Polymatheia 1.1

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POLYMATHEIA
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Front Cover: Ares Ludovisi left profile head and shoulders, mid 2nd C. B.C. (Museo Nazionale Romano)
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FROM THE EDITOR

Erudition – its pursuit, its sustenance, its consummation – lie at the heart of this publication. This is why the Editorial Board chose *polymatheia*, or erudition, for the title of this undergraduate journal of Classical Studies. This journal seeks not only to provide the University with knowledge concerning the Classics, but to turn a critical and introspective eye to the Classics itself.

The journal is broken into two general sections. The first contains papers by current undergraduates at the University. The latter – which contains a dissertation summary and faculty interview – serves to provide a look into the nature of the Classics as a discipline.

In *Bing West’s Dissonant Song of Glory*, Joshua Matz asks, ‘are embedded journalists the true descendants of Homer?’ ‘Should reporters invoke classical beliefs about ‘glory’ as the proper frame of reference for the current Iraq War?’ Bing West, author of *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*, argues for the primacy of this position. But Matz rebuffs this claim, and emphasizes that Homer is best taken as a point of contrast rather than source of analogy for recent conflicts in Iraq.

Cecilia Vogel presents ostracism, a seemingly paradoxical institution, as un-democratic in some aspects yet simultaneously essential for the protection of the young democracy. Athens developed ostracism based on a historical tradition of political exile as a response to a period of political turmoil and tyrannical overthrows. Ostracism was a natural and logical institution for the preventative protection of 5th century Athenian democracy and the maintenance of unity. An examination of just how democratic in nature the institution of ostracism was reveals the extent of Athens’s democratic nature overall.

Joshua C. Miller, in *Visitors at Ilion*, points out that regardless of the historicity of the Trojan War, the site of Ilion in western Asia Minor was identified with the legendary city of Troy throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. From the Greek Archaic period to the early Roman Empire, a string of polities and influential leaders took advantage of this site and its powerful mythology for their own gain. An examination of these polities and leaders, specifically the city-state of Locris, the Persian King Xerxes, Alexander the Great, and the Roman leaders Julius and Augustus Caesar, reveals the systematic political exploitation of the site and its mythology, and provides a unique insight into the complex and often alterable dynamic between myth and reality in the ancient Mediterranean.

These papers by undergraduates at the University are followed by a dissertation summary by 5th year graduate student Roshan J. Abraham. Abraham focuses on Apollonius of Tyana, a philosopher-cum-magician whose life became influential in the fiery dialogue between early Christian apologists and their detractors. The crux of his dissertation lies in Apollonius’ biography, composed by Flavius Philostratus, which chronicles his journey to India, where he assures us the people “speak flawless Greek, they worship Greek gods, and they espouse Greek philosophy.” Apollonius was accused of being a magician, and Abraham links his work to the larger discourse around Orientalism, providing a dual argument for the presence of “ancient Orientalism.”

Finally, the Editorial Board interviewed Dr. Joseph Farrell and Dr. Peter Struck. The inspiration for this portion of *Polymatheia* comes from the immortal words etched in the marble forecourt of Delphi: *know thyself*. Thus, the intent of these interviews is to cast an introspective glance at the Classics as a discipline. Where does the Classics stand in relation to History or English? Is it useful to focus so intensely on a discrete portion of history? What are some of the historical and current connotations of the ‘Classics’ — not simply as a discipline, but as an idea?

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Editorial Board for their diligent work. I would also like to thank Dr. Struck for his advocacy as well as the Department of Classical Studies for its generous support of this publication.

Kojo Minta

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
The representation of warfare witnessed in Homer’s *Iliad* differs in major ways from that presented in Bing West’s *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*. This difference can be productively explored vis-à-vis a comparison of how ‘glory’ is understood in each text, thus revealing through contrast the many ways in which the battle for Troy was unlike the current American occupation of Iraq. Given that the nature of modern combat differs radically from the Homeric context, it is perhaps unsurprising that understandings and representations of war have been significantly transformed. Dissenting from this basic contention, however, West argues for common ground between the Greek ideal of glory and his prescriptive claim for how Americans should perceive and represent the Iraq War: “For Greek warriors, there was no true glory if they were not remembered afterward in poem or in song. There will be no true glory for our soldiers in Iraq until they are recognized not as victims, but as aggressive warriors. Stories of their bravery deserve to be recorded and read by the next generation. Unsung, the noblest deed will die.” This thesis is extremely problematic. Not only does West fail to understand that the Iraq War inherently resists the terms of ‘glory’ that Homer applies to the battle for Ilion, but he also does the current conflict a disservice by imposing anachronistic frames of reference onto a radically different cultural, military, and political context. Although we can learn from the *Iliad* as a point of contrast to the modern struggle, it would be unwise to seek sanction or exemplars in Homer’s account. If such a thing as glory can truly be found in the siege of Fallujah, ancient epics are the wrong place to commence a search for its meaning.

West’s turn to the Homeric concept of glory suggests that we should reference the *Iliad* as a basis for understanding his argument. Several features of Homeric ‘glory’ might be characterized as essential to an understanding of this term. Deeds that Homer considers ‘glorious,’ for example, almost invariably involve death and destruction. Simply put, glorious deeds typically involve killing (or horribly maiming) other human beings. In the *Iliad*, glory is repeatedly referred to as something either given or taken. When Diomedes achieves his *aristeia*, for example, Homer notes that “Pallas Athena now gave to Diomedes, Tydeus’ son, the strength and courage/That would make him shine/Among the Greeks and win him glory.” Aeneas makes contingency plans in case “Zeus gives Diomedes the glory again,” and when Pandarus believes that he has mortally wounded the Greek hero, he boasts that “You’re done for, and you’ve handed me the glory.” Glory is ‘given,’ typically by the gods, when a hero kills dozens of enemies and/or enemy heroes. One sets about ‘taking’ glory by killing an enemy of noteworthy stature. Although heroes might occasionally win glory for showing appropriate pity, glorious actions remain intimately and primarily connected to more savage and destructive aspects of warfare.

American soldiers involved in West’s account of the siege of Fallujah demonstrate a different and more multifaceted understanding of ‘glorious deeds.’ Their beliefs about glory encompass both destructive and protective military action. This more nuanced understanding is beautifully captured in West’s description of the general response to LCpl Gomez’s behavior during the battle of Jolan Graveyard: “He was every man’s image of a Marine—tough, stoic, determined, and caring.” The last of these adjectives captures a crucial differentiating factor. The battle for Fallujah takes place inside an occupied city, which is populated by civilian non-combatants whose protection remains a priority for the Marines. Whereas Homeric Greeks could apply a purely warrior ethic to their combat with a distinctly military opponent, American soldiers are caught in a far more complicated environment. Glory therefore assumes a more complex meaning, as the ability *not to kill* and actively *protect* certain individuals assumes major importance. Sergeant Sean Crane, after killing a young insurgent, watches as “the old man shuffled to the body, grasped the dead man under the armpits, and step by step tugged the body back inside the gate.” Crane watched and waited. A few minutes later the old man stepped into the open courtyard with a shovel and dug a grave.” Crane identifies and kills an enemy, but leaves a non-combatant old man unharmed and permits him to dig a grave. This theme emerges even more clearly when West reports that after “First
Sergeant William Skiles of Gold Company yelled at one squad when incoming rounds broke some dishes, the china in some houses was stacked out of the line of fire.” Not only do the soldiers try not to kill innocent Iraqis, but they also try to protect their belongings. Although skill in battle remains a crucially important characteristic of American soldiers, their goal is not to kill the enemy and thus achieve glory. At no point does West quote soldiers expressing this belief. Determined to rebuild, protect, not die, and follow orders, West’s Marines are hardly concerned with the abstractly glorious merit of their actions. They kill because they must, and occasionally because they want to, but face a far more heterogeneous enemy and missions that do not sanction a Homeric understanding of ‘glorious deeds.’

