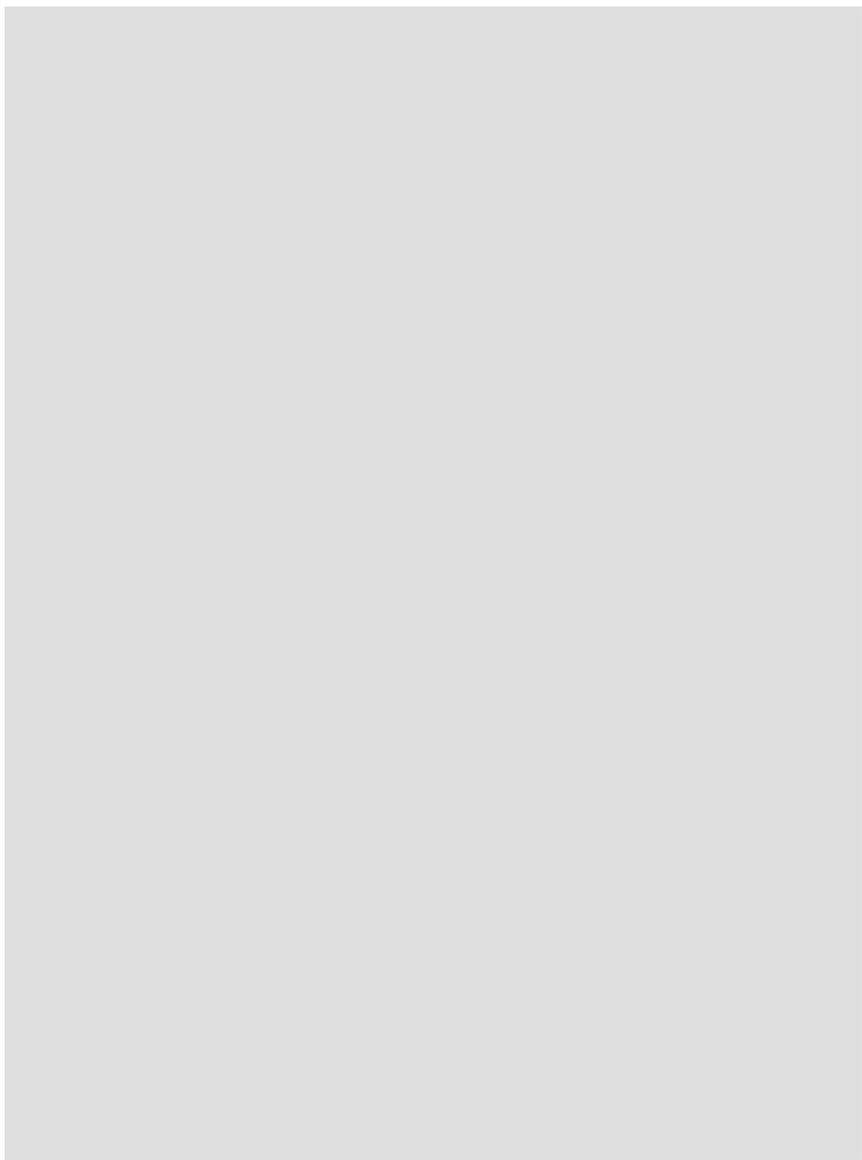


# CLOTHO

volume 5 · issue 2 · 2023



**CLOTHO** volume 5, issue 2 / letnik 5, številka 2, 2023

**ISSN:** 2670-6210 (print / tisk), 2670-6229 (online / splet)

**Editor-in-chief / Odgovorni urednik:**

David Movrin

**Editorial Assistants / Pomočniki odgovornega urednika:**

Anja Božič, Zala Mele, Jonathan Rebetz, Tjaša Šimunič

**Editorial Board / Uredniški odbor:**

Andrea Balbo, Università degli Studi di Torino; Alenka Cedilnik, Univerza v Ljubljani; Jan Ciglencečki, Univerza v Ljubljani; James J. Clauss, University of Washington; Péter Hajdu, Shēnzhèn Dàxué; Elizabeth Hale, University of New England; Stanko Kokole, Univerza v Ljubljani; Christian Laes, Antwerpen Universiteit; Katarzyna Marciniak, Uniwersytet Warszawski; Petra Matović, Sveučilište u Zagrebu; Aleš Maver, Univerza v Mariboru; Tina Milavec, Univerza v Ljubljani; Gregor Pobežin, Univerza na Primorskem, Koper; Sonja Schreiner, Universität Wien; Henry Stead, University of St Andrews; Katalin Szende, Central European University, Wien; Yasunari Takada, Tōkyō daigaku; Daniela Urbanová, Masarykova univerzita, Brno; Andrii Yasinovskiy, Ukrain's'kyy Katolyts'kyy Universtet, Lviv

**Address / Naslov:**

Aškerčeva cesta 2, 1000 Ljubljana

**Publisher / Založnik:** University of Ljubljana Press /

Založba Univerze v Ljubljani

**For the publisher / Odgovorna oseba založnika:**

Gregor Majdič, Rector of the University of Ljubljana / rektor Univerze v Ljubljani

**Issuer / Izdajatelj:** Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts /

Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani

**For the issuer / Za izdajatelja:** Mojca Schlamberger Brezar,

Dean of the Faculty of Arts / dekanja Filozofske fakultete

**Design and typesetting / Oblikovanje in prelom:**

Nika Bronič

**Language Advisors / Jezikovni pregled:**

Anja Božič (Slovenian / slovenščina), Jonathan Rebetz (English / angleščina)

**Website / Spletna stran:** journals.uni-lj.si/clotho

**Email / E-pošta:** clotho@uni-lj.si

**Printing / Tisk:** Birografika Bori d.o.o., Ljubljana

**Price / Cena:** 7 €

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0

International License (except photographs). / To delo je ponujeno pod licenco Creative Commons Priznanje avtorstva – deljenje pod enakimi pogoji 4.0, mednarodna licenca (izjema so fotografije).

**Front page / Naslovnica:** France Prešeren's dedication, preserved in the copy of his *Baptism on the Savica*, now at the Franciscan Library in Ljubljana. / Posvetilo Franceta Prešerna, ohranjeno v izvodu *Krsta pri Savici*, ki ga hrani Francišškanska knjižnica v Ljubljani.

**Photo essay / Foto esej:** Franciscan Library and Museum with Pinacotheca in Ljubljana; photographs from the Library archives. / Francišškanska knjižnica in muzej s pinakoteko v Ljubljani; fotografije iz arhiva knjižnice.



# CONTENTS

## STUDIES

- 05 Ildikó Csepregi**  
Medea Rejuvenates  
Herself: Female Roles  
and the Use of the Body  
in Seneca's *Medea*
- 33 Adriana Grzelak-  
Krzymianowska**  
Pliny the Elder and  
Nicholas of Poland  
on Snake Products  
and Their Medical  
Applications
- 57 Gregor Pobežin**  
Julian the Apostate,  
Claudius Mamertinus,  
and Ammianus  
Marcellinus: Filling in a  
"Blank Spot"?
- 75 Andrea Radošević**  
The Reception of St  
Jerome in a Late-  
Medieval Sermon  
Collection by Johannes  
Herolt
- 95 Bojana Tomc**  
The Motif of Freedom,  
Human Dignity,  
and Awareness of  
a Common Human  
Destiny between  
Antiquity and Cervantes
- 109 Alberto Camerotto**  
Troy Is Burning: Epic  
Archetypes
- 131 Elżbieta Olechowska  
and Marta Pszczolińska**  
Neil Gaiman's Use of  
Antiquity in Television  
Series: *American Gods*  
and *Calliope*

## REPORTS

- 151 Jan Dominik  
Bogataj OFM**  
Franciscan Library  
and Museum with  
Pinacotheca in Ljubljana





# Medea Rejuvenates Herself: Female Roles and the Use of the Body in Seneca's *Medea*

Ildikó Csepregi\*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the central themes for scholars, readers, and spectators of Seneca's *Medea* is the change of Medea's various female roles, the crescendo through which the abandoned princess becomes a child-murdering monster.<sup>1</sup> From these different crises of female roles, I would like to examine how Seneca sees Medea, following closely the text of the tragedy and, ultimately, the testimonies of vase-painting that represent her. Both Seneca's text and the various stratifications of the myth and earlier witnesses, but above all the pictorial representations, help us to understand how a much more positive image of Medea, radically eclipsed by Euripides, was possible, to which Seneca also returns. At the heart of this image is Medea's ability to govern the passage of time and the limits between life and death. The aim of this paper is to illustrate the arc of the sequence of events through which Medea rejuvenates herself – as she had rejuvenated others before her as if she were simply disassembling herself and putting herself in her own cauldron to be reborn as her younger and stronger self.

\* University of Vigo, Department of History; As Lagoas s/n, 32004 Ourense; [ildiko.csepregi@uvigo.es](mailto:ildiko.csepregi@uvigo.es).

1 The research presented in this article is part of my work as a researcher within the Grupo GEAT (Grupo de Estudos de Arqueoloxía, e Antigüidade Territorio); an action financed by the Ministry of Universities under application 33.50.460A.752 and by the European Union NextGenerationEU/PRTR through a María Zambrano contract from the University of Vigo.

## PRETENDING TO BE VULNERABLE?

At the beginning of Seneca's tragedy, Medea might seem vulnerable in various aspects: because of her status as a woman, because of her social and family status, and because of her current situation. She, however, uses her vulnerability as the source of her strength; in a surprising way, she takes these states off her shoulders and, using her feminine arts, she completes her metamorphosis, her rejuvenation, as if she were in her own cauldron, becoming the Medea of legends.

Before rashly dismissing the theme of vulnerability in the figure of Medea, it is important to draw attention to a phenomenon that Seneca was very fond of and that he used several times in his tragedies: his characters sometimes act opposite each other. On the one hand, this is simply a successful dramaturgical gesture on Seneca's part; on the other, the theatricality of the work and the play with the spectator-reader are also evident. Thus, Atreus or Clytemnestra play a role in lulling their opponents into suspicion so that their revenge can be carried out even more unrestrainedly. Similarly, Medea pretends to be vulnerable in front of Creon: "Even if I am burdened with misfortune, even if I am wandering, pleading, alone and abandoned, struck on all sides," *quamvis enim sim clade miseranda obruta / expulsa supplex sola deserta, undique / afflicta* (207–9).

This role-playing is continued, at some point, in front of Jason, with pretending for a moment they are fleeing together.<sup>2</sup> Soon she goes on to play with the idea of revisiting her and their previous dwelling places, before discarding them one after the other. The deceptive characteristic of her role-playing is subsequently revealed not only by the events but also by Medea herself when she says, for instance, in an aside that she has discovered Jason's vulnerability. In my reading, Medea also uses the mask of vulnerability to prepare for her great revenge, in which she will realize herself and be reborn in the fullness of her power.

Those around her do not seem vulnerable at all: Creon, the mighty king of Corinth; his daughter Creusa, whom Jason describes as powerful and a queen; and even Jason, the most shaken but still the future son-in-law and heir to the throne, in a new country, a new marriage, with new children.

2 "Fugimus, Iason: fugimus – hoc non est novum, / mutare sedes; causa fugiendi nova est: / pro te solebam fugere, discedo exeo, / penatibus profugere quam cogituis: / at quo remittas?" (449–51)

When someone on the outside warns her of her vulnerability, Medea flatly refuses. In the scene in which Medea's nurse tries to persuade her to take cover and advises her on the conduct befitting a woman – silence, deflating her anger, and the need to adapt to circumstances – the nurse also lists her fragile states:

Abiere Colchi, coniugis nulla est fides  
nihilque superest opibus e tantis tibi.

Your people are far away, your husband you cannot trust,  
of your power, that was great, nothing remains. (164–65)

It is surprising that the nurse herself should say this to her, someone who was surely aware of Medea's abilities – why does she say that her power has vanished? Could it be for the very same reason that Medea claims her powers have grown because she was already a mother? Medea answers with shocking words:

Medea superest, hic mare et terras vides  
ferrumque et ignes et deos et fulmina.

Medea remains: in her you will see the sea and the earth,  
the iron and the fire, the gods and the lightning. (166–67)

Character manifestations of Medea, such as this, play a role in the fact that secondary literature writes numerous times that Medea behaves like a man, or at least as an androgyne.<sup>3</sup> Someone sees in her a person who denies her femininity and would like to become a man, interpreting line 984: *rapta virginitas redit*, “my stolen virginity has returned,” as a symbol of Medea's attempt to become a man,<sup>4</sup> and in a similar way interpreting *Medea nunc sum* (910), as the culmination of the abandonment of all her womanhood.<sup>5</sup> This affirmation means the opposite, just as the famous image of returned virginity: Medea's

3 Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée: le va-nu-pied et la sorcière*, 213, or Walsh, “The Metamorphoses of Seneca's Medea,” 71–93.

4 “Medea's metamorphosis is not merely about turning back the clock. Inextricably bound to her restoration of a lost past (and the removal of Jason's presence in her life) is Medea's endeavor to masculinize herself over the course of the tragedy, perhaps as a means of asserting an identity when faced with the loss of appropriate gender roles.” Walsh, “The Metamorphoses of Seneca's Medea,” 81.

5 It “seems to culminate also from the banishment of feminine things.” Walsh, “The Metamorphoses of Seneca's Medea,” 82.

gestures and actions are by all means feminine. They arise from her deep awareness of being a woman, with a genuinely magical ability to transform her situation, her body, the world, and the people around her.

Where does this wild and masculine image come from? Already, Medea's cunning intelligence has been interpreted as masculine;<sup>6</sup> it is more often the case that scholars attribute this concept of Medea as a male figure to the extraneous presence of violence, the shedding of blood, and the series of murders.<sup>7</sup>

## VIOLENCE

When reading Seneca's tragedies, one of the striking features is the meticulous description of bloody events, the brutality, the crude narration of amorous passion, in short, the strong presence of the body, of physicality in the plays. Thyestes' messenger recounts in detail the horror of Atreus' cooking, Clytemnestra passionately continues to cut off Agamemnon's already-dead head, Phaedra's chorus explains to Theseus which parts of the dismembered body should be placed where or, if a suitable piece is missing, where it fits best.

The strong imagery of physical reality is a natural feature of the genre itself: theater wants us to see through action, vision, and speech. Roman theater is characterized by a more spectacular and raw presentation than Greek theater. Think, for instance, of the Roman comedy, the *mimus*, the *atellana*, the gladiator performances.<sup>8</sup> We should not see this as a less demanding artistic value but as the need for a community with a different mentality and a different theatrical tradition.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to violence, in Seneca, the representation of the imaginary and the physical within the plays is an essential element, a pivot point in the relationship between the characters. In his tragedies, the spectacle is an important means of dramatic effect, not only the spectacle seen by the audience but the spectacle that has meaning for the characters, that becomes the basis of the plot or even part of the revenge. This is well illustrated, for example, by Euripides' famously different final scene: in the Greek drama, the death of the children

6 Griffiths, *Medea*.

7 For this emotional profile of Medea in relation to the murders, see Battistella, "Medea and the Joy of Killing," 97–113.

8 See Tarrant, "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents," 213–63.

9 With an important caveat – namely, that there is no scholarly consensus whether Seneca's plays were performed in a theatrical setting; they might have been merely recitative or even intended to be read.

is announced by a herald, and Medea remains a distant and passive character. In the final scene by Seneca, however, Medea acts in the fullness of her power, while Jason remains only a powerless spectator.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the physical gestures of revenge and violence, even words brand Medea as masculine: in a Greek context, being a woman equates to pudor, which equates to not acting.

Creon hits the nail on the head when he calls Medea the combination of masculine and feminine properties: *cui feminae nequitia, ad audendum omnia / robur virile est*, “you combine the perfidy of woman with the strength of man” (267–68). In other words, Medea’s femininity has a very wide range.

## FEMALE ROLES

“Medea represents all women,” wrote Dolores O’Higgins of her figure in Pindar.<sup>11</sup> The female roles of Medea and her relationship to her femininity have always been the focus of interest, not only in the dramatizations of Seneca or Euripides and not only in the field of classical philology but from modern theater to film and music, through contemporary literature and even politics.<sup>12</sup>

Strictly in the field of classics, one of the pioneers in this regard, from the 1990s, is Ruby Blondell’s introduction to Euripides’ translation of Medea, in which she offers a balanced discussion of interpretive themes such as Medea “the Other” (where she draws several modern parallels); the marriage of Medea and Jason; and how male/female, Greek/Barbarian, and human/divine are opposed. “Medea represents the threat posed by female subjectivity and independent will, especially the active exercise of women’s erotic desire.”<sup>13</sup> A series of studies on these themes was subsequently published.<sup>14</sup> One that stands out is the stunning book by C. E. Luschnig, *The Granddaughter of the Sun*.<sup>15</sup>

10 Abrahamsen, *The Tragedy of Identity in Senecan Drama*, 123.

11 O’Higgins, “Medea as Muse: Pindar’s *Pythian* 4,” 107.

12 A few titles among many: Citti and Neri, *Seneca nel Novecento: sondaggi sulla fortuna di un classico*; Guastella, *L’ira e l’onore: forme della vendetta nel teatro senecano e nella sua tradizione*; Campbell, “Medea as Material: Heiner Müller, Myth, and Text”; Corbineau-Hoffmann, “Medea.”

13 Blondell, *Women on the Edge*, 159.

14 E.g., Medea: *Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, the influential collection *Medea nella letteratura e nell’arte*. See also Guastella, “*Virgo, Coniunx, Mater: The Wrath of Seneca’s Medea*,” 197–219, about the managing of Medea’s social roles.

15 Luschnig, *Granddaughter of the Sun*.

Boyle makes a detailed list of all Medea's female roles: "naive princess, knowing witch, faithless and devoted daughter, frightened exile, marginalized alien, displaced traitor to family and state, helper-maiden, abandoned wife, vengeful lover, caring and filicidal mother, loving and fratricidal sister, oriental 'other,' barbarian savior of Greece, rejuvenator of the bodies of animals and men, killer of kings and princesses, destroyer and restorer of kingdoms, poisonous stepmother, paradigm of beauty and horror, demi-goddess, subhuman monster, priestess of Hecate and granddaughter of the sun, bride of dead Achilles and ancestor of the Medes, rider of a serpent-drawn chariot in the sky."<sup>16</sup>

The many layers of the myth and the richness of the Senecan drama have given rise to interpretations from many different perspectives. Whichever interpretation an analyst chooses, all tacitly agree that Medea's development throughout the play is a kind of crescendo, whether seen in terms of anger, vengeance, superhumanity, or even the enhancement or loss of her femininity.

Many have also written about how Seneca constructs, step by step, as an excellent dramatist, the final act and the spectacular triumph of the infanticidal mother. Some write about the development of her character,<sup>17</sup> others, on the contrary, about the loss of her character.<sup>18</sup>

Looking at the text itself, Medea expresses, in her very first lines, a precise summary of her female roles up to that day: the very first words of the play invoking the conjugal deities ominously foreground her marriage, naming Lucina to hint at the dramatic role of motherhood, and then gradually move from the present situation (Medea the wife vs. Medea the mother) to the past. With the mention of the Argo, the figure of the acquired stigma for Jason is anticipated, but then also the girl in love, ready to sacrifice everything, the savior of life, and the wise sorceress. That she is a descendant of the Sun is a kind of omen for her marriage, and the reality of this will gradually reveal itself in the text. With the mention of Hecate, Medea's destructive side emerges: the priestess of Hecate of the Argonautics, who kills or saves at will with her poisons and spells. The past and the future are linked at several points: in the summoning of the goddesses of vengeance,

16 Boyle, "Introduction: Medea in Greece and Rome," 1.

17 Abrahamsen, *The Tragedy of Identity in Senecan drama*; Boedeker, "Becoming Medea: Assimilation in Euripides," 141–162; Walsh, "The Metamorphoses of Seneca's Medea."

18 See Henry and Walker, "Loss of Identity: *Medea Superest?* A Study of Seneca's *Medea*," 169–81, who argue that Seneca's Medea loses her identity during the tragedy.

it is significant that they are the ones who once stood at her nuptial bed (*quales horridae quondam thimalis meis stetit* [16–17]), but that at their repeated summoning they are now sent to Creusa's bed *ad novos thalamos* (743). Similarly, the words of the tragedy's prologue and finale resonate in a way that resembles other Seneca's plays: Medea is already asking the Sun for the chariot in which to escape (32–34).

We retrace her past with her, not so much along the events as along her feminine condition; her gestures and actions can be interpreted in relation to them, as Medea suggests, often as a result of her current role as a woman. Before she met Jason, Medea was a loved girl, respected by her people for her healing and magical knowledge; she was also powerful, she was a princess, she had a homeland, she was a sister and most importantly, she was a sought-after girl to marry (217–19):

Generosa, felix, decore regali potens  
fulsi: petebant tunc meos thalamos proci,  
qui nunc petuntur.

Noble and happy and powerful, I shone with a royal light.  
Then I was required to marry princes  
who are now required.

For now, she has lost all this, she is a woman alone, without a country, without her family, without her brother, she is a barbarian, a perennial outsider, feared, hated for her fame as a sorceress, powerless, threatened by the king in a hostile city, humiliated in her role as wife, repudiated by her husband, her children taken from her.

On the one hand, it is true that she loses these roles (which is not the same as losing her own identity), but on the other hand, by actively taking control of her own destiny, she liberates herself from it. That is, her self-definition is not that of an exiled poor woman. But being Medea is not taken for granted, one must work for it. That is why she responds to the nurse's soothing words as follows (171):

– Medea ...  
– Fiam!

– Medea ...  
– I will become!

## THE BODY

To achieve this, to become Medea to the full, Medea largely uses the body as an instrument – she not only uses the bodies of others but also her own female body. The corporeal motifs in Medea are very important, as in the rest of Seneca’s works, not only thinking of the tragedies, for it is enough to recall the well-known parallel between the portrait of Medea (382–96) and the figure in *De ira* 2.35. Yet this is not only rhetoric but also present already on a more conceptual level in Euripides, especially in the consideration of the woman’s body as a tool: when in Euripides Medeia speaks of marriage (233), she calls the husband a “master for the body” and emphasizes the status of a woman’s body as a tool that can be captured and carried off as war booty (256).

Equally strong are the images of the loss of bodily integrity in *Medea*: abducted virginity, childbirth, sword-piercing bodies, lacerated limbs, and the opportunity to open a wound in Jason’s body.<sup>19</sup>

Medea’s hands also take on a life of their own, becoming powerful symbols of herself and her actions, identifiable with the sins she has committed: *si quod urbes barbarae / novere facinus quod tuae ignorant manus* (127–28) and *nota fraus, nota est manus* (181); and elsewhere thirsting for revenge – like she is: *Si posset una caede satiari haec manus ...* (1009).

From Medea, we hear that the body can be taught, and the hands can be taught to commit new crimes. And one can also learn from the body:

Hoc restat unum, pronubam thalamo feram  
 ut ipsa pinum postque sacrificas preces  
 caedam dicatis victimas altaribus.  
 Per viscera ipsa quaere supplicio viam.

What remains for me, to immolate victims on altars ...  
 seek it, in the entrails, the way of vengeance. (36–40)

This sentence, very much at the beginning of the tragedy, shows us the body of the sacrificed animal to ask for advice, to read the solution from its entrails – and this Medea says even before she thinks of sacrificing her children as revenge. Yet this image confirms an equally important

19 See Nussbaum, “Serpents in the Soul,” 231–32.

female characteristic of hers: to be a priestess.<sup>20</sup> Medea invokes Hecate in the Prologue when she recalls her past life, and this also has its symmetrical counterpart at the end of the play, when she offers the serpents to Hecate (773–74). Medea’s role as priestess will be the most relevant in the present analysis while tracking down how she performs on herself the same rituals she had previously performed on others.

## VIRGINITY

The question of Medea’s virginity has already been once decisive in her legend when the Colchians join them on the island of Corcyra and demand the return of Medea to King Alkinoos, who replies that if Medea is still a virgin, he will return her to her father. Meanwhile, the king’s wife, the queen of the Phaeacians, quickly “marries” Medea off to Jason, whatever that means.<sup>21</sup>

In this case, the loss of virginity has become the means of escape and foreshadows the fact that with Seneca, the woman’s body is also a tool. To find confirmation of this in the text, one can mention that at one point the chorus recounts that Jason’s first rejection was of Medea’s body:

Ereptus thalamis Phasidis horridi,  
effrenae solitus pectora coniugis  
invita trepidus prendere dextera ... (102–104)

You, Jason, who used to caress the breast of a savage female,  
now torn from her hideous marriage bed,  
you are reluctant to hold out your hesitant hand [toward her] ...

- 20 Her role as a priestess is emphasized most in the analyses of Isler-Kerényi, “*Immagini di Medea*,” 117–38, and in Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée*, 191–217.
- 21 Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.9.25: “Having passed by the Island of Thrinacia, where are the kine of the Sun, they came to Corcyra, the island of the Phaeacians, of which Alcinoos was king. But when the Colchians could not find the ship, some of them settled at the Ceraunian mountains, and some journeyed to Illyria and colonized the Apsyrtides Islands. But some came to the Phaeacians, and finding the Argo there, they demanded of Alcinoos that he should give up Medea. He answered, that if she already knew Jason, he would give her to him, but that if she were still a maid he would send her away to her father. However, Arete, wife of Alcinoos, anticipated matters by marrying Medea to Jason; hence the Colchians settled down among the Phaeacians and the Argonauts put to sea with Medea.”

It is noteworthy that a little earlier Medea also speaks of her marriage bed as a *horridus thalamus*. Equally remarkable is the chorus' repetition: just before they mentioned Diana as the wild virgin, and immediately here is Medea called the wild wife.

After the chorus rejoice that Jason is already horrified at touching Medea's breast, they add that now he will be cheered by a virgin and say: *felix Aeoliam corripe virginem*, "take happily this virgin!" (105) Moreover, Medea says the same in short order, that the new woman is such a *tabula rasa* as if these women's bodies were in some sense interchangeable.

On the other hand, the most important bodily motif in the play is the connection of virginity and motherhood with the ability to act and the ability to commit crimes. At the very beginning, Medea recounts (not yet referring to the murder of her children) how her plan for revenge matured in her, she did not simply plan it, but she gave birth to it. Vengeance is born through a birth canal, coming out of Medea's body. And vengeance is possible because Medea is a woman who has already given birth to children. The Latin text is skillfully ambivalent:

Parta iam ultio est: peperit. (25–26)

My vengeance is born! I gave birth  
[to children or to *it*, i.e., to vengeance].

Thus, the bodies of the children are the tools of revenge that come to light, and the birth-giving body of the mother is also a tool to act out her plan. The most explicit expression of this is that when Medea is devising a plan, she thinks it out with her body. However, finding this plan to punish Jason is itself a harrowing process. (One cannot but remember Euripides' Medea saying, "I would rather go to the battlefield three times than give birth once again ...") And the result, the "product," is nothing intellectual, cold-blooded, a cunning move; inversely, just as the result of childbirth, it is full of pain, cries, and blood – and it means the start of a new life for both Medea and Jason.

Right after this phrase, she immediately states in no uncertain terms that as a mother, she can and must commit greater sins than when she was a girl:

Vulnera et caedem et vagum funus per artus ...  
haec virgo feci, gravior exurgat dolor,  
maiora iam me scelera post partus decent. (47–50)

Wounds, massacres, limbs torn to pieces ... – I did them as a virgin,  
those – more heinous are the crimes that are due to me now that I  
have given birth.

There is no doubt that the growth from girl to woman and mother has multiplied Medea's capacities. It is also in this context that one can interpret Medea's words of her hypothetical behavior of not acting. In the dialogue with Creon, Medea goes back further in time to her childhood and tells how the course of events would have been if she had behaved as expected of a girl: "Behold, [if] I, a virgin, set above all my modesty ..." and lists what would have happened if she had not set aside her virginal modesty: all Greek heroes would have died.<sup>22</sup>

### REGAINING VIRGINITY

During the process of revenge, Medea also restores her own female status to a new equilibrium: after Jason has deprived Medea of her role as wife, Medea wants to become a virgin again, and for this, she requests Creon and Jason to give her back her sins; the sins that made her a wife and mother. For Medea, it is not impossible for her to become a virgin again, for her virginity or motherhood is not a physical state. If she has lost her virginity by committing crimes for Jason, she can regain it by the same inverted act: by committing crimes against Jason. Bodies killed in the past can be atoned for with future bodies killed, and she reveals that if she had had more children, the more perfect the atonement would be.<sup>23</sup> Martha Nussbaum also connects a later element to this restored virginity: when Medea speaks of how, if she were unknowingly pregnant, she would cut Jason's fetus with a sword: her desire to uproot him, to destroy the piece of him growing in her image of success is the fantasy of restored virginity.<sup>24</sup>

22 "Obici crimen hoc solum potest, / Argo reversa, virgini placeat pudor / paterque placeat: tota cum ducibus ruet / Pelasga tellus, hic tuus primum gener / tauri ferocis ore flammanti occidet" (236–41).

23 "Utinam superbae turba Tantalidos meo / exisset utero bisque septenos parens / natos tulissem! sterilis in poenas fui / fratri patrique quod sat est, peperit duos" (954–57).

24 "Her desire to root it out, to destroy the piece of him that grows in her ... her image of success is the fantasy of restored virginity." Nussbaum, "Serpents in the Soul," 232.

The next motif in *Medea*, besides the female figure regaining her former virginity, is the transformation from virgin to wife, including a certain parallelism between *Creusa* and *Medea*.

## BECOMING A WIFE

The crimes she had committed as a girl helped to make *Medea* the wife of *Jason*, who was the subsequent recipient of the murders and betrayals, while she herself was only the instrument.<sup>25</sup>

As was already made clear by *Medea*, the symmetry of the plot comes from restoring the balance of sins: the sins committed for *Jason* must be balanced by the sins committed against *Jason*. At the end of this process comes the key scene, the recognition<sup>26</sup> that is so important for *Medea*, and the approval:

Coniugem agnoscis tuam? (1021)

Do you recognize your wife?

The phrase is not only the dramaturgical climax but also an interweaving of the two main motives of revenge: the recovery of a lost identity (*Medea* as *Jason's* wife) and the claim to power (the infamous sorceress, the descendant of the Sun who can give and take life). Identity and power are here naturally intertwined because the role of the wife is inseparable from the power that *Medea* as a woman has over *Jason*. This is regardless of the circumstances with which she presents her figure at the beginning of the play and of the way an outsider, who does not know *Medea's* power, but only her roles, might see her: the homeless woman, the exiled woman, the barbarian woman, who is not a wife in the Greek sense, who, by helping the Argonauts, has disowned her homeland and her father, is no longer one from *Colchis*, is no longer the daughter of her father and mother, is no longer a princess and, having killed her brother, is no longer a sister. With *Jason's* new marriage, not only would she no longer be a wife, but she would be forced to leave her children, i.e., her role as a mother would also end.

25 Cf. "Utrumque regno pelle. cur sotes duos / distinguis? illi *Pelia*, non nobis iacet; / fugam, rapinas adice, desertum patrem / lacerumque fratrem, quidquid etiam nunc novas / docet maritus coniuges, non est meum: / totiens nocens sum facta, sed numquam mihi" (275–80). See also 496–503.

26 On the importance of recognition as confirmation of her self, see Bexley, "Recognition and the Character of Seneca's *Medea*," 31–51.

But for a while, Medea still wants Jason to recognize her as his wife again, even though the frequent use of the word *coniunx* is both threatening and ironic; Medea also calls Creusa *coniunx*. Indeed, with the scrupulousness of a feminine rival, Medea investigates Creusa's suitability for this role and how well she holds up to Jason's sexual commitment. She openly asks if his new wife will bear children, to which Jason answers yes, in the future; and elsewhere, in a more desperate dialogue, she forces Jason to reveal that he has not had sexual relations with Creusa until then. Medea confirms her position as a sexually active partner between the roles of wife and mother when she makes it clear that she might even be pregnant, surpassing Creusa in this respect:

In matre si quod pignus etiamnunc latet,  
scrutabor ense viscera et ferro extraham. (1012–13)

If there is in my womb, hidden, a seed of life from you,  
I will frisk my belly with my sword to pluck it out.

In the formulation of the nurse and the chorus, the role of Medea's wife is ended, while Medea wants to restore this role<sup>27</sup> – by physically destroying her other wife. And when Creusa dies, she succeeds precisely because Jason has no other wife but her. Moreover, killing Creusa and Creon could only have been done by such an infamous woman: only Medea, Jason's infamous wife, is capable of a Medea-style murder. However, when this happens, this female role is no longer important to her. Instead, a new clash begins within Medea: her mother and non-mother part.

## MOTHER

It is the image of the child-killing mother that has eventually overwritten almost everything in the afterlife of the Medea myth. But images on vases and the remains of texts predating Euripides illustrate how this image of the monster mother was a one-sided and late development. Little is said as to why this was so. The two very different but pleasingly complementary explanations are that the Persian wars, on the one hand, lacerated the image of Medea and, even more so, the hostilities with Corinth over the island of Corfu in Euripides' time.<sup>28</sup>

27 Abrahamsen, *Tragedy of Identity*, 44–46.

28 Beltrametti, "Eros e maternità," 43.

The reason for the degradation of Medea has been interpreted in a broader context by Cornelia Isler-Kerényi: “Medea exhausts her ability to metamorphose from good to bad, from goddess to woman, not with the advent of rational thought but with the definitive establishment of dogmatic thought: with the extinction of ancient religion.”<sup>29</sup>

Medea’s social status as a mother is quite different in Seneca’s tragedy from Euripides’ presentation. This diversity surely also stems from the very different contexts of woman and wife-in-law and in the conception of the family in Rome and classical Greece. According to Roman law, in the event of divorce, the children always had to remain in the father’s house to guarantee their descent, so Medea’s repudiation automatically meant her removal from the house and her separation from her children. This is undoubtedly the case in the social situation of Rome at the time,<sup>30</sup> but in Medea’s words, we have the feeling that having freed herself from the role of wife, she is consciously turning to her motherhood to weigh that too and that the two are well separated for her:

Materque tota coniuge expulsa redit. (928)

The mother has all come back, the wife is banished.

Medea sees her motherhood as separate, and for her it is bound only to her children: if they are alive, she is their mother; if they are not alive, she has ceased to be a mother. On a different thread, but with a similar conclusion, Guastella, looking at parental roles, originally in relation to Jason, comes to the same conclusion: he remains a father after the death of his children, an orphan father who mourns his children, but Medea ceases to be a mother when her children die.<sup>31</sup> It is fascinating and ambiguous that, on the one hand, Medea forces Jason to recognize her as his wife by killing his children, and on the other hand, she loses the last thread that binds her to Jason. The killing of her children is Medea’s last gesture to accomplish her great feat: to be herself again.

29 Isler-Kerényi, “Immagini di Medea,” 133, my translation.

30 Abrahamsen, “Roman Marriage Law,” 107–121; see also Guastella “Il destino dei figli,” 141–44, 152–54.

31 Guastella writes that the pater remains defeated and alone, the mater, on the other hand, as if she had disappeared, also erased by a crime. “Il destino dei figli,” 162.

## KILLING TO BE REBORN OR THE RE-BIRTH OF THE BODY

Medea speaks first of her longing for a return to *vigor antiquus* and her desire to find a way out of impotence – insecurity, just like those who asked her to rejuvenate. She goes much further when in right in front of our eyes she quickly shrugs off the role of the helpless exiled woman, shortly killing the king who is threatening her. By physically destroying her rival, she also strips herself of the role of the rejected woman. Then, she must take her revenge on Jason, namely by hurting him where he is most vulnerable. Jason himself reveals this point: their children. That is why the children become the instruments of revenge, their little bodies, which Medea uses as a means of escape in the same way as the dismembered body of her little brother. To restore the balance, not only in her own person, Medea wants to make Jason exactly as he made her before: to live as an orphan, exiled, deprived of the male roles of prince, husband, and father. On the one hand, the price for this is that Medea also renounces the corresponding female roles and, on the other hand, this renunciation has a new face: it is part of her grand plan to return to her former self, to rejuvenate herself as she did the others in her cauldron. And this she succeeds in achieving:

Iam iam recepi sceptrā germanum patrem,  
 spoliūque Colchī pecudis auratae tenent;  
 rediere regna, rapta virginitas redit. (982–84)

The throne, the father, the brother are mine again.  
 The golden fleece is in the hands of the Colchians.  
 My homeland has returned, my virginity returns.

The past comes alive and becomes the present. The power of Colchis taken away from her is replaced by Corinth, taken away from Jason; the little man dismembered with the sword of the terrible virgin, *nefandae virginis*, and cut to pieces, thrown one by one, is paid for by the children killed by the *nefanda mater* and the bodies scattered before their father. With this rebirth, this change in her new self, she becomes Medea, the new, preponderant female role: the infamous Medea of the legends.

To achieve this, Seneca makes Medea refer to herself in the third person countless times in the text; in fact, she often jumps between the first-, second-, and third-person singular in a few lines. She can look at herself from the outside. Equally hectic but more exciting is how she jumps into the alleys of her past. However, Medea does not

use this mythical past in the way we know it from tragedies spanning generations. Drawing strength from her past, Medea consciously shapes herself to be more and more like herself. She does not even want to draw on other examples, the mythical past or that of her kinship. This could be why – even if it is present – Seneca does not emphasize the Sun’s history with the love misfortune associated with her female descendants. This would create a generational chain of sins under the influence of the curse, as the Tantalids do. Medea does not need this; she is enough for herself, consciously using her myth and exploiting its power. The most significant ability of her past is the rejuvenation of the body and the use of the body as an instrument. This is one of Medea’s privileges. But where does this power of hers come from?

