

# REVISIONS

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*ReVisions: Best Student Essays* is a publication designed to celebrate the finest nonfiction work composed by undergraduate students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. This issue was copyedited, designed, and produced by the students in PRE 3450: Computer-Assisted Editing and Publication Design.

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Nominations to be considered for publication in the Spring 2018 issue will be accepted until December 2017. For further information, contact Dr. Teagan Decker, Hickory Hall, (910) 521-6437, [teagan.decker@uncp.edu](mailto:teagan.decker@uncp.edu).

The cover photo shows the drum used during the on-campus powwow in March 2017, one of many events honoring our University's Native American heritage.

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# REVISIONS: BEST STUDENT ESSAYS

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## A SECOND CHILD IN A ONE-CHILD POLICY COUNTRY

By Xin Dong



Xin Dong is an international student from China. She is a junior and majoring in chemistry. Xin really enjoys her time at UNCP, and she is looking forward to her life she will live in America.

Last weekend, I saw a movie with two of my best friends that really resonated with me. This movie was called *Life of Despised Matsuko*, and is a Japanese film based on a book by author Muneki Yamada. The book follows the life of the girl Matsuko, and how she was constantly competing for the attention and love of her father who was focused on caring for Matsuko's chronically-ill sister. She did everything she could think of to make her father laugh and notice her, but her father was always too worried about her sister's illness. Finally, she left home after losing her job by taking the blame for a theft committed by one of her classmates. In leaving, she was pursuing the love of her family in different ways throughout her life. Unfortunately, Matsuko was never able to succeed in gaining the love she sought for so long.

After we finished watching it, I saw quite a few similarities between myself and Matsuko. It also made me realize, however, how lucky I am in life and different from her as well. Where Matsuko is a despised and lonely woman, I am not – despite feeling that way in portions of my life. To explain this, one has to understand China's one-child policy. In 1979, in an attempt to control population growth, China implemented a one-child policy where parents were strongly discouraged from having more than one child. Heavy penalties were placed on those who had multiple children, including tax burdens, while those who complied with the policy were rewarded. So in my generation, most of my friends are only children.

My mother, however, became pregnant with

me when she had already had my sister. If the child is a son, it is allowed to be an exception to the policy, as sons are preferred over daughters. The doctors mistakenly told my parents that I was going to be a boy, and it is only for that reason that I am here today. My parents gave me a chance to know this world, to experience life, even to write this essay to tell my story. This taught me that life is always a risk and a trial but that I am very happy to be here.

After I was born however, my parents sent me to live with my aunt and uncle. My grandmother thinks my life has been very hopeless, but I do not agree. I had a very happy childhood. I had wonderful friends, and even though my family was not really structured the way I thought it was, they were still kind. The only thing different in my life was that I thought my biological parents were my aunt and uncle.

After I went to middle school, I went back home to live with my parents. However, I did not know how to get along with them as their child. They could not tell other people that I was their child, otherwise my father would lose his job. I was so jealous of my sister because compared with her, I was like a guest in the family instead of a true part of it. I can still remember there was a parent-teacher meeting at the beginning of every semester during my school time, but the seat for my parent was always empty. At that difficult time, I was always wondering why I was born. I felt I was homeless. I hated them although I wanted to understand that they had no choice.

One night, after I had a fight with my father about choosing college, I left home, like Matsuko did in that movie. Even today, I still think it was very dangerous because I nearly became the second Matsuko. I went to a public square, and I had been thinking a lot that night. I was wondering why I could not feel love from my family. I did not have the answer until my father found me and gave a big hug. And I think I saw some tears in his eyes. After that, my life was totally changed, and I felt his love.

It was my first time to truly feel their love although I knew they always loved me. After that, I totally could understand them. My mother cried a lot every time she said goodbye to me as my aunt. My father doesn't know how to show his love, so he bought me everything I wanted. My sister always had fights with me, but I'm the winner every time. I lived in my own world and always felt unfairly treated before, but I did not think how much my family bore. They

## XIN DONG

took a risk to give me a life. They did not owe me anything, but I could not understand that until now.

At the beginning of the movie *Life of Despised Matsuko*, I felt the same way as Matsuko about pursuing the love of the family. In my life I have always felt that I have had to go above and beyond to prove that I deserve love, but we have very different stories. Actually I got two pairs of love from my aunt and uncle and my parents. I am lucky enough to have this special experience in my life and I appreciate everything I have. Even though I believed I was unloved, I was not. The people around me love me and believe

in me. I hope I can pursue the love during my whole life like Matsuko, but in a more positive way.

Now, China has changed the one-child policy and a couple can have two children. I feel very glad because no second child will struggle as I did anymore. But at the same time, I feel so lucky to have had this special experience. This taught me how to be strong and thankful. I will continue to remember the positives of my life, and the struggles of feeling unwanted that I had to overcome, to grow and become a better person. 🙏

In this essay, Xin explores some painful memories as she explains a very personal history. Her work here is admirable, especially considering the fact that English is her second language. Over the course of the semester, she developed her organizational skills and voice as a writer. There is inspiration and beauty in her essay, and I am glad she chose to tell this story.

—Jesse Peters

## ANIMAL SACRIFICE: CULTURAL EXPRESSION IN MYTH AND PRACTICE

By Logan John



Logan John is a senior philosophy and religion major, and a 2016 inductee into the Theta Alpha Kappa National Honors Society in religious studies and theology. Logan's areas of interest include ritual studies, mythology and storytelling, and religious subjectivities. In 2015 and 2016 he received the Reverend Jerry Lowery Endowed Scholarship from the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

In the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, there existed copious depictions of animal sacrifice in various forms. Animal sacrifice is represented in art, poetry, and literature as religious and societal phenomena. Homer describes animal sacrifice at various stages in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, both written at some point during the ninth to seventh centuries BCE. In c. 700 BCE Hesiod attempted to explain the origins of animal sacrifice mythologically in the *Theogony*. In Ovid's *Fasti*, published circa 8 CE, readers are made aware of the evolution of animal sacrifice since Homer's archaic period.

Ancient Greek and Roman sacrifice was a way of preserving cultural and societal order. Functionally, animal sacrifice enforced cultural norms, communal concepts, and a shared system of veneration. Using a functionalist analysis, I will demonstrate that the sampled literature reveals the importance of animal sacrifice as providing important cultural roles; and, how the function of sacrifice changed between the literary periods of Homer and Ovid.

### Presuppositions

For the purposes of this paper I have adopted two presuppositions which lend themselves to a functionalist analysis of the sampled literature. First, animal sacrifice described in myth can be analyzed as description of ritual practice. By assuming that the sacrificial scenes described in the literary myths are representational (or at least descriptive) of how animal sacrifice would be performed during the life of

the author, one can use the literature as a form of *de facto* primary source material. If one does not accept this first presupposition (by maintaining that the literary myths analyzed are strictly creative literary inventions), then the historical practice of animal sacrifice becomes inaccessible via primary source material.

The second presupposition is that the dating of the literary materials is generally accurate. This is an important assumption, because I will be comparing the animal sacrifice rituals in the literary myths with the purpose of seeing how the functions of animal sacrifice evolved through different periods of Greek and Roman history. The works that I have selected for analysis reflect different periods of history in the classical world. Homer's writings come from the Greek archaic period, Hesiod wrote during the height of ancient Greece, and Ovid wrote during the late Roman Empire. Through these periods, one can see the evolution of views on the function of animal sacrifice.

### Durkheim's Functionalism

The functionalist school of religious thought is grounded in the works of Emil Durkheim (1858-1917). The conclusions of Durkheim's sociological interest in religion are described in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).<sup>1</sup> The functionalist model argues that "religion pertain[s] to the shared beliefs and institutions of a traditional community."<sup>2</sup> The most important role of religion in the shared social setting is to differentiate between the sacred and the profane in society. "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions—beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community"<sup>3</sup> The distinction between sacred and profane that a religion may draw in its society may come in different forms. Ritual legitimizes the sacred to the moral community by putting religious beliefs into the context of practice. "When the Greek Orthodox believers, for example, approach the priest to receive communion, they are not to behave casually...The religious belief is that the body and blood of Christ are in the chalice; given this belief, the religious practice requires that believers approach the priest quietly, solemnly."<sup>4</sup> In this example, the sacredness of the communion is reinforced by the rite of solemn observation.

According to Durkheim, religion not only seeks to differentiate between the sacred and the profane; but, also to separate the two elements of society

from contact with each other where possible. Some rituals, described as the “negative cult”<sup>5</sup> by Durkheim, act to bring about and emphasize this state of separation. “Sacred beings are, by definition, separate beings...Normally, the sacred and profane are outside each other. While a set of rites exists to bring about this crucial state of separation...Their function is to prevent unwarranted mixing and contact, to prevent one of the two domains from encroaching the other.”<sup>6</sup> I will return to the concept of the negative cult in my analysis of separation in ritual and in the sacrificial myth of the *Theogony*.

