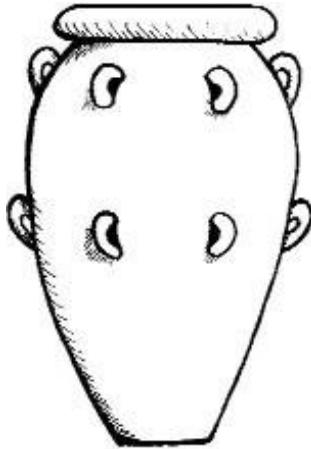


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## ***From the Editor***

ΠΙΘΟΣ (PITHOS): a large earthenware jar used for storage.

Xaipete/Salvete/Hello all!

We are proud to present to you the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of *Pithos*, the student-led journal of the Classics Students Association, after a five-year hiatus.

This year, we decided to revamp the journal a little – for the first time ever, we decided to accept creative submissions as well as written work as a way to break out of the conventional notion of Classics. We spend so much of our studies reading about ancient art and literature that it only seems fair to honor our artists' and authors' memories by using their work to inspire our own.

We hope that the inclusion of creative works sparks an interest in a larger group of people, and we are very excited to show you the amazing artwork we received. I would also like to acknowledge our students who researched and wrote about phenomenal topics – both our research papers this issue focus on women, whose voices have historically been overlooked or dismissed. Additionally, we have some wonderfully modern translations in Latin and Greek that we can't wait for you to read. Finally, as a tribute to the rebirth of the Classics Students Association (which was also on a hiatus), we've included the stories written during our Storytelling Night.

We are so excited to be able to showcase our department's talents, but we couldn't have done this without the help and support of our advisor, Dr. David Smith, and the rest of the faculty at SF State. We would also like to thank all our contributors – we weren't even sure if we would be able to produce *Pithos* this year, but you made it possible with your contributions.

It's exciting to live in a time where the study of Classics is accessible to everyone. When different people with different backgrounds have the opportunity to enter the conversation, our field



flourishes with new ideas and perspectives. So, thank you to everyone reading *Pithos* for the time you are choosing to spend learning something new, and we hope this inspires you to join the greater discussions in the field of Classics.

Multas gratias tibi ago,  
Ruth Varghese  
*Editor-in-Chief*

## *Author Biographies*

**Madeleine O'Connor** is a San Francisco State University alum who is currently a Museology Masters student at University of Washington with an interest in museum ethics, repatriation, and curation. Latin was a historical interest while she attended SF State, graduating *magna cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in art history in 2023.

**Amber-Rose Reed** is a Master of Arts candidate in Comparative and World Literature at San Francisco State University. She received her B.A. from SF State in History and Comparative Literature, with focuses on modern European history and Latin literature. In addition to her study of all things Roman, she writes speculative and historical fiction, as well as film reviews for the *Argus Courier* newspaper.

**Jake Burtnett** is a senior undergraduate student at San Francisco State University majoring in Classics. His interests lie in Greek philosophy, with a particular focus on the pre-Socratics, ancient religious cults, and early Christianity. He's also an aficionado of unorthodox historical theories, namely that the Trojans really did settle in Italy and England, and the Welsh and Irish are descendants of Egyptian/Semitic peoples.

**Dani Poortinga** is an M.A. student in Classics at San Francisco State University. She previously studied History, graduating with a B.A. in 2020 and her first M.A. with distinction in 2023, both at SF State. Her research interests revolve around tragedy, fate, gender, and love.

**Ruth Varghese** is a second-year Classics M.A. student in her final semester at San Francisco State University. She received her B.A. from The University of Texas at Dallas in Political Science where she graduated *cum laude*. Her research interests include the concept of Orientalism and the Other, empires, and colonization.

**Anissa Montelongo** is an M.A. student in the Department of Classics at San Francisco State University. In 2019, she graduated from the University of North Texas with a B.A. in History and a minor in Theatre, as well as with a Certificate in Medieval and Renaissance Studies and a Certificate in Jewish and Israel Studies. Anissa mostly focuses on Latin literature, ancient theatre and clothing. In the future, she hopes to earn her Doctorate.

## A Translation of Catullus 13 by *Madeleine O'Connor*

### AABBA Rhyming Structure

Dear sweet Fabullus, my delightful boy,  
At my home you shall dine if you aren't coy.  
If upon you the gods shine  
And you bring a woman fine,  
And wine, and wit to enjoy

My friend, my wallet is empty,  
But I do have spiders aplenty!  
Though lousy guests spiders make  
For a joke they cannot take  
But with many a joke you tempt me

If you do as I say  
I will give to you this perfume spray.  
It was a gift from Venus of the heaven,  
And to my girl it was given  
But I have since stolen it away!

When you smell it  
You shan't be able to quit.  
You will beg the gods to make you all nose  
So you will forever be in the throes  
Of how delightful I know you shall find it.

Poem 13 reminded me so much of the various odd little fairy tales and nursery rhymes I had read as a child and it, in my mind, seemed perfect to turn into limericks which were so often unserious. I interpreted the Latin in various ways to conjure up more fantastical

images and deviated from dominant translations at times, such as translating “et sale” (“and salt”) as “and wit”, as having salt may be interpreted in that manner.

A large inspiration for this translation came from my not necessarily wrong (but also not quite right) translation of “**plenus sacculus est araneorum.**” I had originally translated this phrase to “a bag of spiders” and that left me thinking, “Why on earth does Catullus have a bag full of spiders?” which is a very nursery-rhyme kind of thing to have. That little mistranslation is what inspired the line about having spiders as dinner guests, and the playful undertones to Catullus’s original Latin provided the following lines about telling jokes, as one may do with friends.

I had grown tired of all the sexual undertones throughout Catullus’s poems and decided to take it literally in terms of the perfume, instead of leaning on a more common understanding that it may actually be alluding to feminine smells. With that, I stuck with an idea that he had stolen it from a girlfriend or lover to use as a bribe for his friend. I worked to preserve the idea of being “all nose,” because again, it’s so odd. Due to the restructuring of Catullus’s original work to make limericks, lines were added here and there to maintain the proper rhyming structure, drawing inspiration from his original. Though some lines and words present here are not direct translations, I worked hard to maintain the same energy and theme throughout my additions.

## **A Villa of One's Own: Sulpicia, women's authorship, and the (mis)use of historical context**

by *Amber-Rose Reed*

When Virginia Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own* that “no woman could have written poetry” while shut up in the dark rooms belonging to the Elizabethan household, it is easy to believe her (Woolf 43). Looking back at the history of the Western world, it is hard to ignore that women have often been sidelined, that their ambitions have been thwarted, and that they have rarely been given the freedoms to pursue the same sort of literary and educational work that their male contemporaries have. Virginia Woolf is not alone in her claim that women in the ages prior to her own did not participate in significant literary production. Statements of this sort often go unchallenged. The past was sexist and racist, as the present still is. Meaningful representation of women, people of color, or queer individuals in literary works of the past is believed to be difficult to find. How are women represented within Elizabethan — or, more on topic to this paper, Roman — literature if there were no women writers to be represented?

In the preface to the *Oxford Anthology of Roman Literature*, the editors briefly touch upon this quandary. They discuss the broad range of genres within their anthology, but confess that despite this, there is “no corresponding diversity in the range of writers represented” (Knox and McKeown vii). Certainly, as they explain, literary pursuits were the province of the wealthy and educated upper class in the Roman world, and this stratum was overwhelmingly male. “Few [women] engaged in literary activities, and just about everything we are told about Roman women is recorded by men,” the preface continues (Knox and McKeown viii). This exploration of the lack of diversity represented in the works selected has a somewhat apologetic feel, as has been noted of anthology makers (Gruesz 336). However, as the preface indicates, with the ancient world being what it was, nothing

can be done; it is only logical therefore that within the *Oxford Anthology of Roman Literature*, of those represented “all, without exception, are men” (Knox and McKeown vii).

The prevailing sentiment in Roman society was indeed that women should keep their lives private (Plant 1) and this belief has carried over into the predominant modern view of the Romans, as it should. Though there were many different ways women lived their lives in the ancient world, depending on time period, social status, and their cultural affiliation, women in the Roman world “had few legal rights and no political power” (Knox and McKeown vii). However, “despite such prejudice, and the perception it produces that all literature was actually written by men,” there were many women writers whose works come down to us, and even more whose words are lost even though we know of them (Plant 1-2). These women include Roman empresses, alchemists, sex workers, and nuns. They were, in many cases, known to their literary contemporaries and those who came after them, including Catullus, Pliny the Elder, and Tacitus. What then to make of the claim that “few [women] engaged in literary activities” and their near complete exclusion — in both selection and mention — in not only the *Oxford* anthology, but many others as well?

In this paper I will seek to address the questions above, but center on one main question, which is: How is it that women have always been present within the literary sphere and yet are rarely allowed, canonically or in the public imagination, to exist? My focus will be on the Augustan-era poet Sulpicia, and the ways in which major ideas like Woolf’s both reflect and refuse to acknowledge women’s historical literary production.

### **The Past is a Foreign (But Still Sexist) Country**

The poems of Sulpicia are the only lyric poems in Latin written by a woman that come down to us today. She lived in the time of Augustus, though we do not have definitive dates for her birth or death, and what we know of her biography is primarily drawn from cross-

referencing the information within her poems to other details we know from the historical record. This allows us to assume her parentage and familial situation; she was likely the daughter of Servius Sulpicius Rufus and Valeria, sister of Messala Corvinus. The persona she adopts is that of a teenage girl, and it seems as if she wrote most of the poems that survive while she was still under her uncle's guardianship (Plant 106-107).