The first literary mention of Medea is found in Hesiod (ca. 700 BC), where she seems to be regarded as a goddess<sup>32</sup> married to the mortal Jason after completing the tasks imposed on him by Pelias.<sup>33</sup> In an archaic epic, Medea is said to be the queen of Corinth and Jason the king, and Medea is said to bury her children in the temple of Hera as soon as they are born in order to make them immortal – and scholars agree that such an attempt could only be made by a deity. This seems to be the first mention of Medea as an infanticide – but, note, unintentional! – which, however, had no counterpart in the testimonies of vase paintings.<sup>34</sup> The sixth-century lyric poet Ibycus mentions Medea, and he is the first to tell of Medea’s marriage to Achilles in Elysium. He is followed by Simonides, in which the scholastics report that Medea boils Jason to rejuvenate him and is herself queen of Corinth, while Sophocles’ *Rhizotomoi* (Rootcutters) also focuses on Medea’s magical abilities.<sup>35</sup> More telling are the iconographical representations of Medea: in Cornelia Isler-Kerényi’s careful and thoughtful reconstruction, the chronological stages of Medea’s imagery could be followed.<sup>36</sup> She points out that the cauldron is part of Medea’s magical equipment in the Argonautics and is present in all textual witnesses, even fragmentary ones, and especially in her iconography before 430, the date of Euripides’ tragedy. Starting with the earliest known image of Medea on the Etruscan olpe of the Villa Julia<sup>37</sup> and later in Athenian cera-

32 See on this Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée*, 101–15 (Médée la déesse).

33 *Theogonia* 992–1002.

34 See Johnston, “Corinthian Medea,” 44–70; cf. also Harrauer, “Der korinthische Kindermord,” 5–28.

35 For all these mentions and ancient sources see Boyle, “Introduction,” 3.

36 Isler-Kerényi, “Immagini di Medea,” 117–38.

37 Images available online at the website of Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia.

mics, Medea is typically shown with a cauldron, and before Euripides' tragedy, she is never depicted as infanticidal. After Euripides, this is almost exclusively the case. Medea uses the cauldron to dominate the phases of human life; in a way, she is like Rhea or Demeter – they, too, are capable of rescuing with similar methods.

Medea was the goddess of the good cauldron, Isler-Kerényi writes. In Seneca's tragedy, her image near the cauldron is referred to in two ways. When Medea confronts Creon, Pelias appears in their speech, and shortly afterward we see Medea picking plants in preparation to kill Creusa, gathering them as if they were spices.

Tradition ascribes to her various rejuvenation spells or events based on her ability to make a human being stronger or even immortal: Jason, Talos, Heson, the ram, Pelias, her children's temptation, and herself.

## THE REJUVENATION OF JASON

In the surviving iconographic evidence, Medea first appears while performing the ritual of rejuvenating a man (probably Jason) in a cauldron (ca. 630 BC). The rejuvenation theme associated with Medea (the rejuvenation of a ram/Jason or the boiling of Pelias) remains in vase paintings until the 5th century. The first representation comes from a funerary context: an Etruscan bucchero vase found in a tomb in Cerveteri.<sup>38</sup> This scene is also described in Simonides (fr. 548) and in Pherecides from the 6th century (3F113). But there are other interesting pictorial testimonies that complement this rejuvenation of Jason. Among the images showing Jason escaping from the jaws of the dragon, there is one that clearly shows a long scar on Jason's chest, a crater from 470–60 BC.<sup>39</sup> Alain Moreau suggests that this scar is a sign that Medea had previously torn Jason apart and boiled him in her cauldron, rejuvenating and strengthening him. Moreau supports this hypothesis by stating that, on the one hand, Jason is a teenager, but his musculature is not strong, and that the accident may have occurred before he began the tasks assigned to him by Aeetes.<sup>40</sup>

The fact of Jason's rejuvenation is also mentioned in literary sources: Apollonius says that, on the one hand, Hera made Jason handsome, and on the other hand, Medea made him extraordinarily strong.<sup>41</sup> To

38 LIMC "Medeia" fig. 1. For a detailed commentary with many illustrations see Kobakhidze, "Medea in Etruscan Art," in *Preprints*, 19.

39 Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée*, 33, fig 2.

40 Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée*, 35–36.

41 *Argonautica* 3.1256ff.

confirm that the ritual of making Jason stronger would take place in the cauldron, Moreau quotes a legendary myth from the enigmatic words of Lycophron in the *Alexandra* where he places the cauldron scene between the fight with the fiery bull and the acquisition of the golden fleece.<sup>42</sup>

## TALOS

Another episode is also pertinent here: the story of Talos shows that although Medea and the Argonauts traveled together for only a short time, Medea's reputation at that time certainly included the ability to reanimate, even render someone immortal. And this must have been true not only for the Argonauts, who may have witnessed Jason's resurrection, but also for Talos himself, for otherwise, he would hardly have agreed that Medea takes him by the hand:

ἔξαπατηθεὶς δὲ ὑπὸ Μηδείας ἀπέθανεν, ὡς μὲν ἔνιοι λέγουσι, διὰ  
φαρμάκων αὐτῷ μανίαν Μηδείας ἐμβαλοῦσης, ὡς δέ τινες, ὑποσχομένης  
ποιήσιν ἀθάνατον καὶ τὸν ἦλον ἐξελοῦσης, ἐκρυνέντος τοῦ παντὸς  
ιχώρος αὐτὸν ἀποθανεῖν.

His death was brought about by the wiles of Medea, whether, as some say, she drove him mad by drugs, or, as others say, she promised to make him immortal and then drew out the nail, so that all the ichor gushed out and he died.<sup>43</sup>

This tale is illustrated by a magnificent painting on a vase, a red-figure volute krater (dated 425–375 BC), which depicts Talos dying unconscious in the presence of the Argonauts while the enchantress Medea stands aside, grimly gazing at her victim and holding in one hand a basket from which she seems to draw fatal herbs with the other.<sup>44</sup>

42 Lycophron, *Alexandra* 1.1309–21: “And second they sent the Atracian wolves to steal for their leader of the single sandal the fleece that was protected by the watching dragon's ward. He came to Libyan Cytaea and put to sleep with simples that four-nostrilled snake, and handled the curved plough of the fire-breathing bulls, and had his own body cut to pieces in a cauldron and, not joyfully, seized the hide of the ram.”

43 Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.9.26.

44 Ruvo, Jatta Museum, 1501; images and bibliography available online at the Beazley Archive.

## THE REJUVENATION OF AESON

According to the author of the *Nostoi* epic, Medea restored Jason's old father to youth:

αὐτίκα δ' Αἴσωνα θῆκε φίλον κόρον ἠβώνοντα γῆρας ἀποξύσασα  
ιδυίησι πραπίδεςσι, φάρμακα πόλλ' ἔψουσ' ἐπὶ χρυσείοισι λέβησιν.

Then she made Aeson a dear young man in the prime of life  
depriving him of old age with wise deeds, boiling in cauldrons of  
gold many medicines.<sup>45</sup>

While according to Ovid Medea restored Aeson to youth, not by boiling him, but by emptying his body of the ephemeral old blood and replacing it with a magical infusion.<sup>46</sup>

THE REJUVENATION OF PELIAS (AND OF THE RAM,  
AND ALSO OF MEDEA HERSELF)

On Jason's return to Iolcos, Pelias, the uncle who had usurped his throne, is now old, and his daughters, the Peliads, are fascinated by the powers of Medea, who assures them that she is able to rejuvenate their father, adopting two subterfuges to convince them: first she simulates her own rejuvenation, perhaps by removing make-up from her face, and then – this being the decisive proof – she has an old ram brought to her, which she tears to pieces and throws the pieces into a cauldron, adding her portentous *phármaka*. Shortly afterward, a young lamb emerges from the cauldron.

The story of Medea's fraud on Pelias is illustrated by several Greek vases,<sup>47</sup> and they attest to an ancient story in which Medea was regarded by all as being able to revive and cure in her capacity as a priestess of Hecate. A few examples would be sufficient to exploit the varieties of the scene, with ram or lamb emerging, with Pelias present or absent. For instance, on a black-figure vase, the ram is seen coming out of the boiling cauldron, while Medea and Pelias' two daughters stand looking at it with gestures of delighted surprise, and the white-haired, aging king himself sits watching expectantly. Or the only two-sided

45 Greek text in Allen, *Homeri opera* 5, 141. Translation mine. Cf. Bernabé Pajares, *Fragments de épica griega arcaica*.

46 *Met.* 7.251–94.

47 Cf. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), Vol. 7, Peliades.

black-figured vase depicting the scene, without Pelias and with a Medea gesturing toward the cauldron – or even adding her magical ingredients<sup>48</sup> (see Figure 1).

Similarly, the lekythos by the Beldam Painter depicts a cauldron with an emerging ram in the center, with two women on each side: Medea, administering her magic instructions with her right hand raised, and one of Pelias's daughters (with no old man present). A recent analysis of the five vases of the Beldam Painter that represent Medea confirms that

the vases show the cauldron placed on the centre of the image with the fire amidst the flaming wood. We can realize that type of cauldron is very ancient, it is large and rustic, and it is known as *empyribete*. Medea shows her expertise at the specific moment when the animal is inside the cauldron in process of being rejuvenated. Crossing the information between the text and the image, we could state that the picture with Medea in these *lekythoi* vases refer to the remote characteristic of hers, and the pictures of the *lekythoi* belong to the Iolkus epic cycle. Medea was designed as the young wife of Jason and as a priestess of Hekate with the ability to cure from diseases and to rejuvenate the old and sick people.<sup>49</sup>

Based on this, Candido arrives at the same conclusion as Cornelia Isler-Kerényi, namely that the predilection for this Medea image in funerary vases was linked to her perception as a magician-reviver who could help the dead. These are only snapshots, while in the extended version, a fresco from Pompeii, one finds Medea dressed as the princess of Artemis.<sup>50</sup> These images are well-known and well-studied, and they can be paired with the very scarce textual evidence that illustrates the same scenery.

Fragmentary references to Euripides' lost tragedy *Peliades* describe it in even more detail, surprisingly recounting how Medea first disguised herself, with hair dye and make-up on her face to look older – and when one of the Peliades, Alcestis, is still hesitant to take out her father after the “ordeal” of the rejuvenated ram, the disguised Medea would perform her own rejuvenation (perhaps by removing her make-up) and this final gesture would convince all the daughters

48 Available online at Harvard Art Museums, object 290713.

49 Candido, *Medea and the Rejuvenation of Pelias*.

50 Museo Archeologico Nazionale Napoli, Invent. 111477, dated to 50–63 AD, originally Pompei VI 13.2 (Casa del Gruppo dei vasi di vetro).



Fig. 1 – Neck Amphora (storage jar): Medea Boiling a Ram, ca. 520 BC, Beazley Archive Database #4798, Harvard Art Museums / Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of David M. Robinson

to proceed.<sup>51</sup> In a medieval Greek work in verse, the *Christus Patiens* (11th–12th c.) by an anonymous author, there are traces of the tales associated with Pelias’ rejuvenation, where one can read the following verses describing Pelias’ disappearances in the first person:

λέβητι χρυσέω δὲ πέπτων μοι δέμας,  
 σοφῆ προμηθεία με ξενίση ξένως  
 λυγρὸν γὰρ ἀπὸ γῆρας εὐφυῶς ξέσας  
 ἀνθρωπολογίου παμπαλαιᾶς μοι λύπης,  
 κοῦρον φίλον θήσειεν ἠβόωντά με·  
 ὡς νῦν κάκιστον γῆρας ἅπαντας τρύχει.

Cooking my body in a cauldron,  
 cautiously surprising me in an unusual way:  
 depriving me of the pain of old age  
 and suffering ever baleful to man,  
 make me a dear boy in my prime,  
 for now, a malignant old age wears everything down.<sup>52</sup>

I leave aside here the hypothesis of the attempted and failed rejuvenation of Medea’s children, briefly mentioned earlier, and turn to the final story related to Medea in this context: Aeschylus’ *Trophi* (Nurses) seems to be about Medea’s rejuvenation of Dionysus’ nurses and their husbands – although it is rather difficult to pinpoint when it might have occurred within her mythological chronology, most likely the event was placed after her flight from Athens. A commentary on Euripides’ *Medea* relates that Aeschylus recounts how Medea “rejuvenated the wet-nurses of Dionysus, together with their husbands, by boiling them”<sup>53</sup> – as she had done to Jason and his father Aeson in other tales, and as she had pretended to do to Pelias.

A scholion to Aristophanes’ *Knights* 1321 refers to Aeschylus and the rejuvenation of the nurses, and cites the fragment from the *Nostoi* about the rejuvenation of Aeson, quoted above:

51 Hartung, *Euripides restitutus*, 63–65.

52 *Christus Patiens* 933–38. Translation mine.

53 Fragm. Bernabé 6b.

ὥσπερ ἡ Μήδεια λέγεται, ὡς μὲν Αἰσχύλος ἱστορεῖ, τὰς τροφούς τοῦ Διονύσου ἀφειψήσασα ἀνανεάσαι ποιήσαι μετὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν αὐτῶν, ὡς δ' ὁ τοῦς Νόστους ποιήσας καὶ τὸν Αἴσονα, λέγων οὕτως ...<sup>54</sup>

According to Aeschylus, they tell the story about Medea that after boiling the nurses of Dionysus, she rejuvenated them, together with their husbands, and according to the author of the *Nostoi*, also [rejuvenated] Aeson, saying the following words ...

A reference to this story by Ovid suggests that Medea did this at the request of Dionysus.<sup>55</sup> Rejuvenation – in any case, successful rejuvenation – is a theme for satyr drama, not a tragedy; Dionysus' role in the story points in the same direction, and there is virtually no doubt that this drama was indeed a satyr play.<sup>56</sup> A vase painted ca. 460 BC may well have been inspired by this play: it shows a woman leading an elderly satyr toward a cauldron (similar to the various images of Medea with Pelias), and on the other side, the same satyr, now black-haired and vigorous, with his wife and a child.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Having seen or read the scenes with Medea and the cauldron, one is reminded of the scene when Pelops was killed by his cruel father Tantalus, cut up into pieces, and served at a banquet of the gods. Out of pity, the gods brought him back to life by boiling him in a cauldron, from which he emerged safe and even with a new shoulder.<sup>58</sup> Cornelia Isler-Kerényi writes that the cauldron evokes fundamental cosmological demarcations: between the primordial age and the present age, between the divine and human worlds, between life and death, and between death and life.<sup>59</sup> Her well-known and well-respected capacities account for the popularity of her images on vases used in a funerary context.

54 Greek text, schol. ad Aristophanes, *Knights*, 1321 in Allen, *Homeri opera* 5, *Nostoi* fr. 6, 141.

55 *Met.* 7.294–6.

56 Aeschylus, *Attributed Fragments*, 248–49.

57 Ancona, Museo Nazionale, 3198.

58 Pindar, *Olymp.* 1.26 (40)ss. For similar stories of magical recovery of youth and life, see Frazer: Appendix to Apollodorus, “The Renewal of Youth.”

59 “Il calderone evoca demarcazioni cosmologiche fondamentali: fra età primordiale ed età presente, fra mondo divino e umano, fra vita e morte e fra morte e vita.” Isler-Kerényi, *Immagini di Medea*, 121.

Seneca turns back to this fearful but potent figure and brings together Medea's gestures from the past when she returned life and strength to the old and weak – and now, in the drama, turns this practice onto herself. The imagery of the cauldron and her previous acts of murder and rejuvenation, along with the strong body imagery and the use of physical transformations, pave the way for her to perform her physical transformation. It happens at the cost of murder and the annihilation of her own former physical stages. Seneca uses descriptions and allusions of high impact to characterize the visceral, sexual, maternal identity of Medea, to underline that everything that had happened to her and all that she had done to others strongly concerns the body.

Medea wants to start again, from the beginning, the image of her regained virginity is the *tabula rasa* that will take her out of the drama and into a new life, young, strong, husbandless, and childless, that will lead her into a later story, as the wife of Aegeus and a mother of his child. In the tradition that relates her to Aegeus, she also uses her own body, her female fertility to become his wife and uses in the same way the promised future child to shape her new life and female identity, becoming thus a sought-after woman to marry, just like before meeting Jason, and a giving birth. Medea, in her rejuvenation, is, in fact, realizing what Jason would have wanted: a new beginning. At the same time, Medea does not really masculinize herself; on the contrary, she only shows how much harder it is to do those things as a woman. Despite Seneca's rather creepy portrayal, his Medea is not the masculine serial killer who denies herself her femininity but rather uses all her strength as a woman, cook, sorceress, virgin, wife, mother, and above all, priestess, and quasi-goddess of the cauldron, to rejuvenate herself and become – Medea.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahamsen, Laura. *The Tragedy of Identity in Senecan Drama*. PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1993.
- . “Roman Marriage Law and the Conflict of Seneca’s *Medea*.” *Quaderni Urbinati Di Cultura Classica* 62, no. 2 (1999): 107–21.
- Allen, Thomas W. *Homeri opera*. Volume 5. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912.
- Battistella, Chiara. “Medea and the Joy of Killing.” *Greece and Rome* 68 (2021): 97–113.
- Beltrametti, Anna. “Eros e maternità: Quel che resta del conflitto tragico di Medea.” In *Medea nella letteratura e nell’arte*, edited by Bruno Gentili and Franca Perusini, 43–65. Venice: Marsilio, 2000.
- Bernabé Pajares, Alberto. *Fragmentos de épica griega arcaica*. Madrid: Gredos, 1979.
- Bexley, Erica. “Recognition and the Character of Seneca’s *Medea*.” *Cambridge Classical Journal* 62 (2016): 31–51.
- Blondell, Ruby, ed. *Women on the Edge: Four Plays by Euripides*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Boedeker, Deborah. “Becoming Medea: Assimilation in Euripides.” In *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, edited by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, 141–62. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Boyle, A. J. “Introduction: Medea in Greece and Rome.” *Ramus* 41, no. 1/2 (2012): 1–32.
- Campbell, Peter A. “Medea as Material: Heiner Müller, Myth, and Text.” *Modern Drama* 51, no. 1 (2008): 84–103.
- Candido, Maria Regina. “Medea and the Rejuvenation of Pelias: One Alternative Version.” *Global Journal of Human-Social Science* 20, no. 3 (2020), 1–6.
- Citti, Francesco, and Camillo Neri. *Seneca nel Novecento: Sondaggi sulla fortuna di un classico*. Rome: Carocci, 2001.
- Clauss, James J., and Sarah Iles Johnston, eds. *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Corbineau-Hoffmann, Angelika. “Medea.” In *Brill’s New Pauly Supplements*, Volume 4, *The Reception of Myth and Mythology*, edited by Maria Moog-Grünwald. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Gentili, Bruno, and Franca Perusini, eds. *Medea nella letteratura e nell’arte*. Venice: Marsilio, 2000.
- Griffiths, Emma. *Medea*. London: Routledge, 2006.

- Guastella, Gianni. "Il destino dei figli di Giasone." In *Medea nella letteratura e nell'arte*, edited by Bruno Gentili and Franca Perusini, 139–75. Venice: Marsilio, 2000.
- . *L'ira e l'onore: Forme della vendetta nel teatro senecano e nella sua tradizione*. Palermo: Palumbo, 2001.
- . "Virgo, Coniunx, Mater: The Wrath of Seneca's Medea." *Classical Antiquity* 20, no. 2 (2001): 197–219.
- Harrauer, Christine. "Der korinthische Kindermord: Eumelos und die Folgen." *Wiener Studien* 112 (1999): 5–28.
- Hartung, Johann Adam. *Euripides restitutus*. Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1843.
- Henry, Denis, and B. Walker. "Loss of Identity: Medea Superest? A Study of Seneca's Medea." *Classical Philology* 62, no. 3 (1967): 169–81.
- Iles Johnston, Sarah. "Corinthian Medea and the Cult of Hera Akraia." In *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, edited by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, 44–70. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Isler-Kerényi, Cornelia. "Immagini di Medea." In *Medea nella letteratura e nell'arte*, edited by Bruno Gentili and Franca Perusini, 117–38. Venice: Marsilio, 2000.
- Kobakhidze, Ekaterine. "Medea in Etruscan Art." Preprints 2018, 2018030159.
- Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), vols. 1–8. Zürich: Artemis & Winkler Verlag, 1981–99.
- Luschnig, C. A. E. *Granddaughter of the Sun*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Moreau, Alain. *Le mythe de Jason et Médée: Le va-nu-pied et la sorcière*. Paris: Hachette, 1994.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. "Serpents in the Soul: A Reading of Seneca's Medea." In *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, edited by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, 219–49. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- O'Higgins, Dolores. "Medea as Muse: Pindar's *Pythian* 4." In *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, edited by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, 103–26. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Tarrant, Richard J. "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 82 (1972): 213–63.
- Walsh, Lisl. "The Metamorphoses of Seneca's Medea." *Ramus* 41, no. 1–2 (2012): 71–93.

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the arc of the sequence of events through which Medea rejuvenates herself – as she has rejuvenated others before her, she does it as if she were simply disassembling herself and putting herself in her own cauldron to be reborn as her younger and stronger self. After describing the different and changing female roles of Seneca's Medea, the paper gives a close reading of the text to show how Seneca uses images of the body and to underscore the way Medea uses her own body to achieve her transformation: to start a new life by returning to her earlier self, i.e., by rejuvenating herself. To back this argument, the paper also highlights her previous acts of rejuvenation in textual and pictorial testimonies and argues that Seneca presented Medea as a rather positive figure, a deity, a magician, a healer, who is capable of ruling over life and death.

**KEYWORDS:** Seneca the Younger, Medea, rejuvenation, female roles, body, stages of life

Medeja se pomladi: Ženske vloge in raba telesa  
v Senekovi *Medeji*

## IZVLEČEK

Prispevek obravnava potek in zaporedje dogodkov, preko katerih se Medeja pomladi – tako kot je pred seboj pomladila druge, to stori, kot bi se preprosto razstavila in se dala v svoj kotel ter se nato prerodila v svoj mlajši in močnejši jaz. Članek najprej predstavi različne in spreminjajoče se ženske vloge pri Senekovi *Medeji*, nato pa s pomočjo podrobnega branja besedila pokaže, kako Seneka uporablja podobe telesa, in se osredotoči na način, kako Medeja uporablja lastno telo, da bi dosegla svojo preobrazbo: da bi začela novo življenje z vrnitvijo k svojemu prejšnjemu jazu, da bi se torej pomladila. V podporo tej tezi članek izpostavi tudi njena prejšnja pomlajevanja, kot so ohranjena v besedilnih in ikonografskih virih, ter pokaže, kako je Seneka *Medejo* predstavil kot precej pozitiven lik, kot božanstvo, čarodejko in zdravilko, ki zmore upravljati z življenjem in smrtjo.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Seneka, Medeja, pomladitev, ženske vloge, telo, življenjska obdobja





# Pliny the Elder and Nicholas of Poland on Snake Products and Their Medical Applications

Adriana Grzelak-Krzymianowska\*

One knows quite a lot about the significance of the snake itself in the culture of antiquity and later times, starting with the mythological story of Asclepius,<sup>1</sup> through stories connected with historical figures such as Cleopatra, to ancient treatises on medicine which described on the one hand how snake bites should be avoided and cured,<sup>2</sup> and on the other the use of snakes in medical procedures and pharmacology, such as for anesthesia and the treatment of various ailments. One can find references to snakes and their symbolic significance in Christian treatises,<sup>3</sup> not to mention many later works by different *medici* and scholars. In terms of the use of various medicines, one can distinguish two trends in medieval times, in the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe and specifically Poland, both, from our perspective, fantastic. However, as we shall see, the two trends are fantastic to various extents: there is a strictly medical trend, as well as a non-medical trend, which expands the framework for using various “magic” or folkloristic remedies. In this paper, I propose to focus on the extent to which one of the well-known representatives of medieval physicians in the Polish territory, Nicholas of Poland, reproduced both the fantastic and the more “medical” information on the use of snakes and vipers in the treatment of humans that appeared in the text of Pliny the Elder, author of the monumental

\* University of Lodz, Department of Classical Philology, ul. Narutowicza 68, 90-136 Łódź; [adriana.grzelak-krzymianowska@uni.lodz.pl](mailto:adriana.grzelak-krzymianowska@uni.lodz.pl).

1 See Luigi Bragazzi et al., “Asclepius and Epidaurus.”

2 Voort, “Ancient Herpetology 1.”

3 Libera, “Motyw lekarza i lekarstwa,” Fondriest, “Animali d’Oriente,” Wołoszyn, “Zrzuciłem duży kamień.”

*Historia Naturalis*,<sup>4</sup> especially in the books 29 and 30 of this work.<sup>5</sup> This article aims to show the correlations and interrelationships between these texts, abstracting from earlier and later ancient accounts on the subject and the sources of Pliny the Elder himself and his continuators, which themselves will be discussed in another work.

Pliny the Elder, the encyclopedist who lived in the first century AD, and the physician Nicholas of Poland are separated by thirteen centuries, during which various fields of knowledge and science, including medical science, developed. By the beginning of the 14th century, several universities founded to teach medicine still drew profusely on ancient traditions: the Aristotelian and the Galenic. In Poland, the first Faculty of Medicine was not established until 1364 with the foundation of the Cracow Academy.<sup>6</sup> Nicholas of Poland, therefore, had to be educated outside the country, like a significant part of Polish scientists of that time.<sup>7</sup> Nicholas of Poland (also known as Nicholas of Montpellier), whose references to ancient medical concepts collected by Pliny the Elder are the subject of this article, was born about 1235 in Silesia and died in Cracow ca. 1316. He was a medieval Polish-German

- 4 Pliny the Elder undertook to describe the whole world as he knew it, all the manifestations of nature, however insignificant. He set out to do something new that none of the earlier authors had ever attempted. He wrote not to have his work read for entertainment but to be a mine of knowledge, a compendium in which to find all the information concerning the natural world and the benefits derived from it. He relied on the works he had read and on his own observation. His frequent mistakes can sometimes be explained by him taking notes by ear, incorrectly noting down certain facts, or simply misunderstanding a Greek phrase. Pliny was unquestionably a scientist – a man more concerned with passing on the knowledge and verifying it than with the applauding of his audience; a man deeply fascinated by the world around him and the uniqueness of nature, yet also recording superstitions, fairy tales, magical recipes, and even spells. See Migdał, “Nauka i magia.”
- 5 These products were not only used to treat humans, but also animals. See, e.g., Plin., *HN* 30.148.
- 6 In 1950, it was separated from the Jagiellonian University and formed into an independent university, the Medical Academy in Cracow, later the Nicolaus Copernicus Medical Academy in Cracow.
- 7 The second half of the 12th century saw the establishment of universities in Montpellier, in Languedoc, in the south of France, and in Paris. In Italy, Salerno was in operation, although it soon lost ground to Parma and especially Bologna: both centers established medical schools particularly competent in surgery. This was soon followed by the center in Padua, to become the main hub of medical education in Europe in the centuries to follow. For more on Polish medicine treatises see Grzelak-Krzyżmianowska, “A Short Review.”

friar and healer of Silesian origin.<sup>8</sup> As a member of the Dominican Order around 1250, he moved to Montpellier,<sup>9</sup> where he became a teacher in the Dominican school. Around 1270, he returned to Silesia and entered the Dominican convent at Cracow, where he, as an already famous and charismatic *medicus*, provided medical and spiritual care to ordinary people.<sup>10</sup> Nicholas represented an alternative medical movement that flourished in Upper Silesia in the late 13th century.<sup>11</sup> He was also a favorite doctor in the court of Leszek II the Black (Lestko Nigritius), the Duke of Sieradz, and his wife Griffine, and they both followed his medical advice.<sup>12</sup> Nicholas was educated at Montpellier when scholastic medicine was highly developed. However, Nicholas appears to have rejected the academic medical tradition, opting for an “empirical” medical system.<sup>13</sup> His drugs were based upon the principle that God had conferred “marvelous” virtues on the most common things like serpents and toads. Nicholas urged for the return to natural, anti-intellectual, and anti-scholastic methods of healing,<sup>14</sup> which corresponds perfectly with the ideas reported by Pliny the Elder. He was

8 According to Ganszyniec, Nicholas was probably *gente Germanus, natione Polonus*; see *Brata Mikołaja z Polski pisma*, 5.

9 He probably went there around 1250 for the *studium generale*, founded in 1248 by the Dominicans at the university. Montpellier was already famous for its medical science, with the university founded in 1180 and France’s first faculty of medicine in 1221. So far, there is no documentary evidence that Nicholas graduated in medicine. For more, see Maciąg-Fiedler, “Medycyna cudowna.”

10 For a comprehensive biography, see Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikołaja z Polski pisma*, 5–13; Eamon and Keil, “*Plebs amat empirica*.”

11 Nicholas is often confused with his namesake, a physician who, like him, studied in France (or Italy) and was active in Greater Poland at the same time. There are many documents from the 13th and early 14th centuries in which *Nicolaus medicus* is mentioned, appearing at various princely courts. In some cases, in the absence of more precise information, it is difficult to determine unequivocally which Nicholas is being referred to. See Maciąg-Fiedler, “Medycyna cudowna,” 159.

12 See Bielowski, “Rocznik Traski.”

13 Eamon and Keil, “*Plebs amat empirica*,” 180–96.

14 For this reason, among others, it is worth examining the relationship between the text of Pliny the Elder, who did not shy away from magical tales, and Nicholas, who, as it were, continued this way of thinking about healing. Except that Pliny was a historian and Nicholas had a medical education, hence one would expect a different, more methodical and scientific approach to the issues presented. He was not the only one who practiced in this vein, as a number of even more fantastic beliefs appear in the Pauline texts included in the codices – although it is difficult to judge how seriously this text can be taken.

the author of three works on medicine, two of them survived in Latin, *Antipocras* (*Liber empiricorum*),<sup>15</sup> *Experimenta* (authorship uncertain), and one in German, *Cyrurgia*.<sup>16</sup> In *Experimenta* (*de animalibus*),<sup>17</sup> in which information on the use of snakes for medical purposes appears, Nicholas provided patients with various natural animal remedies to be served in the forms of powders, drinks, pills, ointments, and oils.

*Experimenta* are a collection of prescriptions, so it is not easy to sketch a table of contents, although the text may be organized by animal: chapter 1 toads (with snakes and bears), chapter 2 green frogs, chapter 3 water frogs, chapters 4 and 5 vipers and snakes.<sup>18</sup> In one of the BDS2 manuscripts, there are two more chapters on the oil of philosophers, which are not considered in this article. Nothing is known about the original text. Numerous manuscripts examined by Ganszyniec are only to be found in Western Europe, so it may be assumed that it was probably written there, perhaps in Montpellier, which at the time was a center where many important scholars were gathered. The *Experimenta* is one of the texts very widespread in Eu-

- 15 In his polemical work *Antipocras*, Nicholas advocates for the empirical method of practice against “Hippocratic” physicians who offered nothing but lies hidden behind fraudulent words and authority. Nicholas wrote: “Pungat et artet eos, ut apud Cristum Phariseos / Fama carens laude maculataque practica fraude, / Que non curare soleat, sed multiplicare / Morbos est solita re sordida, voce polita” (*Antip.* 336–39).
- 16 See Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikolaja z Polski pisma*, 14. The treatise is probably a later compilation.
- 17 On the title and the manuscripts, see Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikolaja z Polski pisma*, 127–35. The title *Experimenta* corresponds to the Greek word ἐμπειρικά, later *recepta*. Frequently encountered as a title in the 13th century and later, the word is not peculiar only to medical texts, but appears wherever knowledge and research rely on experience. Only in one manuscript (B) does the work bear the title *Experimenta de animalibus*, probably not authentic.
- 18 In one of the editions of the text of the *Experimenta* of Nicholas of Poland (13 of the late 15th century), the parts on snakes, i.e. chapters 4 and 5, are assigned to *Experimenta XII Johannis Paulini*, published in 1913 by John W. S. Johnsson in *Bulletin de la Société française d’histoire de la médecine*, 257–67. *Experimenta Paulini* can almost always be encountered in connection with the text of Nicholas. Paulinus is quite unknown; he probably lived in the second half of the 13th century and probably around where Nicholas was. He may have been associated with Montpellier. Some kind of relationship existed between the two *medici*, but it is not known what kind. It is noteworthy that Paulinus gives not only the medical uses of snake powder but also its more mystical uses, which Nicholas, in turn, fought against in his work *Antipocras*. See Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikolaja z Polski pisma*, 128.

rope and is undoubtedly related to other texts that originated in this medical environment. Nicholas of Poland is given as the author of the text, but it is proved that chapters 6 and 7, and probably also 1–5, were not penned by him. As Ganszyniec suggests, it can be concluded that this is a text written according to the instructions or perhaps the recollections of some physician. It was likely collated and published under the name of Nicholas, a well-known and respected figure of the time, although probably without his knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

I want to take a closer look at the relationship between *Experimenta* and Pliny's monumental text. This is an intriguing issue, as on the one hand, one can focus on the first-century text in 37 books in which Pliny the Elder, passionate about science, cites the achievements of knowledge as well as the various ideas and beliefs of the ancients about the world as they knew it,<sup>20</sup> and on the other, there is Nicholas of Poland, a Montpellier-educated physician who, during his studies, must have become familiar with the achievements and concepts of antiquity, as well as the various medical ideas and visions circulating in his time.

The first mention of snakes appears in *Experimenta* after a short introduction, which is, as it were, a praise of Nicholas of Poland himself.<sup>21</sup> The author begins the text by describing how to produce an efficacious powder (*pulvus*) of a toad, which can also be made from other animals such as snakes or scorpions (*simili modo fac pulverem de serpentibus et de scorpionibus*).<sup>22</sup>

19 Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikolaja z Polski pisma*, 128.

20 The ideas about plant and folk remedies appear in Stannard, "Medicinal Plants."

21 "Incipiunt Experimenta Fratris Nicolai, medici de Polonia, qui fuit in Monte Pessulano xx annis, qui tante fuerat experientie, quod ante ipsum non creditor similis ei fuisse, nec speratur de future: sicut patet in miris operibus suis, in diversis provinciis et regionibus curas magnas et subita faciendo." (And here begin the tried and tested cures of Brother Nicholas, a Polish physician who had been in Montpellier for 20 years, and was so experienced that it is said that no one was his equal, nor will be, as is evident from his miraculous activity, as he performed great and prompt cures in various districts and neighborhoods.) (*Exp.* 1–5) All the quotations from Nicholas of Poland's work follow Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikolaja z Polski pisma*. All English translation by the author.

22 The same method can be used to prepare powder from any animal; a toad and a frog (attested also in Pliny, *HN* 32.67, 32.121; Pedanius Dioscorides 2.26; Galen 12.362), a hare (Marcellus Empiricus 26.109), a goat (ME 26.94), or a scorpion (Rhazes, *Ad Mansorem* 9.73). "Nota quod isto modo pulverizabis: recipe tres bufones vel quattuor, et pone in olla recenti, et obturabis cum argilla ita quod non possit evaporare; et tunc pone iuxta ignem ita distanter quod non comburantur intus, sed solum desiccentur. Et per scitum, quando concucies ollam, percipies quando sunt bene siccati ita quod possint pulverizari: tunc depone de olla. Si

It is not a new method or an extraordinary recipe. This kind of treatment was already examined and prescribed in ancient times. Descriptions of the animal powder production are found in Pliny 29.98 (*oportet autem comburi omnia eodem modo ut semel dicamus, in vase fictile novo argilla circumlito atque ita in furnum indito; idem et in potione proficit*)<sup>23</sup> and in 30.119, where he mentions that the animals should be burned alive (*vivas quoque cremare; viperam vivam in fictili novo comburare*). The viper or snake powder<sup>24</sup> and its use is mentioned several times; ash made of viper's head mixed with cypress oil was supposed to effectively treat hard lumps in the sinews (*nervorum nodis capitis viperini cinis in oleo cyprino*, 30.110). The same body part, dried and then burned and served with vinegar (*viperæ caput aridum adservatum et combustum, dein ex aceto inpositum*, 30.106), helps with the condition known as erysipelas. The medicine prepared from the incinerated head of a viper, known as *echeon*, was also supposed to help with eye diseases and dysfunctions such as cataracts or dimness of vision (*viperam vivam in fictili novo comburare addito feniculi suco ad cyathum unum et turis manna una, atque ita suffusiones oculorum et caligines inungere utilissimum est; id echeon vocatur* – 29.119). Elsewhere in his work, the author of *Natural History* mentions that ash obtained from an adder burned with salt applied to the tip of the tongue not only improves eyesight but is also good for the stomach and other unhealthy parts of the human body (*et uritur in olla cum sale quem lingendo claritaem oculorum consecuntur et stomachi totiusque corporis tempestivitates*, 29.120; *effectum ostendit et per se capitis*

autem nondum sunt desiccate, perfecte desicca in vento ad umbram; et postea contere minutissime in mortario. Et poste repone in vase vitreo bene obturato ita quod non possit evaporare.” (*Exp.* 1.3) (The main steps we need to follow to prepare it are the following. We should take three or four toads. One shall put animals in a new pot and seal it with clay to avoid evaporation. Next the pot should be placed near the fire to make the animals dry out, but it must be done carefully not to burn them. To check if the animals are ready to be pulverized, one should shake the pot and decide whether they are already dried out and suitable for powdering. Then the burnt animal must be removed from the pot, dried in the wind and shade if necessary, then pulverized in a mortar. Finally one shall place the powder in a glass container and seal it tightly.)

23 All the quotations follow Jones, *Pliny*.

24 In the case of Pliny's text, there are descriptions of the use of both different species of snakes and vipers. Pliny the Elder himself states that the viper is only one kind of snake, one that hides underground (*HN* 8.59). He mentions different species of snakes and their uses. In this article they are treated all together. For more on the species of snakes in Pliny the Elder, see Böhme and Koppetsch, “Snake Names.”

