callie: Damn right and we're proud of it too.

Leslie: Well I've called a meeting to talk about a super important issue and everyone's lounging in bed.

Callie: Don't worry girl, they'll be here. They've just got a lot on their plates, you know.

Leslie: [*whining angrily*] But there are more important things!

Callie: Tell me, what did you want to talk about so desperately?

Leslie: A matter of great importance. It's an idea I've been thinking about and losing sleep over through many sleepless nights.

Callie: [*slyly*] Oh really? I thought it was your man giving you all those sleepless nights. (*laughs*)

Leslie: [*laughs*] Oh don't be difficult Callie. The future of the country rests in our hands.

Callie: [*laughs*] Sounds like we're pretty screwed then.

Leslie: Be serious! Either all of the Republicans are going to get wiped off the map...

Callie: [*laughs*] If only...

Leslie: ... and all of the Democrats totally demolished...

Callie: Oh not all of them, please! Leave the Californians their avocado toast and their detox smoothies, by god!

Leslie: And America, well I won't say it but you know what I mean. But if all the women work together, not just us, but the Republicans and Democrats too, then working together we can all save America.

Callie: But how will women accomplish all that?! We just sit at home... or in the office... looking pretty, making vastly less money, and being forced to pop out kids.

Leslie: Don't you see that's just what I mean... we're going to use our looks to save America.

Callie: How are we going to do that?

Leslie: I'm gonna make it so no man, either Republican or Democrat, picks a fight with each other for at least a generation. Now where are those lazy-heads? They should be here by now.

Callie: By god, capitalism, and all that is sacred- yeah, the bitches should have pulled up by now.

Leslie: No such luck, girl, they're always late.

Callie: Oh look, here come some of them now.

[*Myllie and several other women arrive.*]

Myllie: We're not late, Leslie, are we?

Leslie: I'm not super chuffed with you guys who arrived so late when such an important matter is at stake.

Myllie: Sorry, I had trouble finding my tubetop and prescriptionless glasses in the dark—they're just so fashionable. But just get on with it, tell us now about the issue.

Leslie: Wait a minute... The Texan and New Yorker women should be here any minute.

Myllie: Oh yeah! Look, here comes Lampa!

[Lampa, Isabella the Texan and a Californian woman, followed by several New York women all enter with designer jogging shorts and tank tops]

Leslie: Welcome Lampa, my cherished New Mexican friend! You look amazing! Such femininity and good looks! And so skinny!

Lampa: Actually, I identify as a lamp. You can call me ze, zir. But I accept your compliments about my weight. Thank you. I spent the last week puking into my toilet to look this good. [*Does a spin.*] So to business, why did you call us all here?

Leslie: I will tell you. But just answer my one little question.

Myllie: Ask away.

Leslie: The fathers of your children— don't you miss them when they're locked up for marching with tiki torches or, for you bitches with educated men, when doctors get locked up for performing abortions? Well, if I've come up with a solution, would you girls be willing to join me in putting a stop to this war in politics?

Callie: By the evils of gluten, I would— even if I had to dance naked in the streets.

Myllie: And I would— even if I could never eat avocado toast or drink Starbucks again.

Lampa: And I would as well— even if I could never get white girl wasted again on mimosas at brunch with my bitches.

Leslie: Well then I'll tell you the plan. Women, if we want to force the men to play nice, we must renounce .... [*She hesitates.*]

Myllie: Give up what? Spill the tea.

Leslie: Then you'll do it?

Myllie: At the cost of our social media lives, if need be. [*Everyone indicates that they agree.*]

Leslie: Ok then. We must give up—sex. [*Everyone flips their shit.*]

Callie: I can't do it! Just let the war in politics go on.

Myllie: Ditto. Count me the fuck out.

Lampa: Wellll... I suppose I could go along with that. We must have peace. I suppose...

Leslie: Oh Lampa, thank you thank you! You're the only real woman... uh, I mean lamp.. here.

Myllie: Well if you think it's really that important, then we agree.