Along with the negative cult, Durkheim proposes that there is a positive cult of ritual as well. While the negative cult seeks to emphasize the separation of the sacred and the profane, the positive cult highlights the social conditions of the moral community. “Rites are, above all, the means by which the social group periodically reaffirms itself.”<sup>7</sup> In his analysis of the Aboriginal totemic beliefs, Durkheim found that rituals that affirm the existence of the collective community were some of the earliest religious foundations. “Some men, who felt united in part by blood ties but even more a community of interests and traditions, gathered and took stock of their moral unity.”<sup>8</sup>

In sum, the religious analysis contained in *Elementary Forms*, and the general methodology of the functionalist school make functionalism an ideal choice for analyzing the functions of animal sacrifice in the classical world. Throughout the analysis to follow, I will demonstrate the important social function that animal sacrifice plays. Elements of the negative cult, positive cult—separation, and socialization—are strongly developed in both ritual practice described by Homer and Ovid, and the mythological sacrifice of Hesiod.

### Homer: Archaic Sacrifice

It is Homer’s description of animal sacrifice, especially in the *Iliad*, that resembles closest the functional description of ritual described by Durkheim. On one hand, this is an unsurprising discovery. Durkheim is describing totemic practices in *Elementary Forms* as the historical basis of all world religions. For Durkheim, the fact that the more ancient (or, as Durkheim would put it, *primitive*) religious practices of archaic Greece more closely align with his analysis in *Elementary Forms* would be no coincidence. Rather, functionalism maintains that such similarities are characteristic of the development of religion over time.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of the reason why Homeric sacrifice

contains so many of the elements of primitive<sup>10</sup> *Elementary Forms*, functionalism provides a valid context in which to overview the rituals described in the *Iliad*. Both of Homer’s texts, though primarily the *Iliad*, provide an important insight into how the Greeks of the archaic period viewed sacrifice. It is important to note that there is relatively little scholarship on animal sacrifice in Homer’s works. Sarah Hitch, of Harvard’s Center for Hellenic Studies, is the only author to date to have completed a full analysis of animal sacrifice in the *Iliad*. Hitch begins by defining animal sacrifice as “the immolation of animals in contexts that include any address or ritual action directed toward the gods, *whether or not it is followed by a meal*.”<sup>11, 12</sup> The last part of this statement is especially important when Hitch describes the general pattern of Homeric sacrifice.

Homeric sacrifice tends to follow a patterned system of rites, divided into three sections: pre-kill, kill, and post-kill. “Greek animal sacrifice is essentially a series of symbolic actions leading up to the violent killing of one or more animals, followed by the practical actions of transforming the sacrifice into a feast or disposing of the carcass.”<sup>13</sup> The first of the pre-kill rites is the essential act of separation. “The pre-kill rites involve highly artificial signs, which mark the ceremony, participants, and victim(s) as extraordinary.”<sup>14</sup> This ritual separation is essentially an invocation of the *negative cult* described by Durkheim, an initial ritual separation between the sacred and the profane. The *negative cult* takes form after the procession, or *pompê*, when the participants in the sacrifice wash their hands in the sacred water and barley. The sacrificial animal is designated as sacred in a similar way. “Once the *pompê* reaches the altar, on top of which a fire is built, the *khernips* ‘water basin’ and the *kanoun*, containing barley grains... are both carried clockwise around the altar. The participants, whose involvement bonds them as members of the group, and the officiant, customarily a household leader, community leader, religious official, or *honorand*, wash their hands. The animal is sprinkled with water.”<sup>15</sup>

Following the *negative cult* rituals, there is a moment of ritual silence that precedes the killing rites. After that, “The throat of the animal is slit, perhaps accompanied by a *ololugê*.” The *ololugê*, or “female ritual cry”<sup>16</sup>, played an important role in Greek society and ritual practice; and was set apart from the masculine cry. “[The *ololugê*’s] direct corollary, the ritual cry of males, was sounded only on the battlefield.”<sup>17</sup> The importance of the *ololugê* in the animal sacrifice

By examining the work of classical authors Homer, Hesiod, and Ovid on practices and meanings of animal sacrifice, especially through the lens of Durkheimian social functionalism, Logan John carries out a sophisticated analysis and offers an original thesis on the trajectory of the meaning of animal sacrifice in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds.

—David Nikkel



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is representative, thus reinforces the unique social role of women, and the same cry is uttered at moments of child birth and family death.<sup>18</sup> Such moments have inevitable importance to the social structure, and the fact that such a cry was uttered at the moment of the kill shows the important social function animal sacrifice also must have played.

The separation of the *negative cult* that begins the ritual is ended with the killing of the sacrificial animal. At the conclusion of the ritual the meat is distributed in a feast. “In such commensal sacrifices, the animal is carved up into different portions, some of which are burned for the god, others given to special participants, especially the religious officials, and the leftover portions distributed for general consumption or even sale.”<sup>19</sup> The communal meal represents the *positive cult* aspect of the ritual, bringing together the members of the group to conclude the ritual. This system can be seen in *Iliad* I 458–461:

Once the men had prayed and flung the barley,  
first they lifted back the heads of the victims, slit  
their throats, and skinned them,  
and carved out the thigh bones and wrapped them  
in a double layer of fat,  
and topped them with strips of raw flesh.  
Once the thigh bones were burned and they tasted  
the splankhna,  
they cut the rest into pieces, pierced them with spits,  
roasted them to a turn and pulled them off the spits.  
The work done, the feast laid out, they ate well  
and no man’s hunger lacked an appropriate share of  
the feast.

The ritual described in *Iliad* 458–461 begins with the pre-kill rite of separation, “The men prayed and flung the barley.” The poem then describes the killing rite and the sacrificed meat. It is important to note that “the thigh bones...wrapped...in a double layer of fat” are the sacrificed meat. Thigh bones wrapped in fat are also the meat legitimized in the sacrificial myth described by Hesiod, and are the most common meat referenced in Greek animal sacrifice.

The importance of proper sacrifice, or following the sacrificial system, is reinforced in the *Iliad*. While the ways in which Homer describes different sacrifices varies in specific detail during different scenes, Homer is likely not conveying that such rituals had great variation in practice. “Shared formulas are found almost entirely in and immediately following the kill sections of sacrifices, and some scholars have assumed that the missing pre-kill details are omitted from the shorter scenes for the sake of brevity.”<sup>20</sup> In the *Odyssey*, Homer represents the profanity of improper sacrifice when Odysseus, upon his return home, sees that his livestock has been eaten.

Odysseus’ disapproval extends beyond the theft that has occurred against him, saying, “so that killing (ΙΕΡΕΥΣΑΝΤΕΣ<sup>21</sup>) the pigs, they might satisfy their spirits with meat.”<sup>22</sup> Homer views sacrifice as sacred and as an important function of the social structure of his time. While the Homeric sacrifice is not always concluded with the *positive cult* of the communal meal, the sacrifice nonetheless describes an important social function in the form of communal gathering and shared value systems.

### Hesiod

While Homer’s writings certainly would not be considered works of non-fiction, they do engage in a legendary-historical literary style that is quite different than Hesiod’s mythology. Hesiod’s *Theogony* is a work of mythological literature that tells of the creation of the world and its many gods. Written sometime around 700 BCE, one to two hundred years after the death of Homer, the *Theogony* deals little with direct descriptions of ritual practice; rather, the *Theogony* expounds on the origins of animal sacrifice in the roots of the creation narrative. The story of Prometheus and the origin of sacrifice begins at a time when mortals and gods are dwelling together. “For when gods and mortal men were making a settlement at Mekone, at that time Prometheus divided with eager spirit a great ox and set it before him, seeking to beguile the mind of Zeus.”<sup>23</sup> Prometheus, perhaps the most prominent trickster among the deities, takes the ox and separates the meats in such a way as to fool Zeus into giving humans the better portion. “Prometheus covered flesh and innards rich in fat with the ox’s stomach and set them down wrapped in the hide. For them, he covered the ox’s white bones with shining fat and, well arranging them for his cunning trick, set them down.”<sup>24</sup> Zeus selects the fat-covered thigh bones, thinking them to be the choicest meat, and the sacrifice is established. “From then on, for the immortals the tribes of men on earth burn white bones on fragrant altars.”<sup>25</sup>

Before analyzing this myth and applying the functionalist method, I will provide a brief historical context for the analysis I will make. It is accepted by many historians that sacrifice is a product of, or began to exist in, the agrarian society. In the past scholars such as Walter Burkert have argued that animal sacrifice played a significant role in pre-agrarian society; however, such views are largely not supported by the historical record. “A key piece of evidence argues against a pre-agrarian context for animal sacrifice. In almost all cultures for which we have ethnographic evidence, sacrifices consist of domesticated animals,



not wild ones.”<sup>26</sup> To simplify, the historical record indicates that in non-agrarian prehistory animal sacrifice did not exist. It is important to understand that the period before agrarian civilization predates archaic Greek civilization by thousands of years. There is no attributable date to the beginning of Greek animal sacrifice, and Hitch notes the general lack of archaeological evidence on Greek animal sacrifice.<sup>27</sup>

