



Collective Violence and Memory in the Ancient Mediterranean

Edited by

Sonja Ammann, Helge Bezold, Stephen Germany
and Julia Rhyder

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Preface

“History is written by the victors” is the common adage. Yet the interplay between victory and defeat in ancient narratives of collective violence is rarely simple or straightforward. In the ancient Mediterranean, claims to victory were ideologically charged and highly contested. Literary, inscriptional, and iconographic sources reveal the complex strategies used to explain losses, or to transform historic defeats into triumphalist narratives. They also reveal how “victimological” narratives were mobilized to construe a group’s enemies as barbaric and cruel so as to justify acts of military retaliation or revenge.

This volume explores how the violence of vanquishing and being vanquished was represented and memorialized in diverse cultural forms in the societies of the ancient Mediterranean, including Anatolia, Egypt, Greece, Israel/Judah, and Rome. Most of the essays in this volume originated in a seminar series hosted by the University of Basel in September–December 2020, entitled “Historical Narratives and Memorialization of Collective Violence in Antiquity,” which have been updated in the light of peer commentary during and after the seminar, and several additional essays have been commissioned. The seminar was held in the context of a five-year research project at the University of Basel, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and led by Sonja Ammann, entitled “Transforming Memories of Collective Violence in the Hebrew Bible” (PCEGPI_181219).

Collective violence takes multiple forms in our case studies, ranging from sporadic, disorganized, and even spontaneous outbursts involving relatively small groups, to highly organized forms of armed conflict, warfare, and mass mobilization of populations. The diversity and complexity of the violence enshrined in our sources illustrates the limitations of neat dichotomies of victors and vanquished, or even victory and defeat, for the study of ancient conflict. We need instead to embrace more fluid understandings of the purposes and outcomes of collective violence, as well as the processes by which violent episodes of the past were used to construct a sense of shared history. This includes paying careful attention to how memories of violent episodes were transformed over time to suit new historical circumstances and to legitimate diverse institutions and their various interests.

This book takes a comparative approach that brings materials from diverse geographical contexts and a variety of sources (literary texts, material remains, monumental inscriptions, and iconography) into dialogue. In so doing, it seeks to illuminate broader patterns in how violent episodes were memorialized in the ancient Mediterranean, while also highlighting those aspects that are

specific to certain historical contexts and conflict situations. The volume also embraces a *longue durée* approach to the study of the memorialization of collective violence, drawing on sources that span the second and first millennia BCE. In so doing, it seeks to illuminate both changes over time and enduring historical trends in how collective violence was memorialized in ancient societies. Finally, the insights of memory theorists are also employed to help conceptualize the processes by which violent episodes of the past, and the leaders or institutions associated with them, achieved prominence in collective memory. Our hope is therefore that this book will appeal to a broad academic audience, from classicists to ancient historians and biblical scholars, while also offering new insights to those with a more general interest in how social groups construct shared histories of their violent pasts.

We wish to thank here each of the contributors to the volume for their support of this interdisciplinary undertaking and for their cooperation throughout the editing process. We also wish to thank the series editors of *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, Eckart Frahm, W. Randall Garr, Baruch Halpern, T.P.J. van den Hout, Leslie Anne Warden, Irene Winter, and especially the editor-in-chief, Jonathan Stökl, for accepting the volume for publication in this renowned series, and we are grateful to Katelyn Chin, Emma de Looij, and Katerina Sofianou at Brill for their assistance throughout the publication process. Finally, special thanks are due to Angela Roskop Erisman for her careful copyediting and proofreading work on the contributions in this volume. Responsibility for any errors in the final text remains, of course, our own.

Sonja Ammann, Helge Bezold, Stephen Germany, and Julia Rhyder
Basel, Marburg, and Cambridge, Mass., May 2023

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Abbreviations

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor Bible
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AC	<i>Acta Classica</i>
<i>AeL</i>	<i>Ägypten und Levante</i>
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AnSt</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<i>AoF</i>	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
<i>ASNP</i>	<i>Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia</i>
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
<i>BAGB</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BARIS	BAR (British Archaeological Reports) International Series
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
<i>BO</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
Corn. Nep. <i>Ag.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Life of Agesilaus</i>
Corn. Nep. <i>Alc.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Life of Alcibiades</i>
Corn. Nep. <i>Cim.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Life of Cimon</i>
Corn. Nep. <i>Con.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Life of Conon</i>
Corn. Nep. <i>Ham.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Hamilcar</i>
Corn. Nep. <i>Dat.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Life of Datames</i>
Corn. Nep. <i>Timoth.</i>	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Life of Timotheus</i>
<i>cj</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>ClAnt</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>ClQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>

CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FGrH	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , by F. Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1923–
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
G&R	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
GB	<i>Grazer Beiträge. Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBAI	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
<i>Hesperia</i>	<i>Hesperia: Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens</i>
<i>Historia</i>	<i>Historia. Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte</i>
<i>HistTh</i>	<i>History and Theory</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae. Editio Minor</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1924–
IPIAO	<i>Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient. Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern 1, 3</i> , by Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer. Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005, 2011.
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JdI	<i>Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JÖAI	<i>Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts in Wien</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series

<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Mnemosyne</i>	<i>Mnemosyne: A Journal of Classical Studies</i>
<i>NEA</i>	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
OCM	Oxford Classical Monographs
OeO	Oriens et Occidens
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>OLZ</i>	<i>Orientalische Literaturzeitung</i>
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>Palamedes</i>	<i>Palamedes: A Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>Phil</i>	<i>Philologus</i>
PHSC	Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts
<i>PP</i>	<i>La parola del passato</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period.</i> By C.B. Wells. London, 1934
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>RevHist</i>	<i>Revue historique de droit français et étranger</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
<i>RhMus</i>	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
<i>RLA</i>	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> , edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLStBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SEG	Supplementum epigraphicum graecum
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
<i>StG</i>	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum.</i> Edited by Wilhelm Dittenberger. 3 vols. 3rd ed. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–1924
SJ	Studia Judaica

STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
Transeu	<i>Transeuphratène</i>
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
Tyrt.	Tyrtaeus
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testa- ment
WO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WS	<i>Wiener Studien. Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie und Patristik</i>
ZABR	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBKAT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare Altes Testament
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Notes on Contributors

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Introduction

Sonja Ammann

Abstract

The history of the ancient Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE was marked by many battles and can arguably be characterized as violent. Yet what had a lasting impact on people groups and their sense of identity was not just the event of war itself but also the way it was remembered. The significance of memory and commemoration has been increasingly recognized in research on collective violence. In this introduction, I briefly discuss the concepts of “collective violence” and “cultural memory” and point out what makes collective violence a particularly rich topic to investigate from the perspective of cultural memory. The introduction brings the essays in this volume into conversation with each other and highlights aspects at the intersection of war and memory such as victory and defeat, victims and aggressors, triumphalist and victimological narratives, public memories and agents of memory production, and the interrelation between literary, material, spatial, and performative forms of commemoration. The introduction concludes by suggesting how the regional approach of the present volume allows for the exploration of memories of collective violence in a trans-cultural perspective.

Keywords

Collective violence – war – cultural memory – commemoration – social identity – trans-cultural memory – comparative approach

A great amount of ancient literature, visual representations, and monuments deals with violent conflicts. These cultural products can be studied as sources not only for reconstructing the history of the many wars in the ancient Mediterranean during the first millennium BCE, but also for understanding how these violent conflicts were remembered in ancient societies. The present volume is focused on the latter.¹ As the essays show, memories of violent conflict deeply impacted ancient narratives of the past, as well as the self-understandings

¹ This volume participates in a broader tendency in current research on ancient warfare that

and shared values of ancient communities, and they played an important role in bolstering and legitimizing dominant powers and their use of violence.

1 Collective Violence

Violence in a broad sense is not restricted to physical violence and does not necessarily include the use of arms. Current research on violence uses nuanced concepts that also account for other forms of violence such as psychological and structural violence.² While structural and symbolic violence arguably played an important role in the social and political history of the ancient Mediterranean and are often related to the causes and outcomes of violent conflicts, the focus of this volume lies on physical violence. The use of the term “collective violence” rather than “war” in the title of this volume aims to include other forms of armed intergroup conflict such as riot, revolt, and insurrection in order to better accommodate the range of violence in the ancient materials we study.³ The term also has the advantage of drawing attention to the specifically *collective* aspects, which play an important role in the collective remembrance of violence. In its most basic sense, collective violence can be understood as “personal injury by a group.”⁴ It has a fundamentally social character that distinguishes it from other forms of vio-

moves away from an interest in military strategy and history of battles toward the social and cultural dimensions of and responses to collective violence; see, e.g., Rich and Shipley, *War and Society*; Bragg, Hau, and Macaulay-Lewis, *Beyond the Battlefields*; Bakogianni and Hope, *War as Spectacle*; Meissner, Schmitt, and Sommer, *Krieg*. For modern and contemporary periods, see the *Journal of War and Culture Studies* (published since 2007). Most of the essays in the present volume originated in a seminar series hosted by the University of Basel in 2020 that was held in the context of the Swiss National Science Foundation project “Transforming Memories of Collective Violence in the Hebrew Bible” (project number 181219). The research for this introduction forms part of this project.

- 2 For a short overview and explanation of common terms, see Rutherford et al., “Violence.”
- 3 For a typology of collective violence, see Tilly, *Politics*, 13–20. The concept of “collective violence” has been used in a narrower sense by researchers who use it to mean something other than war (between states); see, e.g., Staub, *Roots*. For the purposes of this volume (and for the ancient context), a broad understanding of “collective violence” seems most useful. For examples of situations that require a more flexible, inclusive understanding of violence, see, e.g., the mass killings narrated in the book of Esther and the arranged fights in the Battle for the Prebend of Amun, which are dealt with in this volume by Helge Bezold and Damien Agut-Labordère, respectively. There has been some reluctance in scholarship to use the term “war” for ancient contexts because in modern use it implies conflict between nation-states.
- 4 La Roche, “Collective Violence,” 97.

lence such as murder or domestic violence.⁵ Violent acts committed by a group of people require some degree of coordination and cohesion, usually following a leader.⁶ They are prepared and sustained by discursive strategies in order to unite the group and commit its members to a common goal; in many cases this unity might not exist before the conflict, and there may not be consensus within the group on the use of violence.⁷ Collective violence is a collective action as much as it is a collectivizing force: it fosters cohesion and in-group solidarity. To some extent, the individual must disappear within the group, as individual injury and death do not inhibit the group's success or victory. This community-shaping role is therefore a major difference from violence that is not collective, both in its practice (a person subordinates their individual identity to their political identity in the case of war) and its commemoration (as we will see below).⁸ Acknowledging the relationship between collective violence and social identity, a more extensive definition of collective violence like the one proposed by Anthony B. Zwi, Richard Garfield, and Alessandro Loretti may be useful: "the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group—whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity—against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives."⁹

In most cases, the violent acts are directed against individuals or groups considered by the aggressors as outsiders—namely, belonging to a different group.¹⁰ Characteristic of collective violence is the "division across intergroup lines."¹¹ As R. Brian Ferguson puts it, "a line must be clear between 'us' and 'them,' otherwise one would not know whom to kill."¹² The term "collective

5 See Tilly, *Politics*, 4: "collective violence is not simply individual aggression writ large. Social ties, structures, and processes significantly affect its character."

6 The important role of leaders in armed conflict has also been shown with regard to politically egalitarian groups such as the Yanomami; see Ferguson, "Ten Points," 45.

7 See Ferguson, "Ten Points," 43: "In most wars, within the basic political units there are differences of interest, disagreements over actions, and unequal abilities to influence the course of events. Even in the simplest of societies, war is not the result of someone beating on a drum, with everyone rushing off, but of long discussions and debates."

8 See esp. Nathan T. Arrington's essay in this volume on Athenian commemoration of military casualties and its emphasis on the community.

9 Zwi, Garfield, and Loretti, "Collective Violence," 215–216.

10 An exception would be ritual violence, as violent rituals "incorporate all the relevant actors and social sites into a single connected set of performances" (Tilly, *Politics*, 84, emphasis in the original).

11 Belavadi, Rinella, and Hogg, "When Social Identity-Defining Groups Become Violent," 17.

12 Ferguson, "Ten Points," 42. See also Belavadi, Rinella, and Hogg, "When Social Identity-

violence” thus involves identifying opponents—perpetrators and victims—as members of a particular group. Research on contemporary conflicts has shown that collective violence presupposes a distinction between “us” and “them” at the same time it creates and reinforces such intergroup distinctions.¹³

Acts (and memories) of collective violence are thus closely related to social identity because they presuppose and reinforce identification with a group and shape collective identities. In many life situations, group identity need not play a central role in an individual’s choice of action and self-understanding, but belonging to one group or another becomes a matter of life and death in times of violent conflict. At the same time, violent acts against others require justification, which is often linked to othering or even dehumanizing the opponent.¹⁴

As they explore ancient material culture and texts, the essays in this volume will confirm and build on many of these insights from contemporary research on collective violence and show their pertinence for ancient contexts. They will also complicate some modern assumptions and explore dynamics of collective violence in societies where violent acts were embedded in a very different social structure and mindset. For instance, Nathan T. Arrington and Jessica Clark discuss Greek and Roman representations of collective violence that do not necessarily imply an othering of the enemy, nor do they focus on the outcome of such violence as either victory or defeat because they place war within a framework of *agon* (or, ongoing struggle). Other ancient texts imply that war could be considered a regular activity of kings in ancient Mediterranean societies.¹⁵

2 Memories of Violence

The history of the ancient Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE was marked by many battles and can arguably be characterized as violent. The formation, competition, and succession of empires dominating the region from Mesopotamia and Egypt to Anatolia and Italy, as well as armed conflicts of

Defining Groups Become Violent,” 25: “a sense of us versus them is required for collective violence to be enacted”.

13 Ferguson, “Ten Points,” 42–43; Leudar, Marsland, and Nekvapil, “On Membership Categorization.”

14 See Belavadi, Rinella, and Hogg, “When Social Identity-Defining Groups Become Violent,” 24–25 (with further references).

15 See, e.g., the reference to a season for war in 2 Sam 11:1 (עת צאת המלואים). But see also the critical assessment of the alleged normality of war in antiquity by Hornblower, “Warfare.”

smaller local powers, account for the pervasive occurrence of collective violence. Yet what shapes the identity of a group is not just the event of war itself, and with it actual experiences of collective violence, but also its representation in stories, historical writing, public speeches and visual arts—in short, the way it is remembered. The lasting impact of collective violence is a result of cultural memory. The essays in this volume provide many examples of how memories of violence shape local identities.¹⁶ How groups achieved military victories and how they dealt with defeat could be thought to constitute their self-understanding and represent their shared values.¹⁷ What shapes social groups is not just the memories of their behavior in battle but also the particular forms of commemoration and how people participated in the commemoration of conflicts fought by others.¹⁸

The significance of memory and commemoration has been increasingly recognized in research on collective violence and has sparked an interest in the intersection of war and memory.¹⁹ Many works in memory studies deal with the commemorative history of wars and the memories of violence.²⁰ The perspective of memory studies informs the essays in this volume in various ways. Before turning to the question of how collective violence is memorialized, I would like to mention four aspects of collective memory more generally that are particularly relevant to the approach taken in this volume. All four aspects go back to the work of Maurice Halbwachs and have been further developed and refined by Pierre Nora, Jan and Aleida Assmann, Astrid Erll, and Jeffrey Olick, among others.

To begin with, remembering is a *constructive* act, and not merely the retrieval of stored material.²¹ It is a dynamic process, in which memories are re-created in the present each time they are revisited.²² Second, the creation of memories

16 See the essay by Izak Cornelius in this volume.

17 See the essays in this volume by David C. Yates and Simon Lentzsch.

18 On particular forms of commemorating the dead, see the essay in this volume by Stephen Germany; on specific responses to collective violence, see Lentzsch; and on participation in commemorative festivals, see Julia Rhyder.

19 For studies of war and collective violence from a perspective of memory see, e.g., Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, *Politics*; Giangiulio, Franchi, and Proietti, *Commemorating War and War Dead*; and Wright, *War*.

20 Many approaches to collective memory have developed from studies on commemorative practices related to the First and Second World Wars, the Holocaust, and 9/11; see, e.g., Olick, *Sins*; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

21 This is a basic insight that Halbwachs develops throughout his work; see esp. Halbwachs, *Les cadres*, 38–39, 92 (neither passage is translated in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*) and see further Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 26–28.

22 On memory as a process, see Olick, *Sins*, 45 and Stover-Kemp, “Forgetting.”

is a *socio-cultural process*. The agents of remembering are individual subjects, but their remembering is conditioned by social structures and cultural pre-suppositions.²³ Cultural memory is not disconnected from social and political interests and power relations. Particular representations of the past can spread and become dominant only through social interactions.²⁴ Third, memory is central to the construction of a group's *collective identity*. Shared representations of their past connect people in social groups (ranging from small social groups like families to large communities) and play a central role in defining the group's shared values and sense of identity.²⁵

Finally, collective memory is not limited to oral and textual communicative processes but extends to *material objects and spaces*. In his explorations of the spatial dimensions of collective memory, Halbwachs foreshadowed the attention to space in current research.²⁶ The material aspects of memory and the role of media have been further developed by Aleida and Jan Assmann.²⁷ Their concept of "cultural memory" as the transfer of cultural meaning over time through acts and objects, including the possibility of reception that leaps over a break in tradition, focuses more on elite cultural production.²⁸ As I will briefly discuss below, this approach has often been found useful in the study of antiquity and provides one of the starting points of this volume.

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- 23 Halbwachs speaks of social "frames" (*cadres sociaux*) not only because individuals reconstruct their past in conversation with others, but also because they use shared language, concepts, and patterns. The focus on individual subjects of collective remembering and their agency has been further emphasized in recent research on cultural memory; see Stover-Kemp, "Forgetting."
- 24 Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "Politics," 16–34 propose a model to examine such processes in relation to war commemoration.
- 25 See, e.g., Halbwachs, *Les cadres*, 151 (translated in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 59). This aspect is developed further in J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 111–124.
- 26 See Halbwachs, *La mémoire*, 193–236; Halbwachs, *La topographie* (partially translated in Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 128–157); and Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 193–235. Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, although not limited to material objects, has been particularly fruitful for further research in this area; see Nora and Kritzman, *Realms*. The aspect of space is developed further in Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 281–324.
- 27 See J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* and A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*.
- 28 See esp. J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 6–10, 20. For a critical view of Assmann's approach to culture (and thus to cultural memory) as elitist, see Stover-Kemp, "Forgetting." The term "cultural memory" is now used more generally and not always in reference to Assmann's concept specifically; see Erll, *Memory*, who therefore capitalizes Cultural Memory when referring to Assmann.