Leslie: Well than Lampa, why don't we get really serious and take an oath?

Lampa: Ok, what shall we swear on? Cutting out carbs? The joys of making NFTs? The sanctity of drinking matcha drinks?

Leslie: What about the joys of drinking body shots of vodka at 8 AM? [*pulls out shot glasses.*] [*Women cheer and crowd around.*] Ok girls, repeat after me, no peace, no pussy.

Everyone: No peace, no pussy. [*Everyone drinks.*]

Leslie: Ok girls, now we'll go storm the Capital to get our point across... peacefully of course. [*All the women storm the Capital and the doors are closed.*]

The End

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## A Hippocratic Advertisement

By Audrey Telkamp

Advertisement based on Hippocratic text *Prorrhetic II*:

Is your daily routine often disrupted by chronic coughing, fevers, or diarrhea? Are you worried about the proportions of your bodily humors? Do you feel anxious about trusting doctors to cure your disease? We welcome you with open arms to visit a Hippocratic doctor today to set you at ease as we cure your sickness. Unlike magicians, purifiers, or ill-informed physicians who outlandishly prophesize disease outcomes, Hippocratic doctors make rational predictions based on your individual signs. We know that diseases include all symptoms and signs, from exacerbations and fevers to abnormal eating patterns and lack of exercise, and we know how to best chronicle your signs. We understand the trajectory of diseases better than any other doctors due to our technique of reflecting on past symptoms and present states and, with that knowledge, making regimens for the future. We provide you with a special diet, exercise, and lifestyle regimen specific to your individual physis, designed to eradicate disease efficiently. Our knowledge behind the proportions and exacerbations of bodily humors gives us insight you will not find anywhere else on how to sculpt a perfect regimen. Because of our awareness and observations, Hippocratic doctors train to pinpoint if a patient lies about their regimen or symptoms, a handy tool for tweaking regimens and realigning the trajectory of the disease. Commit today to a Hippocratic doctor who will use logic, tracking, and regimen to cure your disease and get you back on your feet, healthier than ever!

Explanation of advertisement:

The Hippocratic doctor who wrote *Prorrhetic II* emphasizes what they believe to be the best methods of curing diseases in healthcare: reasonably predicting disease trajectory based on evidence, forming individual regimens, tracking exacerbations, and changing tactics after noticing a patient lying.

The Hippocratic author claims that they will not make wild predictions like most doctors of the time by claiming that “There are reports of physicians making frequent, true and marvellous predictions, predictions such as I have never made myself” (Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic II* 2.1). Likewise in my advertisement as a fake Hippocratic doctor, I promise that “Unlike magicians, purifiers, or ill-informed physicians who outlandishly prophesize disease outcomes, Hippocratic doctors will make rational predictions based on your individual signs.” The Hippocratic author as well as my fake author argue that sick people should value medical predictions based on extensive knowledge of their symptoms rather than wild claims made with little reasoning. Medical care should be relevant and logical. Instead of prophesizing, this Hippocratic doctor would “rather I record the clinical signs from which one must deduce which persons will become well and which will die” (Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic II* 2.2). Formulating the disease trajectory is most accurate when determined from the clinical signs of the disease, a special offer that this Hippocratic author poses for their patients.

My fake author focuses on a specific method of treatment that the Hippocratic author of *Prorrhetic II* also values: “making regimens for the future.” Regimens of the era involve “special diet, exercise, and lifestyle regimen specific to your individual physis.” My fake author and the author of *Prorrhetic II* mention specializing regimens to work best for individual physis or

constitution. An example of differing physis is wetness or “whether they are bilious, or phlegmy, or raw (i.e. unconcocted), and each kind requires its own particular regimen, and different ones require different medications” (Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic II* 2.4). This physician provides a treatment targeted to help an individual with their unique body and qualities in mind, which is seen as the most efficient way to eliminate the disease.