Hesiod is describing a previous age, consistent with his description of the linear degeneration of eras, when he discusses the time when Prometheus tricked Zeus and created sacrifice. During the era in which this story takes place, the golden era, the interaction between humans and gods is markedly different from the age in which Hesiod believes himself to exist. As evidenced by the very beginning of the myth of Prometheus, “gods and mortal men were making a settlement at Mekone,” humankind and the gods are in complete communion, even going as far as to build a place of residence together. I make the point that this is a reference, intentional or not, to an idealized pre-agricultural past. Hesiod is explaining an era in which humans did not have to sacrifice, because they were in constant contact with the gods. The point is reinforced in Stephanie Nelson’s comparison of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Unbound* to the *Theogony*. “When Aeschylus’ Prometheus describes a time before medicine he describes people as perishing, helpless against the disease which afflicted them. When Hesiod pictures Prometheus’ invention he sees it not only as a time before medicine, but a time before people *needed* medicine, a time before people had diseases.”<sup>28</sup>

I maintain that the *negative cult* described by Durkheim is not only existent in ritual practice, but also in myth. In *Theogony* the origins of proper sacrifice are described through Prometheus’ trick: because Zeus has selected the fat covered bones, humans are to sacrifice this part. The myth thus legitimatizes the sacrificial practice (which was already established by the time that Homer wrote *Iliad*), and separates the sacred from the profane. In a sense, Hesiod applies the same attitude to the forward movement of time. Hesiod views the past as sacred, “golden,” and better than the period in which he lives. On the contrary, Hesiod views his own time period as the product of degeneration from the ancient past.

## Ovid

The way in which scholars are to read the descriptions of religious practice in Ovid has presented a challenge to scholars. Some scholars read Ovid literally, “taking it at face value as a quarry from which to mine reliable gems of information on Roman re-

ligion.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast, some scholars outright reject Ovid’s writings as legitimate means in which to gain an understanding of Roman religious practice, “chastizing [sic] the poet for what they saw as errors from a man ignorant of his own national religion.”<sup>30</sup> Given the first presupposition that I assumed at the beginning of the paper, I will analyze the rituals presented as descriptions (if not direct representations) of rituals that existed during Ovid’s lifetime. On that note, the conditions and functions of animal sacrifice had evolved steadily since ancient Greece. “Among the Romans, religious debate concerning live sacrifice was particularly fervent in the Late Republic.”<sup>31</sup> The Roman debates echoed earlier debates on the morality of animal sacrifice in ancient Greece, especially those made by Pythagoras. “Strong Pythagorean sympathies... may have formed some sort of religious movement. But even outside strictly Pythagorean circles, a number of prominent writers in the Late Republic were inviting debate on the morality and validity of animal sacrifice in its Roman context.”<sup>32</sup> These debates manifest themselves in the spirit of Pythagoras’ defense of animal rights in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, and transformed the way in which the Roman state interacted with the sacred.

The Romans are well known for the intertwining of the secular state and the sacred, and animal sacrifice of Ovid’s time was no exception. “During the reign of Augustus, it is clear that animal sacrifice was being consciously advertised in the ‘traditional’ way, as an unquestionably positive institution and a most potent symbol of religious revival.”<sup>33</sup> Steven Green argues that the connection between “Augustus the sacrificer” and “Augustus the benefactor” was a key way of legitimizing the practice of state sacrifice in the minds of Romans.<sup>34</sup> When Ovid deals with animal sacrifice in *Fasti*, he is writing about animal sacrifice with the Augustinian tradition in mind.

Just as in Hesiod, Ovid is interested in and aware of proper sacrifice. Much like Homer, Ovid weaves the elements of proper sacrifice into his poetry in a way that is both descriptive and narrative. Ovid begins *Fasti* by giving both sides of the animal sacrifice debate, weaving the narrative into the context of a properly described ritual. “The poem, therefore, two sides of an animal sacrifice debate find voice. From this point onwards, Ovid’s attitude towards animal sacrifice remains ambivalent: he seems to endorse a positive interpretation at one moment, only to undermine it the next.”<sup>35</sup> Finally Ovid makes his point in the myth of Roman King Numa and Zeus. The myth is as follows:

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'Cut off a head', said Jupiter: to him, king Numa replied, 'We will obey: an onion must be dug up from my garden and cut up.' Jupiter added, 'Something belonging to a man': Numa responded, 'You will have a man's hair.' Jupiter then demanded a life, to whom Numa responded, '(You will have) a fish's.

While it is clear that Jupiter is asking for the sacrifice of a human, Numa is able to avert Jupiter's wishes by substituting an onion, the hair of a person's head, and finally a fish. "Jupiter shows by his smile that he is pleased with the outcome. The story, then, observes the traditional hierarchy of sacrificial victims: alarm turns to laughter, as the potential sacrifice of a human being is cleverly substituted by a fish."<sup>36</sup> The point is clear: Ovid is arguing that animals are sacrificed in place of humans.

The story of Numa and Jupiter in *Festi* serves the same mythological function as the myth of the binding of Isaac. Both stories serve as origin myths, in that they explain why it is that animal sacrifice began. To a greater point though, Ovid is explaining why animal sacrifice is still practiced. The logic of the myth is that sacrifice of some kind is demanded by the gods, humans view that sacrifice of animals is preferable to that of humans, the gods have smiled on animal sacrifice deeming it acceptable; thus, sacrifice of animals ought to be performed. Taken functionally, rather than literally, the myth conveys the sense that human life is sacred and that animal sacrifice preserves this sacredness. The negative cult of Ovid's myth, and thus his interpretation of ritual practice, is that the sacred life of humans ought to be set aside from the profane nature of the world.

### Conclusion

It is true that by comparing Homer and Ovid, one could gain an understanding of the comparative differences in the system of ritual between archaic Greece and the first century Roman Empire; however, functionalist interpretation of these myths lends itself to an important comparative distinction between what these societies viewed as sacred. For the more ancient Homer and Hesiod, the process of sacrifice is unquestionably sacred. It is clear by Pythagoras' dialogue in the *Metamorphoses*, and his evaluation of the Augustan practice, that the sacredness of the sacrifice was in question. While Hesiod argues that sacrifice ought to be done because it is a way of emphasizing the limited immanence of the gods in a world of separation between human and the divine, Ovid is arguing that sacrifice is an affirmation of the value (or the sacredness) of human life itself.

While it is unfair to characterize the myths of any of these authors as the only existing attitudes in their times or societies, it is important that such contrasting world views are revealed through what was, essentially, the same ritual practice. All of these authors emphasize the sacred and profane in their societies, addressing the social norms of animal sacrifice in their own way. All three are interested in right practice, and view improper practice as profane; thus, all three affirm the significance that sacrifice had in their times. In ancient animal sacrifice one may find a clear unity between society and religion, the inseparable nature of the two that has existed far beyond the days of burning altars in the Greco-Roman world. 🐟

## Endnotes

- 1 For the purposes of this paper I will use Carol Cosman's 2001 translation, republished in 2008. Citation: Durkheim, Émile, Carol Cosman, and Mark S. Cladis. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- 2 *Ibid.* xiv
- 3 *Ibid.* 46
- 4 *Ibid.* xxi
- 5 *Ibid.* 221
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.* 287
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 This is not the position of this paper, but is addressed in fairness to Durkheim and the functionalist school.
- 10 In the context of Durkheim, simple-basic.
- 11 Hitch, Sarah. *King of Sacrifice: Ritual and Royal Authority in the Iliad*. Vol. 25. Hellenic Studies Series. 1.1. Washington DC, 2009. <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/6162>.
- 12 Emphasis mine
- 13 *Ibid.* 1.2
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Cole, Susan Guettel. *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: The Ancient Greek Experience*. 118. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *King of Sacrifice: Ritual and Royal Authority in the Iliad*. 1.2
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 Hitch notes this word is not used elsewhere when describing sacrifice
- 22 *Ibid.* 1.3
- 23 Hesiod, *Theogony*. 535-537
- 24 *Ibid.* 538-542
- 25 *Ibid.* 556, 557
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## THE MYTHOS OF THE THIRD GENDER: INTERSEXUALITY AND TRANSEXUALITY IN MYTHOLOGY

By Piper Lizak



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The vast history and sheer breadth of mythology that spans both time and the globe is staggering in its immensity, dealing with everything within human nature, from the meaning of life, to what happens after death, to the existence – or non-existence – of the soul. One thing almost every mythology at least briefly touches on, however, is human gender, be it in their portrayals of deities and non-human beings or in stories of the human worshippers of these higher authorities. This exploration of gender in mythology across Earth's historical legends and religious beliefs will focus primarily on Ancient Indian tradition and the Valkyries and shield-maidens of the Ancient Norse culture. It will include a comparative look at both the Greek and Roman myths which involve characters who personify different ideas and ideals about the nature of human gender and sex. It will also examine different ideas about gender beyond specific character studies, such as Plato's proposed origin of man in his famous *Symposium* and the Indian portrayal of "bisexuality" as the meeting of the masculine and feminine.

