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Senses and the Embodied Mind of the Initiate in Ancient Mystery Cults[1]

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Introduction

Mystery cults were secret cults that promised their initiates – usually called *mystai* - blessedness, in this life or after death. Ancient sources describe mystic initiation as a life-altering event, which caused a deep transformation in the initiate's personality. Isocrates writes that the initiation rite 'inspires in those who partake of it sweeter hopes regarding both the end of life and all eternity',[2] while Diodorus Siculus notes that 'men who have taken part in the mysteries become both more pious and more just and better in every respect than they were before'.[3] At the same time, the information our sources provide as to the content of the initiatory experience is very limited, which is not surprising at all; not only was secrecy an essential feature of ancient mysteries, but one of the defining characteristics of mystic experiences is that they are ineffable, i.e. no words can describe them.[4] Nevertheless, a better understanding of the nature of the initiatory experience might be achieved through the integration of information provided by the ancient sources with the methods and results suggested by studies from other disciplines, such as neuroscience, cognitive science, and psychology.

The objective of this paper is to explore physiological and sensorial experiences of the initiates in different mystery cults and propose a tentative explanation of their mental and emotional reactions from a cognitive perspective. Throughout this paper I will consider the impact of various physical factors and sensory elements experienced by the initiate in each of the major stages in the initiatory process, namely preliminary preparations or purification (*katharmos*), instructions (*paradosis*), and the core experience of initiation (*epopteia*).[5] Due to the limited scope of this paper, I will direct most of my attention to the core experiences of initiations in the Greek world. I will try to demonstrate that the initiate's physical state following the preparations to the mysteries, along with various sensory stimuli and physiological manipulations experienced during the initiation rite, might have affected their consciousness and can explain, to some extent, the extraordinary effect ascribed to the mystic initiations.

[1] I thank the organizers and participants of the 'New Classicists' conference held at King's College London on 7th of December 2019 for their insightful comments and for their contribution to a most stimulating and enjoyable event. In addition, I am very grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Yulia Ustinova, for her endless support and valuable advice, and to Noa Granot for her helpful advice on my English. Finally, I thank the anonymous reviewers of this paper for their useful comments and suggestions.

[2] Isoc. *Ep.* 4.28 (translated by G. Norlin). Cf. Cic. *De leg.* 36.

[3] D. S. 5.49.6 (translated by C. H. Oldfather).

[4] Kellenberger 1979; Bayne et al 2014: 26; Griffiths et al 2006; Wulff 2000: 400.

[5] Theo Sm. *De utilitate mathematicae*. 14–15; Clem. *Al. Strom*. 5.11.71.

Some methodological remarks

In this paper, experiences of initiates in different mysteries are treated indiscriminately, notwithstanding obvious divergences between distinct cults. This phenomenological approach is justified in my view, since these cults share some essential characteristics.[6] In fact, various sources dating from the Classical period to the Imperial epoch refer to the mysteries in general, without specifying any mystery cult in particular, although these cults also differ in some respects, such as the purposes of initiation, group size and levels of arousal.[7] I refer therefore not to an actual sequence, but rather to the wide spectrum of sensory experiences associated with different mystery cults, and I bear in mind the possible influence of the ritual and cultural context on the initiate's experience and perception.

One of the main challenges in the study of ancient mysteries is that, due to their secret nature, ancient sources are very scarce and limited, and refer to various contexts, areas and periods. Thus, the sources I am using in this paper are often fragmentary and diachronic, and their interpretation requires considerable caution. I think that in the case of ancient Greek mysteries, the use of all available sources, regardless of their challenging nature, may shed light on elements consistently shared by different cults and point to their continuity and distribution across time and space,[8] thereby supporting my phenomenological treatment.

Focusing on the mind of the initiate in ancient Greek mysteries necessitates a definition of what, in my view, the term "mind" means. Using the term "mind" I refer to the seat of all human cognitive and mental faculties, including thought, reason, intelligence, will, memory, feeling, emotion, imagination, etc.[9] The mind is not an organ and it does not exist independently; rather, it is embodied in the human brain and body and embedded in a specific cultural framework, as will soon be explained in detail.[10]

My approach to the study of ancient Greek mysteries is inspired, on one hand, by the growing interest in the senses and sensory studies among scholars of the ancient world; and by the emergence of the cognitive science of religion (CSR) on the other hand. Sensory studies is a research domain that has greatly evolved in recent years. Some scholars even talk about a 'sensual revolution', or a 'sensory turn' in the humanities.[11] This approach focuses on the body and the senses as the mediators of our relation to the world; it observes the cultural and social dimensions of the senses and the influence of culture and society on the ways in which we experience, perceive and inhabit sensory elements.[12] In contrast, the cognitive science of religion is a field of research that has developed over the last two and a half decades and draws on a wide range of disciplines in order to explore the cognitive foundations of religious thought and behavior. The interest in the cognitive perspective on religion has affected Classical Studies and nowadays, Classical scholars increasingly seek to explain ancient religious

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6 On the shared elements of ancient mysteries see Burkert 1987: 4-8; Bremmer 2014: xii-xiii.

7 For the implications of these differences on the nature of the experience underwent by the initiate see Ustinova 2018: 115-216.

8 Burkert 1987: 4.

9 Pandya 2011: 131.

10 McCauley 2011: 17; Graves 2016: 2.

11 On the 'sensory turn' see Bull et al 2006; Betts 2017: 1-3; Howes 2006 and 2019. The most comprehensive study on senses in the ancient world is the series *Senses in antiquity* (Butler and Purves 2014; Bradley 2015; Squire 2016; Rudolph 2017; Purves 2017; Butler-Nooter 2018). See also: Jütte 2005; Smith 2007; Toner 2014; Allen 2015; Bull-Michell 2015; Betts 2017; Harvey-Hughes 2018; Kampakoglou and Novokhatko 2018; Pestalis-Diomidis 2018. On sight and sound in the Eleusinian mysteries see Petridou 2013 and 2018.

12 Classen 1997: 401-402; Classen and Howes 2013: 1-4.

phenomena from a cognitive point of view.[13] Sensory experience has a key role in cognitive science, since, to a large extent, the main task of the cognitive scientist is to explain the mental processing of sensory input and the ways in which they are transformed and shape our perception.[14] Furthermore, sensoriality and levels of sensory stimulation experienced by the participant in a religious performance are perhaps the most notable characteristic by which different types of religious modes and rituals are classified in cognitive theories of religion.[15] This seems to point to the potential that lies in combining CSR with the sensory approach, in spite of the salient contradictions between the universal stance of the cognitive perspective, and the cultural view of sensory studies.[16] This paper follows the sensory approach as it emphasizes the senses as the center of human experience. Throughout this paper, I examine various ancient sources that indicate the dominancy of the senses in the initiatory experience and I analyze them within their historical and cultural context. At the same time, the main innovation this paper sets up to propose is an interpretation of the physiological and sensorial experiences described by the ancient sources from a cognitive perspective.

Whereas the significance of the social, historical and cultural setting in which human experience takes place is apparent to every student of the ancient world, we often tend to disregard the fact that the function of the human mind is conditioned by the human body.[17] After all, we are not born with our mind as a blank slate on which environment leaves its impression. Rather, we are born with a body and brain and our mind is influenced and shaped by the variety of experiences that come from having a human body with different capacities, tendencies and limitations.[18] For students of the ancient mind, this notion opens up new pathways for research, since, though from the cultural perspective we are very different from the ancient Greeks, in physical terms, we have not changed much.[19] Therefore, the interdisciplinary approach suggested in this paper may illuminate significant aspects of the initiatory experience and allow a construal of the mechanism behind the impact of the corporeal sensations of the initiates on their mental states, beliefs, and memories during and after the experience.

Throughout this paper I often explain the mental and emotional reactions of the initiate to various sensory stimuli and physical factors in terms of altered state(s) of consciousness (ASC). For the purposes of this article, the term ASC refers to any temporal mental state that is radically different from what is defined as a normal waking state and can be recognized either subjectively by the experiencer or by an objective observer.[20] It should be mentioned that the term ASC refers to a broad range of states,

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13 On the use of cognitive methods in the study of ancient Greco-Roman religion see Larson 2016: xii n. 1; Ustinova 2018: 17, n. 156. For general bibliography of CSR see Eidinow and Martin 2014; Larson 2016: 379-384. For the main criticism against CSR see Larson 2016: 3-5. For researches that apply cognitive theories to the study of Greco-Roman religion and refer to the issue of ancient mystery cults, see: Gragg, 2004, 76ff; Beck 2006; Ustinova 2009: 226-255 (esp. 234-239), 2013 and 2018: 113-168; Bowden 2010; Martin 2014 and 2018 (esp. 528-530); Griffith 2014; Larson 2016: 250-309; Beck and Panagiotidou 2017.

14 Martin 2005: 473.

15 Such as Harvey Whitehouse's 'Divergent Modes of Religiosity' theory (Whitehouse 2000 and 2004), and Robert McCauley and Thomas Lawson 'Ritual Form' hypothesis' (McCauley and Lawson 2002).

16 As was suggested by Bull and Mitchell 2015 (esp. 4).

17 For the dichotomy of biology vs. culture see Ustinova 2018: 13-14, 17-18.

18 On the 'Blank slate' theory see Pinker 2002. On the embodied mind theory see Varela et al 1991. On the embodied cognition model see Eidinow 2018: 453.

19 Larson 2016: xiii; Betts 2017: 3.

20 I follow the definition provided by Ludwig 1966: 225. It is worth noting that in using the term ASC, I do not refer to mental disorders or to any type of pathological condition. This is how, in my opinion, the states described in this paper in terms of

and the experiences can vary in intensity among different individuals.[21] Nevertheless, most people will react to sensory stimuli in a similar way, as Dio Chrysostom already suggested in the first century AD:

> 'If anyone were to place a man, a Greek or a barbarian, in some mystic shrine of extraordinary beauty and size to be initiated, where he would see many mystic sights and hear many mystic voices, where light and darkness would appear to him alternately, and a thousand other things would occur, and further, if it should be just as in the rite called 'enthronement', where the inducting priests are wont to seat the novices and then dance round and round them—pray, is it likely that the man in this situation would be no whit moved in his mind (ἆρά γε τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον μηδὲν παθεῖν εἰκὸς τῇ ψυχῇ) and would not suspect that all which was taking place was the result of a more than wise intention and preparation, even if he belonged to the most remote and nameless barbarians and had no guide and interpreter at his side—provided, of course, that he had the mind of a human being (ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν ἔχων)?'[22]

This seems to suggest that mystic initiation was an intense physical experience involving many sensorial elements, which had a very strong and predictable effect on the initiate's mind, regardless of his or her cultural background or religious association. I will now examine the sensory elements and physical factors experienced at each stage of the initiatory process and their possible influence on the initiate's mind.

Stages of mystery rites

Preliminary preparations

In order to take part in the mysteries, the initiate needed to complete certain preparations. The initiate often had to pay a considerable sum; Athenaeus even asserts that people 'call by the name of 'mystic rites' (τελεταί) those festivals which are still more important and are accompanied by certain traditional mysteries, deriving the name from the large sums expended upon them. For *telein* means to spend generously'.[23] Furthermore, pseudo-Demosthenes relates that Lysias the sophist, among other expenditures on his lover, wished to initiate her, 'for he considered that everything else which he expended upon her was being taken by the woman who owned her but that from whatever he might spend on her behalf for the festival and the initiation the girl herself would profit and be grateful to him'.[24] This passage indicates the high and desirable status of the mysteries and the expectations of the initiates to benefit in some way as a result of their initiation.[25]

In the period prior to the initiation, in a similar manner to many other ancient Greek cults, the initiate had to remain pure, namely, to avoid any contact with births and deaths.[26] The prohibition of

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ASC were perceived in the ancient Greek world. For a critical evaluation of the dichotomy between pathological and non-pathological ASC's in the ancient Greek world and in modern scholarship, see Ustinova 2018: 1-54 (esp. 19-29).

21 As implied in the famous phrase from Plato's *Phaedo*: 'the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the Bacchants few' (Pl. *Phd.* 69C).

22 D. Chr. 12.33 (translated by H. Lamar Crosby).

23 Ath.2.40E: τελετάς τε καλοῦμεν τὰς ἔτι μείζους καὶ μετά τινος μυστικῆς παραδόσεως ἑορτὰς τῶν εἰς αὐτὰς δαπανημάτων ἕνεκα, τελεῖν γὰρ τὸ δαπανᾶν, καὶ πολυτελεῖς οἱ πολλὰ ἀναλίσκοντες καὶ εὐτελεῖς οἱ ὀλίγα (translated by C. B. Gulick).

24 Dem. 59.21 (translated by N. W. DeWitt). Cf. P. Derv. col. 20; Pl. *R.* 2.364b.

25 On the relation of high expenditures, the expectations of the suppliant and the benefit they derived from their participation (as a result of a placebo effect) see Ustoniva (forthcoming). I am very grateful to Yulia Ustinova who generously allowed me to use her yet unpublished paper.

26 Bacchic-Orphic: E. *Cret*. fr. 472.9–19 = OF 567; the cult of Despoina at Lycosura: IG V 2.514 [SEG 36.376] which includes also breastfeeding. On abstinence from death and birth in ancient Greek religion see Parker 1983: 32-73.

certain foods and drinks was common in many cases as well,[27] and might have affected the initiate's nutrition, physical condition and metabolism on the one hand, and intensified the sense of liminality and separation from everyday life on the other.[28] Cleansing and ritual baths were almost always included in the preparations, and might have contained certain stimulating elements such as nudity and voyeurism.[29]

More extreme, but no less common preparations included certain practices that are known to influence the human psycho-physiological functioning. For instance, many mysteries involved fasting.[30] Fasting is commonly used in religious practices due to its strong effects on the body and mind; prolonged abstinence from food and drinks affect the body chemistry; it can lead to dehydration and hypoglycemia, which can result in various physical and psychological symptoms, such as fatigue, lethargy, dizziness, confusion and ASC.[31] We can therefore assume that it had powerful effects on the initiate's experience.

In addition, the sites of celebration were usually held in sanctuaries located far from city centers,[32] while others took place outdoors, in the mountains or forests.[33] Therefore, the initiates sometimes needed to walk long distances – twenty-two kilometers in the famous example of the Eleusinian mysteries – which likely caused significant exhaustion. Finally, mysteries comprised long rituals that were usually performed over the span of several days. During this time, the initiate probably had very little sleep, which influenced their mental state as well.[34]

Instruction

The second stage of initiation, the *paradosis,* included acquaintance with sacred narrations, *hieroi logoi,*[35] presented either by oral transmission or by means of books and other written texts, which were especially popular among the Bacchic-Orphic initiates.[36] Information regarding the *paradosis* is quite

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27 Eleusis (red mullet): Ael. *NA.* 9.51, 65. Pythagoreans (beans): Plu. *Mor.* 353f; Orphic (eggs): Plu. *Mor.* 636de. Pythagoreans and Bacchic-Orphic (meat): E. *Cret.* fr. 472.18 = OF 567; E. *Hipp.* 952.

28 On the impact of the 'break from the normal regimen' on the suppliant's mental state and expectations regarding future events see Ustinova (forthcoming).

29 Bremmer 2014: 5.

30 Eleusis: Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.21. The Samothracian mysteries: Cole 1984: 36–37. Bacchic mysteries: Liv. 39.9 ('Ten days of fast'); 2 *Macc*. 6:7. Bacchic-Orphic: The great 'Bacchic-Orphic' tablet from Thurii (Graf and Johnston 2013 no. 4 lines 5-6: 'seventh day of a fast'). On fast in the great tablet from Thurii see: Kingsley 1995: 351; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 146-147, 150, 234.

31 Ludwig 1966: 227; Ludwig 1969: 12-13; Stein and Stein 2015: 104-106; Wulff 1997: 70-75.

32 Bremmer 2014: xii.

33 Bacchic-Orphic: E. *Cret.* fr. 472.9–19 = OF 567; Firm. *De err. prof. rel.* 6.12. Samothrace: Cic. *N.D.* 1.119.

34 On the physiological and cognitive effect of sleep deprivation and its relation to ASCs see Ludwig 1966: 227; West and Janszen 1962; Farré-i-Barril 2012; Wulff 1997: 75.

35 On the term *hieroi logoi* see Henrichs 2003.

36 Bacchic-Orphic: A scene of a boy reads from a papyrus scroll in the Bacchic initiation is depicted in the frescoes at the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii (Meyer 1987: 61, 64); E. *Hipp.* 952-954 refers to certain books associated with the mystery rites of Orpheus; Pl. *R.* 364e mentions priests and soothsayers who practice initiation rites (*teletai*) according to the books of Orpheus and Musaeus; and an edict issued by Ptolemy IV Philopator (third-century BC) orders that any person who has been initiated into the rites of Dionysus should deposit his 'sacred text' (Graf and Johnston 2013: 218-219). Furthermore, certain written texts, such as the Gurôb papyrus, the 'Bacchic-Orphic' gold tablets and the Derveni papyrus are self-evidence for the use of ritual texts in the context of the Bacchic-Orphic mysteries. Other mysteries: Dem. 18.259 states that Aeschines, as a boy, had to 'read from the books while his mother performed the initiations'; Pausanias notes that the things said during the cult of Dionysus and Demeter at Lerna were written on heart shaped orichalcum plates (Paus. 2.37); in other place (Paus. 8.15.1-2),

limited, and although it clearly implies the important role of verbal traditions or tales that were transmitted during the initiation rites, the essence of this traditions seems to have been meaningful and understandable only within the totality of the initiatory experience.[37] Furthermore, Aristotle asserts that 'those who are initiated into the mysteries do not learn anything, but rather have an experience and are put in a certain state of mind (οὐ μαθεῖν τί δεῖν, ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους ἐπιτηδείους)',[38] which seems to suggest that doctrinal knowledge had a secondary function in the mysteries compared to the experiential aspect.[39] Without the latter, it is impossible to understand why the initiation rites were so significant.

Senses and the core experience of initiation

Vision

This naturally leads us to the experiential part of the initiation, the *epopteia*, commonly translated as 'beholding'. Indeed, the ancient sources often describe mystic initiation as a visual event, in which seeing and showing play a key role; some sources even state that the blessedness of the mysteries was attained through seeing their rites.[40] As we shall see, however, other senses played an important role in the experience of the *epopteia* as well.