Collective violence is a particularly rich topic to investigate from the perspective of cultural memory. One reason is its inherent relationship to the construction of collective identities outlined in the first part of this introduction. But several other aspects merit closer consideration, and I would like to briefly cover a few of them in the remaining sections of this introduction.

3 Victors and Vanquished, Victims and Aggressors

Representations of collective violence necessarily imply an interpretation of the violent event and a certain reduction of its complexity. Collective violence is in reality a messy affair.²⁹ People on all sides (there can be more than just two) inflict violence and suffer from violence. Many things happen in parallel, and there is generally no clear beginning or end. The causality of events is also difficult to describe in a neutral fashion because the distinction between “self” and “other” is subject to interpretation, as is the perception of acts as aggression, violence, insult, or transgression. As Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern write, violence “signals acts whose legitimacy is itself an object of conflict.”³⁰

The essays in this volume show that violent acts can be remembered in many different ways. This is the case not merely because of the different perspectives of the parties involved, but also because the narratives that commemorate violent events after the fact are qualitatively distinct from the violent conflicts themselves. They are not just a record of the actual violent situation in all its messiness. Studies on memory and history have pointed out that it is only in the process of narrativization that things fall into place—that specific roles are assigned to protagonists, and that events are described, linked by causal relations, and embedded into a plotline with a beginning and an end.³¹ It is the narrative that defines historical events, gives them a degree of clarity that they do not have as lived experience, and endows them with meaning.

This is not to say that ancient narratives of collective violence are generally to be rejected or distrusted as reliable sources for the reconstruction of historical events. It is not the aim of this volume to verify the commemorative

29 On this aspect, see Stewart and Strathern, *Violence*, esp. ch. 1: “Violence as a Construct.”

30 Stewart and Strathern, *Violence*, 9. On this aspect, see Riches, “Phenomenon,” 1–11, who, however, concludes that “The discrepancy in basic understandings amongst those implicated in the performance of a violent act ... is likely to be minimal: in its key sense, as the ‘contestable giving of physical hurt’, violence is unlikely to be mistaken as such” (11).

31 Cf. esp. Mink, “Narrative Form”; White, “Historical Text”; and Zerubavel, *Time Maps*.

narratives against the historical data. Rather, the essays in this volume investigate narratives of past violence as constructed memories and highlight processes and strategies of memory construction. From this perspective, instances where ancient narratives diverge from each other or depart from the historical events as we (as historians) reconstruct them provide us with an opportunity to gain deeper insights into how memories of collective violence were constructed and transformed.

Two important axes of investigation throughout this volume concern the memories of victory and defeat and of victims and aggressors. These categories often play a central role in the commemoration of violent events, but they do not describe fixed and tangible realities. It has been argued that a battle is an inherently dichotomous affair with a clear us-versus-them setting and a clear division of victors and vanquished.³² When seen close up, however, the distinctions are much less clear; individuals on either side may be wounded and killed, and participants in the battle may even desert or change sides. It is only at a certain level of abstraction and interpretation that we see two clearly distinct groups (or even peoples—despite, for instance, the frequent inclusion of foreign mercenaries) fighting for a particular cause, which may not always be supported by the individual warrior. As Julia Rhyder and I have argued elsewhere, “[i]ndividuals involved in war and conflict are rarely just the subject or object of violence. Those who suffer violence are also capable of inflicting it; and those who emerge from a conflict as victors will also have suffered losses.”³³ The outcome of a battle is also not necessarily a clear victory or defeat.³⁴ Battles generally do not end with one group totally wiped out. Victory and defeat are *declared*; the end of a battle or war is usually brought about by a performative act or a speech act.³⁵

A battle, moreover, is usually part of a longer situation of conflict. Roles of victor and vanquished, victim and aggressor, can be reversed in the course of events. It is only in retrospect—and depending on the selection of the time span and events put into a story—that the roles of victor and vanquished are assigned. The narrative includes knowledge of what would happen later; it is shaped by the aftermath. A “decisive victory” can be seen as such only from

32 Cf. Harari, “Concept,” 262–263, who adds that this is at least partially the case because battles are designed to bring about a clear outcome.

33 Ammann and Rhyder, “Editorial Introduction,” 6.

34 On the complexities of victory and defeat, see esp. Turner and Clark, “Thinking,” 3–6.

35 See, e.g., the essays by Arrington and Jessica Clark in this volume and, more generally, Afflerbach and Strachan, *How Fighting Ends*, who speak of “decisions to end fighting.”

a later point of view, when the subsequent developments are known.³⁶ And, finally, victory and defeat are a matter of the position of the speaker; one people's victory is another's defeat.³⁷

It is thus not surprising to find a broad array of narrative and commemorative strategies to deal with loss and defeat, and to construe one's own group as victorious over others. Literary, epigraphic, and iconographic sources reveal the complex strategies used to explain losses or transform historic defeats into triumphalist narratives. Victory and defeat are embedded in a narrative of the past, framing them in a particular way. A victory can thus be memorialized as due to divine help or superior military strength, and a defeat can be presented as divine punishment or as the consequence of moral and political failure.³⁸ Within the narrative plot, defeat and loss can be remembered as an opportunity for repentance or a transitional crisis that magnifies an ultimate victory. Several essays in this volume present examples of how loss and defeat can be integrated into a triumphalist memory plot.³⁹ Where loss and defeat are presented as a sacrifice for victory, destruction and suffering can be emphasized rather than downplayed. Not all commemorative narratives ultimately end in a triumph, however. In many cases, narratives of past violence are more nuanced and integrate aspects of both victory and defeat in the outcome of violent conflicts. As Arrington highlights with regard to Greek representations of collective violence, the binary concepts of "victory" and "defeat" do not seem pertinent for much of Greek commemorative culture, which is based on the concept of *agōn*, or commemorating past violence as part of an ongoing struggle. In addition, some narratives follow a tragic rather than a triumphalist plot and commemorate defeats as such. This is the case, for instance, in much of the Judean literature preserved in the Hebrew Bible, particularly regarding the demise of Israelite and Judean kingship.

Like the roles of victors and vanquished, the roles of victims and aggressors, too, are subject to memory construction and interchangeable in the course of a narrative. A common pattern seems to be that victimological narratives were mobilized to construe a group's enemies as barbaric and cruel in order to justify acts of military retaliation or revenge; this is the case for 1 and 2 Maccabees, as Rhyder shows in her contribution to the present volume, and for Esther (albeit

36 On the concept of "decisive battles," cf. Harari, "Concept."

37 Cf. Turner and Clark, "Thinking," 8.

38 See the example of Livy's account of the Second Punic War dealt with in Lentzsch's contribution to this volume. On the relation between the writing of history and the idea of guilt in the ancient Near East more generally, see J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 206–233.

39 See the contributions by Arrington, Yates, and Rhyder.

a fictional narrative), as is evident in the essay by Helge Bezold. As it turns out, the roles of victim and aggressor (or instigator of violence) can be surprisingly malleable. In his essay, Antonio Loprieno traces how ancient Israel—a relatively small local kingdom—came to be regarded as a main source of violence in ancient Egyptian sources. The fact that hegemonic power and victimological discourse are not necessarily mutually exclusive is further pointed out by Clark. She draws attention to the fact that violence committed by dominant powers was often represented and justified as a legitimate response to rule-breakers, thus assigning the role of instigator to the actual victims of the violence. This pattern was widespread in the ancient Mediterranean (and Mesopotamia) and could even be adopted by the victims of such violence, as the self-blaming (or, blaming of one's own political leaders) in Judean literature shows.

Many of these narratives obviously reflect the interests of the groups that transmitted them—more specifically, their cultural elites and political leaders. For instance, the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE is touted as a decisive royal victory in the annals of the Assyrian king Sennacherib, while Judean sources claim that the city withstood the Neo-Assyrian onslaught and cast the episode as a local triumph against the empire.⁴⁰ It would be difficult to deny ideological and propagandistic reasons behind such commemorative narratives. In many cases, it is also the context in which a memory of collective violence is reactivated that is telling. David Yates provides an apt example in his discussion of Thucydides's Athenian ambassadors. They recall the merits of the Athenians in the Persian War in a speech meant to dissuade the Spartans from attacking Athens. The reactivation of both victimological and triumphalist narratives of past violence in later situations of conflict is a well-known phenomenon in contemporary conflict studies and shows that present-day interests can influence how past violence is memorialized. This is all the more so when such narratives invoke the memory of events in a distant past. The ancient texts studied in this volume were in many cases written a long time—often several centuries—after the reported events.⁴¹ In some cases, they merge situations of collective violence in creative ways (for examples, see the essays by Loprieno and Damien Agut-Labordère), or are even to be considered entirely fictional, as in the case of the book of Esther (see Bezold's essay). Projected onto a distant past, such fictional conflicts can become part of cultural memory. Yet memories

40 Another well-known example concerns the Egyptian representation of the battle of Kadesh, see Turner and Clark, "Thinking," 3–4 (with further references).

41 See, e.g., the materials dealt with by Loprieno, Germany, Agut-Labordère, and Lentzsch in this volume.

of collective violence are not just the arbitrary invention of interested parties. Commemorative narratives put forward by cultural and political agents cannot just overwrite people's memories, all the more so when the commemoration concerns a more recent past and could contradict the memories of people who experienced the violent conflict.⁴² Material objects such as visible ruins can add constraints to the production of memories because they have to be taken into account, although they offer ample room for interpretation, as discussed in the essay by Angelika Berlejung.⁴³

Finally, even fictional conflicts such as the battle of Jericho (Josh 6), the Inaros Cycle, and the book of Esther are not mere inventions but often narrate or allude to past collective violence in the guise of fiction and are based on a tradition of commemoration.⁴⁴ Olick's concept of "path-dependent" memory can be useful to think of these narratives as memories shaped by constraints both of the present and the past; not only the current circumstances but also the tradition of commemoration shapes the forms that are given to the memories of violent events.⁴⁵

4 Memories of Violence in Texts and Material Culture

The present volume explores the memorialization of collective violence in the ancient Mediterranean through a variety of media. The essays deal with literary texts, material culture, and commemorative practices or a combination of these.⁴⁶ Bringing these various media together shows, first, that there is often a continuity between literary and material forms of memorialization that makes a separation between them artificial. For instance, the same motifs can occur in texts and in images, as shown in the essay by Izak Cornelius, and visual representation can concur with a narrative of collective violence as it is expressed in literary texts.

Second, there is also an interrelation (or overlap) of different media: the material object a text was written on (as well as the emplacement or handling

42 See Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning," and the critical discussion of a "politics of memory" approach versus an approach from individual subjectivity in Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "Politics," 7–12.

43 An interesting case in point is Aeschylus's play *Persians*, which was written and performed only a few years after the events; see the essay by Yates in this volume.

44 See the essays by Angelika Berlejung, Agut-Labordère, and Bezold, respectively.

45 See Olick, *Politics*, 40, 56–58. For examples, see the essays in this volume by Berlejung and Lentzsch.

46 See esp. Berlejung's contribution for a combination of material and literary forms.

of that object) modifies the meaning of the text and how it shapes memories.⁴⁷ Performative plays draw on motifs of the literary tradition, and literary texts describe or make reference to material and ritual forms of commemoration.⁴⁸ Such layering or nesting of memory is common and requires methodological reflection on the ancient contexts we study because many performative practices—and sometimes also (unpreserved) visual representations—are accessible to us only through their description in textual sources, and, as Rhyder points out in her essay, we cannot know to what extent these reflect ritual commemorations that were actually practiced in antiquity.

Third, the diverse media of memory can also be complementary and fulfill different social functions. Stephen Germany thus draws attention to the different functions of what he describes as “spatial” and “poetic-performative” modes of commemorating Saul’s death, and Arrington discusses Greek funerary vases that reflect a discourse quite different from the official memory propagated in monumental iconography. We therefore need to be attentive to the differences between the various media of memory and to the different dynamics of literary texts and material objects.

Thinking of material culture and texts together rather than separately deepens our understanding of the memorialization of collective violence in antiquity. For instance, several contributions highlight the military-*cum*-symbolic function of walls in a discourse of memory that brings together texts, images, and ruins. For example, city walls created a border between “us” and “them”—a space that could withhold violence but also through which violence could break in—while temple walls were used for the display of war trophies.⁴⁹

The creation of memory can be seen as multimedia discourse, including the shaping of cityscapes and landscapes into memoryscapes.⁵⁰ Several essays in this volume reflect on spatial aspects of memories of violence. Some aspects pertaining to memories of collective violence more specifically relate to their performative or material presence in the public space. The confrontation with memories of violence arguably has more potential than other memories to provoke strong emotional reactions. Yates discusses Herodotus’s account of the reaction to the performance of the tragedy *The Sack of Miletus* that reminded the Athenians of their own painful experience. Reminders of collective violence would have been omnipresent in some ancient societies, creating an

47 The casualty lists dealt with by Arrington in this volume are a case in point.

48 See the essays in this volume by Germany, Rhyder, and Yates.

49 See the essays by Cornelius, Berlejung, and Germany in this volume.

50 On the importance of “transmedial recursivity” for the formation of cultural memory, see Rigney, “Plenitude,” 20–21.

almost inevitable immersion in memories of violence. This was the case in Athens, and Arrington proposes that the arrangement of the Athenian memoryscape resulted in the normalization and justification of violence.

Beyond the production of cultural artifacts such as tombs, cemeteries, and monuments, collective violence inevitably leaves material traces, including devastation and ruins. Visible traces place constraints on what can be said, because their physical presence cannot just be ignored; it must be integrated into narratives of past violence. Ruins as a particularly interesting interface of materiality and narrativity of memory are dealt with in several contributions in this volume, and Berlejung provides a more extensive theoretical discussion. Material remains trigger narratives of past violence, which in turn influence the meaning with which the material objects are invested. In this sense, ruins and narratives shape each other. The material traces of destruction are not merely remains of past violence but are themselves cultural artifacts, not only in the sense that they are perceived through the narratives associated with them, but also literally because ruins in inhabited spaces are usually curated.⁵¹ The practice of removing certain ruins while intentionally leaving others that Yates describes for temples in ancient Athens can be observed in postconflict sites until today.⁵²

5 Public Memory and Elite Production

Whether literary texts, material objects, or commemorative rituals, the media of memory discussed in this volume generally have in common that they participate in a public discourse of remembrance. They circulated, were enacted, or were on display in the public sphere. The very fact of their preservation until today speaks to their wide circulation and the broad audience they reached in antiquity.⁵³ The resources that were required for such cultural productions were reserved to elites, and they were created with the consent or active sup-

51 “[I]t can be argued that particular places, and the monuments located there, function as repositories of cultural memories only by virtue of the stories that are told about them or by the rituals that are carried out there” (Rigney, “Plenitude,” 21).

52 An example among many others is the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin.

53 While this generally applies to the materials discussed in this volume, it is not necessarily the case for all ancient sources, because some ancient manuscripts of literary and archival texts are preserved in small numbers and without documented transmission (as can be the case for a literary text attested by a single clay tablet). The state of preservation may be accidental and does not necessarily reflect reception in antiquity (which may have been broad).

port of the political leaders in power. In a volume on modern war commemoration, T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper rightly criticize an unhelpful dichotomy between state-centered and social-agency approaches to war commemoration, because official commemoration cannot simply overwrite “popular concerns and emotional investments.”⁵⁴ Yet we have to acknowledge that the sources we discuss in this volume generally represent public commemoration. The focus on public memories—official ceremonies of commemoration, public monuments, and national narratives of war—should not be taken to imply that ancient memory was monolithic and determined by elite actors. It is important to keep in mind that private and family memories of collective violence may have differed markedly from public representation and involved a different set of practices and material objects. The lekythoi paintings discussed by Arrington in this volume provide a glimpse of this difference.

Our transmitted sources provide little access to the lives and thoughts of ordinary people in antiquity, so in many cases we cannot know to what extent people actually identified with the representations that were presented to them. This applies not only to public versus private memories, but also to the inner diversity of ancient elites. Particular representations of collective violence could not just be invented and imposed by elite agents. Rather, various sociopolitical agents and groups often attempted to promote their version of history and struggle over prevailing narratives of past violence.⁵⁵ Narratives that succeed in becoming dominant are rarely uncontested, and alternative memories can exist alongside dominant narratives even though they are often more difficult to trace in our extant sources.⁵⁶ The traces of nondominant discourses on the sack of Athens discussed by Simon Lentzsch in this volume provide an example of this.

It is thus important to keep in mind that the various materials discussed in this volume represent memories of collective violence as shaped by (political) elites.⁵⁷ They are produced from a particular sociopolitical perspective and for a particular sociocultural purpose. They seek to propagate narratives of past violence that are often instrumental to elite interests and may have ideological

54 Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, “Politics,” 5–12, 8.

55 This process can be described and studied in terms of discourse theoretical models; for a proposal specifically in relation to war memories, see Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, “Politics,” 16–32.

56 Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, “Politics,” 20 propose the term “sectional memories” for narratives that are articulated publicly but have not (yet) “secured recognition within the existing framework of official memory.”

57 This point is explicitly made in the essays by Cornelius and Berlejung.

functions. As pointed out above, they need not correspond to historical events. The particular point of view of the elite agents producing the memories also accounts for the fact that we are dealing with national histories, accounts of past violence that are designed for a particular group to identify with.⁵⁸ Their aim is not to write a universal history detached from local interests that seeks to do justice to all parties involved. As Nora put it, “Memory is blind to all but the group it binds.”⁵⁹

6 Collective Violence and Transcultural Memory

War divides people in a most violent way and at the same time brings people together in violent encounters. Collective violence often breaks out in contact zones where different groups face each other or a hegemonic power, competing over resources and political control. In the ancient Mediterranean context, this often occurred at the margins of empires.⁶⁰ At the same time, one could say that collective violence *creates* contact zones: war leads to intense contact between people, and the displacements of people in relation to war in some cases bring together geographically distant people who would not otherwise interact with each other.⁶¹ Thinking from the perspective of memory, moreover, war intertwines peoples’s histories. When war is involved, not one people can narrate its past in isolation, without referring to others. The other is part of one’s own history.