In her "Bisexuality in the Mythology of Ancient India," Wendy Doniger explains that, "in common English parlance . . . a bisexual does something bisexual," referring to someone's preference towards sexual partners. However, in the realm of gender, "Merriam Webster gives as the first meaning the existential meaning, 'possessing characteristics of both sexes, hermaphroditic,'" an outdated term for intersex (Doniger 50). This is further contrasted with

the common term used for sexual preferences as "a bisexual is something bisexual, primarily, and only secondarily someone who does something bisexual" (50). The term "bisexual" encompasses modern views of intersex, androgynous, and even transgender people, allowing readers and scholars of today to compare these ideas of gender to those we have today. As Doniger explains, "the image of a male . . . who splits off half of his body in order to make a woman to be his mate appears first in India in the famous cosmogony in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad . . . . Therefore Yajnavalkya has said, 'Oneself is like a half-fragment'" (50). Myths involving women being born from men in some way are not uncommon, although the idea of men and women having been originally fused into one being is also prevalent.

This idea of the inherently bisexual nature of humanity can be found most famously in Plato's *Symposium*, as discussed in the *Tenth Edition of Classical Mythology*. Plato presents this idea of gender through a speech to the other guests by Aristophanes, who explains that "in the beginning humankind had three sexes, not two, male and female, as now; but there was an addition, a third, which partook of both the others; . . . originally the male was sprung from the sun, the female from the earth, and the third, partaking of both male and female, from the moon, because the moon partakes of both the sun and the earth" (Morford et al. 212). These beings, per Aristophanes, grew insolent, attempting to overthrow the gods themselves. Zeus' proposed solution and, indeed, this myth's version of why there are men and women, is to "cut each of them in two, . . . and they will walk upright on two legs. . . . With these words he cut human beings in two, just as one splits fruit which is to be preserved or divides an egg with a hair" (212-213). Much like other presentations of this "third gender," Plato's embodiment of it necessarily comes to an end to produce modern humanity, describing us as "but a broken tally, half a man, since we have been cut just like the side of a flatfish and made two instead of one," and even offering an origin for human sexuality: "All women who are a section halved from the female do not pay any attention to men but rather turn to women; lesbians come from this source. All who are a section halved from the male pursue males" (213).

What Plato calls the "third gender," Doniger and the mythology of Ancient India refer to as "androgynous," most famously as Arddhanarishvara – "The



Lord Who Is Half Woman,” a fusion of Shiva and his wife, Parvati. The gods in the Hindu tradition are “more often serially than simultaneously bisexual,” that is, instead of being of the third gender and then becoming something else permanently, such as in Aristophanes’ speech, Hindu gods and goddesses can be described as “serially transsexual” (Doniger 51). This means they transform from male to female and back again, with little importance given to how this gender change itself affects them beyond the physical, rarely if ever mentioning the mental or internal effects of the shift. Doniger explains this phenomenon as “serial transformation,” which “in a sense appears to be chronological, first one sex and then another, is really existential: it is an attempt to recover a lost possibility, to express an ambiguity that is present from the start, revealed when it seems to be transformed. Many Hindu myths attest to both the existential perception of the self as bisexual (as having a body of one sex and a mind/soul/personality/gender of another) and active bisexual transformations, from male to female (MTF) or female to male (FTM)” (51). Myths regarding gender changes in the Hindu tradition generally spawn from one of two categories: they involve gods or god-like beings who change their gender temporarily, maintaining their mental gender or fully transforming, or worshippers who are permanently changed from male to female or vice versa.

An example of the first can be found in the story of Vishnu versus a horde of demons who attempt to steal ambrosia; in the version of the myth found in the *Mahabharata*, Vishnu takes on “an enchanting . . . illusion, the marvelous body of a woman.” Doniger explains that, in this version of the tale, “he never forgets that he is Vishnu; he retains his male memory and his male essence and resumes his own form after returning the Soma to the gods” (51-52). However, in the *Brahmanda Purana*, while Vishnu clearly recalls who he is, retaining his male identity, “Shiva seems to forget that the enchantress is Vishnu,” and in forgetting attempts to sexually assault “her,” producing the god Mahashasta from the failed attempt (53). In addition to being part of the traditional third gender stories, this myth can be read as an example of male homosexuality as well, “since Vishnu retains his male memory and his male essence” (53). Another tale of gender instead focuses on Shiva and a forest which is sacred to him, found in its earliest form in the *Ramayana*. While making love to his wife, Parvati, Shiva “took the form of a woman to please Parvati, and everything in the woods, even trees, became female” (53). As Doniger explains, “first comes the statement

that Shiva turned into a woman, and only afterwards, as a result of that transformation, does the rest of the forest change gender,” implying that although Shiva maintains his inner male essence, his gender changes powerfully enough to affect the world around him (53).

In contrast to the easy control over gender that iconifies the Hindu gods, their worshippers often have gender changes thrust upon them, for better or for worse. Doniger uses the example of a male worshipper of Parvati who is forcibly transformed from male to female, although the change is accepted and even appreciated by the worshipper, who goes from dressing as a female to truly being one. This specific example is as close to the modern idea of transgender people as can be readily found, and as Doniger puts it, “the thin line that divides transvestism (the transformation of the surface, the gender) from transsexuality (the transformation of the body, the sex) is often breached, and here it is entirely erased: the surface masquerade becomes, through divine magic, a transformation in depth” (55). Similarly, the myth of Queen Chudala, found in the *Yogavasishtha*, expresses the bisexuality of a god-like human, who uses her power to shift forms from male to female and back again. Her husband, upon discovering that his wife is both his male friend by day and his female lover by night, exclaims that she is “the most wonderful wife who ever lived. The wife is everything to her husband: friend, brother, sympathizer, servant, guru, companion, wealth, happiness, the Vedic canon, abode, and slave” (56). Chudala is especially interesting in her great power, as she is one of the only, if not the only, female in Hindu myth that successfully achieves enlightenment.

As Doniger proposes, “these myths may also express positive homosexual fantasies,” as “a homophobic society,” as most ancient societies were, “often inspires a closet homosexuality encoded in texts” (58). This same train of thought can be found in Kathleen M. Self’s “The Valkyrie’s Gender: Old Norse Shield-Maidens and Valkyries as a Third Gender,” which surveys the mythos surrounding both shield-maidens and Valkyries, the latter of which is more like the perpetually ambiguous gender identity seen in gods and deities. Proposing that “these figures are best understood as a third gender – a hybrid of masculine and feminine characteristics that were dominant during the time period explored,” Self explains that, in Ancient Norse culture, gender was “distinguished particularly by . . . ‘clothing, cosmetics, behaviors, miens, affective and sexual object choices,’” particu-

Drawing on definitive sources on Hindu, Norse, Greek, and Roman mythology, Piper Lizak has completed a thorough comparative project on intersexuality and transsexuality. On the many homework assignments due for each reading, Piper always went far beyond the call of duty with thorough and insightful contributions. She also helped stimulate class discussion every session with her mastery of the readings and her insights.

—David Nikkel

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larly clothing (Self 144). This distinction is important in distinguishing between feminine, masculine and third gender portrayals in Norse mythology, as quite often pronouns, clothing and behaviors are equally important in gender representation, rather than pronouns being the overarching, defining piece of one's gender. This is, as Self explains through a quote from William Layher, "[b]ecause masculinity and femininity were codified, if not established outright, through appropriate clothing in Norse society, items such as colorful silken coats, homespun cloaks, headdresses and the like" (144-145).

Importantly for any discussion of the gender of shield-maidens, Valkyries, and other battle-oriented beings, "the virtue of death in battle points out the strong association of masculinity and martial action, an activity in which valkyries and shield-maidens also participated." This category of "martial action" also includes weaponry, shields and armor, all of which are iconic of classical Valkyries and shield-maidens, although modern interpretations have begun to lose this distinctive quality. As Self explains, "it is a mixing of body codes that marks the valkyrie and the shield-maidens as neither male nor female, but a mixture of the two . . . they, like other third genders of sexes, 'transcend the categories of male and female, masculine and feminine . . . .' These figures do not fit into the classification woman, although the shield-maiden may leave the male/female hybrid to be repositioned squarely in that feminine category" (145). Valkyries, first and foremost, are more indicative of the third gender, mixing many different gender signals through their work, clothing, and pronouns.

Most importantly, Valkyries are "chooser[s] of the dead," controlling the fate of warriors on the battlefield and leading the souls of the dead to Valholl. Upon arrival in Valholl, their role changes from this distinctly masculine power over death and life itself to the much more feminine role of "[serving] the warriors drink" to the souls of those fallen in battle (147). Valkyries on the battlefield, serving their more masculine role, have multiple "macabre aspect[s]: she engages in conversation with a raven, a carrion bird, on a battlefield after the battle has ended . . . describes the bird's bloody break and the smell of dead flesh that accompanies it" (148). Valkyries are also "divine or, at the very least, semi-divine," harkening to the previously discussed Hindu and Indian portrayals of the third gender being almost exclusively found in gods or those blessed by them (148). However, in comparison to the shield-maidens, Valkyries get less "screen-time," so to speak, with less development,

distinctiveness of character, and ultimately are less individualistic and more "personifications of battle" (148).