The importance of light in the mysteries is constantly marked by the ancient sources. Various types of light devices, such as torches and candles, were extensively used during the initiation rites.[41] Plutarch describes the great light flamed out from Eleusis;[42] Euripides refers to the Bacchic-Orphic initiates raising their torches up to the mountain in their initiation rites;[43] in the mystery cult founded by Alexander of Abonoteichus (Alexander 'The False Prophet'), there was an entire day in the initiatory process named 'the torches day';[44] and Lucian, in his description of the Temple of the Great Goddess at Syria mentions 'the great wonder of all': a stone carried by the statue of Hera that produced such a miraculous light at nighttime, as if the temple was gleamed by the light of myriads of candles.[45]

Furthermore, light also had a symbolic meaning in the context of the mysteries. Light seems to have been associated with mystic revelation and insight.[46] For instance, the following citation from an

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he relates that in the cult of Eleusinian Demeter at Pheneus, certain written texts that refer to the rites are read to the hearing of the initiates; regarding the Samothracian mysteries see Cole 1984: 28.

37 Burkert 1987: 66-88 (esp. 74).

38 Fr. 15 Rose = Synesius, *Dio* 8 (translated by Burkert 1987: 89).

39 On the secondary function of doctrinal knowledge in the initiatory experience see Meyer 1987: 12-13; Graf 2003: 256; Ustinova 2013: 109-113; Ustinova 2018: 127-128; Larson 2016: 272, n. 97.

40 S. fr. 837 Pearson-Radt; *h.Cer.* 480-482; Pi. fr. 121 Bowra. On the significance of the sense of sight in the Eleusinian mysteries see Petridou 2013.

41 Eleusis: the Ninnion Tablet, a red terracotta tablet approximately dated to 370 BC depicts the use of torches in the initiation rites at Eleusis; A. *Ra.* 154-158; Plu. *Them*. 15.1; Soph. *OC*. 1049–1051. Bacchic-Orphic: E. *Cret.* fr. 472.9–19 = OF 567; Paleothodoros 2010. Corybantian and Cabeiroi: Non. *D*. 4.183-185; Cybele: Luc. *Syr.* 32. See also: D. *Chr.* 12.33; Firm. D*e err. prof. rel*.6.12.

42 Plu. *Them*. 15.1. Cf. Soph. *OC* 1049–1051 ('the torch-lit beach where the Great Goddesses maintain awful rites for mortals').

43 E. *Cret.* fr. 472.9–19 = OF 567.

44 Luc. *Alex.* 38.

45 Luc. *Syr. D.* 32.

46 Sight and knowledge were closely related in ancient Greek culture. This connection is deeply embedded in ancient Greek language, as in other Indo-European languages, and expressed by the verb *oida* which means both "to see" and "to know" (Thass-Thienemann 1967: 146-7; Ihde 2007: 6-7; Lesher 1981: 12-13). Aristotle (*Metaph.* 980A) emphasizes this association in asserting that all men desire knowledge and therefore have great esteem for the senses 'and most of all the sense of sight

epigram preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*, which refers to the mysteries of Eleusis, relates mystic revelation to the cure of physical blindness*:*

> 'My staff guided me to the temple uninitiated not only in the mysteries, but in the sunlight. The goddesses initiated me into both, and on that night I knew that my eyes as well as my soul had been purged of night.'[47]

In a similar manner, Plutarch described the knowledge, or truth the initiate attained during the *epopteia* as the 'apperception of the conceptual, the pure, and the simple, shining through the soul like a flash of lightning'.[48]

At the same time, light is also associated with salvation and privileges of the initiate in the afterlife. Pindar, in the second Olympian ode, states that the good ones after death have the sun shining both at day and night;[49] and the chorus of the initiates in the underworld in the *Frogs* sings 'we alone, who have been initiated and follow the way of piety towards strangers and laymen, enjoy the sun and the light'.[50] Likewise, in several 'Bacchic-Orphic' gold tablets, the initiate declares that he or she was struck by lightning, which suggests that in mystic language, lightning symbolized the promise of gaining improved fate in the afterlife.[51]

In addition, in certain sources, light is associated with the god himself. For instance, in the *Frogs* the chorus of initiates calls Iakchos 'light bearing star',[52] while an epitaph of the second or first-century BC of an Athenian named Isodoros, mentions that as an initiate in the Samothracian mysteries, the deceased 'have saw the double sacred light of Kabeiros'.[53] This suggests that the experience of light in the mysteries was perhaps interpreted as divine revelation.[54]

Darkness and sensory deprivation

While seeing was undoubtedly significant in the initiatory process, lack of vision seemed to play an equally important role in the experience of the initiate. Various sources mark the centrality of sensory deprivation in the mysteries, particularly the importance of darkness. The sacred rites often took place at night or in dark and closed places;[55] and in some mysteries the initiate was even

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[…] the reason of this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions' (translated by H. Tredennick). The connection between sight and the revelation of hidden truth in the context of the mysteries is stressed by various sources; for instance, in the *Phaedrus* (250B-C) Socrates describes the enlightening experience of mystic initiation as a 'blessed sight and vision […] the sight of perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions, which we saw in the pure light, being ourselves pure' (translated by H. N. Fowler). On the association of sight with truth, especially in the context of ancient Greek prophecy, see Detienne 1996 (esp. 107-134). On the link between vision and knowledge among the pre-Socratics see Rudolph 2015.

47 *APL.* 9.298 (translated by W. R. Paton). Cf. Plu. *Mor.* 81D-E; Pl. *Phd*. 250B-C.

48 Plu. *Mor.* 382D (translated by F. C. Babbitt).

49 Pind. *O.* 2.61-3.

50 A. *Ra.* 455-459 (translated by M. Dilon). These verses were quoted in an inscription on a Hellenistic altar at Rhodes, presumably of an initiate (Cole 2003: 199).

51 Graf and Johnston 2013: 125-127; Edmonds 2004: 73-75.

52 A. *Ra.* 343-344. For additional examples see Seaford 2010: 203-4.

53 Dimitrova 2008: 83-84.

54 The presence of the divine in the experience of light is one of the key features that unifies mystic and religious experiences in various cultures and religions (Kapstein 2004: 1).

55 For instance: E. *Cret*. fr. 472.9–19 = OF 567; Dem. 18. 259; Cic. *N.D*. 1.119; Hipp. *Hear*. 5.8.39; Non. *D*. 4.183-185; Firm. *De err. prof. rel*. 6.12.

blindfolded.[56] Emotional and physical effects of darkness are vividly described in a fragment attributed to Plutarch:

> 'In the beginning there is straying and wandering, the weariness of running this way and that, and nervous journeys through darkness that reach no goal, and then immediately before the consummation every possible terror, shivering and trembling and sweating and amazement (τὰ δεινὰ πάντα, φρίκη καὶ τρόμος καὶ ἱδρὼς καὶ θάμβος).'[57]

Similar effect is ascribed to darkness in the undated dissertation *On style*, often mistakably attributed to Demetrius of Phaleron:[58]

> 'What is implied always strikes more terror, since its meaning is open to different interpretations, whereas what is clear and plain is apt to be despised, like men who are stripped of their clothes. This is why the mysteries are revealed in allegories, to inspire the shuddering and awe (ἔκπληξιν καὶ φρίκην) associated with darkness and night. In fact, allegory is not unlike darkness and night.' [59]

Demetrius, just like Plutarch, mentions the physical and emotional reaction of the initiate to the experience of darkness.[60] He also provides an explanation for the function of darkness in the context of the mysteries: darkness was intended to trigger the imagination of the initiates and arouse fear and horror.[61]

Auditory and kinetic deprivation also seem to have been an integral part of the initiatory process. Ritual silence and stillness are most notably associated with the Eleusinian rites, where the initiates imitated the acts of Demeter, and sat silently on a stool with their head covered. This theme appears in several iconographic depictions, such as those found on the Lovatelli urn or on the Torre Nova sarcophagus, both depicting initiation, probably that of Heracles. Nonetheless, silence and stillness seem to have been common characteristics of other mystery cults as well.[62] Plutarch seems to suggest this, asserting that 'when the holy rites are being performed and disclosed the people are immediately attentive in awe and silence (προσέχουσιν ἤδη μετὰ φόβου καὶ σιωπῆς)';[63] elsewhere he adds, 'in these occasions we sit in silence and in order (εὔφημοι καθήμεθα), for no one weeps while undergoing initiation'.[64]

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56 Clinton 2003: 65-66; Ustinova 2018: 128, n. 142. On the association of blindness with inner vision in ancient Greek thought see the section on "eye-sight/insight" in Christopoulos et al 2010; Ustinova 2009: 198-176; Buxton 1980.

57 Plu., fr. 178 Sandbach.

58 On the uncertain authorship and dating of the treatise see Reed 2005: 124-125.

59 Demetr. *Eloc.* 100-101(translated by D. C. Innes).

60 Cf. *TGF* fr. 387. On the association of fear with shudders in antiquity see Cairns 2013. Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 251A where fear, shuddering, sweating and heat are associated with the initiate's experience of 'seeing a godlike face'.

61 In addition, the terrifying effects of darkness was also combined with various other elements to intensify feelings of terror. For example, the ancient sources mention priests who rushed out of darkness to scare the initiates (Idomeneus of Lampsakos *BNJ* 338F; Anon. *Vita Aeschin.* 268.2); certain objects of terror and terrifying visions (Objects of terror: Origenes. *Cels*. 4.10. Terrifying visions: Lada-Richards 1999: 90-94); visual and physical interaction with snakes (D. 18. 259–260; Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.12; Paus. 8.37.4–5; Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.17; schol. Luc. *Dial. Mer*. 2.1; Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.16; Burkert 1987; Bremmer 1984: 268.

62 Eleusis: *h.Cer.* 197-201; Hipp. *Hear*. 5.8.39. The mysteries of Andania: Bremmer 2014: 89. Pythagoreans and the cult of Dionysus: Montiglio 2000 26-27; Iamb. 17.72.5–8 ('five years of silence'); D.L. 8.10. See also Edmonds 2006.

63 Plu. Mor. 81E (translated by F. C. Babbitt). Cf. Plu. *Mor.* 10fF

64 Plu. Mor. 477D (translated by W. C. Helmbold).

Shutting down sensory channels could have had various effects on the initiate's mental and emotional state. For instance, we know that short-term sensory deprivation usually results in heightened sensitivity in other senses.[65] The initiate likely experienced other sensory elements, such as smells, tastes, and soft noises more vividly as a result. Removal of external stimuli is also used by many cultures to focus the mind within itself, increase awareness of unconscious processes and enter into a meditative state.[66] This effect of sensory deprivation seems to correspond with Plutarch's description of the ultimate stage of the initiation; drawing on Platonic ideas, Plutarch compares geometry with the insightful experience of the *epopteia* and praise it for 'drawing us away from the world of sense to which we cling, and turning us toward the intelligible and eternal level of existence'.[67] Moreover, when the sensory system is deprived of information from the real world, anticipation and inner imagery will activate it instead, resulting in hallucinations and delusion.[68] These hallucinations, when experienced in the religious context, could be interpreted as spiritual or mystical revelation.

Alternation between darkness and light seems to be especially significant in the initiatory experience, as suggested by Dio Chrysosotm in the passage cited above, which describes the strong effect of the sudden appearance of darkness and light on the mind of the initiate.[69] Furthermore, in a fragment attributed to Plutarch, part of which I have already cited,[70] alteration of darkness and light in the context of the mysteries seems to have symbolized the transformation from a state of ritual death to rebirth.[71] In this fragment, Plutarch asserts that the initiatory experience is very similar to that of death. He continues by describing the long terrifying journey through darkness, and then writes:

> 'But after this a marvelous light (φῶς) meets the wanderer, and open country and meadow lands welcome him; and in that place there are voices and dancing and the solemn majesty of sacred music and holy visions.'[72]

The experience depicted by Plutarch, of entering into a dark tunnel with a sudden emergence of a powerful light,[73] is characteristic of different ASCs.[74]

Sound and movement

Music[75] and dances had a vital part in the mysteries, as Lucian asserts in his dissertation *On dance*:

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65 Classen and Howes 1991: 279.

66 Montiglio 2000: 24.

67 Plu. *Mor.* 718C.

68 Nordland 1967: 169-174; Andersen and Schjoedt 2017: 321; Andersen et al 2014 (esp. 224-225); Flynn 1962.

69 n. 23.

70 n. 58.

71 On darkness as a weaker expression of death see Létoublon 2016: 168.

72 Plu. *fr.* 178 Sandbach.

73 Cf. A. *Ra.* 154-158; Plu. *Mor.* 81D-E.

74 This experience is also very common in near-death experience (NDE), as was demonstrated by Ustinova 2009: 226-255, 2013, 2018: 113-144 and Seaford 2005, 2010, 2018. The possible association of mystic initiation with the phenomena of NDE, may explain some of the positive aftereffects attributed to the mysteries (e.g. serenity, reduced fear of death etc.).

75 Instrumental music, singing, chanting, dancing and coordinated movement were inseparably linked in ancient Greek culture and language (Murray and Wilson 2004: 1-8). The ancient sources often do not allow us to determine which of these activities is mentioned in the context of the mysteries. There is a large body of evidence for the presence of various types of musical instruments in ancient Greek mystery cults and some evidence for hymn singing; for instance, the corpus of the *Orphic hymns*. For a comprehensive discussion on the function and impact of music in the mysteries see Hardie 2004.

> 'I forbear to say that not a single ancient mystery-cult can be found that is without dancing, since they were established, of course, by Orpheus and Musaeus, the best dancers of that time, who included it in their prescriptions as something exceptionally beautiful to be initiated with rhythm and dancing (σὺν ῥυθμῷ καὶ ὀρχήσει μυεῖσθαι). To prove that this is so, although it behooves me to observe silence about the rites on account of the uninitiate, nevertheless there is one thing that everybody has heard; namely, that those who let out the mysteries in conversation are commonly said to 'dance them out'(τὰ μυστήρια ἐξορχεῖσθαι)'. [76]

In some mystery rites, such as the Bacchic and Corybantic rites, the role of music and dancing seems to have been especially prominent. Strabo emphasizes the divine and delightful nature of music and dancing in asserting that 'music, which includes dancing as well as rhythm and melody, at the same time, by the delight it affords and by its artistic beauty, brings us in touch with the divine';[77] the musicologist Aristides Quintilian marks the use of music and dancing in the Bacchic mysteries to reduce mental disturbance and writes that 'this is the purpose of Bacchic initiation, that the depressive anxiety of less educated people, produced by their state of life, or some misfortune, be cleared away through the melodies and dances of the ritual in a joyful and playful way';[78] Plato similarly notes that those who practice Corybantic and Bacchic rites use 'the combined movements of dance and song (χορείᾳ καὶ μούσῃ) as a remedy'.[79]

Modern research on the effect of music and dance on the body and mind supports the ancient evidence and shows that the influence of their practice in the religious context cannot be overestimated. Music and dance affect the neurochemical function of the brain and trigger the release of hormones associated with pleasure and happiness including dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphin.[80] Therefore, we can assume that music and dancing in the mysteries probably induced strong positive emotions. In addition, music and dance have also proven effective in reducing stress and mental disturbance, as well as in treating various physical and psychological disorders, including those mentioned by the ancient sources in relation to the mysteries, such as depression, anxiety etc.[81]

Furthermore, ecstatic music and dancing can cause sensory overstimulation, which nowadays is associated with different ASC's and dissociative states, such as possession and trance.[82] In fact, the ancient sources themselves seem to associate the mystic experience with a form of dissociation. Pliny notes that 'hares sleep with the eyes wide open, and so do many human beings while in the condition which the Greeks term 'Corybantic".[83] Socrates, in a passage from Plato's *Ion*, associates the experience of the initiates in the Bacchic and Corybantic rites with a state of possession and argues that 'the Corybantian worshippers do not dance when in their senses (ἔμφρονες) [...], but when they have started on the melody and rhythm they begin to be frantic, and it is under possession ((κατεχόμενοι) – as the bacchants are possessed, and not in their senses, when they draw honey and milk from the rivers'.[84]

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76 Luc. *Salt.* 15 (translated by A. M. Harmon).
77 Str. 10.3.9 (translated by L. Jones).
78 Aristid. Quint. *De mus.* 3.25 (translated by W. Burkert 1987: 113).
79 Pl. *Lg.* 790D-E. See also Str.10.3.7. On music as therapy in ancient Greek culture see Provenza 2020.
80 Heggli et al 2018; Chanda and Levitin 2013; Miller and Strongman 2002.
81 Murcia et al 2010; MacDonald 2013; Hanna 2006; Chanda and Levitin 2013.
82 Rouget 1985: 9-10; Bourguignon 2013. For a collection of works on the cognitive effects of music see Aldridge and Fachner 2006.
83 Plin. *Nat.* 11. 147 (translated by H. Rackham).
84 Pl. *Ion* 534A (translated by H. N. Fowler).

Likewise, the sense of depersonalization seems to be expressed by the fourth-century AD rhetorician Sopater, who writes on his initiatory experience in the mystery cult of Eleusis as follows: 'I came out of the mystery hall feeling like a stranger to myself'.[85] In the religious context, the cognitive effects of music and dancing could be explained as a union with or possession by a god. Aristotle seems to suggest this in his reference to the ecstatic and arousing reaction of the worshipers to the music and dances of the ritual as a state of *enthousiasomos* ('engoddedness', a state of being filled with a god).[86] Here Aristotle asserts that 'under the influence of sacred music we see these people, when they use tunes that violently arouse the soul, being thrown into a state as if they had received medicinal treatment and taken a purge'.[87] Therefore, music and dances might have been used in the mysteries to enable the initiate to enter a state of ecstasy and trance in which the experience of *enthousiasomos* could take place.[88]

Smell

Another important sensory element that is often overlooked in relation to religious experiences is olfaction. Various ancient sources point to the significance of olfactory experience in the context of the mysteries. We know, for example, that in certain mysteries, a perfume or incense bearer participated in the rites;[89] Strabo mentions worshipers of Bacchus who wear robes and turbans, and use perfumes;[90] and the incense that perfumes the air of Eleusis is described in the *Homeric hymn to Demeter*.[91] Perhaps the most notable evidence for the significance of odors in ancient Greek mysteries is provided by the corpus of the *Orphic Hymns* associated with the Bacchic-Orphic cult, which contains eighty-seven poems composed sometime in the late Hellenistic period, and presumably used in religious practice. Nearly all these poems begin with an instruction to burn a specific type of incense, such as frankincense, styrax, manna, myrrh, saffron, firebrands, aromatic herbs, etc.[92] Although some scholars pointed out in the past on the psychoactive effect of some of the substances listed in the *Hymns,*[93] as we shall soon see, the impact of strong fragrances may be significant enough in itself.