Although Homeric glory can accrue to large groups (i.e. ‘Trojans’ or ‘Greeks’), it is usually given and taken within an economy composed of individual champions. Glory is thus ascribed almost exclusively to major figures in the epic: Achilles, Hector, Agamemnon, Odysseus, Diomedes, etc. Moreover, these figures achieve significantly more glory by killing enemy heroes than by killing run-of-the-mill enemy soldiers. This suggests one reason that Homer devotes dozens of lines to battles between major champions (i.e. Paris and Menelaus, Achilles and Hector, Sarpedon and Patroclus) while simply naming and briefly describing many of their less-noble victims.9 This suggests that battling against a more evenly matched enemy is considered more courageous and ergo more glorious than slaying a younger, inexperienced, or incapable opponent.10 Such glory can be contrasted to shame, fear of which is commonly used to motivate soldiers.11 The quest for glory provides meaning and motivation to heroic actions, aligning the dictates of Fate with human volition under the system of causal overdetermination elaborated in the Iliad. The glory/shame metric is thus the framework within which actions assume meaning, making this a crucial notion for any understanding of ancient Greek warfare. Individual champions are therefore the major players in a Homeric quest for glory, which is achieved through courageous deeds and provides a sense of meaning to the experience of warfare.

The American Marines battling around Fallujah operate as individuals, but also as squads, battalions, an army, and many other permutations. Although individuals can accomplish noteworthy feats, mission objectives are almost always achieved at levels more inclusive than the sole warrior. Even more problematically, social, economic, and political aspects of the battle for Fallujah all conspire to ensure that major solutions only rarely result from purely military action (as West notes, “the Marines weren’t a debating society”).12 If ‘glory’ is to be equated with accomplishing major objectives that improve the American position in Iraq, then it almost invariably accrues to military and non-military figures operating as parts of a larger whole rather than as individual agents. West accordingly notes that “stability in the Sunni areas required an amalgam of political compromise, economic blandishment, and superior firepower.”13 Even more remarkable, however, are the major disparities between American and Iraqi soldiers. If more ‘glory’ is achieved through combat between equals or close-to-equals, where do Americans (with tanks, machine guns, heavy artillery, air support, missiles, etc.) stand vis-à-vis the Iraqis (toting AK-47s and IEDs)? The animal metaphors employed by West and Homer reflect this difference: “they fought like a pair of wild boars ... until someone gets lucky with a spear” (Homer) and “to Crane, sniping was like fishing ... the targets were a quarry, like fish” (West).14 Not only do the Americans possess vastly superior firepower and military technology, but they also bring advanced medical skill to war (i.e. Doc Liotta during the Battle of Jolan Graveyard, which miraculously results in only one death). This contest is thus waged between a small army of American ‘heroes’ and a huge and disorganized army of Iraqi insurgents. Where can glory be found in such a conflict? American Marines, operating as part of a complex machine and equipped with extraordinarily disproportionate firepower, stand in a very different relation to their enemy than did the Greeks or Trojans. Glory as understood in the Homeric context, focused on individual champions performing glorious deeds against relatively matched opponents, cannot hold the same basic form in the contest for control of Fallujah.

The Homeric understanding of glory functions effectively because everyone involved in the Trojan War participates in the same basic cultural assumptions. Greeks and Trojans, as presented by Homer, both evaluate the ‘economy of glory’ through similar terms. Greeks can thus take glory from the Trojans, who can take it back, without risk of cultural misunderstanding. This provides a common framework within which the two armies agree on basic terms of combat. Trojans and Greeks, for example, all agree that shooting someone from afar is less glorious than slaying them personally. Both armies employ identical military hierarchies and strategies (champions charge the enemy and everyone else follows) and make use of the same basic armory. As Homer portrays the conflict, both sides share virtually identical beliefs about the proper means by which to achieve glory in combat. These beliefs dictate that, since heroes on either side want as much glory as possible, the two armies both assume a ‘glory-maximizing’ approach to combat (i.e. few archers, heroes use the same basic weapons, a lot of infantry charges). These shared assumptions permit productive battlefield di-
Moving Beyond Homeric Melodies

Although Homeric glory is earned during a hero’s life, it is realized primarily during his time in the underworld. Michael Webster accordingly notes that “glory occurs mostly after death, when poets can sing of a hero’s immortal deeds. In the world of the Iliad, the honors and gifts showered upon a hero come to an end with death, but his glory lives on forever in the stories that poets sing. By achieving imperishable glory, a hero ensures that his name and fame will live on after he has gone on to the rather meaningless afterlife in the underworld.”

It is for this reason that only heroes, who by definition accomplish the most noteworthy deeds, can accrue a sufficient critical mass of glory for poets to take notice. This after-death aspect of glory is closely connected to the historical consciousness of ancient Greek culture. Critical historiographies or journalistic accounts of the modern sort did not exist in the Homeric era; Greeks relied on an oral tradition of epic poetry to record and understand their past. Heroic warriors placed such profound value on glorious deeds because these might result in their inclusion within a rather select sphere of transmittable cultural memory. The Greek rhapsode played a crucial role in this process, composing songs and poems to carry word of glorious deeds into the future. Homer is aware of this: just before the Catalogue of Ships, during a second invocation of the Muses, he notes of poets that “all we hear is the distant ring of glory.”

Homer’s glory was thus deeply connected to remembrance after death, an event conditioned upon the creation and maintenance of an oral poetic tradition in which glorious deeds were recorded for posterity.

These aspects of Homeric glory were connected to particular historical circumstances, that do not obtain in the modern US-Iraqi context. Poets no longer operate at a centuries-long temporal remove from their subjects, nor are they separated by significant spatial barriers. West himself proves this point, as one of many “embedded” journalists. The removal of this disconnection, which allowed poets a great deal more literary license than modern journalists are permitted, constitutes one barrier to romanticized notions of “warrior glory.” Another barrier to mythic ideas of glory emerges from the existence of many competing accounts, each of which justifies itself as superior by claiming greater referential veridicality vis-à-vis what actually happened. The epic poet, once the primary source of representations of warfare, has been supplanted by the embedded journalist. Committed to a critical methodology rather than the perpetuation of cultural values or tales of glory, these individuals are naturally resistant to Homeric idealizations. A fortiori, modern American soldiers and civilians carry a strikingly different historical consciousness. We no longer fight so that our deeds will be remembered...
hundreds of years in the future; rather, at least in theory, we fight to make our current world better and safer. Soldiers fight to achieve their mission objective, serve their nation, achieve a professional degree, etc. We are now motivated to fight by a much broader range of beliefs and desires than Homer addresses. It is therefore unsurprising that ‘glory’ is no longer the major focus or goal of journalistic accounts. Moreover, the distinction between civilian and military culture suggests a reasonable basis for separate cultural codes. Modern civilian culture would be ill-served by the values that animate ancient Greek warriors, as would the distinctly modern and rather different American military.

West focuses much of his argument around the connection between an ethics of representation and the nature of modern warfare. *No True Glory* is liberally spiced with jabs at al-Jazeera, which actively distorts the truth, and the ‘Western media,’ which is apparently driven by incompetence and ideological bias to emphasize negative rather than positive information. West insists that modern journalistic failures are rooted in a focus on ‘individual deaths as tragedies,’ emphasizing his distaste of the media’s penchant for treating soldiers as “victims.” The antidote to this situation is apparently a ‘return’ to the perception of Marines as “aggressive warriors.” A major thrust of *No True Glory* is therefore the articulation of a normative claim regarding how journalists should represent the Iraq War.

West’s argument is not convincing, at least insofar as it references Homer for the proper understanding of martial glory. The concept of glory that was obtained in Homeric Greece is inappropriate to the modern context for many reasons, an exploration of which provides a deeper understanding of certain distinctly modern features of warfare. American Marines are not only ‘aggressive warriors.’ They are, rather, participants in the complex cultural, political, military, economic, and social process of rebuilding a broken nation. Their objectives, firepower, relationship to each other and the enemy, means of combat, cultural assumptions, and beliefs about their actions differ markedly from Homeric norms. These reasons are more than sufficient to suggest that we should reconceptualize glory in distinctly modern terms. Granting that the American Marines described by West are glorious in a particular sense, Homer is the wrong point of reference. Although he is correct to insist that “unsung, the noblest deed will die,” we should nevertheless move slowly and carefully while composing a sound-track for the Battle of Fallujah. West’s song of glory is most emphatically out of tune and would do a disservice to the events of which it speaks. Rather than rely on Homeric ideals, it is time that we find our own musical score, setting the events that transpire in Iraq to an appropriately modern melody.