Shield-maidens, on the other hand, "are human and have human parents and human lineages," but "also have supernatural abilities, such as being able to ride over the sea and through the air" (148). Unlike Valkyries, who generally seem uninterested in human men or, if they do happen to get involved with one, only go so far as a sexual relationship, shield-maidens "take a special interest in human men. . . [protecting] their heroes and [aiding] them. Shield-maidens engage in sexual relationships with their heroes and most marry them; after that, they cease to be shield-maidens and become only feminine" (148). This last distinction is important, as shield-maidens, through their interaction with and tying to a human man, lose their "third gender" aspect, essentially going from an ambiguous, androgyne, or transgender identity to the more familiar – and more mortal – identity of simply "female." Indeed, shield-maidens, upon marriage, lose all of their identifying masculine traits, no longer fighting on the battlefield, losing the control over their own fate found in their previous interactions with men – mortal, non-divine women in Norse culture had no control over whom they would marry, how, or when, and certainly had no say over their husbands – and give up sword, shield and armor to become an ordinary woman, their power, divinity and third gender stripped from them.

Norse mythos also has aspects of the third gender in one of its traditionally masculine gods, Loki, who is "disparaged for his transformations into a feminine form, and for his transsexual and trans-species activity when s/he gives birth to a foal. Moving from the feminine to the masculine end of the spectrum could be met with approval, but the inverse was rarely true. Divine beings other than Loki have their moments of gender blurring, but it is usually treated disparagingly" (145). Thor, by comparison, was the embodiment of "the most positively valorized gender," the "idealized masculinity . . . considered strong, highly capable with weapons, fearless, powerful, and bold." The two brothers represent two sides of the same gender coin, with Loki as the third, ambiguous gender and Thor as the more commonly spoken of, more easily describable, male.

Shifts in gender can readily be found in Greek and Roman mythos, although they tend to be more representative of transgender people than those who are intersex, with the notable exception of the story of Hermaphroditus. The story of Caeneus, born Caenis,

is an interesting one, discussed in short on page 122 of *Classical Mythology*. As it explains, Caenis was “born a girl . . . [and] seduced by Poseidon, who then granted her anything she wanted. She asked to be turned into a man and to become invulnerable,” which Poseidon granted, although Caeneus was later struck down by Zeus for his impiety (Morford et al. 122). Iphis is another example of a human transformed from one gender to another by the gods. Condemned to death from birth if her gender was revealed to be female, her mother, Telethusa, “kept the baby girl, giving her a name suitable for either a boy or a girl and dressing her like a boy. Thus deceived, Ligdus betrothed Iphis to another girl, Ianthe, whom Iphis did indeed come to love. On the night before they were to be married, Telethusa prayed to Isis to pity Iphis and Ianthe (for Ianthe did not yet know the real sex of her lover), and the goddess in answer turned Iphis into a boy, who next day married his Ianthe” (668).

Unlike the gender shifts of these myths, however, Dionysus’ relation to the identity of third or otherwise in-between gender is tied to his birth and subsequent worship. Today, he is considered the patron god of transgender and intersex people, and examining the various details of his birth, death, rebirth and veneration helps to shed light on why he is so closely associated with those of ambiguous or changed identities, even in modern times. The story of his initial birth varies in presentation, but the version described by David Adams Leeming in *Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero* is particularly interesting. The daughter of Demeter, Persephone, was “weaving a great web, a robe for her father or her mother, which was a picture of the whole world,” drawing the attention of Zeus, who “came to her in the shape of a serpent, and begat by his daughter that god [Dionysos],” who himself had horns to “signify that he [was] the son of Persephone” (Leeming 40). In this initial, mortal life, Dionysus was nursed and transformed into a kid – or baby goat – by Zeus “to hide him from the jealous Hera,” and later “carried . . . to the nymphs of Nysa” by Hermes to be raised by them as his nurses (Leeming 79).

Interestingly, as Leeming explains, “precisely at what point the mortal-born Dionysus became a full-fledged god is not certain,” lending another point to his general ambiguity and, perhaps, tying him more to the in-between, grey-area identity of the third gender (172). Edith Hamilton, in her *Mythology*, points out that Dionysus “was the only god whose parents were not both divine” and, in fact, “at Thebes alone do mortal women bear Immortal gods” (Hamilton

64). In either case, Hera fulfilled her vengeance, sending the Titans to tear Dionysus apart, eating his limbs and in some cases either consuming his heart or leaving it behind. In Leeming’s included version, the heart of the child was saved, and “when Zeus came to Semele, this was not a divine mating. He had prepared a potion from the heart of Dionysos, and this he gave Semele to drink. The potion made the girl pregnant. [...] Led astray by her pretended nurse, Semele asked Zeus to grant her just one wish. Zeus promised to do so, and when his beloved wished that he would appear to her as he did to Hera, he visited her with lightning. . . . The lightning struck her and she descended into the Underworld. Zeus rescued from her body the unripe fruit, the child Dionysos. The Father sheltered the prematurely born god in his own thigh, . . . his father bore him, when the proper time for his birth had come” (Leeming 270).

This pseudo-immaculate conception, free from the use of sperm or male essence beyond the heart of the child himself, along with being carried in the womb of a woman and the thigh of a man, described as a “second womb” in *Classical Mythology*, imbues Dionysus with the characteristics of a mixed or blurry gender identity, seeping into the category of the third gender by way of his strange conception (Morford et al. 310). As Padraic Colum puts it, “[Dionysos] was that God who was so marvelously born. . . . [Semele] had begged her lover to show himself to her in all the splendor of his godhead. Zeus came to her in his radiance; then Semele was smitten and consumed and the life went from her. Zeus took her unborn child; opening his thigh he laid the unborn thing within and had the flesh sewn over it” (Colum 84). His great power, even over other gods, also settles him more firmly into this category, as one similarity between all of the pantheons and religions discussed thus far is that those deities and beings of the third gender or similar identities are massively powerful, even Loki, who was ultimately overpowered.

Edith Hamilton describes one of Dionysus’ shows of power, after he has been reborn and gained his followers, wherein “he longed for [his mother] so greatly that at last he dared the terrible descent to the lower world to seek her. When he found her, he defied the power of Death to keep her from him; and Death yielded. Dionysus brought her away, but not to live on earth. He took her up to Olympus, where the gods consented to receive her as one of themselves, a mortal, indeed, but the mother of a god and therefore fit to dwell with immortals” (Hamilton 67). Aside from shows of strength, Dionysus’ followers

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also enhance the ambiguous nature of his identity, with “male as well as female votaries dressed in flowing garments that seemed effeminate to the Greeks” (Leeming 172). Thus, Dionysus’ conception, birth and following places him alongside third gender deities in Greek myth, such as Phanes, “the creator everything,” a bisexual deity who was later swallowed by Zeus, alongside all previous creation (Morford et al. 396).

Comparing the religions and deities discussed herein reveals differences in culture and different aspects of what defines, or furthers the ambiguity of, gender and sex. In Hindu culture, when dealing with gods and goddesses, gender changes are ultimately external, with the internal “essence” of the deity remaining unchanged, their identity and sense of self intact and remaining the same gender they identified as to begin with. The latent homophobia within some aspects of Hindu culture influenced how they dealt with gender shifts in third gender deities, although in a different aspect from its influence in Norse culture. Positively presented tales of homosexuality in Hindu culture exist in small amounts, but are important as examples of myth fighting back in some small way against oppressive aspects of its larger cultural sphere, much like Sappho’s unabashed use of lesbian imagery and themes in her poetic works. Gender shifts in the mortal followers of Hindu gods are more drastic than those in the deities themselves, often being classified as transitions, such as in transgender people, rather than third gender or bisexual identities. Queen Chudala is something of an exception to the rule in multiple ways, most importantly in her ambiguous identity, as she lives comfortably as both a man and a woman, able to fluidly transition between them. She ultimately decides to live as a woman, but her overall identity is more akin to the third gender of Hindu gods than a transition or an intersex person.

In Norse culture, however, gender and sex seem to blur, at least in terms of Valkyries and shield-maidens. Instead of being defined by genitalia or gender roles, they, like men in Norse society, are defined by their attributes in war, with the masculine aspects of their third gender identity spawned from their skills in battle and, in the case of Valkyries, their control over death itself. Further enunciating the importance of battle as the defining characteristic of gender, shield-maidens lose their masculine identity when they marry, banned from the battlefield, and resigned

to a life as a wife first, a mother second, and a shield-maiden never again. The homophobia prevalent in Norse culture impacted portrayals of men more than those who were predominantly feminine-aligned, with Thor being the pinnacle of maleness and Loki being disregarded and degraded due to shifting genders and giving birth. Although some of Loki’s tales might be myth fighting back against culture, they were more likely reflections of the culture itself, with Loki being demonized and portrayed as somehow wrong or deficient for his “crime” of being of ambiguous gender identity.