Olfactory experiences are associated with strong emotional and physical reactions; aromatherapy is used worldwide and proven to be effective in treating various mental and physical problems,[94] some of which are referred to by ancient sources in relation to the mysteries.[95] In addition, it is important to consider the connotations of odors in ancient Greek culture and religion. Perfumery and medicine were

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85 *Rhet.Gr.* 8.114 (Walz). For a comprehensive analysis of the associations in the Greek language between altered states in the religious context on the one hand, and music, dance, and wilderness on the other, see Marko and Seebauer 2013.

86 On the meaning of the term see Hoffmann 1997: 11, n. 61.

87 Arist. *Pol*. 8.1342A (translated by H. Rackham).

88 On the use of music in ancient Greek cults to achieve enthusiasm and epiphany see Kubatzki 2016 (esp. 12).

89 Graf 2003: 248.

90 Str. 15.1.58.

91 *h.Cer.* 490-491.

92 The massive use of incense could reflect theological beliefs similar to those we find among the Pythagoreans, who like the Orphics were vegetarians, and believed that incense was a more appealing offering to the gods than meat (Classen et al 1994: 46; Detienne 1994: 49).

93 Dannaway 2010: 487.

94 Haviland-Jones and Wilson 2008; Sowndhararajan and Kim 2016.

95 Arist. *Pol*. 8.1342A ('medicinal treatment'); Aristid.Quint. *De mus.* 3.25 (release from depression and anxiety); Graf 2003: 255; Burkert 1987: 18.

closely connected in antiquity;[96] sweet smells were thought to be indicative of divine presence;[97] odors played an important role in magic and divination;[98] perfumes, aromatic oils and incense were offered to the gods in almost every religious celebration;[99] and fragrant oils and perfumes were used to anoint cult statues.[100] Several sources even associate the place of the good and the blessed in the afterlife with pleasant and seductive scents.[101] In fact, the sense of smell seems to be so vital in the religious experiences of the ancient Greeks, that Walter Burkert asserts that the divine was experienced 'as an atmosphere of divine fragrance'.[102]

Certain smells seem to have been associated specifically with the mysteries, such as the smell of torches. For instance, in the *Bacchae*, the smoke of the flaming torches is compared to a Syrian exotic incense.[103] Similarly, in one of the *Orphic hymns* we find the unusual prescription to use the smoke of the torches for fumigation;[104] and in the *Frogs* 'the most mystic whiff of torches' is mentioned as an indication that the mysteries were going on.[105] A few lines later, Xanthias smells the 'ineffable aroma of sacrificed pigs' and immediately associates the familiar smell with Persephone, to whom the initiates sacrificed pigs at a certain stage of the Eleusinian mysteries.[106] These examples emphasize the powerful influence of the cultural and ritual connotations on the ways in which sensory experience are lived and explained; a simple odor, such as the smell of a roasted pig or the scent of the of burning torches, might have had a strong impact when experienced within the ritual contexts and conveyed certain religious symbolism and meanings, especially if they took place after an extended fast.

At the same time, these examples also seem to reflect the unique nature of memories related to the sense of smell. Olfactory experiences are stored in the limbic system of the brain, where emotions and many of our deepest memories are also stored; for this reason, smell is associated in modern research with long-term memory and with the ability to evoke deep and emotional recollections.[107] The influence of smells on human memory seems to be reflected in a passage from Lucian's account of the cult of the Great Mother in Syria. There he notes that the pleasant fragrance that comes from the temple of the goddess can be smelled from a distance, and 'even when you have departed from the temple, this fragrance clings to you; and, your very raiment retains long that sweet odor, and it will ever remain in your memory'.[108] The link between smell and memory is particularly interesting in the case of the mysteries since memory, as well as *Mnemosyne* – the goddess of memory – had a central place in them. After all, the blessedness of initiation wasn't worth anything if the initiate didn't remember what he experienced forever.[109]

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96 Totelin 2014.

97 *h.Cer.* 276; E. *Hipp.* 1391-1394. See further: Clement 2015; Classen et al 1994: 45-48; Burkert 1985: 62.

98 Magic: Luck 2006: 455-456, 479ff. Divination: Ustinova 2009: 128-129.

99 See for instance: Hom. *Il.*1.317; Hes.*Th*. 556–557; Sapph. 2; Aesch. *Ag*. 595.

100 Petrovic and Petrovic 2003: 182-184.

101 Pi. *fr*. 114 Bowra; *h.Cer.* 401; Ver. *A*. 6. 658-659.

102 Burkert 1985: 62.

103 E. *Ba.* 144-145.

104 *Orph. H.* 2.

105 A. *Ra.* 313-314.

106 A. *Ra*. 337-338.

107 Engen 1991: 54-58; Engen and Ross 1973; Green 2010: 6-7; Hughes and Mckenna 2014: 38-44.

108 Luc. *Syr.* 30 (translated by H. A. Strong and J. Garstang).

109 Mnemosyne and the lake of memory in the underworld are mentioned in several 'Bacchic-Orphic' gold tablets (Graf and Johnston 2013: no. 1, 2, 8, 9, 25).

Memory of a multi-sensorial experience

The climax of the rite was a multi-sensorial experience. The sacred narrative of the cult was dramatized,[110] and the sacred objects were removed from the *cista mystica* and revealed to the initiate.[111] The consumption of certain foods or drinks was prominent in some cults, for instance the *kykeon*, a kind of barley meal signified the end of the fast in the Eleusinian mysteries.[112]

In many cults, verbal signs and passwords were transmitted by the priest,[113] and in some mysteries the initiate received certain material tokens. For instance, several sources relate that the initiates in the Samothracian mysteries received iron rings that signified their new status;[114] others attribute certain protective functions to the purple fillets, which the initiates of the Samothracitan mysteries received and tied under their abdomen;[115] Plutarch mentions certain objects that the initiate in the cult of Dionysus kept at home in remembrance of the knowledge shared with the other initiates;[116] and Apuleius was charged for keeping certain objects in his possession that were suspected to be magical devices. In his *Apology*, he claims in his defense:

> 'I have been initiated into many mysteries in Greece, and the priests entrusted me with certain symbols and tokens (*signa et monumenta*) of them, which I store carefully. What I say is nothing strange or secret [...] Moreover, can it seem surprising to someone who has any notion of religion that a man privy to so many mysteries of the gods keeps certain ritual emblems (*sacrorum crepundia*) at home and wraps them in a cloth of linen, the purest material for veiling sacred objects? For wool, produced from the most slothful of creatures, shorn from a dumb animal, was already the dress of the profane by the laws of Orpheus and Pythagoras: while linen, that purest of plants, one of the finest crops to spring from the earth, serves not only to dress and clothe the most holy priests of Egypt, but also to cover sacred objects'.[117]

These types of artefacts seem to have various functions. They signified the new status of the initiate and were used as an identification mark for the cult member; they functioned as a kind of talisman and as a material reminder that embodied, and in a sense manifested, the essence of what was learned and experienced in the initiation rites.

Conclusions

Sensory experience had a vital part in different aspects of the initiatory process. The sensory elements introduced during the initiation rites formed the identification marks of the cult, and the

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110 Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.12; Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 29; Seaford 1981; Clinton 2003: 66-70; Bremmer 2014: 10-11, 115.

111 Eleusis (ears of grain): Hipp. *Haer.* 5.8.39. The cult of Dionysus (phallus): Burkert 1987: 105-106. Bacchic-Orphic rites (a cone, spinning top, knucklebones, ball, apple and a mirror): Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.17.2; Arn. *Adv. Nat*. 5.19; Firm. D*e err. prof. rel*.6; Gurob papyrus. 27-28 (in: Graf and Johnston 2013: 217-218).

112 Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.21.

113 Luc. *Syr.* 15; Hipp. *Haer.* 5.8.40; Dem. 18. 259; Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.21; Firm. D*e err. prof. rel*.6.12; Graf and Johnston 2013, no. 27:1.

114 Lucr. 6.1044; Cole 1984: 30.

115 *Schol. Ap. Rhod*. 1.917–918; Bremmer 2014: 28-29.

116 Plu. *Mor.* 611D.

117 Apul. *Apol.* 55-56 (Translated by C. P. Jones).

means by which the initiate experienced the divine. They were prominent in images of the blest afterlife and in the memory of the initiatory experience. These elements convey various cultural connotations and religious meanings which we may never be able to fully understand.

At the same time, studies in neuroscience and cognition suggest that the sensory and physiological experiences of the initiates could have a powerful influence on their mental and emotional state. The preparation for the mysteries involved a series of practices that have strong effects on the human physiological and cognitive functions. Prolonged fasts and sleep deprivation probably manipulated the initiates' mental and emotional response to the initiatory experience; sensory deprivation by means of darkness, silence and stillness led to increased awareness of unconscious processes and to different kinds of hallucinations; the response of the initiate to alternations between darkness and light could be associated with various ASCs; sensory overstimulation by means of ecstatic music and dances led to emotional arousal, a decrease in mental disturbances, and different altered and dissociative states; and the experience of strong fragrances could have left a deep impression on the initiate on the emotional and cognitive levels.

This observation points to the centrality of the senses in the experience underwent by the initiate. It also shows the potential of using methods and results from other disciplines to the study of ancient mysteries, and demonstrates the influence of sensory experience on the initiate's perception, memory and beliefs, which may explain to some extent the life-changing effect ascribed to the mysteries.

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The Impact of the Laurel on Apolline Divination: Affecting the Mind Without the Use of Drugs

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1. Introduction

The focus of this article is the analysis of the laurel's cognitive impact on Apolline divinatory practices, considering its usage in a specific time and space. The priestesses reportedly chewed laurel leaves before uttering prophecies[118], and they even occasionally burned the leaves for fumigation.[119] Scholars have previously suggested that the use of the laurel caused a state of frenzy in the prophetess that inspired her divinations.[120] However, no proof of the laurel containing hallucinogenic substances has been found from the chemical analyses of the plant.[121] My argument is that the engagement with the laurel was affecting the mind of the seer. Nevertheless, it was not because of the chemical substances contained in its leaves but because of its cognitive agency and evocative properties. By wearing laurel on her body, the Pythia personified Daphne and assumed her virginal qualities. Through the act of chewing the laurel, the Pythia's brain prepared her body to welcoming Apollo, following the guidelines of ancient medicine. The case study considered is the Sanctuary of Delphi, which flourished for centuries in the Archaic and Classical periods in mainland Greece. The analysis of the use of the laurel during this ritual will give us a well-rounded presentation of the ways the laurel was affecting the mind of the prophet and the consultants without the intervention of chemical substances, also explaining the reason why this plant was often used in divinatory practices in other sanctuaries.

2. Methodology

If we consider the popular Disney movie 'The Little Mermaid' there is a scene of the mermaid combing her hair with the help of a fork. This is a clear example of how an object and its usage can be misinterpreted when the interpreter comes from a different cultural, geographic, and temporal background. It also shows how an object, its design and physical features interact with the brain of the user to figure out the way of handling and exploiting it. This is also the case for archaeological interpretations and historiographical reconstructions. Therefore, in the process, we need to take into consideration three major factors: first of all, the properties and function of the archaeological object taken into analysis; secondly, the human neural response to these stimuli, and finally, the cultural and ontological background of the case study. In this paper, I will address the laurel plant considering its agency and the neural response to its stimuli. This analysis is going to be set in the appropriate temporal and spatial background with the help of archaeological evidence and primary sources.

[118]Parke, 1967.
[119]Ibidem.
[120]Holmberg, 1979; Broad, 2006; Graf, 2009.
[121]Harissis, 2014, 355.

In line with Malafouris'[122] claim that objects have an agency, this paper refutes Gell's[123] definition of agency, according to which intentionality is a criterion for agency, resulting in the restriction of it to a human property only. As a matter of fact, the latest anthropological studies proved that objects are not passive reflections of the society, but active participants that shape social practices.[124] Following these new theories, this paper rejects the Cartesian perspective, claiming that agency also pertains to objects and is expressed in many different affordances,[125] which literally means what the object can offer to the individual. Those properties can be of various types. For instance, they can be spatial assets, which are the physical features of an object, easily noticeable through sight and touch. They can be often used to facilitate perception; the spatial arrangement of the material is intended to amplify the problem-solving process by reducing the complexity of the cognitive task directing the attention to reduce the cost of visual search.[126] Furthermore, spatial properties can also be used as attention-seeking features. Characteristics like size and colour can make an object easier to notice, identify, and remember.

Material culture may also have symbolical features. It can help with concretising the abstract; allowing the human mind to come to believe things that it would never otherwise conceive. This is also the case with epistemic artefacts, for example the Sumerian clay tokens. As a matter of fact, these objects were able to transform, ground and simplify the problem of numbers and to make the parietal system able to support the representation of exact numbers.[127] The agency of the object can also be conjugated in evocative properties, which means that they can raise emotions or remind the user of a concept or experience. In this paper, the laurel plant is going to be analysed considering all the affordances it could offer to the prophet and the consultants during the ritual of divination in Classical and Hellenistic Greece at Delphi.

Subsequently, the human brain and body response to the object agency will be analysed, by applying some basic concepts of modern neuroscience that explain the human brain's reaction to the material world.[128] Specifically, the theories proposed by Malafouris and Vaesen will be the starting point for the reading of the use of the laurel proposed. Having considered the agency of material culture and neuroscience, the third factor to take into consideration is that the brain is culturally constructed. In this regard, the concept of *habitus* as defined by Bourdieu is fundamental for understanding my interpretation of the laurel plant's impact on divination. Bourdieu describes this concept as 'structured and structuring structure'.[129] The *habitus* is structured by an individual's past circumstances, such as family background and education. It is also structuring in that it shapes one's present and future actions

[122]Malafouris, 2013, 136.
[123]Gell, 1998.
[124]Preucel, 2009.
[125]Johannsen et Al., 2012; Knappett, 2005.
[126]Renfrew, Malafouris, 2013.
[127]Malafouris, 2010, 41.
[128]Applying modern neuroscience to the ancient brain is possible because from the historical period considered to nowadays the human brain has not been subject to relevant changes. Studies proved that the major modifications to the human brain happened during the development from *homo habilis* to *homo erectus* and finally to *homo sapiens*, whose brain is almost the same as people nowadays (Schachner, 2013); 'Anatomically at least, our brains differ little from those of the people who painted the walls of the Chauvet cave all those years ago' (Robson, 2011); "humans in ancient times were much like humans today, at least in terms of basic biological and psychological mechanisms" (Geertz, 2016).
[129]1994d: 170.

and, finally, it is a structure in that it is systematically ordered rather than random, a feature which makes it easier for us to analyse it. This system generates perceptions, appreciations, and practices,[130] directing human actions and cognition.

Moving back to our Little Mermaid combing her hair with a fork, it becomes a clear example of how important it is to consider someone's *habitus* in an archaeological interpretation. The princess is interpreting the object agency handling the fork in accordance with its shape and exploiting the affordances given by the shape of the object. However, the different *habitus* to the designer and common user of the object is evident: she is using the fork as a comb, which is not the function the object was meant to be used for. To combat the risk of differing *habitus* when dealing with archaeological interpretations, this paper looks at the laurel plant through the filter of the primary sources dealing with it. The attempt is to use ancient texts as close as possible to the Classical period. In the cases where this is not possible, later authors are considered if enough elements exist to hypothesise that they are putting into words uses and costumes that were proved by archaeology to exist in the previous centuries too.

3. Discussion

Among its numerous uses, it is common knowledge that, in Ancient Greece, the laurel was sacred to Apollo. In the primary sources, the description of Apollo often includes the laurel.[131] According to Diodorus Siculus, it was Apollo himself who discovered the laurel[132], whilst it is Pausanias who narrates that the most ancient temple dedicated to Apollo in Delphi was first made of laurel.[133] However, my analysis of this sacred plant aims to further develop the investigation of its role in the process of divination.

A first strong evocative affordance of the laurel plant must be ascribed to its mythological background. The myth of Apollo and Daphne gives an aetiological account for the association of laurel with Apollo.[134] Hit by one of Eros' golden arrows, Apollo was bursting with love for Daphne, who had been hit by the lead arrow instead. Wanting to remain unmarried and pure for the rest of her life, the nymph was running away from Apollo who chased after her and desired her body. At this point, the most popular version of the myth narrates that Daphne's father, the river god Peneus, turned her into a laurel tree to save her virginity. From this moment on, Apollo made the plant sacred to him and vowed to wear it as clothing.

In another version of the myth[135], Daphne is the name of Teiresias' daughter who was offered to Apollo at Delphi when the Epigoni destroyed Thebes.[136] According to the tale, she had more mantic skills than the father himself and as an inspired speaker of oracles, she was called the Delphic Sibyl,

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[130]1990c: 53.
[131] Gow-Page, GP II, IX.525; Eur., *Ion,* 422-424; Callim., *Ia.,* 69
[132]And it was Apollo, they say, who discovered the laurel, a garland of which all men place about the head of this god above all others. Diod. Sic. 1-2.34 (Trans. Oldfather, 1933).
[133] They say that the most ancient temple of Apollo was made of laurel. Pausanias. 5.9 (Trans. Jones, 1935).
[134] Paus. 8.20.1; Ov., Met. 1
[135] Diod. Sic., 4.66.5-6
[136]Paus. 8.20.1; Ov., Met. 1

also known as Herophile. Additionally, according to Eustathios[137], Daphnis was the daughter of Ladon and Ge; being the first woman on earth, she also became her mother's *promantis* at Delphi before the advent of Apollo. This figure as well has probably the same origins as Daphne – Herofile – Artemis.[138] It is yet to be noticed that these versions of the myth are quite late. They are indeed the final description of a mythological character whose origins are more complex and part of a wider picture, well analysed by Fontenrose in his book 'Orion: the myth of the hunter and the huntress'.[139] Reassuming his analysis, the origins of Daphne can be traced back to the figure of Artemis Daphnaia, who then became known in the tale as Daphne and was considered a distinct person. Just as Artemis, she is, in fact, leader of a band of maiden huntresses.[140] In a hymn attributed to her, the Delphic prophetess calls herself Artemis and claims to be Apollo's wedded wife, his sister, and his daughter.[141]

The many mythical backgrounds of the laurel plant are fundamental to understand its agency, as during divination the Pythia was not only carrying laurel branches in her hands but also wearing a laurel wreath.[142] Therefore, laurel branches led the Pythia to identify herself as Daphne. Firstly, the Pythia's need to be chaste and pure corresponds with the virginal status of the nymph. Furthermore, there are multiple myths in the cultural background of ancient Greek people where a god has sexual intercourse with a human being in the shape of an animal or a natural element. In addition, the prophetess was wearing the dress of a maiden, an aspect which matches the nymph's young age. As a result, the perspective of the chaste Pythia personifying Daphne, who was finally reached and owned by Apollo entering her body in the shape of vapour was probably appealing to the eyes of the worshippers of that time. In the moment of their physical encounter, the priestess, united to Apollo, was inspired by the god and spoke for his desire.