To say the world in which Sulpicia lived was male-dominated would be an understatement. The Roman world was centered on the idea of the *pater* (father): the *paterfamilias*, or head of the household; the *patria*, the fatherland; the *patres conscripti* (Conscript Fathers), the correct Latin way to address the senators of the Roman Republic and later Empire. While women played an important role in society, it was a largely private one. Even in the late Republic and early Empire, when the roles of women were becoming more prominent, women who existed in the public or political spheres walked a fine line, and straying from it was often to their detriment (*Oxford Classical Dictionary* 1623-1624). On first look, it is easy to believe that such a world could not produce strong female voices. Certainly, Virginia Woolf's look back at the Elizabethan households of her forebearers would be just as relevant looking back at Rome, where a woman in Sulpicia's time was not considered *sui iuris* (having autonomy, literally "by one's own right") unless she met a number of conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Sulpicia's head of household was the renowned Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus, either her uncle or great uncle, depending on scholarly views of her parentage (Hallett, *Eleven Elegies*, 46). Corvinus was well-known as a political figure, but even more so as a literary patron, aiding poets like Tibullus and Ovid in their careers, and

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<sup>1</sup> The Emperor Augustus passed a number of laws to this effect to bolster marriage and childbirth, and women's rights were increased when they produced a certain number of children (*Lex Papia Poppaea* and *Lex Julia*). The ability to own and inherit property was likewise regulated by law (*Lex Voconia*).



presumably acting as patron to Sulpicia herself. Sulpicia mentions him directly in poem II: “Iam nimium Messalla mei studiose, quiescas” / “Now, Uncle Messalla, zealous in my care — too zealous — cease and desist,”<sup>2</sup> not only providing a clue to the poet’s identity but also giving a taste of her poetic voice and attitude.

I say “her” definitively, because most scholars now accept the poet Sulpicia was indeed the woman Sulpicia, not an identity assumed by another (male) poet. This acceptance is relatively new, and however many the “most” entails, some scholars have fairly recently argued against women’s authorship in Rome in general, and against Sulpicia as an author in particular (Keith 5-6). A common tactic throughout the centuries has been to deflect authorship away from Sulpicia herself — “Servi Filia Sulpicia” / “Sulpicia, daughter of Servius” as identified in Poem IV — to a male poet; for instance, the elaborate construction detailed in Hubbard’s “The Invention of Sulpicia,” wherein his main claim is that instead of being authentic compositions by Sulpicia, another poet (namely, Tibullus himself) wrote them as a marriage gift of sorts to Sulpicia’s possible husband, the nobleman Cornutus.<sup>3</sup> In her interrogation of scholarly refutations of Sulpicia’s authorship, Allison Keith quotes Joanna Russ: “What to do when a woman has written something? The first line of defense is to deny that she wrote it” (Keith 6n19). This line of defense seems to have been common among several scholars throughout the ages, attributing authorship of the Sulpicia poems to Tibullus himself or another anonymous, certainly male, poet. In one such argument, women’s authorship in ancient Rome is explicitly denied, as in the *Oxford Anthology* discussed above (Keith

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<sup>2</sup> Translations of the Latin, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

<sup>3</sup> From a historical perspective, for every problem this “solves” in terms of Sulpicia’s social status and possible teenage embarrassment, it creates more. In an era where the emperor’s daughter was a well-known partygoer, and only two decades before the seven-times-married Vistilia, I think Hubbard underestimates the independence of the Roman woman’s mind, and likely teenage girls in general. For further discussion on the “willful” Augustan woman in relation to Sulpicia, see Hallet’s “*Eleven Elegies*.”

6). No women, it seems, could have written poetry in Ancient Rome.

This is blatantly untrue, as Pliny, Tacitus, Cicero, and others cite the works of women, such as Tacitus with Agrippina's memoir, Cicero with the letters of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, and Pliny with the medical writings of Salpe. It continues to be untrue moving throughout history, from the fall of the Western Roman Empire through the Elizabethan England that Virginia Woolf cites and up to modern day. The conditions that Virginia Woolf discusses in *A Room of One's Own* do not preclude women's writing, nor does the sort of patriarchal society that could cause a woman to complain, as Sulpicia does, about the lack of her own input on where she spends her time: "Hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo, / arbitrio quamvis non sinis esse meo" / "Take my body away and I'll leave my heart and soul here in Rome / My own opinions? You don't suffer those." Sulpicia uses her abilities to give voice to the constraints on her autonomy, pushing back against the guardianship that gives her little voice in her movements and, ultimately, her future.

Though those conditions do not preclude a woman's writing, they can — and certainly do — make it much more difficult.

### **The Material Ability to Ignore Men**

Virginia Woolf's major thesis in *A Room of One's Own* is that the most important things a woman can have to further her path in literary production is a dedicated, personal workspace and an income, or "a room of her own" and "five hundred a year"<sup>4</sup> as she repeats throughout. These two things essentially grant the writer autonomy that allows for her to expend her energy creating, and not doing the washing up (Woolf 82). In many ways, Sulpicia fits the qualifications Virginia Woolf sets up in *A Room of One's Own*. Though they lived in a deeply patriarchal society, the boundaries of a Roman woman's life could be more flexible depending on the household (*Oxford Classical*

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<sup>4</sup> In 2023 US dollars, this amounts to \$43,350.92.

*Dictionary* 1624). Sulpicia was of a highly educated class, with a place in a very wealthy household. She likely had her own bedchamber — though Roman *cubicula* were often small and made only for sleeping — and access to the educated and wealthy Messala’s library. Furthermore, association with the poets under her uncle’s patronage would be accessible to her and is a fact accepted by most scholars. This is not only stylistically evident (Santirocco 235-6, 238; Plant 106), but also made apparent by her poems’ placement in the *Corpus Tibullianum*. Yet despite all that, Sulpicia’s privileged existence still falls short in some significant ways.

One of the themes in Sulpicia’s work is a seizure of her own autonomy and a refusal to give it up. She lives within the bounds of a society that hems her in with rules of propriety but that her own authenticity demands she ignores, such as her claim in Sulpicia I: “I loathe composing my looks for public opinion” (Sulpicia I, trans. Kline). Even while breaking with the ideal behavior for a Roman maiden, she claims the goddess Venus herself has granted her the love she claims (Sulpicia I), a love that causes her family anxiety over her future if she gives herself to “ignoto ... toro / an unworthy bed” (Sulpicia IV). And yet despite her claims of autonomy, she does still lack control over her own movements, her own space, and ultimately her own money, body, and time, as shown in her frustrations in Sulpicia II above. Even when the threat of the “iter...triste / joyless journey” on her birthday is lifted, it is clear that it was ultimately not her decision: “natali Romae iam licet esse suo” begins with “birthday” and ends with “hers,” kept apart by the impersonal verb “licet / it is permitted”; clearly her presence in Rome was an allowance on the part of someone else (Sulpicia III). As Sulpicia was in contemporary terms a teenager, some lack of independence makes sense, but in the Roman world, this did not have a definite expiration date. Though she is of a monied class and likely had access to both personal space and spending money, Sulpicia’s life was ultimately controlled by someone else — her *paterfamilias*, her Uncle Messalla, and later, her husband.

What Virginia Woolf calls for in *A Room of One's Own* is freedom from others making one's decisions, making unfair claims on one's time and on one's body, and in patriarchal societies such as that of ancient Rome, those with said claims are most often men.

### **Judith Shakespeare, Sulpicia, and the Fantasy of Woman's Authorship**

One of the most memorable pieces of *A Room of One's Own* is the sad tale of Judith Shakespeare, the sister of the playwright created by Woolf as an object lesson of what must have happened to women who had the sort of talent and ambition of her famous, less fictional brother (Woolf 35-36). One can imagine women bright with promise falling under similar circumstances (for that matter, one can imagine such misfortunes falling upon poor men as well<sup>5</sup>). Certainly, some women did find themselves thwarted and angry in untenable situations. Yet, this tale of Judith Shakespeare and Woolf's surrounding arguments about women writers in the early or pre-modern periods has been accepted by many as fact and used repeatedly to deny the existence of those women who did write. The presence of women writers in "national literary histories been less stable than mens", their niches more shallow or precarious, their memory more quickly occluded by time" (Benson and Kirkham 1). This allows for the spinning of tales like that of Judith Shakespeare and the genuine feminist belief that follows it, that women's writing was thwarted by male-dominated society and the lack of rights and freedoms for women. It's hard to argue with this — it is, of course, better for any human to have autonomy and civil and economic rights — and yet the very desire to free also occludes the situation.

In truth, the cited argument above is one facet of a larger overall problem with the view of early and pre-modern women's authorship; that instead of being viewed with an eye to extant sources, historical

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, Judith's story bears some passing resemblance to that of Jude Fawley's tragic family in *Jude the Obscure*, a novel which haunts me to this day.

context, and differing modes and methods, women's authorship is treated as fantasy, a literary scholar's fanfiction about their chosen subjects and periods. This is seen in Virginia Woolf and in the aforementioned story spun by Hubbard about the wedding gifts for the happy bride Sulpicia. It is in some ways easier to accept a lack of women's writing than to grapple with the idea that much of literature is either lost, especially in the case of ancient works, or not easily accessible, such as women's manuscripts that were circulated outside of a larger print culture.