Marked by violent intergroup conflicts and hegemonic military powers, the histories of the people of the ancient Mediterranean are entangled. The ancient Mediterranean was a cultural space connected not only through commercial and cultural interchange but also through violent interactions. The regional approach we take in this volume allows for the exploration of memories of collective violence in a transcultural perspective, including the different and

58 I use the (anachronistic) term “national” in the sense proposed by Wright, *War*, 5 n. 13.

59 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 9.

60 For an example of how contact with a third party can spark violent conflicts between two groups, see Ferguson, “Ten Points on War,” 37–38, with further references to his work on wars between Yanomami peoples as an effect of Western contact.

61 Collective violence, from the ancient empires until today, has led to the extensive dislocation of people such as soldiers, mercenaries, deportees, and refugees to geographically distant places. The interactions and cultural encounters that result from these displacements are not limited to violence. Moreover, war can stimulate curiosity about the “other,” as cultural knowledge can have strategic advantage; for an ancient, possibly fictional example see the multilingual Assyrian officer in 2 Kgs 18.

interrelated narratives of emerging and established empires as well as smaller local powers.⁶² This configuration encourages several ways of reading, which are sometimes spelled out within the individual essays and other times emerge in the dialogue between the essays. I would like to highlight three perspectives under which the essays in this volume can be read in conversation with each other.

First, from a comparative perspective, the regional approach brings to the fore shared forms, practices, and narratives of memories of violence, as well as particularities and differences. Comparative reading brings into relief the specific nuances of the diverse strategies and discourses of memorializing collective violence and underscores the fact that conventions regarding the commemoration of collective violence are neither self-evident nor universal. Comparing representations of collective violence across the ancient Mediterranean shows that they often use shared imagery, as shown by Cornelius with regard to the motifs of the severed head and the enemy trampled under chariot horses, and that particular ways of memorializing past violence develop in dialogue, as argued by Loprieno with regard to memories of the Bronze Age in Egypt and Israel. Yet there are also noteworthy differences in the representations and commemorative practices. A particularly interesting difference concerns the representation of the dead. Mesopotamian and Levantine accounts and depictions of violence tend to represent only enemies dying in conflicts, while Greek representations frequently include their own losses.⁶³ The contrast in the treatment of the dead indicates a deeper cultural difference regarding royal ideology and the construction of collective identity, which in the Greek context is based on the concept of contest (*agon*) rather than a dichotomous opposition of chaos and order. As shown by Arrington, othering and total destruction of the enemy are therefore not central to Greek constructions of group identity.

Second, from what we may call an “evolutionary” perspective, the regional focus allows one to trace the spread of narratives and forms of commemoration. As Loprieno shows in his essay, peoples of the ancient Mediterranean were familiar with the narratives of other peoples (also across languages) and could incorporate them into their own accounts of the past. Power relations are crucial to the spread and formation of memories across cultures.⁶⁴ His-

62 Moreover, the essays by Yates and Lentzsch in this volume remind us that hegemonic powers also started as local powers and suffered many defeats.

63 See the essays in this volume by Cornelius and Arrington.

64 On transnational hegemonic master narratives and memories of collective violence in the twentieth century CE, see Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, “Politics,” 60–65; Rothberg,

tory is commonly written by the victors, and their terms dictate how conflicts are remembered, as Clark nicely illustrates with her study of the terminology used in Roman accounts of collective violence. Hegemonic powers had a deep impact on how collective violence was represented in the narrations of dominated people, as shown by Bezold. They also influenced the practices and forms of commemoration. Rhyder thus shows that the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees narrate triumphs against the Seleucid kingdom, even as the manner in which these victories are commemorated in festivals is deeply influenced by Hellenistic memory practice.

A third perspective could be called a “systemic” approach to commemoration: forms of remembering collective violence are influenced by other groups not only in the sense of adoption described above, but also in reaction to the commemorative strategies and practices of others. Yates argues that the established heroic memory of the Spartans as having died defending Thermopylae prevented a heroization of the defenders of the Acropolis. The competition with Sparta shaped this particular Athenian memory because commemorating the human loss would result in an unfavorable comparison with Sparta. Taking a different example, the descriptions of Judean commemorative practices dealt with by Bezold and Rhyder are not mere imitations of Hellenistic commemorative patterns but specifically modified adaptations that aim at articulating the sociopolitical agency of Hasmonean leaders in the context of other local and hegemonic powers.

Reading the essays in this volume in conversation with each other deepens our understanding of the cultural memory of collective violence in antiquity and invites dialogue with research on collective violence and memory beyond the scope of this book. The mechanisms and strategies of remembering collective violence that these essays reveal not only help us read ancient sources more carefully and against the grain but also make us think about narratives of collective violence in our own contemporary contexts.

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Multidirectional Memory; and Levy and Sznajder, *Holocaust and Memory*. On transcultural dynamics of memory more generally, see Erl, “Travelling Memory.”

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The Ruins of Jericho (Joshua 6) and the Memorialization of Violence

Angelika Berlejung

Abstract

The ruins of Jericho's Middle and Late Bronze Age walls were integrated into the social construction of memories, assignment of meaning, writing and archiving, and they became a *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory), a center of social processes and discourses. One of these discourses deals with divine violence and collective human violence as a legitimate option of social action and part of identity construction for Israel and Yhwh. The various literary strata of Josh 6 reflect the fact that the visible remains of the past did not have a static interpretation in the social memory and discourses of ancient Israel but were interpreted in different ways over the course of time because the observers' or interpreters' relationship to the commemorated event, its earlier interpretations, previous in- and out-group definitions, sociopolitical circumstances, and ethical guidelines changed. The ruins of Jericho inspired a discourse on the use, purpose, scope, effects, and limits of divine and collective human violence, all of which underwent several modifications. Underlying these different expressions of collective violence in Josh 6 is the didactic impetus to make the visible ruins of Jericho a site of memory and a teaching tool designed to demonstrate that total obedience to God is and should be the highest principle of action.

Keywords

conquest – identity formation – obedience – violence-justifying ideology – foreignness – Rahab

1 Introduction

After a century of excavations carried out across hundreds of sites in Palestine/Israel, we know that the landscapes familiar to the writers of the Hebrew Bible in the first millennium BCE were marked by the ruins of numerous cities,

some centuries or even millennia old. The ruins were exposed to public view, structured the ancient landscape, were partly reused, and triggered various interpretations and discourses that are reflected in the Hebrew Bible. While there is not a single biblical passage referring to an attempt to explore or excavate these remains in an effort to learn about the earlier inhabitants of a place, or to rob or reuse the ruins of devastated cities (practices well attested in archaeology), the visible ruins of (Bronze Age) cities such as Hazor (Tell el-Qedah), Ai (et-Tell), Jericho (Tell es-Sultan), Gath (Tell eṣ-Ṣafi), Ekron (Tel Miqne/Khirbet el-Muqanna), and Sodom and Gomorrah (Tell el-Hammam?) were visually impressive and inspired the Hebrew writers of the first millennium BCE to produce a broad collection of texts of different genres (poems, prose narratives, prophetic oracles, teachings, and etiological notices) in which the experience of living in a landscape of ruins is reflected and integrated into the social construction of reality and symbolic universes.¹ A well-known example of this is the creation of narratives with detailed scenarios of programmatic destructions of “Canaanite” cities by the alliance of the “Israelite” tribes, by divine agents, or by God himself (e.g., Josh 6; 8; Gen 13:10; 19:21, 25, 29; Deut 29:22; Isa 1:7; 13:19; Amos 1:8).

These narratives sometimes have a historical background—as in the case of Gath in 2Kgs 12:18, which was destroyed by Hazael, king of Damascus—and preserve its memory, but usually not.² The destructions of Jericho, Ai, and Sodom and Gomorrah, which were attributed to the people of Israel or to Yhwh, had happened long before, and their historical background was hidden in the past. But the ruins of these cities were still visible and were used to construct a sociosymbolic landscape of material memorials, creating a collective memory of the past (i.e., a memoryscape) and an idealized historiography embodying “Israel’s” identity formation and land claims, as well as conveying theological and ethical programs to present and future generations.³ The visible ruins of abandoned cities were therefore neither neglected by the writers of the Hebrew scriptures nor seen negatively but integrated into various (synchronic and diachronic) discourses and even used to reinforce particular symbolic uni-

1 I take a constructivist approach to the socially defined ascription of meanings; see further Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, who describe the concept of “symbolic universes” in more detail.

2 On the ruins of Iron I Gath as triggers for tales about giant-sized creatures, see Maeir, “Memories, Myths and Megalithics.”

3 An example of how theological and ethical programs influence such narratives is the nexus between sin and sanction; on this, see Berlejung, “Human Sin.” On memoryscapes, see De Nardi and High, “Memoryscapes,” 117–118; Maran, “Presence”; Gensburger, “Memory and Space”; Assmann, *Cultural Memory*; and Nora, “Between History and Memory.”

verses, ethical imperatives, or messianic transformations and utopias expected in the distant future (Isa 58:12).⁴

From the evidence of the biblical stories in Josh 2 and 6, we can conclude that the impressive ruins of pre-Hellenistic Jericho, which were visible during the first millennium BCE, were physical objects that challenged the viewers to interpret them and to deal with their own past. The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament testifies that these ruins were not interpreted as the result of a natural disaster (such as an earthquake) but as a witness and embodiment of history and of Yhwh's activities within this history, as a material memorialization of a key moment in the people of Israel's entry into the promised land, and, last but not least, a testament to the combined power of collective violence on the part of Yhwh and the people. These activities shaped not only time, in that the destruction of Jericho marked a new beginning, but also space, as it transformed the landscape of ancient Palestine into a memoryscape. Since the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament offers a wide range of theological reflections on this ruin, which marked the ancient landscape during the first millennium BCE and beyond, my aim in this essay will be to sketch how Jericho was assigned meanings and integrated into ancient discourses and constructs by biblical authors of various periods in order to shape the past (write historiography), the present (create a sacred landscape; convey theological, ethical, and didactic messages; and argue for land claims and identity formation), and the future (craft utopias). In order to understand the biblical view of Jericho's ruins, a theoretical framing of the terms "ruin" and "collective violence" is necessary before we turn to the material remains of Jericho and their most prominent interpretation in Josh 6.

2 Theoretical Perspectives

2.1 *Defining "Ruins"*

Ruins—the remains of a building, city, or other artifact that have been destroyed or are in disrepair—stand in space and in the landscape as a testimony to past greatness and human creativity, which one sees in later times but often no longer understands. One can ignore them and pass by them carelessly because they are just a pile of stones. One can, however, also pay attention to them in terms of the emergence of their material form, as well as the resulting narratives and interpretations, and thereby ascribe meaning to them.

4 Neil and Simic, *Memories*. On ethical imperatives, see Spiegel, "Limits" and Spiegel, "Future."

Ruins, like rubble, are the material manifestation of the violence and dislocation that created them. Ruins and rubble consist *prima vista* of earth, dust, and stone. Because stones, even if their exact form and function have been lost, stand for durability, they have the potential to inspire reflection on past events.⁵

Over time, a landscape can oscillate between “ruins” and “rubble” multiple times as societies interact with it in various ways—for example, excavating it, restoring it, or leaving it exposed to the elements. The same materiality can be charged with meanings, ideas, and affects depending on time, social conditions, and interpretive authorities. In ruins, as in rubble, the viewer can perceive the forces of past cultures and human will but can never form a complete picture of the past. From the totality of form and culture lost in the destroyed architecture, one can only ever infer partial aspects. That said, we cannot make a clear distinction between ruins and rubble; they are always entangled, contested, and processual.⁶ Both are evidence of past forms of architecture that were exposed to destruction and decay, and in both cases their meaning and significance is determined by later interpreters.

In what follows, I will speak of ruins (rather than rubble) when architectural forms and assigned meanings are recognizable, and I situate ruins within a process (that also includes rubble) in which multiple forces are combined, thus characterizing a ruin as a field of relations. This is because “ruins” are characterized by a particular representational mode of narrating the entanglement of the past, present, and future; culture and nature; progress and decline.

At first glance, ruins are simply fragments and material leftovers of human building activities. Yet they also have an afterlife as spatial markers (depending on the rural or urban context), signs of remembrance, material memorials, or monuments of defeat or victory. They testify not only to the transience of all earthly things but also to the fact that something created by humans has withstood time and the forces of nature.⁷ As spatial markers, they serve an

5 That stones are used cross-culturally by humans for commemorative purposes is already well known; see, e.g., Cohen, *Stone* and Higgins, “Life and Death,” 1.

6 Simmel, “Ruin,” 259–266 draws a clear distinction between “ruins” and “rubble,” the first being a meaningful phenomenon with recognizable forms and the latter being “a mere heap of stones” characterized by formlessness and meaninglessness (261). This differentiation is the starting point of Gordillo, *Rubble*, 9–10 and Stoler, “Introduction,” both of whom discuss “rubble” and “ruin” in order to tear down the latter’s glamorized ascriptions, romanticization, or fetishization.

7 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, nos. 1–2 (“Das Passagen-Werk”). Benjamin, *Ursprung* connected ruins with allegories (176–181) and viewed decay as history condensed in the ruin to a specific locale (176). On Benjamin and ruins, see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics*, 159–201 and Fraser, “Interrupting Progress.”

observer or passerby for orientation, but they also give the landscape a particular aesthetic valence. As signs and bearers of meaning, the interpretive authority (*Deutungshoheit*) of those who ascribe meaning to a ruin and ensure that this meaning is spread synchronously and passed down over time plays a major role. The agents of this authority and its social acceptance also determine whether a ruin is forgotten, further dismantled, maintained as a ruin, or rebuilt.

At the same time, use of the term “ruin” can vary considerably depending on the cultural context and the perspective of the observer. The traces of time and decay are not perceived and interpreted in the same way by everyone. Spaces and architectural remains that are considered dead and decayed to the viewer coming from the outside are spaces full of vitality and new functions to those who inhabit and use them. The concept of a “ruin” thus implies a comparative view not only of past and present, but also of inside and outside.

Ruins have the potential to mediate a sense of materiality, ephemerality, and loss through their outer shape and a sense of temporality through their duration. They can also structure and assign meanings to spaces and landscapes, as well as provoke in their observers reactions (ranging from veneration to looting) and emotions such as respect, disrespect, fear, curiosity, compassion, desire, or perplexity. Ruins also combine culture and nature; they represent the intersection between the human will to control the environment and the powers of nature.⁸ Urban ruin and decay also have a critical potential: they are a challenge to any narrative of unbounded progress or human control over time or nature. They protrude into the present as critical signs from the past because they are witnesses to the fragility of human cultural endeavors, progress, and especially the functional city and human governance. As cultural artifacts, ruins upset and disturb as they disrupt and destabilize the precepts, claims, aims, and progress of human cultural efforts such as settlement, monumental construction, and urbanization. Ruins implicitly undermine any human building project.

Ruins should be understood not only as material, natural, cultural, temporal, or spatial phenomena, but also as social phenomena. Forces, disputes, and meanings are articulated around them that can be attributed to various social discourses and processes.⁹ Different agents attribute meaning to the historical, religious, and political nature of the ruin and decide about its possible

8 Márquez, Bustamante, and Pinochet, “Antropología,” 109–112 and Dobraszczyk, *Dead City*. On the combination of nature and culture, see Simmel, “Ruin,” 261–262.

9 Stoler, “Imperial Debris,” 191–219.

reuse. The decision to forget a ruin or give it an afterlife goes hand in hand with the ability of interpreters to recognize and reactualize the fundamental narrative of a ruin in its material forms. A ruin can become a point of departure and a visual medium for various discourses such as historiography, identity, collective memory, sacred topography, etiology, theology, and ethics, and as a program for the future. Ruins are thus not only oriented toward the past and memory, but they also bridge the past, the present, and even the future.

Ruins, then, can function as landmarks within constructions of history and identity or be interpreted as memorials that challenge human conceptions of control, progress, permanence, linear time, and geometric space. Because ruins always refer to origins and reproduce the aura of the authentic, narratives about ruins and etiologies for them play a role in legitimizing claims to power or territory. The supposed authenticity of the ruin, then, can have different explanations. Some ruins are destined by the holders of interpretive authority to become landmarks, memorials, or markers of actual events, while others are integrated into invented stories of a fictional past into which various claims and constructs are projected.¹⁰ By their very nature, all interpretations of ruins are an offensive of the present on the past.

The aesthetic of destruction that pertains to ruins also belongs in this interpretive context. This special aesthetic is characterized by a balance between the discernibility and the dissolution of a ruin's outward form, which predestines it to become a free arena for new signifying acts and assignments of meaning. The decayed buildings can be semantically reoccupied in a way that differs from their former use, so that one can speak of an aesthetic of ruins.¹¹ Hartmut Böhme points out that this reflexive view of ruins tends toward memory, assigning meaning (e.g., theological, power-discursive, or historical), writing, and archiving.¹² Ruins, memory, and writing are therefore closely connected because ruins can give support to memories but are only permanently immune to oblivion if they are able to "strike the sparks of eternal writing" ("die Funken der ewigen Schrift zu schlagen").¹³

That said, we have to conclude that ruins are disturbing. They are architectural fragments that question human order, human control, and concepts of cultural progress, and they attest to the destructive forces of time, nature, and human action. They can also imply that power structures thought to be deeply

10 In German, memorials are differentiated into different subtypes, e.g., *Siegesmal*, *Erinnerungsmal*, or *Mahnmal*.

11 Following Böhme, "Die Ästhetik," 287.

12 Böhme, "Die Ästhetik," 287.

13 Böhme, "Die Ästhetik," 288.

ingrained are temporary, contingent, and even fragile. This can evoke emotions such as respect, disrespect, fear, insecurity, longing, or nostalgia.