*viperini cinis; utilissime eo oculos inunguit ...* 30.121). Pliny also cites that a remedy made of salt burned in a new clay pot with an adder and rose oil sprinkled into an infected ear cures all diseases, and that this kind of concoction also helps the gums and facilitates tooth loss (*serpentis cum sale in olla exustae cinis cum rosaceo in contrariam aurem infusus ... eadem cavis indita ut sine molestia cadant praestat*, 30.25). With powdered viper mixed with bull's tallow, or powder from an incinerated snake served in oil or wax, cases of scrofulosis, a form of tuberculosis that attacks the lymph nodes in the neck, were also treated (*item cinis aspidum cum sebo taurino inponitur, anguinus adeps mixtus oleo, item anguium cinis ex oleo inlitus vel cum cera*, 30.37). In this case, drinking powder from a snake was also supposed to help, especially from a reptile that had died in wheel ruts (*edissee quoque eos medios abscissis utrimque extremis partibus adversus strumas prodest, vel cinerem bibisse in novo fictili crematorium, efficacius multo inter duas orbitas occisorum*, 30.37). In addition, ash obtained from viper's skin was used to combat alopecia, i.e., hair loss (*pellium viperinarum cinis alopecias celerrime explet*, 29.109). Viperine ashes were also included in ointments for the treatment of various wounds such as snakebites or viper bites (*viperarum caput inpositum, vel alterius quam quae percusserit, sin fine prodest, item si quis ipsam eam in vapore baculo sustinat, aiunt enim recanere, item si quis exustae eiusdem cinere inlinat*, 29.69).

In *Experimenta*, less elaborate mechanisms for using snake powder are described. Nicholas of Poland writes that by adding it to wine and drinking it in the morning and the evening, we can cure stones in any body part, e.g., in the kidneys or bladder, which seems a much more palatable solution than mixing it with vinegar, as suggested by Pliny.<sup>25</sup>

Ad calculum frangendum in quocumque loco fuerit, sive in renibus, sive in vesica – Recipe pulverem serpentis et pone in vino modicum, et da patienti bibere mane et sero. (*Exp.* 1.1)

To remove stones anywhere possible, whether in the kidneys or bladder, take a little powder from a snake, add a little to the wine, and give the patient to drink morning and evening.

Like Pliny the Elder, the author of the *Experimenta* finds powder effective in treating various types of wounds. Still, the form of this

25 According to the old Polish tradition, it was believed that roasted reptiles, lizards and snakes in the form of ashes should be drunk, as this potion protects people from being bitten by a snake. See Majewski, *Wqz w mowie*, 348.

treatment of Nicholas differs significantly from the one described by the Roman writer. According to Nicholas, the wound should be sprinkled with the powder once a day in winter, twice in summer, and wrapped in a linen sheet. The procedure should be repeated until the wound is healed (*Exp.* 1.4). This type of powder heals various types of wounds (*vulnera*), ulcers (*ulcera, apostemata*) and inflammations (*inflaturae*), as well as toothaches (*dolor dentium*). It can be moistened with saliva and applied to a wound or placed on a sore tooth. The *medicus* writes:

Ad omnia etiam ista valet pulvis serpentis, maxime ad apostemata et ad dolorem dentium, si intus de ipso ponatur; et vulnera, si cum sputo linita circumligetur super apostemata vel vulnus, cito curat. (*Exp.* 1.6)

Snake powder is helpful for all these problems, especially for abscesses and toothache if applied internally; it will also quickly heal wounds if mixed with saliva and applied around the wound or abscess.

Other uses of snake powder not mentioned by Pliny the Elder include its use during childbirth. Simply attaching it to the abdomen of a woman in labor could speed up delivery.

Valet etiam predictus pulvis serpentis mulieri laboranti in partu: ligetur predictus pulvis super nudum ventrem et statim parit. (*Exp.* 1.7)

The aforementioned snake powder also helps the woman in labor; attach this powder to the bare abdomen, and the woman will then give birth immediately.

The skin of the serpent eaten cooked or tied to the abdomen of the parturient will also have a similar effect.

Pellis etiam serpentis mulieri laboranti in partu ligata super ventrem, mulierem statim parere facit. Pellis cocta et comesta idem facit quod et sepens. (*Exp.* 4.11)

The skin of the snake attached to the abdomen of the woman in labor makes the woman give birth immediately. The skin cooked and eaten brings the same as the snake.

For this purpose, however, Pliny encourages using a snake slough placed in the lumbar region. He writes that it facilitates childbirth but should be removed immediately afterward. However, when drunk with

wine and mixed with frankincense, it causes miscarriage (*anguium senectus adalligata lumbis faciliorem partus facit, protinus a puerperio removenda; dant et in vino bibendam cum tuere, aliter sumpta abortum facit*, 30.129). A serpent's slough, as the Magi claim according to Pliny, attached to the patient's body in a piece of bull skin prevents spasms (*serpentinum senectus in pelle taurina adalligata spasmos fieri prohibet*, 30.110). In his *Naturalis Historia*, the author cites the use of snake's slough for treatment very frequently, much more so than the skin itself. According to Pliny, snake slough applied to the skin immediately after bathing together with bitumen and lamb tallow cures, as does snake ash with vinegar, the affliction of erysipelas (*senectus serpentinum ex aqua inlita a balneo cum bitumine et sebo agnino*, 30.106). Snake slough in vinegar mixed with turtle bile, the alleged treatment for a great many conditions, was considered an effective remedy for purulent discharges from the ears (*idem [fel testudinum] cum vernatione anguium aceto admixto unice purulentis auribus prodest; quidam bubulum fel admiscent decoctarum carniuum testudinis suco, addita atque vernatione anguium; sed vino testudinem excocunt*, 32.37). Snake slough heated in oil and pine resin used in torches and applied to each ear would supposedly also help with ear pain and other problems (*vernationis membrana cum oleo taedaeque resina calefacta et auri alterutri infusa*, 30.24–26); similarly, a concoction made of old snake slough and vinegar, wrapped in a strip of wool, would help with hearing disorders. Snake slough boiled in wine was seen as effective in treating scars, but also leprosy (*cicatrices ad colorem educit ... vernatio anguium ex vino decocta ... item vitiligines albas, vitiliginem et cantharides cum rutae foliorum dubus partibus*, 30.120). Slough was also used to treat all types of warts (*verrucae omnium generum ... membrana senectutis anguium*, 30.81). In pulverized form or mixed with vinegar, honey, and resin, it was used for the treatment of ulcers and other anal region diseases (*sedis vitiis efficacissima sunt ... senecta serpentis ex aceto*, 30.69). A cooked slough in a tin pot with rose oil would presumably help with dysentery and painful constipation (*senectus anguium dysinteriae et tenesmis in stagneo vase decoquitur cum rosaceo, vel si in alio, cum stagno inlinitur*, 30.60). The slough dropped from a snake was understood to have the power to cure lice in three days if put in a drink (*phthiriasim et totius corporis pota membrana senectutis anguium triduo necat, serum exempto caseo potum cum exiguo sale*, 30.144). In addition, snake slough would also be used to treat epilepsy (*[comitialibus morbis]*<sup>26</sup> *praedicatur et iocur*

26 In Rome, epilepsy was known as *morbus comitalis* ("disease of the chamber"), a curse sent by the gods. See "epilepsja" in Zieliński, *Słownik pochodzenia nazw*.

*milvi devoratum et senectus serpentium*, 30.93). Viperine skin or slough obtained in spring and mixed with fat would be rubbed on eyes to improve vision (*iumentorum oculis membrana aspidis quam exui vere, cum adipe eiusdem claritatem inunctis facit*, 29.121); rubbed with a male crab in wine, it was supposed to help with the bite of a rabid dog and, if placed in chests of drawers, it was attributed the power to kill moths (*[in canis rabidi morsu tuetur a pavore aquae] membrana sive senectus anguium vernatione exuta cum cancro masculino ex vino trita, [nam hac etiam per se reposita in arcis armariisque tineas necant]*, 29.108).

Nicholas of Poland did not forget the skin of a viper or snake – no part of the snake was to be wasted. He found it to have numerous uses in alleviating various ailments. Similarly to Pliny, he wrote that the inside part of a snakeskin, dried and placed on a tooth, would reduce pain.

Pellis autem serpentis exsiccata a parte interior, que est circa carnem, si ponatur supra dentes, omnino dolorem mitigate, maxime ex calida causa. (*Exp.* 4.8)

Snakeskin dried from the side against the meat and placed on the tooth reduces pain, especially one caused by a warm thing.

Snakeskin, like in the case of Pliny's slough or snake powder, when applied to any ulcer or cancer on the face or even a difficult-to-heal wound, would supposedly heal it quickly and soothe the pain. In addition, it would ensure that no trace of the treatment remains. Nicholas' snake powder was deemed to have a similar effect.

Pellis autem serpentis cum sputo linita ex parte carnis et super omne apostema et noli me tangere posita, cito frangit et dolorem, leniter putrescere facit, et quasi nullam cicatricem dimittit. Et hoc probavi. (*Exp.* 4.9)

Pellis enim serpentis linita ut prius, apposite ad omnia vulnera quantumcunque gravia, dolorem mitigate, leniter putrescere facit, et quasi nullam cicatricem dimittit. Et hoc probavi. (*Exp.* 4.10)

In turn, the snakeskin, anointed with saliva from the flesh side and placed on any ulcer or cancer of the face, quickly opens it, soothes the pain, makes them rot gently, and leaves almost no scar. And this I have tried out.

The skin of the snake, anointed as before, laid on any wounds, though severe, soothes the pain and makes them decay gently, leaving almost no scar. This I have also tried out.

Another use of reptiles, clearly present in Pliny the Elder and later in Nicholas, is the consumption of either a whole snake or one of its parts, prepared appropriately. This should come as no surprise. The consumption of snakes itself in ancient times came into use through the customs of certain peoples, notably, the Italic Marsi, whose country the Romans considered to be the home of witchcraft (Hor. *Sat.* 1.9.29; *Ep.* 17.28), and their main deity Angitia, a goddess of healing, especially skilled in curing serpent bites by charms and the herbs of the Marsian woods.<sup>27</sup> However, it is worth mentioning at the outset how one would go about preparing a reptile for consumption. Pliny the Elder mentions several times in his encyclopedic work the need to prepare the animal properly before it can be consumed. First of all, as the author notes, a good plan according to some is to eat the middle of the snake, but first cut off its marginal parts (*edisse quoque eos medios abscissis utrimque extremis partibus adversus strumas prodest, vel cinerem bibisse*, 30.37). After killing a viper, it is essential to put salt in its mouth and let it dissolve, then cut off the front and back of the reptile to the length of four fingers,<sup>28</sup> remove the entrails,<sup>29</sup> and cook the rest in water with olive oil, salt and dill (*primum omnium occisae statim salem in os addi iubent donec liquescat, mox quattuor digitorum mensura utrimque praecisa exemptisque interaneis discoquunt in aqua, oleo, sale, aneto, et aut statim vescuntur aut pane colligunt, ut saepius utantur*, 29.121). Adders prepared in this way can be eaten immediately or mashed into a loaf and eaten from time to time. A broth can also be prepared, as it has the property of cleansing the body of lice

27 Here one can still point to pseudo-Democritus (Plin., *HN* 10.137; 29.72); “Democritus tradit nominando avis quarum confuso sanguine serpens gignatur, quem quisquis ederit, intellecturus sit avium colloquia.” Descriptions of snake-eating appear also in Galen, and later in Dioscorides, Aetius, and Paul Aegineta. For more on snake bites and various tribes, see Voort, “About Snake Bites.”

28 Even in antiquity, nobody really knew why the tail should be cut off; probably, they found it meatless and skinny, ἄσαρκον (Dioscorides 2.16). Perhaps it was believed that these parts were poisonous. As for the head, this is also not entirely clear; we know they believed in the magical powers of the snake’s tongue. It was supposed to be an amulet against misfortune, according to Pliny (*HN* 30.98).

29 The *viscera* were not used because they were believed to contain venom, especially bile (Plin., *HN* 11.163, 19.122); but sometimes they were also used to cure (Plin., *HN* 29.22).

and removing itching (*ius praeter supra dicta pediculos e toto corpore expellit pruritusque etiam summae cutis*, 29.121). To prepare the tablets, one would cut the viper's body three fingers from the head and tail, removing the intestines and the blue vein adjacent to the spine, then boil it in a shallow pot in water with dill, the bones removed, wheat flour added, forming the tablets and drying them in the shade (*fiunt ex vipera pastilli qui theriaci vocantur a Graecis, ternis digitis mensura utrimque amputatis exemptisque interaneis et livore spinae adhaerente, reliquo corpore in patina ex aqua et aneto discocto spinisque exemptis et addita similigine atque ita in umbra siccatis pastillis quibus ad multa medicamenta utuntur*, 29.70). Such tablets had many medical uses.

In *Experimenta*, one can also find information regarding preparing theriac, a remedy known well since antiquity, although the word's meaning has not been fully clarified yet. For Nicholas, theriac was made of green frogs (*ranae virides*, 2.1., 138), while Pliny insisted that it should only be made from a viper (29.70).

Nicholas of Poland also gives other valuable advice on eating snake meat in chapter 4 of his work *Experimenta*. He states after ancient authors, including Pliny, that first, the snake must be killed, and then its tail and head must be cut off to the length of four fingers. Then, its blood must be squeezed out and stored in a glass container. The snake is flayed, the skin dried, and then hidden in a safe place. He writes as follows:

Accipe serpentem et interface; et post abscinde totam caudam per locum per quem stercorizat, et deinde caput ad longitudinem quattuor digitorum et plus. Postea accipe residuum, et sanguinem exprime in aliquo vase, et conserva in vitro diligenter. Postea excoria ad modum anguille, incipiendo a parte grossiori et pellem pone super lignum, et exsicca; et post scinde per medium et conserva diligenter. Omnia enim ista sunt multum necessaria, sicut inferius patebit. (*Exp.* 4.1)

Take a snake and kill it, then cut off the whole tail from the anus and the head up to the length of four fingers. Then, take the rest, squeeze the blood into some vessel, and hide it carefully in glass. Then skin it like an eel, beginning with the thicker part, and lay the skin on a tree and dry it; then cut it open in the middle and hide it carefully, for all this is very necessary, as I shall show below.

Viper or snake meat, according to Pliny the Elder, had many applications and could be prepared in various ways. It could be used to

make soup, as mentioned above. In addition, Pliny mentions the use of its individual parts. For example, powder from empty snail shells, mixed with wax, was supposed to prevent rectal prolapse, but only when mixed with a substance extracted from the brain of a viper when its head is pricked. The same brain wrapped in a piece of skin attached to a baby's body would facilitate teething, as would snake teeth (*cerebrum viperæ inligatum pellicula dentitiones adiuuat. Idem valent et grandissimi dentes serpentium*, 30.137). A snake's brain would presumably work in a similar way, as would a stone pulled from the head of a boa constrictor, which the snake was supposed to spit out when it feared death. The snake needed to be startled and killed, the stone pulled out, and then placed around the child's neck. Boiled viper in three semisextarii of oil after draining was used as a depilatory for excessive or unwanted hair (*quidam in tribus heminis olei discocunt viperam, exemptisque ossibus psilotri vice utuntur evolsis prius pilis quos renasci nolunt*, 30.133). The consumption of viperine meat after an unsuccessful ulcer operation was recommended by the physician Antonius, as it was supposed to quickly help (*Antonius quidem medicus cum incidisset insanabilia ulcera, viperas edendas dabat miraque celeritate persanabat*, 30.117). Pliny writes that eating cooked viper's liver once prevents all snake attacks and bites (*horum [hydri] iecur servatum adversus percussos ab his auxilium est*, 29.72). On the other hand, consuming the liver of a water snake or hydrus, crushed and added to a drink, was purportedly helpful for urinary tract stones. Allegedly, snake bones applied with the rennet of any four-legged animal within two days healed a wound after an arrow, other sharpened weapon, or foreign substance that had been pulled out of it (*harundines et tela quaeque alia extrahenda sunt ... cum leporis coagulo efficacissime ossa anguivum*, 30.122). Snake teeth cured toothaches (*dens anguivum adalligatus dolores mitigat*, 30.26), and a snake heart, extracted from a live animal with the left hand, used as an amulet, helped with fever and paroxysms within three days. The heart of a snake would be consumed or carried on the body to aid teething in children. And wearing the right eye of a snake as an amulet was ostensibly effective for defluxions of the eyes, provided the snake was released afterwards (*serpentis oculum dextrum adalligatum contra epiphoras prodesse, si serpens viva dimittatur*, 29.131). Pliny the Elder furthermore mentions the use of snake entrails as an effective treatment for wounds when applied directly (*praeterea constat contra omnium ictus quamvis insanabiles ipsarum serpentium exta inposita auxiliari*, 29.71). However, the entrails were generally

removed because they were believed to contain poison; snake bile was believed to be particularly harmful.<sup>30</sup>

In the text of Nicholas of Poland, there is also a great deal of information on the use of snake meat. First, it is worth mentioning that he discusses the possibilities of its preparation in much greater detail. While in Pliny one had to do with raw meat, boiled or dried, according to his medieval Polish counterpart, snake meat could be boiled or fried. Nicholas tells precisely how snake meat should be prepared. First, one must wash the snake well and put it in a good wine with salt for an hour.<sup>31</sup> Then, it should be cut into pieces, put in a bowl, and cooked in wine with spices.<sup>32</sup> The snake could also be roasted.<sup>33</sup> One was supposed to roast it until the bones were visible, but one had to be careful not to burn it. However, Nicholas wrote that not every snake is suitable for consumption.<sup>34</sup> As explained in *Experimenta*, eating snake meat seemingly had many health-promoting properties. Nicholas devotes an entire section of his text to snakes, in which he not only encourages everyone to eat a snake from time to time,<sup>35</sup> but also lists what that can help with:

Serpens enim comestus ab omni lepra futura preserat et presentem palliat, iuventutem et bonum colorem suoer omnes medicinas conseruat, ab omni canicie custodit, oculos clarificat, a caduco morbo

- 30 Snake bile, however, had positive properties. The gall of the boa was highly vaunted for the cure of albugo and cataracts upon the eyes (Plin., *HN* 29.38).
- 31 Pliny also refers to the storage and preparation of snakes in wine and salt. It is interesting to note that, according to the author of *Naturalis Historia*, the very salt in which the snake was stored or prepared has medicinal properties and helps, for example, in the treatment of ulcers (Plin., *HN* 30.39).
- 32 “Postea incide frustratim, et pone in poto, et decoquas in duabus partibus vini; et postquam bene coctum fuerit, condias brodium cum bonis speciebus et sic comedes et aliis dabis” (*Exp.* 4.1).
- 33 “Vel si vis assare, assa tantum, quod ossa incipient apparere, non tamen comiburendo, et tunc poteris comedere. Vel si vis, assa tantum, quod possis in mortario pulverizari.” (*Exp.* 4.2). Nicholas recommends that this dish, prepared this way, be served at every meal, especially to kings, leaders, and other nobles because of their merit and horror (*propter honorem vel horrorem*).
- 34 According to Nicholas of Poland, only mountain snakes, pet snakes, and those with a white belly and black back can be eaten. One should not eat snakes that are blind (the blindworm was believed to be the most venomous of all snakes), have a lot of tails, and dragons, which is also linked to tradition (*Exp.* 4.4).
- 35 “Et breuiter secundum doctrinam Fratris Nicolai omni homini, in quocunque statu sit, expedit, ut serpentem, quocunque tempore habere possit, comedat” (*Exp.* 4.3).

future preservat, caput purgat, ab omni infirmitate gravi et longa custodit, morpheas et scabies et omnes infirmitates similes supradicto modo comestus expellit. (*Exp.* 4.3)

For the consumption of the serpent, if it is consumed in the manner described above, protects from all future leprosy and expels the present one, preserves youth and a good complexion better than any medicine, insures against all gray hair, removes the clouding of eyes, protects from future epilepsy, cleanses the head, saves from all severe and prolonged illnesses, expels leprosy and scab and all similar diseases.

In addition, consumption or indirect ingestion of snake meat was supposed to help with deafness (*a surditate liberat, Exp.* 4.5), which is why people should feed snakes to hens or geese (*pullos et anseres, Exp.* 4.6). The consumption of storks (*ciconie, Exp.* 4.7) was described as having a similar effect, as these feed on toads and snakes.<sup>36</sup>

Pliny the Elder also cites the ancients' beliefs about the health-promoting properties of fat extracted from vipers and snakes. Presumably, snake fat could effectively treat burns (*ambustis ... medetur ... adipis viperinus, 30.109*), and when massaged into the feet, it would help with gout (*sale quidam cum vipera crematus in olla nova saepius sumpto aiunt podagra liberari, utile esse et adipe viperino pedes perungui, 30.77*). Snake fat mixed with oil or wax, added to drink, or eaten was allegedly an excellent treatment for ulcerated scrofula (*cocleae cum testa sua tusae inlinuntur, maxime quae fructectis adhaerent, item cinis aspidum cum sebo taurino inponitur, anguinus adeps mixtus oleos, iem anguium cinis ex oleo inlitis vel cum cera, 30.37*). Viper fat and snake fat were used as an eye ointment (cf. 29.119). Viper's fat boiled with one sextarius of olive oil and added to a person's body would seemingly repel all kinds of harmful animals (*quidam purgatae ut supra dictum est adipem cum olei sextario decocunt ad dimidias. ex eo, cum opus sit, ternis stillis additis in oleum perunguntur ut omnes bestiae fugiant eos, 29.70*). Dragon's fat dried in the sun would conceivably also help with ulcers (*draconum quoque adeps siccatus in sole magnopere prodest, 30.117*), and rubbing oneself morning and evening – as Pliny writes about the magical beliefs of some healers – with a dragon's tongue, eyes, bile, and intestines cooked in oil and cooled outside at night was supposed to help with delirium and nightmares (*rursus Magi tradunt ... eos vero qui a nocturnis diis Faunisque agitentur draconis lingua*

36 Cf. also Plin., *HN* 29.105, 10.62.

*et oculis et felle intestinisque in vino et oleo decoctis ac sub diu nocte refrigeratis perunetionibus matutinis vesperitinisque liberari, 30.84).*

Nicholas of Poland, similarly to Pliny the Elder, stated that if fat was rubbed around the eyelids, it would cure flushing and blotchiness and all disease, and remove cloudy eyes.

Arvina vero serpentis omnem rubedinem recentem et maculam et omnes infirmitates oculorum cito curat iuncta circ palpebras oculos etiam supra modum clarificat. (*Exp.* 4.13)

And the serpentine fat cures all erythema and spots and all diseases of the eyes quickly if it is rubbed near the eyelids, and it removes the clouding of the eyes in an extraordinary way.

In Chapter 5 of the *Experimenta*, a way to prepare snakeskin ointment is given, and there is a description of its applications. To prepare it, one was supposed to take two, three, or four live snakes, put them in a new clay<sup>37</sup> pot on the bottom, and fill the pot with butter, made in May. One would then cover it with a lid and seal it with strong batter so that nothing could evaporate. Only a small hole at the front could be left uncovered. Then, the pot would be placed over heat and cooked for half a day. The butter would be strained through a linseed sheet and what was left of the snakes would be crushed in a mortar, strained again, and mixed. Finally, the mixture would be cooled and stored in silver, gold, or glass boxes so that it would not evaporate. The longer one aged the ointment, all the way up to 40 years, the more valuable it would become (*Exp.* 5). The properties of a mixture thus prepared were supposed to be many. First, it presumably helped treat rheumatism and paralysis in the area where it was rubbed.

De isto unguento infirmus, paciens guttam vel paralytim in quocunque loco, ungat ad ignem frequenter et evadet absquae dubio. (*Exp.* 5)

If you suffer from rheumatism or paralysis in any part of your body, use this ointment to rub yourself frequently by the fire, and you will undoubtedly be cured.

In Pliny the Elder, remedies from vipers and snakes also appear in the form of ointments prepared from fat (cf. 29.119) or from reptile ashes mixed with oil (cf. 29.121). A gripping passage in *Historia Naturalis*

37 A new earthenware vessel is also used in Pliny (*HN* 30.12).

describes how to prepare a cure for eye diseases. According to Pliny, one was supposed to leave the adder in an earthenware vessel until it rotted and then mash it with saffron and with the worms that had nested in it (*viperam vivam in fictili novo comburere addito feniculi suco ad eyathum unum et turis manna una, atque ita suffusiones oculorum et caliginis inungere utilissimum est*, 29.119). An ointment containing snake powder was also seen as effective in treating wounds (cf. 29.70). In Pliny's work, a use of snake products appears which is not found in *Experimenta*, namely fumigation with dried snake, which is likely to have an emmenagogue effect (*anguis inveterati suffitu menstrua adiuvant*, 30.128). In *Experimenta* attributed to Nicholas of Poland, snake blood still appears as essential for women and beauty. Snake's blood was used to rub the face like a lotion, professedly letting the skin remain beautiful with no spots. It also allegedly removed the unpleasant odor of teeth and gums.

Sanguis autem serpentis plus valet quam balsamum: quia labia linita ex eo domicelle rubicunda facit valde. Facies etiam linita hoc sanguine nullam maculam recipit, faciem pulcram, rubicundam et serenam reddit, omnem scabiem non solum in facie, verum etiam in toto corpore, ubicunque linitum fuerit, (aufert); tollit et fetorem dentibus et gingivis, ubi cum inunxeris. Ista omnia domine multum diligent, et sunt vera sicut probavi. (*Exp.* 4.12)

And the blood of a snake is worth more than a lotion because the lips of a maiden anointed with it redden very much. A face anointed with this blood does not receive any stains; it gives the face frothiness, redness, and cheerfulness, banishes any scab not only from the face but also from the whole body, wherever it is rubbed, and abolishes the unpleasant smell of teeth and gums if only you rub them with it. All this the ladies like very much, and it is true, as I have tried it out.

As one can imagine, Nicholas of Poland's text must have provoked various emotions; the methods of treatment and healing he promoted among the people of Lesser Poland, might not have been entirely new and original, but they were nevertheless controversial. Although his method *fuit abhominabilis omni populo*, even "Lord Leszek, the duke of Sieradz, along with his wife Griffine ... began to eat serpents, lizards and frogs, because ... they were efficacious medicaments."<sup>38</sup>

38 Bielowski, "Rocznik Traski" (*dominus etiam Lestco dux Syradie cum uxore sua Grifhina ... cepit comedere serpentes, lacertas et ranas*).

Despite the development of medical thought and knowledge in the centuries separating them, both Pliny and Nicholas of Poland present remarkably similar medicines derived from snakes and vipers. Both described how to prepare serpent powders, how to prepare serpent meat for consumption, how to make serpent ointments, pills, and compresses from serpent powder or fat. All parts of these reptiles, their guts, skin, organs, slough, fat, teeth, or blood, were used in pharmacology. Both Pliny and Nicholas of Poland even seem to have had similar aims in describing the different types of serpent medicines. Pliny clearly states that he aims to benefit humans:

Quid ergo? dixerimus herbas et florum imagines ac pleraque inventu rara ac difficilia, iidem tacebimus quid in ipso homine prosit homini ceteraque genera remediorum inter nos viventia, cum praesertim nisi carenti doloribus morbisque vita ipsa poena fiat? minime vero, omnemque insumemus operam, licet fastidii periculum urgeat, quando ita decretum est, minorem gratiae quam utilitatum vitae respectum habere. (Plin., *HN* 28.1)

Well then, shall I, who have described plants and forms of flowers, including many rare things that are difficult to find, say nothing about the benefits to man that are to be found in man himself, nothing about the other kinds of remedies that live among us, especially as life itself becomes a punishment for those who are not free from pains and diseases? Indeed, I must, and I shall devote all my care to the task, although I realize the risk of causing disgust since it is my fixed determination to have less regard for popularity than for benefiting human life.

Nicholas, on the other hand, wanted to develop an extraordinary medical art that could work miracles and help relieve all ailments. He asserted that by treating diseases among various nations, he was doing admirable things and performing miracles (*in pluribus nationibus morbos curando mira ac stupenda gessi*).<sup>39</sup> Thus, both authors showed remedies that were supposedly useful in everything from aiding childbirth to inducing bleeding and that would ostensibly cure a myriad of illnesses, ailments, and defects, including eye diseases, ear problems, deafness, all skin lesions and wounds, lice, burns, dental or hair problems, gastric problems, ulcers, stones, diseases of the anus, rheumatism, paralysis, gout, and epilepsy. As magical medicine was

39 *Antipocras* in Ganszyniec, *Brata Mikołaja z Polski Pisma*, 44, v. 10.

quite popular in Rome, it is not surprising that it is found in various forms in the texts of Pliny the Elder; however, this article has shown that similar recipes and advice were recorded under the name of Nicholas of Poland centuries later. This way of magical thinking would survive for centuries to follow and would appear in Polish folk beliefs and medical recipes for snake snacks.<sup>40</sup>

40 Majewski, *Wąż w mowie*, 76–84; Wołoszyn, “Zrzuciłem duży kamień,” 375–87; Bartmiński, *Dlaczego wąż nie ma nóg?*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bartmiński, Jerzy, Olga Kielak, and Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska. *Dlaczego wąż nie ma nóg? Zwierzęta w ludowych przekazach ustnych*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2015.
- Bielowski, August, ed. "Rocznik Traski." In *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* 2. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1961.
- Böhme, Wolfgang, and Thore Koppetsch. "Snake Names in the Greek-Roman Antiquity: Old Characterizations, Identity in Current Zoology, and Change of Their Original Meaning in Post-Linnean Herpetology." *Salamandra* 57, no. 4 (2021): 482–501.
- Bragazzi, Nicola Luigi, et al. "Asclepius and Epidaurus: The Sapiential Medicine as Divinatory Art between Therapeutic Landscapes and Healing Dreams." *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2019): 193–98.
- Eamon, William, and Gundolf Keil. "Plebs amat empirica: Nicholas of Poland and His Critique of the Mediaeval Medical Establishment." *Sudhoffs Archiv* 71, no. 2 (1987): 180–96.
- Fondriest, Simone. "Animali d'Oriente nei codici d'Occidente: Il leone e il serpente." Thesis, University of Trento, 2017.
- Ganszyniec, Ryszard, ed. *Brata Mikołaja z Polski pisma lekarskie*. Poznań: University Press, 1920.
- Grzelak-Krzymianowska, Adriana. "A Short Review of Polish Medical Writings in Latin from Medieval Times to the Contemporaneity." In *Secretarii actiones Petri Pauli Vergerii*, edited by Gregor Po-bežin and Peter Štoka, 109–23. Koper: Osrednja knjižnica Srečka Vilharja, 2018.
- Jones, W. H. S., transl. and ed. *Pliny: Natural History*, vol. 8. London: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- Libera, Piotr. "Motyw lekarza i lekarstwa w 'Komentarzu do Psalmu xxxvii' św. Ambrożego." *Analecta Cracoviensia* 20 (1998): 209–20.
- Maciąg-Fiedler, Agnieszka. "Medycyna cudowna Mikołaja z Polski." *Almanach Historyczny* 23, no. 2 (2021): 157–66.
- Majewski, Erazm. *Wąż w mowie i pojęciach ludu przeważnie polskiego: Na podst. wyciągów z literatury etnograficznej zebranych przez E. Majewskiego i J. Saneckiego*. Warsaw: Nakładem Redakcji "Wisły," 1893.
- Migdał, Justyna. "Nauka i magia w Historii Naturalnej Pliniusza Starszego, czyli o prawie sympatii." *Meander* 2 (2005): 184–203.

- Stannard, Jerry. "Medicinal Plants and Folk Remedies in Pliny, 'Historia Naturalis.'" *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 4, no. 1 (1982): 3–23.
- Voort, Marcel van der. "Ancient Herpetology 1: About Snake Bites and Unwanted Pregnancies." *Litteratura Serpantium* 15, no. 6 (1995): 142–45, available online.
- Wołoszyn, Magdalena. "Zrzuciłem duży kamień na wodnego węża ... Poetycki a polski ludowy obraz węża." *Vilnius University Open Series* 2 (2021): 375–87, available online.
- Zieliński, Krzysztof W., ed. *Słownik pochodzenia nazw i określeń medycznych: Antyczne i nowożytne dzieje chorób w ich nazwach ukryte*. Bielsko-Biała: A-Medica Press, 2004.

## ABSTRACT

The paper aims to show how Pliny the Elder, in his *Historia Naturalis*, and Nicholas of Poland, in *Experimenta*, the medical treatise attributed to him, presented and described ways of preparing snakes for medical purposes. The paper explores the connections and relationships between these texts, primarily in terms of the instructions conveyed regarding the use of specific snake and viper products and the effects of their use on human health, including the many diseases known since antiquity that plagued Nicholas' contemporaries.

**KEYWORDS:** Pliny the Elder, Nicholas of Poland, snakes, medicine, Dominicans, Silesia

Plinij Starejši in Nikolaj Poljski o pripravkih iz kač  
in njihovi uporabi v medicini

## IZVLEČEK

Članek se osredotoča na to, kako sta Plinij Starejši v svojem delu *Historia Naturalis* in Nikolaj Poljski v njemu pripisanem medicinskem traktatu *Experimenta* predstavila in opisala načine za pripravo kač v medicinske namene. Razprava razišče povezave in stične točke med obema besediloma, predvsem v smislu njunih navodil za uporabo pripravkov iz kač ter učinkov njihove rabe na zdravje ljudi, ter obravnava vrsto bolezni, znanih že v antiki, ki so pestile tudi Nikolajeve sodobnike.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Plinij Starejši, Nikolaj Poljski, kače, medicina, dominikanci, Šlezija



Informational text panel, likely describing the artwork or the exhibition.







# Julian the Apostate, Claudius Mamertinus, and Ammianus Marcellinus: Filling in a “Blank Spot”?

Gregor Pobežin\*

Much is known about the first half of the 4th century AD and the action-packed period between 360 and 363, which this paper is particularly diving into.<sup>1</sup> However, we propose to formulate a question of central importance for this treatise, namely the content of the (administrative) action that Emperor Julian the Apostate took during his months in Illyricum in the second half of 361. By examining key primary sources like Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudius Mamertinus, we endeavor to reconstruct a more comprehensive<sup>2</sup> understanding of Julian’s activities during his time in Illyricum.

\* Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts; University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities; [gregor.pobezin@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:gregor.pobezin@zrc-sazu.si).

1 The paper owes its existence to the research conducted within the project “Empire and Transformation of Genre in Roman Literature” (J6-2585), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS), and the research programme “The (New) Cultural History of Intellectual Heritage: Slovenian Historical Space in its European and Mediterranean Context” (P6-0440) funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS).

2 The paper builds upon some of my prior work. It presents new research inspired by my presentation “Julian and Illyricum” at the “Bałkany w kulturze Europy: Od starożytności po współczesność” conference on November 14, 2022 (Instytut Studiów Klasycznych i Sławistyki Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego). While analyses of the chapters from Ammianus’ history and (some) inscriptions have been covered in a forthcoming conference paper, this work breaks new ground by offering a novel interpretation of Mamertinus’ panegyric (i.e. the chapters relevant to the topic of this paper), providing a distinct perspective on the subject matter.

On the first day of 362, Claudius Mamertinus<sup>3</sup> held a *gratiarum actio* (thanksgiving speech) for his consulship in 362. Delivered to the Senate in Constantinople, it served to express gratitude and praise – but also to justify Julian’s recent actions.<sup>4</sup> For context, a brief historical overview precedes this analysis.

Barely a decade after Constantine’s passing, the West relapsed into chaos. With Constans assassinated by the usurper Magnentius (350), Constantius II emerged as sole emperor in 353. Seeking a new heir after executing his previous choice, Constantius Gallus (executed in 354),<sup>5</sup> Constantius elevated Julian (Flavius Claudius Iulianus) to caesar in 355, solidifying the alliance through marriage.

Julian’s initial success in Gaul<sup>6</sup> as caesar may have been met with Constantius’ concerns over his growing power. At the beginning of 360, while wintering in Lutetia (modern Paris), Julian was asked to relinquish his army, presumably needed for the operations in the east, but also with a possible intent to diminish Julian’s influence.<sup>7</sup> This escalation resulted in Julian being proclaimed Augustus and his claim to the throne.

Julian took the initiative and moved first,<sup>8</sup> taking his small army toward the east through Illyricum. However, before the final face-off, Constantius died in November 361 near Tarsus, ending further hostilities: Constantius’ court accepted Julian as his legitimate successor.<sup>9</sup>

3 Jones, Martindale, and Morris, *Prosopography 1* (= *PLRE 1*), 540–41 (Claudius Mamertinus 2).

4 Lieu, *Emperor Julian*, 4–5; Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of the Roman Emperors*, 389.

5 Zosim. 2.55.2; Amm. 14.11; 15.1.

6 See Heather, “Gallic Wars,” 64–96, for details about Julian’s campaigns in Gaul.

7 Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate*, 47; see Cox’s *Ascension of Julian*, 267–76, on the dilemma whether Julian really “engineered his acclamation” (Greenwood, “Five Latin Inscriptions,” 101–19, particularly 101) or whether he was forced into usurpation by the possibility of his troops’ revolt (Bleckmann, “From Caesar to Augustus,” 98–123, particularly 107).

8 This seems to be of no little embarrassment for Mamertinus who tries to make the connection between Julian’s operations against the German tribes in the western provinces and his march towards the east; cf. Lieu, *Emperor Julian*, 10–11, and Nixon, *In Praise of the Roman Emperors*, 390–91), which we shall briefly discuss further below.