Another service that my fake author provides is tracking “proportions and exacerbations of bodily humors.” Multiple times throughout the text, the Hippocratic author of *Prorrhetic II* mentions the importance of maintaining proportional levels of humors in the body to stay healthy. Different humors even have varying characteristics to look out for, such as “evacuations [stool] should be dry but soft, and in quantity proportional to what is ingested and to the person’s exertions” (Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic II* 2.4). The bodily humors should therefore be tracked to detect abnormalities, and from that, adjust regimen and disease trajectory.

Lastly, my fake author points out the importance of being able to “pinpoint if a patient lies.” Hippocratic authors like that of *Prorrhetic II* value the ability to track the patient so closely that they can tell when the patient’s healing deviates from its projected trajectory. The Hippocratic author notes that “it is easy to know by judgement and observation, in the case of a person lying ill in a fixed place and charged with a strict regimen, whether he is disobeying in some matter, or whether he is taking his prescribed walks and eating a great deal” (Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic II* 2.3). To be able to know if a patient is lying allows the doctor to fix regimens and rethink how the disease trajectory will change, all for the sake of reestablishing how to best cure the illness.

My fake author and the author of *Prorrhetic II* aim to help patients cure all aspects of their illnesses through scientific prediction, individual regimens, tracking fluids, and detecting patient lies.

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## A New Drug Recipe Derived From Ancient Greek Medicine

By Audrey Telkamp

New drug recipe and instructions:

When the presence of kidney stones requires a diuretic to alleviate kidney pain and regulate menstruation, concoct this composition in a small cup:

- 3 denarii of iris sap
- 1 denarius of yellow flag root
- 2 denarii of baldmoney root
- 1 denarius of galingale root
- 3 denarii of cassia bark
- 2 denarii of madder leaves
- 2 denarii of a sea urchin shell in a paste
- 1 denarius of hedgehog skin

Complete the following outline for the collection of roots, leaves, and sap. Roots, like those of the yellow flag, baldmoney, or galingale root, and leaves, like that of the madder plant, must be collected when the plant is newly sprouted. Juice will be extracted from the roots and leaves through incisions and poured directly into the small mixing bowl or cup when medicine is needed. Sap, like that from the iris, is drawn from the stem of a freshly sprouting plant. Compared to the juices of the roots and leaves, sap flows slower and thus the incisions on the plant must be done more delicately. Make smaller, vertical incisions by the base of the stalk so the sap can follow out at its own rate without harming the plant.

A few of the plants require special preparation. For the collection of the iris, travel to the shores of the Adriatic in Illyria to gather the best iris plants. To distinguish the galingale plant from others, look for fibrous and stout roots with smooth stems and pointed leaves.

Explanation of recipe:

My new drug recipe resembles the structure of Scribonius Largus' *Compounding of Drugs* while combining the ingredients of mainly Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* with the collection practices of Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants* and my own inspired commentary in order to create a new drug recipe that ancient patients could easily follow to cure their kidney stones causing kidney pain and unregulated menses.

The recipe is formatted to reflect the ingredient lists in Scribonius Largus' *Compounding of Drugs*. Scribonius Largus states the intended use of the drug followed by the exact amounts of each ingredient:

Against headache, when it is of long standing, this composition acts favorably: 1 denarius of myrrh / 2 denarii of saffron / 2 denarii of bitter almond / 3 denarii of green/fresh rue / 1 denarius of cow parsnip / 1 denarius of panax / 3 denarii of laurel berries / 2 denarii of wild thyme / 1 denarius of castoreum (Scribonius Largus, *Compounding of Drugs* 1.5).

After my ingredient list, I added a paragraph on how to collect and prepare the three different types of plant parts used in the recipe: "roots, leaves, and sap." The third paragraph mentions a few specific notes for the more unique plants, which are added to assist the reader in accurately mimicking the new drug recipe.