Greek and Roman myth dealt with gender and sex in similar ways due to their highly interconnected histories, although the differences between their culture of gender roles and norms in myth and those of Norse and Hindu traditions is still noticeable. Changes in identity, from gender, to sex, to species, were commonplace in classical myth, so much so that the transformation itself is rarely reacted to with surprise or shock. What seems most important in gender and sex shifts in classic myth is the benefit of the change itself, be it Ianthe’s shift to male to legally marry the love of her life or Caenis’ shift to Caeneus to avoid being harmed ever again. Even Dionysus’ use of the third gender is associated with power more than identity, with his inner strength keeping him alive through death, rebirth, and being carried in both a feminine and masculine “womb,” only to achieve a massive amount of power in adulthood, in part thanks to the ambiguity of both his practice and his people.

By examining these differences and arguing for the inclusion of these myths into the categories of ambiguous gender identity and, in some cases, as representation of real identities in the modern day, one can see the development over time and throughout different cultures of different views of gender, sex, transgender people and intersexuality, along with the prevalence of homophobia in early culture and how authors and poets of the time fought back against these cultural restraints through mythos. In conclusion, transgender, intersex, bisexual and “third gender” deities span across history and the globe, creating an impactful trail of cultural and legal shifts in the status quo and the norms of gender roles that can help to put the modern world into perspective, especially when examining culture through the lens of gender, sex, and identity. 🧡



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# THE APOTROPAIC FUNCTION OF THE PHALLUS IN ANCIENT ROMAN ART

By Anisha McDowell



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The phallus has been a significant part of the iconographies of many cultures because it commonly symbolizes fertility, abundance, and male energy and power. The phallus is also often used in works of art simply to add a humorous element. A lesser-known function of the phallus however is that of an apotropaic symbol, or a symbol that is meant to invoke luck and protection from evil. The reproductive, patriarchal, and humorous natures of the phallus are directly linked to its apotropaic function and influence how the phallus came to be a ubiquitous symbol in daily Roman life.

To understand how the phallus operates as an apotropaic object, one must first understand the power of fertility, the power of men, and the power of laughter in the eyes of the ancient Romans. There are social, political, and mystical aspects related to each of these elements. In a social context, the phallus was most likely viewed as being especially powerful because ancient Rome was a patriarchal society where men were the primary wielders of power. An example of how the ancient Romans followed a patriarchal structure lies in the *paterfamilias*, or the male head of the household, who oversaw all of the affairs in his family (Sofroniew 37). All families had their own *paterfamilias*, and this male-dominated family structure was a smaller example of the overall societal structure.

Due to the patriarchal nature of ancient Roman society, male energy was seen as more aggressive and domineering than female energy. This difference in energies between the sexes can be further seen in

Roman mythology. For example, the god Mars was a god of war and battles and the goddess Venus ruled over love and beauty. As illustrated by Mars, male energy at its extreme symbolizes violence. For the ancient Romans, and many other cultures during and after their time, one of the ways male violence could be communicated was through the erect phallus. This is because a flaccid phallus holds no power: it does not penetrate therefore it does not assert dominance. An erect phallus however symbolizes sexual dominance, which translates into dominance in other aspects of life.

In both the social and political arenas, and as Paul Mathieu notes, fertility “increased the size of one’s house, one’s wealth, and one’s might, but also ensured survival of one’s family line. Fertility and sex brought about this progeny and, therefore, brought good fortune and, in other words, kept away the evil eye” (74). Fertility provided material gain as well social and political gain that created a more ideal lifestyle for a family, and for the *paterfamilias* especially.

Perhaps the strongest political aspect of fertility stemmed from government-promoted nationalism. The birth of children was significant to individual family units, but the continuation of the Roman people and their society as a whole was even more significant from the point of view of the imperialist government. Having children and continuing Roman society, particularly the patrician class, was so important that the first of the imperial emperors, Augustus, created laws that encouraged Roman citizens to marry and have children. For example, in 18 B.C.E., Augustus established the *lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*, legislation that stated men who were between the ages of twenty-five and sixty and women who were between the ages of twenty and fifty should be married, not be practicing celibacy, and should have children. Unmarried and married but childless citizens of these ages were subject to consequences. For example, these citizens could not receive an inheritance from a family member that they were not related to by blood unless that family member was a soldier and included these citizens in their will. In addition, unmarried or childless women were subject to higher property taxes (Rowell 209).

In relation to mysticism, the inexplicable generative forces of nature that brought life to Roman infants were venerated precisely because of their incomprehensibility. This force also stood in direct opposition to death itself; this opposition was miracu-

lous to the Romans because as a society they suffered from high infant mortality rates (Sofroniew 73). The humorous nature of the phallus also relates to mysticism because the Romans viewed laughter as a powerful ward against evil spirits and energies. For the Romans, laughter and the energy that accompanied it was the exact opposite of the energy of evil and dark forces (Clarke 66).

The phallus, in all of its apotropaic iterations, was incorporated into daily Roman life in the form of many objects. These objects included but were not limited to wall carvings, wind chimes, mosaics, and wall paintings. The common nature of these objects combined with the significance of the phallus resulted in pervasive phallic imagery that could be found throughout the empire. These objects were so common that many, including the objects to be discussed in this paper, became popular research subjects for historians and art historians alike. The primary object that this paper investigates is a wind chime, or tintinnabulum. The term tintinnabulum did not refer only to wind chimes; any set of functioning bells, no matter what form they took, was referred to as a tintinnabulum. The specific tintinnabulum in question was bronze-cast in ancient Rome around the first century A.D. It is currently housed in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier of Germany (Mathieu 74).

The Trier tintinnabulum has the hind legs of an unidentifiable mammal and the upper portion of the figure is made up of the shaft and head of a phallus. It has a long, feline-like tail that morphs into a small phallus at the end. It also has angel-like wings on its back, what appears to be donkey ears on either side of the head of the phallus, and an erection attached to the lower portion of the body. A single bell is attached to each wing by chain, and a third bell is hung from just above the frenulum of the tintinnabulum's "head" (fig. 1). The repetition of the phallus throughout the piece indicates that the protective aspect of this object derives from the genitalia and its reproductive power, not from the other included elements such as animal features, wings, or bells. It could also be argued that this object's apotropaic power can also be found in its humorous nature, as it depicts an imaginary and frankly laughable creature.

Claudia Moser asserts that the location where objects like the tintinnabulum could be found indicates that erect phalluses "served a protective, apotropaic power, warding off trespassers, enemies, or instilling good luck and protection" (14). As previously stated, tintinnabulae served as wind chimes and as such were hung outside of the home. Having an ob-

ject in a liminal space of a building shows that tintinnabulum and the phalli they depicted were intended to be defensive in some way. Another common art object that could be found in the liminal spaces of Roman homes was the floor mosaic. Mosaics of dogs in the entryway of the home were common, imitating the image of an actual guard dog of a home, for example the guard dog floor mosaic from the House of Opeheus (fig. 2). Apotropaic phalluses were also used in mosaics in the same manner that dogs were used in floor mosaics.

Examples of mosaics utilizing phalluses in the place of guard dogs can be seen in multiple buildings found in and around ancient Rome. One example is the threshold mosaic of the House of Jupiter the Thunderer, found in Ostia (fig. 3). This mosaic is a straightforward example of the simple generative and patriarchal power of the phallus protecting a location. It is important to note that the phallus in this mosaic is erect. As mentioned before, erections demonstrated male dominance, and in the case of ithyphallic mosaics such as this one, the dominance and aggression being displayed is directed at any evil spirits intending to cross the threshold. The confrontational nature of a large erection is meant to intimidate the spirits, thus scaring them away.

Another example of an apotropaic mosaic found in a liminal space is the "Mosaic of the Evil Eye" (fig. 4) found in the threshold of the House of the Evil Eye, in Antioch. It depicts a dwarf walking away from the evil eye, while his large phallus faces the opposite direction and is directly targeting the evil eye. A dog, snake, scorpion, and other animals also attack the evil eye. In contrast to the threshold mosaic of the House of Jupiter, the Mosaic of the Evil Eye's protective power comes from its humor rather than aggressive male energy. It is the dwarf's phallus that creates the apotropaic humor of the mosaic. This is partly because the Romans found the short stature of the pygmies in Egypt to be humorous, and partly because they found disproportionately large penises on any body size humorous in and of themselves (Clarke 65-66).