The Pythia's personification as Daphne is possible if we consider that the brain always keeps track of any changes in body shape and postures to guide actions in space, and in normal conditions we are always fully aware of the position of our body in the surrounding environment. In order to do so, the brain updates its representation of the body, the so-called body schema. It has been suggested that the body schema is plastic, which means that it can incorporate external objects.[143] Inside the *adyton*, this can easily relate to the laurel branches. As previously described, the Pythia was wearing a laurel wreath whilst holding a laurel branch.[144] We have already mentioned the mnemonic power of this specific kind of tree, which is reminiscent of the myth of the nymph loved and chased by Apollo.[145] The leaves on the body of the Pythia and the branch in her hands have the capacity to break the temporal simultaneity and spatial coincidence of her body which is now entwined with the essence of the laurel. Similarly, as the act of a man grasping the sword is more than a mechanical one, but also an act of incorporation

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[137] on Dionysios Per. 416
[138] Paus. 8.20.1; Ov., Met. 1
[139] 1903.
[140] Fontenrose, 1903, 50.
[141] Paus., 10.12.2
[142] Haughton, 2008; Howatson, 2013, 192; The same thing is proved to be true for the prophets of Apollo Koropaio (Dillon, 2017, 351).
[143] Vaesen, 2012.
[144] Haughton, 2008; Howatson, 2013, 192.
[145] Cf. p.3-4

'which provides a new basis for self-recognition and self-awareness'[146], the Pythia is subject to the same process of recognition through objectification. As the man grasping the sword is not a simple man anymore but becomes a knight, in the same way, the Pythia holding laurel branches recognises herself in the figure of Daphne.

This cognitive process surely applies to the Pythia in first person. The same cultural background also pertained to the spectators. However, it is worth mentioning that scholars disagree whether or not the Pythia was visible to the consultants during the process of uttering. The majority of scholars claim that despite the *adyton* only being a couple of stairs lower than the room where the spectators were waiting for the prophecy, the Pythia was performing behind curtains and therefore, she would not have been visible to the worshippers.[147] However, other scholars argue that people were directly seeing her during the process of divination. Evidence for directly seeing the Pythia is a vase painting which portrays Aegeus consulting Themis (in the figure of the Pythia).[148] In this image, the consultant is standing directly in front of the prophetess and can clearly see her during the consultation.

The idea of the Pythia not being seen by the spectators aligns with the figures of the priests reporting the words of the prophetess and with the idea of the uniqueness of the union between the god and the woman. Yet, none of the arguments can be claimed to be right or wrong with certainty. In the case of the Pythia not being seen by the consultants, the cognitive processes induced by the laurel branches in the mind of the spectators would be less effective than in the latter option. However, it is also true that people roughly knew what was going on behind the curtains. They had been told stories about the Pythia and the literary sources demonstrates that they were aware of the involvement of the laurel in the process of divination. Laurel wood was also used as fuel of the sacred heath[149], which means that the pleasant smell of the burning plant was surrounding the consultants as a constant reminder of its presence. Furthermore, although they did not enter the *adyton* with the prophetess, the consultants participated in the ritual procession from the sacrifice on the altar outside the temple to the cellar of the temple[150], where they saw her entering the room. The fact that the worshippers did not see the priestess during the process of divination itself does not mean they did not see her before or after the contact with Apollo.

Furthermore, a passage of the ritual that prepared the Pythia to the act of divination probably involved the chewing of the laurel[151]. In earlier centuries, it was believed that chemical substances that could have altered the state of mind of the Pythia could have been contained in the laurel leaves. This hypothesis has been disproved in recent times; the laurel does not have hallucinogenic effects.[152] However, the laurel was often associated with the idea of poetical inspiration. Notably, a late authority even claims that the laurel itself when burnt served to induce prophecy.[153] From the fifth century BC onwards, there is evidence that chewing the laurel leaves was supposed to bring a person into touch

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[146]Malafouris, 2009,100.
[147]Parke, 1967; Broad, 2006; Graf, 2009.
[148]Bowden, 2005.
[149] Parke and Wormell, 1956, 26.
[150] Parke, 1967, 82.
[151] Ibidem, 83
[152] Harissis, 2014, 355
[153] GP, 11.2; Parke and Wormell, 1956.

with the gods, as such, it was frequently used by prophets and poets to invoke inspiration.[154] Despite the fact that chemical analysis proved the laurel not to contain hallucinogenic substances in a quantity that is high enough to alter one person's consciousness, I argue that this idea of an inspiring plant could have influenced the process of divination to a certain extent. 'A word more clear should be spoken from the laurel branch',[155] says Callimachus[156], stating the belief in this property specific of the laurel. Therefore, the chewing of the laurel could have had a placebo effect on the Pythia, causing her to believe that the plant was helping her to be infused with inspiration from the god.

Another interesting feature of the laurel is highlighted in the medical literature of the Classical period. As a matter of fact, holy trees in general represented fecundity and fertility.[157] For instance, the fig tree at Mochlos was carrier of these ideas, and the priestess gazing at it was an indicator of oracular invocation.[158] In the same way, other oracular shrines shared the common element of the holy tree, e.g. Phaistos, Gournia and Dodona. In the specific case of the laurel, the plant is mentioned more than once in the Hippocratic corpus (end of the 5th century – beginning of the 4th century BC) with the following uses: to help expelling a foetus after an abortion[159]; to help in case a woman failed to become pregnant[160]; as a medication in case a woman's uterus twisted upon itself[161]; and to broaden the mouth of the uterus[162]. Therefore, at that time, the laurel was believed to have properties that helped women with gynaecological disorders, specifically, disorders that concerned the obstruction of the vagina. In this regard, it is also noteworthy that Ancient Egyptian medicine believed that all the orifices of a woman's body were connected and communicated through an open channel. The Egyptian medical papyri[163] claim that the channel between the vagina and the mouth had to be free from obstructions, otherwise the woman could not conceive. They also report that the bodily channel of a woman was free if it was possible to smell from her mouth the garlic put in her vagina the day before.[164] This belief is also found in the Hippocratic tradition and in Soranus' *Gynecology*[165], in a period following the Archaic and Classical. However, as this information was already known in Egypt since at least the late Dynastic period (7th-4th century BC) it suggests that it might similarly have equally been known in Archaic Greece too.

This aspect brings our attention not only to the centrality of the female anatomy in the Delphic process of divination, but also to the modality of the encounter between the god and the prophetess. In fact, the tripod the Pythia sat on was positioned right above the opening in the earth where the sacred smoke representing Apollo was coming from.[166] If the laurel opens the main channel in a woman's body

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[154] Parke and Wormell, 1956.
[155]Trans. W. Mair, G. R. Mair, 1921.
[156] *Hymn* 4, 94.
[157] Dedes, 2015, 124
[158] Ibidem, 132
[159] Virg. 29
[160] *Nat. Mul.* 7
[161] *Mul. 2*. 280
[162] *Mul.* 32
[163]P. Carlsber VIII verso, col. 1 xx + 4-x + 6. Iversen 1939: 1-31. See also the similar P. Kahun 3, 17.19, case 28 in Westendorff 1999: 434, n. 768.
[164]Nifosi, 2019.
[165] I.IX.35
[166] Parke, Wormell, 1956, 19.

and in a healthy body the genitals were believed to be directly connected to the mouth, we could argue that whatever entered the genitals would come out from the mouth. In medical literature, the smoke from fumigations[167], while in this case it is Apollo himself as smoke, coming out from the mouth of the Pythia. Therefore, the presence of the laurel might also have been seen as an ulterior aid for the Pythia to welcome Apollo inside her body. In fact, not all the laurel's associations presented in this section would have been present to the mind of each worshipper as it would have depended on their age, gender, and culture. However, each aspect makes the plant fundamental for a successful rite of divination. As a matter of fact, independent magicians prophesizing in the name if Apollo reportedly held a laurel branch and wore a laurel crown too, just as the Pythia did.[168]

It is also interesting to note that the laurel was used in the process of divination at other sanctuaries dedicated to Apollo, such as the sanctuary of Didyma. However, with Didyma, we are dealing with a different time and space: Asia Minor in the Hellenistic period. The properties of the laurel were not as strong as they were at Delphi because a single branch in the hand of the prophet was no longer sufficient, a thick bay grove had to be recreated inside the *adyton* to grasp the oracle's attention. The aspects of the process of divination at Didyma based upon the Delphic ones helped the minds of the prophet and of the worshippers to feel comfortable inside the defined area of the established tradition. Specifically, the material culture at the sanctuary of Didyma had a strong impact on the consultants' cognition due to the power of imitation of an official model. The process of divination at the oracle of Delphi was well known and trusted and had become a paradigm fixed in the minds of Greek people. After the renovation of the sanctuary that started around 334 BC, Delphic material culture was brought to Didyma's *adyton* along with a few of its associated meanings, including the most symbolical ones. The process of divination at Didyma was accepted and justified by centuries of mundane knowledge[169] and cultural background that was pertaining to their brains. Therefore, we can claim that the presence of the laurel at Didyma had a symbolical importance more than evocative, as it was at Delphi. However, the laurel still had a cognitive impact on the minds of the prophetess and the consultants.

4. Conclusion

Whilst it is true that consciousness differentiates between the human sense of agency and agency proper, it is not necessarily the human that is the cause of something happening.[170] As stated, objects can activate areas of our brain by causing some sort of uncontrolled response. We do not have direct command over the ideas and emotions that objects generate in our mind at first sight. The totality of the properties of material culture described proves that each object has affordances in itself.[171] Inside

[167] King, 1993.
[168] Johnston, 2008, 153.
[169] Catechetical instruction and repetitive reinforcement of belief, typical features of religious transmission, become encoded in our explicit memory system, generating precise schema of knowledge and a coherent system of beliefs. This system can be organised into different categories and once an object has been put in one of them, categorical knowledge provides rich inductive inferences that guide the interactions with it. This phenomenon has been defined as mundane knowledge (Barsalou et Al., 2005) as it helps our orientation in the social system and in the world in general.
[170] Renfrew, Malafouris, 2013, 215.
[171] Johannsen et Al., 2012; Knappett, 2005.

the *adyton* at the Sanctuary of Delphi, each one of the objects involved in divination embodies strong mnemonic potential. The material culture is not simply decorating the room but has a consistent cognitive biography. The analysis of the laurel carried on in this paper highlights the fact that symbolical and evocative properties of this plant affected the mind of the Pythia assisting her in feeling a real contact with the god. The laurel branches helped the Pythia to identify with the very character of Daphne. Additionally, they suggested the idea of divine inspiration and they physically opened the channels of the female body to make it ready to welcome Apollo. Concluding, I argued that the laurel plant was affecting the mind of the oracles not only at Delphi but in many rituals dedicated to Apolline divination.

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How do the *Galli* of the *Magna Mater* cult occupy gendered space in Latin Literature?

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The *galli* were the self-castrated devotees of *Magna Mater,* a Phrygian goddess introduced to Rome in 204BCE during Hannibal's invasion of Italy (Roller, 1999, p.263),[172] ostensibly due to a prophecy claiming that her arrival in Rome would expel the invaders.[173] *Magna Mater's* arrival in Rome was consequently not the result of a long-term development, but a direct response to political crisis, leading Roller (1999, p.263) to assert that her impact was "real, vivid and public from the very beginning." As her devotees, the *galli* were subsequently introduced to Roman life in a similarly vivid way, perhaps becoming the most recognisable symbol of the cult (Beard, 2012, p.341). Their status as eunuchs and publicly active religious figures often put them in conflict with traditionally gendered norms and spaces of Rome.

This article argues that the interaction between the *galli* and the gendered spaces they occupied in literature is central to the *galli* and their representation. Their presence in these spaces is not simply a conflict of cultural values, but an interaction constructed to enforce these values by using the *galli* as a negative paradigm. By investigating this we can interpret how gendered space and the *galli* were constructed and understood by contemporary writers and audiences. As Fitzgerald and Spentzou (2018, p.10) summarise, "the meaning of a space changes as people interact with and react to that space." This essay will view this concept through the spatial interaction and reaction of the *galli*.

The eunuch *galli* openly defied normative gender binaries. Valerius Maximus, in a text concerning Roman legal practices, describes a *gallus* called Genucius being denied an inheritance on the grounds that as a *gallus* he "should not be reckoned among either men or women" and that his presence in front of the tribunal would be obscene, banning him from the court.[174] This transgression, demonstrated by Genucius' exclusion from court, directly impacted the ways they were perceived in certain spaces, as their transgressive identity clashed with Roman ideals and the spaces through which they were performed. This interaction between space and *gallus* is a common feature in Latin literature, although it is not often depicted definitively. It is these interactions that will be examined. The primary focus will be on the depiction of the *galli* in the works of Lucretius and Catullus' depiction of *Attis,* a figure associated with both *Magna Mater* and the *galli,* having been chosen due to the spatial elements foregrounded in both. Whilst the *galli* are mentioned in numerous sources, Lucretius and Catullus depict a central spatial relationship with great potential for analysis within this study.

[172] Cicero, *De Haruspicum Responsis,* 13.27; Ammianus Marcelinus, 22.9.5
[173] Livy, 29.10.4-6
[174] Valerius Maximus, 7.7.6

Unfortunately, literary sources chiefly offer the perceptions of the elite male literate classes, and there are no surviving first-hand accounts of a *gallus'* understanding of their gender (Roller, 1998, p.119). Whilst monuments exist which may depict *galli,* Latham (2015, p.73) stresses that literary depictions often convey a sense of uniform *gallus* identity, contrary to the varied monumental representations. Consequently, the literary evidence may not be a totally accurate depiction of how the *galli* understood their own gender identity. Latham (2015, p.54) therefore posits that literary representations of the *galli* became an absurdist fantasy through which the Roman elite could project its own self-image of virtuous and traditional masculinity. This material still has utility for furthering our understanding of how gendered space was conceived in Latin literature; their function as "an evolving foil with which elite Roman men renegotiated Roman masculinity" (Latham, 2015, p.51) provides a literary tool through which we can ascertain how space and its use could be gendered via reference to "negative" paradigms such as the *galli.*

This study requires the definition of some key concepts. Gender, as has been definitively outlined by Parker (2001, p.327-328), is related to, yet separate from biological sex. Instead, gender is the result of culture and socialisation, a performance of the norms, customs and roles of a given society, a definition echoed by Foxhall (2013, p.2). Holmes (2012, p.79) describes ancient gender practices as "the different ways that individuals upheld or violated gender norms," particularly regarding idealised masculinity, a trait so obviously rejected by the *galli*. Sissa (2009, p.139) expands upon this, describing gender as "the construction of a certain use of the body." Gender is a performative reflection of certain behaviours, norms and customs derived from the culture and society of an individual, socially constructed rather than biologically defined.

"Space" must be differentiated from "place." Place is the physical environment within which activity takes place, whilst spaces are not strictly geographical, but are what Klooster and Heirman (2013, p.5) describe as "lived" space, "experienced and valued by the narrator or (one of the) characters in an ideological, emotional, experiential relation to society and power, not as a number of coordinates on a geographical map." Space is the intersection of culturally significant human social experience with places, such as a house, street or forest. It is a "cultural product," produced by "cultural interpretations, which may include historical associations, and the everyday experience of space" (Fitzgerald and Spentzou, 2018, p.2).

These experiences create "gendered spaces" as gender norms encoded within these spatial experiences become part of their spatial identity. Gendered space is not a singular division, but as Russell (2016, p.165) emphasises, can refer to spaces restricted to a certain gender or associated to a particular gender identity or gendered activities. Russell (2016, p.166) indicates that whilst it was a gender stratified society, Rome "had a low degree of spatial segregation by gender," although spaces like the forum were more definitively gendered; Livy has Cato suggest that the presence of women in the forum for political reasons was transgressive and embarrassing (Russel, 2016, p.169).[175] Boatwright (2011,p.119) further suggests that it was "extraordinary, transgressive, and anomalous" for women to be in the forum unless for religious purposes, which both demonstrates the impact of gender identity on spatial practices, whilst hinting at the importance of context and functionality, with Trümper (2012, p.291) suggesting that multifunctional spaces may have altered the spatial dynamic by allowing access to those who would

[175] Livy, 34.2-4

have previously been excluded. Gendered space is not monolithic but is fluid depending on the function of the space at a given time.

This is seen in "ritual" or "sacred" space. As spaces are differentiated from places by socio-cultural interactions, events occurring within these places temporarily alter spatial dynamics; the spatial experience of a street is different from a typical day during a festival. Religious places can also be altered by the social conventions of their use; A church is experienced differently during a funeral than it is during a wedding, and ritual space can be gendered depending on the nature of the ritual and its associated norms and expectations. Sacred space is central to the *galli,* as the sources concerning them and their interaction with spaces depict them in their religious capacity as cult devotees.

Sacred space is central to Lucretius' description of the Megalesian Games in honour of *Magna Mater* in *The Nature of Things.*[176] This procession forms the intersection between the public streets and the social element of a religious celebration, creating a distinct spatial experience superimposed upon the place through religious practices. Specifically, this is a procession for a mother goddess, a distinctly feminine figure who is named "The Great Mother, Mother of Gods and Wild Beasts" by Lucretius.[177] The celebration of such an overtly feminine goddess would suggest the creation of a feminine spatial identity. However, the gendered aspects of this ritual space are complicated by the presence of the *galli* and other cult actors.