As stated first, the recipe is designed to "alleviate kidney pain and regulate

menstruation.” Kidney stones are often associated with changes in the menstruation cycle, so a drug that targets kidney stones would likely also aid the menstruation cycle back to normal function. All of the ingredients in this new recipe are supported by ancient authors as beneficial to cure kidney stones by acting as diuretics and to fix the dysregulation of menses. Iris sap “when drunk with wine they draw down the menses. Their decoction, too, is suitable for women's vapor baths, softening and dilating the genitalia” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 6). The iris plant specifically targets the uterus by reverting the menstruation cycle and the softness of the uterus back to normal according to Dioscorides. The yellow flag root, a plant similar to the iris, “has a warming property. Its decoction is diuretic when drunk; it is suitable for pains on the sides, chest, and liver” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 7). This yellow flag root functions explicitly as a diuretic, which is the most common medication for expelling kidney stones. It also alleviates pain around different parts of the abdomen, a common site for both kidney stones and menstruation pains. Next, the baldmoney plant’s “roots relieve dry conditions around the bladder and kidneys, they are suitable for difficult...uterine conditions” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 7) which are further tied to “draw down blood through the menses” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 7-8). The baldmoney plant’s ability to create suitable kidney and uterus conditions will likely involve expelling unwanted kidney stones and unwanted menses. To consolidate the final three plants that I included, the galingale “has properties that are warm, open, and that are diuretic, operating on patients with kidney stones” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 8) and works on “drawing down the menses” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 8), the cassia plant “is good to drink for all internal inflammations and for the kidneys, and it is used by women” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 14) implying the improvement of kidney and uterus health, and finally, the madder leaves as mentioned by Theophrastus have “diuretic properties, wherefore it is used for pains in the loins or hip-disease” (Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants* 285). Every plant I included in the recipe has a method for eradicating kidney stones by improving kidney health and menstruation in women.

Two animals from Dioscorides’ *De Materia Medica* are included for their similar properties of aiding in kidney health. The sea urchin shell is stated to have “properties to ease the kidneys and it is diuretic” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 93). Hedgehog skin also “helps people with kidney disease” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 93). I included these two ingredients to show that ancient drug recipes can also involve animal parts and that animal parts were also classified into their own medicinal categories, which in this case include the medicinal goal of improving kidney health.

The paragraph following the ingredient list instructs the reader on how to properly accumulate the three main types of plant parts in this recipe: the leaves, roots, and sap. All three are to “be collected when the plant is newly sprouted” which is a suggestion originally made by Dioscorides. He says that “one must extract juice from herbs when their stems have newly sprouted; the same applies to leaves. One must catch saps and gums by cutting the stems when still at the peak of perfection” (Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica* 4), emphasizing the importance of having healthy plant parts to make a potent drug. Further, Theophrastus claims that the “collection of juice is made either from the stalks... or from the roots” Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants* 253-255). I extended on this in my new recipe by mirroring that “juice will be extracted from the roots and leaves” and adding that the readers should do this “through incisions and poured directly into the small mixing bowl or cup.” Like Theophrastus, I also mention that

sap from the plant stem must be collected in a “more delicate matter” (Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants* 221-223). I expand on this by reasoning that delicacy is required due to the different flow rates of the juices and the saps, as well as instructing the reader on how delicate sap “smaller, vertical incisions” must be done.

The third paragraph includes new information about the iris as stated by both Dioscorides and Theophrastus and the galingale as noted by Theophrastus to eliminate difficulties that might arise in the collection of the ingredients. A patient recreating this recipe could struggle with finding the best iris plants but if they “travel to the shores of the Adriatic in Illyria” because the iris “grows best in Illyria on shores of Adriatic” (Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants* 453), then they should easily find the plant. Including this section makes the recipe appear more personable and seemingly intended for an audience that will be making these drugs themselves and might run into trouble without extra guidance from a seasoned pharmacological physician.

Overall, my new drug recipe uses ingredients from plants and animals that specifically target alleviating kidney stones and unregulated menses and outlines a method for collecting and preparing the different types of plant parts used in the recipe, as done by ancient pharmacological authors.