Did Virginia Woolf actually believe her claims that "no women could have written poetry" in Elizabethan England? It is important to recognize that she outright states that the story she weaves is fictional (Woolf 4). While *A Room of One's Own* is an essay, the voice is one of a novelist, and is presented as fact hiding in fictionalized events, or as a fictionalized day in the life of a very real kind of woman. In addition, as Ezell points out, Woolf "is a great novelist, an inspired analyst of the process of literary creation-but she is not a great historian and it is unfair to demand that she act in such a role" (Ezell 587). Regardless of Virginia Woolf's belief in these myths or the "limitations of the historiography" of her day (ibid 587), the idea of women's inability to write has been considered true for centuries by some. Women might look back on history as a place not made for them, but women writers — and women in all fields — have been surviving in hostile territory throughout written history. Can we as scholars do both — look at what might have stopped a Judith Shakespeare and yet allowed for a Sulpicia? Accept the fact of women's authorship while also looking at ways in which women's writing went unrecognized in the canon?

### **Text and Context**

In the introduction to *Agrippina: The Most Extraordinary Woman of the Ancient World*, a biography of empress and memoirist Agrippina the Younger, scholar Emma Southon comments:

“This is our final lesson from this tour of Rome: it is perfectly possible to tell a history of Rome after Lucretia that does not mention women at all. Only men wrote histories<sup>6</sup> ... So if a woman is included in the narrative of the original sources, it is because the male author has made an explicit and definite decision to include her and has a reason for it. Women in the Roman world are never a neutral. They can never simply exist in the public eye.” (Southon xxix)

These comments echo a point Woolf makes — woman “pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history” (Woolf 33). It seems women are left out of history, vaunted in literature, and yet denied when they write that literature. Throughout history, women’s role in literature has been downright paradoxical. But, as Southon says, they are never neutral (Southon xxix). This is true when one turns to the history of literature and the formation of the literary canon. What does it mean to search for women’s voices in a canon that popularly ignores them? Is it tokenizing to find a woman author here or there and put them forth as a candidate for remembrance and study?

In the Wiley edition of *A Room of One's Own*, editors Bradshaw and Clarke discuss some of the inspiration for the essay. The essay/lecture was intended as “a riposte to those who took the intellectual and artistic inferiority of women for granted,” such as Arnold Bennett, whose 1920 book *Our Women* has a chapter titled “Are Men Superior to Women?” which specifically deals with the inferiority of women in the aforementioned areas (Woolf xii). Woolf’s

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<sup>6</sup> This comment, while overwhelmingly true, has an ironic touch as the subject of this biography is known to have written a history of her family that was used by later (male) historians, though the work itself is lost. As a personal note, if I could choose a single work to have survived the ancient world, it would be Agrippina’s history/memoir of the Julio-Claudians.

response to said chapter seems to be the genesis of *A Room of One's Own*, as she noted in her diary after reading Bennett's book (Woolf xii), and of her Judith Shakespeare story, as she lays out a reasoning as to why, in fact, a woman Shakespeare had not yet existed (Woolf xiii).

Interestingly, some of the criticisms leveled at Sulpicia fit this same broad reasoning that inspired Woolf in the first place. Once Sulpicia was widely accepted as a woman poet, criticism of her work as overly emotional became the norm. She has been considered "an essentially artless, amateur poet" and discussions of her style have apologetic tones for her "oddities" (Merriam 11). Her syntax has been described as appealing to "Feminine Latinity" (Santirocco 238) and a number of failings of her work have been called out, from a lack of elision in her verses to a lack of major intertextual and mythological references.<sup>7</sup> Bennett's comments, as quoted in the introduction to the Wiley edition of *A Room of One's Own*, that "in the region of creative intellect there are things which men almost habitually do but which women have not done" (Woolf xii) would feel at home in certain essays about Sulpicia, and his following comment about women poets being "second rate" also fits (Woolf xii).

Unlike Woolf, whose publication and reception history scholars have great access to, we know little-to-nothing of the public response or knowledge of Sulpicia's poetry. Her poems fit within their literary tradition, and intertextual studies of said poems show both what influenced them and what was likely influenced by them (Hallett, *Sulpicia and Her 'Fama'*, 42). She is certainly the only one of her kind — the only woman poet whose works come down to us from her period of Roman history — though we cannot know what else may have perished over the last two millennia. To ignore them as amateurish has been argued against at length, convincingly; to deny their authorship should be seen as backward and pointless. There is no reason to not set

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<sup>7</sup> The latter claim is contradicted by both Keith and Hallett in their cited works. The former was strikingly noticeable when I first turned to translating Sulpicia.

the verses of Sulpicia beside those of her fellow elegists, other than that it does not fit a narrative so commonly espoused.

We should never forget that the milieu of ancient Rome (or Elizabethan England or Edwardian England or even modern America) was male-dominated and unfriendly toward women who put themselves forward as a man might. Not forgetting the place and time in which a subject lived is not the same as using that space and time to define or limit their actions. If we continually “forget” that women have written under less-than-ideal societal circumstances, then how are we ever build a coherent body of women’s writing or writing in general?

Women will always write. They will always read. They will always delve into the study of all topics of interest. Perhaps describing some metaphysical ineffability is not within the purview of a literary paper, but when discussing the ability of women to write in cramped rooms or gilded cages, it might be important to remember that drive is not necessarily a logical thing. Material advantages help, societal advantages help, and voices can certainly be silenced. But for a voice to be silenced, it must first seek to speak, and throughout history, women have sought to speak and succeeded in doing so. Many have been silenced or ignored by their contemporaries or by the succeeding generation of writers and canon-makers; many are still silenced by their lack of inclusion not only in the canon of world literature but also in the discussion of world literature and its history. By increasing our knowledge of the environment women like Sulpicia lived in, with a limited tradition of women writers but a tradition nonetheless, we would give voice to an age-old struggle. Only by taking the opportunity to seek out voices such as Sulpicia’s — a woman, whose voice conventional thought may claim was silenced — that we can get a true idea of the history and literature as a whole. Perhaps then we can stop searching for a fantasy of a thwarted woman to rise up in our verses and instead see the true traces of the women who have come before.



## Sulpicia II

Invisus natalis adest, qui rure molesto  
et sine Cerintho tristis agendus erit.  
Dulcius urbe quid est? an villa sit apta puellae  
atque Arrentino frigidus amnis agro?  
Iam nimium Messalla mei studiose, quiescas,  
heu tempestivae, saeve propinque, viae!  
Hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo,  
arbitrio quamvis non sinis esse meo.

My dreaded birthday has arrived, which will be spent—sadly—  
in the irksome countryside and without Cerinthus.  
What is sweeter than the city? Is our villa really fit for a girl—  
out in Arrentine country at that freezing cold river?  
Now, Uncle Messalla, zealous in my care—too zealous— cease and  
desist;  
It's not time for a vacation!  
Take my body away and I'll leave my heart and soul here in Rome;  
My own opinions? You don't suffer those.

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# A Translation of Various Heraclitus Fragments

by *Jake Burtnett*

## **Fragment 19**

ἀκοῦσαι οὐκ ἐπιστάμενοι οὐδ' εἰπεῖν.  
Knowing not how to hear nor how to speak.

## **Fragment 49a**

ποταμοῖς τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐμβαίνομέν τε καὶ οὐκ ἐμβαίνομεν, εἶμέν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμεν.  
We both step in the same rivers and do not step in, we both are and are not.

## **Fragment 50**

οὐκ ἔμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι.  
Hearing the word, not me, is wise, to agree that all is one.

## **Fragment 79**

ἀνήρ νήπιος ἤκουσε πρὸς δαίμονος ὅκωσπερ παῖς πρὸς ἀνδρός.  
Infantile man understood in the presence of spirit just as much as a child in the presence of man.

## **Fragment 98**

αἱ ψυχαὶ ὀσμῶνται καθ' Ἄϊδην.  
The souls smell down in Hades.

## **Fragment 102**

τῷ μὲν θεῷ καλὰ πάντα καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ δίκαια, ἄνθρωποι δὲ ἅ μὲν ἄδικα ὑπειλήφασιν ἅ δὲ δίκαια.  
To the god all is noble and good and just, but people have taken up the things which are unjust and the things which are just.

**Fragment 106**

(Ἡσίοδος ἠγνώνει) φύσιν ἡμέρης ἀπάσης μίαν οὔσαν.

(Hesiod knew not) the original nature of every day being one.

**Fragment 107**

κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὄτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων.

Bad witnesses for people are the eyes and ears, since they possess foreign souls.

**Fragment 112**

σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μεγίστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας.

The maximal excellence is to keep one's wits about oneself, wisdom is both to speak truthfully and to act knowingly in accordance with original nature.

**Fragment 113**

ξυνόν ἐστι πᾶσι τὸ φρονεῖν.

Thinking is shared by all.

**Fragment 115**

ψυχῆς ἐστι λόγος ἑωυτὸν αὔξων.

Self-multiplying value (λόγος) is of the soul.

**Fragment 116**

ἀνθρώποισι πᾶσι μέτεστι γινώσκειν ἑωυτοὺς καὶ σωφρονεῖν.

It is with all human beings to know themselves and to keep their wits about them.

**Fragment 118**

αῦη ψυχῆ σοφωτάτη καὶ ἀρίστη.

A dry soul is most wise and best.

**Fragment 123**

φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.

Original nature loves to conceal itself.