The *galli* lead the procession, attending the icon of the goddess[178] and carrying flint blades "in order to affright the crowd's ungrateful souls and impious hearts at such a sight with awe for her divinity."[179] Whilst other celebrants are present, the *galli* dominate the description, suggesting they were the most significant human element of the experience. Ovid compounds this, singling the "half-men" out at the heart of the procession, carrying the icon of *Magna Mater.*[180] Beard (2012, p.340) attests that the *galli* were one group of a varied organisation of cult officials for *Magna Mater,* comprising numerous demographics. However, the *galli* come across as being of central importance, with their castration a vital aspect of this. Beard (2012, p.341-342) suggests that it was unlikely that full castration was a commonplace due to the dangers of the process, and that perhaps in reality a less extreme form of mutilation was practiced. Latham (2015, p.55) expands on this, detailing how "no known Metroac devotee's self-representation ever depicts or refers (directly or indirectly) to castration," including many figures of Attis. Lucretius and Ovid portray an accepted stereotype of the *galli,* the key identifier for which is their supposed castration. Their literary identity becomes synonymous with their rejection of normative gender, and Nauta (2004, p.615) indicates that Lucretius' readership would have been familiar with the castration, and Tougher (2020, p.7) suggests that whether or not the *galli* were castrates, "the Romans were fixated with the notion that they were."

Whereas the festival itself has feminine overtones, "the eunuch *galli* who, above all others, stood for the cult of Magna Mater" (Beard 2012, p.341) are the central figures, characterised by their castration and defiance of gender expectations. This creates a point of conflict in the space. According to Roller

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[176] Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*, 2.600-660
[177] Ibid, 2.598
[178] ibid, 2.614-615
[179] ibid, 2.621-624
[180] Ovid, *Fasti,* 4.184-186

(1999, p.318), fertility "was an essential part of *Magna Mater's* character" for the Romans, and central to their understanding of her. A space honouring femininity and fertility becomes warped by the centrality of the *galli* and their self-inflicted infertility, contrasting normativity with transgression and seemingly undermining a core gender dynamic of the space.

The presence of the *curetes*, "a troop of youths in armour" following the *galli,* dancing "delirious with bloodshed," as if "ready with courage and arms to defend the fatherland"[181] compounds this confused spatial identity. Their presence echoes the Roman triumph, a public celebratory military procession which would have undoubtedly been a masculine space. Whilst the triumphal audience would have included many women, the triumphal spatial experience would have been generated by the masculine celebration of martial strength and victory. As Summers (1996, p.342) indicates, a procession replete with brandished weapons is a strikingly Roman concept. The links with such a procession, the military imagery, the brandishing of weapons and the celebration of militarism, constructs a masculine performative space around the Megalesian procession, especially considering that the cult of *Magna Mater* was a recognised part of Roman religion (Roscoe, 1996, p.196). Whilst there are both feminine and masculine attributes to the space, the contrasting identities of *Magna Mater* and the *curetes* are generated through the celebration of idealised gender performance. The cult itself is coded feminine; the central religious figure is unmistakably female, with her title, "great mother," creating a distinctly feminine identity, coupled with her "strong emphasis on fertility" (Roller, 1999, p.318). The ritual space honours a mother goddess, whilst echoing a hypermasculine military celebration, complete with symbolic representations of the youthful soldiers ready to violently defend Rome. It should be noted that if we are to follow Trümper (2012, p.290), the public street through which the procession takes place is often characterised as "masculine" space. Combined, these spatial aspects would create a space celebrating an idealised performance of gender normativity, honouring aspects of both masculinity and femininity which complement each other rather than clash. However, the most significant literary participants are eunuchs, who have deliberately removed their physical masculinity as a religious devotion, subsequently becoming something other than a man and not quite women. The *galli* are a central yet seemingly incongruous element of a multifaceted gendered space, their rejection of traditional gender performance writ large against a background of celebrated and ritualised gender activity.

The "half-men"[182] *galli* however, despite opposing the ideals personified by the *curetes* and *Magna Mater,* are not incompatible with this space. Indeed, rather than being barred from this space they have a central role in proceedings. Lucretius proposes that their gender identity is central to their religious role and vital in constructing the ritual identity of the space. He states that the *galli* are eunuchs "to illustrate that those who would degrade the mother's power, ungrateful to their parents, had no right to bring descendants forth unto the boundaries of Light."[183] Their castration is a warning that those who lack familial piety are undeserving of having their own children, "to follow traditional Roman values and not be like the *galli*" (Roller, 1999, p.126). This stands in contrast with the *curetes,* who "for their parents they became both guardian and glory"[184] due to their willingness to defend their

[181] Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*, 2.629-645
[182] Ovid, *Fasti,* 4.184
[183] Lucretius, *The Nature of Things,* 2.615-617
[184] Ibid, 2.641-643

homeland. The *curetes* are a reflection of the *galli;* as Nauta (2004, p.617) observes, "*pietas* towards parents and fatherland belongs together, and the castrated state of the *galli* may be interpreted as a punishment for the failure to fulfil one's duties." The *galli*'s rejection of normative gender performance is reinforced by comparison to the idealised *curetes*. In a space constructed by the normative performance of childbearing and militarism, the *galli* symbolise a defiance towards both masculinity and femininity. Bremmer (2004, p.557) describes how the *galli* gave up their male sexuality for their religion. In doing so, they openly rejected the important socio-political roles associated with this sexuality.

The transgression of self-inflicted infertility is compounded by the *curetes'* description as "a troop of youths in armour"[185] and "a circle of armed boys."[186] Whilst the *galli* threaten the impious with the inability to have children, with self-castration described by Nauta (2004, p.617) as "forsaking one's duty to one's fatherland," the *curetes* are the personification of these pious children, juxtaposing the eunuch *galli* with the living symbols of adherence to traditional gender roles. The items they brandish during the procession enhance this distinction; The *curetes* wear armour[187] and escort *Magna Mater* with weapons,[188] obvious symbols of Roman masculinity. In comparison, the *galli* lead the procession, scaring onlookers with "a display of flint blades."[189] Stallings (2007, p.244) indicates that these blades represent the auto-castration of the *galli,* and Catullus, writing at a similar time to Lucretius, depicts Attis, a figure with strong associations with the *galli,* using a sharp flint to castrate himself.[190] This inverts the masculine associations of weaponry; the *curetes* embody warfare and valour, a symbol of the brave Roman youth. The *galli* bear knives used to violently remove their genitalia as a warning to those who don't deserve to raise children. The *galli* become a dark reflection of the *curetes,* warning onlookers to follow the examples they set alongside the *Magna Mater*.

The *galli's* occupation of this gendered space is a foil for the normative associations of the festival, using their presence to re-emphasise the importance of traditional gender roles. The conflict with gender norms represented by the *galli* and the space they occupy is constructed by Lucretius as their religious role in the proceedings, and their opposition to the normative gendered space is emphasised to reinforce traditional gender performance. Rather than excluding them from the space, their autocastration serves as their reason for occupying it, becoming a central aspect of the ritual space they occupy, with their impact on the identity of the space becoming a central aspect of the ritual itself. Latham (2015, p.51) suggests that the *galli* "provided an evolving foil with which elite Roman men renegotiated Roman masculinity." We can see this in Lucretius' description of the Megalesian procession; The imposition of the transgressive *galli* constructs and promotes traditional masculine values through the opposition represented by the *galli* and the warning they represent. Rather than excluding them from the space, their identity forms a core element of the procession, magnifying the social message of the ritual.

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[185] Ibid, 2.629
[186] Ibid, 2.635
[187] Ibid, 2.629-633
[188] Ibid, 2.640-641
[189] Ibid, 2.621-622
[190] Catullus, 63.5

Lucretius' description of the procession draws parallels with another gendered Roman space; the Roman funeral procession. Funerary rituals were culturally significant and contained certain expectations, creating ritual funerary space. Hope (2017, p.92) suggests that the public performance of mourning meant that "both the streets and forum temporarily became mourning environments, and must have been spaces which were regularly affected by such events." Erker (2011, p.40) argues that some funerary tasks were considered men's work, and some tasks were designated as female, with the upper-class ideal of female funerary interaction being that women traditionally lamented and mourned the dead. Erker (2011, p.49) continues to explain that it was a practice to hire professional female mourners and musicians to accompany the funeral procession who would sing, scream and tear at their cheeks, a view echoed by Hope (2017, p.96), with Lucian in his treatise on funerary practices describing the prevalence of "cries of distress, wailing of women, tears on all sides, beaten breasts, torn hair, and bloody cheeks."[191] Whilst funerary processions took place in public "male" spaces, the funerary activities changed the spatial dynamic. As Hope (2017, p.94) describes, "mourning had a temporary impact on certain environments and locations," and that "there was also a certain fluidity in the parameters and definition of mourning bodies and spaces," denoted by sensory clues such as sounds. These sonic cues were traditionally created by the lamentations of female mourners, creating a feminine sensory experience, imposing a feminine dynamic upon the ritual space. Lucretius describes the *galli's* procession as being accompanied by various musical instruments[192] as well as evoking the image of the "wailing of the infant Jove" when describing the *curetes,*[193] an image reproduced by Ovid,[194] drawing parallels with mourning practices. The sensory environments of both the Megalesian and funerary processions were culturally distinct, and the *galli* emulate what the spectators would recognise as feminine mourning practices within this ritual space. Whilst they are described as less than men by Lucretius and Ovid, these writers do not liken them outright to women in their descriptions. However, the *galli* create a feminine sensory environment within this procession, one that would have been recognised by onlookers and spatial convention, re-emphasising their gender identity and non-conformity.

This suggests an interaction between the *galli* and their spaces transcending occupation. The Megalesian procession is shown as a heavily gendered space, as weapons and violent imagery are superimposed against a feminine, maternal cultic background. Whilst the *curetes* provide the masculine dynamic for this procession, the rites of the *galli,* their playing of music and loud howling, emulate feminine aspects of a Roman funeral procession, drawing aspects of the masculine and feminine spaces together. The imposition of feminine spatial practices upon militarised, masculine ritual creates a confused identity, and the *galli's* appearance therein serves to reinforce their non-conformity and divergence from the traditional binary. Whilst the identity of the Megalesian procession was already multifaceted, it was constructed as such by the mingling of two traditional normative performances. The *galli's* interaction reinterprets this, superimposing a new transgressive identity onto the spaces via a rejection of normative gender performance through their cult role. The *galli* once more stand between two acceptable performances of normative gender, serving as a visual and audible

[191] Lucian, *On Funerals,* 12
[192] ibid, 2.617-621
[193] ibid, 2.634-646
[194] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.340-344

reminder as to what becomes of those "who would degrade The Mother's power."[195] The relationship between the *galli* and space is complex; they inhabit a space designed to reassert traditional gender performance, yet their own presence undermines this dynamic. The result is a space centred on the negative paradigm of the *galli* in order to reinforce these Roman gender ideals.

The idea of the *galli* as a negative literary paradigm is strengthened by their foreign identity. Latham (2012, p.84) asserts that they were "not Roman," and indeed, Lucretius describes them as "Phrygian,"[196] with Dionysius of Halicarnassus taking great pains to separate the acceptable Roman celebrations of *Magna Mater* from the "fabulous clap-trap" of "Phrygian ceremonies," and "foreign religious customs."[197] Latham (2012, p.101) subsequently claims that earlier written sources imagine the *galli* as "strange, non-Roman, non-masculine objects of curiosity," asserting that the *galli* consistently transgressed the boundaries of Roman masculinity (Latham, 2012, p.89). Further, Beard (2012, p.345) suggests that the prohibition on Romans undergoing castration "put the *galli* outside the bounds of Roman society," as the *galli* were symbolic of a distinctly un-Roman and transgressive practice.

Accordingly, the *galli* created "foreign" space at the procession, as the social experience of the space was determined by the overwhelmingly foreign associations of the ritual activity. Conversely, the Phrygian *galli* were themselves acting in foreign space, as they were not Roman citizens, heightening the cultural divide between cult actors and spectators. The ritual, gendered space is couched firmly in a foreign spatial dynamic, highlighting the foreign *galli's* incompatibility with Roman law and gender ideals. Latham (2015, p.51) suggests that "the Roman and the foreign were mutually constructed" by the difference presented between Roman norms and the activity of the *galli*. This creation of foreign ritualised space in a procession in Rome's public spaces is a stark example of this. Through mutual construction, the negative paradigm of the *galli* is plainly depicted in opposition to the normative idealisation of Roman gender practices.

The evocation of foreign gendered space as a contrast to normative Roman gender performance plays a similar role in Catullus 63.[198] Whilst not about the *galli* themselves, the central figure of the poem, Attis, can be seen as the prototype literary model for the *galli* (Roller, 1998, p.119), and Nauta (2004, p.618) suggests that Catullus' readers would have seen Attis as a *gallus*. Bremmer (2004, p.558) posits that Catullus 63 is the first time Attis is mentioned by name in Roman literature, although the character itself bears no resemblance to *Cybele's* mythical consort (Bremmer, 2004, p.566). This poem was also written at a time during when there was interest in the cult and its figures (Bremmer, 2004, p.558), suggesting that the link between Attis and the *galli* would have been noticed by readers, especially given that *galli* were visible and active in the Rome of Catullus and his readership (Nauta, 2004, p.599). Catullus describes Attis and their fellow devotees as *gallae* twice, further strengthening this association with the cult[199] and Attis' role as a literary *gallus*.

The poem details Attis' transformation into a *gallus*. The starkest example of the gender identity of Attis, and by extension the *galli*¸ is the way they are explicitly gendered in the text. Initially, Attis is

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[195] Lucretius, *The Nature of Things,* 2.615-616
[196] ibid, 2.611
[197] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities,* 2.19
[198] Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus*, 63
[199] Ibid, 13/34

described using male pronouns, but immediately after the castration Catullus describes her using female pronouns.[200] Catullus moves his depiction of Attis' gender closer to that of Valerius Maximus' Genucius, declaring Attis as "woman yet no true one,"[201] suggesting that Attis is somewhere between the normative binary, although more feminine than masculine,[202] in contrast to Ovid's "half-men."[203] The castration takes place in "Phrygian woodland," Attis having travelled there from across the sea.[204] Judging from this geographical juxtaposition, Harrison (2004, p.522) claims that it appears likely that Attis has come from a Greek *polis* and a "traditional Greek culture," which Nauta (2004, p.600) suggests may be Athens. There is a split of gendered space present here; the male Attis comes from a Greek *polis,* a symbol of culture and civilisation, to a Phrygian woodland, the homeland of Cybele and a wild, uncivilised environment, where she becomes female. There is a split between the public, male-dominated life of the city state and the foreign woods of Attis' isolation. Catullus describes the woods as "mountain forests of Cybele"[205] and the "Phrygian forests of the goddess,"[206] creating a feminine space by associating the woods strongly with the goddess. Much like Lucretius' *galli,* gender-transgressive behaviour is strongly associated with the Phrygian identity of the cult, distancing it from Roman cultural values. The distance is physical and metaphorical. Attis is portrayed as a man moving from masculine space to feminine space and becoming female. This new female space is reinforced by Attis' companions, as the only other people in the woods are also *galli,* noticeably referred to as the feminine form "*Gallae"* (Bremmer, 2004, p.560).[207] This is a literary creation that puts forward perhaps the stereotypical transition from male worshipper to *gallus*. Unlike the multifaceted space of the Megalesian procession, Attis appears in a singularly feminine space, characterised by nature and wilderness, detached from civilisation.

This comparison of female wilderness with masculine metropolitanism is reaffirmed by Attis herself. As Bremmer (2004, p.561-562) highlights, mountainous woods were traditionally seen as home to the maenads, raving female devotees of Bacchus. Indeed, Attis makes the same association, referring to herself as a "barren man" and a "maenad."[208] Attis compares the loss of genitalia with a loss of manhood, a change in identity which confines her to the spaces populated by frenzied, feminine religious figures. Regretting her castration, she decries her fate to be "absent from the market, the wrestling-place, the racecourse, the playground,"[209] and lamenting her past as "the flower of the playground… the glory of the palaestra."[210] Becoming a *gallus* has prohibited her from these spaces as

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[200] ibid, 4-6
[201] ibid, 27
[202] The use of female pronouns to describe the *galli* has prompted Christian-Blood (2015) to suggest that the *galli* may have included transgender people. It should be remembered that in literature, the *galli* do not define their own genders, but they are assigned by the author. As Roller (1998, p.119) points out, there is no first-hand evidence to suggest that the *galli* saw themselves as women after their castration. It is possible that some *galli* identified as women, and the possibility should not be ruled out, but in a study of their occupation of gendered space in literature it must be remembered that their identities are ascribed to them by someone else, rather than being self-asserted. It is also reductive to associate castration with transgenderism.
[203] Ovid, *Fasti,* 4.184-186
[204] Catullus, 63.1-2
[205] ibid.12
[206] ibid.19-20
[207] Ibid.12
[208] Ibid.69
[209] ibid.60
[210] ibid.64

a direct result of her new gender identity, as she says "I, now a woman, have been a stripling, a youth, a boy"[211] and calls herself "a handmaid of the gods, a mistress of Cybele."[212] Her transition from male to female is linked to her exclusion from masculine civic spaces, confining her to a foreign, uncivilised, feminine space. By abandoning her homeland and her manhood, Attis has banished herself from society.

The exclusion from metropolitan spaces links to the earlier ideals of manly spaces and highlights the fact that to elite writers such as Catullus these were indeed masculine spaces, and eunuch *galli* could not, or should not, access them. As Roller (1998, p.128) suggests, their exclusion from these masculine civic spaces is indicative of "an individual who is outside the bounds of any social organisation or contact." If we consider the dual functionality of spaces like the palaestra and the gymnasia (Trümper, 2012, p.291), Attis has been excluded from more than just male space. If Attis is excluded from these spaces, she is excluded from her old spaces of masculinity, and as a *gallus* she is excluded from spaces that women may have been able to use. By defying traditional gender norms and physically cutting herself off from masculinity, Attis has also cut herself off from civil society and humanity, reinforcing the importance of traditional gender performance through the creation of a negative paradigm.