ENDNOTES

1. The Homeric concept of ‘glory’ is extremely complex and multi-faceted. For this reason, I will focus on a small set of crucial aspects without claiming that these represent an exhaustive listing.
4. Homer, p. 90 and 92 (emphasis added).
5. West, p. 207.
6. West, p. 175.
7. West, p. 172.
8. The gods, especially Zeus, are commonly referred to as ‘glorious,’ but I do not believe this is relevant to an understanding of West’s argument (because the gods are inherently glorious, as compared to mortals who must win glory).
9. As an example of the latter Homeric approach, see p. 401, on which Achilles kills ten enemy soldiers with brutal efficiency.
10. Assuming that glory can be approximately equated to the number of lines that Homer devotes to a battle, an assumption that I will develop into an argument below.
11. For Example: Glauces has come to battle so as "not to bring shame on the race of my fathers/the noblest men in Ephyra and Lycia" (p. 118). Also, Poseidon urges the Greeks to battle in Book 13 — "Shame on you, Argives. To think I trusted you raw recruits to fight for our ships./If you're backing off when the going gets tough/Then this is the day we get beaten by the 'Trojans" (p. 242).
13. West, p. 244.
15. Homer, p. 115-119.
17. West, p. 178.
19. West, p. 244.
20. West, p. 176.
24. This perspective sheds further light on Achilles’ choice: he can return home, in which case “all glory is lost,” or remain to fight, thus ensuring that “my glory will be undying forever.” Confronted by these options, Achilles dwells on joys reserved to the living: “A woman to have and to hold, someone with whom/I can enjoy all the goods that Peleus has won./Nothing is worth my life, not all the riches/They say Troy held before the Greeks came.”
He recognizes that the benefits of glory accrue almost exclusively after life has ended, that
he will not personally enjoy many of these benefits (especially since Agamemnon has shown
glory to be somewhat fickle), and therefore focuses with terrible intensity on weighing
the value of “undying glory” against a long and full life. This scrutiny places the system of
Greek cultural meaning in jeopardy, triggering an ‘existential crisis’ that results in Achilles’
withdrawal from battle for most of the Iliad.

25 Iliad 2.575-576 as translated by Michael Webster, ibid (Lombardo translation: “we hear
only reports and know nothing” (p. 35).
26 He refers to Al Jazeera as having “opened a new chapter in the book on information
warfare and propaganda,” and criticizes the Western media, which “covered incidents of
misconduct more fully than the multiple instances of bravery.” (West, p. 323).
27 West, p. 324.
28 West, p. 324.
29 West, p. 324.

OSTRACISM IN 5TH CENTURY ATHENS:
The Sword of Democracy

Cecilia Vogel

The Athenian democracy, unique for its time and remarkably suc-
scessful, is the ancestor of today’s modern democracies, yet its institutions
often moderately or even drastically diverge from today’s. One such insti-
tution is ostracism in 5th century Athens. It was supposed to be a political
safety valve to maintain stability in the young democracy by instituting the
possibility to exile a single prominent politician each year by majority vote.
Although ostracism as an institution had some un-democratic characteris-
tics, it was a necessary and effective means of maintaining stability in Athens
which as a young democracy was highly susceptible to volatility. To under-
stand the rationale of ostracism, this practice must be considered in its his-
torical context. We must examine how the institution functioned, its origins,
its intended and actual purpose, its efficacy in achieving that purpose, why
it fell out of practice, and its possible democratic and anti-democratic char-
acteristics. Ultimately, an evaluation of ostracism depends upon the inter-
pretation of the relationship of political power between the demos and its
political leaders.

Before taking an in-depth look at the institution, we must look at its
basic structure. Most likely, according to ancient texts, ostracism only took
place in the 5th century, even though the institution still existed in law after-
ward. A vote in the Assembly was held every year in the 6th prytany on
whether or not to hold an ostracism that year. If the vote was yes, the os-
tracism was held in the 8th prytany. Any private citizen could be ostracized.
No charges were brought against the individual up for ostracism, nor were
any speeches allowed in the meetings on ostracism. On the day of the os-
tracism vote, a part of the agora was sectioned off by tribe, and the citizens
would cast their vote, a name inscribed on a piece of ostraka, or potsherds, with perhaps a reason for ostracizing that person. A minimum of 6,000 votes was needed for the ostracism to go into effect. Archaeologists have found over 11,000 ostraka in the excavated Athenian Agora. The “winner” had to leave Athens within 10 days and their banishment lasted for 10 years after which they could return to Athens with their reputation intact. In addition, they lost neither their property nor citizenship. In the course of about 60 years, scholars are confident 10 (perhaps more) ostracisms took place. In ostracism, we see a highly institutionalized and legitimate mechanism which reflects the order and stability it was meant to enhance in the democracy. Having a grasp of the start date of ostracism is helpful in understanding the power, intentions, and transformative nature of ostracism.

Ostracism arose as a reaction to Athens’ earlier experiences in political stability, perhaps as a lesson from history, although its origins are contested. The question when and why it was adopted as an institution in the democracy is crucial for understanding its purpose and efficacy. Due to inconsistencies in historical texts, scholars debate whether ostracism originated as one of Cleisthenes’ reforms in 510 or right before its first recorded use in 488 against Hipparchos. Aristotle’s Athenian Constitution states that it began with Cleisthenes, but a fragment of Androtion of the 4th century cited by Harpocrates dates ostracism to immediately prior Hipparchos’ ostracism. There is a good chance, however, that Harpocrates’s text is wrong and that Aristotle has the correct version of Androtion. Aristotle, Philochorus, Aelian, and Diodorus write that ostracism was a Cleisthenic reform.

However, a logical problem still makes the starting date of ostracism debatable. If ostracism was a Cleisthenic reform, why was there a 20 year gap before it was actually used? This argument could be support for a later date for the origin of ostracism. Yet, there are some possible explanations for why it would not have been used immediately. One possibility is that there was an earlier ostracism that we are unaware of (and yet how can we not have evidence of such a prominent individual)? Scholars are not entirely sure who we know had been ostracized is completely accurate because archaeologists have found significant amounts of ostraka for other prominent individuals. The most likely explanation is that Cleisthenes did pass ostracism with his reforms, but that having it as a threat was enough to achieve its overall purpose. If the mere possibility of its use was enough to maintain stability in the first 20 years of the democracy, then ostracism did its job. By having a good grasp of when ostracism was instituted, we can better understand where the political force was concentrated in the institution of ostracism.

The Sword of Democracy

Born out of the period of the Peisistratid tyranny, the democracy would always be chiefly concerned about protecting itself against tyrannical overthrow. Furthermore, Athens’ archaic period was characterized by a series of exiles, such as that of the Alkmeonids and Peisistratos, as noble families fought amongst themselves for political power, in the process creating political instability in Athens. Thus, with such a historical context of a tradition of exile and instability, the new democracy would seek an institution that legitimized exile and controlled the unstable competition between power-hungry aristocrats. The answer they found was ostracism. Ostracism fit nicely with Cleisthenes’ other reforms such as the new tribes and the selection of the Boule, Assembly, and law courts by lot for they all sought to keep any individual from being too powerful and to maintain stability by highly institutionalized procedures. Aristotle writes that the first victims of ostracism were the friends of the tyrants and that it was used to remove anyone who seemed to be too powerful. The fragment from Androtion also states that ostracism was established to get rid of the supporters of tyranny. Ostracism was a preventive law, a means to protect against tyranny. It was both the threat of ostracism and the act of ostracism before an individual became too powerful that gave this institution its force. Scholars are uncertain, but Cleisthenes might have created ostracism with a specific target in mind, either Isagoras or Hipparchos, even though it was never used while he was in power. Regardless of whether or not it was originally for a specific target, the first four ostracisms – Hipparchos, Megacles, Kallixenos, and Xanthippus – were all targeted for their connections with the Peisistratids or the Alkmeonids, Athens’ past tyrannical families. Hence, the primary goal of ostracism was to protect Athens against possible rising tyrants, and more generally, to maintain stability. In addition, ostracism had a secondary function: to protect against factionalism because the Athenians feared that clashing charismatic leaders might lead them to vie for extra-constitutional powers. As one of its main characteristics, ostracism was an ad hominem political weapon, but logical and appropriate for the democracy considering its historical context. Athenians, because of their history clearly saw the danger of tyrants and the possible instability created by haphazard exiling, so that they created a preventative means, ostracism, to deal with this danger.