9 For further reading on Julian’s life see Ricciotti, *L’Imperatore Giuliano l’Apostata*; Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate*; among recent works Bringmann, *Kaiser Julian*; Teitler, *Last Pagan Emperor* (particularly 7–15 and 24–34). See Pająkowska-Bouallegui, “History of the Remains,” 333–49 (particularly p. 333, footnote 1) for a more detailed list of references.

MAMERTINUS' *GRATIARUM ACTIO* AND AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS 21.10-12 ON JULIAN IN ILLYRICUM

Having accepted the acclamation of his army, Julian's ascension to the throne became a *de facto* usurpation:<sup>10</sup> although there was probably a lull in the course of hostilities during which some negotiations may have taken place,<sup>11</sup> from the point of view of imperial legitimacy, his ascension to the throne was technically a usurpation since he was not recognized by Constantius.<sup>12</sup> Mamertinus makes some effort in his *Gratiarum Actio* to make this an issue of *saving the empire* rather than usurping power by way of strategic rhetorical comparison, contrasting Julian to such usurpers as Nepotianus and Silvanus: "Since the expulsion of the kings many men have desired to rule the entire State by themselves. ... Suppose they were temporarily restored to life, and God should address them: 'Ho, Nepotianus,' for example, 'and Silvanus, you sought imperial power through hostile swords and imminent death. But now the power to rule is given you spontaneously on the condition that you rule on Julian's terms ...'"<sup>13</sup>

Julian divided his army into three groups; while his army group south under *magister equitum* [Flavius] Flavius Iovinus and Iovius went toward Sirmium "along the familiar roads of [northern] Italy" (*per itinera Italiae nota quosdam properaturos cum Iovino misit et Iovio*),<sup>14</sup> and army group center under *magister equitum* Flavius Nevitta<sup>15</sup> pushed toward Illyricum through "the middle of Raetia" (*per mediterranea Raetiarum*) and Noricum,<sup>16</sup> Julian proceeded with his army group north "along the roads near the banks of the river Danube" (*per ... viasque iunctas Histri fluminis ripis*) toward the Second Pannonia and its capital, Sirmium.

Mamertinus treats this march in a highly mythicized, epic manner, which he otherwise claims to reject,<sup>17</sup> linking Julian's initiative in

10 The motifs for Julian's ascension to the throne received ample attention from ancient authors as well as modern researchers: see Cox, *Ascension of Julian*, 268-70, for a comprehensive overview of ancient and modern viewpoints.

11 Lieu, *Emperor Julian*, 10.

12 Bleckmann, "From Caesar to Augustus," 98-101.

13 Mamert. 13.1-4. This and all subsequent translations from Nixon, *In Praise of the Roman Emperors*.

14 See *PLRE* 1, 462-63 for Fl. Iovinus and 463 for Iovius.

15 *PLRE* 1, 626-27.

16 Amm. 21.8.2-3; see also Bleckmann, "From Caesar to Augustus," 117-20, for a detailed summary of the route of Julian's army to Illyricum.

17 Nixon, "In Praise of the Roman emperors," 391.

marching against Constantius with the war against Alemanni: “Consequently, he suppressed Alamannia at the outset of the attempted rebellion. Not long after he had wandered with his victorious army *through regions, rivers, and mountains with unheard-of names, through the farthest kingdoms of wild races*, flying over the trampled heads of kings, he suddenly appeared in the middle of Illyricum.”<sup>18</sup>

A brief geographical analysis may be of value at this juncture. The Constantinian era saw *Illyricum* transformed, referring to a distinct territory from its earlier organizational purpose.<sup>19</sup> Diocletian’s 293 reforms saw a significant reorganization of the provinces, with the newly created prefecture of Illyricum divided into the administrative units *Illyricum occidentale* (diocese of Pannonia) and the *Illyricum orientale* (diocese of Moesia).<sup>20</sup> By the end of the provincial administrative reforms (difficult to date with certainty, but possibly during the reign of Constantine),<sup>21</sup> the Empire comprised twelve dioceses and 95 provinces, as attested by the “Verona List” (*Laterculus Veronensis*) from 324.<sup>22</sup> According to the *Notitia dignitatum* (late 4th/early 5th c.),<sup>23</sup> the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum had already shrunk to

- 18 Mamert. 6.2. This narrative serves its purpose (minimizing the aspect of usurpation), to which Julian himself was dedicated as well, i.e., to “polish” his (imperial) image where he *could* do so: see Conti, *Inscripfen Kaiser Iulians*, 103–109, for inscriptions (mostly on milestones) dedicated to Julian in Illyricum; the recurring epithet *victori ac triumphatori totiusque orbis Augusto bono rei publicae [nato?]* – a formulation generally restricted to the milestones in the province of Dalmatia (Conti, *Inscripfen Kaiser Iulians*, 103) is general and restrained enough.
- 19 See Šašel Kos, *Appian and Illyricum*, 97–115, for the ancients’ idea of Illyria’s dimensions; for further notice on the geography of Illyricum (and the Roman diplomatic attitudes towards it), see Dzino, *Illyricum in Roman Politics*, 26–43; see Šašel Kos, “Pannonia or Lower Illyricum?” 123–30, and Šačić Beća, “Issue of Origin and Division,” 87–110, on the important issue of the dissolution of the province Illyricum (and the question of its date) and its division into Pannonia and Dalmatia. See also Kuntić-Makvić, “Illyricianus,” 185–92, for an interesting debate about the use of the terms *Illyricus* and *Illyricianus*. For (some) ancient reports on Illyricum in the 4th c., see Cedilnik, *Ilirik*; also Gračanin, “Illyricum,” 287–98 for the representation of Illyricum in ancient authors.
- 20 For a detailed account of Diocletian’s (provincial) reforms see Barnes, *New Empire*, 140–74; Kuhoff, *Diokletian* (particularly 330–560).
- 21 Bratož, *Med Italijo in Ilirikom*, 60.
- 22 See Barnes, *New Empire*, 205, for the problems of dating the *Laterculus*.
- 23 See Scharf, *Dux Mogontiacensis*, 3–5, for the outline of problems related to the dating of the *Notitia dignitatum*.

the dioceses of Macedonia and Dacia;<sup>24</sup> however, in the mid-fourth c. AD and until the end of the reign of Valentinian I, the eastern and western Illyricum were still parts of one praetorian prefecture,<sup>25</sup> its western border running along the “western and southern borders of both Norican provinces.”<sup>26</sup>

Virtually unopposed,<sup>27</sup> Julian’s forces reached Sirmium, from where they moved on “with the dawn of the third day”<sup>28</sup> to the pass of Succia and “placed a force ... and entrusted its defense to Nevitta. ... After these arrangements had been made in a matter so momentous and so urgent, the emperor, leaving the commander of the cavalry there, returned to Naissus (a well-supplied town), from which he might without hindrance attend to everything that would contribute to his advantage.”<sup>29</sup>

Julian’s further action against Constantius was severely hampered by the revolt in Aquileia, which began in the summer/autumn of 361 and lasted until February 362, forcing Julian to extend his stay in Illyricum.<sup>30</sup>

This must have given Julian time to do regular “imperial business.” What was it – and how much could he have done in a limited space of time? In his correspondence to Libanius in 363 (*ep.* 98), Julian mentions *libelli* – official documents – that “traveled with him everywhere, following him like shadows” and too numerous to mention.<sup>31</sup> And how limited was Julian’s time in Illyricum anyway?

24 Notitia dignitatum: *Sub dispositione viri illustris praefecti praetorio per Illyricum sunt dioceses infrascriptae: Macedonia. Dacia. Provinciae Macedoniae sex: Achaia – Macedonia – Creta – Thessalia – Epirus uetus – Epirus noua et pars Macedoniae salutaris. Provinciae Daciae quinque: Dacia mediterranea – Dacia ripensis – Moesia prima – Dardania – Praeualitana et pars Macedoniae salutaris.*

25 Lippold, “Westillyricum und Nordostitalien,” 17–28; see also Weiler, “Zur Frage der Grenzziehung,” 123–43.

26 Weiler, “Zur Frage der Grenzziehung,” 133. Under Julian (after Dec. 361), the jurisdiction of the praetorian prefect of Illyricum extended over Italy and Africa as well (Amm. 26.5.5).

27 See Amm. 21.8.3 on Julian’s ploy to make his army seem bigger (and 21.9 on how the trick worked); also Cedilnik, *Ilirik*, 284–85.

28 Amm. 21.10.2.

29 Amm. 21.10.5. Julian had good reason to stay in Naissus instead of Sirmium, the seat of the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum and an important military hub (Mirković, “Sirmium,” 150); see quote above, ch. 21.11.22.

30 Amm. 21.11–12; see Gentili, “Politics and Christianity in Aquileia,” 198–200, for the summary of the revolt and the analysis of Aquileians’ political and religious allegiances; also Bratož, *Med Italijo in Ilirikom*, 128–30.

31 Millar, *Emperor in the Roman World*, 211.

A clear chronology of Julian's stay in Illyricum is particularly important because it allows us to assess whether his administrative and legislative measures were an ad hoc affair or, in fact, deliberate and well thought out. If we accept the (contested) assumption that he left Sirmium for Naissus in mid-May<sup>32</sup> or (more likely) as late as mid-July<sup>33</sup> and another (most reasonable) assumption that he left for Constantinople by the end of November that year so that he could be in Constantinople on December 11,<sup>34</sup> he spent anywhere between four months to about half a year in Illyricum. An interesting aspect of this chronology is of epigraphic nature. While the inscriptions on milestones in Dalmatia exhibit a "restrained" dedication (see footnote 18), the inscriptions along the road from Naissus to Constantinople via Serdica in the Dacia Mediterranea (the road Julian must have taken after having learned of Constantius' death) give Julian full imperial epithets:<sup>35</sup>

[Im]p(eratori) Caes(ari) [d(omino) n(ostro) Flavio Clau]=  
 dio Iuliano Pio Felici [victori]  
 venerabili ac triumphatori  
 semper Augusto, pontifici  
 maximo, German(ico) maximo,  
 Alaman(nico) maximo, Franc(ico)  
 maximo, Sarmat(ico) maximo,  
 imperatori ̄I, consuli III,  
 patri patriae, proconsuli,  
 recuperata re publica [[ - - ]]  
 [[ - - ]]  
 in antiquam ce(n)suram (?) dignita=  
 temque revocavit.

To Emperor and Our Lord Flavius Claudius Iulianus Pius Felix, the ever-winning and ever-triumphant Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, the vanquisher of Germans, the vanquisher of Alemanni, the vanquisher of the Franks and Sarmatians, emperor and consul for the third time, father of the fatherland, proconsul who, having restored the

32 Still accepted by some, e.g., Conti, *Inscripfen Kaiser Iulians*, 109.

33 Nixon, "Aurelius Victor and Julian," 118, for the date of Julian's journey from Sirmium to Naissus.

34 Ibid., 115.

35 Conti, *Inscripfen Kaiser Iulians*, 100; also Sharankov, "Infectam usque fatale exitium," 41-70.

republic [which had been almost completely destroyed], returned it to the old faith and splendor.

A few textual instances will be inspected to explore this matter further. Mamertinus' account – a rhetorically embellished exercise but a fresh document nonetheless (it was delivered mere months after the events in question) – gives a picture of energetic action:

7.1 To restore the condition of the most faithful provinces and at one and the same time to rob all the barbarian world of its spirit by bringing terror nearer, he decided to make a lengthy voyage along the Danube. ... 7.3 All the cities which are situate upon the Danube were visited, the decrees of all were heard ... 9.1 At that very time the Dalmatians were relieved of the enormous taxes in horses, and the Epirotes weighed down and unable to move under the burden of an intolerable tribute, have by your forethought, Emperor, not only cast off their miseries, but have even grown strong in rich and abundant prosperity. ... 9.4 It is enough to know that after one or two letters of the greatest of Emperors all the towns of Macedonia, Illyricum, and the Peloponnesus suddenly assumed a youthful appearance ...

Although this particular passage shares the rhetorical grandeur of the prevailing panegyric style, a few points of interest touch upon what seems factual: the relief of the heavy taxation burden in Dalmatia and Epirus (9.1). But we will see echoes of this observation in Ammianus, too. Even though temporally more remote than Mamertinus' *gratiarum actio*, Ammianus provides some more detail<sup>36</sup> and substance in his chapters 21.10–12 outlining Julian's administrative action in Illyricum:<sup>37</sup>

10.6 There [sc. in Naissus] he made Victor,<sup>38</sup> the writer of history, whom he had seen at Sirmium and had bidden to come from there, consular governor of Pannonia Secunda, and honoured him with a statue in bronze, a man who was a model of temperance, and long afterwards prefect of the City. ... 12.21 Now these things happened later. But Julian was still at Naissus, beset by deep cares, since he feared many dangers from two quarters. For he stood in dread lest the soldiers besieged at Aquileia should by a sudden onset block the

36 But see Lieu, *Emperor Julian*, 6–8, on the historical value of Mamertinus' panegyric.

37 All English translations from Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*.

38 *PLRE* 1, 960 (Sex. Aurelius Victor 13).

passes of the Julian Alps, and he should thus lose the provinces and the support which he daily expected from them. 22 Also he greatly feared the forces of the Orient, hearing that the soldiers dispersed over Thrace had been quickly concentrated to meet sudden violence and were approaching the frontiers of Succi under the lead of the count Martianus. But in spite of this he himself also, acting with an energy commensurate with the pressing mass of dangers, assembled the Illyrian army, reared in the toil of Mars and ready in times of strife to join with a warlike commander. 23 Nor did he at so critical a time disregard the interests of private persons, but he gave ear to their suits and disputes, especially those of the senators of the free towns, whom he was much inclined to favour, and unjustly invested many of them with high public office. 24 There it was that he found Symmachus<sup>39</sup> and Maximus,<sup>40</sup> two distinguished senators, who had been sent by the nobles as envoys to Constantius. On their return he received them with honour, and passing over the better man, in place of Tertullus made Maximus prefect of the eternal city, to please Rufinus Vulcatius,<sup>41</sup> whose nephew he knew him to be. Under this man's administration, however, there were supplies in abundance, and the complaints of the populace, which were often wont to arise, ceased altogether. 25 Then, to bring about a feeling of security in the crisis and to encourage those who were submissive, he promoted Mamertinus, the praetorian prefect in Illyricum, to the consulship, as well as Nevitta; and that too although he had lately beyond measure blamed Constantine as the first to raise the rank of base foreigners.

Despite the messed-up chronology,<sup>42</sup> Ammianus' chapters 21.10–12 are the most detailed account of Julian's administrative (and strategic) moves in Illyricum during the second half of 361.<sup>43</sup> Structurally, the events after Julian's acclamation to Constantius' death are given from two perspectives: Julian's (21.8–12) and Constantius' (21.13–15). Strictly speaking in narrative terms, "Julian's point of view" is marked by a significant narratorial intervention: the revolt in Aquileia (21.12.4–20) is a temporal parenthesis, which somewhat complicates the timeline of the events.

39 *PLRE* 1, 863–65 (L. Aurelius Avianius Symmachus 3).

40 *PLRE* 1, 582 (Valerius (?) Maximus 17).

41 *PLRE* 1, 782–83 (Vulcacius Rufinus 25).

42 See Kóvacs, "Kaiser Julian in Pannonien," 171, footnote 10, for a list of works suggesting different chronologies.

43 For instance, Zosimus (3.11) is silent about Julian's administrative measures (or his military dilemmas).

This is what Ammianus tells us (21.10.6): Julian appointed – in late summer – Aurelius Victor (who had just finished his *Liber de caesaribus*) governor of Pannonia Secunda;<sup>44</sup> he received with honors the senators L. Aurelius Symmachus and Valerius (?) Maximus, who had been sent by the Senate as envoys to Constantius, supposedly at Antioch at the time.<sup>45</sup> In the (self-proclaimed and still disputed) capacity of Augustus, he appointed Maximus prefect of Rome (*praefectus urbi [aeternae]*). He made Claudius Mamertinus prefect of Illyricum (*praefectus pretorio Illyrici*) – Constantius’ prefect Florentius<sup>46</sup> had fled to Constantius when Julian’s army was approaching Sirmium<sup>47</sup> – elevating him (as well as Nevitta) to the rank of consul.<sup>48</sup> Still, despite our observation about the (more) detailed Ammianus’ account, a lot of substance comes from Mamertinus, too, despite the rhetorical veneer of his *actio*. Mamertinus was well informed – several of Julian’s laws directed exclusively at him have a common underlying theme, i.e., “to relieve the provincial population of the expenses (of the *cursus publicus*) through the intervention of the fisc,”<sup>49</sup> which may be a relevant argument in the style of his administrative reforms in Gaul<sup>50</sup> but also Illyricum. This is congruent with Ammianus’ observation that Julian paid attention to “the interests of private persons [and] gave ear to their suits and disputes, especially those of the senators of the free towns, whom he was much inclined to favor” (21.12.23). Although Ammianus makes no mention of Dalmatia or Epirus (Mamert. 9.1), they are on the same page: Mamertinus tells us that “all the cities which are situated upon the Danube were visited, the decrees of all were heard.” (Mamert. 7.3:

44 See Nixon, “Aurelius Victor and Julian,” 119–25, on the possibly complex relationship between Julian and Victor.

45 The chronology of this event is difficult to establish and therefore calls for some questioning. Ammianus enigmatically tells us Julian “found Symmachus and Maximus in Naissus” (Amm. 21.12.24: “Ibi Symmachum *reperit* et Maximus, senatores conspicuos ...”). When exactly did the return from Antioch? If we accept the established dates of Julian’s travels to and fro in Illyricum – from Sirmium to Naissus and then to Succus and back – it would mean he came back to Naissus sometime in the first half of August. It remains to be verified whether Symmachus and Maximus were already at Naissus when Julian returned there from Succus: did they reach out to Constantius on his outward journey or when he was returning from Edessa?

46 *PLRE* 1, 365 (Flavius Florentius 10).

47 Amm. 21.9.4.

48 Note Ammianus’ criticism of Julian’s largesse in this case (Amm. 21.10.8 and again 21.12.25).

49 *Ibid.*

50 Amm. 16.5.14.

*omnes urbes quae Danubium colunt aditae, omnium audita decreta, levati status instaurataeque fortunae.*)

Another clue we are looking for may come from a further epigraphic source, i.e., Mamertinus' honorary inscription for Julian from Iulia Concordia in the province of Venetia and Histria (362/3 AD)<sup>51</sup> speaks of such care and regard (*insignis singularisque erga rem publicam favor*):

Ab (!) insignem singula=  
remque erga rem publicam  
suam faborem (!)  
d(ominus) n(oster) Iulianus Invictissimus Prin=  
ceps remota provincialibus cura  
cursum fiscalem breviatis mutationum spa=  
tiis fieri iussit,  
disponente Claud[i]o Mamertino v(iro) c(larissimo) per Ita=  
liam et Inlyricum praefecto praetorio,  
curante Vetulenio Praenestio v(iro) p(erfectissimo) corr(ectore)  
Venet(iae) et Hist(riae).<sup>52</sup>

Because of the outstanding and unique good-will towards his res publica, our master Julian, Undefeated Prince, relieving the provincials of such a burden, ordered that a postal service with shortened distances between the relay stations be established, according to the plan of Claudius Mamertinus, of *clarissimus* rank, for Italy and Illyricum praetorian prefect, under the execution of Vetulenius Praenestius, of *perfectissimus* rank, corrector of Venetia and Histria.

Albeit the inscription refers to the improvement of the *cursus publicus* and the shortening of the intervals between the relay stations (*mutationes*) in the province of Venetia et Histria (after Constantius' death, Mamertinus' jurisdiction extended over Illyricum and Italy (*per Italiam et Inlyricum praefecto praetorio*) – and possibly Africa),<sup>53</sup> it has some bearing on the question of Julian's administration in Illyricum in 361. The inscriptions on the milestones posted in Illyricum in 361<sup>54</sup> suggest that Julian may have undertaken similar tasks (delegating them to his subordinates) during his stay in Naissus.

51 CIL 5.08658.

52 Translation and inscription analysis Andrea Bernier; see Bernier, "Inscription of the emperor Julian on the cursus publicus from Iulia Concordia made by the praet. prefect Mamertinus," available online in the PPRET Inscriptions database.

53 Bernier, "Inscription of the emperor Julian."

54 Conti, *Inscriften Kaiser Julians*, 103–109.

Unfortunately, Julian's letters written in Illyricum reveal almost nothing of what Mamertinus and Ammianus tell us summarily about his dealings with the provincials (Amm. 21.12.23: *nec privatorum utilitates in tempore adflagranti despiciens litesque audiens controversas maxime municipalium ordinum* ...). However, something about Julian's (at times inconsistent) style in the discussed matters<sup>55</sup> may be perhaps surmised from his *Letter to the Thracians* concerning their petition to cancel their debt due to unpaid taxes, an amalgam of leniency and pragmatism ("not my goal to collect in taxes as much as possible from my subjects; instead I want to be the source of their benefit ... So I remit, down to the third part the sum owed for the preceding period. But from now on, you will contribute as usual"),<sup>56</sup> congruent to Mamertinus' observation about relieved taxation or Ammianus' assessment of "many undoubted tokens of [Julian's] generosity"<sup>57</sup> as well as his subsequent proactive reforms in the prefecture *Oriens* on the restitution of unspecified possessions.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Julian's reputation as an energetic lawgiver and administrator, even if disseminated initially by his own court<sup>59</sup> (but propped up by his own confession to Libanius in ep. 98 about the official dealings), calls for a *statistical* conclusion.

The extensive archive of Julian's administrative, reformist, and judicial actions, spanning his term as Caesar in Gaul to his demise in Persia, presents a compelling subject of inquiry. Notably, even during periods of significant pressure arising from his precarious position against Constantius, Julian appears to have maintained a remarkable level of administrative activity, undeterred by the evident dangers.

55 See Harries, "Julian the Lawgiver," 123–24.

56 *Ep.* 27: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡμεῖς οὐχ ὅ, τι πλείστα παρὰ τῶν ὑπηκόων ἀθροίζειν πεποιήμεθα σκοπόν, ἀλλ' ὅτι πλείστων ἀγαθῶν αὐτοῖς αἴτιοι γίνεσθαι, τοῦτο καὶ ὑμῖν ἀπολύσει τὰ ὀφλήματα. ... τοιγαροῦν μέχρι μὲν τῆς τρίτης ἐπινεμήσεως ἀφίεμεν ὑμῖν πάντα, ὅσα ἐκ τοῦ φθάνοντος ἐλλείπει χρόνου· μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ εἰσίοιστε κατὰ τὸ ἔθος (Wright).

57 Amm. 25.4.15.

58 Schmidt-Hofner, *Reform, Routine, and Propaganda*, 131–37.

59 *Ibid.*, 125.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, Timothy. *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Bernier, Andrea. "Inscription of the emperor Julian on the *cursus publicus* from Iulia Concordia made by the praet. prefect Mamertinus." *PPRET Les Préfets du Prétoire de l'Empire Tardif*. Available online.
- Bleckmann, Bruno. "From Caesar to Augustus: Julian against Constantius." In *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, edited by Stefan Rebenich and Hans Ulrich Wiemer, 98–123. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Bowersock, Glen. *Julian the Apostate*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Bratož, Rajko. *Med Italijo in Ilirikom: Slovenski prostor in njegovo sosedstvo v pozni antiki*. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2014.
- Bringmann, Klaus. *Kaiser Julian: Der letzte heidnische Herrscher*. Darmstadt: Primus, 2004.
- Cedilnik, Alenka. *Ilirik med Konstantinom Velikim in Teodozijem Velikim: Balkansko-podonavski prostor v poročilih Atanazija, Hilarija, Sokrata Sholastika, Sozomena, Teodoreta in Filostorgija*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2004.
- Conti, Stefano. *Die Inschriften Kaiser Iulians*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004.
- Cox, Sarah. "The Ascension of Julian: Ammianus Marcellinus 20.4." In *Concordia Disciplinaryum: Essays on Ancient Coinage, History and Archaeology in Honor of William E. Metcalf*, edited by Nathan T. Elkins and Jane DeRose Evans, 267–76. New York: American Numismatic Society, 2018.
- Dzino, Danijel. *Illyricum in Roman Politics 229 BC–AD 68*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Gentili, Sara. "Politics and Christianity in Aquileia in the Fourth Century AD." *L'Antiquité Classique* 61 (1992): 192–208.
- Gračanin, Hrvoje. "Illyricum of the 2nd and 3rd Centuries AD in the Works of Latin and Greek Historians." In *Illyrica antiqua – ob honorem Duje Rendić-Miočević: Radovi s međunarodnoga skupa o problemima antičke arheologije*, edited by Mirjana Sanader, Marija Šegvić, and Ivan Mirnik, 287–98. Zagreb: Arheološki muzej v Zagrebu, 2005.
- Greenwood, David Neal. "Five Latin Inscriptions from Julian's Pagan Restoration." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 57, no. 2 (2014), 101–19.

- Harries, Jill. "Julian the Lawgiver." In *Emperor and Author: The Writings of Julian the Apostate*, edited by Nicholas Baker-Brian and Shaun Tougher, 121–36. Wales: Classical Press of Wales, 2012.
- Heather, Peter J. "The Gallic Wars of Julian Caesar." In *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, edited by Stefan Rebenich and Hans Ulrich Wiemer, 64–96. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Jones, Arnold Hugh Martin, John Robert Martindale, and John Morris. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (vol. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971 (= *PLRE* 1).
- Kóvacs, Péter. "Kaiser Julian in Pannonien, über Pannonien." In *From Polites to Magos – Studia György Németh sexagenario dedicata*, edited by Ádám Szabó, 169–18. Debrecen: University of Debrecen, Department of Ancient History, 2016.
- Kuhoff, Wolfgang. *Diokletian und die Epoche der Tetrarchie: Das römische Reich zwischen Krisenbewältigung und Neuaufbau (284–313 n. Chr.)*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001.
- Kuntiċ-Makviċ, Bruna. "Illyricianus: L'histoire du mot et l'histoire del'Illyrique." In *Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der Spät-römischen Zeit*, edited by Rajko Bratož, 185–92. Ljubljana: Narodni muzej, 1996.
- Lieu, Samuel N. C. *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic; Claudius Mamertinus, John Chrysostom, Ephrem the Syrian*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1986.
- Lippold, Adolf. "Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der Zeit zwischen 364 und 455 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Theodosius I." In *Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der Spät-römischen Zeit*, edited by Rajko Bratož, 17–28. Ljubljana: Narodni muzej, 1996.
- Millar, Fergus. *The Emperor in the Roman World*. 2nd edition. London: Bristol Classical Press, 1992.
- Mirković, Miroslava. "Sirmium." In *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia – Die Autonome Städte in Noricum und Pannonien*, edited by Marjeta Šašel Kos and Peter Scherrer, 145–56. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2004.
- Nixon, Charles Edwin Vandervord. "Aurelius Victor and Julian." *Classical Philology* 86, no. 2 (1991), 113–25.
- , Barbara Saylor Rodgers, and R. A. B. Mynors. *In Praise of the Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Pająkowska-Bouallegui, Anna. "The History of the Remains of the Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate." *Studia Ceranea* 9 (2019): 333–49.

- Ricciotti, Giuliano. *L'Imperatore Giuliano l'Apostata secondo i documenti*. Milan: Mondadori, 1958.
- Rolfe, John C. *Ammianus Marcellinus: History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950–2005.
- Scharf, Ralf. *Der Dux Mogontiacensis und die Notitia Dignitatum*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005.
- Schmidt-Hofner, Sebastian. "Reform, Routine, and Propaganda: Julian the Lawgiver." In *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, edited by Stefan Rebenich and Hans Ulrich Wiemer, 124–71. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Sharankov, Nicolay. "'Infectam usque fatale exitium': The Milestones of Emperor Julian in the Territory of Serdica and the Conflict of Paganism and Christianity." *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 3 (2019): 41–70.
- Šačić Beća, Amra. "The Issue of Origin and Division of the Province of Illyricum." *Arheološki radovi i rasprave – Acta et dissertationes archaeologicae* 21, edited by Željko Tomičić and Alka Domić Kunić, 87–110. Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2022.
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta. *Appian and Illyricum*. Ljubljana, ZRC SAZU, 2005.
- . "Pannonia or Lower Illyricum?" *Tyche* 25 (2010): 123–30.
- Teitler, Hans Carel. *The Last Pagan Emperor: Julian the Apostate and the War against Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Weiler, Ingomar. "Zur Frage der Grenzziehung zwischen Ost- und Westteil des Römischen Reiches in der Spätantike." In *Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der Spätromischen Zeit*, edited by Rajko Bratož, 123–43. Ljubljana: Narodni muzej, 1996.
- Wright, Wilmer Cave, ed. *Julian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913.

## ABSTRACT

Flavius Claudius Julianus, often referred to as “Julian the Apostate,” ruled the Roman Empire from early 360 AD until his death in battle on June 26th, 363 AD. Despite his brief reign, Julian undertook significant reforms targeting various aspects of public life, including the administration and provincial governance. This paper focuses on his administrative activities in Illyricum, where he resided in 361 AD while campaigning against Constantius II. While facing immediate tactical concerns during his campaign, Julian reportedly engaged in imperial administrative duties within Illyricum, as documented by historian Ammianus Marcellinus and panegyrist Claudius Mamertinus. This research delves into Ammianus’ account to analyze Julian’s administrative acts in Illyricum and subsequently across the Roman Empire.

**KEYWORDS:** Flavius Claudius Julianus, Constantius II, Ammianus Marcellinus, Claudius Mamertinus, Illyricum

Julijan Odpadnik, Klavdij Mamertin in Amijan Marcelin:  
Zapolnitev »praznega mesta«?

## IZVLEČEK

Flavij Klavdij Julijan, pogosto imenovan »Julijan Odpadnik«, je vladal rimskemu cesarstvu od začetka leta 360 do svoje smrti v bitki 26. junija leta 363. Kljub kratki vladavini je Julijan izpeljal vrsto pomembnih reform, usmerjenih v različne vidike javnega življenja, vključno z upravljanjem provinc. Članek se osredotoča na njegove upravne dejavnosti v Iliriku, kjer je leta 361 po Kr. bival med kampanjo proti Konstanciju II. Medtem ko se je Julijan med kampanjo soočal z neposrednimi taktičnimi težavami, je v Iliriku opravljal cesarske upravne naloge, kot poročata zgodovinar Amijan Marcelin in panegirist Klavdij Mamertin. Raziskava se osredotoči na Amijanovo poročilo in analizira Julijanove upravne dejavnosti v Iliriku ter v celotnem rimskem cesarstvu.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Flavij Klavdij Julijan, Konstancij II., Amijan Marcelin, Klavdij Mamertin, Ilirik

Donum auctoris

sum Iam Iam Dr Joseph  
fillom S. P. Nolan  
Senior Iam Hof und Spruch  
atholatum in P. am.

Dr Presterer

## Matiju Zhópu.

---

**V**am isrozhím prijátla drági máni!  
Ki spí v presgódnim gróbi, pésem mílo;  
Lozhítvi od njegà je blà hladílo,  
Hladílo blà ljubésni stári ráni.

Minlívost sladkih sves na svét' osnáni:  
Kak krátko je vesélih dní fhtevílo,  
De frézhiń je le tá, kdor s Bogomílo  
Up frézhe únstran gróba v pèrfih hráni.

Pokôpal mífli vífokoletézhe,  
Sheljá nespólnjenih fim bolezhíne,  
Ko Zhertomír ves úp na sèmlji frézhe;

Dan jáfni, dan oblázhni v nôzhi míne,  
Šerzé vesélo, in bolnó, terpézhe  
Vpokójle bódo gróba globozhíne.

---





# The Reception of St Jerome in a Late- Medieval Sermon Collection by Johannes Herolt

Andrea Radošević\*

## INTRODUCTION

St. Jerome became one of the most significant authorities in the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> He was an *auctoritas* in the truest sense whose extracts, quotations and name were widespread in many sermon books. One of them is *Sermones Discipuli de tempore et de sanctis cum Promptuario exemplorum et de miraculis Beatae Mariae Virginis*. It was written in the 15th century by Johannes Herolt (d. 1468),<sup>2</sup> a German Dominican who spent most of his life in the convent of Saint Catherine in Nuremberg as confessor, prior, and general vicar. Herolt's employ-

\* Old Church Slavonic Institute, Demetrova ul. 11, 10000 Zagreb; aradosevic@stin.hr.

- 1 During his lifetime, Jerome did not have as much influence as he did in the Middle Ages; not even close, according to Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, 3. Jerome's popularity increased in the Carolingian times in the 8th–9th centuries with a growing interest in biblical commentaries. In addition to Jerome's works on Scripture, many of his other texts were considered a guide for leading a monastic life. A significant role in the widespread use of Jerome's quotations in the late Middle Ages was played by Pope Boniface VIII, who in 1295 gave "official recognition when he instructed the faithful to celebrate Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great and Jerome as preeminent Fathers of the Church"; see Kaczynski, "The Authority of the Fathers," 2–3; "Edition, Translation, and Exegesis," 171–85.
- 2 Cruel, *Geschichte der deutschen Predigt in Mittelalter*; "Herolt, Johannes," in *Deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters*, 425–29; Kaeppli, "Iohannes Herolt (Herold)," 450–56.

ment of Jerome's<sup>3</sup> texts, especially those regarding attitude toward women, is connected with his activity in the monastic reform and spiritual revival of the Nuremberg convent in which he participated with Dominican Johannes Nider (d. 1438), his spiritual teacher, and the convent's previous confessor.

His popular collection *Sermones Discipuli*,<sup>4</sup> which was primarily composed to be used by lower clergy and less educated audience, contains quotations from different works of St. Jerome: *Commentarii in Isaiam*, *Commentarii in Ezechielem*, *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei*. Others come from his polemical texts such as *Contra Rufinum*, *Ad Jovinianum*, and *De viris illustribus*, but mostly from his letters: *Ep. 22 ad Eustochium*, *Ep. 45 ad Asellam*, *Ep. 130 to Demetrium*, *Ep. 53 ad Paulinam*, *Ep. 54 ad Furiam*; the exegetical *Ep. 140 ad Cyprianum Presbyterum* and *Ep. 69 ad Oceanum* as well the consolatory *Ep. 118 ad Julianum*, *Ep. 60 ad Heliodorum*, *Ep. 66 ad Pammachium* and *Ep. 68 ad Castricianum* and finally some letters about monastic life: *Ep. 125 ad Rusticum*, and *Ep. 52 ad Nepotianum*.

The primacy in giving moral teaching in medieval Dominican sermon collections was often accomplished by introducing diverse *auctoritates*.<sup>5</sup> Thus, one of this paper's goals is to determine the function of the extracts from Jerome's texts in this collection and to determine occasions in which they were employed frequently. Despite emphasizing the sentences from those texts St Jerome wrote himself, the research includes extracts from so-called Pseudo-Jerome. Such attribution was common in the Middle Ages, especially regarding Church Fathers. Moreover, as will be shown, frequent usage of a Pseudo-Jerome text in particular sermons (especially those dedicated to the Virgin Mary) is far from a coincidence.

## RECEPTION OF SAINT JEROME IN HEROLT'S *SERMONES DISCIPULI*

Herolt is promoting ascetic life as an exemplary Christian model. He was one of the preachers who vigorously attacked "comfortable living,

- 3 In the German-speaking lands, Jerome's popularity reached its peak in the 16th century; Pabel, "Reading Jerome in the Renaissance," 470–97.
- 4 It was one of the most frequently printed sermon collections between 1450 and 1520; Thayer, *Penitence, Preaching*, 17.
- 5 Ziolkowski, "Cultures of Authority," 426–27. According to Delcorno, "proofs and truths seemed most important to the Dominicans"; Delcorno, "Medieval Preaching in Italy," 474.

fine clothes, pleasure, and luxuries.<sup>6</sup> He often highlighted the idea that the riches of this world are nothing compared to spiritual wealth. This could be one of the reasons for introducing Jerome's quotations from his texts about monasticism, priesthood, and virginity, in which he glorified the importance of leading immaterial religious living. As expected, there are quotations from his exhorting letters, such as *Ep. 130 ad Demetrium*, *Ep. 52 ad Nepotianum*, and *Ep. 22 ad Eustochium*, more precisely from those Jerome addressed to a broader audience.

Herolt's *contemptus mundi*, his constant reproof of even the slightest enjoyment of any bodily pleasures, considered such pleasures the manifestation of carnal sins.<sup>7</sup> This doubtless brought him closer to Jerome's texts about virginity, in which purity of both body and soul is strongly emphasized. As a confessor of Nuremberg nuns, Herolt "focused on comparisons between marriage and chastity and praised the religious life over the ephemeral luxuries and pleasures of the world."<sup>8</sup> Jerome's view on virgins as proper symbols of pure soul and finally as "consecrated brides of Christ," in the words of Bernard of Clairvaux,<sup>9</sup> is perfectly summarized in the sentence about vanity in preserving exclusively the carnal virginity, which appears several times in Herolt's collection. For example, by introducing the quotation from *Adversus Jovinianum* to the sermon *De Virginibus*, Herolt strengthens the argument that serving Christ implies taking care of the soul, not the body:

Sextum, quod Christus requirit, et sine quo praedicta non sufficient est, quod sponsa Christi sit fidelis in amore sui sponsi, sic quod nulli placere desideret, nisi soli Christo ... Unde Hieron.<sup>10</sup> *Nonnullae sunt virgines carne, non spiritu, quarum corpus est integrum, sed anima corrupta* sed illa virginitas hostia est Christi, cuius nec mentem maculat cogitatio, nec carnem libido.