# "We Are What We Are": The Horror of Feminized Violence in Greek Drama

by *Dani Poortinga*

Medea, debased by her husband's betrayal, laments the circumstances of her gender: "Of all the living creatures with a soul and mind, we women are the most pathetic."<sup>1</sup> Lacking choices, women – or more accurately, wives and mothers – in dire situations, full to the brim with anguish, turn from giving life to taking it. "Most of the time, I know, a woman is filled with fear. She's worthless in a battle and flinches at the sight of steel. But when she's faced with an injustice in the bedroom, there is no other mind more murderous."<sup>2</sup> Women's territory is in the home, with her husband and children. When this territory is threatened, or taken from her, she will act.

Murderous, life-taking women feature in three Greek tragedies: Euripides' *Medea* and *Hecuba*, and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Each tragedy sees a woman taken to her furthest extreme and snapping to revenge. Though the exact natures of their killings vary, their motives as women, as mothers and wives, align. Feminized violence in Greek drama exists on a spectrum of victimhood and culpability; regardless of where a perpetrator of feminized violence falls on the spectrum, she is the subject of fear for usurping the unspoken masculine monopoly on violence, morality, and vengeance. The following pages will first unpack the depiction of violence and gender in each play's context. Then, I will analyze the acceptability of their actions, based on justification and pathos. Finally, I discuss how these incidents, if treated in the modern day, should be classified in the horror genre. It must be stated that discussions of horror are limited, and included specifically to help modern readers connect more closely with the source material.

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<sup>1</sup> Euripides. "Medea," in Euripides: *Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

The violence covered henceforth is defined as deliberate, malicious physical and psychological harm done to persons or people. What distinguishes feminized violence from plain violence? The difference, I argue, is in motive and means. As we lack a definition in current scholarly debate, I tread lightly upon relatively new ground. We shall see three women whose motives come directly from their roles as wives and mothers, and whose executions are distinctly feminine in nature. Medea avenges her marriage and honor as a woman, using poison and a sword. Hecuba avenges her children, acting with a gang of enslaved women using whatever weapons were available. Clytemnestra avenges her child, using a symbol of feminine intelligence, the net, and a symbol of masculine political power, the axe.<sup>3</sup> Further, each woman inflicts punishment upon a man who has wronged her. Using these examples, we can conclude that feminized violence is violence that cannot be divorced from the perpetrator's identity as a woman.

With our theoretical framework and definitions established, we now move to our main source material. I have broken each play into its own section for the sake of sense: first, *Agamemnon's* Clytemnestra, second, *Medea*, and third, *Hecuba*.<sup>4</sup> Following each play's synopsis will be a brief analysis. Then, each instance of violence will be assessed along a spectrum of culpability. Finally, I will briefly make clear the elements of horror therein, to enable modern readers to connect with the original material.

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<sup>3</sup> See Kate Gilhuly, *The Feminine Matrix of Sex and Gender in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) for more on weaving and textiles.

<sup>4</sup> This paper exclusively uses these three tragedies as primary sources. Information about the characters from other sources is omitted, because tragedy is the most recognizable as a form of horror compared to epic or lyric poetry.



**Clytemnestra. “Here lies Agamemnon, my husband, a dead body, work of my righteous right hand.”<sup>5</sup>**

*Agamemnon* begins with a watchman catching sight of a beacon declaring Troy fallen: Agamemnon is coming home to Argos. Clytemnestra, who machinated the signal, begins preparations to kill her husband. Upon his return, she appears ever the perfect, obedient wife, reassuring her husband that she has remained faithful. She orders servants to lay down fine fabrics for Agamemnon to walk upon, thus forcing him to appear prideful. Once he is inside the palace, his lover and captive of war, Cassandra, prophesies his death in the bath at Clytemnestra’s hand. Cassandra, despite also seeing her own death, enters the house, whereupon the Chorus jumps at the sound of cries from within. Clytemnestra re-enters the stage with the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra. Just as Cassandra saw, Agamemnon was in the bath, and Clytemnestra cast a net upon him, and struck him twice with an axe. She and the Chorus argue about the justification of this killing, and Clytemnestra reveals her motive: to punish Agamemnon for sacrificing their child. Clytemnestra’s lover, Aegisthus, appears and claims credit for the plot, a claim which the Chorus accepts but the audience doubts. The Chorus and Aegisthus square up to fight, which Clytemnestra stops. “No more evil. The harvest is in: we have enough pain, enough bloodshed... that’s a woman’s opinion, for what it’s worth.”<sup>6</sup>

Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon in revenge for his killing their child; for this reason, her act is classified as authority-ranking (AR) violence. Following the explanation of Fiske and Rai, AR relationships prescribe a subordinate’s duty and motivation to “respect, obey, and pay deference to the will of superiors,” and superiors a duty to “lead, guide, direct, and protect them.”<sup>7</sup> The authors posit that violence is

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<sup>5</sup> Aeschylus, “Agamemnon,” in *An Oresteia*, trans. Anne Carson (New York: Faber and Faber, 2009), 63.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Page Fiske and Tage Shakti Rai, “Violence is morally motivated to regulate social relationships,” in *Virtuous Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

used to regulate and enforce relationships; in this case, the relationship between father and child. As her father, Agamemnon had the responsibility of protecting Iphigenia. By sacrificing her, he betrayed that bond – a betrayal which Clytemnestra punished with death. Clytemnestra expresses frustration and confusion when the Chorus disagrees with her logic, saying “Isn’t this the man you should have sent into exile, to pay for that polluted deed?”<sup>8</sup> She doubles down, “He paid by the sword for what he himself began.”<sup>9</sup> In Clytemnestra’s eyes, this killing was entirely necessary and just.

Clytemnestra’s motivation for her revenge is distinctly feminine. She kills Agamemnon to avenge her daughter, Iphigenia. It is vital to note that Iphigenia was sacrificed at the advice of a seer, to appease Artemis.<sup>10</sup> Clytemnestra had no right to avenge a lawful, divinely ordained sacrifice, but she was so consumed with rage at the loss of her child that she avenged her anyway. Clytemnestra and Iphigenia become two strands of femininity, interwoven: mother and daughter, and a mother’s love becomes a wife’s hate.<sup>11</sup> Clytemnestra expresses her hopes for her child: “Iphigenia will open her arms and run to meet him in Hades – a father-daughter embrace, won’t that be perfect!”<sup>12</sup> Her killing Agamemnon clearly came from her desire to fix the relationship between her husband and daughter, as established in the previous paragraph. If a woman’s duty is to preserve the family, it follows that Clytemnestra would want to reunite the father and child.

The way Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon is partially feminine, and partially masculine: she lures him to the bath, traps him in a net, and strikes him twice by axe. Like a bait on a hook, she reels

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Press, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 64.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Marinella Calabrese, “Clytemnestra Both Victim and Executioner,” *Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology* 7, no. 1 (2019): 3.

<sup>12</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 69.

Agamemnon in – for surely it is a wife's task to seduce her husband.<sup>13</sup> Cassandra, in her prophecy about Clytemnestra's use of a net, says "what is this appearing a net of hell no the wife is the net."<sup>14</sup> A net, made by weaving, invokes the domain of Athena, goddess of wisdom and women's handicrafts. Further, Clytemnestra's use of an axe invokes masculine political power,<sup>15</sup> intertwining different poles of gendered violence into one act. While the axe masculinizes the kill, characters around Clytemnestra (and Clytemnestra herself) refuse to treat her as anything but a petty woman, killing her husband for womanly reasons. The Chorus says of Agamemnon, "Our guardian is gone, the gracious man who for a woman's sake suffered so much and by a woman's hand is now cut down."<sup>16</sup> The act of killing Agamemnon cannot be divorced from the hand of a woman. Clytemnestra refers to her own womanhood with scorn, "Such are my woman words" and "that's a woman's opinion."<sup>17</sup> While these comments are not outright misogynistic, their inclusion carries weight. She recognizes that her words and actions are inseparable from her femininity. Despite her lover's attempts to claim credit, it is clear that Clytemnestra is responsible; Aegisthus does not appear until the end, and had no hand in killing Agamemnon. He may have a tie to the curse of Atreus, but he can make no claim on the Agamemnon's murder. Clytemnestra's acts are further feminized by the Chorus, a crowd of men.<sup>18</sup> If we consider the Chorus as a guide or even surrogate for the audience, the masculine lens through which we see events unfold alienates Clytemnestra as a woman. Without Clytemnestra's gender, Agamemnon would not have died at her hand, making his killing a distinct act of feminized violence.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Davies, "Aeschylus' Clytemnestra: Sword or Axe?" *Classical Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1987): 75.

<sup>16</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 23 and 73, respectively.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 9.

**Medea. “[I] have the knowledge, not to mention woman’s nature: for any kind of noble deed, we’re helpless; for malice, though, our wisdom is unmatched.”<sup>19</sup>**

*Medea* begins with her nurse’s pity: Jason has broken his marriage vows and married the princess of Corinth. Medea, who killed her brother and was exiled from her home of Colchis for Jason, is distraught. Her lamentations are so visible and so intense that the king of Corinth, fearing her wrath, resolves to exile Medea and her children. Twice-exiled, Medea begs for a day to make preparations, which the king reluctantly grants. Medea uses the time for preparations – preparations for the king’s, his daughter’s, and Jason’s deaths. Jason walks in on Medea plotting and instigates an explosive argument. He tells her that she brought the exile upon herself by speaking ill of the royal family and claims to have married the princess only in Medea’s and the children’s best interest. When Medea bristles at the outlandish claim, he doubles down, arguing that women have no use for children. Little does he know, he has planted a seed in Medea’s head. After their argument, and after Jason storms out, an ally of Medea’s stumbles upon her. Medea begs for shelter in his kingdom, which he grants, thus giving her room to execute her amended plan. No longer does she want to kill Jason; instead, she plans to kill their children. The Chorus begs Medea to change her mind, but she refuses, after briefly wavering. She makes a show of appearing apologetic before Jason and sends her children to gift poisoned garments to Jason’s new wife. The poison takes the king and the princess both, and Medea kills her children by sword. The Chorus informs Jason of what has transpired, and he bewails his suffering. Medea gloats, and flies off with her children’s bodies on her grandfather Helios’ chariot, thereby denying Jason the ability to bury and mourn them properly.