Being basically real places, ruins are linked with the construction of world-views, identities, memories, sacred landscapes, etiologies, and theological and ethical programs.¹⁴ Ruins are thus able to intertwine space, time, materiality, and symbolic universes and trigger a variety of sociocultural discourses that are detectable, for example, in literary sources. Ruins are spaces in which different forms of materiality (e.g., organic, inorganic, natural, synthetic), temporality, and agency can be articulated. They are cultural artifacts that activate networks of meaning, but at the same time they perform it as a kind of meaningful manifest that can be read, analyzed, interpreted, (re)thought, and written down. How they are discussed and interpreted is intimately connected to the histories, stories, religion, economic forces, power structures, interpretive authorities, and communities of a given culture, as well as to conflicting visions for its future.

In sum, ruins are complex landmarks in which different spatial and temporal forms come together, whose confrontations materialize on at least five levels: Ruins (1) stand between nature and culture; (2) stand between concepts of past, present, and future; (3) mark and disrupt spaces and landscapes; (4) are focal points of confrontation between different social actors with different possibilities of interpretation and action; and (5) produce an aesthetic of their own.¹⁵ The ongoing confrontations with ruins and their changing interpretations, which are tangible in texts, testify to the search for new configurations for any current or future experience. This is the background for approaches that seek to understand ruins as processes rather than objects or that propose to consider the state of ruin as a precarious equilibrium that, even if inscribed in a fixed materiality, evokes controversial emotions, invites imagination, and is subject to permanent transformations.¹⁶

14 On sociosymbolic landscape archaeology, see Stewart and Strathern, *Landscape, Memory and History*; Holtorf and Williams, "Landscapes and Memories"; and LExcellent, *Human Memory*. On etiologies in the Bible, see, e.g., Van Dyk, "Function"; Schmitt, "And Jacob Set Up a Pillar"; and Farkas, "Etiologies."

15 The essays in Bicknell, Judkins, and Korsmeyer, *Philosophical Perspectives* refer to philosophical perspectives on ruins and address issues of the nature or aesthetics of ruins, ruins as catalysts of memory, the physical legacy of a troubled past, triggers of respect and emotion, and the destruction and conservation of cultural heritage in recent periods. Corresponding studies referring to antiquity are still lacking.

16 Márquez, Bustamante, and Pinochet, "Antropología." Stoler, "Imperial Debris" has proposed that we shift our gaze away from ruins and toward processes of ruination in order to highlight the active forces of destruction that create the palimpsests of "imperial debris" that exist all over the world.

2.2 *Defining “Collective Violence”*

The scope of this study does not permit a thorough review of the current interdisciplinary research on collective violence—which includes medical, psychological, sociological, philosophical, historical, and religious aspects—but a brief definition of the term and an overview of the most important characteristics will help us as we move forward. Collective violence may be defined as “the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group—whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity—against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives.”¹⁷ It can take various forms, including war, genocide, banditry, and gang warfare.¹⁸ Collective violence seems to be an anthropological constant with phylogenetic roots that is triggered and enabled by particular group processes; social, economic, and political factors; and specific psychosocial constellations.¹⁹ It is a social act that occurs episodically and can be used for many purposes (e.g., appeasing the gods, conquering new territories, acquiring resources, or conflict resolution).²⁰ Socially, structures of legitimation can be created in ideologies and religions that allow the use of collective violence to go unpunished or that even reward it and, if necessary, override individually prescribed ethical-moral behavior patterns and empathy with the victims.²¹ In these contexts, collective physical violence requires the coordination of the violent parties and tends toward self-organization and a feedback loop in the experience of power and impunity, which can lead to unrestrained escalations.

Collective physical violence, like individual violence, is primarily the domain of men.²² In this context, group dynamics such as in-group overevaluation and out-group devaluation are of central importance in stabilizing the male sense of self-worth and social identity, as well as in legitimizing, normalizing, and internalizing violent behavior. In the process of constructing an image

17 Krug et al., *World Report*, 215.

18 Krug et al., *World Report*, 215.

19 On the neurobiological and sociological aspects of collective violence as a group and intergroup phenomenon and the following aspects, see Möller-Leimkühler and Bogerts, “Kollektive Gewalt.”

20 Tilly, *Politics*, 3 refers to collective violence as the “episodic social interaction that: immediately inflicts physical damage on persons and/or objects ..., involves at least two perpetrators of damage; and results at least in part from coordination among persons who perform the damaging acts.”

21 On divine approval of violence as legitimation of human violence, see Wahl, *Aggression und Gewalt*, 160–162.

22 Wahl, *Aggression und Gewalt*, 27–28.

of an enemy, the persons or groups declared to be enemies are dehumanized, which involves defining the out-group using constructs of otherness and difference, religion, gender, race, or ethnicity. Only minimal differences are needed to discriminate against other groups; sometimes even social classification is enough. The violent actions of one's reference group are perceived as legitimate acts of self-defense or efforts to implement legitimate claims which justify the violent actions. At the same time, individual members feel less responsible for violent acts committed as a group. This results in fewer feelings of guilt and, at the same time, the feeling of dominance and power over others acts as a psychological reward, an effect that is enhanced by the admiration, solidarity, and friendship within the reference group. In this respect, individuals who participate in acts of collective violence do not experience feelings of guilt, but rather a reward system. The social identity acquired through group membership is reinforced internally by the alignment of attitudes and behaviors and externally by processes of seclusion, so that group ties become the main component of social identity, and the individual can no longer distinguish himself or herself from group goals. In all categories of collective violence, the categorical distinction of "us versus them" is foundational.²³ Collective violence can thus contribute significantly to the identity construction of individuals as well as of groups.

Groups of male youth in particular have an affinity for violence. They are often characterized by a normative cult of masculinity, which is defined by strength and violence and can be combined with a code of honor. In these contexts, collective violence functions as a group norm and a means of demonstrating masculinity, and it serves to secure status in and through the group. Motives for collective violent behavior can be sought in the desire for dominance, the need for belonging, identity construction, territorial claims, resource acquisition and defense, or the staging of masculinity and strength.²⁴ Violence in groups can also be exercised as an end in itself, because the act of violence is experienced as euphoric, reflected in the notion of a "violent orgy." Intense experiences of risk, tension, pain, rescue, heroism, community, and superiority create bonds among the perpetrators of violence that delimit the in-group to the outside world, an effect that is further reinforced by the telling and literary elaboration of corresponding stories. This can lead to the diffusion and implementation of violence-promoting ideas and traditions and fantasies of violence, which in any case contribute to the socialization to vio-

23 Tilly, *Politics*, 10.

24 Möller-Leimkühler and Bogerts, "Kollektive Gewalt," 5–6.

lence. Once violence is accepted as an option for social action, fantasies of violence can also be developed. These fantasies can reach theatrical dimensions without ever being or having been translated into real acts of violence. The potential for violence that occurs in violent fantasies acts as a cognitive script intended to secure power and control over others. This phenomenon of violent appropriation of the world is less about the exercise of violence per se than about the desire for total control and the exercise of power. Violent fantasies are often triggered by threats or humiliation that override one's inhibitions and create a feeling of being at the mercy of others. The violent fantasies can then act as an escape valve, warding off feelings of inferiority and powerlessness and suggesting a virtual superiority that can "strike" at any time. The triggers and the addressees of the violent fantasies need by no means be the same.²⁵ In this sense, fantasies of violence are like acts of violence themselves: they are an excellent means of creating individual and group identity. External enemies and threats hold the group together, even if they are pure constructs and do not actually exist. Fantasies of violence weld the group together through experiences of commonality, feelings of superiority, fear, and guilt and can reflect existing insecurities, deficits, and instabilities.

3 The Case of Jericho

Ruins leave salient traces of past greatness and past destruction alike, which can be integrated into discourses of the present. This can be studied in particular on the basis of the impressive and (until now) well-preserved ruin of pre-Hellenistic Jericho. As I will argue, it inspired the authors of Josh 2 and 5:13–6:27 to create a narrative of the city's fall that was as theatrical as it was fictional. This ruin undoubtedly struck sparks in the Holy Scriptures (see section 1 above), protecting it from being forgotten. Using Josh 6 as a case study, this section will examine how the city's ruins might have been perceived, remembered, and interpreted in antiquity and how they came to symbolize a proud city, rightly reduced to rubble by collective and divine violence. The etiological narrative of Josh 6 not only explains the presence of a ruin whose presence could not be ignored by contemporary observers but also reveals different perspectives on the subject of collective violence in particular.

²⁵ Kirchhöfer, *Wider die Rationalität*, 107.

3.1 *The Point of Departure: Tell Es-Sultan*

Jericho (Tell es-Sultan), a site that had been settled since the Epipaleolithic period (eleventh–ninth millennia BCE), developed in the Early Bronze Age I (EB I) from a flourishing village into a city.²⁶ The fortified EB II (3000 BCE) urban center was destroyed by a strong earthquake around 2700 BCE and was rebuilt in EB III with an outer and an inner wall. This form of the city likewise suffered a destruction in the EB IIIB, around 2300 BCE, which was followed by several centuries of nonurban settlement on the site (2300–2000/1950 BCE). At the beginning of the second millennium BCE, a new city arose on the mound, with its center on Spring Hill. In the Middle Bronze Age (2000/1950–1550/1500 BCE), Jericho was a strongly fortified city of approximately 7 hectares with a “solid mudbrick wall with rectangular towers in MB I (1950–1800 BCE)” and “two successive earthen ramparts with a limestone revetment crowned by a mudbrick wall in MB II (1800–1650 BCE).”²⁷ The city suffered violent destruction in the mid-seventeenth century BCE but was rebuilt and refortified in the MB III (1650–1550/1500 BCE) with a new monumental fortification approximately 8 m in height, consisting of a rubble rampart supported by a series of terrace walls (called “triangular walls”) and by a massive Cyclopean wall made of huge limestone boulders at its base (fig. 2.1). At the end of the MB III, the city underwent a terrible destruction and a fierce conflagration, which affected the city and its walls.²⁸ The cause of this destruction has long been a matter of discussion, with both human and natural events held responsible. Earlier scholarship linked the city’s demise to the expulsion of the Hyksos rulers from Egypt or to internal military disputes within Palestine itself, perhaps exacerbated by additional tensions from newly arrived populations.²⁹ Attempts to link the destruction of the strong MB III city fortification around 1550/1500 BCE with the migrating tribes of Israel and the conquest narrative in Josh 6 have failed. Although the biblical descriptions of imposing Canaanite fortifications are reminiscent of the city’s Middle Bronze Age fortifications, the alleged date of Joshua’s conquest and the emergence of early Israel at the end of the Late Bronze Age during the thirteenth or twelfth centuries cannot be matched with the end of urban Jericho in the mid-sixteenth century.

26 The discussion of the archaeology of Tell es-Sultan in this section is based on Burke, “Walled,” 274–282; Marchetti, “Century”; Nigro, “Italian-Palestinian Expedition”; and Nigro, “Jericho.”

27 Nigro, “Italian-Palestinian Expedition,” 196.

28 Nigro, “Italian-Palestinian Expedition,” 175–214 and Nigro, “Jericho,” 139–156, pls. 6–7.

29 Nigro, “Italian-Palestinian Expedition,” 201–202. Nigro, “Jericho,” 149 discusses Egyptian assaults or internal conflicts.



FIGURE 2.1 The Cyclopean Wall, Jericho
IMAGE: OLE DEPENBROCK

Kathleen Kenyon found evidence of an earthquake that was at least partly responsible for the demise of the city in the MB III.³⁰ An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 is documented for about 1560 BCE.³¹ The destruction of the nearby site of Tell el-Hammam has recently been dated to around 1650 BCE and interpreted as a Tunguska-like event (i.e., a meteor airburst), which would likewise have hit and destroyed Jericho, 22 kilometers away.³² According to Ted E. Bunch and his colleagues, the destruction of Tell el-Hammam was followed by a post-MB settlement gap of about three hundred years, because the airburst had salinized the sediment of the area by distributing hypersaline water from the Dead Sea in such a way that no agriculture was possible for several centuries afterward.³³ The simultaneous dating of the destruction of Tell el-Hammam and Jericho around 1650 BCE is possible, but this was not the final chapter of Jericho's history. Without a longer gap, the city was rebuilt and refortified after the destruction of 1650 BCE and flourished for around a century. Radiocarbon dating fixes the very end of Middle Bronze Age Jericho between

30 Kenyon, *Architecture and Stratigraphy*; Kenyon, "Jericho"; and Marchetti, "Century."

31 Migowski et al., "Recurrence Pattern."

32 Bunch et al., "Tunguska Sized Airburst."

33 Bunch et al., "Tunguska Sized Airburst," 49–50.

1550 and 1520 calibrated BCE, thus around one hundred years later than the airburst at Tell el-Hammam.³⁴ The thesis of Bunch and his colleagues is also undermined by the fact that Jericho was still occupied in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BCE) and later, albeit on a very reduced scale and with much weaker fortifications.³⁵ Another piece of evidence that contradicts the theory of a long settlement gap after the MB III destruction is the observation that the burnt and collapsed MB III defensive system was refurbished by adding a mudbrick wall on top of the surviving crest of the Cyclopean wall. The scarcity of material evidence from the thirteenth century BCE is not the result of an abandonment of the site during the Late Bronze Age or of the impossibility of farming; rather, it is due to levelling operations carried out in the Iron Age.³⁶ Like many Late Bronze Age sites, the humble LB Jericho was simply abandoned.

The subsequent layers of the Iron Age I were detected only in a few places on Spring Hill. During the Iron Age IB, Jericho was resettled as a rural village that was built over the ruins of the Late Bronze Age city.³⁷ The site was refortified in the tenth century BCE, reusing the surviving MB III–LB Cyclopean wall. The remains of an administrative *bit hilani* building from the Iron Age IIA prove that Jericho played an administrative role during the ninth century BCE.³⁸ The small city continued until the end of the kingdom of Judah in 587/586 BCE.³⁹ Tell es-Sultan still experienced a stable occupation during the Persian period, even though the center of the oasis was shifting south toward Wadi Qelt and the road to Jerusalem.

To conclude, repeated reuse of the MB III–LB Cyclopean wall at Jericho shows that the ruins of these walls were noticed through the centuries and motivated the inhabitants of Jericho and the surrounding area again and again to restore these fortifications to their original function. Whenever Jericho was rebuilt and refortified, the remains of the wall were reused. The material remains of the Middle and Late Bronze Age city were part of an ongoing processes: they were a permanent resource of building material but also the focus

34 On the calibrated date for MB Jericho, see Nigro, "Jericho," 149.

35 Nigro, "Jericho," 149–150; for a different (but outdated) view, see Burke, "Walled," 282. On the reduced scale of occupation in the Late Bronze Age, see Bienkowski, *Jericho*, 155.

36 Nigro, "Italian-Palestinian Expedition," 203–204. For a different view, see Nigro, "Jericho," 150 (decline and abandonment of the small LB settlement in the very last century of the period; see already Bienkowski, *Jericho*, 155).

37 Nigro, "Italian-Palestinian Expedition," 205–206.

38 Marchetti, "Century," 317; Nigro, "Italian-Palestinian Expedition," 204–206; and Nigro, "Jericho," 150–151.

39 Weippert and Weippert, "Jericho"; Marchetti, "Century," 317–318.

of an ongoing confrontation between contemporary observers and the ruin on the five levels mentioned above (see section 2.1 above).

3.2 *The Ruins of Jericho and Joshua 6*

The foregoing survey of Jericho's settlement history indicates that, during the end of the Late Bronze Age (thirteenth–twelfth centuries BCE), when the “Israelites” are usually supposed to have settled “Canaan,” Jericho surely was not an impressive city; rather, it was a small settlement on a very impressive ruin.⁴⁰ Late Bronze Age Jericho was apparently only abandoned (without major destruction events such as sieges and battles), as was also the case at many other sites in the region during this time of deurbanization. Because the modest dimensions of LB Jericho are not an adequate setting for the battle scene narrated in Josh 6, conservative readers of the Bible had to backdate Joshua's conquest as presented in Josh 6 to the end of the Middle Bronze Age (instead of the end of the Late Bronze Age).⁴¹ Yet there is no way to harmonize this early (MB III) date for the arrival of new groups of proto-Israelites with the situation in Late Bronze Age Palestine as reflected in the archaeological record. And, when we take into account that the first version of Josh 6 was written in the eighth, seventh, or sixth centuries BCE and continued to undergo development, it becomes clear that any attempt to identify one of the many destructions of Jericho with biblical figures and their actions is very hazardous.⁴² This remains true even if we assume that a conquest story was transmitted orally over several centuries. Jericho suffered several destruc-

40 Finkelstein and Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 81–83.

41 See Bimson, “Wann eroberte Josua Kanaan” and the general outline of van der Veen and Zerbst, *Keine Posaunen*.

42 On the date of Josh 6, see, e.g., Bieberstein, *Josua–Jordan–Jericho*, 230–433, who dates the basic narrative layer of Josh 6 after 733 BCE (vv. 1–3, 4b, 5, 11, 14–15, 20c–21), which was in turn supplemented with four later layers and some isolated additions (296). According to Knauf, *Josua*, 68–72, the basic layer of Josh 6 (vv. 1, 2b–3a, 5*, 7*, 10*, 12a, 15*, 16*, 20*, 27) originated (along with Josh 9*–10*) as the conclusion of an Exodus–Joshua story at the end of the seventh century and was later expanded through several updates and book redactions (16–22). He argues that the authors of Josh 6 had in mind not ruins but the Jericho of the time of Ahab (70). Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 302–338 argues in favor of an original narrative (vv. 1–3, 4b, 5abb, 6a, 7, 8a*, 8b, 9–10, 11–12, 13abb, 14–27) and two post-pentateuchal stages of composition. As always, the diachronic reconstructions, especially of the basic layer, are highly debated in scholarship; for a recent treatment with reference to further literature, see Germany, *Exodus–Conquest Narrative*, 346–365. But there is a general tendency to differentiate Deuteronomistic and Priestly expansions (priestly participation, ritualized actions, and procession) as well as redactions spanning several books.

tions by natural or human forces between the third and first millennia BCE, and it was almost always able to overcome them without a settlement gap. The experience of the unstoppable survival of this very old city with its ruins of considerable height (today 21.5 m) became part of the local memoryscape and the multiple social discourses and interpretations from the first millennium BCE until today.