With continued use, ostracism transformed and expanded its function, although was always basically aimed towards ensuring stability. After the four initial ostracisms, any prominent individual who could be a threat to the democracy could be targeted, as Aristotle stated. After the Battle of Marathon, the political struggle in Athens involved new leaders and new party alliances, and ostracism was used to keep these struggles in check.
Still no charges were officially ever brought against individuals, although on the ostraka were written accusations ranging from too much prestige, elite status, ostentatious wealth, and even sexual behavior. Plutarch describes this newer use of ostracism to keep prominent individuals in check in the case of Themistokles. He writes, “They made use of ostracism to humble his great reputation and his authority, as indeed was their habit with any man whose power they regarded as oppressive, or who had risen to an eminence which they considered out of keeping with the equality of the democracy.” There was a great concern not to let any one individual rise too high above the rest. This sense of equality was seen as essential for the preservation of the democracy. Similarly, Diodorus writes, “The Athenians would appear to have made this law not for the punishment of evildoers, but rather to humble by means of exile the arrogance of the over-ambitious.” Thus, ostracism did not concern crimes or morality, but rather emphasized the danger of ambition. Ostracism created a sort of “glass ceiling” for what was an acceptable level of public prominence. Perhaps, we can begin to see some resemblances to the modern impeachment processes in ostracism.

Ostracism, whether it was its intended purpose or not, also became a way for the Athenians to decide on policy. It can be considered a parallel to modern referendums on issues as well as a vote of confidence on political leaders, a sort of reverse political popularity vote. Ostracism was no longer just about tyranny, but about letting the people as a whole pick the better policy and its political champion. It was not only to decide on people, but on issues. Themistocles and Aristides are an example. These political rivals were arguing over how Athens should spend the funds from the Laurium silver mine. Themistocles wanted to use the wealth for the creation of a navy while Aristides argued for the distribution of those funds to the citizens. Ultimately, by choosing one person, the Athenians were choosing one policy. Athens voted to hold an ostracism that year in 483 BCE, and it became a means by which the citizens would decide how to spend the silver. Aristides was ostracized, and Themistocles succeeded in funding his navy. Similarly, Cimon, opposing Ephialtes and Pericles, was ostracized in 461 for his pro-Sparta policies.

Ostracism was also a means to deal with the challenges of mass politics that are inherent in democracy. Ostracism could serve as an outlet for the collective, pent-up emotions of the citizenry. Plutarch expresses this, “They did not regard ostracism as a punishment, but rather as a means of appeasing and blunting that spirit of envy, which delights in bringing down the mighty and finds an outlet for its own rancour in the penalty of disfranchisement.” He suggests that a “spirit of envy” naturally arises and hence must be dealt with. This emotionality must not build up in the society but instead be released by an official, institutionalized means. If there were to be no legitimate means for the emotional expression of the populace worked into the democratic structure, pressure would build and eventually erupt, destabilizing the democracy. Plutarch later reiterates and expands this point: “in reality it was a humane device for appeasing the people’s jealousy, which could thus vent its desire to do harm, not by inflicting some irreparable injury, but by a sentence of ten years’ banishment.” Ostracism helped to maintain democracy because it was a sort of damage control for the people’s jealousy. In democracy, mass psychology must be carefully accounted for since the masses effectively wield most of the political power and control. The Athenians wisely recognized the power of the emotional psyche of the demos and planned accordingly for it in the framework. Ostracism takes on a symbolic value as a pragmatic means to deal with the irrational component of democratic politics by maintaining the democratic principal of equality. It becomes a legal, moderate form of human sacrifice to satisfy the jealousy of the citizens. Thus, ostracism is much more than protection against tyranny, but protection against the demos’ own self-destruction.

Ostracism was, for the short time it was practiced, effective in achieving its goals. While ostracism was exercised, no tyrant took over Athens. During the period subversive groups gained little ground and only a small number of ostracisms took place to maintain the security of the polis. By removing the leaders who would have thrown Athens into chaos by opposing the current political trend, ostracism allowed Athens to stick with consistent and progressive policies. The almost 100 years from Cleisthenes in 508/7 until the oligarchy in 411/10, which was brought on by losses in the Peloponnesian war, was a relatively stable period for Athens. Ostracism was successful because, if we compare it to exiles in the archaic period, it was a moderate and legal means accepted by the ruling populace to deal with problems that could create instability in a young democracy. Rivalries such as those between Aristides and Themistokles, Cimon and Ephialtes, and Thucydides and Pericles could have become violent and threatened democracy if it were not for ostracism which peacefully and legally resolved the political tension. In comparison with the French Revolution, in which the execution of public enemies devolved into organized terror against aristocrats, ostracism directed and controlled what could have become mass violence by institutionalizing exile. Ostracism effectively functioned as a valve to release political tension to help avoid the explosion of stasis that had continuously disrupted archaic Athens and could have again split Athens with political strife, stifling its growth to greatness. Particularly as a young
democracy, Athens needed an institution like ostracism in order to give itself
time to establish legitimacy. Time is crucial in proving the legitimacy and
functionality of any new government. By implementing ostracism, Athens
afforded itself the chance to try out and prove its new democratic government
by securing itself against a reversion to the old tyranny.

Yet, if ostracism was such a useful tool for upholding the democracy,
why did it fall out of practice? Although the institution was not completely
abandoned, the Athenians stopped carrying out ostracisms because they recog-
nized that the practice was being abused. Hyperbolos, an influential dem-
agogue but second rate politician, was the victim of the last known to be
ostracism in 417. The ostracism of Hyperbolos marked a departure from the
trend of previous ostracisms,29 signaling the demise of the tradition. As
Plutarch writes, Hyperbolos had aimed to remove either Nicias or Alcibiades
with an ostracism, but instead the two politicians teamed up and ma-
nipulated the institution so that Hyperbolos himself was ostracized.30
Hyperbolos’ predecessors, such as Aristides, Themistocles, Cimon, and
Thucydides, were ostracized for the threat of their rising prominence as well
as for their policies, neither of which were reasons as to why Hyperbolos
was ostracized. Hyperbolos neither advocated any specific programs nor was
he a rising leader. Another difference in this case was that it was the first
time that the proponent of ostracism became its victim.31 Furthermore, the
will of the people which expressed itself through ostracism was thwarted by
the campaigning of elite politicians,32 detracting from the democratic value
of ostracism. As the politics in Athens transformed, demagogues were able
to manipulate the very institutions that were meant to restrain them, much as
modern institutions can use and abuse laws today. In addition, Hyperbolos
was an unusual victim because he was not a member of the landed elite who
were up until then the targets of ostracism.33 Plutarch states that ostracism had
never before been used on such a “mean or insignificant individual” as Hy-
perbolos, and, quoting Plato, continues, “the fate did not deserve the man.
Not for the like of him and his slave brands did Athens put the sherid into our
hands.”34 Hence, ostracism has been abused because it was forced to stoop
to a level lower than for which it was intended; there was a certain dignity
and honor associated with ostracism that disappeared upon its use on Hy-
perbolos. Once abused, ostracism had lost its legitimacy and with it, its
power to maintain stability. A cautionary note: we must be aware that the
commentary on Hyperbolos as the last ostracism was written post facto,35 so
that more significance may have been attached to his ostracism than there ac-
tually was at the time that it took place. Plutarch claims that the Athenians
were outraged by the degradation of ostracism, and thus stopped enacting it.36

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but it might just be in retrospect, already knowing that Hyperbolos was the
last ostracism, that justification was sought for Hyperbolos to have been the
last. Ostracism, in fact, was not legally abolished immediately after Hyper-
bolos.37 The vote whether to hold an ostracism seem to have continued in
the 6th ptryany for years,38 although it is not known for how long. Hence, os-
stracism continued to symbolically represent a warning against tyrants, the
political will of the populace, and a desire for democratic stability.