Medea punishes Jason for breaking marriage vows made before the gods, making the murders AR violence. By remarrying, Jason

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<sup>19</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Avarlien, 71.

committed a grave sin against the gods.<sup>20</sup> “You realize full well you broke your oath.”<sup>21</sup> Oath-breaking is no small crime. The Chorus agrees: “You have betrayed your wife. You’ve been unjust.”<sup>22</sup> Not only does Jason break his oaths, he also personally insults Medea over and over again: “What do *you* need children for?”<sup>23</sup> “The whole female race should not exist. It’s nothing but a nuisance.”<sup>24</sup> “You brought [exile] on yourself.”<sup>25</sup> “You’d be an idiot to refuse this offer.”<sup>26</sup> Though not necessarily punishable by law, his blatant disrespect and disdain for Medea dishonors their marriage, a relationship which should be mutually respectful. Medea, as a proud woman who saved Jason’s life, sacrificed her livelihood in Colchis to marry Jason, and traveled with him to a foreign land, views Jason’s betrayal as a disrespect of an authority that she established over him.<sup>27</sup> As such, she punishes him by returning the favor: she destroys his livelihood and ensures he will have a difficult time establishing another. Further, by allowing Medea and their children to be exiled, Jason betrays his responsibility as a father. Because he ignores his children, Medea takes them away permanently.

Medea’s motive rests in her identity as a wife, and directly contradicts her role as a mother. Throughout the play, Medea and those around her (especially Jason) acknowledge that she is driven by her gender:

“They say that we [women] lead safe, untroubled lives at home while they do battle with the spear. They’re wrong. I’d rather take my stand behind a shield three times than go through childbirth once.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 71.

“But you’re a woman – you’re all the same!”<sup>29</sup>

“This woman, destroyer.”<sup>30</sup>

Jason’s disrespect of Medea’s identity as wife outweighs her identity as mother, as explicitly said by the Chorus: “You’re a mother, yet you will slaughter them, your own children, for the sake of your bridal bed, the bed that your husband now shares with somebody else.”<sup>31</sup> Despite her love for her children, Medea’s outrage at Jason’s betrayal drives her to hurt herself and her children, knowing it hurts Jason too. She reflects on the pain she experienced in motherhood: “I raised you, children, but it was no use; no use, the way I toiled, how much it hurt, the pain of childbirth, piercing like a thorn.”<sup>32</sup> Medea’s affection as a mother nearly convinces her to change her mind: “Why should I, just to cause their father pain, feel twice the pain myself by harming them?”<sup>33</sup> Her wavering is temporary, but notable nevertheless.

The means by which Medea executes her revenge reflect her femininity. She sends her children to the princess with poisoned garments disguised as a gift – women’s garments. Medea sends Jason’s new wife a fine robe and a golden crown, poisoned to kill the princess and anyone who touches her after she puts them on.<sup>34</sup> As an indirect method of killing, poison rings feminine. Further, disguising the poison as a gift reminds readers of Clytemnestra, luring her husband to the bath and trapping him in a net. Again, fabric indicates feminine trickery and cleverness. Medea using the sword to kill her children is an interesting contrast – perhaps by using the sword, she is telling Jason that he brought this misery upon himself. Switching from feminine means to masculine distances Medea’s gender from the infanticide. However Medea may distance her womanhood from killing her

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 107-110.

children, nobody else does.

**Hecuba. “Revenge is what I want –  
I’d slave my whole life for it!”<sup>35</sup>**

Hecuba, former queen of Troy, faces absolute reversal of her fortunes. Where she once was queen, now she is slave; where she once was mother to many, now she loses her children in the opening pages of her story. Her daughter, Polyxena, is sacrificed to the shade of Achilles. Her last son, Polydoros, washes up on the shore, having been killed by a guest-friend, Polymestor. Unable to avenge her daughter but fully able to avenge her son, Hecuba solicits Agamemnon’s help, persuading him to lend her what assistance he can. Hecuba tricks Polymestor into entering a tent full of enslaved Trojan women, who kill his sons and blind him. Polymestor appeals to Agamemnon, but because Polymestor had betrayed the bond of guest friend, Agamemnon rules his punishment just. Hecuba buries her children and remains a slave, having avenged her son.

Hecuba exacts vengeance on Polymestor, who broke the bond of guest friend, a vitally important social convention for the Greeks. Punishing Polymestor for transgressing against a god-ordained practice categorizes this violence as AR. Polymestor was responsible for taking care of Polydoros, but instead, he killed him.<sup>36</sup> Hecuba’s case is rife with hierarchies and power imbalances – the guest-friend bond is not the only relevant relationship. Hecuba, a slave, supplicates herself before a Greek master, invoking another social convention. “If you flout this law now, if men go unpunished who murder guests, who dare to violate the holy things of gods, then there is no justice among human beings.”<sup>37</sup> Hecuba begs for Agamemnon’s assistance on the grounds that Polymestor’s crime must go punished, else the honor of all men be diminished. Further, she also uses Agamemnon’s affection

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<sup>35</sup> Euripides. “Hekabe,” in *Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides*, trans. Anne Carson (New York: New York Review of Books, 2009), 132.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

for her daughter, Cassandra, as reasoning to help her.<sup>38</sup> As Cassandra's captor and lover, Agamemnon had good reason to acquiesce to her mother's plea. Hecuba takes advantage of every power structure she possibly can, having lost all authority herself.

Hecuba's motivation is inseparable from her identity as a mother. When she learns of her most recent loss, she mourns her own death, "I am lost. Annihilated."<sup>39</sup> Even her own daughter, going to her death, pities her mother above herself. Hecuba is so consumed by grief at the loss of her children that she turns to taking life instead of giving it. Even her choice to kill Polymestor's children instead of the man himself is feminine: she has lost her children, so she will force him to lose his. At Polymestor's pained cries, she says, "You are in pain, so what? What about my pain, my boy?"<sup>40</sup> Further, the way Hecuba executes her revenge is feminine – she organizes her fellow enslaved Trojan women to trick Polymestor and his sons, much like Clytemnestra tricked her husband into the bath, and Medea tricked Jason's new wife into accepting poisoned gifts. Trickery and collective violence marks Hecuba's acts as distinctly womanlike, at least as depicted by Greek literary conventions.

### **He Had It Coming: Sins, Victims, and Blame**

With our murderesses established, we move now to situating them on a spectrum of victimhood and culpability. I propose two axes for such a spectrum: in-text justification and pathos. In-text justification is defined as the severity of the sin that the murderess punishes. Pathos is the level of sympathy given to the murderess by other characters, and level of repentance expressed by the murderess. In increasing order of severity, Hecuba is the most justified and the most pitied; Medea is less justified but still somewhat pitied; Clytemnestra is the least justified and least pitied.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 156.



First, I will plot each murder on the justification axis. Hecuba blinds Polymestor and kills his sons in revenge for his killing her last son and leaving him unburied. Polymestor's supreme sin was killing a guest friend, an act to which Agamemnon says, "Now perhaps with you it's a light thing to kill a guest friend, but for Greeks a serious crime."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Agamemnon rules his punishment as just, following the conventions of *xenia* as ruled by Zeus.<sup>42</sup> *Xenia*, the customary hospitality toward guests, went beyond social expectation, even being more important than military opposition in war.<sup>43</sup> In violating *xenia*, Polymestor incurred a just wrath. The punishment fit the crime: as he took her child, Hecuba took his. Further, how Hecuba punishes Polymestor indicates an agreement: she gathers a group of female slaves – the very Chorus – to blind Polymestor and kill his sons. The collective action shows that Hecuba successfully persuaded a good number of women who agreed with her plan to work with her.

Jason's sin, while not quite as vicious as his punishment, was also rather severe. By turning away from his wife and children, he broke a god-ordained oath. "Poor Medea, mournful and dishonored, shrieks at his broken oaths, the promise sealed with his right hand (the greatest pledge there is) – she calls the gods to witness just how well Jason has repaid her."<sup>44</sup> Medea invokes Themis and Artemis to witness the injustice, Titan of order and justice and goddess of childbirth, respectively.<sup>45</sup> Medea matches Jason's slight – she ruins his life as he ruined hers. She abandoned her father and her city, thereby stripping herself of resources and comfort, so she does the same to him in return.<sup>46</sup> Further, Creon invokes her wrath by violating *xenia*. He banishes Medea from Corinth on suspicion of a crime she had not (yet)

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<sup>41</sup> Euripides, *Hekabe*, trans. Anne Carson, 155.

<sup>42</sup> Simon Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 81-82.

<sup>43</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Caroline Alexander (New York: Ecco, 2016), 189.