The Middle and Late Bronze Age Cyclopean wall stood out among the material remains of Jericho that were already ancient when Josh 6 was written. It could not be ignored but became part of the visual communication and was integrated into the “social genesis of the view.”⁴³ From a semiotic perspective, it could function as a sign carrying meaning. Its perception was (like the perception of texts and images always is) a cultural construct and a self-referential process; perception is interpretation and involves assigning meaning with the aim of appropriating what is seen (or heard/read) and adapting it to prior experiences or interpretations, which are thereby expanded and stabilized. The ancient observers of the ruins, as well as the producers (and the audience) of adjacent written or oral interpretations (as well as readers/observers today), were thus governed by their respective social, religious, and historical contexts and their interests. A selection of these interpretations is perceptible in Josh 6.

Jericho’s walls lost their original form and function after the Bronze Age. The ruin witnessed past grandeur followed by a massive destruction without a clear indication of who its earlier inhabitants were or who destroyed the site. It could therefore become the free arena of new signifying acts and assignments of meaning. The authors of Josh 6 used their chance to semantically reoccupy the decayed buildings.

Of all the possible destruction scenarios that could be associated with the ruins of Jericho, the authors of Josh 6 chose a time horizon that was central to Israel’s identity and its land claims: the time of Israel’s seizure of the promised land. And of all the possible participants in the destruction of the city, they chose the people of Israel under the leadership of Joshua and Yhwh. The ruins of Jericho were thus integrated into the biblical discourses on this key moment of the “Israelites’” very first contact with the land and its inhabitants. Paradigmatic decisions were taken. In Josh 6, the inhabitants of Jericho were used *pars pro toto* for the Canaanite population of the land and thus served as a model for differentiating the in-group of the “Israelites” versus the out-group of the “Canaanites.” The in-group is portrayed as a non-sedentary newcomer

43 Bourdieu, *Rules*, 295–306, 309–315. On perception as a cognitive construct, see Schelske, *Die kulturelle Bedeutung*, 84–104.

in the area, living in camps under the guidance of Joshua and Yhwh, while the out-group consists of the long-established urban population, whose cultural features such as kings, walls, and gates are highlighted. By assigning urbanism, fortifications, and kingship to the out-group, the text promotes an antiurban and an antiroyal tendency, which is said to be part of “Israel’s” identity from its very beginning.⁴⁴

The textual perspective fully subsumes the reader within the in-group of external (but legitimate) aggressors that also otherwise characterizes the martial fantasies of conquest in the book of Joshua. By doing this, the biblical text promotes one of the basic parameters of “Israel’s” identity formation—namely, the “Israel versus Canaan” pattern, through which biblical authors reshape cultural memory and express their distance from their own habitat, language, and ethnicity by specifying criteria of demarcation to the outside and identity formation to the inside.⁴⁵ This “us versus them” distinction prepares the ground for collective violence not only in Josh 6 but throughout the book of Joshua and in other biblical books.

Apart from this paradigmatic in- and out-group distinction, several other meanings assigned to the ruins of Jericho are in evidence in Josh 6, a text that has shaped the “social genesis of the view” (see section 2.1 above) and the perception of the ruins up to the present. The ruins of Jericho and the text of Josh 6 are mutually connected with each other, transforming the ruined walls of Jericho into a means of communication and a material witness of the biblical construction of memory. The ruins became an illustration of Josh 6, producing an aura of authenticity for the story, while Josh 6 also became a caption of sorts for viewers of the ruin. The text of Josh 6, which underwent several stages of supplementation, reflects a longstanding engagement with the ruins of Jericho and an evolving assignment of meanings that sought to reshape the past according to present interests and discourses.

But why Jericho? Jericho stands temporally and spatially at a key point. It was a famously ancient city, representing a long tradition and distant past. Its destruction by a new immigrant group therefore programmatically erased this past and began a new era. The monumental ruins of Jericho also marked a prominent point in the surrounding landscape, something that has not

44 I do not, however, share the view of Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 336 that the authors of the book of Joshua promote a general antiurban perspective, since texts in Joshua argue only against those Canaanite cities that must be eliminated in order to clear the ground for Israelite cities (cf. Josh 20–21).

45 On the “Israel versus Canaan” pattern, see Berlejung, “Geschichte und Religionsgeschichte,” 60.

changed to this day. This domination of space stimulated the creation of a narrative that frames the city of Jericho as a potent enemy of the Israelites because it blocks their way as they enter the land from Transjordan. Although the occupation of the land in the book of Joshua took a different direction (Ai and Mount Ebal; Jerusalem comes into view only in Josh 10), Jericho stood spatially for the entrance into Cisjordan and for the route from the lowest point in the landscape up into the hill country and to Jerusalem.

Jericho also stands for the “low-high” symbolism of another perspective: The view of Jericho’s ruins from the outside implies a certain line of sight on the part of the observer. One can only approach the ruin by looking up from below, from fertile fields to stones. This unavoidable perspective on the tell (low = outside; high = inside) corresponds to the contrast in Josh 6—namely, that of the open Israelite camp below against the high enclosed and fortified Canaanite city. These spatial categories also correspond to the biblical construct of the landless hordes of the tribes, approaching the urban settlements of Canaan only from below and outside, standing as outsiders before Canaanite cultural and architectural achievements such as gates, towers, and walls. The remains of the Cyclopean wall of Jericho were an ideal symbol of the polarities of low versus high, camp versus fortified city, outside versus inside, and rural/nonsedentary versus urban societies. These polarities express central themes in the book of Joshua (see also Josh 10, the camp at Gilgal and the five kings), making city walls a key issue. This is because they are the boundary *par excellence* between the aforementioned polarities. City walls, towers, and gates are liminal zones. They have a protective function and a highly symbolic meaning. They are borders between the center and the periphery, controlling the access to the inner center of human settlement, granting it security or, in cultic categories, purity. In the ancient Near Eastern worldview, city walls were thought to divide the space into an inner and outer area, with the latter being a zone of reduced divine presence, protection, and order.⁴⁶ It is the task of the king (in cooperation with the city god) to control the gates and walls and to maintain their integrity, form, and function. City walls thus represent intact power, wealth, and divine protection; an intact human-divine relationship; and control over different forms of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital.⁴⁷ Consequently, city walls were not only built by mighty kings (such as Gilgamesh) using slave labor but were also consecrated (see Neh

46 Berlejung, *Die Theologie*, 28.

47 On the city as a symbol of the divine-human relationship, see Nissinen, “City,” 208. On the different forms of capital and their conversions and reconversions, see Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 32–36, 137–138 and Bourdieu, “Forms,” 241–258.

12:27–43) or even deified (such as the inner and outer walls Imgur-Enlil and Nemed-Enlil of Babylon, whose names also express the involvement of the god Enlil).⁴⁸

Of course, one's view of city walls and their assessment depend heavily on one's perspective. For the inner circle of the city's inhabitants, the wall is something that evokes trust and the feeling of inclusion, safety, and being at home. For those outside, it evokes distance, exclusion, respect, fear, and perhaps even aggression with the motivation to destroy or appropriate the wall. The collapse of the city wall is the worst-case scenario for a city and its inhabitants, god, and king (see, e.g., Deut 28:52), while it is the desired result for the aggressor from outside. It signals the end of divine protection, human rule, personal safety, and the security of the city's wealth and other capital and the beginning of the city's vulnerability to enemies and dangers from outside. In this respect, the ruin of the destroyed city wall of Jericho is a visible sign that a city, its population, its king, and its patron god failed at some point in the past. Joshua 6 provides an interpretation of who failed, when, against whom, and why.

On the basis of the ruins of the massive walls of Jericho, the contrasts of low versus high, camp versus fortified city, outside versus inside, and rural/non-sedentary versus urban societies could be illustrated at a key place and key moment in the best and most visible way. With these assignments of meaning, Josh 6 provided significant parameters for the perception of Jericho's ruins, integrated this perception into social discourses, and used it for the production of memories and as a didactic tool for passing on the corresponding patterns of interpretation to the next generations. The writers of Josh 6 chose Jericho in order to create a sociosymbolic, sacred, and didactic landscape and transformed it into a site of memory and identity formation. Another polarity that characterizes the narrative of Josh 6 is that of the new (and dynamic) versus the ancient (and static) culture. This polarity is best illustrated by the warfare that the Israelites are said to have used against the city, a topic which leads us to the theme of collective violence.

3.3 *Joshua 6 and the Discourse of Collective Violence*

Joshua 6 is part of the history of social discourses and of the production of memory constructs that were triggered by and attached to the ruins of Jericho. The text foregrounds their impact on the ancient observers, on their social life, and on their construction of identity, symbolic universes, ethics, memory,

⁴⁸ On the walls of Babylon, see Pedersén, *Babylon*, 40–88. On the consecration of cities, see also the traces of a ritual at the city wall of Ashdod-Yam (the favissa or ritual pit in Area B) discussed in Berlejung and Fantalkin, "Ausgrabungen."

time, and space—in short, their world and its symbolic meanings. These discourses on memory and identity started with the first version of Josh 6, written during the reign of Hezekiah, Manasseh, or Josiah, and continued, as can be seen in the multiple layers of expansion in the text, until the time of the Maccabees.⁴⁹

According to the present text of Josh 6, the ruin of Jericho is said to have resulted from the fact that the intact city was destroyed by a collaborative action of Joshua, an advance guard of armed men, seven priests with seven trumpets, the ark of Yhwh, and the rear guard of the people. Joshua coordinated all of these violent forces. The collapse of the walls is said to be the work not of weapons and siege instruments, but of six plus one silent encirclements, trumpet blasts, and war shouts. This is a peculiar composition for an army, not to mention peculiar equipment and a peculiar strategy. Literary or redaction critics usually explain these peculiarities by interpreting the priestly participation and most probably also the ark as later additions to the text, leaving a semirealistic military force in the original version.⁵⁰ This army acts, as is typical in ancient Near Eastern war constructs, in perfect unity with its deity and does not have to mourn any victims. We can observe a strong contrast in warfare: the Israelites are characterized as acting with Yhwh (Josh 6:2), while the inhabitants of Jericho have no divine help at all. The Israelites are also portrayed as dynamic in their aggression, while Jericho remains static and only shows passive resistance (v. 1). The reader's perspective is shaped by the view of the in-group of the people of Israel having no king but Joshua and Yhwh, and the out-group of the inhabitants of Jericho having a king but no god. With regard to religion, kingship, and dynamic power, the starting position of the opponents is very different. Jericho does not stand a chance.

The attack on Jericho from the Jordan Valley is not only the very first conquest in the book of Joshua; it also begins Israel's appropriation of Cisjordan from the east, the direction of the sunrise. A symbolic meaning cannot be excluded because the rising sun brings light, dawn, and, often in the Bible, sal-

49 On the history of research on Josh 6 since Wellhausen, see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 316–325. With Noth, *Das Buch Josua*, 40; Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 321; and Irsigler, *Gottesbilder*, 520, I share the view that Josh 5:13–15 is a secondary addition to the destruction story starting in Josh 6:1. The author of Josh 5:13–15 seeks to parallel Joshua with Moses (Exod 3*). The ongoing textual development of Josh 6 during the Hellenistic period becomes evident in the differences between MT and LXX.

50 On the debate over whether the ark is a later addition or an original element of Josh 6, see the summary of different proposals in Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 316–325, who argues for the latter.

vation.⁵¹ Joshua 6 not only refers to symbolic meanings within Israel's mental map but also includes an ideal program for its social organization: the conquest is carried out not by single tribes or individuals but by the entire people (according to Josh 6:5) acting in total obedience to Yhwh. By outlining such basic parameters in space, time, and human-divine interaction, the narrative of Jericho's destruction has a proleptic function in the book of Joshua. It anticipates the destruction of Canaanite cities and the conquest of the land as a divine act of holy war. Jericho's defeat functions as a paradigm for the conquest of the entire land. Because of its key position in the book of Joshua and for the identity of Israel, it is not surprising that the narrative's original version has been continually updated and modified—especially with regard to the extent of Jericho's destruction and the participants in this seminal event—through the mention of the “ban” (חרם), the priests, the ark, and Rahab.

From its first to its last textual form, the narrative of Josh 6 communicates Jericho's destruction as the result of divine and collective violence. In the original version of the text, the violence used against the city and its king is not physical violence but psychological terror and acoustic violence, as only noise (the war cry) and siege are used by the people. The walls are also not stormed by the Israelites from below, but only surrounded. The actual destruction work on the walls is done by Yhwh, reflecting the motif of divine warfare, which has nothing to do with real military action.⁵² Only after the walls have been miraculously brought down by Yhwh do the people enter the city. The later priestly expansion of the story elaborates on the motif of the weaponless war in that priests, armed only with musical instruments instead of weapons, carry out an ark procession accompanied by music.⁵³ No real siege warfare takes place; instead, the priests perform an annihilation ritual, while Jericho's wall itself is not even touched by the Israelites.

Apart from the fall of the wall, nothing and nobody comes to harm by human or divine martial violence until Josh 6:16. Ernst Axel Knauf speaks here of a “demilitarization” of divine warfare, which, however, is completely annulled by the Deuteronomistic additions to the earlier narrative.⁵⁴ Joshua's command to

51 Janowski, *Rettungsgewißheit*, 47.

52 Holy war is a well-known ancient Near Eastern pattern; see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 330–332. Quite interesting are the parallels between Josh 6 and 1 Kgs 20, the war between Ahab and Ben-Hadad with the seven-day siege against Aphek and the collapsing walls. On Yhwh as a warrior, see Irsigler, *Gottesbilder*, 340–354.

53 On the literary connections between Josh 6, Lev 25, and Exod 19, see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 331–332.

54 Knauf, *Josua*, 70 (“Entmilitarisierung des JHWH-Krieges”).

execute the ban (Josh 6:17–18), its execution (Josh 6:21), and the second introduction of the narrative in Josh 5:13–15 (theophany of the divine warrior) are later additions that amplify divine as well as human violence. The collapse of the wall is transformed into Yhwh's preparation for the people's collective physical violence.

Under consideration of the oath of rescue to Rahab promised in Josh 2, and under diversion of metal goods for the temple treasury pointing to the sacrilege of Achan in Josh 7 (both of which are even later post-Deuteronomistic additions), the people executed the ban “on man and woman, on old and young, on ox, sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword” (Josh 6:21) and burned the city with everything in it except the metal goods (Josh 6:24).⁵⁵ Everything in Jericho created by Canaanite hands was to be eliminated so that the place could be appropriated and completely remade by the people of Israel and their deity. In this respect, it is quite consistent that a curse against the destroyed city (v. 26) would be added in the context of a textual expansion; it functions as a parenthesis to 1 Kgs 16:34 and proves Joshua to be a true prophet.⁵⁶ The pattern of the announcement and later fulfillment of punishment recognizable in this curse further elaborates what was inherent in the narrative already in its first version. Yhwh and his chosen ones totally control not only space—the land of Canaan

55 Regarding Rahab, Schwienhorst-Schönberger, “Josua, die Gewalt und die Bewohner,” 80–81 correctly notes two different locations: her and her family's lives continue in the midst of Israel until today (Josh 6:25) or outside of the camp (Josh 6:22–23). He attributes the first to the late DtrN and the second to a priestly *Fortschreibung* during the fifth or fourth century in the tradition of Ezra-Nehemiah. Wazana, “Rahab,” 53 also reviews earlier arguments (since Julius Wellhausen) and argues convincingly that the Rahab episode in Josh 2 and 6 is a later addition to the conquest tradition and the original composition. Regarding Achan and the ban, Schwienhorst, *Die Eroberung*, 126 and Fritz, *Das Buch Josua*, 73 correctly observe that the subject matter of booty or dedicated gifts for the treasury of the temple of Yhwh is a topic with an affinity to Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chr 9:26; 26:20, 22, 24; 2 Chr 5:1; 16:2; 36:18), pointing to a postexilic date of the composition. For the same conclusion, see Germany, *Exodus-Conquest Narrative*, 363. Less probable is the claim of Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 338 that the reference to the treasury of Yhwh is antimonarchic, intended to create a contrast to the “treasury of the king” (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:26; 2 Kgs 16:8; 18:15; 20:15; 1 Chr 27:25; 2 Chr 12:9; 36:18).

56 The LXX includes some significant variants. The priestly involvement, the ark, and the procession in vv. 1–5 are lacking in LXX. In vv. 6–10, MT and LXX diverge both in the instruction to the priests and the people and in the account of the destruction (vv. 11–20). Perhaps the most important difference between MT and LXX is the curse section of the story. While the curse remains unfulfilled in MT, opening a prophetic horizon (and bridging to 1 Kgs 16:34), it is immediately fulfilled in LXX by the additional story of Ozan and his sons and thus limited to past history but still proves that Joshua is a true prophet. For a detailed discussion, see Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 305–316 and his Appendix 1.

and its cities—but also time, which is structured by divine announcements and their later fulfillments. With the conquest of Jericho, the announcement of the takeover of the land that had started the exodus was fulfilled.

From the earliest version of Josh 6 to the received versions of the Hebrew Masoretic Text or the Septuagint, it is less a question of *whether* Jericho was destroyed in the past—that can be seen with a glance at the ruins and is part of the collective memory—than *how* it happened and what lesson can be drawn for the present and future. Thus, Josh 6 is not in the first instance (or only through additions such as v. 25) an etiological saga, the *hieros logos* of a feast, or a biblical “report” of historical events, but an exemplary, didactic narrative that deals with the consequences of human faith, obedience, and solidarity in collective as well as individual dimensions.⁵⁷ The text also provides clear categories for Israel’s identity formation and a code of correct behavior: the obedient people, trusting in and acting with God, reach the goal of the exodus—namely, receiving the promised land.⁵⁸ Divine violence against a foreign city

57 For the notion that it is an etiological saga, see Noth, *Das Buch Josua*, 21–27, 40–41, who identifies three etiologies tied to Jericho: the story of Rahab (Josh 2; 6), the theophany to Joshua (5:13–15), and the ruins of the walls of Jericho (Josh 6). He suggests that a pre-Deuteronomistic author combined them into a single narrative. Etiologies, however, are not a primary literary motif in the conquest narratives, which focus more on Israel’s identity, memory constructs, and social borders. For the *hieros logos* of a feast, see Otto, *Das Mazzotfest*. And, for a report of historical events, see Van der Veen and Zerbst, *Keine Posaunen*.