Ostracism clearly was created as an institution to protect and solidify
the democracy, yet the very idea of exclusion seems to strike against the
heart of democratic ideology. It becomes unclear as to whether ostracism
was in character a democratic or anti-democratic institution. The question
largely depends on where the bulk of true political power lay in the Aten-
ian democracy – with the people or its leaders, who was really making the
decisions in Athens? By looking at the democratic value of ostracism, we can
better understand how comprehensive democracy was in Athens, its true
character, and where it perhaps compromised democratic principles for prag-
matism.

There are several aspects of ostracism that make it un-democratic.
First, as Karavites succinctly writes, “the instrument devised for would be
tyrants becomes in the Democracy the organ of the majority for the extir-
patation of the minority views.”39 Exclusion, not allowing for plurality of
opinion, and the lack of a framework for compromise all seem to go against the
ideals of democracy. Furthermore, the question arises whether ostracism is
truly in the best interest of the democracy or whether it harms the democ-
archy by eliminating its best leaders.40 And while some argue ostracism is a
moderate institution, ostracism can be considered harsh because the ostra-
cized person is not at any point officially charged, for this act is not a pun-
ishment for a crime.41 There is no law that one breaks knowing the
consequences are ostracism; one is merely targeted on the whim of the peo-
ple. The ten year exile can also be considered harsh because a citizen’s iden-
tity was closely tied to his native land,42 so that removing the person from
their home is a harsh punishment for not actually having committed a crime.
Ostracism, by targeting individuals without specific charges, also demon-
strates the highly personal nature of Athenian democracy,43 which while per-
haps is not anti-democratic, may point out a weakness in the Democracy of
Athens. In addition, the practice of ostracism points out a trend of political
irrationality and extremism arising from a strong emotionalism that charac-
terizes mass politics.44 It recognizes the dangers of demagoguery and the
willingness of the masses to be led, not to lead; ostracism is an attempt to
control this phenomenon. Ostracism is just one manifestation of the irra-

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Sara Forsdyke represents the farthest end of the spectrum arguing that ostracism was not only a democratic institution, but the ultimate symbol of democracy in Athens. Ostracism was neither bizarre, irrational, nor irresponsible, but in contrast an essential feature of the establishment of the democracy. Ostracism is the intervention of the non-elites in the intra-elite politics of exile, and as expulsion determines political power, thus the non-elites have taken political power into their own hands by controlling exile. Ostracism thus indicates a change in the balance of power from the elites to the non-elites, or the demos. Forsdyke argues that the democracy started when the non-elites expelled the Spartans and Cleomenes, Athens’s rulers, from the Acropolis in 508/7, and thus took power from the elites. Ostracism is a reminder and reenactment of this watershed event, thus both a pragmatic assertion of the citizen’s political will and an ideological symbol of the democracy. Her theory, however, largely depends on one’s interpretation of the events in 508/7, for it is very unclear whether this was a mass uprising of the populace that founded the democracy or a small group that simply chased out the Spartans. Furthermore, she does not consider the archaeological evidence of the ostraka to be significant enough to demonstrate an organized effort to sway the vote and instead maintains that the votes were mostly written independently, which also largely hinges on how literate the Athenian population was. Thus, both arguments, democratic and anti-democratic, largely depend on the significance placed on what little archaeological and literary evidence has come down to us, but ultimately depends on whether we see democratic Athens as the expression of the citizens’ independent political will or as the playground of its most prominent leaders.

In summa, perhaps at first glance, ostracism seems a peculiar institution, but upon examination, it is not peculiar but in fact an intelligently planned protective measure intended to shore up a fledgling democracy. It was successful in keeping tyranny at bay for the first 100 years of the democracy, allowing it the time to establish itself so that even after the reign of the thirty tyrants at the end of the 5th century, democracy quickly reasserted itself in Athens. Ostracism’s primary purpose is stability, and it gets its strength from both its symbolic and pragmatic aspects. It also brings into question where the true political power of Athens resided—with the people or the leaders. Was ostracism a wolf in sheep’s clothing? How democratic was the institution, really, at its core? Ostracism certainly does not entirely agree with our modern conception of democracy. It maintained the democratic principle of equality, but at the cost of other democratic principles, yet it was a worthwhile and necessary sacrifice for the sake of the longevity of
democracy. The Athenians recognized that power corrupts, and absolute power absolutely corrupts. They had the wise foresight to avoid this even as a possibility by establishing ostracism, which is also reflected in other Athenian institutions. Once democracy matured, ostracism was no longer needed and other institutions took its place. Thus, in the end ostracism was developed with a strong consciousness of both Athens’ past and present.

ENDNOTES

5. Accountability, 143.
7. Classical Athenian Democracy, 37.

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29. Accountability, 151.
30. Plutarch, Nicias 11.
31. Accountability, 152.
33. Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy, 171.
34. Plutarch, Alcibiades 13.
36. Plutarch, Nicias 11
37. Accountability, 152.
40. Problems, 95.
41. Accountability, 143.
42. Accountability, 143.
43. Classical Athenian Democracy, 40.
44. Problems, 107-8.
46. Athenian Politics, 1284b33-36.
49. “Ostracism, Sycophancy, and Deception of the Demos, 339; Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy, 152.
50. Classical Athenian Democracy, 40.
51. Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy, 134.
52. Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy, 135, 150.
53. Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy, 148.
VISITORS AT ILION: THE CO-OPTION OF THE TROJAN MYTH

JOSHUA C. MILLER

The Co-Option of the Trojan Myth

the Locrians. To atone for the sins of their ancestor and to break the curse, the Locrians instituted a tradition in which two virgins were sent to Ilion every year in order to clean and maintain the temple of Athena. By instituting this custom, the Locrians not so subtly emphasized their link to the mythic war which served as a unifying link between all the peoples and polities of ancient Greece. Furthermore, the co-option of the myth and place of Troy through this custom did not simply link the entire city of Locris to the legend, it specifically was a foundation of the city’s internal hierarchy. As Polybius describes:

At Locris, all ancestral nobility is derived from women, not from men ... for example, those are considered noble among them who are said to be of the “hundred houses,” ... the families from which the Locrians, as the oracle ordered, were to select by lot the virgins they had to send to Troy.  

This description of the Locrian nobles indicates the importance attached to the Trojan myth — their association with the War legitimized them, and this legitimacy was emphasized each year when the new maidens were selected. While the legend of the rape and curse is presumably myth, the custom and the internal hierarchy it promoted are both historical.

The next political manipulations of the Trojan myth consist of a pair of visits to the site by two of the most important leaders of the period, the Persian Xerxes in 480 BC and Alexander the Great in 334. As he prepared to invade mainland Greece during the Persian Wars, King Xerxes marched through the city of Ilion with his army. Herodotus relates the king’s interest in the site:

Xerxes had a strong desire to see Troy, the ancient city of Priam. Accordingly he went up into the citadel, and when he had seen what he wanted to see and heard the story of the place from the people there, he sacrificed a thousand oxen to the Trojan Athene, and the Magi made libations of wine to the heroes.  

There is nothing in the extant sources to indicate that Xerxes’s interest in the site was not politically motivated. However, in the search for genuine political manipulations of the Trojan legend, it is important to consider that Xerxes’s visit to the site also may have had more immediate and practical motivations. With such a massive army, he was undoubtedly faced with the
logistical problem of providing food for them. The "thousand oxen" Herodotus speaks of, in addition to being a sacrifice to placate the gods, also would have provided food for a substantial part of his army. Furthermore, his decision to stop at Ilion was probably more a function of the site's strategic location on his way to Greece than an intentional manipulation of the site. Beyond these practical considerations, however, Xerxes's visit did serve to associate him with the site. By taking time to explore the city, Xerxes legitimized both himself and Ilion. The presence of such a powerful foreign person, while not economically beneficial in this case, reinforced the site's credibility and relevance to the era, not simply the mythology. Furthermore, the visit emphasized the mythic theme of a titanic struggle between East and West; Xerxes as the new champion of the East symbolically assumed the mantle of Priam, the bulwark of eastern resistance to the West. The visit to Ilion by Xerxes and the Persian army in 480 BC was more than anything a practical matter, but the king's interest and visit served to legitimize the city as the historical location of the mythology and associate Xerxes with the powerful legends.