The sixth thing that Christ requires, and without which the aforementioned is insufficient, is that the bride of Christ be faithful in the love of her spouse so that she desires to please none other than Christ alone. Hence, Jerome says, "There are some virgins in the flesh,

6 Dahmus, "Late Medieval Preachers," 124.

7 His viewpoint on the carnal sins is also manifested in the choice of *exempla* in which the protagonists die while sinning (drinking man, dancing girl), as is the case in the sermon *Dominica secunda post octavas Pasche*.

8 Clark Walter, *Profession of Widowhood*, 288.

9 Jussen, "Virgins – Widows – Spouses," 20.

10 Hieronymus, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23, col. 241–42.

not in spirit, whose body is intact, but the soul is corrupted. But that virginity is a sacrifice to Christ, of which neither the thought stains the mind nor lust corrupts the flesh.”<sup>11</sup>

In *De Virginibus*, faithfulness is mentioned as the last sixth thing that every virgin should fulfill to become the bride of Christ. That Herolt’s employment of Jerome’s text, when speaking about the purity of the soul, is not necessarily addressed only to women can be seen in the sermon *De Apostolis*. Here, a quotation from *Ep. 22* appears as a confirmation of the first thing that everyone should do to gain merit for the soul:

Pro quo sciendum quod tribus modis meremur cum corpore nostro augmentum gloria in vita aeterna. Primo, resistendo peccatis suis ad quae corpus nostrum inclinatum est ... Unde et Hier. in epistola quadam [*Ep. 22.39*]. *Sine certamine nullus sanctorum coronatus est.*

Regarding this, it must be known that we merit an increase in glory in eternal life with our bodies in three ways. First, by resisting the sins to which our body is inclined ... Hence, Jerome also says in a certain letter [*Ep. 22.39*], “Without struggle, none of the saints has been crowned.”<sup>12</sup>

As could be expected, many of Jerome’s sentences in Herolt’s sermons are dedicated to the Virgin Mary (*De Annunciatione Beatae Mariae, Communis sermo de Beata Virgine*), virgins (*De Virginibus*), and widows (*De Viduis*). Many are in sermons where particular sins are connected to women (*De Luxuria*). There are quotations from the *Adversus Jovinianum, Ep. 22*, from other Jerome’s texts, and Pseudo-Jerome’s *Ep. 9 ad Paulam et Eustochium*. For example, the first part of *De Virginibus* begins with the statement that married women are blessed, widows are more blessed, and virgins are most blessed among all. This comes from Jerome’s text *Adversus Jovinianum*:<sup>13</sup> “Quantum ad primum, notandum quod beatae sunt coniugate, beatiores viduae, beatissimae sunt virgines.”<sup>14</sup> A similar choice of quotations appears in another sermon, *De Luxuria*, where Herolt repeats the things that

11 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 589.

12 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 565.

13 Pabel, *Reading Jerome*, 476.

14 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 586.

refer to virgins, for example, about the inability of God to raise a virgin after she has fallen:

Cum omnia possit Deus, suscitare virginem non potest post ruinam.  
Valet quidem liberare de poena, sed non vult coronare corruptam.

While God can do all things, He cannot raise a virgin after her fall. Indeed, He is able to deliver from punishment, but He is unwilling to crown the corrupted.<sup>15</sup>

Two stand out in frequency among many texts circulating under Jerome's name in the Middle Ages. The first is *Ep. 9 ad Paulam et Eustochium*,<sup>16</sup> and the second is *Ep. ad Mauritii filiam laus virginittatis*. In *Alius sermo de beata virgine Maria*, the quotation from Pseudo-Jerome's *Ep. 9* is used as the sermon foundation, together with the *thema*:

Fecit mihi magna qui potens est et sanctum nomen eius. Luc. 1. Hieron.<sup>17</sup> de beatissima et gloriosissima virgine Maria loqui me indignum fateor. *Sed puto quod nemo sit qui praesumat, nisi qui quanta sint quae panduntur, penitus ignorat.*

"He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name." (Luke 1) Jerome says: I confess my unworthiness to speak of the most blessed and glorious Virgin Mary. But I believe that no one presumes otherwise unless they completely ignore the greatness of the things that are revealed.<sup>18</sup>

Quotations from this letter appear in all sermons dedicated to the Virgin Mary, frequently in the first part of the sermon.

What draws Herolt closer to Jerome is the "repetition of the tripartite formulation concerning widows' inferiority to virgins."<sup>19</sup> In *De Viduis*, Herolt partially follows Jerome by concluding that it is better to remain widowed than remarry. The argument is that a widow has greater spiritual freedom to serve God and greater chastity. In *De*

15 *Ep. 22.5.*

16 "In great monasteries like Cluny and Corbie, it was read even in place of the Gospel and Homily, which should have formed the lessons for the third nocturn of the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin." Agius, "On Pseudo-Jerome, Epistle 9," 176.

17 Pseudo-Hieronymus, *Epistolae*, PL 30, col. 127.

18 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 608.

19 Clark Walter, *Profession of Widowhood*, 288.

*Viduis*, Herolt introduces Jerome's statement from *Ep. 125*, which frequently appeared in medieval treatises:

Tertium, quod viduae non debent esse otiosae, sed semper se in aliquo bono opere occupare ... Ideo, dicit Hieron. [*Ep. 125.11*] *Semper aliquid boni facito ut diabolus semper inveniat te occupatum.*

Third, widows should not be idle but always engage in some good work ... Therefore, Jerome says [*Ep. 125.11*], "Always do something good so that the devil may always find you occupied."<sup>20</sup>

It refers to avoiding leisure by constantly being preoccupied with different obligations (prayer, handwork, or other activities of the monastic life) to escape the devil's temptations.<sup>21</sup> The exact quotation was also used in the sermon about preparing the heart (*De Preparatione Cordis*) and the sermon about work (*De Laboribus*).

A thematic similarity between the preaching of Herolt and Jerome can also be found when considering the topic of detraction. On the one hand, detraction was one of Herolt's most despised manifestations of sins. On the other hand, Jerome used his texts to defend himself against different accusations. One of his most famous apologetic letters is *Ep. 45 Ad Asellam*, in which he, as Cain said, "defends his integrity against critics."<sup>22</sup> A quotation from this particular letter that to "speak evil of the righteous is a sin not easily pardoned" is quite widespread in Herolt's book. It is the first argument of the third type of detraction in the sermon *De Detractione* that refers to the false accusation of the neighbor, which is in Herolt's collection considered a grave sin:

Tertio detractio cum quis crimina falsa imponit proximo et illa manifestat aliis, qui sic false finxit super proximum, et hoc gravissimum peccatum inter peccata detractionis, et vix remittitur tale peccatum. Unde Hier. [*Ep. 45.1*] *Non facilis venia prava dixisse de rectis.*

Third, detraction occurs when someone falsely imposes crimes on their neighbor and reveals them to others, thus falsely inventing things about their neighbor. This sin of detraction is most serious among the sins, and such a sin is scarcely forgiven. Hence, Jerome

20 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 438.

21 Clark Walter, *Profession of Widowhood*, 288.

22 Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, 209.

says [*Ep.* 45.1], “It is not easy to obtain forgiveness for speaking evil of the upright.”<sup>23</sup>

Jerome is also an authority to confirm the statement about detractors, the sort of people whose confession is not fruitful, as in the second part of *De Annuntiatione Beatae Mariae Virginis*. Jerome’s words also appear in the sermon *De Signis Veri Christiani*. They come as the allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament phrase *lingua vetus*, referring to false faith that true Christians should abandon:

Secundum signum fidei necessarium est, ut nova lingua loquatur ... Item lingua vetus est adulari et verba fraudulenta loqui. Unde Hier. *Nihil est quod tam facile corrumpat mentes hominum sicut audlatio* ... Item lingua vetus est, loqui verba detractoria et denigrare famam proximi. Unde Hier. [*Ep.* 45.1] *Non facilis venia, prava dixisse de rectis*.

As a second sign of faith, it is necessary to speak a new language ... Likewise, the old language is to flatter and speak deceitful words. Hence, Jerome says, “There is nothing that corrupts the minds of men so easily as flattery ...” Likewise, the old language is to speak detracting words and blacken the reputation of one’s neighbor. Hence, Jerome [*Ep.* 45.1] says, “It is not easy to obtain forgiveness for speaking evil of the upright.”<sup>24</sup>

After explaining the primary meaning of *lingua vetus* as a synonym for living in sin, there is an enumeration of different manifestations of *lingua vetus*. Herolt refers to Jerome twice: when he inserts a sentence from his *Ep.* 45 in the description of detraction and when quoting from Pseudo-Jerome *Ep.* 148 *Ad Celantiam Matronam* during his interpretation of the word *adulatio*. This second sentence is probably introduced from Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*,<sup>25</sup> where it is also used as a confirmation of *adulatio*.

Unlike the occasions mentioned above when Herolt used the same Jerome quotation in different sermons but still interpreted the same or similar message, there are also cases in which he used the exact quotation when interpreting different teachings. One example is

23 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 346.

24 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 253.

25 “Et Hieronymus dicit quod nihil est quod tam facile corrumpat mentes hominum quam adulatio.” Aquinas, quaestio 115.2.

consolatory *Ep. 118*, important in the Christian consolation tradition.<sup>26</sup> Jerome points out the impossibility of being materially and spiritually fulfilled simultaneously. This quotation's far more interesting use is in *Domínica I in adventu*, about rising from sleep, mentally and spiritually. The connection between the sermon and Jerome's quotation from *Ep. 118.6* reflects syntactic similarities. The starting point of the allegorical exegesis of rising from sleep is a widespread antithesis. The events that occur in dreams are contrasted with those in reality. Gathering richness and joyful living on earth is in Herolt's sermon interpreted as sinful oversleeping that could only bring the opposite, sadness, and pains in the afterlife:

Quarto sicut somnia somniantibus debent per oppositum exponi, sic qui habent hic honores mundanos, divitias temporales et delicias corporis et gaudia mundi, ista omnia sunt quasi quaedam somnia, et vertuntur per oppositum in tribulationem et paupertatem et amaritudinem maximam ... Unde Hiero. *In quadam epistolam* [*Ep. 118.6*]. *Difficile, imo impossibile est ut et praesentibus quis et futuris fruatur bonis: ut et hic ventrem, et ibi mentem impleat; ut de deliciis transeat ad delicias; ut in utroque saeculo primus sit; ut et in coelo et in terra appareat gloriosus.*

Fourth, just as dreams should be interpreted by those who dream according to the opposite, so should those who possess worldly honors, temporal riches, bodily pleasures, and the joys of the world consider all these like a kind of dreams, and they turn into the opposite, leading to tribulation, poverty, and utmost bitterness ... Hence, Jerome, in a certain letter [*Ep. 118.6*] says, "It is difficult, indeed impossible, for someone to enjoy both present and future goods: to fill the belly here and the mind there, to pass from delights to delights, to be first in both worlds, to appear glorious both in heaven and on earth."<sup>27</sup>

This impossibility of simultaneously feeding our souls and bodies is relatively connected with the statement that "pains and tribulations of life in a defective body are the soul's opportunity to acquire merits."<sup>28</sup> In *De Infirmis*, during the interpretation of the seventh reason, Herolt points to their direct link. He introduces a quotation from *Ep. 118* pointing to those hoping to deserve an afterlife in the Kingdom of

26 Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, 211–12.

27 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 7.

28 Siggins, *Harvest of Medieval Preaching*, 50.

Heaven without suffering and tribulation. Again, fulfilling the body as one part of Jerome's quotation served as a connection with another sermon, *De Septem Generibus Divitum*, this time on the allegorical level:

Secundi sunt qui suis divitiis damnantur, qui iustas res retinent et possident eo animo, ut contra Deum cum eisdem pro libito vivere velint ... Hier. [Ep. 118.6] *Impossibile enim ...*

The second group comprises those condemned by their wealth, retaining and possessing legitimate things to use them freely against God ... Jerome [Ep. 118.6] says, "For it is impossible ..."<sup>29</sup>

Herolt also used this quotation on a relatively literal level when interpreting the fifth manifestation of gluttony at the very end of the second part of the sermon *De Sancto Mathia*<sup>30</sup> about those sinners who prefer food over God:

Quantum ad secundum partem istius sermonis, sciendum est, quod ex quo illud festum, occurrit communiter circa carnisprivium, quo tempore solent homines *gulse vivere*. Unde pro nostra informatione et simplicium quaeritur, quot modis *homo bibendo et comedendo peccat moraliter ...* Quinto peccat quis comedendo et bibendo quando principaliter quaerit delectationem ... Et talem delectationem homines voluptuosi quaerunt, qui solum secundum carnem vivunt ... *Unde etiam Hier. [Ep. 118.6] Impossibile est hic implere ventrem et illic mentem.*

Regarding the second part of this sermon, it should be known that this feast commonly occurs around Shrove Tuesday, when people are accustomed to living indulgently. Therefore, for our information and that of the simple, it is asked in how many ways a person morally sins by eating and drinking ... Fifthly, one sins by eating and drinking when one primarily seeks pleasure ... And such pleasure is sought by voluptuous individuals who live solely according to the flesh ... Hence, also, Jerome [Ep. 118.6] says, "It is impossible to fill the belly here and the mind there."<sup>31</sup>

29 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 308.

30 In several *sermones de sanctis*, especially those performed during Lent like the one on St. Matthew, Herolt introduced topics by which he exhorted the listeners about the true confession, different forms of sins, *imitatio Christi*, and other Christian teachings.

31 De sancto Mathia; Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 32.

Passages from Jerome's consolatory letters in Herolt's book appeared on different occasions. Quotation from his *Ep. 66 ad Pammachium*, which according to Cain<sup>32</sup> "provides a very early example of alms and suffrages for the dead," is found in the sermon *De Septem Generibus Pauperum*:

Similiter etiam nostris temporibus religiosi sic faciunt qui omnia propter Deum sic resignant ... *Unde Hier. super Mat. [Ep. 66.12] Apostoli quantum ad divitias, nihil vel modicum; sed quantum ad voluntatem totum mundum reliquerunt.*

Similarly, even in our times, the religious who renounce everything for the sake of God do the same ... Hence, Jerome, in his commentary on Matthew [*Ep. 66.12*] says, "As for wealth, the apostles left nothing or very little; but as for their will, they left the whole world."<sup>33</sup>

In the sermon *In Epiphania Domini*,<sup>34</sup> Herolt introduced Jerome's consolatory letter *Ep. 60 ad Heliodorum Epitaphium Nepotiani*. As Schaff said, he "tries to smooth his friend's grief by contrasting pagan despair or resignation with Christian hope, by a eulogy of the departed both as man and presbyter and by a review of the evils which then beset the Empire."<sup>35</sup> It is not surprising that we also find a quotation from *Ep. 68 Ad Castrutium* about suffering torments and resulting future glory in the sermons *De Infirmatibus*, *De Credentibus a Deo*, and the sermon *De Operibus quae fiunt in Peccato Mortali*. A quotation from the consolatory letter *Ep. 68.1 (Libens nunc tormenta patior ut futura mihi gloria servetur)* is in *De Infirmatibus*, as well as a quotation from *Ep. 118*. It is used as instruction and warning about the desirable behavior and attitude that leads to eternal life in heaven. In the sermon *De Uno Confessore*, a quotation, more precisely, the closing sentence of *Ep. 53*, is employed as an argument for describing the third service that every sinner should fulfill to please God. In several sermons, echoes of *memento mori* are exposed by *Ep. 140 Ad Cyprianum Presbyterum* and *Ep. 53 Ad Paulinam*, representing scriptural study and appeal to become or stay Christian. Both of the quotations appear in the sermon *Quod Morienti Septem Contingunt*

32 Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, 102–103.

33 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 306.

34 "Sciendum quod nos Christiani exemplo illorum trium regum debemus Deum in vera fide veraciter cognoscere. Unde Hiero. *Absque notitia creatoris sui omnis homo pecus est* [*Ep. 60.4*]." Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 76.

35 Schaff, *Jerome*, 314.

and the sermon *De Divitiis non Appetendis*, in which the passage about avarice imitates chapter *De Remediis contra Avaritiam* from Peraldus *Summa de Virtutibus et Vitiis*:

Secundo, dicendum est de remediis contra avaritiam, quorum primum est mortis consideratio. Unde Hier. [Ep. 53.10] *Facile contemnit omnia qui semper moriturum cogitat* sicut iumenta defendunt se ab importunitate muscarum causa sua, et sicut aves et pisces cum cauda regunt se, sic homo consideratione finis et mortis propriae defendit se ab avaritia et caeteris vitiis. Unde. Interroga iumenta et docebunt te; volatilia coeli, et indicabunt tibi. Job 12.7. Mors indicat ad oculum tibi, con temptibilia esse omnia, quae quaeruntur in hoc mundo, scilicet delitias, divitias et sic de singulis mundi vanitatibus. Unde Hier. [Ep. 140.16]. *Qui quotidie recordatur se moriturum contemnit temporalia et ad futura festinat.*

Second, one should speak about remedies against avarice, the first of which is the consideration of death. Hence, Jerome [Ep. 53.10] says, “He who always thinks of himself as one who is about to die easily despises all things, just as beasts defend themselves from the annoyance of flies due to their nature, and as birds and fish guide themselves with their tails. So, a person, by considering the end and his own death, defends himself against avarice and other vices. Therefore, ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you” (Job 12:7). Death points out to you that all things sought in this world, namely pleasures, wealth, and so on concerning each of the world’s vanities, are contemptible. Hence, Jerome [Ep. 140.16] says, “He who daily remembers that he is going to die despises temporal things and hastens towards the future.”<sup>36</sup>

## USING JEROME’S AUTHORITY

Since Herolt<sup>37</sup> inherited the main procedures of scholastic sermons, which reflects from the form and amplification of the text, let us continue by analyzing the function of the sentences that appear under Jerome’s name in Herolt’s *ars praedicandi*.<sup>38</sup>

36 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 446.

37 Radošević, “Signale der Mündlichkeit,” 23.

38 See Wenzel, *Medieval Artes Praedicandi*.

### *Confirmation*

The subdivision in the first part of the 21st sermon on Epiphany ends with a quotation from Jerome's consolatory letter *Ep. 60.4 Ad Heliodorum* (*Absque notitia enim creatoris sui omnis homo pecus est*). The appearance of this sentence as the final confirmation could be motivated by Jerome's similar elaboration on the ability to recognize the Savoir, found in *Ep. 60*. In the sermon, the quotation is introduced to highlight the antithesis between elements from the world of nature (sky, earth, sea, stones) that recognized the Savoir and the humans who reject recognition: "Iudaeorum vero corda saxis duriora, eum confiteri nolunt quem elementa testantur."<sup>39</sup>

In the sermon *De Malis Cogitationibus*, the quotation from Pseudo-Jerome's text *De Virginitate ad Demetriadem* appears as the last confirmation introduced from the church authorities in the fifth subdivision. It finishes with the exemplum as a final proof that clarifies and embellishes the question about banishing evil thoughts:

Hieron.<sup>40</sup> *Quicquid pudet dicere pudeat etiam cogitare. Quod diabolus delectatur in malis cogitationibus patet per tale exemplum. Legitur, quod quidam habuit malas cogitationes et delectationes.*

Jerome says: "Let whatever it is shameful to say also be shameful to think. It is evident how the devil delights in evil thoughts through such an example. It is read that someone had evil thoughts and pleasures."<sup>41</sup>

### *Closing formula*

*(division, subdivision, central parts of the sermon)*

The elaboration on the second class of the rich in the sermon *De Septem Generibus Divitum*, those who indulge in using their justly gained riches and do not care about the poor, is built on several authorities. However, the final warning sentence closing this part is from Jerome's *Ep. 118*. As a closing sentence of the whole sermon appears Pseudo-Jerome's quotation, as is the case in *Dominica II in Adventu*:

39 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 76.

40 PL 30, col. 37.

41 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 517.

Unde verificatum est et dictum beati Hiero.<sup>42</sup> qui dixit in quadam epistola ad Nepotianum. *Non memini me legisse, mala morte mortuum, qui libenter opera pietatis exercuit, habet enim multos intercessores et impossibile est preces multorum non exaudiri.*

Therefore, even the saying of blessed Jerome in a certain letter to Nepotianus has been verified. He said, “I do not remember reading about someone who, having willingly engaged in works of piety, died a bad death. For he has many intercessors, and it is impossible that the prayers of many should not be heard.”<sup>43</sup>

By introducing Jerome’s name at the end of the Advent sermon, Herolt has highlighted the point of the exempla and the spiritual message of the whole sermon.

#### *Question/answer form*

The central theme of the second part of the sermon *Dominica II in Adventu* is why everyone should be afraid of the Last Judgment. The examination of the second reason refers to our responsibility for all the words spoken throughout our entire lifetime. It begins with the phrase “idle words” from the Gospel of Matthew. Further development of the sermon is based on what these idle words are. To this, Herolt responds by using Jerome’s sentence from his commentary on the same Gospel (Matt 2:36–37) as a first confirmation: “Quid est verbum otiosum? Respondeo Hiero.<sup>44</sup> *Verbum otiosum est, quod sine utilitate loquentis dicitur et audientis proferetur.*”<sup>45</sup> In this example, his quotation represents the general interpretation of the Scripture, unlike the sentences of the following authorities, which have a much narrower meaning, conveying useless, harmful, and sinful speech.

#### *Stating the opposite*

Herolt’s quotation from the exhorting *Ep. 125*, which Cain called the “epistolary manifesto on monastic life,”<sup>46</sup> appears as a contrast to the

42 Pseudo-Augustinus, *Sermones ad fratres in eremo commorantes*, PL 40, col. 1319.

43 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 13.

44 Hieronymus, *Commentarii in Evangelium secundum Matthaum*, PL 26, col. 81.

45 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 9.

46 Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, 151.

belief that the moral basis for a living should be the behavior of the majority, or worse, exempla of the evildoers:

Multi faciunt hoc, et iam consuetudo est, et sic volunt se excusare contra quos dicit *Hier ad. Rusticum*. [Ep. 125.16–17] *Nequaquam consideres quid alii mali faciant, sed quid tu boni facere debeas, neque peccantium ducaris multitudine, et te pereuntium turba sollicitet.*

Many do this, and now it has become a habit, and thus, they want to excuse themselves. Against them, Jerome says to Rusticus [Ep. 125.16–17], “By no means consider what evil others may do, but consider what good you ought to do. Do not be led by the multitude of sinners, and do not let the crowd of the perishing trouble you.”<sup>47</sup>

In this letter, Jerome advises Rusticus on living in a monastic community where he will undoubtedly share a place with bad monks. Jerome’s sentence is used to underscore the contrast between good and bad Christians who are forced into coexistence in everyday life.

### *Rhetorical question*

Herolt’s promotion of the ascetic life is manifested in the sermon about the spiritual advent, in which he develops the exegetical allegory on the words *vesta aspera* that refer to the clothes of John the Baptist:

Sed quantum ad tertium sciendum circa hoc, quod Christus in hodierno evangelio commendat Ioannem Baptistam de asperitate vestium dicens: Quid existis in desertum videre? Hominem mollibus vestium? Quasi dicat: Vestis Ioannis est pellis camelorum. Ubi notandum, quod vestis aspera confert homini quinque bona. Primo, vitia carnis domat ... Secundo, vestis aspera hominem ab imminente tribulatione liberat ... Tertio, vestis aspera facit orationem exaudiri ... *Unde Hier. in Epistola [Ep. 54.7]: quia fiducia erigas ad coelum vultum, quem cognitor non agnoscit?*

But as for the third point, it should be known that in today’s Gospel, Christ commends John the Baptist for the roughness of his clothing, saying: “What did you go out to see in the desert? A man clothed in soft garments?” As if to say that John’s clothing is made of camel hair. It should be noted here that rough clothing contributes five goods to

47 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 116.

a person. Firstly, it subdues the vices of the flesh ... Second, rough clothing liberates a person from imminent tribulation ... Third, rough clothing causes prayers to be heard ... Hence, Jerome, in his letter [*Ep.* 54.7] says, “With what confidence do you lift up to heaven your face, which the all-knowing does not recognize?”<sup>48</sup>

The third of the five good things that *vesta aspera* brings to people (hearing prayers) is strengthened by introducing Jerome’s quotation from *Ep.* 54 to widow Furia, more precisely from one of his letters about the ascetic life.<sup>49</sup> His retaining the quotation in its original form (rhetorical question) certainly contributed to the strength of the argument.

### *Metaphor*

In *Sermones Discipuli*, there are some of the popular medieval metaphors ascribed to Jerome. One refers to the perfection of David’s sanctity and Samson’s strength. It is used in *Communis Sermo de Beata Virgine* when emphasizing perfection in persistently keeping from the carnal sins of the former sinner. It refers to Mary Magdalene and her purity of the body, forever lost due to her past sins. She is very much unlike the Virgin Mary, the only one with triple virginity. In this form, the sentence is found in the treatise *Summa de Virtutibus et Vitiis* written by Guillaume Peraldus,<sup>50</sup> a Dominican whose texts noticeably inspired Herolt. In Jerome’s work, more precisely in *Ep.* 52, a similar phrase appears in which perfection is described by mentioning David’s holiness and Solomon’s wisdom.<sup>51</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This research has shown that Herolt used Jerome on different occasions to shape and embellish the moral message: when enumerating the points of a particular subdivision, interpreting the *thema*, or closing the chapter. One of the main reasons for the frequent employment

48 Herolt, *Sermones Discipuli*, 26.

49 Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, 159.

50 “In the Summa of Peraldus, the examples appear in a different order: ... dicit Hieronymus ... nec in preterita castitate confidas. Nec David sanctior, nec Samson fortior, nec Salomone potes esse sapientior.” See Friend, “Sampson, David, and Salomon,” 120. According to Friend, the reference to Jerome could also refer to *Ep.* 79.

51 “Jerome’s citation of David and Salomon as implied models for chaste conduct and discretion around women.” Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, 137.

of Jerome's texts about monasticism, priesthood, and virginity is Herolt's explicit promotion of the ascetic life as an exemplary model for Christians. The use of Jerome's name is also connected with his reliance on the crucial theological texts written by Thomas of Aquinas and William Peraldus, in which we can find the same Jerome's sentences when the authors are interpreting a particular Christian teaching. The reception of Jerome in Herolt's book goes further than the mere reception of the texts he wrote, as Herolt echoes texts that are no longer included in Jerome's opus today.

Nevertheless, they are a clear signal of the strength that Jerome's authority had in the late-medieval sermons written for the instruction of a wider audience. Although this paper emphasizes the reception of texts that Jerome wrote, Herolt's frequent referring to his name when inserting the Pseudo-Jerome's sentences was not ignored. Moreover, they all indicate how Herolt and his contemporaries frequently invoked the persuasive power and the authority of St. Jerome.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agius, T. A. "On Pseudo-Jerome, Epistle 9." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 94, no. 24 (1923): 176–83.
- Cain, Andrew. *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy: A Commentary on Letter 52 to Nepotian with an Introduction, Text, and Translation*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- . *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Clark Walter, Katherine. *The Profession of Widowhood: Widows, Pastoral Care and Medieval Models of Holiness*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018.
- Cruel, Rudolf. *Geschichte der deutschen Predigt in Mittelalter*. Detmold: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1879.
- Dahmus, John. "Late-Medieval Preachers and Lay Perfection: The Case of Johannes Herolt, O.P." *Medieval Perspectives* 1 (1986): 122–34.
- de Rubeis, Bernardus Maria, ed. *Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica*. Madrid: Typographia D. Josephi Doblado, 1797.
- Delcorno, Carlo. "Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200–1500)." In *The Sermon*, edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle, 449–560. Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 81–83. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000.
- Friend, Albert C. "Sampson, David, and Salomon in the Parson's Tale." *Modern Philology* 46, no. 2 (1948): 117–21.
- Herolt, Johannes. *Sermones Discipuli de tempore et de sanctis cum Promptuario exemplorum ac miraculis Beatae Mariae Virginis*. Venice: Apud Petrum Mariam Bertanum, 1603.
- Hilberg, Isidor, and Margit Kamptner, ed. *Hieronymus: Epistulae*. CSEL 54–56. Vienna: ÖAW, 1996.
- Jussen, Bernhard. "Virgins – Widows – Spouses: On the Language of Moral Distinction as Applied to Women and Men in the Middle Ages." *History of the Family* 7 (2002): 13–32.
- Kaczynski, Bernice M. "The Authority of the Fathers: Patristic Texts in Early Medieval Libraries and Scriptoria." *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 16 (2006): 1–27.
- . "Edition, Translation, and Exegesis: The Carolingians and the Bible." In *The Gentle Voices of Teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, edited by Richard E. Sullivan, 171–85. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1995.
- Kaeppli, Thomas. "Iohannes Herolt (Herold)." In *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum Medii Aevi* 2, edited by Thomas Kaeppli and Emilio Panella, 450–56. Rome: Istituto storico domenicano, 1975.

- Migne, J. P., ed. *Hieronymus: Adversus Jovinianum*. PL 23. Paris: J. P. Migne, 1883.
- , ed. *Hieronymus: Commentarii in Evangelium secundum Matthaeum*. PL 26. Paris: J. P. Migne, 1884.
- , ed. *Pseudo-Augustinus: Sermones ad fratres in eremo commorantes*. PL 40. Paris: J. P. Migne, 1845.
- , ed. *Pseudo-Hieronymus: Epistolae*. PL 30. Paris: J. P. Migne, 1888.
- Pabel, Hilmar M. "Reading Jerome in the Renaissance: Erasmus' Reception of the *Adversus Jovinianum*." *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2002): 470–97.
- Radošević, Andrea. "Signale der Mündlichkeit in der kroatischen Übersetzung der lateinischen Sammlung von Predigten Sermones discipuli des deutschen Dominikaners Johannes Herolt (†1468)." *Germanoslavica: Zeitschrift für germano-slawische Studien* 26, no. 2 (2015): 18–40.
- Schaff, Philip, transl. *Jerome: Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2.6. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890. (Repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979.)
- Siggins, Ian. *A Harvest of Medieval Preaching: The Sermon Books of Johann Herolt*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2009.
- Stammler, Wolfgang. "Herolt, Johannes." In *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters* 2, edited by Wolfgang Stammler, 425–29. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1936.
- Thayer, Anne. *Penitence, Preaching and the Coming of the Reformation*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Wenzel, Siegfried. *Medieval Artes Praedicandi: A Synthesis of Scholastic Sermon Structure*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
- Ziolkowski, Jan M. "Cultures of Authority in the Long Twelfth Century." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 4 (2009): 421–48.

## ABSTRACT

Church fathers were among the most cited authorities in the medieval sermons, right after the Bible. Their quotations were used in different ways – as an exegesis of the reading, as a commentary of a moral lesson, or as a strong argument for a particular statement. Jerome was considered one of the key authorities, and his passages can be found in numerous books of sermons. The paper examines the reception of St. Jerome in the 15th-century sermon collection known as *Sermones Discipuli de tempore et de sanctis cum Promptuario exemplorum et de miraculis Beatae Mariae Virginis*, written by a German Dominican, Johannes Herolt (†1468). The collection includes quotations from different works of Jerome, mostly from his letters. Despite the emphasis on sentences from the texts written by Jerome, the analysis also includes extracts from the so-called Pseudo-Jerome.

KEYWORDS: St. Jerome, Johannes Herolt, reception, medieval sermons, authority

Recepcija svetega Hieronima  
v poznosrednjeveški zbirki pridig Johanesa Herolta

## IZVLEČEK

Cerkveni očetje so bili v srednjeveških pridigah med najbolj pogosto navajanimi avtoritetami, takoj za Svetim pismom. Citati so se uporabljali na različne načine: kot eksegeza prebranega, kot komentar moralnega nauka ali kot močan argument za določeno izjavo. Hieronim je sodil v srednjem veku med najpomembnejše avtoritete, njegove odlomke in citate je najti v številnih zbirkah pridig. Prispevek predstavi recepcijo svetega Hieronima v zbirki pridig iz 15. stoletja, znani kot *Sermones Discipuli de tempore et de sanctis cum Promptuario exemplorum et de miraculis Beatae Mariae Virginis*, ki jo je napisal nemški dominikanec Johannes Herolt (†1468). V tej zbirki so citati iz različnih Hieronimovih del, večinoma iz njegovih pisem. Kljub poudarku Hieronimovih besedilih analiza vključuje tudi odlomke iz t. i. psevdo-Hieronima.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Hieronim, Johannes Herolt, recepcija, srednjeveške pridige, avtoriteta





# The Motif of Freedom, Human Dignity, and Awareness of a Common Human Destiny between Antiquity and Cervantes

Bojana Tomc\*

The legacy of classical antiquity presents a constituent part of Cervantes' opus. The vicinity of the classical imaginarium, with which Cervantes became acquainted at school and while living in Italy, is patent in using ancient elements, topics, and motifs, establishing a constant dialogue with the Ancients. In *Don Quixote* part 1, chapter 11, for example, he offers the reader an image of the ancient Golden Age, as created by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, when writing about the four ages of humankind:

Dichosa edad y siglos dichosos aquellos a quien los antiguos pusieron nombre de dorados, y no porque en ellos el oro, que en esta nuestra edad de hierro tanto se estima, se alcanzase en aquella venturosa sin fatiga alguna, sino porque entonces los que en ella vivían ignoraban estas dos palabras de *tuyo* y *mío*. Eran en aquella santa edad todas las cosas comunes: a nadie le era necesario para alcanzar su ordinario sustento tomar otro trabajo que alzar la mano y alcanzarle de las robustas encinas, que liberalmente les estaban convidando con su dulce y sazonado fruto.<sup>1</sup>

\* St. Stanislaus Institute, Diocesan Classical Gymnasium, Štula 23, 1210 Ljubljana; [bojana.tomc@stanislav.si](mailto:bojana.tomc@stanislav.si).

<sup>1</sup> Pérez López, *Cervantes: Don Quijote*, 89.

In creating the image of prehistoric Arcadia, Cervantes reverts to the images and expressions already used by Ovid. To quote some of them:

*Aurea prima sata est aetas ...  
 ipsa quoque immunis rastroque intacta nec ullis  
 saucia vomeribus per se dabat omnia tellus.  
 contentique cibus nullo cogente creatis ...  
 et quae deciderant patula Iovis arbore glandes.<sup>2</sup>*

Golden was that first age ...  
 The earth herself, without compulsion, untouched by hoe  
 or plowshare, of herself gave all things needful. And men,  
 content with food which came with no one's seeking ...  
 and acorns fallen from the spreading tree of Jove.

There are further connections to Vergil's descriptions of the elementary eras of humankind, from the first book of *Georgics*:

*Ante Iovem nulli subigebant arua coloni:  
 ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum  
 fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus  
 omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.<sup>3</sup>*

Before the reign of Jove no tillers subjugated the land:  
 even to mark possession of the plain or apportion it by  
 boundaries was sacrilege; man made gain for the common  
 good, and Earth of her own accord gave her gifts  
 all the more freely when none demanded them.

Another testimony to the traces of classical antiquity, one due to which the reader could expect the incorporation of ancient motifs almost a priori, is often merely the choice of the topic itself. This can go back to the beginnings of Roman presence on the Pyrenean peninsula. A case in point is the legendary story in Numancia.

## NUMANCIA

According to Canavaggio, *Numancia* is the only authentic tragedy originating from 16th-century Spain – although its author never

2 *Met.* 1.89, 101–103, 106; translated by Frank Justus Miller and G. P. Goold.

3 *Georg.* 1.125–28; translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold.

considered it a tragedy. Instead, Cervantes denoted it as “comedy” because tragedy for him did not represent a particular genre, “at the outmost a singular expression of an eclectic *genus dramaticum*, which may include any type of performance in the form of dialogues.”<sup>4</sup> It was only neo-classicists at the end of the 18th century who classified it as a tragedy.

In this work, Cervantes stages a historically attested event involving the destiny of a Celtiberian town of Numancia, besieged by Scipio’s troops in the year 133 BC, and the resistance of its inhabitants, who sacrificed their lives rather than accepting a defeat. After the final expulsion of the Cartagenans from the Iberian Peninsula, the Romans established two provinces in Hispania in 197 BC, namely Hispania Citerior or Tarraconensis and Hispania Ulterior. In the beginning, they covered a relatively tiny part of the peninsula. However, the Hispanic population was quite defiant, and there were riots. Although Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, father of the brothers Gracchus, achieved peace in 179, the locals rose again in 154. Numancia resisted for nine years. Its allies opted for peace with Rome after another, and Numancia was left alone. Finally, in 133, it was occupied by Scipio Aemilianus. This was the finale of the chapter on the Hispanic wars.

It seems that Cervantes saw *Numancia* as an experiment, an attempt to create a more erudite, higher theater. Indeed, its elevated tone, flowery language, nationally-tinged theme, and tragic end – when young Bariato throws himself from the tower rather than handing over the city’s keys – are reminiscent of classical tragedies.

However, the motifs in Cervantes are unique. The ancient sources of these motifs – Aeschylus, Epictetus, Seneca, Horatio, Virgil – are diverse and specific. They also come from different genres, including Greek historical tragedy, lyric poetry, and Roman tragedy. One of the characteristics of Cervantes’ use of motifs, rooted in antiquity and employed in *Numancia*, is that he does not use simple mythological motifs, omnipresent in the baroque era. These would be immediately obvious to any reader with a classical background. However, he reaches further and deeper by weaving a complex web of motifs.