58 Schwienhorst-Schönberger, “Josua 6” and Schwienhorst-Schönberger, “Josua, die Gewalt und die Bewohner” argues that the conquest narratives of the book of Joshua should be understood in a metaphorical-paradigmatic sense. This applies, for example, to Israel’s relationship with the inhabitants of the land, because the narratives represent different models of behavior. The evaluation and consequences of the behavior of the Canaanites are measured primarily by their behavior toward Israel and Yhwh. It is thus not about the Canaanites or city dwellers as such, but about their behavior. In this respect, Josh 6 demonstrates that the relationship of Israel to the inhabitants of the land has three possibilities—extermination, separation, or integration—with the foreign peoples having the decision in their own hands. In his opinion, Rahab (and also the Gibeonites) show that the choice of Israel’s strategy depends on the behavior of the foreign peoples. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, “Josua, die Gewalt und die Bewohner,” 82 argues that, by analogy with the behavior of Rahab, we may conclude that the inhabitants of the city of Jericho would not have experienced destruction if the city had opened its gates to the approaching Israelites. This is highly speculative and also a whitewashing of the biblical text. The claim of Josh 6 and the book of Joshua is that the Canaanites should be and were eliminated. On the different attempts to mitigate the violence of the book of Joshua, especially the ban, see Firth, “Models,” 70–88, who supports the inclusive readings of the book of Joshua, arguing that the policy of the ban requires active opposition to Yhwh, “and where there is active opposition initial ethnicity is not the issue” (87). The assignment of active

is presented as a proven means of reaching this end. As can be observed in the Deuteronomistic additions, this fundamental divine approval of destructive violence, already perceptible in the basic version of the story, in the end legitimates the most extreme human collective violence against those who do not belong to the in-group of the Israelites.

The extremely violent Deuteronomistic fantasy of the ban was not the last word on the topic of collective violence by Israel toward out-groups. Another addition to the story modified the discourse in Josh 6. If Israel's identity and social boundaries were largely defined by faith in and obedience to Yhwh and solidarity with the people, then this faith and solidarity could also open the way for inclusive models of conviviality with out-groups. The insertion of the Rahab episode in Josh 2 and 6 exemplified how it could be possible to survive within Israel.

Rahab as "the quintessential Other" is the paradigm designed to illustrate that confessing monotheistic belief and acting in solidarity with the people of Israel could enable foreigners to live in the midst of or alongside the people of Israel.⁵⁹ The late insertion of the Rahab episode clearly shows that the final composition of the book of Joshua assumes that foreign peoples were an enduring reality in Israel/Palestine and that there was a discourse about how they might live together. Being a narrative of identity formation placed at the key moment of the beginnings of "Israel" in the promised land, the story about divine and human violence in Josh 6 was the perfect place to insert an episode relating to the issue of the limitations of violence and possible inclusion of foreign people in Israel.

In summary, the discourse on identity formation, land possession, faith, obedience, solidarity, and social borders, which the first version of Josh 6 fixed to the ruins of Jericho, was also consistently continued in the later expansions of the story, when collective (the Israelites) and individual (Rahab, Joshua) obedience toward Yhwh and solidarity with the people was said to be rewarded, whereas collective opposition against Yhwh and his people (the city of Jericho) or disobedient solo actions, breaches of oaths, and lack of solidarity led to divine punishment (see Josh 6:26 in connection with 1 Kgs 16:34; see also the Achan episode in Josh 7). Readers up to the present learn that one must not break divine orders and curses despite the brutality involved because disobedience is fatal. The text of Josh 6 explores various aspects of the act-consequence

opposition to the inhabitants of Jericho is, however, problematic and apologetic, because the text merely states that Jericho kept its gates closed, which is more passive resistance than active opposition.

59 Wazana, "Rahab," 57, direct quote 39.

nexus, which was considered to be valid for Israelites and foreign peoples alike and totally controlled by Yhwh as the lord of all nations.

With respect to collective violence, which appears in various facets in Josh 6, the following differentiations can be identified. The “us-them” categorical distinctions were foundational already in the basic version of Josh 6*. The constructed image of the enemy separated the in-group of the tent-dwelling people of Israel and its god, Yhwh, from the out-group of the city dwellers without any god. The persons or groups declared to be enemies are denounced, whereby the foreign group definition in Josh 6 is oriented toward constructs of otherness of religion, social organization, urbanism, and ethnicity. Only the late postexilic insertion of the Rahab episode differentiated the image of the “other” in such a way that the option was opened for individuals of the out-group to acquire the right to conviviality under certain conditions in the long run.⁶⁰ In this way, Josh 6 corresponds to what was formulated above for intergroup processes in the context of the collective use of violence. Of central importance is the overvaluation of Israel’s own in-group and the devaluation of the foreign group, which stabilizes Israel’s (very male-dominated) self-worth and social identity, legitimates violence against others as a way of implementing claims grounded in Yhwh, and normalizes violence as a possible option of social action against out-groups with promises of reward rather than threats of punishment. According to Josh 6, then, four different possibilities arise for the use of collective violence against out-groups.

- (1) The earliest reconstructible version of Josh 6* refers to the conquest of the promised land by a divinely ordered war against Jericho (as *pars pro toto*). The collective violence of the people, Yhwh, and Joshua results in a wall collapse caused by Yhwh’s power and the collective war cry of the people. Yet this is a nonmartial conquest because the people only shout, while it is Yhwh who causes the walls to collapse. Even if Yhwh and his people form a team in perpetrating collective violence, human beings are not allowed to touch the walls of Jericho themselves or any living being. No weapons are involved, no killing is reported.
- (2) The Deuteronomistic expansion, which incorporated the concept of the ban, makes collective violence explicit and transfers the *modus operandi* to the Israelite warriors. Now Israelite men act according to (Joshua’s order, who represents) Yhwh’s will, who legitimates genocide with the sword, extinction of living beings, and total destruction. The previous col-

⁶⁰ Wazana, “Rahab,” 42 correctly points out that Rahab’s dwelling in the midst of Israel implies “a physical coexistence but not necessarily complete integration with Israel.”

lapse of Jericho's wall caused by Yhwh is interpreted as the preparation of the later massacre executed by Israel's men. Yet the Achan episode in Josh 7 (with references to Lev 27) develops the idea that it is not the use of violence per se with the ban that functions as the group norm, but obedience to Yhwh. In the Deuteronomistic expansion, human collective violence becomes physical, weapons are needed, and killing is reported.

- (3) A priestly expansion inserts the priests as leaders of the conquest, making them the agents of collective violence together with Yhwh. However, they do not engage in physical violence against Jericho, nor do they use any weapons. Instead, their "weapons" are musical instruments; they make music together with Yhwh (represented in the ark) and never even touch the enemy. The insertion of the priests and their procession turns a martial narrative of conquest into a story about the effects of a procession (connected to the number seven) and sanctity. The musical instruments and the ark are used as weapons against the walls; no killing is reported.
- (4) The Rahab episode. Even if Josh 6 legitimates collective violence on the part of the Israelites in cooperation with Yhwh's divine violence, the Rahab episode relativizes it as a general means of confronting "the other." Instead, it promotes the view that it makes sense to have a closer look into individual behavior and that there are times to make well-founded exceptions. Through the categories of individual faith, obedience, and solidarity with Israel and its god, the survival of "the others" is possible. The Rahab episode breaks through the male-dominated collective violence of the story and teaches the Israelites a lesson regarding the acceptance of outsiders. Rahab belongs alongside Ruth as an example of how foreign women can counter xenophobia as known from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the postexilic discourse of Persian period Yehud.

With Nili Wazana, the question should be asked: Why was Rahab's house "placed in the wall, which in chapter 6 dramatically collapsed, with no harmonizing explanation in the additions to chapter 6 connecting the two stories (6:17b.22–23.25)?"⁶¹ Again, the visible ruins of Jericho's walls (and no other spatial element) are employed in the story. It is surely correct that the dwelling of Rahab plays an important part in her ability to rescue the spies (Josh 2). But, at the same time, her localization in the liminal sphere of the wall, between center and periphery, expresses her marginality as an outsider within her own Canaanite in-group. As a prostitute, she was on the lower fringe of society, but

61 Wazana, "Rahab," 55.

she was also in control of her own actions since, according to the prevailing social norms, a respectable married woman or unmarried daughter would not have been able to act on her own, and her husband or father would have been the one interacting with the spies. As a woman without status and honor, living in a liminal sphere between “in” and “out,” she is able to switch from being a member of the previous out-group to the Israelite in-group. Her behavior not only secures her survival but also earns her a permanent place in Israel’s collective memory. Without being made explicit, the possibility arises that, because Rahab survived the disaster of the fall of the wall, she was already spared by Yhwh’s act of destruction and later by the oath of rescue. Rahab is thus saved first by Yhwh and then by the Israelites. Her behavior puts a stop to Yhwh’s violence *and* to that of the people.

3.4 *Violence, What Is It Good For?*

In the course of the literary growth of Josh 6, the purely divine unarmed violence against Jericho’s walls in the original version became a (Deuteronomistic) military massacre against the city and its living beings, then a priestly unarmed procession that celebrated a ritual of destruction against the city wall without any physical contact. In a sense, Jericho was destroyed three times.

The ruin of Jericho was at the center of these discourses on divine and collective violence, which were subject to constant change. The material remains of Jericho were also in a process of transformation but remained visible as a ruin and thus could be repeatedly assigned new meanings during the first millennium BCE. The ruin could serve as a witness, illustration, material memorial, and memorialization of divine and collective violence, land claims, identity formation, social borders, Rahab’s story, and the effects of total obedience. The biblical narrative mirrors the ongoing interpretation of Jericho’s visible ruins and contextualizes them in the conquest of the Promised Land, which is constructed as an act of war. The story was less about the use of violence per se and more about the total control of space and time by Yhwh and the exemplary message that Israel’s identity formation and its social borders are defined by solidarity, obedience, and faith in Yhwh.

The violence used by God against the walls of Jericho—and, with the Deuteronomistic expansion, by the Israelites against all living beings in the city—is a prime example of ritualized and theologically exaggerated collective violence that unites human and divine perpetrators. Especially through the Deuteronomistic expansion, extreme human violence is legitimated by stylizing it as fulfillment of the divine will. This expansion paints a picture in which the divine violence against the walls was the preparation for the human violence against Jericho’s inhabitants, thus increasing its efficiency. Violence is clearly gendered:

in all textual stages of Josh 6, human collective violence is the domain of men. Men are the partners of Yhwh in the holy war, the perpetrators of the Deuteronomistic ban, and the priests of the procession in the priestly expansion. Men are also the ones who grant life to the only woman in the story, Rahab, in yet another later extension of the text. Within the framework of the story's male-defined fantasies of violence, it is a woman who reactivates ethical-moral patterns of behavior and evokes empathy with the victims in the story's readers. Her role is to serve as an emblem of mercy in a male-dominated martial world. This is a gender-typical ascription.

Joshua 6 is a narrative that conceptualizes collective violence as an option of divine and social action that can be used for many purposes; the text also advances the construction of a social and political ideal of a martial-military masculinity. This ideal applies to the Israelites as well as to Yhwh, whose identity construct includes violence. The martial story creates legitimizing structures for collective violence and thus contributes to the socialization of violence. In the end, the perpetrators of violence receive their reward in the form of conquest and land appropriation.

Joshua 6 reflects different motivations for collective violent behavior, including territorial claims, the staging of masculinity, total obedience to God, and the display of control and strength, all of which ultimately serve the construction of identity for both Israel and its god Yhwh. Israel and its god are said to have migrated into the land from outside and conquered it militarily. Because there is a growing conviction that "Israel's" emergence within the land of Canaan was far less spectacular in history than it is in biblical narrative, one must ask why the narratives had to involve violent appropriation of the land by military campaign.⁶² What is the display of war and violence good for?

One possible answer is that the potential for violence in this fantasy acted as a cognitive script intended to secure power and total control over "the others." Joshua 6 would thus be an expression of the desire to pursue violent appropriation of the world as a possibility of social action, even if the text is less concerned with the exercise of violence per se than with the desire for total control over "the others" and with the program of teaching total obedience to Yhwh. An equally good answer would be that this fantasy of violence and memory construct—through the enactment of intense experiences of risk, danger, community, superiority, and success—was intended to create bonds that would stabilize the in-group of the people of Israel internally and delimit

62 On the growing conviction about Israel's emergence, see the summary in Berlejung, "Geschichte und Religionsgeschichte," 59–64.

it externally. Both effects can be observed in Josh 6, a text that was repeatedly updated and reactivated through literary expansions and passed on to future generations. Josh 6 and other stories like it led to the diffusion and implementation of violence-promoting ideas and traditions and contributed to the legitimization and socialization of violence, but also to the limitation of violence: according to the final version of Josh 6, there are good reasons to leave the exercise of violence against others to Yhwh and to spare people of the out-group.

The question of who or what could have been the trigger of the drastic fantasies of violence in the book of Joshua cannot be answered precisely. Because the triggers and the addressees of violent fantasies as a reaction to experiences of powerlessness need by no means be the same, one can always think of the Assyrians, who could evoke the feeling of inferiority in Israelite and Judean writers of the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. But the same may have been true of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Phoenicians, or Greeks, against whom the kingdoms of Israel and Judah could not do a thing. The violent fantasies of Josh 6 could thus act repeatedly as a release valve when needed, warding off feelings of inferiority and powerlessness.⁶³ They were an excellent means of constituting and constructing the identity of the “whole people of Israel” by creating a dramatic scenario in which external overwhelming enemies were defeated through a sense of community, solidarity, and obedience to Yhwh. By creating a narrative of a purely fictional experience of togetherness, the group was welded together and to its god. By portraying the ruin of Jericho as part of the drama’s stage set, appropriating it and interpreting it accordingly, biblical authors gave the site major significance for the formation of “Israel’s” identity, which could be reactivated and updated at any time.

4 Conclusion

In the Israelite/Judahite experience, living with ruins was commonplace, and they had a strong impact on social life and the social construction of identities, memories, time, and space. As a real place, the ruins of Jericho became part of the construction of a worldview, a sacred landscape, etiologies, theo-

63 Finkelstein and Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 94–96 argue differently. According to them, the martial fantasies of the book of Joshua are not a sign of the powerlessness of the Israelites but an expression of Josiah’s ambitions to reconquer the land of Canaan from the Assyrians. Joshua and his territorial goals would thus be a retrojection of Josiah’s power onto the figure of Joshua.

logical and ethical programs, and teachings. This ruin was, like all ruins, able to intertwine space, time, materiality, and symbolic universes and fueled several social and cultural discourses that are reflected in the Hebrew Bible. The relationship between the ruins as physical remains and Josh 6 as their interpretation is interactive: the biblical authors and later redactors used the visible ruins of Jericho to validate the historicity of their interpretation and to produce an aura of authenticity. The ruins were not forgotten but were repeatedly assigned new meanings.

By themselves, however, the ruins of Jericho meant nothing. They first had to be discovered and interpreted, and their aesthetics had to be codified by their viewers. Jericho's ruins were therefore also involved in the social competition for interpretive authority (*Deutungshoheit*), because the meanings attributed to them by various interpreters conveyed clear programs for shaping the society of the present and the future. Only when the ruins of Jericho became the focus of the reflexive gaze and were integrated into the social construction of memories, assignments of meaning (e.g., theological, power-discursive, or historical), writing, and archiving did it become a *lieu de mémoire* ("site of memory"), a center of social processes and discourses.⁶⁴ One of these discourses dealt with divine violence and with collective human violence as a legitimate option of social action and part of Israel's and Yhwh's identity construction. Linked to this issue were reflections on land ownership, group solidarity, social borders, dealing with the "other" or out-groups, the validity of the act-consequence nexus, the dimensions of Yhwh's control over space and time, and demands for faith and obedience. The extent to which these themes were attached to Jericho's Middle and Late Bronze Age walls and became productive in corresponding texts is very clear in the various literary strata of Josh 6.

Through Josh 6 we have access to literary sources that provide us with perceptions, interpretations, and attributions of meaning to the ruins of Jericho that were part of the social construction of reality of the ancient writers. As we can conclude from the earlier story in Josh 6 and its later literary expansions, these remains did not have a static interpretation in the social memory and discourses of ancient Israel but were interpreted in different ways over the course of time because the relationship of the observers or interpreters to the commemorated event, its earlier interpretations, previous in- and out-group definitions, sociopolitical circumstances, and ethical guidelines changed.

64 Nora, "Between History and Memory" and Van Dyke, "Archaeology and Social Memory," 210–212.

With regard to the topic of collective violence, it can be stated that the ruin of Jericho inspired a dynamic discourse on the use, purpose, scope, effect, and limits of divine and collective human violence. These concerned, first, the legitimation of human collective violence by Yhwh and the question of how far human violence can go and what must be left to God. On the other hand, the enemy image of the in- and out-group was subject to change, because the genocide demanded by the Deuteronomistic expansion motivated later writers to add Rahab as an example in order to argue that there must be exceptions. Borders between in- and out-groups can become fluid. Above all, innerbiblical differentiations of collective violence in Josh 6 stood the didactic impetus to declare the visible ruins of Jericho as a memorialization and a teaching tool, which was supposed to demonstrate that obedience to God should be the supreme maxim of action. It is always Yhwh who controls and defines all limits, including those of collective violence.

Despite this theological limitation on human collective violence and the fact that Josh 6 is a pure fantasy of violence, there is no mistaking that the final version of Josh 6 espouses a violence-justifying ideology that seeks to override morality, empathy, and altruism in readers and to legitimate acts of violence, both divine and collective, when directed against people who have been stigmatized as part of the out-group. The potential for violence inherent in Josh 6 acted and can still act as a cognitive script intended to secure power and total control over “the others.” The story is very male and martial and confirms the notion that there is “good violence.” This is all the more serious because Josh 6 is a model narrative of total obedience that creates images of the enemy, divinely legitimates human violence against “the other,” and integrates it into a reward system overseen by Yhwh, which is grounded in the well-known framework of the act-consequence nexus of traditional wisdom. In this respect, the ruins of Jericho with their interpretive horizon of Josh 6 (including all of its later expansions) are predestined to function as a memorialization of collective violence and to send future generations on their way to seek new configurations and interpretations for any current or future experience.