Almost a century and a half after Xerxes stopped at the site, Alexander the Great also visited Ilion. Like the Persian king before him, Alexander brought an army with him as he prepared to conquer the Achaemenid Empire and avenge the Persian devastation of Greece. Alexander's visit further legitimized Ilion, as Plutarch describes:

Once [Alexander] arrived in Asia, he went up to Troy, sacrificed to Athena and poured libations to the heroes of the Greek army. He anointed with oil the column which marks the grave of Achilles, ran a race by it naked with his companions, as the custom is, and then crowned it with a wreath...While he was walking about the city and looking at its ancient remains, somebody asked him whether he wished to see the lyre which had once belonged to Paris.4

Alexander's visit and activities at Troy seem to indicate both genuine interest in the site as well as further manipulation of the site's legend. Unlike the previous visit by Xerxes, Alexander's visit had no overriding practical theme such as supplying food for his army. Instead, Alexander spent his time at Troy celebrating the mythology and rewarding the city. Besides the grave of Achilles, Alexander also took an interest in the relics that linked the site to the legend, including the shield of Achilles.5 In addition, he honored Ilion by granting it the status of polis and exempting it from tribute.6 By granting Ilion the status of a polis, Alexander directly associated it with the historical city of Athens.

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Ilion special status, he ensured that he would be seen as the patron of the mythological site where the Greeks united to win their culturally defining victory in the Trojan War. Beyond being simply a patron, however, Alexander also assumed the mythological prestige of being associated with Troy. With Alexander's visit, the developing dynamic of Troy as a powerful symbol becomes more evident. As had Xerxes, Alexander capitalized on the mythic theme of East vs. West, though obviously as a champion for the West. More than Xerxes had done, Alexander also capitalized on the legend through actions intended to associate him directly with the city. Furthermore, Alexander more directly emphasized his association with the particular Greek heroes of the war, specifically by the dedication of his own armor to Athena, his use of antique armor supposedly dating from the Trojan War, and his reenactment of Achilles's funeral games for Patroclus.7 In doing so, Alexander literally donned the mantle of the ancient Greek heroes. He also affirmed his relationship with the Greek heroes by sacrificing to Priam. As Arrian describes:

[Alexander] sacrificed also to Priam at the altar of Zeus of enclosures (so runs the story), praying Priam not to vent his anger on the race of Neoptolemus, of which he himself was a scion.8

Arrian's description of Alexander's motives for sacrifice indicate the ruler's subtle machinations. Like the Locrians, Alexander leveraged the Trojan legend to identify himself with specific heroes from the mythic past, in this case Neoptolemus and Achilles. Although it would perhaps be overly cynical to judge Alexander's actions as motivated purely by symbolic manipulations, he clearly understood and benefited from his association with the city and its heroes. Likewise, Ilion also benefited from Alexander's association. In purely practical terms, Alexander's patronage provided the city with economic benefits and honors. Moreover, by so publicly honoring the site, Alexander also reinforced the relevance of the Trojan legend and its concrete association with Ilion. Although Xerxes and Alexander claimed to represent different sides of the Trojan War, they both successfully leveraged the site's mythic symbolism of the conflict between East and West and ensured the continuing relevance of Ilion.

Although the site of Ilion remained popular and regionally influential after the visit of Alexander, political leveraging of the site and legend were limited to a relatively small scale until the rise of Julius Caesar and the Julian family in Rome during the mid first century BC. The Romans already
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had a mythical founder, Romulus, and while the myth of Rome’s Trojan origin seems to have been part of the Roman national mythology since at least the third century BC, it was of secondary importance. As Julius Caesar and his descendants came to power, however, Troy and site of Ilion took on greater import as the Julians emphasized and leveraged the Trojan myth. To the Julians, the Trojan legend played an especially important part in their mythic past, with Caesar claiming descent from Iulus (Ascanius), the son of Aeneas, who was himself the son of the goddess Venus. The Julian family tree thus included both Trojan nobility and divine ancestry. As Caesar gained power, emphasizing his connection with the Trojan mythology became increasingly essential to him.

Caesar’s co-option of the Trojan legend began in 48 BC, when he visited Asia Minor. There, as the poet Lucan imagines the visit, Caesar found, “the town of Troy burnt down of old / now but a memorable name.” Caesar also, in consideration of his Trojan ancestry, “extended the territory of the Ilians and confirmed them in the grants of freedom and immunity from taxation.” He went even further in his political leveraging of his mythical Trojan background, however, frequently publicly emphasizing his familial connection to Venus and Iulus in both speeches and with his dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix in 46 BC. There is also evidence that he chose Venus Genetrix as the watchword at the battles of Pharsalos and Munda. In addition, Caesar emphasized his ancestry in a less direct manner by the minting of coins depicting the joint Roman-Trojan mythology. The most well known of these was minted in 48 BC, after Caesar defeated Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus. Thomas Duncan describes it:

On the obverse is the head of Venus; on the reverse is Aeneas l., holding in his r. hand the palladium, and bearing on his l. shoulder his father Anchises who wears a long tunic and hood; on the r. is the inscription, CAESAR.

Caesar’s connections to Troy were certainly intended to legitimize and romanticize his public image, but there is evidence that in popular opinion, he may have overly emphasized his connection and patronage of Troy. Suetonius records a rumor from 44 BC:

The report had spread in various quarters that [Caesar] intended to move [the capital] to Ilium or Alexandria, taking with him the resources of the state, draining Italy by levies, and leaving the charge of the city to his friends.

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Although the capital was never moved, the existence of rumors such as this demonstrates how powerfully Caesar exploited his Trojan ancestry. Like Alexander in the fourth century, Caesar leveraged the mythic connotations of the Trojan War. More powerfully than Alexander, however, Caesar was also able to claim direct ancestry from the Trojans, a comparison emphasized by Strabo, and later reflected in the imperial mythology of the Aeneid. It is also apparent that the historical events at Troy, rather than just the mythic, played a growing role in the leveraging of Ilion. In Strabo’s account, Caesar was not just emphasizing his mythical inheritance, but also emulating the historical visit of Alexander the Great some three-hundred years prior.

With the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, Rome was thrown into turmoil. When Augustus restored order after the battle of Actium in 31 BC, it marked the start of a new era in Rome and the further solidification of the importance of the Trojan myth and its concurrent politicization. As with Julius Caesar, an important aspect of the political leveraging of Troy revolved around the legendary ties between Rome and Troy, both with Aeneas as the founder of Rome and with Ascanius as the legendary ancestor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. During his travels to Asia Minor between 22 and 19 BC, Augustus came to Ilion, and as Brian Rose writes:

The visit of Augustus sparked a building boom that continued through the Julio-Claudian period. The city also began to advertise its association with Rome and the Julio-Claudian family more emphatically at this time. In local inscriptions the Julio-Claudians were referred to as “Suggeneia”, or “of the same blood” as the Ilians.

The vast number of inscriptions on buildings from the period of the Julio-Claudians indicates that, as with the economic benefits earlier conferred on the city by Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, patronage of the clan’s “maternal” city of Ilion was an important (and expensive) use of funds. At this point, moreover, it becomes evident that the emphasis on the connection between Rome and Ilion becomes more mutual. As Michael Sage describes:

Under Augustus we have the first appearance on Ilian coinage of Aeneas carrying Anchises on his shoulders. Given the earlier monotonous regularity of the appearance of Athena Ilias, this numismatic affirmation of Ilium’s association with Rome
Although the Ilians had passively benefited from their association with the Trojan and Roman mythology, they were now actively marketing this connection. The emphasis Rome put on its Trojan heritage in the formation of its identity can also be seen in the Aeneid, which was written during the reign of Augustus to canonize the myth of Aeneas and the founding of Rome. As part of Augustan propaganda, Aeneas became a model figure symbolizing the Augustan moral reforms. The Aeneid also served to solidify the Julian inheritance. As Andrew Erskine describes, “Vergil seems to have chosen the awkward expedient of saying that Iulus was merely another name for Ascanius.” For the rest of the Julio-Claudian era, and indeed for the duration of the Roman Empire, the heavy emphasis of the Trojan legend by Julius Caesar, Augustus, and other Julio-Claudian and later emperors ensured that Ilion remained an important site to the Romans.