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**A True and Accurate Depiction that Definitely Occurred as the Ending to  
Plautus' *Aulularia***

By Autumn Wright

*Scene: On a street in Athens, between two homes, is a shrine to Fides. Congrio, the cook, had been looking for another cooking pot but was then accused of taking the pot of gold and fled Euclio's home. Lyconides has admitted to Euclio that he ravished his daughter. During the confession, Lyconides's slave pilfered Euclio's pot of gold. Lyconides has an old Mexican standoff (Hellenic-style!) confronting his slave of this crime.*

Strobilus: By Hercules, you'll have to kill me or you'll never get it.

Lyconides: Ah ha! So you do admit that you stole the pot of gold.

Strobilus: I do not! But if I did I wouldn't tell you a thing at all.

Lyconides: You're my slave. You'll have to tell me no matter what. Or I'll beat you until you rave.

Strobilus [fearful and pleading]: You would never. Not to lay a hand or a whip or a club to poor, old Strobilus' poor old back and tired arms. Your loyal servant, who aides and guides and even offers in your place all your tides. A connection between us, you would sever?

[Thoughtfully, he leans into Lyconides' space as if to whisper in his ear.]

Here, I must tell you so we must not part in such ways. If, perhaps, a pot had been discovered by some gloriously, clever means and then retrieved by an even glorious-er and clever-er means, which may, perhaps, contains some weight of what might, perhaps, be some shiny substance of what some might, perhaps, would consider being gold -- well who would be fool enough not to take the chance like a cook on sunny market day. I could not insult the fates and ignore where they had led me to this pot of rays.

Lyconides: Thief! That is all you are to me. I ought to knock out all your teeth. Instead, you must return it at once. Or I'll see to it that you break your knees.

Strobilus: Oh but what good will that get you. I was a good slave, doing this all for your benefit. Let me tell you.

Lyconides: And what were you doing?

Strobilus: I had this idea.

Lyconides: Yes?

Strobilus: About that situation, you were in -- that old, crudgety Euclio would never let you marry his daughter.

Lyconides: So?

Strobilus: So when I found the gold, I thought, "what if master could pay Euclio for his daughter?" And then you would be absolved of all your misdeed. I was only looking out for your future.

Lyconides: And?

Strobilus: And then, I say, I came to confess to you. So that we might split the gold and you, Lyconides, could marry. And you in your gracious wisdom would free me and I would continue to be a great friend of yours with my own half of treasure.

Lyconides: Not likely! You'll not have a single coin.

Strobilus: How about a quarter instead?

Lyconides: Absolutely not.

Strobilus: An eighth?

Lyconides: NO!

Strobilus: A tough customer. A third and my freedom. My last and final offer! Take it or leave it.

Lyconides: You'll get your freedom and your life. Be lucky, I grant you that.

Strobilus [to the audience]: Damn! I taught him too well. I should have never let him learn those numbers. [to Lyconides] Deal. I'll be back with the chest.

[Strobilus leaves to the left and Euclio bursts onto the stage from the opposite side. His hair is wild and pulled out. His clothes are even more disheveled and dirtier than normal.]

Euclio [gripping his head, having fallen to the ground]: I am ruined. By Hercules, the gods have forsaken me. This is what I get for trusting *Fides* and then *Silvanus*. Never again. Never again!

Lyconides: Calm yourself, neighbor. I have found the gold. It will be here soon.

Euclio: So it was you who took my gold!

Lyconides: No, not me. It was Strobilus.

Euclio: I knew it all along.

[Strobilus enters. He is huffing and puffing with the effort of dragging the large chest and does not see Euclio on the other side.]

Strobilus: I have come, Lyconides! As we have agreed. The gold for my freedom.

Lyconides: Good. Leave it there.

Euclio: You thief! Come all the way here. I need to wring your neck.

[Strobilus sees Euclio and screams in fright. He beats a hasty retreat as he scrambles to get away from Euclio. In the process he trips and stumbles multiple times until he is out of the scene.]

Euclio [to Lyconides]: Quick, go after that thieving slave. He needs to be punished.