To conclude, the interaction between gendered spaces and the *galli* was a primary aspect of their literary depictions, reinforcing both normative gender roles and the agency of the *galli* in public cult practice. The *galli* didn't simply inhabit gendered spaces. They had a reciprocal relationship with space, as their presence affected the spatial dynamic, and gendered spaces were not always binary by design. Rather than simply a source for criticism, however, this spatial dynamic played an important part in the *galli's* public role. In Lucretius' account, their role in the space is a crucial element of the ritual atmosphere of the procession. This role could only be performed through contrast with the gender dynamic already coded in the space, as their identity contrasted with its pre-existing gender connotations. By occupying a space with such strong associations with normative gender performance as the Megalesian games, the negative paradigm of the *galli* enforced normativity by becoming a warning against rejecting it. Lucretius also shows how gendered space could be understood; rather than being simply masculine or feminine, the space is instead a promotion of the desired elements of both, embodying an idealised portrayal of masculinity and femininity. The *galli* stand counter to this as a way of reinforcing these ideals. Catullus' poem also uses gendered space to reinforce traditional gender performance; Attis' punishment for castrating himself is rendered on a spatial level, as they are cut off from the civilisation they had once known. The denial of access to spaces of their youth, and the subsequent confinement in the Phrygian wilderness, is the crux of the punishment. This outlines the importance of gendered space to the *galli* and their appearance in Latin literature. space plays a key role in creating the image through which Latham (2012, p.86) suggests Roman masculinity was understood. Both Lucretius' *galli* and Catullus' Attis use space and gendered spatial dynamics to reinforce the importance of submitting to traditional Roman norms, and to warn of the dangers of rejecting one's masculinity and place in society.

[211] ibid.63
[212] ibid.68

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Philosophy and Pedagogy in Horace Epistles I

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The conventional system of education, *enkyklios paideia*, was formalised in the Hellenistic period and to a large extent remained fixed throughout antiquity.[213] Education in the ancient world existed to promote the transmission of an established body of knowledge, about which there was wide consensus, with numeracy, music, astrology and geometry occupying a peripheral place alongside literary and rhetorical studies.[214] At the same time, *paideia* functioned as a vehicle of elite socialisation and political continuity, assimilating young boys into the rules of the dominant order and preparing them for a life of civic duty. Ancient sources indicate that philosophy was not part of the standard round of education, but that it occupied a separate position in the curriculum and attracted a very limited student intake[215], with philosophical educators employing alternative pedagogical methods and pursuing very different aims from the mainstream.

The values and techniques of mainstream education were criticised by philosophers from the classical period onwards. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates contrasts the education of the sophists, which was supposed to equip young men for public life, unfavourably with the *elenchus*, which nurtures the individual soul.[216] The contest between dialectical and rhetorical modes of education is picked up in the *Republic*, where Socrates argues that only a life-long education in philosophy can form the ideal citizen, while sophistic education corrupts its students by instilling them with false notions of right and wrong.[217] Hostility to mainstream education became commonplace in Hellenistic ethics, with Epicurus urging the young initiate to 'flee all education'[218] and praising the disciple who is 'pure of *paideia*'[219]. By the same token, the early Stoa regarded the cyclical arts as useful only insofar that they served virtue, with Seneca later dismissing the study of grammar and rhetoric as contributing little to the good life, since such learning was motivated by material ambition.[220] Similar ideas are encountered throughout the philosophical successions.[221]

For the most part, philosophy existed in contention with the mainstream, with philosophical educators of different backgrounds believing that *enkyklios paideia*, especially in its rhetorical phases, failed to

[213] Cribiore (2001a) 8.
[214] For broader treatments of ancient education, see Marrou (1956); Morgan (1998); Cribiore (2001a). On Roman education and its critics, see Bonner (2012) and Maurice (2013).
[215] Cribiore (2001a) 3.
[216] *Gorg*. 519d-520a.
[217] *Rep*. 498b-c. Cf. Nightingale (2001) on educational themes in the *Republic*.
[218] Diog. Laert. 10.6.
[219] Ath. 13.588a.
[220] On Stoic pedagogy, see Pire (1958.) On the later tradition, Reydams-Scils (2010). On Seneca and the Roman imperial Stoic pedagogy, Verbeke (1965); Schafer (2001).
[221] On the evidence for Cynic pedagogy, Höistad (1948); Sluiter (2005).

instruct students in virtue. This paper situates Horace's satire of Roman educators and institutions within the longstanding ancient tradition of philosophical critiques of education. It concludes that the first book of *Epistles*, drawing on an eclectic range of philosophical-pedagogical techniques and traditions, sets out a virtue-based system of education which is opposed to the materialist values of mainstream Roman pedagogy.

In the first place, the *Epistles* are poems about moral guidance, therapy and education. As McCarter (2015) has shown, the first book not only dramatises Horace's own 're-education' in moral philosophy (Ep. 1.1.11 *quid verum atque decens*) but also portrays him in the role of philosophical mentor to others.[222] To his young correspondents, who number fellow-poets, soldiers, travelers and adolescent students of rhetoric, Horace offers practical moral advice, mixed in with satirical critiques of luxury, commerce and urban living, together with periodic attacks against mainstream Roman educational institutions and professionals.[223] Both the stated moral-therapeutic aims of the collection and its satirical targeting of schoolteachers warrant a close investigation into the pedagogical strategy of the *Epistles*.[224] I will be arguing that the sustained contrast of philosophy with conventional forms of Roman education reflects the stereotyped preference of philosophers for virtue-based models of education over the standard round of *paideia*.

One of the benefits of a pedagogical reading of the *Epistles* is that it offers one plausible literary explanation for Horace's choice of the epistolary form. In antiquity, the art of writing letters, introduced under the grammarian and later perfected at the school of rhetoric, was an important part of a student's literary and rhetorical training. Theon of Alexandria and the sophist Nicolaus in the 5th c. allude to the practice of writing epistles in connection with the preliminary exercises of *ethopoeia* ('impersonation'), while the handbooks of model letters collected in Ps-Demetrius and Ps-Libanius, suggest that this exercise was widespread.[225] Looking ahead to later epistolary educators like Fronto and Libanius, it is also clear that letters would have been used as a means of continuing an educational course during periods of separation, with a student's letters to his teacher doubling as both school exercises and real communication.[226]

There is also abundant evidence that epistles served an important role in philosophical education. Within Epicureanism, it has been argued that epistolography provided a medium for disseminating doctrine across geographically dispersed communities.[227] Ferri (1993), Harrison (1995), Armstrong (2004) and Morrison (2007) all believe that Epicurean traditions of letter-writing motivated Horace's choice of the epistolary form. Cucchiarelli, moreover, identifies a number of similarities between the

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[222] McCarter (2015) 62, *passim*.
[223] Bonner (1972) establishes the cultural context of the 'street-school' topos in *Epistles* 1.1 and 1.20. Reckford discusses the mocking school children of the first epistle in the context of the idea of the *ludus*. The topic of education in the epistles has otherwise not received sustained attention.
[224] This paper uses the term 'pedagogy' to refer to the education not just of children but of students of all ages. Horace is forty-four years old (*Ep*. 1.20.24-5) when he claims he began relearning the 'rudiments' (*Ep* 1.1.27) of philosophy. Epicurus famously accepted students from all age groups, cf. Asmis (2001) 210.
[225] Cribiore (2001a) 216.
[226] Libanius reproaches an ex-student for not writing to him in spite of the fact that he knows the epistolary art (*Epist*. 777.6). In another letter, he exhorts the young man to keep on writing epistles in order to strengthen his professional communication (*Epist*. 300.4). Cf. Cribiore (2001a) 217.
[227] Cucchiarelli (2019) 47.

Platonic letters, Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus* and the first book of the *Epistles*, highlighting the youth of the recipients relative to the senders in each collection, the comparable function of moral criticism and the recurring contrast between the recipients' worldly obligations and philosophy.[228] Writing on Seneca's letters, John Schafer suggests that the collection of epistles is the most appropriate format for dramatising a course of philosophical instruction, given that a physical setting (for instance, a Horatian *sermo*) 'impose[s] difficulties…concerning choice of detail.'[229] Whether or not this longstanding association between letter-writing and educational instruction motivated Horace's choice of the epistle form, the book of letters is clearly well-suited to representing the application of therapeutic and reciprocal criticism and for dramatising a course of education in a reflexive, essay-like manner.

This paper begins by examining Horace's satire of elementary education in the first epistle, where he represents two kinds of 'elementary' learning, the basic instruction in literacy offered by 'street teachers' in Rome's financial district and the poet's own 're-education' in the basic doctrines of moral philosophy. I will place the 'street-school' within its cultural context as a proletarian educational institution and seek to define more clearly what Horace intends by the 'philosophical elements.' I will then turn to the final epistle, where Horace pictures the afterlife of his collection as it is transformed into a schoolbook/*magister ludi*. Finally, I will consider how Horace contrasts philosophy with more elite forms of literary and rhetorical education in the correspondence with Lollius Maximus (1.2 and 1.17.)

The Elements

The first epistle parallels two forms of elementary education, the philosophical and the mainstream. At the same time as he declares his intention to relearn the principle doctrines of moral philosophy, Horace contrasts the object of his study to satirical effect with the elementary education provided at the Roman 'street-school' (*ludus litterarius*), where to learn the 'elements' meant to receive basic instruction in literacy. This epistle plays on several meanings of the word *ludus* and its cognates, emphasising the educational theme. In the opening address, Horace begs Maecenas to retire him from his circle of poets, which he compares to a gladiatorial training school (*ludus*): *Maecenas iterum antiquo me includere ludo? / Non eadem est aetas, non mens* (3-5). Promising to give up on 'verses and other nonsense' (*nunc itaque et versus et cetera ludicra pono*, 10), he adopts the pose of a slave begging freedom from his *lanistra*, forecasting the end of *Epist*. 1.20 where his collection will be imagined as a fugitive slave eager to escape into the world. Having grown out of the 'games' (*ludicra*) of his younger years, Horace now dedicates himself to philosophy (*quid verum atque decens*), a more fitting use of *otium* for a man entering middle age.[230] He starts from the elements:

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[228] Cucchiarelli (2019) 46ff.
[229] Schafer (2001) 35.
[230] Cf. *Epist*. 1.14.36 *nec lusisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum*; 2.2.214 *lusisti satis, edisti satis atque bibisti:* Philod. *Anth. Pal.* 5.112 = *GPh* 3268-73 G.-P., spec.5 = 3272 παίζειν ὅτε καιρός, ἐπαίξαμεν**.** The final epistle places Horace at the

> *restat ut his ego me ipse regam solerque elementis* (27).
>
> It remains that I should seek guidance and consolation for myself from these simple lessons (trans. Davie (2011) *hic et infra*)

The notion of the 'elements' of philosophy is familiar from the Theaetetus, where Plato compares the student taking her first steps in philosophy to a child practising the elements (*stoicheia*) of speech.[231] The concept of the philosophical 'element' was important in the 'basic stage' of Epicurean education, which involved memorising collections of authoritative texts and sayings

> ἃ δέ σοι συνεχῶς παρήγγελλον, ταῦτα καὶ πρᾶττε καὶ μελέτα, στοιχεῖα τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν ταῦτ' εἶναι διαλαμβάνων.[232]
>
> Do and practise what I always tell you, knowing that these are the elements of the good life (my trans.)

In this passage from the Epicurean *Letter to Menoeceus*, the 'elements of the good life' (στοιχεῖα τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν) are the basic doctrines of Epicureanism. These were the founding texts, which included both gnomic collections like the Κύριαι Δόξαι (*Principal Doctrines*) or the Vatican Sayings as well as Epicurus' epistolary works and were assigned to the student to memorise at the basic stage of her training.[233] As Braicovich (2017) shows, the memorisation of these collections, rather than being a process of mechanical repetition comparable to rote-learning, as Cicero has it,[234] was in fact an active, collaborative process which involved close communication between the student and her mentor. The student was instructed to reflect deeply on the sentences and epistles she read and, with the aid of her teacher, who acted as interpreter, would learn to appropriate Epicurus' doctrines as a personal standard of conduct and gain a deep understanding of their significance and consequences.[235] Horace's study of the elements closely resembles this practice, as it entails the habitual (*soler*) reading of introductory texts, pictured as a means to attaining a state of personal sovereignty and independence, or *autarchia* (*regam*).

Epicureans characterised the benefit of reading the principle doctrines as a 'four-fold remedy' (*tetrapharmakos*),[236] playing on the traditional metaphor of philosophical instruction as medical

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significant age of forty-five (1.20.27) at which, according to Varro (*Cens*. 14.2), a Roman man ceased to be a *iuventus* and became a *senior*.

[231] *Theaet*. 202d8-e1.

[232] *Ep*. *Men*. 123.

[233] Asmis (2001) 216-7. Armstrong (2004) 279-80 identifies a number of the Vatican Sayings reworked in *Ep*. 1.2.

[234] *Nat*. *D*. 1.72. Cf. Booth (1981) 7-8.

[235] Braicovich (2017) 148: 'El destino de las epítomes, si esta suposición es correcta, consistía en ser estudiadas en forma detenida por los discípulos en el seno de una comunidad de aprendizaje (ya sea bajo la guía de un tutor específico, como sugiere convincentemente Asmis, o bajo una modalidad más casual), y es ese horizonte el que ponía a disposición del discípulo las argumentaciones que respaldaban las doctrinas expuestas en forma sintética en las epítomes.'

[236] Memorisation allowed the Epicurean trainee to arrive at the same discoveries as Epicurus by following a similar process of reasoning; Asmis (2001) 217. Braicovich (2017) is certain the letters would have been counted among the initiatory texts of Epicureanism.

treatment.[237] This idea is picked up by Horace, who invokes the 'words and expressions' that soothe pain and cure disease (*sunt verba et voces quibus hunc lenire dolorem / possis et magnam morbi deponere partem*, 35-35) and the 'book' which, read thrice over, can cure any moral disorder (*invidus*, *iracundus*, *iners*, *vinosus*, *amator*, 38). Cucchiarelli believes that the book Horace has in mind here, rather than being the collection of epistles itself, as Harrison imagines,[238] is in fact the Epicurean *tetrapharmakos*, the compilation of doctrines and epistles whose effect was compared in antiquity to that of a strong medicine,[239] with the 'rites' (*piacula*) which Horace mentions presumably standing for the mnemonic and hermeneutic methods that formed the core of Epicurean education at the initiatory stage.[240] Horace's earlier claim that he is not bound to swear by the precepts of any teacher (*nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*, 14) suggests that his reading of this *libellus*, which may also be taken, in line with Horace's professed philosophical eclecticism, as an emblem of the basics of moral philosophy more generally, will be one of active, independent self-critique, rather than one of passive assimilation.[241]

According to McCarter (2015), the first epistle differentiates Horace's education from that of the young boys pictured receiving their lesson in the 'elements' at an open-air school beneath the arcades of Janus.[242] The setting of the schoolroom and the character of the mischievous schoolboy are frequent in Horace's later works[243] and feature prominently in the first and final poems of *Epistles* I. Stanley Bonner (1972) establishes the cultural context of the Horatian 'street-school' (*ludus litterarius*), which, it appears, was an institution which taught basic literacy and numeracy to children of the plebeian class preparing to enter a commercial career.

In the first epistle, Janus occupies the role of teacher, while in *Epist.* 1.20, it is the collection of epistles itself that is transformed into the *magister ludi* teaching children their elements, following a career as a prostitute. In *Epist.* 1.1, the children are practising their elements, which, in the context of primary education, were simple expressions and sentences for practising literacy:

> *'O cives, cives, quaerenda pecunia primum est;*
> *virtus post nummos': haec Ianus summus ab imo*
> *prodocet, haec recinunt iuuenes dictata senesque.*
> *[laevo suspensi loculos tabulamque lacerto]*
> *est animi tibi, sunt mores, est lingua fidesque,*
> *sed quadringentis sex septem milia desunt:*
> *plebs eris. at pueri ludentes 'rex eris' aiunt*

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[237] Cf. Nussbaum (2009).
[238] Harrison (1995) 52.
[239] Cucchiarelli (2019) *ad loc.*
[240] McCarter (2015) 67ff.and Cucchiarelli (2019) *ad loc.* also remark on the magical language of these lines. On the Socratic dialectician as sorcerer, *Charm.*. 157a-c, 176b (the magical power of songs); *Phd.* 114d; *Men.* 80a; Xen *Mem.* 2.6.10. On the idea that philosophical texts grant magical protection, *PHerc.* 465, a sentence of Epicharmis defining *apophylake*.
[241] Braicovich (2016).
[242] For this line of argument, see McCarter (2015) 62.
[243] *Epist.* 2.1.99; 2.142; *AP* 159.

'si recte facies'. (53-64)

> 'O citizens, citizens, first you must seek money; virtue after cash': this is the rule proclaimed by Janus from top to bottom, this the instruction that young and old alike chant back, dangling satchels and slate from left arm. You have sense, you have morals, you have eloquence and honesty, but you are a few thousands short of the four hundred; you will prove to be a nonentity. Yet boys at play cry, 'Play by the rules and you'll be ruler!'

Here we have another *ludus*, 'with Janus as master and the citizens of Rome his pupils.'[244] These lines, which call to mind the schoolboys learning their elements in the first satire,[245] show students of all ages (*iuuenes…senesque*) taking dictation from Janus, the god of financial enterprise. While *elementa* tends to be translated as 'ABC's,' the students of Janus are not reciting the alphabet, but rather, as Bonner demonstrates, short example sentences (*O cives…nummos*), called out by the magister and repeated back (*recinunt*) by the class, one syllable at a time.[246] Seneca criticises this exercise (*syllabarum enarratio*) as one kind of educational activity which renders no moral benefit to the student, unlike the study of the liberal arts, especially philosophy.[247] Prejudice against the person whose training has been limited to the elements was common among elites in antiquity and was a standard topic of philosophical critiques of mainstream education. According to Plato, Protagoras accused his contemporaries of being little better than elementary teachers.[248] Protagoras in turn was abused by Epicurus as a 'village schoolmaster',[249] referring to his sophistic activity, with Nausiphanes using the same insult once more against Epicurus.[250]

It is clear that Horace intends something similar to Seneca by creating a parallel between the elements of moral philosophy and those of Roman primary instruction, setting the spiritual aims of the former against the materialist ethos of mainstream pedagogy. Where the elements of Horace's virtue-based educational programme 'profit rich and poor alike' (*aeque pauperibus prodest, lucupletibus aeque*, 25), the streetschool privileges material advancement over ethics (*virtus post nummos*, 54) and discriminates on the basis of social status (*plebs eris*, 59).[251] In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace will associate the primary stage of Roman education with commercial greed,[252] so, at this school, good moral conduct comes second to profit (*rem facias, rem, / si possis, recte, si non, quocumque modo rem*, 65-66). The boys' rhyme (*rex eric…si recte facies*) makes a mockery of Janus' lesson and aligns them with Horace's

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[244] Mayer *ad loc.*
[245] *Sat.* 1.1.25-26 *ut pueris dant crustula blandi / doctores, elementa velint ut discere prima.*
[246] Bonner (1972) 513.
[247] *Epist.* 88.3.
[248] *Prt.* 318e.
[249] *Diog. Laert.* 10.8; cf. Ath. 8.354c-d.
[250] Evidence for the prejudice against school teachers is collected by Booth (1981). Since Epicurean pedagogy demanded the memorisation of basic tenets, it could always be compared mockingly to rote-learning under the schoolmaster, Cic. *Nat. D.* 17.2.
[251] Unlike Epicurean education, which, as Asmis (2001) shows, did not discriminate on grounds of class, wealth or gender.
[252] *aerugo et cura peculi, AP* 335-332.

moral philosophy (*regam*, 27)[253] while, for Reckford, these boys are more serious in the end and more in touch with the ultimate reality than their teacher.[254]

Needless to say, classical philosophy tended to regard the desire for social and material advancement as a moral danger. On the other hand, people of low income and status in antiquity naturally hoped that learning literacy would bring their children a more prosperous future.[255] Horace's first epistle pitches the basic stage of moral-philosophical education, characterised by the quasi-magical effect of reading and criticising elementary ethical texts like the Epicurean *tetrapharmakos*, against mainstream Roman elementary schooling, where learning your letters by passive ingestion and repetition was hoped to render a social and material benefit to the student. It becomes clear from the first epistle that Horace is interested in contrasting philosophical pedagogy with mainstream forms of education for satirical purpose.