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Memorializing Saul's Wars in Samuel and Chronicles

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Abstract

This essay proposes that, within the biblical books of Samuel and Chronicles, there are two distinct narrative modes of memorializing the leadership of Israel's first king, Saul, in war. Whereas 1 Sam 31 and 2 Sam 21 negotiate the remembrance of Saul through their depiction of geographical space, 2 Sam 1 depicts a textualized memorialization of Saul's heroism performed by David. These two modes, one spatial and one verbal, can be regarded as two different types of sites of memory that are expressed in narrative form in the biblical text. They also serve distinct rhetorical functions. The spatial mode participates in a broader discourse on Israelite identity—specifically, the status of Transjordan and the identification of its population as insiders or outsiders—while the poetic-performative mode contributes to an idealized depiction of another king of Israel: David.

Keywords

Saul – book of Samuel – book of Chronicles – Transjordan

Anyone who reads the book of Samuel from beginning to end could rightly ask why it is not instead called the “book of Saul and David,” because these two figures—Israel's first two kings—occupy far more space in the narrative than the figure of Samuel does.¹ What is more, the biblical “biographies” of Saul and David are developed in more detail than those of any other Israelite or Judahite king, together occupying nearly as much space as the history of all of Israel and

1 The present essay was written as part of the Swiss National Science Foundation project “Transforming Memories of Collective Violence in the Hebrew Bible” (project number 181219).

Judah's subsequent kings combined.² This fact alone already points to the special place of Saul and David within the larger history of kingship in Israel set forth in the combined books of Samuel and Kings. Moreover, the rich literary style of the stories, including ample dialogue and glimpses into the characters' inner thoughts, contrasts with the shorter and less dramatized depictions of Israel's and Judah's subsequent kings. This raises a question: Could much of what is found in the stories about Saul and David in the book of Samuel better be understood as historical fiction written by Israelite and Judahite scribes living in later times, who used the figures of Saul and David to reflect on issues of their own day? This view has been increasingly adopted by specialists on the book of Samuel, who tend to regard the major redactional shaping of the book as beginning no earlier than the eighth century BCE—that is, roughly two centuries after Saul and David are reported to have reigned.³

This general observation has important implications for the topic of this study—namely, the literary memorialization of Saul's wars with two of Israel's neighbors, the Ammonites and the Philistines. Just as for the book of Samuel as a whole, it cannot be assumed that the narratives about Saul's wars stem from the time of Saul himself; rather, because we lack evidence to the contrary, we should assume that the stories about these wars, as well as their narrativized memorialization, are literary constructions reflecting the symbolic universe and the rhetorical aims of later scribes. The same applies to the parallel accounts of these stories in the book of Chronicles, which largely presuppose the narratives in the book of Samuel and recast them in line with the aims of their Persian- or Hellenistic-period author(s).

Within the biblical texts in the books of Samuel and Chronicles that memorialize Saul's wars with the Ammonites and Philistines, I will propose that there are two distinct narrative modes of memorializing Saul's leadership in war, namely, a spatial mode and a poetic-performative mode. Whereas 1Sam 31 and 2Sam 21 negotiate the remembrance of Saul through their depiction of geographical space, 2Sam 1 depicts a textualized memorialization of Saul's heroism performed by David. These two modes can be regarded as two different types of "sites of memory" that are expressed in narrative form in the biblical text.⁴ They

2 The narratives about Saul and David in 1Sam 9:1–1Kgs 2:11 span 1,391 verses, while the narrative history of the monarchy from Solomon to Zedekiah in 1Kgs 2:12–2Kgs 25:30 spans 1,427 verses.

3 See, e.g., Dietrich, *Samuel, Teilband 1*, 6.

4 On "sites of memory," see Nora, *Les lieux*, as well as the discussion of modified versions of this concept in Erll, *Memory*, 22–27.

also serve distinct rhetorical functions, whereby the spatial mode participates in a broader discourse on Israelite identity—namely, the status of Transjordan and the identification of its population as insiders or outsiders—and the poetic-performative mode contributes to creating an idealized memory of another king of Israel: David.

1 Prelude: Saul's Victory over the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11)

Before turning to the first case study of the narrativized memorialization of Saul in 1Sam 31 and its parallel in 1Chr 10, it is necessary first to consider the story of Saul's debut as a military leader in 1Sam 11. In this narrative, Saul rescues the city of Jabesh-gilead in the eastern Jordan Valley from an imminent attack by the Ammonites, one of Israel's neighbors to the east of the Jordan. According to the Hebrew Masoretic Text, this aggression begins when Nahash, king of the Ammonites, besieges Jabesh-gilead and threatens to gouge out the right eye of all of the town's inhabitants, with the intention of bringing disgrace "upon all Israel" (v. 2).⁵ When Saul hears of the Jabeshites' plight, he invokes all Israel to join in battle to rescue them.⁶ The battle itself, in which Saul and his troops defeat the Ammonites in their camp, is recounted very tersely, occupying only one verse in the entire chapter: "The next day Saul put the people in three companies. At the morning watch they came into the camp and cut down the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together" (1Sam 11:11). The upshot of Saul's victory, however, is significant: "So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before Yhwh in Gilgal" (1Sam 11:15). In this respect, the book of Samuel depicts the institution of kingship in Israel as born out of two

5 The wording of this passage suggests that the text's author regards Jabesh-gilead as part of Israel rather than as a non-Israelite city; for this view, see also Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 116. There is a long plus prior to 1Sam 11 in the Qumran manuscript 4QSamuel^a. While earlier scholarship often regarded this plus as part of the original narrative, there is a growing consensus in more recent scholarship that it is a late addition to the text; see Kratz, "Nahash," with reference to further literature.

6 In 1Sam 11:10, the inhabitants of Jabesh further agree to submit to Saul's authority provided that he delivers them from Nahash. The wording of this verse could imply, in contrast to v. 2b, that the Jabeshites were not previously part of Israel. Contrary to the view that the Jabeshites' non-Israelite status is original to the narrative and their Israelite status is secondary (Edelman, "Saul's Rescue," 202–205), the reverse seems more likely, with v. 10 possibly being a later addition, especially considering that the Jabeshites' commitment to "come out to you" lacks a fulfillment report in the verses that follow.

instances of collective violence: the threat of violence against the city of Jabesh-gilead and Saul's response to that threat through a military attack against the Ammonites.

2 Saul's Death in Battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31//1 Chronicles 10)

Saul's rescue of Jabesh-gilead in 1 Sam 11 forms the background to the first case of narrativized memorialization to be discussed here—namely, the aftermath of Saul's death in battle against the Philistines as recounted in 1 Sam 31 and in a parallel account in 1 Chr 10. In both versions of the story, the Israelites retreat from the Philistines in battle, with many Israelites dying on Mount Gilboa. In the process of the retreat, the Philistines kill three of Saul's sons, and a Philistine archer also strikes Saul with an arrow, mortally wounding him. Seeing that he will not survive, Saul falls upon his sword in order to hasten his death. The next day, the Philistines find the bodies of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa, cut off Saul's head, and take Saul's armor as a trophy of their victory.⁷ Following this, the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead reappear on the scene for the first time since Saul's rescue of their city in 1 Sam 11. Having heard of Saul's death, the Jabeshites bring the bodies of Saul and his sons to their city, bury them under a prominent tree, and fast for seven days, thus paying their final respects to the figure who had saved them in a time of need.

The two versions of the story of Saul's death in 1 Sam 31 and 1 Chr 10 contain several important differences in detail, which indicates that the memorialization of Saul's death was a topic of particular interest, and perhaps also dispute, among different biblical authors.⁸ Some of the most significant differences between the two versions of the story relate to the treatment of Saul's body both by the Philistines and by the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead. In 1 Sam

7 See also Nathan T. Arrington's essay in this volume, where he notes that the removal of armor from the battlefield and its dedication in sanctuaries was common in Greek culture. On the motif of decapitation in battle in ancient Near Eastern culture, see Dolce, "Losing One's Head" in the *Ancient Near East*.

8 Another version of the story is found in the Greek text of 1 Sam 31 in Codex Vaticanus, which does not refer to the Philistines' beheading of Saul's corpse. Here, when the Philistines find Saul's body, they simply turn it over (καὶ ἀποστρέφουσιν αὐτόν), apparently in order to identify Saul and/or in order to facilitate the removal of his armor. For further discussion, see Hunziker-Rodewald, "Wo nur ist Sauls Kopf geblieben?," 281–283 and Bezzel, "Chronistisch beeinflusste Korrekturen," 195.

31, after the Philistines decapitate Saul's body and bring his armor to the temple of Astarte (Heb. בית עשתרת) as a trophy, they hang his body on the wall of the city of Beth-shan in the western Jordan Valley.⁹ Following these events, the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead come to Beth-shan, take down the bodies of Saul and his sons, bring them to Jabesh, cremate them, and inter their bones under "the terebinth in Jabesh" (1Sam 31:11–13).¹⁰ Notably, the reference to "the terebinth in Jabesh" (with the definite article) in verse 13 indicates that a specific and well-known site is in view here. This could suggest that this detail serves either to reinforce an existing tradition associating "the terebinth in Jabesh" with Saul's burial place (perhaps including the practice of visiting the site) or to create such a tradition and practice for the first time.

The version of Saul's death in battle in Chronicles begins in the same way as its parallel in 1Sam 31, yet the two versions diverge at the point where the Philistines find Saul's body. Unlike in 1Sam 31, where the Philistines hang Saul's body on the wall of Beth-shan, 1Chr 10 does not mention the fate of Saul's body or indeed the city of Beth-shan but states that the Philistines took Saul's *head* and put it on display in the temple of their god, Dagon. In line with this depiction of the Philistines' treatment of Saul's mortal remains, 1Chr 10 says nothing about the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead taking down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan; rather, the reader has to assume that the inhabitants of Jabesh took Saul's body directly from the battlefield. In addition, 1Chr 10 says nothing about the inhabitants of Jabesh burning the bodies of Saul and his sons prior to burying their bones, as is the case in 1Sam 31.

The question of which of these two versions is earlier and which is later is debated. Following the more classic approach of regarding the Chronicles version as a reinterpretation of the version in Samuel, some scholars have

9 Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.105 mentions that there was a temple to Astarte in Ashkelon; see Campbell, *1Samuel*, 288. The reference to the temple of Astarte in 1Sam 31:10 thus has a plausible Persian period background, even if this does not rule out other possible dates for this reading.

10 Kaiser, "Der historische und biblische König Saul," 542 n. 94 notes the discrepancy between 1Sam 31:10, where only Saul's body is pinned to the wall, and v. 12, where the Jabeshites take down the bodies of Saul *and his sons*. According to Wright, *David*, 67 n. 1, the reference to Saul's sons in v. 12 suggests that vv. 11–13 are a later addition. As for cremation, several scholars have noted that the burning of the bones of Saul and his sons is not a typical Israelite practice and thus serves to mark the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead as non-Israelite, in contrast to the depiction in 1Sam 11; see, e.g., Brooks, *Saul and the Monarchy*, 92 and Wright, *David*, 66–68. For a more critical approach to the possibility that the practice of cremation is a marker of non-Israelite identity, see McKenzie, *Chronicles' Use*, 59–60 and Bezzel, "Chronistisch beeinflusste Korrekturen," 199.

argued that Chronicles omitted the reference to the Jabeshites removing Saul's body from Beth-shan in order to downplay the Gileadites' heroism.¹¹ A number of other scholars, however, have called this approach into question and argued that 1Chr 10 preserves an earlier, shorter version of the story.¹² Scholars who follow this line of interpretation consider that the earlier form of the narrative preserved in 1Chr 10 reflects a more positive attitude toward both Saul and the inhabitants of Jabesh, while the hanging of Saul's body on the wall of Beth-shan in 1Sam 31 serves to denigrate the figure of Saul, and the burning of his bones serves to mark the inhabitants of Jabesh as non-Israelites.¹³ Considering that the original story of Saul's rescue of Jabesh-gilead in 1Sam 11 seems to have depicted Jabesh-gilead as part of Israel, I tend to favor the view that the material unique to 1Sam 31 belongs to a later revision of the story by scribes who sought to mark the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead as non-Israelites.¹⁴ The narrative description of the Jabeshites' memorialization of Saul specific to 1Sam 31 thus does more than simply provide a new image of the events surrounding Saul's death; rather, it participates in a wider discourse on whether or not the inhabitants of Transjordan can be identified as members of Israel. If it is correct that these details were not yet present in the version of Samuel known by the author(s) of Chronicles, then this would suggest a late Persian or Hellenistic historical context for the more geographically restrictive stance taken in 1Sam 31:11–13.

11 E.g., Wright, *David*, 75. If, however, it is correct that the earliest version of Saul's rescue of Jabesh-gilead in 1Sam 11 depicted Jabesh-gilead as part of Israel and was only later reworked in 1Sam 11:10 to imply that Jabesh was *not* part of Israel, then it is possible that the *Vortage* of 1Chr 10 imagined the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead as Israelite, while later revisions to 1Sam 31 sought to depict them as non-Israelite through their practice of cremation.

12 Cf. Ho, "Conjectures and Refutations," 96–97; Hunziker-Rodewald, "Wo nur ist Sauls Kopf geblieben?," 296 n. 64; Knoppers, *1Chronicles 10–29*, 526; (tentatively) Doak, "Fate and Power," 201 n. 1; and Doak, *Heroic Bodies*, 165.

13 For Ho, "Conjectures and Refutations," 95 and Adam, *Saul und David*, 87, the burning of Saul's body is a further sign of disrespect; Adam compares it with the defilement of the corpse of Ptolemy IV Philopator by burning in 204 BCE (see Polyb., *Hist.* 15.25). On the other hand, Edelman, *King Saul*, 295; Kuberski, "La crémation," 200; and Dietrich, *Samuel, Teilband 3*, 193 interpret the burning of Saul's body as a sign of respect.

14 There is no doubt that 1Chr 10:13–14 represent a Chronistic interpretation of Saul's death on Mount Gilboa as a punishment for Saul's earlier sins; so Zalewski, "Purpose," 456. It does not, however, necessarily follow from this that the present wording of 1Sam 31 "presents Saul with honour," as Zalewski suggests.

3 David's Lament over Saul (2 Samuel 1)

Immediately following the notice of the Jabeshites' honoring of Saul's mortal remains in the last chapter of 1 Samuel, the opening chapter of 2 Samuel describes David's reaction to Saul's death.¹⁵ Upon learning of Saul's death, David expresses his grief by tearing his clothes, mourning for Saul and his son Jonathan (2 Sam 1:12), and uttering a song of lament over Saul and Jonathan that refers specifically to their death in battle (cf. 1 Sam 31:1–6).¹⁶ The song clearly depicts both Saul and Jonathan in a heroic light, without any hint of a critique of Saul. Here, the fact that David orders that this song be taught to the people of Judah reflects a poetic-performative memorialization of Saul within the world of the narrative. In contrast to the Jabeshites' memorialization of Saul through his burial, which is spatially fixed and thus may have been difficult to reactivate by certain readers of the book of Samuel through cultural practices—for example, for readers in the diaspora, for whom a journey to visit Saul's burial site would not have been practical—David's poetic memorialization of Saul can be reenacted by the text's readers regardless of their location.¹⁷ On a rhetorical level, David's memorialization of course does more than simply eulogize the figure of Saul. It also serves to reinforce the depiction of David's treatment of Saul, even after Saul's death, as irreproachable and thus marks David as setting the standard both for how Israel's kings should act and how they should be remembered.¹⁸

4 The Transferal of Saul's Bones (2 Samuel 21:12–14)

A further episode related to the memorialization of Saul appears in 2 Sam 21:12–14, which narrates David's transferal of Saul's bones from Jabesh-gilead

15 The received form of 2 Sam 1:1–16 contains an alternative version of Saul's death in battle, although this need not detain us here because it is not directly related to the memorialization of Saul in the world of the text. For a succinct overview of the main divergences between the account of Saul's death in 1 Sam 31 and in 2 Sam 1:1–16, see Bezzel, "Numerous Deaths," 327. On the literary relationship between the two accounts, cf. the divergent views of Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, 18–23; Adam, *Saul und David*, 83, 89; and Dietrich, *Samuel, Teilband 3*, 214–215.

16 For a review of scholarship on David's lament in 2 Sam 1:19–27, see Dietrich, *Samuel, Teilband 3*, 258–259. On the comparison of laments for fallen warriors in Greek literature with the David stories, see already Gordon, "Homer and Bible," 90 and Isser, *Sword*, 28.

17 On the refiguration of literary memories in the world of the reader, see Erll, *Memory*, 155.

18 Cf. Smith, *Poetic Heroes*, 275: "Many modern commentators would—and arguably should—see ideological reasons for finding such a poem on David's lips."

to the land of Benjamin west of the Jordan. This passage comes at the end of a story that opens with a notice of a long-running famine in the land during David's reign.¹⁹ In response to the famine, David inquires of Yhwh, who discloses that there is bloodguilt on Saul and his descendants because Saul killed the Gibeonites, the inhabitants of one of the towns in Saul's home region of Benjamin (2 Sam 21:1), an act that is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. Seeing that he needs to bring the famine to an end, David asks the Gibeonites how he can clear Saul's bloodguilt, and the Gibeonites ask David to hand over seven of Saul's descendants to be executed, to which David agrees (vv. 2–9).²⁰

Following the enactment of this execution, 2 Sam 21:12–14 reports rather abruptly that David went and took the bones of Saul and Jonathan from the people of Jabesh-gilead—who had, according to this text, *stolen* them from Beth-shan—and buried them in the land of Benjamin, in the tomb of Saul's father, Kish. This passage does not have a direct bearing on the story about Saul's bloodguilt in verses 1–11 and is most likely a later addition to that episode.²¹ In terms of subject matter, these particular verses connect back to a short notice about David being informed of Saul's burial in Jabesh earlier in the book, in 2 Sam 2.²² Yet, whereas there David praises the Jabeshites' action

19 While many earlier commentators assumed that the story in 2 Sam 21:1–10 (11) was originally located prior to 2 Sam 9 and was later moved to the so-called appendix at the end of the book of Samuel (2 Sam 21–24), scholars have more recently tended to regard it as having been placed in its present literary context from the outset; see, e.g., Van Seters, "David and the Gibeonites," 537; Hutzli, "L'exécution," 89–90; and Edenburg, "11 Samuel 21:1–14 and 11 Sam 23,1–7," 169.