Cervantes was aware of the intertextuality of his works. He mentioned it by using an outside view in *Adjunta al Parnaso*, among the advice sent to the poet by Apollo from Delphi through Pancraccio de Roncesvalles:

4 Canavaggio, *Historia de la literatura española*, 2.225.

Ítem, se advierte que no ha de ser tenido por ladrón el poeta que hurtare algún verso ajeno y le encajare entre los suyos, como no sea todo el concepto y toda la copla entera, que en tal caso tan ladrón es como Caco.<sup>5</sup>

Aurora Egido<sup>6</sup> believes that Cervantes, “when using words or sentences of certain authors, without mentioning their name, was appealing to the cooperation of the readers or the audience, who were delighted when they recognized a quote and its author.” Such agreement between the dramatist and the audience establishes a play of identification. This is an additional element of entertainment, because “the spectacle event of the Golden Age, which is multifaceted and diverse, elitist and popular, sophisticated and ordinary, religious and secular, is intended for a very heterogeneous audience.”<sup>7</sup> Spanish dramatists of the baroque period – especially after the revolutionary appearance of Lope de Vega – thus had to consider two types of audiences attending the performance: the uneducated and the more refined public. For each of the two, they had to use attractive elements to create their vision, their performance version. A common denominator included notable quotes and allusions from famous authors and mythological elements, folk motifs, legends, tales, romances, biblical motifs, elements from the Byzantine, and chivalric novels and archetypes.

## MOTIF OF FREEDOM AND HUMAN DIGNITY

However, the humanistic note in the work of Cervantes is most noticeable in his constant defense of freedom and human dignity – or the value of the human being in itself, according to the Renaissance concept.<sup>8</sup> According to Rey Hazas,<sup>9</sup> freedom becomes a key element and cornerstone of Cervantes’ poetics. This is the link to the Renaissance tradition, extending from Fernán Pérez de Oliva and his disquisition *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre* (before 1531) to the Renaissance Italian thought on human dignity and freedom. This included *De dignitate et excellentia hominis libri IV* by Giannozzo Manetti (1452)

5 Cervantes, *Viaje del Parnaso*, 147.

6 Egido, *Speciale Cervantes*, 18.

7 Kalenič Ramšak, *Hispanistična razpotja*, 4.

8 Abellán, *Historia del pensamiento español*, 240.

9 Hazas, *Cervantes*, 369.

and *Oratio de hominis dignitate* by Pico della Mirandola (1486), two thinkers who established the canon of this topic.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the Renaissance thought on freedom was not a *creatio ex nihilo*. Instead, it represents a link in the tradition of previous discussions and derives from the central idea of Epictetus. The thinking of this Greek philosopher (50–138 AD), a former slave and exponent of late Stoicism, was rooted in freedom.<sup>11</sup> His freedom “is not subject to any constraint or obstacle,”<sup>12</sup> and the basis of his teaching on freedom is linked with human dignity, which cannot be influenced by any circumstance or other human being. In his *Diatribes on freedom*,<sup>13</sup> Epictetus discusses the vanity of victory over somebody or a person’s capture if the defeated individual resorted to death, which accorded him the final victory:

For this reason, we shall say that those animals only are free, which can not endure capture, but as soon they are caught, they escape from captivity by death. So Diogenes also somewhere says that there is only one way to freedom, and that is to die content: and he writes to the Persian king, “You can not enslave the Athenian state any more than you can enslave fishes.” “How is that? Can not I catch them?” “If you catch them, they will immediately leave you, as fishes do,” says Diogenes. “For if you catch a fish, it dies; and if these men that are caught shall die, of what use to you is the preparation for war?”

This thought keeps reverberating in the words of the Cervantes’ character Bariat in the closing speech to his countrymen before he pushes himself to death:

Yo os aseguro, ¡oh fuertes ciudadanos  
que no falte por mí intención vuestra  
de que no triunfen pérfidos romanos,  
si ya no fuere de ceniza nuestra.<sup>14</sup>

After this heroic and dignified act of liberation, the apparent winner Scipio (or Cipión) realizes the following, almost in resignation:

10 For the seminal study on this topic, see Forcione, *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*.

11 Senegačnik, “Veličina in nemoč Epiktetove svobode,” 183.

12 Ibid., 184.

13 Epict., *Diatr.* 4.1; English translation by George Long.

14 Marrast, *Cervantes: Numancia* 2385–88.

Tú sólo me has llevado la ganancia  
de esta larga contienda, ilustre y rara.  
Lleva, pues, niño, lleva la ganancia  
y la gloria que el cielo te prepara,  
por haber, derribándote, vencido  
al que, subiendo, queda más caído.<sup>15</sup>

The curtain over the fallen Numancia, which nonetheless rose over the Romans in victory, is dropped by personified Fame. Fame praises the Numancians with her poem and humiliates the Romans:

Alzad, romanos, la inclinada frente,  
llevad de aquí este cuerpo, que ha podido  
en tan pequeña edad arrebatáros  
el triunfo que pudiera tanto honraros.<sup>16</sup>

The desires of Spain come true and in act one, Spain appears as the personified homeland of the Numancians. Crowned by the towers, holding a castle in one hand, it finally makes a wish:

¡oh, si saliesen sus intentos vanos,  
y fuesen sus quimeras desatinos,  
que esta pequeña tierra de Numancia,  
sacáse de su pérdida ganancia!<sup>17</sup>

This short excursus can provide a starting point for further exploration of Renaissance thought. According to Pico della Mirandola, the highest human dignity and true “excellence of human nature” are not in particular human characteristics or abilities. Neither are they in the human, of whom there is nothing more miraculous, being “the bond of the world,” according to Marsilio Ficino. Higher than man’s role in creation is the freedom of man to choose his role. Humans are not pre-defined; they are given free will, comparable to the freedom of God at creation. Pico della Mirandola says that a man is created in the image of God primarily because God, in his “unattainable generosity,” rewarded the man with “miraculous happiness” so that “his gift is to be able to have what he wants and to be what he wants to be.”<sup>18</sup>

15 Ibid., 2411–16.

16 Ibid., 2421–24.

17 Marrast, *Cervantes: Numancia* 397–400.

18 Senegačnik, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*, 5–7.

Fernán Pérez de Oliva (1493–1531) captures this thought on human freedom and free will as follows:

Porque como el hombre tiene en sí natural de todas las cosas, así tiene libertad de ser lo que quisiere: es como planta o piedra puesto en ocio; y si se da al deleite corporal es animal bruto; y si quisiere es ángel hecho para contemplar la cara del padre; y en su mano tiene hazerse tan excelente que sea contado entre aquellos a quien dixo Dios: *dioses sois vosotros*. De manera que puso Dios al hombre acá, en la tierra, para que primero muestre lo que quiere ser, y si le plazén las cosas viles y terrenas, con ellas se queda perdido para siempre y desamparado; mas si la razón lo ensalça a las cosas divinas, o al deseo dellas y cuidado de gozarlas, para él están guardados aquellos lugares del cielo que a ti, Aurelio, te parescen tan ilustres.<sup>19</sup>

Así que esta incertidumbre en que Dios puso al hombre responde a la libertad del alma: unos quieren vestir lana, otros lienço, otros pieles; unos aman el pescado, otros la carne, otros las frutas. Quiso Dios cumplir la voluntad de todos haziéndolos en estado en que pudiesen escoger, y pues es así, no devemos tener por aspereza lo que Dios nos concedió como a hijos regalados.<sup>20</sup>

The works of Pérez de Oliva, who died unexpectedly at a relatively young age, were published after his death by his nephew, the humanist Ambrosio de Morales. They were published in Córdoba in 1586. Therefore, one can assume that Cervantes, who, due to his difficult financial situation, worked as a court employee precisely in Seville in Andalusia from 1587 to 1600, collecting cereal and oil in the villages of Andalusia, was familiar with *Dialogue on the Dignity of Man* by Pérez de Oliva.

Cervantes frequently expresses the premise of human freedom and its fundamental value in his literary work. For example, in *Don Quixote*,<sup>21</sup> the knight of the sad countenance says to Sancho:

La libertad, Sancho, es uno de los más preciosos dones que a los hombres dieron los cielos; con ella no pueden igualarse los tesoros que encierra la tierra ni el mar encubre; por la libertad, así como

19 Cerron Puga, *Pérez de Oliva*, 143–44.

20 *Ibid.*, 151

21 Pérez López, *Cervantes: Don Quijote* 2.58.

por la honra se puede y debe aventurar la vida, y, por el contrario, el cautiverio es el mayor mal que puede venir a los hombres.<sup>22</sup>

The ideal of freedom accompanied Cervantes from the beginning of his writing to the end of his life. In his first work, the pastoral novel *Primera parte de la Galatea*, published in 1584,<sup>23</sup> Gelisia sings a sonnet with the following closing lines:

Del campo son y han sido mis amores;  
rosas son y jazmines mis cadenas;  
libre nascí, y en libertad me fundo.<sup>24</sup>

Cervantes reverts to the same theme in his last work, just before his death. In the adventurous novel inspired by the Hellenistic novel *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, Taurisia says:

Libre pensé yo que gozara de la luz del sol en esta vida, pero engañóme mi pensamiento, pues me veo a pique a ser vendida por esclava: desventura a quien ninguna puede compararse.<sup>25</sup>

This pronounced orientation toward freedom may be related to Cervantes' personal experience and partly explained by his painful captivity in Algeria, where he spent five years. These years "essentially marked his character and perhaps also contributed to his realization that the literature shall change his fate."<sup>26</sup> He started to write to survive and maintain clarity of mind and spirit.<sup>27</sup>

#### MOTIF OF A HEROIC CITY AND AWARENESS OF A COMMON DESTINY

One ancient parallel, however, is impossible to overlook. War is the core conflict in three of the oldest preserved tragedies by Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, *The Persians*, and *The Suppliants*.<sup>28</sup> In *The Persians*, the only preserved historical drama from antiquity, Aeschylus focuses on the aggressors' human destiny upon facing the defeat incurred by the

22 Sevilla Arroyo, *Cervantes: Obras completas*, 137b.

23 Kalenić Ramšak, "Cervantes," 100.

24 Sevilla Arroyo, *Cervantes: Obras completas*, 137b.

25 Pérez López, *Cervantes: Don Quijote*, 134.

26 Kalenić Ramšak, "Cervantes," 97.

27 For a discussion on Cervantes and the literature of war, see Rupp, *Heroic Forms*.

28 Gantar, *Ajshil*, 8–9.

Greeks as the defenders of freedom, who are kept in the background of the tragedy. The stasima of the choir end in realizing a common human destiny, awaiting the winners and the losers. It seems that not only their countrymen's choir is singing to the Persians. Their mourning turns into a reminder and a warning to themselves, coming from the mouth of the Athenians:

Pour the deep sorrows of my soul; ...  
Lamenting my misfortunes; beat thy breast, ...  
Answer my grief with grief!<sup>29</sup>

This motif of awareness of common human destiny is also present in Numancia. The words of the Romans sound similarly sinister and not at all triumphant:

Todos son muetros ya: solo uno  
creo que queda vivo, para el triunfo darte ...<sup>30</sup>

It seems that the eyes of Scipio are starting to see the defeat into which the apparent victory against the stubborn Hispanici is turning, as a warning invoking a similar tragedy waiting for the Romans in the future. Thus both works, *The Persians* and *Numancia*, are a collective tragedy – and in each case, the main protagonist a community, facing its destiny.

29 Aeschylus, *Persae* 54–55, translated by Robert Potter.

30 Marrast, *Cervantes: Numancia* 2321–22.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abellán, José Luis. *Historia del pensamiento español de Séneca a nuestros días*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1996.
- Anderson, William S., ed. *Publius Ovidius Naso: Metamorphoses*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1996.
- Canavaggio, Jean. *Historia de la literatura española 2: El siglo XVI*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1994.
- Cerron Puga, María Luisa, ed. *Fernán Pérez de Oliva: Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre; Razonamientos; Ejercicios*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2008.
- Cristóbal, Vicente, ed. *Virgilio: Bucólicas*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2000.
- Egido, Aurora, et al. *Speciale Cervantes: El robo que robaste; El universo de las citas y Miguel de Cervantes*. Parole rubate: Rivista internazionale di studi sulla citazione 8. Parma: Università degli studi di Parma, 2013, available online.
- Forcione, Alban K. *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four Exemplary Novels*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1983.
- Gantar, Kajetan, ed. *Ajshil: Peržani; Vklenjeni Prometej*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1982.
- , ed. *Ajshil: Sedmerica proti Tebam*, translated by Alojz Rebula. Maribor: Študentska založba Litera, 2005.
- , transl. *Publij Ovidij Naso: Metamorfoze*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1977.
- Hazas, Antonio Rey. *Cervantes, el Quijote y la poética de la libertad*. Actas del I Coloquio Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas, 369–80. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1990, available online.
- Kalenić Ramšak, Branka. “Cervantes: Življenje in književnost.” In *Hispanistična razpotja: Rojas, Cervantes, Machado, García Márquez*, 93–171. Ljubljana: Znanstvenoraziskovalni inštitut Filozofske Fakultete, 2013.
- , Jasmina Markič, Barbara Pihler, and Maja Šabec. *Hispanistična razpotja: Rojas, Cervantes, Machado, García Márquez*. Ljubljana: Znanstvenoraziskovalni inštitut Filozofske Fakultete, 2013.
- Košir, Niko, transl. *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: Veleumni plemič don Kihot iz Manče*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1988.
- Long, George, transl. *Epictetus: Discourses*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904.
- Marinčič, Marko, transl. *Publij Vergilij Maro: Lirika*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1994.
- Marrast, Robert, ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: Numancia*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1984.

- Pérez López, José Luis, ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Madrid: Biblioteca IV centenario, 2004.
- Potter, Robert, transl. *Aeschylus: The Persians*. The Tragedies of Aeschylus. London: Strahan and Cadell, 1779, available online.
- Romero Muñoz, Carlos, ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2004, available online.
- Rupp, Stephen. *Heroic Forms: Cervantes and the Literature of War*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.
- Senegačnik, Brane, transl. *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: O človekovem dostojanstvu*. Commentary by Igor Škamperle. Ljubljana: Družina, 1997.
- , transl. *Lucij Anej Seneka: O srečnem življenju in druge razprave*. Ljubljana: Claritas, 2001.
- . “Veličina in nemoč Epiktetove svobode.” In *Epiktet: Izbrane diatribe in Priročnik*, 153–89. Ljubljana: Študentska založba, 2001.
- Sevilla Arroyo, Florencio, and Antonio Rey Hazas, ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: Obra completa 17; Entremeses*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998.
- , and Antonio Rey Hazas, ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: Viaje del Parnaso*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1997.
- , ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: La Numancia*. Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2001, available online.
- , ed. *Miguel de Cervantes: Obras completas*. Madrid: Castalia, 1999.
- Urdemala, Pedro de, ed. *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: El rufián dichoso*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1986.
- Vivar, Francisco. “El ideal pro patria mori en La Numancia de Cervantes.” *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 20.2 (2000): 7–30.

## ABSTRACT

The Motif of Freedom, Human Dignity, and Awareness of a Common Human Destiny between Antiquity and Cervantes

The legacy of antiquity forms a constituent part of Cervantes' opus. The vicinity of the classical imaginarium, with which Cervantes became acquainted during his education and while living in Italy, is represented by classical elements, topics, and motifs. Through these, he establishes a constant dialogue with antiquity. However, the humanistic note in his opus is most noticeable in his constant defense of freedom and human dignity and the value of the human being, reflecting the Renaissance concept of the human person. Freedom becomes a key element and cornerstone of Cervantes' poetics, linking to the Renaissance tradition. Cervantes frequently expresses the premise of human freedom and its fundamental value. This pronounced orientation toward freedom may be related to his personal experience and explained by his painful captivity in Algeria, where he spent five years. He started to write to survive and maintain clarity of mind and spirit.

KEYWORDS: ancient literature, humanism, Spanish literature, Golden Age, *Numancia*, classical reception

Motiv svobode, človekovega dostojanstva in zavedanja skupne človeške usode od antike do Cervantesa

## IZVLEČEK

Cervantesu antični klasiki niso bili tuji, z njimi se je seznanil v času šolanja in med bivanjem v Italiji. Da mu je bil klasični svet blizu, dokazuje z vpletanjem antičnih elementov, snovi in motivike. Humanistična nota v njegovem delu je najbolj opazna v nenehni obrambi svobode in človeškega dostojanstva oziroma vrednosti človeškega bitja samega po sebi v skladu z renesančnim konceptom človeka. Svoboda kot ključni pojem in temelj Cervantesove poetike navezuje njegov opus na renesančno tradicijo. Premiso o človekovi svobodi in njeni temeljni vrednosti Cervantes izrazi na številnih mestih. Cervantesovo izrazito usmerjenost k svobodi in prežetost njegovega dela z njo pa je treba razumeti tudi skozi njegovo osebno izkušnjo in mučno ujetništvo v Alžiru, kjer je preživel pet let. Da bi preživel ter ohranil bistrost duha in razuma, je začel pisati.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: antična književnost, humanizem, španska književnost, zlata doba, *Numancia*, klasična recepcija





# Troy Is Burning: Epic Archetypes

Alberto Camerotto\*

*ILIOUPERSIS: A RESEARCH PROJECT  
AND A CIVIL EXPERIMENT IN THE FOOTSTEPS  
OF THE CLASSICI CONTRO*

Troy is burning. The fall of the city is a symbol that crosses time, history, cultures, and languages. Our imagery of the most inhuman violence of war begins with the end of Priam's city. It symbolizes the end of civilization, a warning, and food for thought.

Starting from Homer, the *Ilioupersis: Epic Archetypes* project investigates the *paradeigmata* of our way of thinking about the violence of war across different cultures and epochs of history in a perspective that is multidisciplinary and includes oral poetry, literature, history, art, theater, cinema, and sport.

The research laboratory experiments with new dimensions for the civil conscience and the collective memory of our societies, and it does that right in the cities and places that symbolize war and peace, not only with research work, lectures, and seminars in universities and schools but also with public actions in theaters, archaeological museums, and World War Museums.

Meetings, seminars, and conferences on *Ilioupersis* are scheduled with the involvement of Italian and foreign scholars. Particular attention is dedicated to younger scholars, students, PhD students, and PhDs with the participation of Aletheia, the Laboratory of Greek Literature of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Among the activities of Aletheia Laboratory, the project includes a series of seminars and experimental meetings with a strong civil impact: a contribution to the construction of a shared historical-cultural awareness around the themes of war violence, starting with the archetypes of the fall of Troy. In several cities, symbolic places are chosen to present and discuss research results in front of a wider audience. The first experiment, as a scientific experience, concerns

\* Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Dorsoduro 3484/D, 30123 Venezia; [alcam@unive.it](mailto:alcam@unive.it).

the archaeological museums for immediate contact between the texts, documents, objects, and artistic representations of *Ilioupersis* and war.

Public lectures are scheduled in the Museums of the two World Wars, as places where ancient ideas and images about war encounter the symbols and memories of contemporary history.

In collaboration with UNESCO, we have begun discussing the idea of bringing the results of research on *Ilioupersis* to Sarajevo on the 30th anniversary of the siege in a combined action with Venice. At the Siege Museum, the rebuilt Library, and the National Museum in the center of the city, amid the various communities still in conflict, the universality of this mythical archetype could contribute to peace, helping to resolve the tensions that have not yet found a solution.

The themes are centered on the polar opposition between peace and war. Knowing the evils of war is necessary to think about peace. Experiencing difficulties creates the awareness required to build a better future: to invent a civilization within the *civitas*, within the ideal and universal *polis* where differences become a resource, an added value, a source of beauty, an *agathon koinon*, an asset to be shared.

I. *The utopia of peace*. It consists of all the symbols required to build peace as the foundation of happiness and prosperity in the life of the *polis* and its men, starting from the representation of the city in peace in polar opposition to the city at war in the shield of Achilles of Homer's *Iliad*. Weddings, courts, and altars. A paradigm of art and poetry that becomes a paradigm of history.<sup>1</sup>

II. *War as the end of civilization*. When a war starts, the real consequences of its violence are impossible to predict, but it is undoubtedly the end of civilian life. To maintain a degree of humanity, other rules come into play, but the codes of honor, which are supposed to safeguard the respect for other humans, for the enemies, fail to be applied. They no longer have any meaning. When at war, only violence remains, blood that endlessly generates more violence and more blood.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Hom., *Il.* 18.490–508. See Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 213: “The blessings of ordered communal life are represented by weddings, which unite different families and bring festivities for all, and the peaceful settlement of a dispute over a man’s death by a city’s judicial institutions.” For the Homeric principle of human civilization see Ugo Foscolo, *Dei Sepolcri*, 119–21: “Dal dì che nozze e tribunali ed are / Diero alle umane belve esser pietose / Di sé stesse e d’altrui” (1807). The Homeric definition of the city of peace becomes a cultural paradigm for the ancient world and for our times.
- 2 On the motif of blood and massacre in the epic representation of the fall of Troy, see Barbaresco, “La terra e il sangue,” 323–39.

III. *The fall of the city, or the latest violence.* It starts with *Ilioupersis*, which, for us, is the first archetype of limitless violence. When it comes to the siege and the fall of a city, there is a qualitative leap in the violence of war. All the rules are canceled, there are no human feelings, and a feral or, better still, monstrous dimension guides the winners' actions. But *hybris*, the violence of the assailants who destroy the city, is at the origin of the ruin of those who believe they are the winners.<sup>3</sup>

IV. *Sport is a principle of civilization that removes and denies war.* Sport allows the construction of life and peace together with others, even the adversary, the enemy. Confrontation and struggle are part of human life, but the most ancient archetypes show that sport changes the symbol of hostility into a symbol of peace.<sup>4</sup> It is a cognitive question, a logical structure that has become part of our thinking and behavior. In sports, the opponent becomes a friend through mutual recognition, precisely in competition, confrontation, and cooperation. Starting with Homer, the *athloi* are a symbol of civilization, of peace, of hospitality. Sport is a symbol of a happy utopian society aware of the limits and difficulties of human life – a positive symbol in search of prosperity and beauty, which immediately suspends all hostilities. *Ekecheiria* is born around Olympia: it is the inviolable suspension of every act of war.<sup>5</sup> It is the return of civilization and life.

The first experiments were as follows.

I. We started from Venice, in Piazza San Marco, on 3 March 2022, at the National Archaeological Museum with the action “Death in the Eyes,” staged in front of the Hellenistic statues of the Galatians. A long series of actions and seminars ensued.

II. “Women and the Fall of Troy,” on 8 March in Vicenza, at the Gallerie d'Italia – Palazzo Leoni Montanari, among the bas-reliefs of the battles of the *Iliad* and the medallions of Homeric heroes, and then

- 3 There is no triumph, no certainty. This is the epic story of mortals, we know what awaits the victors next. This is also the effect of the narration of the *Iliou Halosis* of Triphiodorus, see Miguélez-Cavero, *Triphiodorus: The Sack of Troy*, 394: “His readers should therefore anticipate the punishment of the Achaeans when they finish reading his poem, with the departure of the Greek ships from Troy.”
- 4 On sport as a sign of peace in the archaic Epics and in particular among the Phaeacians, see Camerotto, “Utopici Feaci,” 23: “l'eccellenza (*Od.* 8.244, ἡμετέρης ἀρετῆς) è quella delle gare sportive, ma con una ben chiara precisazione, ossia con l'esclusione degli sport violenti, il pugilato e la lotta.”
- 5 See Lämmer, “La cosiddetta ‘pace olimpica,’” 129–31.

at the Natural History and Archaeological Museum, with the great mosaic of Meleager.

III. “The Wolf, or the Enemy,” Adria, National Archaeological Museum (16 March 2022).

IV. “*Ilioupersis*: Epic Archetypes,” Seminar at the University of Palermo (24 March 2022).

V. “Women on the Trojan Stage,” Treviso, Teatro Comunale Mario del Monaco (13 April 2022).

VI. “*Ilioupersis*: How and Why Should We Tell the Story of the Fall of Troy,” Seminar at the University of Salerno (27 April 2022).

VII. “The City under Siege,” Cagliari, at the National Archaeological Museum, in front of the giants of Mont’e Prama, at the Pinacoteca and at the Liceo Dettori (4–5 May 2022).

VIII. “Lysistrata: Women against War,” Venice, Teatro Santa Margherita Ca’ Foscari (12 May 2022).

IX. “The Death of Achilles,” Este, Museo Nazionale Atestino (14 May 2022).

X. “The City is Burning: *Ilioupersis* under Mount Pasubio,” Schio, Sala Turbine – Exhibition Space of the Lanificio Conte (1 June 2022).

Then came two large scholarly meetings, in the Museum of the Battle, a Memorial for the First World War in Vittorio Veneto: with laboratories, educational seminars, and with the participation and the work of 400 students in each meeting.

XI. “*Il cielo è rosso*: The sky is red at the Museum of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto; The myth of the fall of Troy to learn about war and imagine peace” (Museo Della Battaglia, Aula Civica, San Paoletto, Teatro Lorenzo Da Ponte – Vittorio Veneto, 27–29 October 2022).

XII. “*Ilioupersis*: *Inventare la pace al Museo della Battaglia di Vittorio Veneto*; Inventing peace at the Museum of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto; Epic archetypes and collective memory to understand war and build peace” (Museo della Battaglia, Teatro del Seminario, Vittorio Veneto, 26–27 October 2023).

Three books were born from this project:

1. Alberto Camerotto, *Troia brucia: Come e perché raccontare l'Ilioupersis* (Milan: Mimesis, 2022), *Classici Contro* n. 20.
2. Alberto Camerotto, Katia Barbaresco, and Valeria Melis (eds.), *Il grido di Andromaca: Voci di donne contro la guerra* (Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani Editore, 2022), *Paradoxa* n. 1.
3. Alberto Camerotto, *Ilioupersis: La caduta di Troia in quattro atti, con un prologo, un epilogo e qualche nota di commento (sulle tracce epiche di Trifiodoro)* (Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani Editore, 2023), *Paradoxa* n. 2.

Obviously, images of our world also emerge here and there, from the aberrations of the wars of these days, as for Iryna in Mariupol, or the yellow room in Dnipro, the young musicians Khrystyna and Svitlana killed in Zaporizhzhia, the devastation of the Odessa Cathedral, the grain silos on the bank of the Danube. Daily images. All normal images of peace and happiness are contaminated by weapons and death.<sup>6</sup> We look at them with fear: there is the tension of ancient ideas that tell us something to be able to resist in the face of horror. Even with the sense of testimony. It is the experiment of a *rhesis*, a civil discourse, a different thought from the world of Classics and Ancient Literature. Sometimes it is a good thing for research, philology and literature: to speak. This is our *parrhesia*.<sup>7</sup> Through ancient thoughts.

From all these works, we propose here a simple example through the analysis of the images of the Pithos of Mykonos, so close to Homer's poems and to the time of the epic narratives of the fall of Troy.

## THE FALL OF TROY: EPIC ARCHETYPES AT THE END OF CIVILIZATION

This is the first great iconographic testimony of *Ilioupersis*: it comes from the second quarter of the 7th century, between 675 and 670 BC, not far from the times of Homer and our most ancient epic songs. It may well belong to the lifespan of the same generation of men.<sup>8</sup>

- 6 On the contamination of codes in the *Ilioupersis* see Scheijnen, *Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*, 278–80, Avlami, “Contextualizing Quintus,” 172–3.
- 7 On *parrhesia* and *Classici contro*, see Camerotto, “*Parrhesia*: Una parola,” 51–63.
- 8 See Ervin, “A Relief Pithos from Mykonos”; Ervin Caskey, “Notes on Relief Pithoi of the Tenian-Boiotian Group”; Anderson, *The Fall of Troy in Early Greek Poetry and Art*, 182–90.

It is a large vase, a *pithos*, from an island in the center of the Aegean Sea, Mykonos, near the sanctuaries of Apollo in Delos. The vase and the images were created to be seen by everyone on festive occasions, in public situations, just like the songs of rhapsodes were meant to be heard by everybody. At the top of the *pithos*, on its neck and so in a position of prominence, is depicted the wooden horse. This may well be the most beautiful image in the entire history of art. There are all the necessary elements: it is a large, impressive wooden horse that contains many armed men, and seven Achaean warriors with weapons, who appear in seven windows on the horse's body and neck. They let the weapons dangle from the windows above: we might say that the warriors are showing their weapons, a large helmet, a shield, and two swords ready to be drawn from their leather sheaths. They take pride in them, but this is also an authentic gesture: a simple and safe action before the last battle. Everything has been carefully prepared. This is what will resolve the war.<sup>9</sup>

As we can see, the wheels are applied to the horse's legs, a notable detail.<sup>10</sup> This element suggests the function, thus allowing us to identify the *equus Troianus* and the myth of *Ilioupersis*.<sup>11</sup> The horse must enter the city. Indeed, at this point of the story, the horse is already in the citadel: above and around, there are warriors in action.<sup>12</sup>

- 9 As we can see in Hom., *Od.* 492–5, the horse is essential from the point of view of the story, nothing else is needed. From here the *persis* begins, with this special space reserved for the construction of the wooden horse. The will is that of Athena. The objectives, the idea, the project are the *metis* of the goddess. The builder is Epeios, who is at work by divine inspiration. See de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary*, 215: “Odysseus’ description of the song which he requests resembles an epic proem ... the Wooden Horse will lead to the fall of Troy.” Of course, the famous theme of the song is “ἵππου κόσμον ... / δουρατέου” (*Od.* 8.492–93).
- 10 On the wheels of the horse, which are part of Epeios’ project, cf. Quintus Smyrnaeus 12.424–27, Triphiodorus 100. For a different perspective, with the wheels applied by the Trojans, cf. Verg., *Aen.* 2.235–36. See Cadario, “Il cavallo di Troia,” 224: “Alla presenza di ruote potrebbe forse alludere già il verbo usato da Demodoco nell’*Odisea* (8.504, ἐρύσαντο) per descrivere gli spostamenti del Cavallo all’interno della città.”
- 11 The construction of the horse is widely narrated in the *Posthomerica* of Quintus Smyrnaeus (12.104–56) and in Triphiodorus’ *Halosis Iliou* (62–102). See Campbell, *A Commentary on Quintus Smyrnaeus*, 46–48, Miguélez-Cavero, *Triphiodorus: The Sack of Troy*, 156–66.
- 12 Hom., *Od.* 514–15, “ἦειδεν δ’ ὡς ἄστῃ διέπραθον νῆες Ἀχαιῶν / ἰππόθεν ἐκχόμενοι, κοῖλον λόχον ἐκπρολιπόντες.” It is the beginning of the action of *persis*, a new section of the song (ἦειδεν).

Immediately below the top representation on the neck of the vase, there are three bands divided into metopes, the tableaux of the story, and we immediately move on to the final events of the *persis*. The narrative gap, the logical leap, is impressive: the beginning and the end are in sequence, in contact. We will see what this means straight away.<sup>13</sup>

The wooden horse immediately declares the traditional tale of the fall of Troy. But what we see below is not the hard fighting nor the heroic scenes of the conquest that we would expect. Ultimately, this is not the Homeric αἰνότατον πόλεμον, “the most terrible battle” mentioned in Demodocus’ song (Hom. *Od.* 8.519). At the end of his *Ilioupersis*, the formidable singer of Scheria narrates the deeds of Odysseus amid the battle for the city, in Deiphobus’ home.<sup>14</sup> Demodocus’ song presents the signs of an *aristeia*: it recounts the final fight against the last defender, against the last husband of Helen, who thus also inherits the guilt of Paris and the role of the last target of the revenge of the Achaeans.

On the other hand, the images in relief on the large body of the vase are the scariest, most horrifying ones. Their sight is unbearable, no one would want to see scenes like these, neither the losers nor the winners. Even the old Argives say so at the return of Agamemnon’s army, two centuries later in a tragedy by Aeschylus: it is the refusal of the *persis*, and so it even becomes impossible to think of the heroic attribute πολυπόροθης, “destroyer of cities,” because of its meaning, because of what we see on this vase with our eyes:

μήτ’ εἶην πολυπόροθης  
μήτ’ οὖν αὐτὸς ἀλοῦς ὑπ’ ἄλ-  
λων βίον κατίδοιμι.

13 Anderson, *Fall of Troy*, 182: “The upper panel narrates an early stage of the attack, while the lower group follows with later chapters of the same story. This progression may be described with more precision as preparation and execution, the ruse of the horse above forming a prelude to the murder and enslavement below.”

14 Hom., *Od.* 8.517 “προτὶ δώματα Δηϊφόβοιο.” Cf. Quintus Smyrnaeus 13.355 “Δηϊφοβὸν κατέπεφνε,” Triph. 627 “Δηϊφοβὸν κατέμαρψε.” See Verg., *Aen.* 6.494–97 “Atque hic Priamidem laniatum corpore toto / Deiphobum videt et lacerum crudeliter ora, / ora manusque ambas, populataque tempora raptis / auribus et truncas inhoneste vulnere naris.” On the death of Deiphobus see Renker, *A Commentary on Quintus of Smyrna*, 226–27.

may I neither be a sacker of cities,  
nor myself be captured and see  
my life subjected to another.<sup>15</sup>

Metope after metope, in a repetitive and interminable sequence, we see an Achaean warrior with a sword. He is not facing an equally strong and well-armed opponent, another warrior in a memorable battle that will be told in epic songs forever and depicted on so many vases: in front of each Achaean warrior stands a woman with a child. Desperate gestures, pleas, cries, useless tears against the power of weapons, against the enemy's violence. It is absurd and embarrassing; there is simply something wrong with the image. This is not a heroic myth. According to the rules of warfare, the rigid and heroic rules of war, fights can only happen between warriors and their equals. The war narrative is straightforward, even banal, but this is the only one still acceptable for those who believe in illusions and those who believe in mystifications. Here is an example. A duel is not possible between a young and strong fighter and a man who has become too old to bear arms.<sup>16</sup> It would be a shame; there could be no glory; it would be an ambiguous, degenerate *kleos*. The epic codes make it clear. So surely a duel between a warrior in his splendid armor on one side and a helpless woman and child on the other is inconceivable. By definition, women and children have nothing to do with war. They know nothing about war and weapons.<sup>17</sup> A helmet and a child do not go together; weapons are always awful.

15 Aeschyl., *Ag.* 472–74; translation by Alan H. Sommerstein. On the epic epithet *πτολίπορθος* and its metonymic meaning see Camerotto, *Troia brucia*, 21–26.

16 On the epic values and infamy of the duel between Neoptolemus and Priamus, see Tanozzi, “L'antiduello,” 430–37.

17 Being a paradigm of weakness and terror, women and children incarnate the opposite of the qualities that make a good warrior; Hom., *Il.* 2.289–90: “ὡς τε γὰρ ἢ παῖδες νεαροὶ χῆραί τε γυναῖκες / ἀλλήλοισιν ὀδύρονται οἶκον δὲ νέεσθαι,” 7.235–36: “μή τί μεν ἤτε παιδὸς ἀφαιρουὸν περιήτιζε / ἢ γυναικός, ἢ οὐκ οἶδεν πολεμήτριά ἔργα.” The formula “πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει” (*Il.* 6.492, 20.137) is famous, also for its parodic re-uses in the comedy. See Graf, “Women, War, and Warlike Divinities,” 245: “πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει,” is the counsel Hector gives to Andromache – Lysistrata will repeat it, in quite another vein; γυνή στρατηγεῖ and γυνή στρατοπεδεύεται are proverbs used ἐπὶ τῶν παραδόξων. Women did not fight.” Loman, “No Woman No War,” Rousseau, “War, Speech, and the Bow”; Farioli, “Le dita tagliate delle donne greche,” 157s. The motif of children unaware of war will tragically return at the beginning of the *persis* in Quintus Smyrnaeus 13.123: “νηπιάρχους τῶν οὐ πω ἐπίστατο κήδεα θυμός.” Women and children are symbols of peace, they are the opposite of war: see

This is the *persis*: no rules or respect for gods or men exist. Before our eyes, we see the formidable deeds of the Achaeans. On the body of the vase, in a position of prominence, maybe even too prominent, is the violence against women, the slaughter of infants, and warfare of the most ferocious, ruthless, and unacceptable kind. We could even say that it is repugnant. A sword pierces a child in the arms of his mother; another one is caught between his mother and the warrior, who impales him. His blood flows like a river, and it can be touched on the relief of the terracotta. Another child in a lower metope is smashed on the ground: this is the same way Astyanax is killed, it seems to become a pattern<sup>18</sup> for prefigurations.<sup>19</sup>

Bigai, "Nausicaa e lo straniero," 146, and Consoloni, "Le donne di Troia: fondamenta della città in pace," 67–69.

- 18 Cf. Anderson, *The Fall of Troy*, 188; Morris, "The Sacrifice of Astyanax: Near Eastern Contributions to the Siege of Troy." The image of the killing of Astyanax can be represented among the panels of the Pithos of Mykonos (met. 17) according to the *Ilias Parva*, where it is Neoptolemus that kills the boy (*Ilias Parv.* fr. 21.3–5): "παῖδα δ' ἔλawn ἐκ κόλπου ἐνπλοκάμοιο τιθήνης / ῥίψε ποδὸς τεταγῶν ἀπὸ πύργου, τὸν δὲ πεσόντα / ἔλλαβε πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή." Of course, in the collective massacre, this motif does not need to be further specified and can have many applications. Cf. Andromache's premonitory image in *Il.* 24.734–36: "ἦ τις Ἀχαιῶν / ῥίψει χειρὸς ἔλawn ἀπὸ πύργου λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον / χωόμενος." In the iconography, Astyanax's body can become a weapon wielded in the scene of Priam's killing, a superimposition of two scenes of the *persis*. When Odysseus is the protagonist, the δίσκημα recalls his launch during the Phaeacians games in the *Odyssey* (8.183–96). We find the juxtaposition of the images of the competition with that of the *persis* in Euripides, as a contamination of incongruent codes.