The schoolroom setting occurs once more at the end of the collection, where Horace foresees the publication of his epistles as ending in their transformation into a school textbook. The final poem dispenses with the collection's epistolary conceit, even imagining a more permanent format for the work (*pumice mundus*, 1.20.2).[256] It opens with a direct address to the collection (*liber*), which might at the same time be taken for Horace's slave-secretary, with the circumstances of publication resembling the career of a freedman who, after a life of sex work, ends his days as a *magister ludi*. The poet, who was once so anxious for his *carmina* to be conveyed straight into the hands of the emperor, now resigns himself to much less controllable circumstances.

The imagined afterlife of the *Epistles* has been described in terms of 'degradation.'[257] Horace's reluctance to publish his work suggests the attitude of Plato in the *Phaedrus*[258] and the second letter: 'have a care lest one day you should repent of what has been divulged improperly… It is not possible that what is written down should not get divulged [οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν τὰ γραφέντα μὴ οὐκ ἐκπεσεῖν].[259] Moreover, the book/slave's final transformation into magister, or school textbook, calls to mind Horace's statement in the first satire: 'you are mad to want your poems dictated in the common schools' (*an tua demens / vilibus in ludis dictari carmina malis*, *Sat*. 1.10).[260]

In the ancient world, primary school teachers occupied a low social status. Accusing one's father of being a primary teacher was a common insult and authors from Demosthenes to Libanius expressed contempt for members of this profession, which, in the Roman world, was typically practised by lower class freeborn men who sold their meagre knowledge for a small income. Callimachus was derided for

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[253] Cf. Cribiore (2001a) 165 on the pedagogical uses of nursery rhymes (*nenia*, 63).
[254] Reckford (2002) 8-9.
[255] Cf. Cribiore (2001a) 249. On the materialist aims of mainstream education, see Lucian's personification of Lady Rhetoric as the river Nile surrounded by wealth and power (*Rhetorum praecepto* 6). For parents' claim that education will bring their sons wealth, John Chrysostom *PG Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* 47. 357.21-28.
[256] Indicating a book-roll rather than the *pugillares/codicilli,* the usual format for epistles, notetaking and school exercises; cf. Cribiore (2001a) 149.
[257] Cf. Oliensis (1995).
[258] *Phdr*. 274c-277a.
[259] Plat. *Epist 2* 314b-c.
[260] Horace will nevertheless emphasise the positive role that a poet should play in the education of young men at *Epist*. 2.1.126-9.

having worked as a primary teacher and he, in turn, in his fifth Iamb ridicules a schoolteacher who was accused of molesting children.[261] That becoming a primary teacher was considered a particularly harsh fall is suggested by a well-known epigram of Aratus: 'I lament for Diotimos, who sits on stones teaching the children of Gargara their ABC's.' [262] This longstanding ancient prejudice provides context for Horace's anxiety that his epistles will end up being used as material for dictation exercises in the *ludus*, an anxiety which, as Juvenal proves, was well-founded.[263]

Eager to escape the 'chaste seal and key' of its box, the liber finds its way to the bookshops of the Sosii, here doubling for pimps (prostes, 2), from where he wins the praises of the whole city.[264] The setting of the book stalls (*Vortumnum Ianumque*) calls back to the first epistle, where the commercial arcades of Janus resounded with the dictations of schoolmasters. After travelling the provinces, youth will desert the book before at last, returning to Rome, he ends his life as a teacher of the *ludus*: *hoc quoque te manet, ut pueros elementa docentem / occupet extremis in vicis balba senectus* (17-18). The phrase *extremis in vicis*, as Bonner shows, does not indicate a suburban setting, but rather a 'crossway,' implying the ancient image of the trivium or quadrivium as a metaphor for the lowest divisions of the liberal arts: knowledge obtained 'at the streetcorner.'[265] In the first epistle, the street-school was associated with the poor student's prospects of social and financial improvement (*rem facias*, 1.1.65), and in 1.16 Horace criticises the man who stoops to pick up a penny at the streetcorner (*in triviis*), calling him 'no better than a slave' (1.16.65).

The collection ends on a short biographical note, which could be construed either as a kind of 'author's bio' included with the published work or as part of the magister's lesson. These lines ring a deliberate note of banality, as the author is reduced to a series of dry biographical facts.[266] Before, Horace set out to abandon 'verses and other nonsense' (*ludicra*) and to devote himself to moral philosophy. Now, he looks ahead to a time when his collection, once intended for an intimate elite readership, is degraded to the status of a schoolbook used for teaching children their elements, forgetting the serious moral intentions of the collection.

Philosophy and Elite Education

So far, we have seen how Horace uses the satirical topos of the 'street-school' at the opening and the close of the collection to represent the materialist values of traditional Roman education in opposition to his personal virtue-based philosophical programme. It may be objected that the *ludus litterarius* is

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[261] Cf. Cribiore (2001a) 37.
[262] Anth. Pal. 11.437.
[263] Juv. 7.226-7 *quot stabant pueri, cum totus decolor esset / Flaccus et haereret nigro fuligo Maroni.*
[264] Cf. Cribiore (2001a) 146 on the humble profession of bookseller. This edition was probably not of the first quality.
[265] Cf. Bonner (1972) 517.
[266] Ending an autobiography with a note of one's age at time of writing was traditional, cf. *Res Gestae* 35.2: *cum scripsi haec, annum agebam septuagesumum*. On forty-five as an important birthday in the Roman world, see n.18.

a proletarian institution, and that, as such, it does not represent the values of all mainstream education, but only one debased manifestation of it. In the final section, I will attempt to show how Horace mobilises classical philosophical critiques of *paideia* to contrast elite Roman education unfavourably with philosophy. I will be focusing on Horace's allusions to the literary and rhetorical education of Lollius Maximus, the son of the consul mentioned at the end of *Epist*. 1.20, and the only addressee to receive more than one letter (1.2 and 1.18).

Ancient sources indicate that there were three phases of schooling in the traditional Greco-Roman system. We have already discussed the elementary stage, which taught basic literacy and numeracy. Children of the plebeian class learnt their elements at the *ludus litterarius*, while elite children studied under a private tutor, usually an older slave of their household. Progress onwards from the elementary stage was guaranteed only by social status, with elite students going on to study under a grammarian before graduating to the school of rhetoric, finishing their formal education at the age of twenty or so. The move to study under a grammarian began the process of teaching boys how members of the elite talked and behaved. While fundamentally literary in character, with an emphasis on grammar, mastery of the canon, oratorical composition and performance, this stage of Roman education was also geared towards socialisation and preparation for a public career.[267] As mentioned above, there was no place on the standard curriculum for philosophy, with Seneca contrasting the regular round of literary and rhetorical education with those higher studies which have as their object the pursuit of virtue.[268]

The contest of philosophy and rhetoric is flagged in the opening clause of *Epist*. 1.2:

> *Troiani belli scriptorem, Maxime Lolli,*
> *dum tu declamas Romae, Praeneste relegi* (1-20)
>
> Lollius Maximus, while you have been declaiming at Rome, Praeneste has found me rereading the poet of the Trojan War…

In Horace's time, the verb *declamo* had the particular meaning of undertaking an exercise in declamation.[269] In both the grammatical schools and the schools of rhetoric, teachers assigned poetry as the basis of exercises in 'impersonation' (*ethopoeia*/*prosopopoeia*), where the student would imagine himself in the position of some character from history or poetry at a critical point in their life, to try and speak as he or she might have under the circumstances, with papyrus evidence suggesting the *Iliad* inspired the majority of ethopoeiac exercises.[270] Ancient educators often extolled Homer as beneficial to the future orator,[271] while Cribiore suggests that Roman education in particular relied on the teacher's digestion of the Homeric poems, such as Horace demonstrates in this epistle.[272]

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[267] Watts (2015) 237 n.88.
[268] Cf. Schafer (2001).
[269] Cucchiarelli (2019) *ad loc.*
[270] Quint. *Inst*. 3.8.52-3, Liban. *Decl*. 3.4. Cf. Bonner (2012) 267-8.
[271] Dionysius *De imitat*. Epitome 2; Quint. Inst. 10.31-130.
[272] Cribiore (2001a) 227.

We may take *scriptorem*, then, as the object of both verbs, as Horace compares two ways of engaging with Homer's text, corresponding, as we shall see, to two differing kinds of literary pedagogy. While Lollius is preparing an oration for school based on some episode in Homer, Horace has moved on from his study of the 'elements' and is now 're-reading' the Homeric poems.[273] The idea of using literature as a moral guide was common in ancient education, both in its mainstream and philosophical manifestations.[274] One of the most instructive works in this connection is Plutarch's *How a Young Person should study Poetry*. This treatise, whose method closely resembles that of Horace in this epistle, details how, with the help of an enlightened teacher, the student can draw moral benefit from his reading of Homer and use him in preparation for serious philosophical study.[275] Like Plutarch's model teacher, Horace, whose interpretation of the Homeric poems derives from Philodemus' treatise *On the Good King* according to Homer, highlights the various positive and negative moral exempla which the poems contain, with an emphasis on matters of moral interest (*quid virtus et quid sapientia*, 17). Horace's moralising of the Homeric characters, whose behaviour Lollius will do well to contemplate as he prepares to enter public life, is supposed to lead the young student to a more philosophical encounter with literature. Homer is not to be valued as material for classroom exercises, but as a propaedeutic to serious moral study. As we have seen, this same attitude characterises Horace's hopes for his own poetry: to be a work of serious moral philosophy, not merely a schoolbook.

Horace resumes the pose of philosophical *praeceptor* when we meet Lollius again in 1.18. In this letter, he professes to act as an advisor to the young student, who is now beginning to make useful connections at the imperial court and wants to know how to please his patron without coming across as a false friend (*professus amicum*, 2) or exposing himself to ridicule. The importance of distinguishing flatterers from friends was a typical concern of ancient moral philosophy, as evidenced by Aristotle's interest in the topic,[276] Theophrastus' portrait of the flatterer[277] and the Cynic commonplace that unbridled frankness is the mark of the true sage.[278] While the concept of parrhesia has a long philosophical pedigree, Horace's advice here is chiefly drawn from Philodemus' treatise *Peri Parrhesias* (*'On Frank Speech'*), whose influence on this epistle is assessed by Kemp (2010). As a recent essay by Braicovich (2016) shows, this text was read in antiquity as a pedagogical manual, and so the fact that Horace draws directly on this work suggests that his advice applies not only to context of social patronage but also to the pedagogic connection between himself and the young Lollius.[279]

He begins by explaining to Lollius that there are two kinds of parasite (*scurra*):

> *alter in obsequium plus aequo pronus et imi*
> *derisor lecti sic nutum diuitis horret,*

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[273] This unusual verb brings to mind Pliny the younger's exhortation to read the same authors again and again in order to expand one's comprehension (*Epist.* 7.9.15).
[274] Cf. Bonner (2012) 263ff.
[275] Plut. *Mor.* 17d-e; Hunter (2014) 26-7.
[276] *NE* 1126b11-1127a12; *Eud.* 1233b40-1234a3.
[277] *Char.* 2.
[278] Cf. Yona (2018) 52 on the philosophical background to flattery and frank speech; Sluiter (2005) on *parrhesia* in Cynic didactics.
[279] Braicovich (2016) 11: 'la interpretación pedagógica todavía representa el modelo más adecuado de abordaje del tratado.'

sic iterat voces et verba cadentia tollit,
ut puerum saevo credas dictata magistro
reddere vel partes mimum tractare secundas;
alter rixatur de lana saepe caprina et
propugnat nugis armatus: 'scilicet ut non
sit mihi prima fides?' et 'vere quod placet ut non
acriter elatrem? pretium aetas altera sordet.'
ambigitur quid enim? Castor sciat an Dolichus plus;
Brundisium Minuci melius via ducat an Appi. (10-20)

The one man inclines more than is appropriate towards compliance, and, a mocker on the lowest couch, so reveres the rich man's nod, so repeats his words and picks up his remarks as they fall unnoticed, that you'd believe it was a schoolboy repeating the lessons dictated by a severe teacher, or someone performing the second part of a mime. The other comes to blows often over goat's wool, and fights his corner armed with trifles: 'To think, if you please, that I shouldn't be believed before anyone else, that I shouldn't bark out fiercely what I really think! A second life isn't reward enough.' Well, what's the point at issue? Whether Castor or Dolichos has more skill; whether the Minucian or the Appian Way is the better road to Brundisium.

The use of 'character-types' to exemplify negative moral traits was a common tool of ancient philosophical instruction. Plutarch identifies the use of 'examples' (*paradeigmata*) as one of the most effective pedagogical aids,[280] while Philodemus refers to the technique of 'setting before the eyes' as an important method within Epicurean instruction.[281] In the *Satires*, we learn that Horace's father conducted ethical investigations on his son's behalf by 'inferring' (*notando*) different character flaws (*quaeque vitiorum*) by means of *exempla*. [282]The use of examples, therefore, again places Horace in the role of philosophical critic.

Calling back again to the first epistle, Horace compares the first *scurra* to a schoolboy taking dictation (*dictata*, 13) from a stern master.[283] The parasite's impressions of his host fall *cadentia* ('unregarded')[284] by the company, with the comparison to the mime suggesting an excessively subservient attitude. The second *scurra*, meanwhile, arrives at the reception 'armed with trifles' (*nugis armatus*, 16), ready to drag the guests into trivial debates. His questions - "do we say goats are covered in 'hair' or 'wool'?" "Who is more skillful, Castor or Dolichos?" - suggest the recondite controversies of the grammarians, whose love of pointless questions and debates (*erotemata*/*quaestiones*), popular in

[280] Plut. *On the Education of Children*, 16c-d.
[281] *De lib. Dic.* 42.1ff. Cf. Tsouna (2007) 93.
[282] 1.4.106. Yona (2018) 68: 'manifest[ing] patterns of observable behaviour.'
[283] Cf. *Ep.* 1.1.55 *dictata*.
[284] Mayer *ad loc.*

antiquity both as schoolroom exercises and as symposiac entertainment, was a common target of ridicule.[285] It features together with the dictation of the elements on Seneca's catalogue of morally useless kinds of learning[286] and in the following epistle, Horace will warn that the 'games' of the grammarians give way to all kinds of intemperance.[287]

Although this epistle is clearly grounded in the stratified world of patronage, rather than the schoolroom or lecture hall, it nevertheless demands to be read in terms of education. The symposiac setting is traditional in philosophical illustrations of *parrhesia* and *kolakeia* ('flattery'),[288] since it was a convenient setting for displaying different social 'types.' At the same time, however, dining also played an important role in the socialisation of young men and learning how to behave within elite male groups was considered a necessary part of education outside of the classroom. Having interpreted the moral lessons of Homer in *Epistle* 1.2, Horace invokes another literary example favoured by ancient educators,[289] this time from Euripides, to encourage Lollius to join in with his patron's *studia*, instructing the young man neither to praise his own tastes nor to criticise those of his benefactor:

> *Nec tua laudabis studia aut aliena reprendes,*
> *nec, cum venari volet ille, poemata panges.*
> *gratia sic fratrum geminorum Amphionis atque*
> *Zethi dissiluit, donec suspecta severo*
> *Conticuit lyra. fraternis cecisse putatur*
> *moribus Amphion: tu cede potentis amici*
> *lenibus imperiis, quotiensque educet in agros*
> *Aeoliis onerata plagis iumenta canesque,*
> *Surge et inhumanae senium depone Camenae,*
> *cenes ut pariter pulmenta laboribus empta.*
> *Romanis sollemne viris opus, utile famae vitaeque et membris.* (39-50)
>
> Be sure not to praise your own favourite pursuits or to criticize those of others, and when he wishes to hunt, be sure not to be penning verse. This was how the goodwill between the two brothers Amphion and Zethus was severed, until the lyre that had earned the one's stern look of distrust fell silent. It's thought that Amphion yielded to his brother's mood: you, too, must yield to a powerful patron's gentle commands, and whenever he takes out into the country his hounds and his mules, weighed down with Aetolian nets, up you get and cast

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[285] Cribiore (2001a) 209 quotes a graffito from Cyrene: 'Question: Who was the father of Priam's children?' Cf. Lucian *Amores* 45.
[286] *Epist.* 88.20.
[287] *Epist.* 1.19.35-49.
[288] See Yona 52: the earliest extended portrayal of the *kolax* appears in the fragments of Eupolis' comic play *Flatterers*, which contains references to the sophist Protagoras of Abdera as a parasite at the home of a wealthy Athenian patron (*PGC* 5.157-8).
[289] Cf. Cribiore (2001b).