<sup>44</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, 62.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 67

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 68, 94.

committed.<sup>47</sup> Medea punishes Creon by killing him and his daughter, a tit-for-tat retaliation in her eyes. While Creon and Jason deserved punishment (again, in her eyes), Medea goes the extra mile, doubling the pains dealt to her. She says it herself – “I treat my friends with kindness, and come down hard on the heads of my enemies. This is the way to live, the way to win a glorious reputation.”<sup>48</sup> Her motivation is not purely moral, but petty, thereby losing some, though not all, justification. Medea’s use of poison and the sword also have bearing on her justification. Her lineage as a granddaughter of Helios enabled her to poison the garments she “gifted” to the princess, the means being twofold feminine: an indirect murder by poison, and fine clothing. Then, she killed her children by sword. This particular means serves to masculinize her violence, but may also be attributed to her punishment of Jason. Medea uses a weapon Jason would be familiar with, perhaps a way to tell him that he brought the punishment on himself.

We turn to the woman with the least justification, Clytemnestra. Agamemnon’s crime, sacrificing Iphigenia, was demanded by Artemis: “she wants to instigate another sacrifice, a lawless joyless strifeplanting sacrifice that will turn a wife against a husband.”<sup>49</sup> While the exact reasoning for her demand is unclear (it is given as prophecy, which is characteristically opaque in meaning), it is made certain that Agamemnon was acting in accordance with divine authority. Therefore, Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigenia was justified in the eyes of the gods – but not in Clytemnestra’s. To her, Agamemnon’s death was entirely justified and necessary, a “work of [her] righteous right hand.”<sup>50</sup> She condemns Agamemnon’s spilling his own blood, “without a second thought, as though it were a goat dying.”<sup>51</sup> Over and over again she deflects any blame from herself, always citing

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>49</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 64.

Agamemnon's sin. "His death was nothing unworthy!"<sup>52</sup> Clytemnestra defies the will of the gods by killing her husband for following divine directions. She is further damned by her weapon(s) of choice, the net and the axe. As explored earlier, her use of both male and female symbols indicates a blurring of gender roles. It must also be noted that Clytemnestra premeditated a complex plan to exact her revenge: she constructed a signal fire to warn her when she should begin preparations,<sup>53</sup> she laid out fine fabrics and forced Agamemnon to trample them,<sup>54</sup> lures him to the bath where traps him in the net and kills him by axe, and then boldly displays his body before the people.<sup>55</sup> The premeditation and lack of repentance with which she kills Agamemnon rob her of any justification.

Now, we move to pathos invoked for each murderess, in ascending order of sympathy. As such, Clytemnestra comes first, being the murderess to receive the least pathos by the author. From the beginning, characters around Clytemnestra criticize her. Their primary complaint is her failings as a perfect wife, with the first reference to her being "a certain manminded woman."<sup>56</sup> Upon her first entrance, the Chorus greets her with "I am here to reverence your power, Klytaimestra (sic). When the king is away one must honor the queen."<sup>57</sup> At first, this seems to be a sort of compliment, but as the story continues, Clytemnestra's masculinity is clearly a fault: "You're like a bulldog. It's not very feminine."<sup>58</sup> When she does behave like a woman, Agamemnon derides her, saying "Don't pamper me with your female ways."<sup>59</sup> Clytemnestra, regardless of how she acts, cannot garner sympathy from anyone in her story, she cannot do anything

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 41.

right. Even the only other woman in the play, Cassandra, says of her “he’s married to murder here,”<sup>60</sup> and “She has the nerve, she is a killer, female against male.”<sup>61</sup> Further, Clytemnestra’s own words condemn her. She rejoices in the gore of her deed “as he sputters out his life in blood he sprays me with black drops like dew gladdening me no less than when the green buds of the corn feel showers from heaven!”<sup>62</sup> The curse of Atreus may lend some reasoning behind the killing, but Clytemnestra’s “truce with the demon of this house” still pins her as the culprit.<sup>63</sup> Regardless of how justified she (or the audience) feels her act was, the complete lack of empathy shown to Clytemnestra in the text denies any attempt to absolve her of blame.

Medea, on the other hand, despite the horror of her infanticide, still garners some pathos in the text. The majority of sympathy comes from the Nurse and the Chorus, who are also Medea’s harshest critics. The Nurse says of the woman, “Poor Medea, mournful and dishonored . . . She won’t touch food; surrendering to pain, she melts away her days in tears . . .”<sup>64</sup> and “I know her. I’m petrified to think what thoughts she might be having now . . .”<sup>65</sup> Those around Medea know her temperament; they know what she is capable of. Before she reveals her plan to kill her children, the Chorus cheers for her: “The race of women will reap honor.”<sup>66</sup> Once she details her scheme, the Chorus changes their tune, begging her not to commit this sin against “the laws of mankind.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, the Chorus and the other characters around Medea (barring Jason, Creon, and the princess) pity her, understanding that revenge is just, but not the means by which she intends to exact it. The remainder of the play sees the Chorus slowly losing pity for Medea,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>64</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, 62.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 94.

lamenting her every action and word thenceforth. “I cry for your pain in turn, poor thing; you’re a mother, yet you will slaughter them, your own children...”<sup>68</sup> An interesting exception to the hostility shown to Medea is Helios, her grandfather, sending a chariot to help her escape.<sup>69</sup> The Chorus explains that this action indicates divine authorization of Medea’s infanticide: “the gods find a way, against all expectation, to do what they want, however surprising.”<sup>70</sup> The will of the gods contradicts the opinion of the audience and the other characters. The relative sympathy shown to Medea humanizes – though does not by any means forgive – her horrific acts.

Hecuba is by far the most sympathetic of the three murderesses. In the opening monologue, her son Polydoros’s shade says, “Your grief is as great as your splendor was.”<sup>71</sup> As the once-queen of Troy, so now is she the queen of misery. Agamemnon, when Hecuba supplicates him for help in avenging her son, says outright “I do pity you! What woman has had luck as bad as this?”<sup>72</sup> Hecuba herself laments her circumstances, “Shame inside me, shame all around me. Lost.”<sup>73</sup> The Chorus of enslaved Trojan women is so sympathetic of Hecuba that they execute her revenge by her side.<sup>74</sup> To Polymestor they say, “Degradation is the price you pay.”<sup>75</sup> Every character in her story (except her victims) takes pity on Hecuba. Agamemnon, in his last spoken words to Hecuba, calls her “creature of sorrow.”<sup>76</sup> Compared to Medea and Clytemnestra, it is quite clear that Hecuba is more victim than victimizer. Despite the pathos used to describe her, however, she is still a subject of fear.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>71</sup> Euripides, *Hekabe*, trans. Anne Carson, 103.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 146,149.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 159.

Feminized violence induced fear in Greek audiences because it depicted willful, independent women wielding their intelligence and morals over men. Clytemnestra, Medea, and Hecuba all face criticism for being bossy or otherwise headstrong. Hecuba, when she learns that her daughter is to be sacrificed, says that she must be killed with her daughter, to which Odysseus says “Must? You’re giving the orders now?”<sup>77</sup> Her transgression against the Greeks’ authority makes clear that she submits to her captors only at her own will. She manipulates men into bending to her desires, convincing Agamemnon to help her exact revenge and convincing Polymestor to step into a trap. Upon executing her plan, Agamemnon is shocked, saying, “*You*, Hecuba? You had the nerve for this?”<sup>78</sup> Hecuba’s willpower and determination make her a force to be reckoned with. Despite her circumstances, Hecuba is not afraid to take advantage of what she can. Medea, too, is known to be headstrong, even her nurse calling her “a terror.”<sup>79</sup> Medea embraces her own character, telling Jason to his face that she is “a curse to [his] family.”<sup>80</sup> Her unrelenting fury is good reason to avoid her ire, but as we know, Jason makes himself a target. Medea wants to accomplish her goals so badly that she hurts herself just to hurt Jason, too – “Let no one think that I’m a simpleton, or weak, or idle – I am the opposite.”<sup>81</sup> Her fear of her enemies laughing at her drives her to do awful, awful things.<sup>82</sup> Finally, Clytemnestra is repeatedly derided for her pushiness. Agamemnon, bending to her desires, says “I am compelled by your will...”<sup>83</sup> Her husband, distinctly an authority, obeys her. Cassandra says it best: “She has the nerve, she is a killer.”<sup>84</sup> Clytemnestra is bold and unafraid. She defies the will of the gods; not even fear of divine wrath stops her from taking her revenge. Each

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>79</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, 63.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>83</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 56.

woman refuses to be passive, forcing those around them into submission – some manipulated, others outright killed.

Each of our murderesses exhibit superior intellect over their victims, showing a combination of wit and skill. Hecuba's skill in rhetoric humiliates Polymestor, "It seems I am beaten by a woman, a slave! Stepped on by the lowest of the low!"<sup>85</sup> Hecuba's status as an enslaved woman makes her strength of morality a point of dishonor for Polymestor. Medea is exiled from Corinth because the king fears her intelligence: "I'm afraid of you. You could hurt my daughter, even kill her. Every indication points that way. You're wise by nature, you know evil arts, and you're upset..."<sup>86</sup> Medea's wisdom makes her a threat. Clytemnestra, schemer and weaver who invented the signal fire alerting her of Troy's fall, posed a threat for her superior intellect. She successfully lies to Agamemnon's face and lures him to his death.<sup>87</sup> Each of these women trick men into following their commands, demonstrating their intelligence. Their trickery lies in the knowledge that (most) men around them assume them to be simple women, feeling more than they think.<sup>88</sup> Audiences walk away from seeing these plays worried that perhaps their wives are smarter than they let on.