Throughout the Archaic, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, the site of Ilion remained a symbolic location as the site of Homer’s Iliad. Although its fortunes varied as a result of broader geopolitical changes, the myth and site of Troy was consistently co-opted and manipulated for the benefit of the world’s most powerful polities. Furthermore, the politicizing of the site was consistent in its dual themes: the Trojan War as the representative location in the struggle between East and West, and the adoption of the legendary ancestry of the Trojan War heroes. Manipulation of the site began with a simple tradition in Locris, became broader in scope with the visits of Xerxes and Alexander, and eventually became a complicated and living feature of the Roman national mythology, emphasized with personal visits to the site, the construction of monuments, and even its immortalization in the words of the Aeneid. As a powerful symbolic location for the ancient Mediterranean world, Ilion was successfully co-opted by various different cultures and polities, both East and West, since the site could be portrayed as either European or Asian, all depending on the prevailing political circumstances.

ENDNOTES

2 Polybius, XII, 5, 6-7.
3 Herodotus, VII, 43.
4 Plutarch, Alexander, 15.

The Co-Option of the Trojan Myth
6 Ibid.
7 Arrian, Anabasis of Alexander, I, 11, 11.
8 Ibid.
10 Lucan, Pharsalia, IX, 964-965.
11 Strabo, XIII, I, 27.
12 See Suetonius, Caesar, VI.
15 Suetonius, I, LXXIX.
16 Strabo, XIII, I, 27; and see the discussion of the Aeneid in the later section on Augustus.
17 Strabo, XIII, I, 27.
19 This can also be seen at the site of Aphrodisias, the site associated with Venus, the divine ancestor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.
21 Ibid., 213.
22 Erskine, 22. See also Vergil, Aeneid, I, 267-268.
scribes two reasons for the accusations made against Apollonius: (1) his association with Indian Brahmins and other eastern wise men, and (2) his ability to divine the future. My work examines these two aspects of the charge.

As to India, Philostratus marks Paraca, the land of the Brahmins, as a place where no Greek has ever travelled before Apollonius. When Apollonius arrives at Paraca, he finds that the Brahmins are thoroughly Hellenized: they speak flawless Greek, they worship Greek gods, and they espouse Greek philosophy. I argue that Philostratus’ depiction of the Brahmins responds to the prevalence of Roman culture in the Greek world. Paraca and the Brahmins represent a pure form of Hellenism that exists outside the boundaries of Roman imperialism. Indeed, Philostratus uses Paraca as a space to negotiate Greek identity under the Roman Empire. In so doing, he engages with Greek ethnographic traditions on India going back to Alexander the Greek. These traditions allow India to become a place that is both recognizable and knowable to a Greek audience. The “danger” that the Orient represented to Apollonius’ accusers is thus normalized.

Philostratus likewise normalizes Apollonius’ divinatory ability. He counterpoints mantikē, the traditional term used for divination in Greek sources, with prognōsis, the form of divination practiced by Apollonius. Mantikē has a negative valence throughout the work, and Philostratus emphasizes that mantikē is not what Apollonius practices. Prognōsis, on the other hand, is based on the assertion that the human soul and the divine are composed of the same element, ether. By introducing ether as the fifth element of the cosmos, Philostratus engages in a major debate of Middle Platonic physics. Prognōsis also requires the ritual purity of the practitioner, which is accomplished through an ascetic lifestyle. Finally, though prognōsis gives the practitioner access to information about the past, present, and future, the main goal of prognōsis is a better understanding of the divine. Throughout Philostratus’ description of Apollonius’ divinatory skill, he relies upon contemporary philosophical thought, thus making what Apollonius’ accusers thought to be magical something intellectual and spiritual.

While Apollonius’ associations with Indians and his ability to divine the future are the explicit reasons for the accusation of being a magician, Philostratus’ Apollonius represents a movement of religious authority from the temple site to the holy man himself, and it is this threat to traditional Greek religion that ultimately drives the accusations made against Apollonius. While traditional religious practices are localized around the god, his festivals, and the site of his worship, Philostratus’ text reveals a shift in religious authority from the localized temple site to an individual, not bound by geographic nor spatial constraints. This is particularly evident in Apoll-
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Apollonius of Tyana

mogenizes. Secondly, in defending Apollonius, Philostratus constructs an India that is only possible because of centuries of Greek ideas about the East and the limits of the world. Though extremely distant and foreign, Philostratus can rely upon the Greek discourse of India to make the land knowable and non-threatening to his audience.

Through my dissertation, I hope to demonstrate the relevance of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* beyond the field of Classical Studies. Philostratus engages in and perpetuates discourses, particularly those concerning the representation of India and the figure of the *magos* and, reveals its relevance to both discourses of Orientalism in general and particularly to discussion of Western conceptions of the East.

ENDNOTES

1 In the 2nd century CE, Lucian, in his *Alexander the False-Prophet*, refers to Apollonius’ “bag of tricks” (*tragōdian*, which suggests both theatricality and ostentatiousness). In the early 3rd century CE, the historian Cassius Dio refers to Apollonius as a “sorcerer (γωσ) and true magician (*magos*)” (Dio. 77.18.4).

2 V. 1.7-12.

3 V. 4.1.

4 V. 4.17-18.

5 The most recent systematic criticism of Said comes from Daniel Martin Varisco’s *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (University of Washington Press, 2007).


7 This tendency has been further illustrated by several scholars, including Ranajit Guha in *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Duke, 1996), Bernard Cohn in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton, 1996) and Nicholas Dirks in *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, 2001).

8 James Romm provides an excellent discussion of how the Greco-Roman world conceived of the limits of the world in his *The Edges of Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton, 1992).
other projects are two related papers on the theme of genealogy in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, again in relation to the meaning of that theme in the culture of Augustan Rome.

**PS:** I’m working on a book on divine signs in antiquity. These are things like oracles, omens, dreams, prodigies, any bizarre occurrence that is thought to be a sign from the gods. I’m trying to take these things seriously as a form of communication. How does this sign system work when one of the parties is a god and another is a human being?

**P:** *With the rising notion of Greece as not so “exceptional,” but rather part of a larger Mediterranean sphere, would it be better to include classes normally relegated to NELC or History into the curriculum?*

**JF:** Definitely. The department has a very liberal policy of counting courses taught in other departments towards the CLST major.

**PS:** I think that it is healthy that we no longer lord it over other disciplines by saying Greece and Rome are the *sine qua non* of understanding civilization. I think it’s healthy that we don’t hold that view or say that it is right. I think they are not exceptional in that sense, but rather think they are exceptional in that they are extraordinary as well as interesting cultures that we can learn a lot from and have had a lot of influence on where we are today. That doesn’t make them different from a lot of cultures. So I’d call them exceptional, but not ‘exceptionally exceptional.’ Many other ancient cultures have a lot to teach us about where we are today.

**P:** *With the previous question in mind, why should the Classics be a separate discipline?*

**JF:** There are lots of reasons to ask that question about almost any discipline. For instance, Chemistry seems to most Americans to be a clearly defined discipline. But in Europe, Chemistry departments are almost unheard of: instead, it is more common for there to be separate institutes of Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Materials Science, Chemical Biology, and so forth. Here we have other ways of ensuring that interdisciplinary teaching and research takes place across the boundaries of Chemistry, Biology, Engineering, and other departments. But the traditional departmental structures tend to persist. In Classics this is true as well, and it certainly makes sense in historical terms that this should be so. This is not just a matter of tradition: there
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by now a vast amount of learning about the ancient world that is organized in such a way that it is accessible only to those who are familiar with the languages and cultures of both Greece and Rome. It is also at least arguably true — and I certainly would make this argument — that the elite cultures of the Greeks and the Romans were so intertwined for such a long time that it would be difficult to understand either one adequately without almost constant reference to the other, but that the same is not true of either the Greeks or the Romans with respect to any other culture. It is of course true that before the Greeks became involved with the Romans, their relations with various other cultures — those of Egypt and Persia, for instance — were also very important. And after the disintegration of the Roman Empire, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Persian all played the role of imperial languages, with varying and complex relations to one another, in different parts of the world. So it is easy to imagine a configuration of disciplines that would pay more attention to these interactions. But each area is so rich in itself that few will be able to master them all. In addition, the tradition of studying Latin and Greek even before college means that the field has traditionally been more accessible to students in Europe and the United States. My opinion is that we have to build up curricula in Arabic and Persian language and culture; and if we can succeed in doing so, some reconfiguration of departmental boundaries might make sense.