- 19 This image is anticipated by Priamus in the definition of the *persis* scenes in *Il.* 22.63s: "καὶ νῆπια τέκνα / βαλλόμενα προτὶ γαίῃ ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτήτι." Similarly, in the image suggested by the epic word κυβιστήσαντα (Triph. 644), we find the traces of happy categories of party, dance, and sport (*Il.* 18.605, *Od.* 4.18), but above all there is the sign of their distortion, and so of mockery and death (*Il.* 16.745, 16.749, 16.750, 21.354). The image of Astyanax's killing returns in Arctinus's *Ilioupersis*, Procl. *Chrest.* p. 92, 268 Severyns = *Il. Exc. arg.* p. 89, 20 B: "καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς Ἀστυνάκτα ἀνελότος." Cf. Stesichorus (fr. 107 Davies-Finglass), according to schol. Eur. *Andr.* 10: "Στησίχορον μὲν γὰρ ἰστορεῖν ὅτι τεθνήκοι καὶ τὸν τὴν Πέρσιδα συντεταχότα κυκλικὸν ποιητὴν ὅτι καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους ῥιφθεῖη· ᾧ ἠκολουθηκέναι Εὐριπίδην." Cf. Paus. 10.25.9 = *Il. Parv.* fr. 21 (11) B: "γέγραπται μὲν Ἀνδρομάχη, καὶ ὁ παῖς οἱ προσέστηκεν ἔλόμενος τοῦ μαστοῦ –τούτῳ Δέσχεως ῥιφθέντι ἀπὸ τοῦ πύργου συμβῆναι λέγει τὴν τελευτήν· οὐ μὴν ὑπὸ δόγματός γε Ἑλλήνων, ἀλλ' ἰδίᾳ Νεοπτόλεμον αὐτόχειρα ἐθελήσει γενέσθαι."

All the other scenes are similar to these; they are variations on a theme.<sup>20</sup>

Among the panels of the first higher band, we perhaps see Helen appearing in front of Menelaus – an educated guess. Helen would be among the victims, among the women and the prisoners of war.<sup>21</sup> Judging by their gestures, this is probably the depiction of the first attempt at reconciliation between husband and wife. There is also a fallen warrior. It could be Deiphobus, as a paradigm or metonymy of the Trojan defenders: the symbol of the last, vain defense.<sup>22</sup> But he could also stand as a just victim of the revenge of the Achaeans and Menelaus. A symbolic function that is useful to everyone.<sup>23</sup> But their names do not matter; identifications are helpful for the story but not essential. These images are valid for the entire city, these are necessarily unidentified images of the collective massacre and horror. As we well know, this is the war code of Agamemnon, the Achaeans' commander-in-chief (Hom., *Il.* 6.57–60):

τῶν μή τις ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον  
 χεῖράς θ' ἡμετέρας, μηδ' ὄν τινα γαστέρι μήτηρ  
 κούρον ἔόντα φέροι, μηδ' ὄς φύγοι, ἀλλ' ἅμα πάντες  
 Ἴλιου ἔξαπολοίατ' ἀκήδεστοι καὶ ἄφαντοι.

Of them let not one escape sheer destruction and our hands, not even the boy whom his mother carries in her womb; let not even him escape, but let all perish together from Ilios, unmourned and unseen.<sup>24</sup>

20 Cf. Quintus Smyrnaeus 13.100–23, Triph. 547–58. See Camerotto, *Ilioupersis: La caduta di Troia in quattro atti*, 109–13.

21 On the representation of Helen in the *Ilioupersis* see Brillante, “Elena nella notte della presa di Troia,” 109–10.

22 It is less probable that this might be Echion, the first Achaean warrior to die falling from the Trojan horse, forgetting to use a rope; his death somehow recalls that of Elpenor.

23 Anderson, *Fall of Troy*, 186: “But the massacre on the pithos need not be limited to a single family, and the multiplication of scenes may be read as an attempt to represent all the women and children of the city. Like the Achaians of epic poetry, the warriors on the pithos are determined to eradicate the entire race of Trojans.”

24 Translation by A. T. Murray and William F. Wyatt. These are the words that Agamemnon addresses to Menelaus in battle. They serve as a rule of conduct, this is the ideology of war. See Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 161: “the phrase, not elsewhere, has a threateningly legalistic ring”; Graziosi-Haubold, *Homer: Iliad, Book 6*, 90: “Both ancient and modern readers have expressed shock at his harshness, and at the poet’s apparent endorsement of it.” And then see Camerotto, “I giorni del sangue,” 65–67.



Fig. 1 – Ilioupersis, Relief Pithos from Mykonos, Detail  
(Archaeological Museum Mykonos, inv. 2240)

When the story is a *persis*, then one can observe the impotence of the women and the mothers whose children are being massacred in their arms, in front of their eyes; there is desperation and blood, and slavery. It is the time of the *doulion emar* (see Figure 1).

Why these images? Why does the artist choose to depict precisely these scenes, these images, and these motifs to narrate the *persis*? Such questions arise almost automatically. Even if these images were made for the public of the Hellenes, the context cannot be festive. It may be impressive, but it is not celebratory. There is nothing heroic about raping a woman; there is nothing great about killing a child, about massacring children without mercy before the eyes of their mothers. This cannot be the celebration of the winners. Why, then, do the Greeks of Homer's time represent and want to see the slaughter of infants, something that Euripides will call an ignominy, a shame for Hellas?<sup>25</sup>

The vase is certainly not a heroic celebration of victory over enemies. There is no sign of triumph. After the spectacular scene of the horse, we see the Achaeans immediately below: not even a single duel between heroes can be seen, and this is impressive since they are so frequent in many later representations of ceramics. The duel with the two warriors in arms facing each other becomes one of the most popular epic and iconographic themes. The structure is the same as that of the duel, but the variation is problematic, creating embarrassing and certainly terrible results. With the strength of their bodies, with the violence of their gestures, with the great weapons in the foreground, the Achaean heroes face the weakest, the helpless, in a literal sense. Women and children cannot be the protagonists of a duel. This is a massacre, but there exists a more precise term: it is genocide because the goal is the death of those who could become the

25 Cf. Eur., *Tro.* 1190s: "Τὸν παῖδα τόνδ' ἔκτειναν Ἀργεῖοι ποτε / δέισαντες; αἰσχρὸν τοῦπῖγραμμά γ' Ἑλλάδι." Thus, the killing of Astyanax becomes the paradigm of cruelty and the end of civilization: Eur., *Tro.* 764s: "ὦ βάρβαρ' ἐξευρόντες Ἑλληνες κακά, / τί τόνδε παῖδα κτείνετ' οὐδὲν αἴτιον." The reasons are aberrant, this is the legitimacy of the extermination of the lineage, to avoid any possibilities of rebirth (Eur., *Tro.* 1160s: "μὴ Τροίαν ποτέ / πεσοῦσαν ὀρθώσειεν;"), any possible return: Eur., *Hec.* 1138s (Polimestor about the killing of Polydorus): "ἔδεισα μὴ σοι πολέμιος λειφθεῖς ὁ παῖς / Τροίαν ἀθροίσῃ καὶ ξυνοικίῃ πάλιν." Cf. this series of barbaric and monstrous comparisons, Sen., *Tro.* 1104–109: "Quis Colchus hoc, quis sedis incertae Scytha / commisit, aut quae Caspium tangens mare / gens iuris experts ausa? non Busiridis / puerilis aras sanguis aspersit ferri, / nec parva gregibus membra Diomedes suis / epulanda posuit."

future of the city.<sup>26</sup> So, if heroic values reside in face-to-face fighting against an equally strong opponent, then here we have the complete opposite.<sup>27</sup> Narrating the *persis*, then, is precisely narrating the violence. When the massacre of innocents becomes the dominant motif, the one that occupies the whole narrative, the one that is put in greatest prominence in the broader space of the scene of the *pithos*, then there can be no misunderstandings, no ambiguities. The artist's goal, the desired effect, is in what we see with our eyes.

The tale of *Ilioupersis* is the testimony of the true nature of war, not of the memorable actions of heroes. Their glory is cursed, as we well know. Telling the *persis* shows the desperation in the eyes of women, their gestures, the tremendous emotions, the words, and the cries of their voices.<sup>28</sup>

We can see in these images the end of Troy through the eyes of Priamus, Hecabe, and Andromache: before our eyes, we see death, devastation, fire, pain, and blood. The representations, images, and songs become collective consciousness, essential because of this effect.

There are at least two perspectives. It is good to show everything: works of art have the necessary detachment and *enargeia*. This is the goal of the artist of this vase. We must have the courage to show the tragedy on stage before the people. As we know, this is also the aim and effect of Demodocus' song.

It is good to see, understand, and remember. The evil of war must be seen. We must never forget what war means. This becomes a warning shared by everyone, winners and losers. The ruin of

26 The goal of the winners is clear and tremendous: Hom., *Il.* 9.592–94 “κῆδε’, ὅσ’ ἀνθρώποισι πέλει τῶν ἄστυ ἀλώη· / ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει, / τέκνα δέ τ’ ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναῖκας.” See Camerotto, *Troia brucia*, 67: “Si uccidono tutti i maschi adulti, quelli che hanno il ruolo di difensori. Diventano il nemico demonizzato su cui inferire nella maniera più spaventosa, più oltraggiosa. Ma al contempo, se non prima ancora, entra in opera il massacro delle vittime innocenti, inermi. Si uccidono i vecchi, che sono la coscienza e la testimonianza della storia della città. Si ammazzano i bambini, anche quelli nel ventre delle madri, perché sono la speranza delle generazioni future e della rinascita.”

27 For the meaning, the rules of duel and confrontation according to the codes of heroic epic, see Camerotto, “Il duello e l’agone,” 9–12, and now Tanozzi, “L’antiduello,” 427–30.

28 On women’s crying and its value as testimony see Leandro, “Piangere Troia,” 39: “È l’esito di una volontà programmatica di sterminio, oltre che un gesto simbolicamente mostruoso; non riguarda solo la resa della città, ma la rimozione totale della sua memoria collettiva.” The women see and mourn the horror of the fall of Troy.

*persis* affects everybody. The story of *Ilioupersis*, with its words and images, could make us understand that the horror of war is always present.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Michael J. *The Fall of Troy in Early Greek Poetry and Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Avlamis, Pavlos. "Contextualizing Quintus: The Fall of Troy and the Cultural Uses of the Paradoxical Cityscape in *Posthomerica* 13." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 149 (2019): 153–214.
- Barbaresco, Katia. "La terra e il sangue (secondo Quinto Smirneo)." *Lexis* 37 (2019): 323–39.
- Bigai, Silvia. "Nausicaa e lo straniero: Civiltà, accoglienza, ospitalità." In *Il grido di Andromaca: Voci di donne contro la guerra*, edited by Alberto Camerotto, Katia Barbaresco, and Valeria Melis, 141–52. Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani Editore, 2022.
- Brillante, Carlo. "Elena nella notte della presa di Troia: Dall'*Ilioupersis* all'*Eneide*." *Aevum Antiquum* 9 (2009): 109–39.
- Cadario, Matteo. "Il cavallo di Troia aveva le ruote? Riflessioni su tradizione letteraria e iconografica." In *Philoxenia: Viaggi e viaggiatori nella Grecia di ieri e di oggi*, edited by Andrea Capra, Stefano Martinelli Tempesta, and Cecilia Nobili, 223–26. Milan: Mimesis, 2020.
- Camerotto, Alberto. "Il duello e l'agone: Le regole della violenza nell'epica eroica." *Nikephoros* 20 (2007): 9–32.
- . "I giorni del sangue: Immagini e codici eroici della violenza per la *Ilioupersis*." *L'Immagine Riflessa* 21 (2012): 65–94.
- . "Parrhesia: Una parola per i 'Classici contro.'" *Atene e Roma* 6 (2012): 51–63.
- . "Utopici Feaci, ovvero a che cosa servono le utopie (secondo Omero)." In *Utopia (Europa): Ovvero del diventare cittadini europei*, edited by Alberto Camerotto and Filippomaria Pontani, 13–34. Milan: Mimesis, 2019.
- . *Troia brucia: Come e perché raccontare l'Ilioupersis*. Milan: Mimesis, 2022.
- . *Ilioupersis: La caduta di Troia in quattro atti, con un prologo, un epilogo e qualche nota di commento (sulle tracce epiche di Trifiodoro)*. Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani Editore, 2023.
- Campbell, Malcolm. *A Commentary on Quintus Smyrnaeus Posthomerica XII*. Leiden: Brill, 1981.

- Consoloni, Ludovica. "Le donne di Troia: Fondamenta della città in pace, frammenti della città distrutta." In *Il grido di Andromaca: Voci di donne contro la guerra*, edited by Alberto Camerotto, Katia Barbaresco, and Valeria Melis, 65–78. Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani Editore, 2022.
- de Jong, Irene J. F. *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Edwards, Mark W. *The Iliad: A Commentary 5; Books 17–20*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Ervin, Miriam. "A Relief Pithos from Mykonos." *Archaiologikon Deltion* 18 (1963): 37–75.
- . "Notes on Relief Pithoi of the Tenian-Boiotian Group." *American Journal of Archaeology* 80, no. 1 (1976): 19–41.
- Farioli, Marcella. "Le dita tagliate delle donne greche: Femminile, guerra e cittadinanza." In *Uomini contro: Tra l'Iliade e la grande guerra*, edited by Alberto Camerotto, Marco Fucecchi, and Giorgio Ieranò, 157–74. Milan: Mimesis, 2017.
- Graf, F. "Women, War, and Warlike Divinities." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 55 (1984): 245–54.
- Graziosi, Barbara, and Johannes Haubold. *Homer: Iliad, Book 6*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Kirk, Geoffrey S. *The Iliad: A Commentary 2; Books 5–8*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Lämmer, Manfred. "La cosiddetta 'pace olimpica' nell'antichità greca." In *Lo sport in Grecia*, edited by Paola Angeli Bernardini, 119–52. Rome: Editori Laterza, 1988.
- Leandro, Federica. "Piangere Troia: Attraverso le lacrime delle donne." In *Il grido di Andromaca: Voci di donne contro la guerra*, edited by Alberto Camerotto, Katia Barbaresco, and Valeria Melis, 39–52. Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani Editore, 2022.
- Loman, Pasi. "No Woman No War: Women's Participation in Ancient Greek Warfare." *Greece & Rome* 51, no. 1 (2004): 34–54.
- Miguélez-Cavero, Laura. *Triphiodorus: The Sack of Troy; A General Study and a Commentary*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Morris, Sarah P. "The Sacrifice of Astyanax: Near Eastern Contributions to the Siege of Troy." In *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, edited by Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris, 221–45. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Renker, Stephan. *A Commentary on Quintus of Smyrna, Posthomerica 13*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2020.
- Rousseau, Philippe. "War, Speech, and the Bow Are Not Women's Business." In *Women & War in Antiquity*, edited by Jacqueline

- Fabre-Serris and Alison Keith, 15–33. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.
- Scheijnen, Tine. *Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica: A Study of Heroic Characterization and Heroism*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Tanozzi, Federico. “L’antiduello, ovvero della morte di Priamo.” *Lexis* 41 (2023): 423–52.

## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the Italian project on “Ilioupersis: Epic Archetypes,” which delves into the multifaceted concept of war violence across cultures and history, exploring its representation in various disciplines like literature, art, and cinema. Through seminars, conferences, and public actions, the project aims to enhance civil consciousness and collective memory, particularly focusing on the fall of Troy as a universal symbol of violence and its consequences. With a strong emphasis on engaging younger scholars and involving communities, the project seeks to foster a shared historical and cultural awareness around war violence themes. Moreover, it explores the transformative power of sport as a symbol of peace and cooperation, drawing parallels between ancient athletic ideals and contemporary societal values. Collaborations with institutions like UNESCO aim to extend these discussions to conflict-affected areas, promoting peace-building efforts through cultural understanding and dialogue. Ultimately, the project advocates for a civilization that values peace, understanding, and cooperation over violence and conflict.

KEYWORDS: Troy, *Iliad*, epic, archetypes, Quintus of Smyrna, war

## Troja gori: Epski arhetipi

### IZVLEČEK

Članek obravnava italijanski projekt "Ilioupersis: Epski arhetipi," ki raziskuje večplastni koncept vojnega nasilja v različnih kulturah v zgodovini ter raziskuje njegovo predstavitev v različnih sferah umetnosti, kot so literatura, likovna umetnost in film. S seminarji, konferencami in javnimi nastopi želi projekt okrepiti državljansko zavest in kolektivni spomin, zlasti s poudarkom na padcu Troje kot univerzalnem simbolu nasilja in njegovih posledic. Z velikim poudarkom na vključevanju mlajših raziskovalcev in vključevanju skupnosti si projekt prizadeva spodbujati skupno zgodovinsko in kulturno zavest o temah vojnega nasilja. Poleg tega raziskuje transformativno moč športa kot simbola miru in sodelovanja ter išče vzporednice med antičnimi športnimi ideali in sodobnimi družbenimi vrednotami. Cilj sodelovanja z ustanovami, kot je UNESCO, je razširiti te razprave na območja, ki so jih prizadeli konflikti, ter s kulturnim razumevanjem in dialogom spodbujati prizadevanja za gradnjo miru. Končno se projekt zavzema za civilizacijo, ki med vrednote postavlja mir, razumevanje in sodelovanje namesto nasilja in konfliktov.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Troja, *Iliada*, epika, arhetipi, Kvint iz Smirne, vojna

OD L...  
mogoln...

1of. 7. c. 1. Sam. 1. a. 2. a. 3. a. 4. a. 5. a. 6. a. 7. a. 8. a. 9. a. 10. a. 11. a. 12. a. 13. a. 14. a. 15. a. 16. a. 17. a. 18. a. 19. a. 20. a. 21. a. 22. a. 23. a. 24. a. 25. a. 26. a. 27. a. 28. a. 29. a. 30. a. 31. a. 32. a. 33. a. 34. a. 35. a. 36. a. 37. a. 38. a. 39. a. 40. a. 41. a. 42. a. 43. a. 44. a. 45. a. 46. a. 47. a. 48. a. 49. a. 50. a. 51. a. 52. a. 53. a. 54. a. 55. a. 56. a. 57. a. 58. a. 59. a. 60. a. 61. a. 62. a. 63. a. 64. a. 65. a. 66. a. 67. a. 68. a. 69. a. 70. a. 71. a. 72. a. 73. a. 74. a. 75. a. 76. a. 77. a. 78. a. 79. a. 80. a. 81. a. 82. a. 83. a. 84. a. 85. a. 86. a. 87. a. 88. a. 89. a. 90. a. 91. a. 92. a. 93. a. 94. a. 95. a. 96. a. 97. a. 98. a. 99. a. 100. a.

Od lashy ali laganja.

Limeh,

Gen. 3. a. 37. c. 38. a. 4. a. 2. Reg. 5. c. 25. a. 26. a. 27. a. 28. a. 29. a. 30. a. 31. a. 32. a. 33. a. 34. a. 35. a. 36. a. 37. a. 38. a. 39. a. 40. a. 41. a. 42. a. 43. a. 44. a. 45. a. 46. a. 47. a. 48. a. 49. a. 50. a. 51. a. 52. a. 53. a. 54. a. 55. a. 56. a. 57. a. 58. a. 59. a. 60. a. 61. a. 62. a. 63. a. 64. a. 65. a. 66. a. 67. a. 68. a. 69. a. 70. a. 71. a. 72. a. 73. a. 74. a. 75. a. 76. a. 77. a. 78. a. 79. a. 80. a. 81. a. 82. a. 83. a. 84. a. 85. a. 86. a. 87. a. 88. a. 89. a. 90. a. 91. a. 92. a. 93. a. 94. a. 95. a. 96. a. 97. a. 98. a. 99. a. 100. a.

Lazarus, Marie inu Marte brat, od smerti obuden Joan 11. c. 1. c. 2. c. 3. c. 4. c. 5. c. 6. c. 7. c. 8. c. 9. c. 10. c. 11. c. 12. c. 13. c. 14. c. 15. c. 16. c. 17. c. 18. c. 19. c. 20. c. 21. c. 22. c. 23. c. 24. c. 25. c. 26. c. 27. c. 28. c. 29. c. 30. c. 31. c. 32. c. 33. c. 34. c. 35. c. 36. c. 37. c. 38. c. 39. c. 40. c. 41. c. 42. c. 43. c. 44. c. 45. c. 46. c. 47. c. 48. c. 49. c. 50. c. 51. c. 52. c. 53. c. 54. c. 55. c. 56. c. 57. c. 58. c. 59. c. 60. c. 61. c. 62. c. 63. c. 64. c. 65. c. 66. c. 67. c. 68. c. 69. c. 70. c. 71. c. 72. c. 73. c. 74. c. 75. c. 76. c. 77. c. 78. c. 79. c. 80. c. 81. c. 82. c. 83. c. 84. c. 85. c. 86. c. 87. c. 88. c. 89. c. 90. c. 91. c. 92. c. 93. c. 94. c. 95. c. 96. c. 97. c. 98. c. 99. c. 100. c.

Lea je bila Jacobu Oz-baku, saroz-bent, Gen: 29. b. 1. c. 2. c. 3. c. 4. c. 5. c. 6. c. 7. c. 8. c. 9. c. 10. c. 11. c. 12. c. 13. c. 14. c. 15. c. 16. c. 17. c. 18. c. 19. c. 20. c. 21. c. 22. c. 23. c. 24. c. 25. c. 26. c. 27. c. 28. c. 29. c. 30. c. 31. c. 32. c. 33. c. 34. c. 35. c. 36. c. 37. c. 38. c. 39. c. 40. c. 41. c. 42. c. 43. c. 44. c. 45. c. 46. c. 47. c. 48. c. 49. c. 50. c. 51. c. 52. c. 53. c. 54. c. 55. c. 56. c. 57. c. 58. c. 59. c. 60. c. 61. c. 62. c. 63. c. 64. c. 65. c. 66. c. 67. c. 68. c. 69. c. 70. c. 71. c. 72. c. 73. c. 74. c. 75. c. 76. c. 77. c. 78. c. 79. c. 80. c. 81. c. 82. c. 83. c. 84. c. 85. c. 86. c. 87. c. 88. c. 89. c. 90. c. 91. c. 92. c. 93. c. 94. c. 95. c. 96. c. 97. c. 98. c. 99. c. 100. c.

Od lebna teh vernih.

KOKV IE ZHLOVEZHKI

leben ena kratka, residezha, neoba

stojezha in usanikerna rezh.

Od lenobe ali vragljivosti.

Od Levi inu Levitou.

Kry fenema prelitri, Deut. 27. b. 1. Sam. 9. b. 29. a. 9. a. 10. a. 11. a. 12. a. 13. a. 14. a. 15. a. 16. a. 17. a. 18. a. 19. a. 20. a. 21. a. 22. a. 23. a. 24. a. 25. a. 26. a. 27. a. 28. a. 29. a. 30. a. 31. a. 32. a. 33. a. 34. a. 35. a. 36. a. 37. a. 38. a. 39. a. 40. a. 41. a. 42. a. 43. a. 44. a. 45. a. 46. a. 47. a. 48. a. 49. a. 50. a. 51. a. 52. a. 53. a. 54. a. 55. a. 56. a. 57. a. 58. a. 59. a. 60. a. 61. a. 62. a. 63. a. 64. a. 65. a. 66. a. 67. a. 68. a. 69. a. 70. a. 71. a. 72. a. 73. a. 74. a. 75. a. 76. a. 77. a. 78. a. 79. a. 80. a. 81. a. 82. a. 83. a. 84. a. 85. a. 86. a. 87. a. 88. a. 89. a. 90. a. 91. a. 92. a. 93. a. 94. a. 95. a. 96. a. 97. a. 98. a. 99. a. 100. a.

*R...*



mi

Franklin







# Neil Gaiman's Use of Antiquity in Television Series: *American Gods* and *Calliope*

Elżbieta Olechowska  
and Marta Pszczolińska\*

By nature and physical necessity, audiovisual series are the result of collective efforts, and yet some bear an unmistakable imprint of a single author, as exemplified by two recent mesmerizing shows, Starz's 2017–2021 prematurely canceled *American Gods* and Netflix's *The Sandman* launched in 2022 and still ongoing. The history of the development and production of the two shows illustrates the precarious nature of endeavors in the entertainment industry affected by financial pressures, ratings, labor disputes, and artistic or creative differences. Both series originated from Neil Gaiman's literary successes of some decades ago: the graphic novel *The Sandman*, published in seventy-five installments by DC Comics from 1989 to 1996, and the 2001 "regular" novel *American Gods*, which in 2002 won Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novel, as well as Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel.<sup>1</sup>

Even though *The Sandman*'s publication predates *American Gods*, its rebirth as an audiovisual series was aired after the adaptation of the 2001 fantasy novel completed its run on Starz. *The Sandman* spent decades in development hell as a film project, and finally, in 2019, emerged as a Netflix series, with season one filmed in 2020–2021 and streamed in 2022. In 2011, *American Gods* was initially considered for adaptation by HBO; when the giant pay television network abandoned the project in 2014, it was taken over by Starz and premiered in 2017. The show was canceled mainly because of dwindling ratings after three seasons in 2021, frustrating Gaiman's plans to run it for two more. The

\* Faculty of "Artes Liberales," University of Warsaw; Nowy Świat 69, 00-046 Warsaw, [elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com](mailto:elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com), [m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl](mailto:m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl).

1 See the websites of Hugo, Nebula, and Locus awards for the year 2002.

Covid-19 pandemic caused a year and a half break between season 2 and 3 and compared to season 1, the ratings fell by 65%.<sup>2</sup>

The announced but delayed continuation of Netflix's *The Sandman* will not air before early 2025. Still, the already circulating leaks indicate the participation of more Greek mythological figures, in addition to Oneiros and Calliope, also their son Orpheus, his wife Eurydice, Persephone, the goddess of the Underworld, and at least two Maenads. Gaiman mentions his childhood fascination with Norse gods in his "Reflections on Myths,"<sup>3</sup> which found its obvious development in his 2017 book entirely dedicated to Norse mythology, which was not only present in *American Gods* but is expected to work its magic in *The Sandman* as well through the presence of Odin, Thor, and Loki.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, nothing indicates the potential appearance of an ancient historical figure from the 30th installment of *The Sandman*, entitled *August* and featuring C. Iulius Caesar Octavianus Augustus and Lycius, an unusual actor of very short stature but *vocis immensae* mentioned by Suetonius in *Divi Augusti vita* 43.3.<sup>5</sup> The audiovisual *Sandman* seems to limit the classical inspirations to mythology, like Starz's *American Gods*, where the Herodotean leitmotif, "refrain from calling him fortunate before he dies; call him lucky," which is important in the novel,<sup>6</sup> is abandoned.

### *American Gods*

In keeping with the chronology of audiovisual adaptations of the two books, one might begin reflecting on Gaiman's use of antiquity with *American Gods*,<sup>7</sup> the show that first reached the small screen.

2 See Lesley Goldberg, "American Gods Cancelled at Starz," *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 29 (2021), available online.

3 See "Reflections on Myth (with Digressions into Gardening, Comics and Fairy Tales)," *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* 31 (Winter 1999): 75.

4 See, for instance, "The Sandman Season 2: Here's what we know so far about cast, release date, streaming platform and more," *India Times* (October 31, 2023), available online. For extensive speculations on the content and casting of *The Sandman*'s continuation, see McMillan, Malcolm. "The Sandman season 2 – everything we know so far," *Tom's Guide* (October 27, 2023), available online.

5 See Anise K. Strong's excellent discussion of *August* in *A Dream of Augustus*, 173–82.

6 Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.32.7: "But refrain from calling him fortunate before he dies; call him lucky." Translated by Alfred Denis Godley.

7 See the entry on the audiovisual series in *Chronological Table* and a discussion in ch. 5 in Olechowska, 'This is the Song That Never Ends' [forthcoming].

The author himself spoke of the impact of Herodotus' *Histories* on the novel in an often-quoted interview given after the publication of *American Gods* in 2001, where he explained how the Greek author provided the idea for the book:

[In the *Histories*,] you had a world in which the gods were written about and treated as simply part of the world. And I thought wouldn't it be a really cool thing to try and put that into the here and now? If people did come over with their gods, what are their gods doing, *how* are their gods doing? That's really where the whole thing sprang from.

He said that right after presenting his view on creative license and the use of research by fiction writers:

I do not see why every single weapon in the arsenal of the imagination can't be mine. The lovely thing about being an autodidact (as all writers to some extent are, is you learn very quickly how to teach yourself cool stuff, learn cool stuff, read cool stuff, and get the meat or something out of it. And give the impression that you know so much more about it than you really do).<sup>8</sup>

Shadow Moon, the endearingly naive and honorable protagonist of *American Gods*, reads the *Histories* during his stay in prison, strongly recommended to him by his non-random cellmate, Low Key Lyesmith (Loki). Herodotus is mentioned eleven times in the novel; the maxim "call no man happy until he is dead," quoted by Herodotus allegedly according to Solon's story of his encounter with Croesus, returns three times as a misleading leitmotif. Debbie Felton discussed Gaiman's use of the maxim, pointing out that the adjectives Herodotus uses, ὄλβιος and εὐτυχής, may not only mean "happy" and "fortunate" but "blessed [by the gods]" and "lucky." Low Key says to Shadow at Mr. Wednesday's funeral, implying that a reversal of fortune affects gods as inevitably as men: "Call no man happy, huh, kid?"<sup>9</sup> This is part of the deception or misdirection targeting not only Shadow but also the reader and designed to hide Odin's and Loki's intricate scheme of manipulating Shadow into voluntarily risking his death

8 Dornemann and Everding, "Dreaming *American Gods*," available online. For Gaiman's view on myths, see for instance, Gaiman, "Reflections on Myth," 75-84.

9 Felton, "Herodotean Context," 1-3; Gaiman, *American Gods*, 399.

on the American version of Yggdrasil, a human sacrifice required to resurrect Odin and restore his full power.

In the 2001 interview for *Rain Taxi*, Gaiman shares his admiration for Michael Ammar, whom he calls “one of the top sleight-of-hand magicians in the world,” and describes how, during the performance, he directs the audience’s attention by twirling his wand high in the air with one hand while unobtrusively placing an object down on the table with his other hand. When all the eyes come down from watching the fascinating wand, the object magically materializes on the table. The story of the magician serves as an explanation of Gaiman’s narrative device in the novel:

There’s a lot of stuff in *American Gods* where I’m directing your attention. If the novel is working, you are looking over here while I am putting something on the stage, setting something up, so when you get two chapters on, or ten chapters on, or in one case eighteen chapters on, you’re going to go *Oh my God, I should have seen that coming*. It’s both enjoyable and frustrating. One of the nice things about doing that stuff is that next time through the book, somebody can actually enjoy watching my hand put that little thing there.<sup>10</sup>

Elizabeth Swanstrom persuasively discusses Gaiman’s device of misdirection in *Mr. Wednesday’s Game of Chance*, a chapter in the collective volume edited by Tray L. Bealer, Rachel Luria, and Wayne Yuen.<sup>11</sup> Odin and Loki entangle Shadow in a masterful “set-up so cleverly fore-grounded that it can only be seen in retrospect.”<sup>12</sup> Nothing has been left to chance by the divine Norse schemers, and their epic con to regain worshippers proceeds as planned, launched three decades earlier with Shadow’s conception as its act one. Solon’s story of Croesus and the maxim about reversal of fortune introduced at the beginning of the novel is, as Swanstrom says, “a fiendishly clever move on Gaiman’s part because it makes a sucker of Shadow and the reader both.”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the true goal of Odin’s and Loki’s con is to take over the shrinking numbers of worshippers by manipulating the other gods into killing each other while their attention is misdirected toward Shadow.

10 Dorneman and Everding, “Dreaming American Gods.”

11 Bealer, Luria, and Yuen, *Neil Gaiman and Philosophy*, 2–20.

12 *Ibid.*, 10.

13 Swanstrom, “Mr. Wednesday’s Game of Chance,” 10–13.

More recently, Herodotus' role in *American Gods* has been the topic of Vanda Zajko's article in the 2020 issue of the *Classical Receptions Journal*.<sup>14</sup> The author, at the time aware of only the first season of the television series, does not ignore the show entirely but puts the emphasis on the novel and says:

Gaiman's text is an interesting case study from the perspective of classical reception because he sidelines the ancient Greek gods in the main body of his story, while simultaneously positioning the ancient historian Herodotus as a significant intertext.<sup>15</sup>

As a matter of fact, in Gaiman's novel, Greek gods are not so much sidelined as simply absent. In the television series, on the other hand, although only in season three, we have Demeter, goddess of the harvest, Argus Panoptes, Hera's servant and watchman of Io, slayed by Hermes and now resurrected as the god of surveillance, and a rather obnoxious character, called Technical Boy who in the finale of season three is revealed as Prometheus, "inventor" of fire, the god of innovation, constantly evolving and forgetting his previous incarnations. In season one, the Roman Vulcan, who in today's America became the god of firearms, forges a magical blade for Odin but betrays him and Shadow to the New Gods.<sup>16</sup> Odin decapitates him with the new blade and curses his worshippers. As mentioned above, there is no mention of Solon's maxim or Herodotus in the television series. Classical mythology replaced ancient history without a trace if you discount Shadow's statement that he read many books in prison, the Herodotean *Histories* among them.

Demeter was first alluded to in s03e02 *Serious Moonlight* and appeared in s03e03–e06 (*Ashes and Demons*, *The Unseen*, *Sister Rising*, and *Conscience of the King*). She constitutes an interesting case of classical reception, as Gaiman transforms the Greek goddess who suffers the loss of her child and, in her despair, lets the world go to ruin into a figure familiar and relatable to contemporary audiences: a

14 Zajko, "Contemporary Mythopoesis," 299–322.

15 Zajko, "Contemporary Mythopoesis," 299.

16 Zajko acknowledges Vulcan's presence in s01e6 and describes him as follows: "Vulcan, an 'old god' who had been on the point of extinction, has been reinvigorated by the Americans' love for firearms. Presiding over the eponymous town in Virginia dominated by the manufacture of guns, he has 'turned fire into fire-power' and is now worshipped by the bullets fired into the air by his supporters, all of whom are white and wear arm-bands which bear a close resemblance to those worn by the Nazis." Zajko, "Contemporary Mythopoesis," 308.

woman devastated by the loss of a stillborn daughter and abandoned in her grief by an irresponsible partner. In Greek mythology, things are genealogically and otherwise too complicated for today's mortals to relate to: Demeter's and Zeus' daughter, Persephone, was kidnapped by Hades, her parents' brother, who wanted to marry her and live with her in the Underworld with her father's blessing but unbeknown to her mother and naturally, without her consent.

In *American Gods*, mythological intricacies are forgotten to make room for ordinary human relationships. Demeter came to Pennsylvania in 1765, appealed to by the mother of a family of farmers struggling with failing crops. The woman used a ritual involving a corn husk puppet and a pig sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> Demeter responded by bringing in miraculous crops. During the American Revolution, two Norse gods, Odin and Tyr (god of war), tried to woo her. She chose Odin even though Tyr was more honorable. They had a passionate affair, but when their daughter was stillborn, Odin abandoned his distraught lover, unable or unwilling to offer her emotional support. It was the rejected suitor, Tyr, who helped her in her hour of need.

Odin learns about Demeter's whereabouts from a postcard she sent at the occasion of Equinox to the empathetic Tyr (now a dentist). After an incident culminating in her public claim of divine status, a clueless judge committed her to a mental hospital, Haven Glen Retreat. There, she was surrounded by kind and sympathetic nurses and the trust and admiration of the other patients who made her feel worshipped. To release Demeter from the facility and convince her to join his war, Mr. Wednesday tries blackmailing the director, forges a marriage certificate, and, finally, becomes a patient himself. Demonstrating that grief may lessen with time but trust once betrayed may never recover, Demeter, who is no longer affected by Odin's manipulative charm, lets herself be persuaded to return to the world, leaves the hospital, but refuses to join Odin and disappears. Her lack of confidence in him and her unequivocal departure profoundly affect Odin, who regrets his previous unscrupulous behavior and is painfully reminded of the joy they shared in the past.

The two other mythological Greeks played only marginal roles. They were presumably selected to fit specific segments of modern American reality: Argus Panoptes embodies the ubiquitous and

17 Magic rituals to call upon divine beings figured prominently also in the graphic novel *The Sandman* and its audiovisual adaptation, where both the Lord of Dreams and Calliope were captured and imprisoned by mortals using ancient enchantments allegedly found in an old grimoire.

constant surveillance, omnipresent not only in fictional spy series but also in real life, and Prometheus / Technical Boy, representing the unending stream of innovations. The Roman god Vulcan appears in the first season in a small town where firearms are manufactured without much concern for employees' safety, as an adequate modernization of the factory would cost more than settling an occasional fatal accident. He estimates that some such occurrences qualify as an acceptable price to ensure the town's and his own continued prosperity. American Vulcan is a ruthless figure with few redeeming features; he personifies all that is wrong with an excessive fascination with firearms and allows greed to trump concerns for human safety. In a scene of unalloyed horror, his decapitated body dissolves in a vat of molten metal and is urinated upon by Odin. The extreme brutality occasionally present in Norse mythology and reflected in the series provides an outlet for a severely critical view of an ideology advocating against gun control.