Lyconides: I can't. He is freed. I had to in order to get this gold back.

Euclio: Arhg! [Euclio sees a soldier on the other side.] You there!

Soldier: Me?

Euclio: Yes, you. What is your going rate to put a thief in the ground? I need you to find a man.

Soldier: What man?

Euclio: A crook and a swindler of the worst sort. A man who has loyalties only to the gold he can get.

Soldier: My kind of man! I'll be back. [leaves in the direction Strobilus left]

Lyconides [To Euclio]: What are you doing? Sending for him to be killed? You would have murder on your daughter's wedding day? This will bring us bad luck.

Euclio: Not for me, it won't!

[Strobilus stumbles towards them. He looks terrible.]

Lyconides: Good lord, Strobilus. Look at you! You're black and you're blue and what's with all that pus?

Strobilus: Oh woe is me when I go out into the world. I am tracked and sniffed, hunted by hounds intent on attacking and sending me to the depth of the world.

Euclio: By Hercules! You should be dead. Why won't you drop already?

Strobilus: Euclio, you have done this?

Euclio: Who else, but the one you have wronged.

Strobilus: I am a freedman. I'll take you to the courts.

Euclio: And when they hear about your crimes, they will deem the only appropriate response should have been your death. I have been generous.

Strobilus: Ahh, but I'll tell them about the gold and how I found it so it should have been mine.

Euclio: I found it first! It was always mine.

Strobilus: Maybe. But the courts will decide that they can't say for sure whose gold it was. So they take it from both of us.

Euclio: No!

Strobilus [Gleefully]: And then you'll be left with the bill for all the courtly fees without your pot of gold to help. But everyone will know that you had riches and that you hid them. So they'll think that you'll still have some more to hide. They'll come 'round day and night with their hands out and palms up, asking, "Oh Euclio, I didn't see you there. I was just in the area. It's funny that we bumped into each other. While I'm here, think you have a few coins to spare?" And I'll still be free!

Euclio [looking apoplectic and ready to scream]: FINE! On your way, you thief. Never come around here again.

[Strobilus strolls away. Congrio enters behind Euclio.]

Congrio [to himself]: One pot short! Of course, I'm one pot short still. Now I have to encounter that wretched old man again. I'll be given another beating, undeserved. [to Euclio] Oh Euclio, you walking corpse. I was forced into the area. It's horrible that we bumped into each other. While I'm here, think you can spare that pot?

Euclio [to himself in paranoid delusion]: They know! They all know! I'll never be left alone again. My solitude will be gone. There will be too many of them to beat them all back. My land! My house! It will all be overrun by the clamoring hoards. I can't live, not like this. [to Congrio] NOOO! I'll never give it to you. I'll never give it to anyone.

[Euclio takes the pot with all the gold in it and throws it into the fire by the shrine] BURN! BURN IT ALL!! I'll never have to worry about that dreadful pot again.

Congrio [looking upon the broken shards of the pot sorrowfully]: And there goes the pot I need. I should have just gone home.

[Everyone leaves. Cue the stock chorus singing here.]

[Euclio enters from the sides and goes into his house. We hear hysterical screaming from the inside and a crash and then more screaming. Euclio comes running out and in his hands we see...a pot of gold.]

Euclio: NOOO! I curse the gods for the gods have cursed me. I go inside my house where everyone would leave me be. My daughter married and that useless hag, Staphyla, left with her. It was great. The best I have felt in a while with this peace and quiet and no one nagging at me, ever! That was until I looked up at the table. Where I saw a pot of gold. Not this pot that I am holding now but another. And I destroyed that pot as I did the other. I knew what trouble it would bring. But then this pot, this one here, appeared. So the gods have seemed to be haunting me with greed, I fear.

And at this time, my dear viewers, if you would please,  
pound your palms together, vigorously, for all of us indeed.

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**I don't speak the language. I just teach it.  
- Professor John Rundin, Ph.D.**



**The End  
Χαίρετε  
Valete**