Another example of a floor mosaic that uses the phallus for apotropaic purposes can be found in the bathhouse known as the House of Menander, in Pompeii. The mosaic is at the entrance to the caldarium of the bathhouse and depicts a servant who is carrying two water pitchers and who has a disproportionately large penis that his short bath towel cannot even begin to cover (fig. 5). It is understood that the servant is meant to be an apotropaic symbol because

Students in ART 3710 were allowed to select their own research paper topics, and Anisha began by investigating humor in Roman art. The body and sexuality are themes that she explores in her visual art, so it was logical for her to address those in her research. Her paper examines the pervasive nature of the phallus in Roman art and suggests reasons for its use as an apotropaic sign. Anisha is an active member of the Art Department and a very talented painter. She plans to attend graduate school and pursue an MFA after graduating from UNCP.

—Richard Gay

## THE APOTROPAIC FUNCTION OF THE PHALLUS

he sports a phallus that is comically large. Through public art such as this mosaic, the phallus, and especially large, erect ones, became a common part of the iconography of ancient Roman art.

The phallus was depicted in other ways that went beyond threshold objects such as tintinnabulum and floor mosaics. One example can be found in the House of Vettii in Pompeii in the form of a wall painting that illustrates Priapus weighing his phallus against a bag of money (fig. 6). Priapus was the child of Aphrodite and Dionysus, and was a fertility god who was seen as a symbol of protection. Priapus was also a god who was worshiped in the domestic setting. Shrines were devoted to him in the home and he was often prayed to for cases of impotence. This association of Priapus with protection and fertility aid was due largely to his consistently being portrayed with an extremely and unrealistically large penis (Sofroniew 73-74).

Outside of the threshold or walls of homes and public complexes, a wall panel found in Pompeii offers both visual and written evidence that the phallus equated protection. It also possibly provides some connection between the phallus and fortune. The wall panel is made of travertine, a type of limestone, and shows a cartoon-like phallus in the center with the phrase *hic habitate felicitas* carved above and below it (fig. 7). This phrase translates to mean, “Here dwells happiness” (Johns 65). Rather than attaching the phallus to a person whose identity indicates protection or fortune, such as Priapus, this phrase was carved instead to explicitly demonstrate that the phallus alone is a powerful object. The phrase “here dwells happiness” is also rather vague. It could suggest that happiness lies in the protection from evil that the phallus provides, but it also could suggest that happiness lies in the fortune and wealth that the phallus invites into whichever building it was carved into.

The phallus was used as an apotropaic symbol and was depicted using various mediums in ancient Rome. Bronze tintinnabulae, floor mosaics, wall paintings, and travertine wall panels are just some of the ways Romans represented the phallus. The power of the phallus to ward off evil and invite fortune was derived from the social, political, and mystical aspects of its generative, patriarchal, and humorous capabilities. Socially and politically, the phallus ensures the survival of the individual family unit, inviting good fortune and abundance of wealth into the home. It also ensures the growth and survival of Roman society as a whole. In a purely social context, the phallus as an apotropaic symbol perpetuates the patriarchy as

it displays the aggressive and protective aspect of male energy in order to intimidate evil. Mystically, there is an unknown, awesome force of nature behind the reproductive capabilities of the phallus, and the ancient Romans revered this force. Additionally, the simple humorous nature of the phallus was mystical in that it provided enough positive energy to dispel any evil energy. No matter the medium used or the specific context surrounding it, it is clear that the phallus was a powerful apotropaic symbol and a significant part of the iconography of ancient Roman art. 🗨️

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Figure 1. Tinnabulum, Bronze, Rome, 1st century A.D. <http://www.rafimetz.com/borndigital/cg/chime.jpg>



Figure 5. Black bath servant, House of the Menander, Pompeii [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5f/Pompeii\\_-\\_House\\_of\\_Menander\\_-\\_Caldarium\\_-\\_Mosaic\\_2.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5f/Pompeii_-_House_of_Menander_-_Caldarium_-_Mosaic_2.jpg)



Figure 2. Mosaic of a guard dog, House of Orpheus, Pompeii, 1st century A.D. <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-21897925>



Figure 6. Wall painting of Priapus weighing his phallus against a bag of money, House of the Vettii, Pompeii, ca. 1-79 A.D. <http://m0.i.pbase.com/u12/doowopper/upload/3076500.Dscn0365redone.jpg>



Figure 3. Threshold mosaic, House of Jupiter, Ostia, ca. 150 A.D. [http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio4/4/4-3\\_1.jpg](http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio4/4/4-3_1.jpg)



Figure 7. Wall panel, travertine, Pompeii, 1st century A.D. <http://www.maicar.com/GML/000PhotoArchive/073/slides/7304.jpg>



Figure 4. Mosaic of the Evil Eye, House of the Evil Eye, Antioch, 2nd century A.D. [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Antiochia\\_-\\_House\\_of\\_the\\_Evil\\_Eye.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Antiochia_-_House_of_the_Evil_Eye.jpg)

# DAVINA BUFF JONES: ORIGINAL RESEARCH

By Eugene M. Smith III "Tre"



of the base of the Old Baldy Lighthouse. She would call into dispatch to report that she was out with three individuals and to please stand by. A few seconds passed and the following transmission could be heard by Davina, "There ain't no reason to have a gun here on Bald Head Island, OK? You wanna put down the gun. Come on, do us a favor and put down..."<sup>3</sup>



Telephone Booth at Marina on Bald Head Island

Davina was found shot moments later by her partner, Keith Cain, with a single gunshot wound to the back of her head. As he describes the scene:



Present-Day where Davina's body was found in 1999

Her body was face down, her face turned towards

her left shoulder, her eyes slightly open. Her legs straight out but slightly bowed and stretched toward her truck. Her left arm was bent at a forty-five-degree angle at her elbow; her mike was lying straight out by her left side about waist high. Her right arm was bent also with her hand just like behind her head. She resembled an upright field goal that had been pushed down. Her weapon, a 40 caliber Glock Model 23, was lying right up under her hand as though she had been holding it some two to three inches from her head.<sup>4</sup>

What was once a peaceful paradise for the wealthy became the circus of a crime scene investigation. The incident of this evening would send a ripple effect through Brunswick County that still is evident today. Did District Attorney (DA) Rex Gore and Sheriff Ron Hewitt exhaust all resources in investigating the mysterious death of Bald Head Island Police Officer Davina Buff Jones on Friday October 22, 1999? Through historical analysis of independent research this paper develops a theory that makes evident whether this incident was a homicide or suicide.

The thesis for this paper is to show that DA Gore & Sheriff Hewitt were wrong in the ruling of suicide despite the efforts of Brunswick County Sheriff Department and Bald Head Island Public Safety to follow protocol. Various investigations as reported

*Did District Attorney Rex Gore & Sheriff Ron Hewitt exhaust all resources in investigating the mysterious death of Bald Head Island Police Officer Davina Buff Jones on Friday October 22, 1999? Based on historical analysis what is your evaluation of the findings: homicide or suicide?*

Eugene M. Smith III "Tre" earned a BS in business administration with a concentration in management from UNCP in 2004. He is currently working towards his MA in Teaching (middle grades social studies). He is a HonorSociety.org member and a National Trust for Historical Preservation member. He has been married for twelve years and is the father of two: Mitchell, age nine, and Michelle, age six.

**O**n Friday October 22, 1999, the petite-framed Davina Buff Jones reported to duty on her evening shift as a Bald Head Island police officer. Davina had been with the department for a little over 9 months. What the 33-year-old lacked in size, she made up for in character and personality. "Davina was the fearless one. She was the tomboy who, as a child, would climb 32 feet up a tall oak tree without thinking twice."<sup>1</sup> That evening around 11:15pm Davina stopped by the pay phone at the marina and made a call to her ex-boyfriend, Scott Monzon, who had just broken up with her that week. Monzon would describe this phone call in testimonies as, "uncharacteristically quiet" and would further state, "If you knew Davina, you'd know she was loud. When she was happy, she was loud. She was talkative. She wasn't as loud—her voice wasn't as loud as it normally was."<sup>2</sup> After the phone call Davina would then head to the 182-year-old lighthouse near the marina. While in route to the lighthouse she would stop three unidentified individuals just short



Davina Buff Jones

her that week. Monzon would describe this phone call in testimonies as, "uncharacteristically quiet" and would further state, "If you knew Davina, you'd know she was loud. When she was happy, she was loud. She was talkative. She wasn't as loud—her voice wasn't as loud as it normally was."<sup>2</sup> After the phone call Davina would then head to the 182-year-old lighthouse near the marina. While in route to the lighthouse she would stop three unidentified individuals just short

## EUGENE M. SMITH III "TRE"

by the media, the testimony of Captain Sam Davis (Lieutenant in 1999) with corroboration by other sources, and independent research with corroboration of interviews show evidence of a homicide.