P: Is it anachronistic to focus so intensely on one period of time? Is this useful or is it merely something born out of a particular European affinity, or even fetish, in particular that of the English (cf. Byron and the Greek War of Independence) for these regions and periods of time?

JF: I’ve just said a little bit about that. I guess it’s by definition “anachronistic,” but I would say that the study of any period other than the present is equally anachronistic. Quite honestly, I see no essential difference between studying the literature and history of (say) the English Renaissance and that of the Second Sophistic. The relationship between past and present is what we make of it, and that applies to the recent past as much as to the distant past. One reason for studying the distant past is that it has acquired more meaning over time, because it has attracted the efforts of many generations of men and women to explain it, to understand it, or to turn it to their own purposes. Obviously we have to study the recent past and the present as well; but it is a truism that what we think of contemporary events changes rapidly, and with time even radically. News commentators are always speculating about “the judgment of history,” and with reason. So the relationship

between past and present is dynamic; both deserve our attention; and with so much information to process, we have no choice but to specialize.

PS: The fetish is gone, for the most part, which is a good thing. But a huge amount can be learnt by making that past relevant to the contemporary period. I say making it as if it is some creative act of relationship, [but] it’s more like rediscovering the continued relevance of a period. This goes to the previous question of exceptionalism. There should be an acknowledgement that we are not exceptional, but the real historical linkages and legacies need to be understood. Looking forward is necessary. It’s one of the things I tried to do with my ‘Iliad and the Iraq War’ class. I think it’s really important to continuously rediscover material obviously relevant to the present.

P: How would you place the Classics in relation to the other fields in the humanities, such as History, English or Philosophy — all of which seem to contain elements of the Classics.

JF: It’s true that they all contain elements of Classics, and vice-versa. Our graduate students have all heard me talk about the organization of Classics as a discipline as “orthogonal” in relation to all the others. If you think of a cartesian grid, where the vertical axis corresponds to time and the horizontal one as the continuum of human experience at a given moment, most disciplines would take their place as vertical lines, with (say) History, Philosophy, Literature, Science, and so on arranged from left to right. Classics, though, would be a horizontal band extending from (let’s say) about 1500 BC to about 500 AD, cutting across all the others. This is very simplified, since on the one hand there are such things as philosophy of science, philosophy of history, history of philosophy, and so forth; also, as I’ve said, Classicists are interested in the sources and reception of ancient Greek and Roman culture. But in general, it is accurate to say that our discipline is organized “horizontally” and most others “vertically.”

PS: I think we’re better [laughter]. But being serious, what we do is offer a uniquely interdisciplinary field. It is assumed that as a classicist, one can deal with literature, philosophy, history, art and architecture. It’s just supposed to be a part of one’s study. There are fewer boundary markers that are there to prevent us from crossing over. Our discipline is very broad and open, and focused on a thousand-year span of history. We offer a unique cultural perspective because of the heterogeneity of the material we study. That is a
surprising answer for those who don’t study classics. Once you get into the material you can do all types of things. As a discipline in the humanities, classics raises question of humans as a whole. Our questions tend to be more centered on that unit of analysis, or at least my questions tend to be centered on that. I consider it, like our friends in history and other disciplines, a core humanities discipline, but we have a competitive advantage when dealing with these broad questions of what it means to be human.

P: The Classics has a certain connotation of being a more rarified form of discipline and discourse. Is this sentiment well placed (for example, classicists must generally learn Greek, Latin or both, as well as straddle literary criticism/archaeological methods, etc) and if so why?

JF: Historically, of course, it’s true that the study of Classics was associated with elites. To some extent, studying Classics has helped some to improve their social and even economic standing at some points in history, but it has also served as a mere mark of belonging to a certain club. I don’t happen to think that studying Greek or Latin is intrinsically more difficult than studying many other subjects. My high school Latin teacher used to tease us if we complained that an assignment was difficult that there must have been at least some Romans who were stupider than we were, and they all spoke Latin all the time. It’s true enough that learning two foreign languages is, for most people, harder than learning one or none, and that learning a bit about literature, history, philosophy, art, material culture, and so on may be harder in some ways than studying just one of those areas. It may be that the very partial evidence that survives from any ancient culture also makes it more difficult to study than more recent ones, although the superabundance of information that we have about more recent cultures can make it difficult to separate the signal from the noise. But it’s also true that different people have different natural abilities: some learn languages better, others are more adept with math, and so forth. There’s no question that Classics was used in the past as a way of reinforcing social structures, and not simply as the best way of training the mind. That is regrettable, but I don’t think it is a charge that can realistically be made today (at least, not any more than it can be leveled at any subject taught primarily at institutions like Penn), and it seems clear that it does offer a significant number of students a chance to educate themselves in a subject that they personally find valuable. To me that is the real justification for any discipline, or one of them, more than any abstract notion of its inherent capacity to improve the mind: all disciplines, if well taught, have that capacity.

P: Can the Classics be made as immediately relevant today as a discipline such as Political Science, or must it be utilized in a different way? Should it even seek to be immediately relevant?

JF: It’s hard to imagine a presidential candidate hiring a classicist as a political adviser, the way they do political scientists, or even as an adviser on rhetoric. I do think that there is room for classicists to play a much more active role in contemporary political and cultural commentary than we generally do in this country. In other countries it is actually much more common for academics of all sorts to play such a role. Here I am afraid that some conservative intellectuals have taken advantage of a naive tendency to associate the past with certain qualities that they maintain have been lost or eroded through the enactment of liberal policies. They are entitled to make such arguments, but there is another side, in fact there are many other sides, to that particular story. It would be a very healthy sign for political discourse in this country if all of these sides were heard, but I think we have a ways to go before we will see that happen.

PS: I think its relevance will always be mediated by history. That mediation cuts two ways. If you want to figure out how to fix commodities markets, you can learn right now with incredible subtlety and detail in other places at Penn. If you want to understand your world a little better, in a broad way, we may have a comparative advantage through our study of the ancient past. It gives you a place to think more broadly. With our discipline you have a more mediated relevance, which gives you a place outside one's own culture or own discipline to stand, so as to get a vantage on the present. That's something a more immediately relevant discipline does not give you.

P: In regards to current scholarship, where is the Classics heading today?

PS: There are two developments I would point to. One is understanding the Classics from outside. There is a lot of ferment among scholars now, [in regard to] looking at core Classics topics from the outsider’s perspective: the margins of the Roman Empire, beggars, the insane, bandits, criminals. How do those outsider’s stories inform us about the places we study? Also, geographical outsiders, whether talking about the great civilizations of India or North Africa or northern Europe. Their relationships and views have been extremely instructive in giving us a better perspective. Secondly, I would point
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to studies that are using Classics to give us a unique purchase on the ques-
tion of the human. Within the humanities I think the Classics has a lot to say,
it may even be a kind of leader in that aspect of the humanities.

P: Where do you imagine the Classics to be 20 years from now?

JF: In general, I do think that some of the interdisciplinary developments that
you asked about above are likely to occur, sooner or later. I think such de-
velopments are likely to entail an increased emphasis on the study of history
and material culture, to some extent at the expense of literature as such. This
is something that is happening across the humanities. I am myself primarily
a student of literature, but I don’t fear this development. There may be too
much specialization in classical literary studies, and fewer specialists might
encourage greater breadth. I do think that it will be obvious that some kinds
of study require a high degree of linguistic facility and that some do not, and
the profession will allow for individuals to make those adjustments. Twenty-
five years is a long time to say what specifically will be happening, but it’s
not so far in the future that I can’t imagine it. I will have retired from teach-
ing by then, but I hope still to be active in my research. And the students
who are in our programs today and who want to pursue careers in Classics
will be in their prime. That gives me confidence that the field will be in very
good shape.

PS: What I would want is to see those [above-mentioned] development nurt-
tured. We will likely keep Greece and Rome at the center of our study, be-
cause it’s what we know. But we will continue to develop an appreciation for
how those two very different cultures relate. Rather than try and develop our
own expertise in Egypt or the Near East, we will continue to strengthen our
connections with other great civilizations. And since lifetimes are finite, you
need to continue relationships and conversation with colleagues; it’s a way
to keep [the discipline] cross-pollinated.