While willful and intelligent women are intimidating on their own, what makes Clytemnestra, Medea, and Hecuba so scary is that they are right. As discussed in the section about the justification of their violence, each woman has valid reason to punish their victims. Polymestor violated a deeply important social custom for the sake of greed.<sup>89</sup> Such a grave sin, as ruled by Agamemnon, required punishment. Jason violated his marriage vows, sinning against the gods. As Medea lost everything for Jason, so she forced him to lose the same. Agamemnon killed his own child, and faced his family curse.

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<sup>85</sup> Euripides, *Hekabe*, trans. Anne Carson., 156.

<sup>86</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, 72.

<sup>87</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 62-63.

<sup>88</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, 99.

<sup>89</sup> Euripides, *Hekabe*, trans. Anne Carson, 154.

Each of these women exacted punishments on men who deserved them. Above all else, feminized violence scared Greek men because women broke gender expectations to punish men who deserve to be punished – perhaps not with murder in the eyes of the audience, but for the perpetrators, these punishments fit the crimes. These punishments showcase that men did not have a monopoly on morality and violence, and that sinning would not be forgiven. Agamemnon did not get away with killing his daughter, taking a prisoner as his lover, and did not escape his family’s curse. Jason did not get away with marrying another woman, forsaking his children, and allowing them to be exiled with his former wife. Polymestor did not get away with killing his guest friend out of greed. Indeed, the women behind these examples of feminized violence are acting in accordance with divine authority. Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon in line with a god-ordained curse, and at the will of Artemis.<sup>90</sup> When their son kills Clytemnestra in revenge for his father in another play, the Furies side with Clytemnestra (until they are convinced otherwise).<sup>91</sup> Medea escapes Corinth with the assistance of her grandfather, Helios, indicating divine agreement.<sup>92</sup> Polymestor exploited a holy power imbalance for his own gain.<sup>93</sup> Men feared facing consequences at the hands of women.

These women likely did not exist, and these events likely never happened, but their depictions are crucial to understand what scared the ancient Greek men watching their stories unfold onstage. Audiences attending these dramas would recognize themselves in the characters they see.<sup>94</sup> “In Greek tragedies every story becomes

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<sup>90</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Anne Carson, 15-16.

<sup>91</sup> Rachel M. E. Wolfe, “Woman, Tyrant, Mother, Murderess: An Exploration of The Mythic Character of Clytemnestra in All Her Forms,” *Women’s Studies* 38, no. 6 (2009): 715.

<sup>92</sup> Devrim Sezer, “Medea’s Wounds: Euripides On Justice And Compassion,” *History of Political Thought* 36, no. 2 (2015): 227.

<sup>93</sup> Anhalt, *Enraged*, 167.

<sup>94</sup> Anhalt, *Enraged*, 166.



universal history and every character is always current.”<sup>95</sup> The truth to the stories is irrelevant to whether audiences could identify with them. Myth gives us language to talk about things that would otherwise be kept silent: women killing their children (Medea), their husbands (Clytemnestra); slaves hurting their masters (Hecuba); generations of trauma (the curse on the family of Atreus). These myths show human beings pushed to their very limits, to the extremes, and therefore cores, of their characters.

Art today accomplishes similar tasks to ancient drama. Feminized violence is common in modern horror films— though now audiences are split in opinions of them. Ari Aster’s *Midsommar* (2019) features the protagonist punishing her cheating boyfriend by having him burned alive.<sup>96</sup> Compare her to Clytemnestra. She kills Agamemnon for sacrificing their child and taking home a female captive of war, thereby disrespecting Clytemnestra’s wife – and motherhood. David Fincher’s 2014 film *Gone Girl* depicts the protagonist’s wife, Amy Dunne, framing him for her own disappearance and murder for cheating on her and failing to live up to her expectations.<sup>97</sup> She holds their unborn child hostage until he behaves the way she wants him to. Compare Amy to Medea killing her and Jason’s children for cheating on her. Cult horror is full of films dedicated to women punishing men for failing them in some way. Reactions to these stories are mixed, but based in personal experience, women tend to recognize themselves in these acts of petty, personal revenge, while men fear retribution.

Myths do not need to be true to show truths. Depictions of the murderesses Medea, Clytemnestra, and Hecuba show that Greek men feared their wives wielding superior morality and intelligence against them. While each of our three murderesses were vastly different

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<sup>95</sup> Calabrese, “Clytemnestra Both Victim and Executioner,” 2.

<sup>96</sup> *Midsommar*, directed by Ari Aster (2019; A24), film.

<sup>97</sup> *Gone Girl*, directed by David Fincher (2014; 20th Century Fox), film.

women, regardless they were scary. They show us that women had few options, few choices. “Of all the living creatures with a soul and mind, we women are the most pathetic.”<sup>98</sup> But a mother can take life, just as she can give it. A wife can hate her husband, just as she can love him. A queen may become a slave, but she does not forget how to lead. Those passions, those feelings which men considered unique to women, grow barbs. What lies behind a wife’s smile? What happens to a home when a husband goes to war for ten years? Who do soldiers come home to? Medea knows: “We women – oh, I won’t say that we’re bad, but we are what we are.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, 70.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

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## A Translation of Taylor Swift, “august” in Greek by *Ruth Varghese*

ἢ τοῦ ἀλμυροῦ ἀέρος καὶ τοῦ ἰοῦ ἐπὶ θύρα σοῦ,  
οὔποτε ἐγὼ ἐδεήθην μᾶλλον.  
σιγαί εἰσι, “Βεβαίους περὶ τούτου;”  
“Οὐ οὔποτε πεποίηκα πρίν.”

ἀλλὰ δύναμαι ὄρᾶν ἡμᾶς ἀπονουμένους ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ,  
ὀπώρα διέφυγεν εἰς ἀκαρὲς χρόνου  
γὰρ οὔποτε αὐτὴ ἦν ἐμοί.  
καὶ δύναμαι ὄρᾶν ἐλικτὰς ἡμᾶς ἐν τῇ χλαίνῃ,  
ὀπώρα γεῦσαι ὡς ἀσκὸς οἴνου  
γὰρ οὔποτε σύ ἦσθα ἐμοί.

τὸ νῶτον σοῦ ὑπὸ τῷ ἡλιῷ,  
ἐβουλόμην γράφειν τὸ ὄνομα ἐμοῦ ἐπὶ αὐτοῦ.  
γράψεις ὅτε εἶ ἐν διδασκαλείῳ;  
μιμνήσκομαι ἐγὼ νομίσαι ὅτι ἔσχον σέ.

ἀλλὰ δύναμαι ὄρᾶν ἡμᾶς ἀπονουμένους ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ,  
ὀπώρα διέφυγεν εἰς ἀκαρὲς χρόνου  
γὰρ οὔποτε αὐτὴ ἦν ἐμοί.  
καὶ δύναμαι ὄρᾶν ἐλικτὰς ἡμᾶς ἐν τῇ χλαίνῃ,  
ὀπώρα γεῦσαι ὡς ἀσκὸς οἴνου  
γὰρ οὔποτε σύ ἦσθα ἐμοί.

πάλαι ὅτε μεταβάλλομεν τὸ εἶναι βελτίων,  
τὸ βούλεσθαι ἦν ἱκανή, αὐτὸ ἦν ἱκανὴ ἐμοί.  
ζῆν ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδι τῶν πάντων.  
καθαιρῶ ἄν τύπους εἰ γράψοις,  
καὶ λέγεις, “συντύγχανε ἐμοὶ ὀπισθεν τῆς ἀγοράς.”  
θερὸς ἔρος καὶ λέγοντες “ἡμᾶς” τετελευτήκασιν.  
καὶ γὰρ σὺ οὐ ἦσθα ἐμοὶ ἀφιέναι.  
σὺ οὐ ἦσθα ἐμοὶ ἀφιέναι.

ἀλλὰ δύναμαι ὄρᾱν ἡμᾶς ἀπονουμένους ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ,  
ὀπώρα διέφυγεν εἰς ἀκαρὲς χρόνου  
γὰρ οὔποτε αὐτὴ ἦν ἐμοί.  
καὶ δύναμαι ὄρᾱν ἐλικτὰς ἡμᾶς ἐν τῇ χλαίνῃ,  
ὀπώρα γεῦσαι ὡς ἀσκὸς οἴνου  
γὰρ οὔποτε σύ ἦσθα ἐμοί, οὔποτε ἐμοί.

καὶ μιμνήσκεις;  
μιμνήσκεις ὅτε ἦλθον καὶ εἶπον,  
“ἔλθε εἰς ὄχημα;”  
καὶ τότε καθεῖλον τύπους ἐμοῦ εἰ ἂν γεγραφοῖς.  
πάλαι ὅτε ἔζων τῇ ἐλπίδι τῶν πάντων,  
τῇ ἐλπίδι τῶν πάντων.  
“συντυγχανε ἐμοὶ ὀπισθεν τῆς ἀγοράς.”

Salt air, and the rust on your door,  
I never needed anything more.  
Whispers of "Are you sure?"  
"Never have I ever before"

But I can see us lost in the memory,  
August slipped away into a moment in time  
'Cause it was never mine.  
And I can see us twisted in bedsheets,  
August sipped away like a bottle of wine  
'Cause you were never mine.

Your back beneath the sun,  
Wishin' I could write my name on it.  
Will you call when you're back at school?  
I remember thinkin' I had you.  
But I can see us lost in the memory,  
August slipped away into a moment in time  
'Cause it was never mine.