> aside the glum spirit of your unsociable Muse, so that you may share his dinner, eating food bought with effort; this is the customary task of Roman men, of benefit to reputation, life, and limb alike…

This scene, from Euripides' *Antiope* (F 212-5), is cited in a well-known passage of Plato's *Gorgias*, where Socrates' opponent Callicles makes the case that while it is fine for a young man to study philosophy, it is shameful to approach it too seriously or to carry it far on into later life:

> ἐὰν γὰρ καὶ πάνυ εὐφυὴς ᾖ καὶ πόρρω τῆς ἡλικίας φιλοσοφῇ, ἀνάγκη πάντων ἄπειρον γεγονέναι ἐστὶν ὧν χρὴ ἔμπειρον εἶναι τὸν μέλλοντα καλὸν κἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐδόκιμον ἔσεσθαι ἄνδρα.[290]
>
> However well-endowed one may be, if one philosophizes far into life, one must needs find oneself ignorant of everything that ought to be familiar to the man who would be a thorough gentleman and make a good figure in the world (trans. Lamb 1967)

According to Cleary (2007), in this dialogue, Amphion and Zethus symbolise two competing modes of *paideia*, the rhetorical education of the sophists versus the *elenchus*.[291] Plato presents the debate about modes of education as a contest over different ways of life; namely, 'the life of the democratic politician, oriented to success in the public affairs of the demos, as against the life of the philosopher, which involves privately caring for the soul.'[292] There is an obvious affinity between Plato's and Horace's readings of the myth. In Horace's account, the brothers also represent conflicting fields of leisure, with Amphion the musician standing for private literary pursuits (*poemata panges*, 40), and Zethus, the huntsman, representing the kind of activity enjoyed by Lollius' patron. Horace urges Lollius to trade the gloom of his 'unsociable muse' (*inhumanae senium depone Camenae*, 47) for the hunt. Like the *convivium*, hunting (yet another kind of *ludus*) was a core element of ancient education and a vehicle for the socialisation of aristocratic men and is therefore identifiable with the traditional form of elite education which Lollius is undertaking, corresponding to that defended by Callicles in Plato's dialogue.[293]

On the surface, Horace appears to voice the position of Callicles, using the example of Amphion and Zethus to pit the pursuits of the poet and philosopher unfavourably against those of the publicly-engaged *homme d'affaires* and encouraging Lollius not to worry himself too much with writing poems, but to take a healthy part in his patron's hobbies. However, Horace's advice contains an obvious

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[290] *Gorg*. 484c-d.
[291] Cleary (2007) 95-96.
[292] *Ibid*. Morrison (2007) 117 writes that Zethus and Amphion are 'representative of the 'practical and the contemplative life' respectively.
[293] Cf. *C*. 3.24.54-8 (shame on a freeborn *puer* who cannot ride a horse); cf. Corbeill (2001) 280-281 on hunting in Roman education.

philosophical subtext. After urging Lollius not to neglect his duties to the patron in favour of private study, Horace resumes his discourse on the superiority of the philosophical life:

> *Inter cuncta leges et percontabere doctos,*
> *qua ratione queas traducere leniter aeuum,*
> *num te semper inops agitet vexetque cupido,*
> *num pavor et rerum mediocriter utilium spes,*
> *Virtutem doctrina paret naturane donet,*
> *Quid minuat curas, quid te tibi reddat amicum,*
> *Quid pure tranquillet, honos an dulce lucellum*
> *an secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae.*
> *Me quotiens reficit gelidus Digentia riuus,*
> *quem Mandela bibit, rugosus frigore pagus,*
> *quid sentire putas, quid credas, amice, precari?* (96-106)
>
> In the course of all this be sure to read and to question learned men as to how you can pass your days tranquilly; are you to be tormented and harassed by greed that forever makes you penniless, by anxiety and the hope for things indifferent? Is virtue acquired through training or is it a gift of nature? What reduces cares, what makes you a friend to yourself? What creates a calm mind absolutely, public office or the delights of profit or a secluded journey along the sidepath of a life unnoticed? As for myself, whenever Digentia refreshes me, whose chilly brook Mandela drinks, that village whose folk are wrinkled with the cold, what do you suppose my feelings are?

Whatever happens, Lollius will always be able to draw consolation from the works of the *docti*, the philosophers who teach one how to moderate desire (*cupido*), to avoid fear and live virtuously. As much as Lollius may manage, among the many distractions of his professional life (*inter cuncta* 96), to make time for reading, if he pursues a public career, the truly philosophical life (*secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae*, 103) will be closed off to him. Although Horace does not dissuade Lollius from joining in the pursuits of his patron, at the same time, his comments on the young man's professional ambitions striking a lightly-mocking, parrhesiastic note, he hints that true happiness and virtue lies in withdrawal from public life, in the Epicurean garden at Mandela.

This paper has examined some aspects of Horace's reception of classical philosophical pedagogies and critiques of mainstream education. Drawing on a variety of sources which propose moral philosophy as an alternative to traditional education, Horace sets out a therapeutic, virtue-based programme of education in opposition to traditional modes of Roman pedagogy. In the first epistle, he pitches his study of the philosophical 'elements,' the principle doctrines of Epicureanism, against the simple dictation exercises practised at the *ludus litterarius*. Where Horace's elements bring a number of spiritual benefits, the lessons of the 'street-school' are supposed to render social improvement. In the final epistle, Horace's book is pictured as a debased schoolmaster, teaching children the elements at the Roman crossroads, representing the degradation of Horace's serious ethical message once it comes into contact with the world of mainstream education. The two letters to Lollius Maximus sustain the contrast between philosophical and rhetorical education familiar from Plato's *Gorgias* and portray the use of moral-pedagogical techniques, including *parrhesia*, in action. This paper has sufficed to prove both

that the *Epistles* are exceedingly responsive to classical philosophical debates around education and also that the pedagogical concerns of the collection coincide with its use of the epistle form for dramatising a course of moral instruction.

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Morales, H. (2020). Antigone Rising: The Subversive Power of the Ancient Myths

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If, when opening Helen Morales' *Antigone Rising* (2020), you were expecting a book solely on Sophocles' *Antigone,* then you may be pleasantly surprised.[294] *Antigone Rising* is not a book dedicated to an exploration of Sophocles' famous *Antigone*.[295] Instead, Morales, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, from her perspective as both mother and professional, writes about how myth has been used to reinforce social control, or unlock it. Classics meets the contemporary in the most thunderous way: this is not the usual 'why the classics are essential' tome. Gender identity, the #metoo movement, body image, and race politics all meet the classics in Morales' exciting account. [296] Critically, knowledge of the myths discussed is not a pre-requisite of reading the book, as they are explained throughout (and she suggests further reading for those who may wish to become better acquainted with myth); in this way, Morales genuinely makes myth accessible to all.

So why is Antigone still the titular heroine? It is not Antigone's tragic story that Morales is particularly interested in. Rather, she focusses on how Antigone herself creates future characters who embody her spirit: 'I want to dwell on the courage and endurance of Antigone's character. She risks everything for a cause that she believes in and refuses to be cowed either by powerful politicians or what anyone else thinks.' (Morales 2020: xii). That spirit lives on, Morales suggests, in the likes of Iesha Evans who, at a Black Lives Matter protest in Baton Rouge, was photographed in flimsy summer attire facing down police in riot gear; in Greta Thunberg, a teenage environmental change protestor; and in Malala Yousafzia, who was shot by the Taliban for protesting her right to an education.

Despite Antigone's heroic reputation today, and, Morales observes, whilst contemporary audiences are firmly on Antigone's side, classical audiences would not have been so sympathetic. Medical texts from the time, such as *On the Diseases of Virgins*[297], characterised unmarried girls of Antigone's age as mad or unruly. Intriguingly, Morales illustrates how figures like Greta Thunberg have been classified in similar ways. Commenting on how Thunberg's behaviour has been criticised and her Asperger's syndrome dwelt upon, Morales hereby draws a surprising line between Antigone and Thunberg, over two millennia apart. Despite this disablist criticism, Thunberg has transformed it into

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[294]It is important to note that this review does not engage with scholarship, due to how recent the publication is: none has yet been published at the time of writing this review.

[295]For feminist readings of the *Antigone* story, see the fairly recent *Feminist Readings of Antigone* (2010). In many ways, however, Morale's book could be called 'feminist', but not dedicated to a feminist reading of Antigone, per se.

[296]A chapter list for *Antigone Rising* is included at the end of this review.

[297]Morales states that there is not a specific reference for this text, but it was possibly written after Sophocles' *Antigone.* Even if written after Sophocles' play, Morales maintains that it still provides a valuable insight into the attitudes towards girl's behaviour at the time. Morales cites (Flemming and Hanson 1998: 241-252); please see for further information about this source.

something positive, stating that her Asperger's has allowed her to see things 'outside of the box.' (Morales 2020: xiv). This approach might also be applied to Antigone: Morales, whilst agreeing with the ancients that Antigone's 'madness' gives her a political edge, notes that it functions as Antigone's fuel for her single-mindedness. Therefore, 'through this lens, ancient myths don't just enlarge human stories; modern figures and events can also invite us to see myths in new ways.' (Morales 2020: xiv). Connecting through time, then, myth and modernity work in tandem: modernity can allow us to view fresh perspectives of myth, whilst myth also enables us to see modernity, too, from new angles.

The question of who myth 'belongs to' lingers, however. Differentiating a myth from other types of story is precisely its characteristic of repeatedly being told over the centuries, becoming of special significance for culture. Whilst ancient myths may typically be viewed as belonging to an elite—for instance, people who have benefited from a classical education—Morales seeks robustly to challenge this notion. However, far from shying away from the problematic ideological and political history of myth, Morales instead highlights the darker issues which continue to haunt today's culture.

Antigone Rising's first chapter, 'Killing Amazons,' opens starkly: 'This book starts where misogyny ends, with men killing women' (Morales 2020: 1). After reviewing these canonical ancient Greek myths about men killing women, and in particular those of the famous hero, Hercules, Morales, in a highly unsettling and troubling account, links the killings that occur in ancient myth to the present time, recalling the Isla Vista killings in which many students were murdered and injured by a gunman. Whilst there were both male and female victims, Morales writes that it was the killer's views about women that led him to murder. Just before the murder, he sent a detailed manifesto, from 'online "pick-up" sites' (Morales 2020: 5) to a total of 140 people. Acknowledging that although the massacre was the result of one individual, Morales reasons that it was also caused by centuries' telling the same stories about men and women, desire and control. Thousands of years of belief, she suggests, originating from ancient culture, have propagated the belief that violence against women is an essential component for heroism.

In an era of prominent feminists, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and social media campaigns such as #YesAllWomen and #MeToo, it should be the case that we have a 'heightened awareness about how misogyny leads to women being killed.' (Morales 2020: 11). Yet, sadly, this is not the case. Misogyny abounds. Morales goes on to share a deeply personal account of how her daughter Athena was exposed to misogyny in her high school, and how the perpetrators were left unpunished. Morales ends the chapter with a wish that, through tracing patterns and links between ancient and modern beliefs, it will be easier to understand how misogyny operates.

Continuing with the theme of struggles against misogyny, Morales then moves on in a new chapter to consider how, in the ancient comedy, Lysistrata persuades women who belong to opposing city-states to come together and hold a sex strike. Whilst not all modern day strikes that bear similarities to Lysistrata's strike may be as successful, a 2016 strike in Poland yielded results: a reversal of the government's plans to impose a complete ban on abortion.

Furthermore, in the chapter 'Dieting with Hippocrates', we are presented with the familiar issues of body image and dieting culture. Whilst many of us are well acquainted with diets and media headlines that demand we lose weight, it may be surprising to some to learn that the origins of debates about the ideal body might be traced back to antiquity, the discourse dating back to 'famous Greek artist Zeuxis, who lived during the fifth century BCE.' (Morales 2020: 39). Statues of Venus have also influenced the notion of the ideal body. In 1916, a creepy practice of measuring student's bodies to compare if they were a real touchstone to Venus' statue, which was impossible to achieve, occurred in Wellesley College, Massachusetts.

However, diet culture is not the only way to control women's bodies. In 'The Women Controllers', Morales explores how females must exercise caution in how they dress. And a major instigator in enforcing these rules? School dress codes. Giving an example of how her daughter, Athena, was forced to comply with dress codes that stated extraordinarily that girls 'could not have visible bra straps or exposed cleavage or wear short skirts because it was *distracting to the male teachers*' (Morales 2020: 47), Morales ridicules such rules and demonstrates how they belong to a long tradition of policing women's bodies. In both Ancient Greece and Rome, regulators of women's dress, *guinaikonomoi* (literally, women controllers), had the responsibility of ensuing that women both dressed and behaved appropriately in public spaces. While, in most modern countries, there may no longer be government officials enforcing dress codes as they were in antiquity, Morales reasons that numerous widespread cultural discourses and practices still have the same function today: to control women and make them feel ashamed of their body.

Yet, myths have a way of being reappropriated in order to combat the misogynistic power that has previously been wielded through them. In a discussion of the ancient goddess Diana/Artemis, protector of women and girls, Morales leaps forward over two thousand years to 2013, when another Diana emerges in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Instead of a bow and arrow, this new Diana sported a handgun, shot two bus drivers after a history of sexual attacks from transport workers in the area, predominantly on women who were travelling home late at night after working in the city's factories (*maquilas*), and was never caught. Signing a letter, 'Diana, Hunter of Bus Drivers', she decided to announce the action she had taken, because no one else was protecting women. Rather than perceiving women as silent and weak, she wrote, in reality we are not: we are brave. Deciding to take action against the bus drivers, who for these women that regularly travelled on the route, Morales outlines, bus driver equals rapist, meant that women could finally take back control. Morales concludes, however, that women do not want to take revenge in this way. Unable to rely on the police and courts for justice, they are left with little choice: therefore, deciding to become a Diana becomes a necessity, but an extreme last resort, for women to protect themselves.

Classical myth's troubling role in racial ideology, as well as its potential to subvert that history, are also addressed in the book. Morales admits that whilst 'we' own mythology, the 'we' hasn't necessarily been as expansive as it should be (Morales 2020: 101). Focussing on the myth of Aphrodite as an 'icon of female allure' (Morales 2020: 100), and her Roman counterpart Venus, Morales demonstrates how this history has had different meanings for black and white women. White women such as Lady Gaga and Kylie Minogue have positively represented themselves as the goddess of love and desire, but Venus's legacy for black women has been more troubling. Morales recalls the example of Sarah Baartman—who was likely a slave— put on public display in the nineteenth century as the 'Venus Hottentot.' Even in death, Baartman's body was subjected to public scrutiny. The racism subtending certain strands of myth persists. Racism such as this, underpinned by ancient mythology so long, means it is difficult to break free of its chains, with the issue continuing to this very day. Morales highlights how white people feel very strongly about mythological characters being portrayed as white and not black; 'there is a desire to see themselves [white people] reflected in them.' (Morales 2020: 104.) When black actors were cast by the BBC in 2018 to play the roles of Zeus and his three warriors: Achilles, Patroclus and Aeneas in *Troy, Fall of a City* in a television version of Homer's *Iliad,* there was public outcry. Although not directly related to classical antiquity, a similar reaction occurred when Halle Berry was cast to play Ariel (2018) in a live-action remake of *The Little Mermaid,* rather than a white actress.

Providing an answer as to how we move away from the racial ideology traditionally associated with myth, Morales writes: 'It takes a cultural phenomenon to rewrite a cultural script.' (Morales 2020: 104). And just exactly who is this cultural phenomenon? The answer: Beyoncé. Announcing her

pregnancy through a series of photographs in 2017, Beyoncé cast herself as Venus. Crucially, Morales notes, Beyoncé makes Venus share her throne with African deities, elevating them to equal importance. However, this is not the only instance in which Beyoncé changed the cultural encounter with myth. When Beyoncé and Jay-Z took over the Louvre for their music video APESHIT, which Morales names as a protest, they make a point of criticising the exclusion of black culture from the Louvre. Museums, a common way in which many people experience myth through their representation in various cultural and artistic objects, are not always straightforward in the way in which they choose to display and frame myth. Morales points out that not only do Beyoncé and Jay-Z successfully illustrate the exclusion of black culture, but they also make a point of taking up public space, something which black people in America are condemned for doing.

Furthermore, this is not the only aspect of Beyoncé's music video which subverts the racial underpinning of myths. Rather, Morales highlights how Beyoncé's black body dancing against white marble challenges a history of whiteness, beauty and antiquity. Here Morales reframes the issue of our consumption of classical statuary. While modern technological advances have demonstrated that ancient statues were painted in many bright colours, the belief that classical statuary should be purely white persists. Morales even honestly admits that when she saw one of the reconstructed statues in its full coloured glory, she was shocked. Beyoncé's challenge to the assumption that white is (classically) beautiful is clear.

Including more voices that have previously been largely excluded in discussions around myth, the chapter 'Transmythology', examines Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy,* a retelling of Ovid's account of Iphis and Ianthe. Pointing out that this is the only story of lesbian desire to survive from classical antiquity, Morales highlights how in the ancient tale, Iphis' father wished for a boy, but Iphis was born female. Her mother, Telethusa prayed to the god Isis, and Isis advised that Iphsis be raised with her true identity concealed. Once Iphsis was a teenager, her father Ligdus arranged for his 'son' to be married to Ianthe, a local girl. Yet, ancient Roman society did not allow women to marry women. Iphis' mother once again prayed to Isis, and Iphis was transformed into a male. This story, Morales states, seems to leave no place for lesbian desire. Opposed to this, Smith's re-telling finds it a home, and more: leaving behind the 'dodgier elements of the Latin poem' (Morales 2020: 138), it does not focus on the changing of sex, but on the blurring of gender boundaries. Adaptations like Smith's, Morales concludes, are essential; they allow LGBTQIA+ people to see themselves represented in myths that did not previously encompass them.

Overall, then, Morales' book *Antigone Rising* is a compelling success. Ending the book where it begins—with the *Antigone*—Morales reflects that whilst Antigone's story largely ends in tragedy, and her lack of sisterhood is a problem,[298] her spirit lives on, inspiring others. The appeal of Antigone's story, and other myths, as demonstrated by this review, is precisely their ability to be (re)read and (re)told in different ways. Morales' project does exactly that: showing how the subversive power of myths can make them accessible to all, and how viewing them in a new light can allow them to evolve away from their troubling ideological histories. So who does myth belong to? Answer: it belongs to all of us.

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[298]For more on Antigone and sisterhood, see Bonnie Honig's *Antigone, Interrupted* (2013), where Honig explores sorority in greater depth, and refutes the claim that Antigone 'lacks sisterhood.'

Chapter List

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