### *Calliope*

On August 12, 2022, twelve days after the release of season 1, the Netflix series *The Sandman* streamed a bonus episode containing two separate stories only indirectly connected to the main plot.<sup>18</sup> The first story is an animation, *Dream of a Thousand Cats*, and the second is a live-action fantasy, *Calliope*.<sup>19</sup>

The television series is an adaptation of Neil Gaiman's comic books from the 1990s<sup>20</sup> with Morpheus, Lord of Dreams, as the leading character. The title comes from European folklore and a comic book predating World War II, Gardner Fox's and Bert Christman's 1939 *The Sandman*, published by DC Comics. In the Gaiman's series, the Lord of Dreams is seized due to a failed attempt to capture Death by a father distraught by the loss of his son, during World War I, in 1916. Morpheus is then imprisoned to prevent him from undertaking any potential punitive action. Over one hundred years later, he escapes and travels between various realms to find his tools of power, stolen during his captivity, and to restore his kingdom of Dreams and Nightmares, the

18 For the narrative connections between *The Sandman* and Joseph Campbell, see Rauch, "The Sandman" and Joseph Campbell. For details of the episode, see Pszczolińska's entry on *Sandman* SO1E11, "Calliope by Neil Gaiman, Louise Hooper," for Our Mythical Childhood Survey, available online.

19 *Sandman* SO1E11: *Dream of a Thousand Cats* / *Calliope* was directed by Hisko Hulsing and Louise Hooper.

20 Gaiman, Jones, and Jones, *The Sandman 17: Dream Country*.

Dreaming. It is a place where sleeping mortals can experience freedom and adventure, facing fears and fantasies in dreams and nightmares the king of dreams creates and controls.<sup>21</sup> He meets many mythical, legendary, or fantastic characters of various origins. Although his Greek or Roman roots are not explicitly highlighted in the series (the viewer hears the name Morpheus in episode two), he displays many of his ancient features.

In episode eleven, *Calliope*, the Sandman is called by his Homeric name, Oneiros,<sup>22</sup> and also presented as Morpheus, the one “whom the Romans called the shaper of the form,” the name deriving from μορφή, “form, shape.” The series also retains some of Oneiros’ siblings, as mentioned by Hesiod;<sup>23</sup> here, they are called the Endless. According to Gaiman, the Endless are children of Night and Time, embodiments of natural forces, though Hesiod provides only the mother’s name.<sup>24</sup> The other Endless featured in season one are Destiny (Μόρος), Death (Θάνατος), Desire, and Despair (Οιζύς). By turning a Greek god into an Endless, Gaiman develops the character as more enduring than old gods who died because worshippers abandoned them. One of the Fates explains to Calliope, who asks them for help: “Many gods have died, my daughter. Only the Endless never fade.”<sup>25</sup> Dream is also explicitly described as “not a god, more than a god. And are men not governed by their dreams?”<sup>26</sup> This way, the audience is given a plausible reason why Dream or Death are still present and relevant in the contemporary world.

Other mythical characters in the series are the already mentioned Fates, who appear four times; they also play the role of oracles and use riddles while answering questions. According to Hesiod, they were daughters of Nyx<sup>27</sup> and thus Oneiros’ half sisters; however, this fact is not mentioned in the series. Morpheus calls the Fates “the Three-Who-Are-One, the-One-Who-Is-Three, the Hecate”<sup>28</sup> and never invokes the family connection. When asked to reveal their name in episode seven,<sup>29</sup> they answer: “Be satisfied with the trinity

21 *Sandman* S01E01: *Sleep of the Just*, directed by Mike Barker.

22 See Homer, *Iliad* 2.56, *Odyssey* 14.495.

23 Hesiod, *Theogony* 211–25.

24 *Ibid.* 213: οὐ τινι κοιμηθεῖσα θεὰ τέκε Νύξ ἐρεβεννή (“gloomy Night bore ... although she had slept with none of the gods”), translation by Glenn W. Most.

25 *Sandman* S01E11.

26 *Sandman* S01E01.

27 Hesiod, *Theogony* 217.

28 *Sandman* S01E02: *Imperfect Hosts*, directed by Jamie Childs.

29 *Sandman* S01E07: *The Doll’s House*, directed by Andrés Baiz.

you have, love. You wouldn't want to meet us as the Kindly Ones," i.e., they may assume the function of Eumenides / Erinyes. Their triple identity becomes clearer at their last appearance in the series. Calliope summons them, begging on her knees: "Gracious ladies, mother of the Camenae, hear my prayer. ... Ladies of meditation, remembrance and song, hearken to me."<sup>30</sup> In the graphic novel, she directly uses the names "Melete, Mneme, Aiode,"<sup>31</sup> identifying them with elder Muses and with her mother, Mnemosyne.

The episode *Calliope*, released as the first season's post-finale, casts the Muse as the protagonist. She is held captive by a mortal man. It parallels the imprisonment of Morpheus at the beginning of the series. Her captor, a writer called Erasmus Fry, explains:

I was 27, visiting Mount Helicon. Researching yet another novel I was sure to abandon. This one steeped in Greek mythology. And while I was there, I discovered a trove of ancient texts about the Muses and how to control them using *moly*, sorcerer's garlic, and certain lost rituals. The hardest part was getting her back to England.<sup>32</sup>

*Moly*, a mysterious magical plant powerful against sorcery, is mentioned in the *Odyssey*.<sup>33</sup> It has characteristic milk-white flowers and black roots that mortal men may find hard to pull out. Theophrastus in *The Story of Plants* discussed it as a variety of Allium, ornamental garlic.<sup>34</sup> Neil Gaiman reuses the motif of *moly* as part of an ancient ritual powerful enough to bind a goddess. Fry calls it "sorcerer's garlic," which suggests that it is the plant listed by Theophrastus. Homer describes it as an herb that protects Odysseus from the magic of Circe. Here, *moly* is used against the goddess, not to protect but to enslave. Another part of the binding enchantment, parallel to the rite performed to capture Morpheus, allowed Fry to deprive Calliope of her ancient tool of power by burning her scroll. Morpheus was robbed

30 *Sandman* ΣΟΙΕ11; for the κλύτε, Μοίραι formula and its comparison to the habitual language of prayers see Bowra, "A Prayer to the Fates," 234.

31 According to Pausanias, Melete, Mneme, and Aoide were the three from Boeotia, replaced later with the nine Muses established by Pierus, a Macedonian, after whom the mountain was named. Cf. *Description of Greece* 9.29.2–3: οἱ δὲ τοῦ Ἀλωέως παῖδες ἀριθμόν τε Μούσας ἐνόμισαν εἶναι τρεῖς καὶ ὀνόματα αὐταῖς ἔθεντο Μελέτην καὶ Μνήμην καὶ Ἀοιδήν. See also Vox, "Esiodo fra Beozia e Pieria," 321–25.

32 *Calliope* ΣΟΙΕ11: *The Sandman*.

33 Homer, *Od.* 10.302–306.

34 Theophrastus, *Hist. plant.* 9.15.7.

of his three tools of power and imprisoned naked in a magic circular cage; Calliope, without her scroll, naked (graphic novel) or barely dressed (serial), was held for many years locked up in a basement, where Fry violated her whenever he wished to obtain inspiration. While not glossed over, acts of merciless brutality against the Muse are more explicit in the literary source than in the television series. Most probably because of the difference in audiovisual aesthetics and the wider spectrum of potential viewers targeted by television.

As an old man, he trades the Muse for a bezoar brought to him by Richard Madoc, another writer unable to find new ideas. Fry confesses to Richard:

They say one ought to woo her kind. But I must say I found force most efficacious.<sup>35</sup>

He encourages Richard not to pity Calliope or be kind to her, hoping to be rewarded by inspiration because she is not human and was

created for this. This is her purpose, to inspire men like us.<sup>36</sup>

The character of Calliope is intensely sexualized (more so in the graphic novel, where she is imprisoned naked; in the TV series, she is barefoot and wears a thin nightgown). When Erasmus enters the basement with Richard, she asks:

Am I now to perform for your amusement? Is this man to be our audience?<sup>37</sup>

A harsh red light sends an alarm signal to the viewer. The “performance” she is thinking about is not declaiming hexameters from the *Iliad*.

At first, the new owner considers unbinding the Muse. He gives her a coat to cover the nightgown and locks her in a bedroom, not in a basement; he tries to woo her with presents but still holds her captive. In fact, contrary to his character in the graphic novel, Madoc in *Calliope* is not from the outset an unredeemable villain, a ruthless, determined rapist, but rather a greedy, ambitious man who wants, at first, to avoid the violence recommended by Fry. Only pushed to the limit by his fear of failure, his persisting writer’s block, and the

35 *Sandman*, SO1E11.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

pressure of the publisher's nine-month overdue deadline, he abandons his restraint and proceeds to abuse the Muse as Fry did before him, demonstrating that even men aspiring to some degree of decency may in time turn into monsters given strong enough incentives.

Contrary to the brutal scene of rape included in the graphic novel, the sexual assault is not shown in the television series. The scene opens with Richard staring at a blank computer screen and unsure what to write. Then, all worked up, he gets up and knocks on the Muse's door. In the next shot, we see him again at his computer, writing in a "manic fit," with a bloody fingernail scratch on his cheek. The scene leaves no doubt as to what happened: he used violence to get what he wanted, but she fought him in a desperate act of defiance.

Terrified and distraught, Calliope summons the Fates, hoping they can release her, but it turns out that the bonding ritual prevents them from any action:

There are few of the old powers who are willing or able to meddle in mortal affairs in these days, Calliope. Many gods have died, my daughter. Only The Endless never fade. And even they have been having a difficult time of late.<sup>38</sup>

They suggest Morpheus as Calliope's former husband and father of her son. Unfortunately, he is also magically imprisoned by mortals. On the day Calliope realizes that Oneiros is free, she calls him by writing down his name even though her master confidently and arrogantly claims:

You're mine. By law. The God of Dreams can't save you.<sup>39</sup>

Despite their complicated past, Dream, who, since the publication of the graphic novel, in parallel with ongoing social developments, acquired, in comparison with his original character, more emotional sensitivity, answers her call and helps Calliope regain her freedom. Dream was not alone in having to evolve during the three decades since Gaiman published *Calliope* as the 17th installment of *The Sandman*. The story of a captured and abused Muse, an immortal goddess of high status, prestige, and power, brought to the fore the painful issue of violence against women, specifically of the potential threat of sexual abuse from men in a position of actual or perceived authority.

38 *Sandman*, SO1E11.

39 *Ibid.*

Wide-ranging changes in mentality and societal attitudes occurred during that period. The phrase *Me Too*, applied in the context of sexual abuse in 2006, became the hashtag #*MeToo* in 2017 when it highlighted the scope of the problem and galvanized public opinion against the culture of rape in the workplace where employment dynamic may be used to facilitate and cover up abuse. When the graphic novel story of text combined with visuals was translated into sound and images of a television series, it reflected the whole spectrum of these changes.

The scene of violence precedes the summoning of the Fates. Calliope, a daughter of Zeus, calls for help and prays as an ordinary supplicant to powerful female deities she hopes can save her. She does not call Zeus but appeals to her mother, as any woman would do in her place. The Fates appear, and the scene's background looks distinctly "Arcadian." The landscape resembles a painting hanging at Erasmus Fry's house, beneath which the two writers talk about capturing the Muse. In contrast with Calliope's dark room and her skimpy nightgown, the respectable and dignified Fates wear ancient white robes and appear against an open vista of an idyllic, freshly green landscape, clear running water, and a small round temple on a hill. Unlike in episode two, where Morpheus, in a gloomy scenery, summons the clad-in-black Fates adhering to the rule of "one question, one answer,"<sup>40</sup> the omniscient Fates talk freely with Calliope, almost as equals, without riddles or ambiguities and without requiring payment. They cannot help her, but they give hopeful advice. In the scene, the viewer learns of Calliope's other family connections – Orpheus is mentioned as her son. His entire life story is condensed in a single well-turned sentence:

That boy-child who went to Hades for his lady-love and died in Thrace torn apart for his sacrilege; he had a beautiful voice too.<sup>41</sup>

Contrary to ancient sources<sup>42</sup> that attribute the great musician's paternity to Oiagros, Calliope's Thracian lover, in both the graphic novel and later in the television series, Oneiros is the father of Orpheus.

The theme of forgiveness for the acts that are far beyond current social norms, acceptance, and understanding, which, from the per-

40 *Sandman* SO1E01.

41 *Sandman* SO1E11.

42 E.g., Apollodorus 1.15, Apollonius Rhodius 1.24, Hyginus, *Fabulae* 14; for the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, see for instance, Apollodorus 1.14–15 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.1–85.

spective of the victim, are a matter of lasting horror, nightmares, and a source of persistent trauma – and in most contemporary legislations, are defined as criminal. Morpheus is understandably outraged at the writer's heinous behavior, but, being now a changed man, he relents, respecting Calliope's sentiment when she says:

What punishment could be enough? Even his death would not bring back what he has taken from me.<sup>43</sup>

As for Calliope, her divine strength of character and the dignity she preserves in the face of humiliation allows her to show clemency and wisdom; she says: "Without forgiveness, wounds will never heal."<sup>44</sup> However, the perpetrator is punished, and the punishment strikes where it would hurt a writer the most. When Morpheus, allowed only to inspire, demands Calliope's instant release, and Richard dares to beg for more ideas, the god floods his mind with such an abundance of ideas that the author, having no pen and paper, frantically tries to write them down on the walls in his blood. Finally, when Calliope is gone forever, Richard rapidly loses memory of all he has written forcibly extracting inspiration from the Muse, and has no more stories to tell.

On the other hand, without any observable outside intervention – an act of cosmic justice? – the once-famous Erasmus Fry is struck by even worse misfortune: his books are forgotten and out of print, and he ends his miserable life by taking poison. A comment immediately comes to mind: Loki telling Shadow at Odin's funeral in *American Gods* (the novel):

Call no man happy, huh, kid?<sup>45</sup>

Both despicable writers are punished where it hurts most: their once dazzling fame fades away without a trace and their names sink into oblivion.

Once free of her sixty-year-long bondage, Calliope answers Morpheus' question, "What will you do now?" saying:

I think what I must do is to try to make sure that this never happens to anyone else ever again. How? I do not know. By inspiring humanity to want better for themselves and each other. By rewriting the laws

43 *Sandman* S01E11.

44 *Sandman* S01E11.

45 Gaiman, *American Gods*, 399.

by which I was held. Laws that were written long ago in which my sisters and I had no say.<sup>46</sup>

And Morpheus, having significantly evolved since the graphic novel, replies:

I shall do the same in my realm.<sup>47</sup>

This comment does not detract from highly encouraging the viewer to watch the forthcoming second season of *The Sandman*, during which we may expect that Calliope will *one day perhaps* visit Oneiros in his Dream World, something that seemed very unlikely in 1990.

Critics are practically unanimous as to the excellence of *Calliope's* cast, enthusiastically praising performances of Tom Sturridge (Morpheus), Melisanthi Mahut (Calliope),<sup>48</sup> Arthur Darvill (Richard Madoc), and Derek Jacoby (Erasmus Fry).<sup>49</sup> While in the graphic novel, Calliope is supernaturally thin and elongated with untidy blonde curls, in the television series, she is a beautiful woman whose suffering is poignantly rendered by the brilliant performance of Melisanthi Mahut, known to the audiences as the voice of Cassandra, the *misthios* in the video game *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*.<sup>50</sup> The Greek-Canadian actress is cast perfectly in the role of Calliope; she speaks English with a Greek accent, emphasizing the origin of the Muse of Epic Poetry who inspired Homer. The Greek mythological dimension of the story highlights its profoundly universal resonance, unerringly reaching and delighting today, in its renewed audiovisual form, audiences much larger than it ever did three decades ago as a less sophisticated graphic novel. Like in *American Gods*, Gaiman uses classical mythology to reflect and amplify the essential contemporary challenges facing twenty-first-century society.

46 *Sandman* SO1E11.

47 *Sandman* SO1E11.

48 For Calliope's iconography in antiquity, see Queyrel, "Les muses à l'école," 90–102.

49 See for instance online reviews by Amelia Emberwing (IGN), Rebecca Nicholson (*Guardian*), Judy Burman (*Time*), Ben Wright (XGeeks), and Melanie McFarland (*Salon*).

50 *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, published by Ubisoft in 2018.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. Ubisoft Entertainment, 2018.
- Bowra, Cecil Maurice. "A Prayer to the Fates." *The Classical Quarterly* 8, no. 3/4 (1958): 231–40.
- Dornemann, Rudi, and Kelly Everding. "Dreaming *American Gods*: An Interview with Neil Gaiman." *Rain Taxi* website, 2001, available online.
- Emberwing, Amelia. "*The Sandman* Changed Calliope's Story, and It's a Big Deal." *IGN* website, 2022, available online.
- Felton, Debbie. "Herodotean Context for Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*." Presented at 36th International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts, March 18–22 (2015): 1–3, available online.
- Gaiman, Neil. *American Gods: The Tenth Anniversary Edition*. First published 2001. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.
- . *Norse Mythology*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2017.
- . "Reflections on Myth (with Digressions into Gardening, Comics, and Fairy Tales)." *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* 31 (1999): 75–84.
- , Kelly Jones, and Malcolm Jones III. *The Sandman 17: Dream Country*. New York: DC Comics, 1990.
- Goldberg, Lesley. "*American Gods* Cancelled at Starz." *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 29, 2021, available online.
- Jones, William Henry Samuel, ed. *Pausanias: Description of Greece 8.22–10 (Arcadia, Boeotia, Phocis, and Ozolian Locri)*. Loeb Classical Library 297. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935.
- McMillan, Malcolm. "*The Sandman* Season 2 – Everything We Know So Far." *Tom's Guide* website, 2023, available online.
- Mellette, Justin. "Serialization and Empire in Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*." *Studies in the Novel* 47, no. 3 (2015): 319–34.
- Miller, Frank Justus, and George Patric Goold, ed. *Ovid: Metamorphoses 9–15*. Loeb Classical Library 43. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916.
- Most, Glenn W., ed. *Hesiod: Theogony – Works and Days – Testimonia*. Loeb Classical Library 57. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Murray, Augustus Taber, and George E. Dimock, ed. *Homer: Odyssey 1–12*. Loeb Classical Library 104. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.
- , and William F. Wyatt, ed. *Homer: Iliad 1–12*. Loeb Classical Library 170. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.

- Olechowska, Elżbieta. *'This is the Song That Never Ends': Classical Mythology in the Twenty-First-Century Audiovisual Series for Young Adults*. Our Mythical Childhood series. Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2023 [forthcoming].
- Pszczołińska, Marta. "Sandman (Series, SO1E11): Calliope by Neil Gaiman, Louise Hooper." Entry for Our Mythical Childhood Survey. Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2023. Available online.
- Queyrel, Anne. "Les muses à l'école: Images de quelques vases du peintre de Calliope." *Antike Kunst* 31, no. 2 (1988): 90–102.
- Rauch, Stephen. *Neil Gaiman's 'The Sandman' and Joseph Campbell: In Search of the Modern Myth*. Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 2003.
- Sandman* SO1E01: *Sleep of the Just*. Directed by Mike Barker, written by Neil Gaiman, David S. Goyer, and Allan Heinberg, music by David Buckley. DC Comics, DC Entertainment, Netflix, Phantom Four, Warner Bros. Television: August 19, 2022.
- Sandman* SO1E02: *Imperfect Hosts*. Directed by Jamie Childs, written by Allan Heinberg, Neil Gaiman, and David S. Goyer, music by David Buckley. DC Comics, DC Entertainment, Netflix, Phantom Four, Warner Bros. Television: August 19, 2022.
- Sandman* SO1E07: *The Doll's House*. Directed by Andrés Baiz, written by Heather Bellson, Neil Gaiman, David S. Goyer, and Allan Heinberg, music by David Buckley. DC Comics, DC Entertainment, Netflix, Phantom Four, Warner Bros. Television: August 19, 2022.
- Sandman* SO1E11: *Dream of a Thousand Cats / Calliope*. Directed by Hisko Hulsing (*Dream of a Thousand Cats*) and Louise Hooper (*Calliope*), written by Neil Gaiman and Catherine Smyth-McMullen, music by David Buckley. DC Comics, DC Entertainment, Netflix, Phantom Four, Warner Bros. Television: August 19, 2022.
- Strong, Anise K. "A Dream of Augustus: Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Comics Mythology." In *Classics and Comics*, edited by George Kovacs and C. W. Marshall, 173–82. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Swanstrom, Elizabeth. "Mr. Wednesday's Game of Chance." In *Neil Gaiman and Philosophy: Gods Gone Wild!* Edited by Tray L. Bealer, Rachel Luria, and Wayne Yuen, 2–20. Chicago: Open Court, 2012.
- Vox, Onofrio. "Esiodo fra Beozia e Pieria." *Belfagor* 35, no. 3 (1980): 321–25.
- Zajko, Vanda. "Contemporary Mythopoesis: The Role of Herodotus in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*." *Classical Receptions Journal* 12, no. 3 (2020): 299–322.

## ABSTRACT

*American Gods* (Starz 2017–2021) and *The Sandman* (Netflix 2022–), two highly watchable audiovisual series are adaptations of Neil Gaiman's popular novel (2001) and of his earlier comic book series (1989–1996). They are both inspired by classical and Norse mythologies and reflect the evolution of culturally and socially important themes that occurred between the publication of their literary models and the airing of the television series. Curiously, the adaptation of the novel includes more Olympic gods but glosses over the influence of Herodotus. *The Sandman*, on the other hand, in its television version, and specifically, in its first season finale episode *Calliope*, under discussion here, is much less graphic in the scenes of sexual abuse leaving the more drastic images to the imagination of the viewers but at the same time achieving an even more expressive empathy toward the suffering victim and a severe condemnation of the committed outrage.

KEYWORDS: *American Gods*, Neil Gaiman, Greek mythology, Norse mythology, reception of myths, *The Sandman*

Neil Gaiman in njegova raba antike v televizijski seriji:  
*Ameriški bogovi* in *Kaliopa*

## IZVLEČEK

*Ameriški bogovi* (Starz 2017–2021) in *Peščeni mož* (Netflix 2022–), dve izrazito gledljivi avdiovizualni seriji, sta priredbi priljubljenega romana Neila Gaimana (2001) in njegove predhodne serije stripov (1989–1996). Obe sta navdihnjeni s klasično in nordijsko mitologijo ter odražata razvoj kulturno in družbeno pomembnih tem, do katerega je prišlo med objavo njunih literarnih predlog in predvajanjem televizijskih serij. Zanimivo je, da priredba romana vključuje več olimpskih bogov, vendar zamolči vpliv Herodota. Po drugi strani je *Peščeni mož* v svoji televizijski različici, natančneje v tu obravnavani zadnji epizodi prve sezone z naslovom *Kaliopa*, v prizorih spolne zlorabe precej manj grafičen; drastičnejše podobe prepušča gledalčevi domišljiji, a hkrati doseže še bolj izrazito empatijo do trpeče žrtve in ostro obsodbo storjene nezaslišanosti.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: *Ameriški bogovi*, Neil Gaiman, grška mitologija, nordijska mitologija, recepcija mitov, *Peščeni mož*



# REPORTS





# Franciscan Library and Museum with Pinacotheca in Ljubljana

Jan Dominik Bogataj OFM\*

The Franciscan Museum and Pinacotheca of the Franciscan Friary in the center of Ljubljana represent, together with the renovated library, a newly conceived cultural and art-historical section of the Friary as the mother house of the Slovenian Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross. The library currently holds ca. 70,000 book units, including precious books such as incunabula – one-seventh of all incunabula in the country – and can thus boast the title of Slovenia's most extensive monastic library. The newly designed museum showcases some of the friary's key cultural and artistic objects.

This heritage dictates an obligation to preserve the artifacts carefully – yet opens the question of public accessibility. The purpose of the renovated library and the new museum is to offer, on the one hand, a detailed presentation of typically Franciscan or Franciscan-related exhibits or personalities and, on the other hand, to create a modern museum with a diverse collection for a broader range of visitors. The design of the new Franciscan Museum and Pinacotheca is thus a synthesis between a historical presentation of Franciscan identity in Ljubljana and the display of a broader cultural and artistic heritage interesting for the widest possible audience.

## THE MUSEUM WITH PINACOTHECA

At the entrance of the museum, visitors are greeted by a chronogram. The sum of the highlighted Roman letters, number 2023, represents the year of the museum's foundation, while the content of the chro-

\* University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology, Poljanska cesta 4, SI-1000 Ljubljana; [jan.bogataj@teof.uni-lj.si](mailto:jan.bogataj@teof.uni-lj.si).

nogram illustrates the two-fold design of this new exhibition place, the museum with a gallery and the library.

In prInCipIo LoCVs MVsIs fVIIt,  
 nVnC hIC  
 VnICo qVI artes InspIrat,  
 InspIratIo Ipsa et artIfeX est,  
 CantIbVs CanVnt CoLores LItteraeqVe

Initially, this was a place for the Muses,  
 Now, a place where  
 The only Inspirer of art, who is  
 The Inspiration itself and the Artist,  
 Is glorified with songs of colors and letters

The museum premises consist of two units: the Treasury and the Pinacotheca. The Treasury displays the key precious objects and books from the library collection. The most significant works of art from the friary's collection hang in the Pinacotheca.

### *Treasury*

The items in the Treasury are presented in thematic sections in chronological sequence. The Franciscans' history in Ljubljana covers eight centuries, from the 13th to the 21st century. The exhibition thus begins with the oldest medieval document in the collection: the privilege (*Ad consequendam gloriam*) of Pope Clement IV from 1265, which granted the Order of Friars Minor that no other monastery, church, or oratory of other religious orders would be within a circle of more than 500 meters of their monasteries.

The late Middle Ages are represented by a fantastic polychrome Gothic statue of the "Madonna of Rožnik" from the middle of the 15th century. This is one of the extremely rare surviving Gothic (sacral) objects in central Slovenia, currently on loan from the National Gallery.

The written heritage is represented by two manuscript codices from the early 15th century, a Bible and a collection of sermons. The collection continues with several incunabula bound into manuscript fragments, often richly illuminated, a manuscript psalter for the chanted prayer, and manuscripts in Hebrew and Arabic. This is followed by a presentation of selected incunabula and other older prints. Among these, the second edition of Copernicus' seminal work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1566) is an exceptional rarity. Among the

key Slovenian publications are a copy of Jurij Dalmatin's Bible (1584), Primož Trubar's personal copy, which includes his signatures; the first edition of Prešeren's poem "Krst pri Savici" ("The Baptism on the Savica") (1836) adorned with the author's dedication to his fellow lawyer, Judge Josef Pillman; and a manuscript collection of poems by Prešeren's contemporary and friend, Fr. Benvenut Crobath.

The museum display continues with the Baroque period: next to a vitrine with the liturgical vestments and utensils, one can find a significant but hitherto almost unknown source, the *Bosna Seraphica* chronicle, written in 1780 by Fr. Maver Fajdiga (the so-called "Fajdiga Chronicle"). Fr. Fajdiga describes the history of the Franciscan Order in the Balkans, with particular attention to all the Franciscan friaries of the then-Croatian province.

The museum further preserves two important ethnological collections founded by Slovenian missionaries: the Bishop of Marquette, Frideric Irenaeus Baraga (1797–1868), and the missionary to China, the Franciscan Fr. Engelhard Avbelj (1887–1928). The first collection includes objects from the daily life of the Ottawa and Ojibwe Indians of the Great Lakes region of North America and Baraga's dictionary of the Ojibwe language. The second collection includes various artifacts from Chinese culture and Catholic prints in Chinese.

The museum also displays the work of Fr. Stanislav Škrabec (1844–1918), the instigator of Slovenian phonetics and one of the greatest Slovenian linguists. When Fr. Škrabec had to flee to Ljubljana to escape death and destruction of the First World War, he brought with him his copies of the covers of the magazine *Cvetja z vertov svetega Frančiška* [Flowers from the Gardens of St Francis], where he recorded his linguistic findings. The author's handwritten comments give these copies exceptional value.

Two objects by the Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik, also a member of the Order of St Francis, represent the 20th century. Plečnik's red monstrance, explicitly designed for the Franciscan church in Ljubljana, is considered one of his central liturgical works. Below the monstrance, the visitors can observe one of Plečnik's two unique chess sets, which he made specifically for the Franciscans in Ljubljana.

The museum's installation concludes with a thematic section dedicated to the difficult period of World War II when the Franciscans also found themselves in a difficult situation between the two sides involved in the Civil War. The display includes some scarce inter-war prints and documents, above which two flags hang: the original flag of the Kingdom of Italy, which flew at the Friary during the Italian occupation (1941–1943), and a copy of the old Slovenian flag, which

was hung on the church bell tower by the Slovenian resistance fighters during the war.

### *Pinacotheca*

The gallery installation comprises a selection from the broader collection of artworks the Friary holds. The chronological arc of the artworks on display stretches from the 16th to the 20th century but focuses on the Baroque period when most of the paintings now owned by the friary were created. Still, the collection starts with two icons: an older representation of Mother of Consolation and St John the Baptist that probably belongs to the Cretan school of the 16th century and a Baroque copy of the Black Madonna of Brno with an artfully carved and gilded frame.

Two Baroque canvases follow: the Adoration of the Shepherds by an unknown Venetian master of the Bassano tradition and the Sorrowful Mother of God by an unknown, probably southern Italian or Spanish painter. The installation then introduces the central figure of the local Carniolan Baroque, Valentin Metzinger, who was closely associated with the Franciscans throughout his life and is represented by three canvases. The next painting is St. Bonaventure by Anton Cebej, which means that the collection's paintings include half of the "Big Four" of Carniolan Baroque painting, completed by Fortunat Bergant and Franc Jelovšek.

The era of the so-called fading of the Baroque at the end of the 18th century is effectively represented by two late Baroque painters: Leopold Layer, author of one of the quintessential Slovene paintings, the merciful image of Our Lady Help of Christians from Brezje, and the Bavarian painter Janez Andrej Herrlein, who brought his unique style of painting to Carniola. The transition in the subject matter of Slovenian painting at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries is illustrated by two works by the Šubic brothers. Firstly, one can admire a painting of Janez Šubic, St. Anthony of Padua, which still retains traits of late Baroque Pietism in its early celestial sphere. Then, there is Visitation of the Virgin Mary by his brother Jurij Šubic, opening the door to early 20th-century realism – and thus also to Impressionism and Expressionism – and is therefore considered one of the seminal works of Slovenian painting. The collection is completed by two works that already embrace this Impressionist enthusiasm: Rihard Jakopič's intriguing small canvas, The Baptism in the Jordan from around 1900, and Matej Sternen's sketch for the ceiling frescoes of the central nave of the Franciscan Church in Ljubljana.

## THE LIBRARY OF THE FRANCISCAN FRIARY

*History of the library*

The Library of the Franciscan friary in Ljubljana, the oldest continuously operating library institution in Slovenia, is the richest monastic library in this area. Its eight-hundred-year history is depicted by an anaphoric Latin inscription at the entrance to the gallery, focusing on the critical years of its functioning:

s. XIII condita, s. XIV incensa, s. XV observantibus tradita, s. XVI partim dispersa, s. XVII iterum congregata, s. XVIII locupletata et trans fluvium translata, s. XIX nova domo accepta, s. XX confundendo salvata, a. D. MMXXIII vero renovata

Founded in the 13th century, burned in the 14th century, handed down to observants in the 15th century, partly dispersed in the 16th century, reassembled in the 17th century, enriched and transferred across the river in the 18th century, received in a new home in the 19th century, saved through confusion in the 20th century, and genuinely renewed in the year 2023

The origins of the library date back to the early 13th century, when the Franciscans settled in Ljubljana in 1233 at the invitation of the Patriarch of Aquileia, Bertold v. A friary was built by the Conventuals on today's Vodnik Square. This friary must have had at least an armarium, a place for the most essential books needed for communal life and worship. Valvasor's large panorama of Ljubljana suggests that the library was located in the western wing, in the corner of the cloister. In 1382, the library burned to the ground but was rebuilt between 1403 and 1412.

When the province adopted the Observant reform in the 15th century under the Auersperg family, who were provincial governors, the Conventuals had to leave the friary. It was then occupied by the second branch of the Order of Friars Minor, the Observants, who were intensely involved in the collection of books, librarianship, and education. During the Catholic Reform, the Franciscans abandoned the friary almost completely and emigrated from Ljubljana in 1596. On their return in 1602, many books were temporarily moved to the Franciscan friary in Graz. From 1596 to 1602, when the friary was taken over by the Imperial Hospital, many books were lost or

appropriated by the hospital administrator. In 1609, the monks asked him, through Bishop Tomaž Hren, to give them the books and the library inventory.

The formal founder of the library was Fr. Sigismundus Škerpin (1689–1775), theologian, provincial, general visitor of the provinces of Hungary, Austria, Bavaria, Venice, and Rome, and general definator. He secured a special fund to purchase books, to which citizens of Carniola and Ljubljana contributed as donors. The library collection grew, and from 1733 to 1735, the friary built a new extension decorated with a painted ceiling and furnished in baroque style. Škerpin traveled extensively and purchased or received many books that are now part of the friary library during his journeys. In the second half of the 18th century, the entire collection comprised over 4000 volumes. No less than 2672 volumes bear Škerpin's ex-libris. Although it begins with the personal characteristic of an ex-libris (*Ab A. R. P. Sigismundo Skerpin*), it also emphasizes the communal purpose of his purchases (*pro Bibliotheca Labacensi PP. Franciscanorum*). Škerpin's entire project was one of the central contributions to the Ljubljana baroque "scholarly renaissance," the library was one of the richest collections in Carniola.

In 1784, the friary of the barefoot Augustinians in nowadays Prešeren Square was abolished by Joseph II and given to the Franciscans, who took over the pastoral care in the newly established parish, carrying out school activities and social work. The Franciscans also brought books and documents from their previous location in today's Vodnik Square. There is no precise information about the library's location and layout during the initial period of the Franciscans' stay in Prešeren Square. One exception is the mention in Fajdiga's chronicle that Fr. Lenart Košar, monastery guardian between 1814 and 1823, had new library premises built or the existing ones enlarged. The present two-story building with two library galleries on the site of the friary was built according to the plans of architect Raymund Jeblinger from Graz after the earthquake of 1896, during the time of the guardianship of Fr. Hugolin Sattner.

In 1919, a reading room was added to the library. In 1933, the library was renovated since it was already very neglected. During World War II, almost all the duplicates of the books were removed, leaving only the covers and some other fragments of the bindings (about 200 items of *membra disiecta*). Before World War II, the library attempted a complete reorganization of the layout of the material by subject, which was only partially implemented. This may have saved the books from the German occupiers, but after the

war, the Visitor General ordered that the old layout according to size (formats) should be introduced. In 1970, the library premises were almost demolished in favor of a shopping center on the new “Boris Kraigher platform,” but the 1952 decree on protecting the library’s monuments prevented this.

Between 2022 and 2023, the library was extensively renovated following the strict guidelines of the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Slovenia. The electrical wiring was replaced, new integrated lighting was installed to replace the old 1960s lighting, the window sashes were thoroughly refurbished, and the wooden and ceramic floors were renovated. The discovery of a dangerous wall fungus that had been dormant for decades has helped ensure that the building is thoroughly restored. Many of the artworks have been reinstalled. In January 2023, the library became the first Franciscan library in Slovenia to join the mutual bibliographic system, Cobiss.si, and cataloging began with the entry of all incunabula. A new archive room has also been set up in the corridor next to the library, where provincial, friary, and parish archival material is stored. There is also a new layout of the books: the ground floor and the first gallery now house the historical part of the collection (printed up to around 1850), while the second gallery houses later items. To solve the problem of space constraints, later periodicals and fiction have been excluded.

### *Library collection*

The historical and modern parts of the library’s collection total around 70,000 items. The library has undergone several cataloging attempts in the past. The earliest catalog dated from 1491, when the friary in Vodnik Square was abandoned by the Conventuals and occupied by the Observants. Unfortunately, this manuscript catalog was likely destroyed. There were several attempts at various catalogs from the early and late 20th century, but none were complete.

The Škerpin books alone are printed in ten different languages: Arabic, Flemish, French, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Chaldean, Latin, German, Spanish, and German. In addition, the collection also includes books in Dutch, Old Czech, and other languages, mainly European. The works are classified into 14 subject groups. The library also contains a considerable amount of modern manuscripts, a collection of sheet music by Hugolin Satner, a large amount of older photographic material and older periodicals, a collection of church pictures, a collection of postcards, a collection of small prints, a numismatic collection, a collection of decorations, documents, and

diplomas, and a collection of posters and maps. A unique feature of the library is an extensive collection of more than three thousand prayer books in over fifteen languages. The library's diverse material is displayed in eight exhibition cases on the ground floor. The exhibition concludes with showcases in which the arc of history extends to the present with the contemporary scholarly and literary work of the Franciscans from the Ljubljana Friary.

# KAZALO

## ČLANKI

- 05 Ildikó Csepregi**  
Medeja se pomladi:  
Ženske vloge in raba  
telesa v Senekovi *Medeji*
- 33 Adriana Grzelak-  
Krzymianowska**  
Plinij Starejši in Nikolaj  
Poljski o pripravkih iz  
kač in njihovi uporabi v  
medicini
- 57 Gregor Pobežin**  
Julijan Odpadnik,  
Klavdij Mamertin  
in Amijan Marcellin:  
Zapolnitev »praznega  
mesta«?
- 75 Andrea Radošević**  
Recepcija svetega  
Hieronima v  
poznosrednjeveški  
zbirki pridig Johanna  
Herolta
- 95 Bojana Tomc**  
Motiv svobode,  
človekovega  
dostojanstva in  
zavedanja skupne  
človeške usode od  
antike do Cervantesa
- 109 Alberto Camerotto**  
Troja gori: Epski arhetipi
- 131 Elżbieta Olechowska in  
Marta Pszczolińska**  
Neil Gaiman in njegova  
raba antike v televizijski  
seriji: *Ameriški bogovi* in  
*Kaliopa*

## POROČILA

- 151 Jan Dominik  
Bogataj OFM**  
Frančiškanska knjižnica  
in muzej s pinakoteko v  
Ljubljani