The initial write-up of the incident was handled properly and the investigating officers from Brunswick County and Bald Head Island followed protocol. Once everything was considered and evidence gathered, it was then that the crime scene was washed clean of any evidence that a gruesome event had taken place at the lighthouse.<sup>5</sup>

This research paper is not intended to attack the deputies, lieutenants and/or the officers that did their jobs on the evening of the investigation. The focus is on the mishandling of the findings by DA Gore and Sheriff Hewitt. DA Gore did not want to investigate the obvious because of threats of an exclusive community's backlash on his political office and the thoughts fed to him from Sheriff Hewitt of Brunswick County. Gore's immediate ruling of suicide was based on recommendations from Sheriff Hewitt. In Gore's announcement nine weeks after Davina's death he alluded to her medical history in his ruling of suicide.<sup>6</sup>

From 1994 to 1998 Davina received outpatient treatment (170 visits) for adjustment disorder with mixed emotional features and chronic depression. This coincides with two failed marriages as well. Dr. Keith Reschley was Davina's physician and prescribed her Zoloft in March 1999. This prescription was later changed to Effexor in September 1999. Two days prior to her death Dr. Reschley scheduled a psychological consultation for her on October 27, 1999 and had her listed at low risk in relation to suicidal behavior.<sup>7</sup> Dr. George Gressman, Associate Director of Counseling and Psychological Services at UNC Pembroke, was not alarmed by the details of her doctor visits and prescription regimen. Medicines were prescribed and given a 4-6-month window to check effectiveness before possibly changing over to something stronger in dose. Davina's adjustment disorder was in response to the failed marriages and start of a new job while the number of visits are typical for someone diagnosed with mixed emotional features that is being seen bi-weekly by her physician over a 4-year period. Dr. Gressman was not convinced that Davina committed suicide stating, "The percentage of people that are depressed that actually commit suicide is low, approximately 2 ½ percent." He also pointed to the fact that most females do not commit suicide by gun. "Approximately 90% of gun suicides are men."<sup>8</sup>

Loy Buff, Davina's father stated, "the suicide theory, to be blunt [is], inconsistent with Davina's state of mind that day; [Gore's] viewpoint about the bullet wound is inconsistent with the autopsy

report; inconsistent with the radio traffic that night; inconsistent with the 911 message; inconsistent with

the location of the weapon at the crime scene and not so surprisingly so, inconsistent with the known pattern of drug smuggling in that area."<sup>9</sup> DA Gore was steadfast on the suicide ruling despite allegations of large drug transactions on the island plaguing the community for months. On the first ferry, out on the morning after the murder, three men were discovered trying to sneak off the island. They were briefly questioned and released. Bald Head Island Police Chief Karen Grasty attempted to re-interview the men in Charlotte, NC against the wishes of DA Gore and Sheriff Hewitt. She was led to believe that the three men were not suspects. She found that there were some discrepancies when she independently background searched the three men to find criminal records up to 48 pages long.<sup>10</sup> If these three men were on probation or parole, why would Gore and Hewitt think that they were good standing members of the community? One out of 52 adults are on state supervised probation and/or parole. It is known that within five years of release that 77% are re-arrested with 29% of those being violent offense and 4% homicide.<sup>11</sup> Some resources suggest that the campaign-contributing residents of Bald Head Island and their fear of property value decline from a murder and drug rumors were the most encouraging factor in the DA's decision. When talking with Loy Buff at his home in Oak Island, NC he said, "DA Gore was bought. Gore received about \$10,000 from that community to keep the case [a] suicide and Sheriff Hewitt received a payout as well."<sup>12</sup> "We have been betrayed by the police and by the District Attorney. They told us that suicide was just one of the possibilities they were considering. It looks to me like it was the only one they ever investigated."<sup>13</sup>

The case would eventually close in November 2001 as a suicide.

The Buff family and friends fought to clear Davina's name. Gore had his chance to right his wrong in years to follow. On July 28, 2004, the NC Indus-



Loy and Harriett Buff with author

Tre's extensive primary source research explored not only the merits of a murder mystery, but brought him face-to-face with the challenges that confront historians in practice: insufficient sources, multiple perspectives, contradictory evidence, the challenges of assessing the motivations of historical actors, and the complexity of merging narrative, interpretation, and argument. This was a worthy struggle, as all historical writing becomes, to merge art, craft, and science.

—Jeff Frederick



trial Commission ruled that the incident was not a suicide based on 39 facts, including evidence and lack of analysis on some items.

To self-inflict a gunshot wound to the posterior mid-line of her head and accomplish a slight upward projector, she would have had to have aimed the gun at the front of her face with her thumb on the trigger, then raised her arms over her head so that the gun would be in mid-line, and upside down. ... Even in this position, the casing would have been ejected to the left. ... The casing was found to the right.<sup>14</sup>

This was Gore's chance to clear the air but his response was, "If it's just a differing of opinion I don't think there will be a case for us to reopen."<sup>15</sup>

On February 1, 2006, the Department of Justice ruled in favor of the Buff family once again against Gore's initial ruling.

Eventually Gore's actions in Brunswick County wore thin and he was ousted as DA in 2011 when Jon David beat him in the election for office. Immediately DA David said that Gore's actions damaged the office of the District Attorney and that there was a rush to judgment on Gore's part in relation to this case. He stressed the significance of the former District Attorney not reopening the case after subsequent rulings suggested otherwise.<sup>16</sup> DA David reopened the case and followed up with an investigation by an independent group of 4 retired Federal Bureau of Investigation members that reviewed the entire case from beginning to present day. They even toured the scene of the incident on the island and met with Loy and Harriett Buff along with David in a discussion afterwards. It was reviewed and found by a 3-1 margin that it was thought a homicide.<sup>17</sup> This was the last Davina's mother and father had heard pertaining to their daughter's case. During our interview, they were unaware that there was a Cold Case Unit assigned to working their daughter's case now. Captain Sam Davis (Brunswick County Sheriff Department), Assistant District Attorney Lee Bollinger (Brunswick County), Assistant District Attorney Chris Gentry (Columbus County) and Mac Warner of State Bureau of Investigation (NC SBI) are the 4 individuals assigned to the case. Captain Davis spoke in an interview in regards to the initial investigation for this research paper. The two assistant district attorneys have not responded to contacts made to their offices. Mac Warner forwarded email correspondence to Angel Gray, General Counsel for NC SBI who stated, "Any records the SBI would have regarding this matter would not be considered public record under North Carolina law and are only released to the prosecutor or pursuant to a court order. I regret that we can't be

of further assistance to you at this time."<sup>18</sup>

The case of Davina Buff Jones is still filled with questions unanswered and the status of the case is an undecided criminal investigation which remains open pending the discovery of new evidence. Did



Old Baldy Lighthouse

DA Gore and Sheriff Hewitt exhausted all resources in investigating the mysterious death on Friday October 22, 1999? This research suggests that they did not investigate all avenues of this incident intentionally because of ulterior motives. Did Davina take her own life or was she gunned-down at the hand of individuals not yet brought to justice? The research suggests that the evidence that was initially gathered and further investigations led by state and federal agencies indicate that she was murdered. Gore had the opportunity to reopen the case and to pursue those responsible for this wrongdoing but chose otherwise.

DA Gore and Sheriff Hewitt's lives after this lapse in judgment on Davina's case have been interesting as well. Gore pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor of willful neglect to discharge a duty of his office in August 2013. In exchange, prosecutors agreed to drop a felony charge of conspiracy to obtain property by false pretense. Gore received a suspended 60-day sentence and was placed on unsupervised probation for 18 months. The law license for Gore was suspended for 6 months.<sup>19</sup>

Sheriff Hewitt was suspended from office in April, 2008, after an employee-initiated petition alleged embezzlement, sexual harassment and extortion. Indictment on state charges of embezzlement and obstructing justice followed and resignation occurred in May, 2008. He pleaded guilty to one count of obstructing justice and resided at Butner Federal Correctional Complex near Raleigh, NC from November 2008 to January 2010. Hewitt, unfortunately, has passed away while being held in New Hanover County jail on a federal detainer due to violating federal laws regarding the possession of a firearm across state lines by a felon in July, 2014.<sup>20</sup>

Questioning Loy Buff about these incidents, he was certain that drug activity had been occurring on the waterway around Southport, Oak Island and Bald Head Island. He even added that it was occurring on Gore and Hewitt's watches. History shows that Gore and Hewitt were not the outstanding



members of society that they were once portrayed as by the media. Davina was just in the wrong place at the wrong time and they knew that she was going to be a whistle-blower to the whole operation. Just days after the 16th anniversary of the death of their daughter while standing on the back porch of Loy Buff's home looking out at Oak Island Country Club, he put it in perspective by stating, "I have had a good life other than losing Davina, I have tried to come to peace with the fact that she was murdered and her name has been cleared. I just put everything in the Lord's hands and it will all work out."

It does appear that karma has come back around for the few that mishandled this investigation. 🗣️

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**Artifacts**



Present-day where confrontation with three individuals occurred



Present-day where confrontation with three individuals occurred



Present-day what is left of the fishing pier where questionable drug activity would occur

## EUGENE M. SMITH III "TRE"



Present-day outlet to where the old fishing pier was located, where questionable drug activity would occur



Present-day the once-dead-end road where Officer Jones' body was found has now been paved over just like her memory on Bald Head Island



Present-day if this lighthouse could talk, the tales and dectet it has witnessed in the grounds behind its shadow would be beneficial



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