And I can see us twisted in bedsheets,  
August sipped away like a bottle of wine  
'Cause you were never mine.

Back when we were still changin' for the better,  
Wanting was enough.  
For me, it was enough.  
To live for the hope of it all,  
Cancel plans just in case you'd call  
And say, "Meet me behind the mall."  
So much for summer love and saying "us,"  
'Cause you weren't mine to lose.  
You weren't mine to lose, no.

But I can see us lost in the memory,  
August slipped away into a moment in time  
'Cause it was never mine.  
And I can see us twisted in bedsheets,  
August sipped away like a bottle of wine  
'Cause you were never mine.  
'Cause you were never mine, never mine.

But do you remember?  
Remember when I pulled up and said, "Get in the car"  
And then canceled my plans just in case you'd call?  
Back when I was livin' for the hope of it all, for the hope of it all.  
"Meet me behind the mall."

## A Cross-Stitch of the Colosseum and a Translation of Catullus 7

by *Anissa Montelongo*



A 2x2 cross-stitch rendering of the Colosseum in a 4x4 hoop.

Built under the Flavian Dynasty (69-96 CE), the Colosseum was the largest free-standing amphitheater in the Roman world. It is located at the city center and sits at an impressive 620 x 513 ft with 80 entrances and is estimated to have held 50,000 spectators at any given time. The Colosseum is best known for hosting gladiatorial games where spectators would watch and place bets as dramatic fights between slaves, animals and other gladiators unfolded. Natural disaster and neglect eventually left the building in ruins with sparse use from rulers over the centuries until it was restored in the late 20th century. The Colosseum is now host to thousands of tourists daily as a testament to Roman architecture.



1 Quaeris, quot mihi bāsiātiōnēs  
tuae, Lesbia, sint satis superque.  
Quam magnus numerus Libyssae harēnae  
lasarpīciferīs iacet Cyrēnīs

5 ōrāclum Iovis inter aestuōsī  
et Battī veteris sacrum sepulcrum;  
aut quam sīdera multa, cum tacet nōx,  
fūrtīvōs hominum vident amōrēs:  
tam tē bāsia multa bāsiāre

10 vēsānō satis et super Catullō est,  
quae nec pernumerāre cūriōsī  
possint nec mala fascināre lingua.

1 You ask of me, my dear, beautiful, Lesbia,  
how many of your kisses will be enough for me?  
As many kisses as there are grains in the Libyan sand on the  
burning shores of the silphium-rich Cyrene  
between the magnificent Oracle of Jupiter and the far-off tomb of  
dear, old, sacred Battus.

5 As many kisses as there are bright stars during the darkest part of  
the night,  
when everything is quiet  
and the love shared between two people  
can remain  
a secret.

10 To be able to kiss you all over, over and  
over and over again, will be enough for me, for crazy Catullus.  
Because only when the night is quiet,  
can our kisses be full of promises,  
promises that can be hidden from those  
15 meddling men who wish to count them out  
and curse us for being happy.

For this translation of Catullus 7, I focused more on a visual representation rather than an exact Latin translation of the poem. Catullus knows everyone is focused on him and Lesbia. He knows that any sort of intimacy shared with Lesbia will immediately be called out if it is seen and so, his goal is to drone on until they are bored and he can spend time alone with her. My goal was to have lines 1-5 full of adjectives to represent the long, drawn-out sentences being spoken loudly. It is meant as a way for Catullus to distract anyone who might be watching or listening to the conversation by putting on a performance until he can be alone with Lesbia. Lines 6-8 represent the secret that they share and is placed in this section of performance as a nod to the truth of their relationship, but also shows that despite the performance, everyone around them knows the truth and is hoping for proof. The shortness of the lines means to invoke the whispering happening around the couple. Lines 11-15 are meant to represent the fact that there is no need to be secretive now that it is dark, because no one is watching anymore and now there is no need for a performance, the effect being that there is whispering again, but now from Catullus to Lesbia.

**The Classics Students Association Presents:  
Storytelling Night**

*by The Classics Students Association*

The Classics Students Association (CSA) intends to promote knowledge and understanding of the ancient Mediterranean world to SFSU students. This organization is for anyone who is interested in learning more about Greek, Roman, or Egyptian culture, and is open to any major or minor on campus, not just Classics students.

The CSA hosts events throughout the year pertaining to antiquity, including trivia nights, movie nights, and our annual Spring Lecture. These events are open to all students on campus. Last fall we hosted Storytelling Night, where students drew a name, location, and two sentences referencing either a piece of literature or archaeology from the ancient world and turned them into a story. Because we learn about oral epics and poems from Hesiod to Homer, we thought it would be fun to be a part of myth and stories that have been retold for thousands of years. Here are some of the stories that were written during Storytelling Night. Any punctuation or grammatical inconsistencies are intentional and meant to be read out loud (as our ancient poets would approve) as it appears.

*Written by Dani Poortinga*

**Name:** Marcus Licinius Crassus

**Location:** Great Altar at Pergamum

**Sentences:**

Are you telling me I'm not pretty enough for a freaking apple?  
Why is my toilet gold?

So my uncle (Marcus Licinius Crassus) (it's not namedropping if he's dead) ran into this guy Bilius Maius trying to sell him this apple, and Crassy (that's what I call my uncle, Marcus Licinius Crassus) was like okay but I get pretty privilege AND I'm literally an influencer so like ... I'll give you free exposure? and Bilius Maius said girl LOOK in a mirror. WHAT do you mean pretty privilege and Crassy says Are you telling me I'm not pretty enough for a freaking apple? and he storms off to the Great Altar at Pergamum and anyway some 99 percent guys grab him and POURED GOLD down his throat like who DOES THAT and then Bilius Maius walks up and says Why is my toilet gold? and everyone clapped.

*Written by Anissa Montelongo*

**Name:** Nausicaa

**Location:** Via Appia

**Sentences:**

I know I'm late, but I ran into an acquaintance in the market on the way here and he just wouldn't stop asking me why.

I really just wanted a glass of blood, but they only had beer on tap.

Nausicaa was now cold and shivering, not expecting to still be waiting so late. She expected to be halfway to Brindisi by now and it couldn't be long before the troops marching along the road noticed her. She was getting impatient. How much longer did she have to wait before he showed up? The tomb wasn't exactly great company and the sun had worn her out. She would wait a little longer, just till morning and then leave if he hadn't shown up by then. She lay on the grass, covering herself as much as she could with her garments and decided to sleep off the stress. After all, she was the woman who helped Odysseus in his time, the woman who traveled through high winds, rough seas, and dangerous lands to get here, how could she have been stood up?

It was not long after she had closed her eyes and submitted herself to Hypnos that she was suddenly shaken awake with a whisper of hurried words muttering in her ear about being late, marketplaces and a curious old friend. Even though soldiers had already passed, they moved quietly, the tomb being the only sort of cover in the area and counting on the night for cover. If they were lucky, they would not run into any stray soldiers, they could not take being caught a second time. Unfortunately, luck was not on their side. They had only been traveling for a couple of hours, the sun just beginning to kiss the sky when a soldier hiding in a bush surprised them. The soldier took Nausicaa's lover with a dagger to his throat claiming how he had wanted a glass of blood this whole time but had to settle for beer on tap. Nausicaa was

livid, she did not make it all this way just to be killed by some blood-lust soldier. She discreetly pulled a dagger from her breast and slowly inched closer to the soldier and her lover wrestling, deciding that at this moment the soldier was right: a glass of blood would taste better. She raised her hands and brought them down with the force of a thunderbolt, loud, powerful, and deadly, and completely missed her target.

*Written by Katherine Clement*

**Name:** Caligula

**Location:** Heraion of Samos

**Sentences:**

I sing of a tale of arms and a man, who left his girlfriend to die in a faraway land.

Keep messing with me and I'll tear off your skin and add it to my shield.

It was a sunny day in Samos, where only the finest of speeches were held in front of the watchful eyes of Hera. The purple clad equine figure stood in all his glory. T'was time for the glorious horse Incitatus' ascent to greatness. The crowd gathered was forced into silence as the horse rose onto his back legs, straightening his toga. He cleared his throat.

“Greetings friends! Today we are here to join in celebration - today you are here to witness the first big step to horse-human equality. The next reasonable step? Marriage,” he said, shooting Caligula a look. The ruler blushed shyly and looked away. “I sing of a tale of arms and a man, who left his girlfriend to die in a faraway land-”

“Does nobody else think this is weird? I swear to gods, he better not be fucking that horse!”

Nostrils flared, tail swatting - Incitatus was mad. Like a water-fearing, feral beast he frothed at the mouth.

“Keep messing with me and I'll tear off your skin and add it to my shield. Quiet - or death! Dead! The lot of you!”

*Written by Ruth Varghese*

**Name:** Hegeso

**Location:** The Seven Hills of Rome

**Sentences:**

You've cut off my genitals!

Do you still understand me or do those pig ears only hear oinks?

Hegeso looked out the window at the Seven Hills of Rome. Her husband was coming in from a long day of work sitting in the marketplace talking with other men about nothing. He comes inside and asks Hegeso where dinner is. Hegeso looks up, nervous, because dinner wasn't ready. "Do you still understand me or do those pig ears only hear oinks?" he shouted. Hegeso flinched. She started heating up the leftovers. She put them in front of him and went back to the kitchen. While he was eating, she received a vision from Athena. "You're better than this!" she told her. Hegeso said, "You know what, you're right." She grabs a knife and walks back to her husband. The last thing the neighbors hear-

"You've cut off my genitals!"







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