20 Within 2 Sam 21:1–11, vv. 2b–3aα and v. 7 are widely regarded as later additions; see, e.g., Hentschel, "Die Hinrichtung," 104–105 and Edenburg, "11 Sam 21,1–14 and 11 Sam 23,1–7," 168, 173–174, with reference to further literature. In contrast, Van Seters, "David and the Gibeonites," 539 n. 14 argues that v. 2 is essential to the narrative, while Lee-Sak, "Polemical Propaganda," 126 does the same for v. 7.

21 Thus also Lee-Sak, "Polemical Propaganda," 126; against Bezzel, "Chronistisch beeinflusste Korrekturen," 202, who considers that relocating the bones of Saul and Jonathan was the original solution to the crisis and that the theme of the Gibeonites in 2 Sam 21:1*, 2–11 is a later expansion. Hentschel, "Die Hinrichtung," 105–107; Dietrich and Münger, "Die Herrschaft," 45; Chavel, "Compositry and Creativity," 50–51; and Darshan, "Reinterment," 643 treat vv. 1–11 and 12–14 as originally independent traditions, thus sidestepping the issue.

22 Because 2 Sam 2:4b–7 presupposes 2 Sam 1, 2 Sam 21:12–14 also postdates 2 Sam 1; thus also Bezzel, "Chronistisch beeinflusste Korrekturen," 203. Dietrich and Münger, "Die Herrschaft," 44 plausibly interpret David's message to the inhabitants of Jabesh as a claim to David's rule over Transjordan from the very beginning of his reign.

and thus implicitly accepts Saul's place of burial, here David's action suggests that Jabesh-gilead is an unacceptable final resting place for Saul's bones.²³ The depiction of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead as "stealing" (גנבו) Saul's bones from Beth-shan also implies that it was not their prerogative to perform the final rites on Saul's mortal remains, which could suggest that the Jabeshites are imagined here as non-Israelites who deprived Israel of the ability to pay its final respects to Saul. In this sense, 2Sam 21:12–14 can be regarded as a later revision of 2Sam 2 that relocates a Transjordanian site of memory associated with Saul to the west of the Jordan and calls into question the Jabeshites' identity as Israelites. In other words, the author of these verses sought to advance a more Cisjordan-only view of Israelite identity.²⁴

Although 2Sam 21:12–14 is likely a later supplement to the preceding narrative about Saul's bloodguilt, a comparison of these verses with extrabiblical sources reveals that their placement there is far from arbitrary.²⁵ Indeed, several Greek narratives describe how, in response to a crisis that befalls a city (such as war or famine), an oracle instructs the city's leaders to bring the bones of a past hero to the city, which results in a resolution of the crisis.²⁶ I will mention just one of these examples here.²⁷ In Herodotus's *History*, the Lacedaemonians inquire of the oracle at Delphi for advice in overcoming their repeated defeats at the hands of the Tegeans, whereupon they are instructed to bring the bones of Orestes, the son of the legendary king Agamemnon, from Tegea to Lacedaemonia. Herodotus goes on to recount how a certain Lichas discovers the grave of Orestes in the city of Tegea, persuades the owner of the property to let him settle there, then digs up the bones and brings

23 On this discrepancy, cf. Van Seters, "David and the Gibeonites," 542 and Darshan, "Reinterment," 640.

24 Cf. Wright, *David*, 79, who likewise notes that the authors of 2Sam 21:12–14 used the memory of Saul's rescue of Jabesh-gilead "for an originally unintended purpose, namely to cast aspersions on Jabesh-gilead—and, by extension, on the communities throughout the Gilead and Transjordan."

25 On the comparison of the biblical motif of bone transferal with ancient Greek literature, see Chavel, "Compositry and Creativity," 37 n. 34; Darshan, "Reinterment"; Doak, "Heroic Bones," 206–215; and Doak, *Heroic Bodies*, 170–182.

26 See, e.g., McCauley, "Transfer," 225–239; McCauley, "Heroes and Power," esp. 96; Doak, "Heroic Bones," 206; Doak, *Heroic Bodies*, 170–171; and Darshan, "Reinterment," 643.

27 McCauley, "Heroes and Power," 96 with n. 40 lists thirteen examples of the transferal of a dead figure's bones in Greek literature. She further notes that several Greek stories of the transferal of bones have to do with territorial claims (95); the same could be said of 2Sam 21:12–14, yet here the focus is on a *negative* territorial claim: the transferal of Saul's bones seems to *deprive* Gilead of a claim to be Israelite.

them to Sparta. As a result, Herodotus claims that from that time forward the Lacedaemonians were able to gain the upper hand against the Tegeans in battle.²⁸

The connection in Herodotus's account of Orestes between transferring a hero's bones to one's own city or region and the resolution of a crisis (such as repeated military losses or pestilence) is a striking commonality between this and other Greek texts and 2 Sam 21:12–14.²⁹ What is more, the transferal of Saul's bones in this passage fits well with new developments in Greek hero cults during the Hellenistic period, particularly the privatization of hero cults—that is, their association with individual families in addition to their association with cities.³⁰ This development fits well with a detail mentioned in 2 Sam 21:14—namely, that Saul's bones were buried *in the tomb of his father Kish* (note the contrast with their prior burial “under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh” in 1 Sam 31:13). This could reflect a process of privatization similar to that which has been observed in hero cults elsewhere in the Hellenistic world.³¹ Alternatively, it is possible that the description of the reburial of Saul's bones “in the tomb of his father Kish” serves primarily to align the fate of Saul's mortal remains with that of later Israelite and Judahite kings, who are repeatedly described as “lying down with their fathers” (וַיִּשְׁכַּב ... עִם אֲבֹתָיו).³²

With regard to the two modes of narrative memorialization of Saul that I have proposed here, 2 Sam 21:12–14, like 1 Sam 31, reflects a spatial memorialization of Saul in narrative form, but it has now been shifted from Transjordan to the region of Benjamin in Cisjordan. While it remains a matter of speculation whether this geographical shift reflects the existence of (or the desire to establish) an actual “tomb of Kish” or “tomb of Saul” in the world of the readers, on a textual level it is clear that David's relocation of Saul's mortal remains serves to decommission Jabesh-gilead in Transjordan as a legitimate site of memory—even if purely fictive—associated with Saul.³³

28 Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.67–68.

29 Darshan, “Reinterment,” 644.

30 Hughes, “Hero Cult,” 168–169 and Lenzo and Nihan, “Introduction,” 8–9.

31 Based on the intertextual connections reflected in 2 Sam 21:12–14, a date of composition in the Hellenistic period is quite plausible. Considering that these verses reflect the idea that the bodies of Saul and Jonathan were “hung” (תָּלַי/אֲתָלִיָּה) in Beth-shan, and if the Philistines' display of the bodies of Saul and his sons in Beth-shan is a late addition to 1 Sam 31:12 that was not yet present in the text of Samuel used by the author of 1 Chr 10 (see above), then 2 Sam 21:12–14 is probably no earlier than the book of Chronicles (cf. Wright, *David*, 78), which dates to the late Persian or early Hellenistic period.

32 1 Kgs 2:10 et *passim*; this phrase occurs twenty-seven times in the so-called annalistic notices in the book of Kings.

33 For other Israelite and Judahite kings, if the place of burial is mentioned at all, it is usually

5 Synthesis

Before concluding, I would like to distill the main observations gathered from these three cases of memorializing Saul's wars, focusing particularly on the narrative modes of memorializing Saul, the overall attitude toward Saul, and the depiction of Jabesh-gilead in each respective text. Each of the three texts discussed above takes the story of Saul's defeat of the Ammonites and the rescue of Jabesh-gilead in 1Sam 11 as its starting point. This is Saul's debut as a military leader, the point at which his authority as king is also confirmed. In this narrative, Jabesh-gilead seems to be regarded as part of Israel.

The first case of the narrativized spatial memorialization of Saul's wars is found in 1Sam 31 and 1Chr 10, where Saul is mortally wounded in battle against the Philistines. An earlier version of this story, which underlies both 1Sam 31 and 1Chr 10, portrayed the Jabeshites' act of burying Saul as a sign of respect and most likely treated Jabesh-gilead as a legitimate site of Israelite memory. This story seems to have been reworked in the received Hebrew text of 1Sam 31, which now depicts the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead as cremating Saul's body prior to burying it, thus marking the town of Jabesh-gilead as culturally distinct from Israel.

The second passage dealing with the memorialization of Saul's wars, 2Sam 1, focuses on David's reaction to Saul's death. Among other acts of mourning, David expresses his grief by uttering a song of lament over Saul and Jonathan. Significantly, he also orders that this song be taught to the people of Judah, such that here the site of memory is not a physical space, as is the case with Saul's grave in Jabesh-gilead, but rather a textual artifact with a performative dimension. Of course, the book of Samuel is itself a textual site of memory, which gives David's lament a meta-quality, with one instance of textual memorialization nested within another.

Lastly, 2Sam 21:12–14 constitutes a second case of spatial memorialization in narrative form. In contrast to 1Sam 31, these verses depict the Jabeshites in an unequivocally negative light, describing them as having stolen the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Beth-shan. Yet not only are the people of Jabesh maligned, but the site of Jabesh-gilead itself is also treated as an unacceptable

no more specific than the name of the city, such as Tirzah, Samaria, or Jerusalem. (For Judahite kings, the burial site is almost always specified as the "city of David," which presumably referred to a specific part of Jerusalem.) A notable exception is Manasseh, who is described as being buried "in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza" (2Kgs 21:18), although this probably has to do with the sinful king Manasseh being (literarily) barred from burial in the city of David.

final resting place for Saul's bones. This passage, whose relatively late date of composition can be surmised on both internal and external grounds, shows how the memorialization of the figure of Saul continued to be a productive literary device that later biblical authors used to debate other issues that concerned them—in this case, the status of Transjordan within the idealized conception of Israelite identity.

6 Conclusion

In concluding, I would like to offer three final reflections on the narrativized memorialization of Saul's wars in Samuel and Chronicles. Firstly, it is notable that, while the memorialization of Saul remains closely linked to Saul's role as a military leader in 1 Sam 31 and 2 Sam 1, in the third text, 2 Sam 21:12–14, Saul's wars have in fact faded into the background. Here the process of memorializing Saul serves not to promote collective memories about the beginnings of kingship in Israel per se but to consolidate a specifically Cisjordanian landscape of memory. Secondly, the case of 2 Sam 21:12–14 shows with particular clarity the constructed nature of the process of memorialization, whereby new ways of remembering Saul are actively cultivated by drawing on existing narrative patterns and cultural practices that circulated in the Mediterranean world during the second half of the first millennium BCE—in this case, the transfer of a hero's bones in response to a crisis and perhaps also the trend toward privatizing the hero cult. Finally, developments in the modes of memorializing the figure of Saul in Samuel and Chronicles do not follow a simple linear trajectory over time. Rather, the spatial and poetic-performative modes of narrativized memorialization continued to be cultivated alongside each other over the gradual literary development of these texts. In this process, each mode served specific rhetorical purposes. While the spatial mode was closely linked with a discourse on the insider/outsider status of certain groups living in Transjordan within an idealized concept of Israel, the poetic-performative mode contributed to the image of Saul's successor, David, as a model of how to mourn for Israel's royal heroes.

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Fighting Annihilation: The Justification of Collective Violence in the Book of Esther and in Its Cultural Context

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Abstract

The annihilation of entire people groups represents the most extreme form of collective violence. It is well-known that ancient empires could depict themselves as perpetrators of genocidal violence to demonstrate their power. Literary traditions from those living under imperial dominance, however, have received little scholarly attention. This essay analyzes the violent outlook of the book of Esther, a Jewish narrative within the Hebrew Bible that offers unique insights for the study of collective violence in antiquity. The narrative invents a past in which the Jewish people appear both as both possible victims of systematic annihilation and as the successful perpetrators of large-scale killing. This essay explores the cross-cultural borrowings in the book of Esther and proposes that it adapts a Greek literary pattern: when individual actions call into question the honor and status of imperial agents or imperial rule, collective retaliation and large-scale killing are legitimate means to reestablish the status quo. In adapting and transforming this motif, the Esther narrative sheds light on how Jewish scribes used fictional storytelling not only to refute charges made against their people but also to justify their own group's exertion of violence. This observation adds further weight to recent scholarly proposals to contextualize the Esther narrative in the late Hellenistic period, and it also hints at the possibility that the book of Esther reflects key aspects of Hasmonean ideology.

Keywords

Esther – 1Maccabees – annihilation – retaliation – Hasmonean ideology

The annihilation of entire people groups arguably represents the most extreme form of collective violence.¹ It certainly is a rare motif in ancient literary traditions. Yet it is widely known that deportations, mass enslavements, and even the extermination of entire people groups could be depicted as legitimate options for imperial actors when they perceived that their power was challenged. From the ancient Near East to the Graeco-Roman world, such a horrible punishment was faced mostly by rebellious cities or small countries.² Given the imperial provenance of most of the ancient accounts, it comes as no surprise that they were written from the perspective of those who sought glory in totally defeating and killing their enemies. This essay discusses a narrative in which the perspective of being the possible victim of annihilation also plays a crucial role. The biblical book of Esther, best known as the etiology for the festival of Purim, may be a promising example of how Jewish scribes used fictional storytelling to reflect on possible justifications for extreme forms of collective violence, from both imperial and Jewish perspectives.

1 The Book of Esther and the Motif of Annihilation

The Esther narrative is a work of fiction.³ It invents a past in which the entire Jewish people was threatened with systematic annihilation in the Persian period, living under king Xerxes (אחשורוש). After the Jew Mordechai refuses to bow down before the main courtier, Haman, the latter convinces the Persian ruler to wipe out the Jewish people. Haman issues an edict addressed to all provinces of the Persian Empire: “Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces, giving orders to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children in one day, the 13th of the 12th month, which is Adar, and to plunder their goods” (ונשלוח ספרים ביד הרצים אל כל מדינות המלך) (להשמיד להרג ולאבד את כל היהודים מנער ועד זקן טף ונשים ביום אחד בשלושה עשר לחדש לבזוז וגשלוח ספרים ביד הרצים אל כל מדינות המלך) (Esth 3:13 [NRSV]). Readers familiar with the Hebrew Bible immediately wonder how such a cruel plan fits with the generally positive depiction of Achaemenid domination as reflected in texts such as Ezra and Nehemiah.⁴ The book of Esther also develops a violent resolution

1 The research presented here forms part of the Swiss National Science Foundation project “Transforming Memories of Collective Violence in the Hebrew Bible” (project number 181219).

2 For an overview, see van Wees, “Genocide,” 19–33.

3 Johnson, *Historical Fictions*, 16–20 or Macchi, *Esther*, 39–40.

4 See Eckhardt, “Memories,” 252–262 for a discussion of the image of Persia in Jewish literature.

of the crisis, which is unique in the Hebrew Bible; the aversion of the threat comes not by divine deliverance but by human agency. It is only thanks to the diplomatic abilities of two Jewish individuals, Esther and Mordechai, as well as the glorious battles of the Jewish people, that the Jewish community survives (Esth 8–9). As such, in this dramatic narrative, the perspectives of the possible victims and of the perpetrators of collective violence are strongly intertwined.

From an historical point of view, the motif of a Persian anti-Jewish annihilation plan seems highly unlikely, as there is no evidence for any attempt to persecute and kill Jews in the Persian period. Even though the Achaemenids violently punished their enemies, the idea of a systematic persecution of an ethnic minority does not fit well with what we know of Persian use of violence from Achaemenid sources.⁵ The discrepancy between Persian depictions of violence and the book of Esther is an additional argument in support of scholarly proposals that the book of Esther should not be interpreted as a reliable source for Jewish history in the fifth century. Rather, the narrative probably stems from the Hellenistic period. Different scholars have already argued that the book of Esther intensively engages with well-known clichés about Persia as reflected in Greek historiographical traditions.⁶ The first two sections of this essay will follow this line of interpretation, as I propose Greek influence for the patterns justifying the imperial plan to annihilate the Jewish people in the book of Esther. Strikingly, the Esther narrative productively and creatively engages with these patterns. The threat made against the Jews ultimately helps to refute the charges made against them, to identify their enemies, and to legitimize the Jewish leaders but, most importantly, it also justifies the Jews' own violent retaliation against their enemies. The book of Esther is thus a fascinating example of how Jewish scribes adapted prevalent literary justifications of collective violence to convey important convictions in their own group's interests. The second part of this essay (the third and fourth sections) will demonstrate how the threat of annihilation as a justification for Jewish violence relates to other Jewish literature from the Hellenistic period. In addition, it will investigate the sociopolitical and ideological functions of this narrative in its presumed historical context.

5 See Brosius, "From Fact to Fiction," 198, who argues that "this episode is solely for the storyline to work."

6 Macchi, "Book;" Mathys, "Der Achämenidenhof," 243–265; and Eckhardt "Memories," 259–260.

2 Injured Pride as a Trigger for the Jews' Annihilation

The first step in conceptualizing the theme of annihilation in the Esther narrative is the analysis of the passage that introduces the story's main conflict in the third chapter of Esther. The plan to kill all members of the Jewish people is at first depicted as an emotional response to an interpersonal slight. All members of the Persian court bow down before the main courtier, Haman. It is only the Jew Mordechai who persistently refuses to do obeisance (Esth 3:1–4). In response, Esth 3:5 describes Haman as “filled with rage” (וימלא המן חמה).⁷ As a consequence, the courtier “sought to annihilate (להשמיד) all Jews who were in the entire kingdom of Ahasuerus, the people of Mordechai” (3:6). The plan to annihilate the Jewish people is thus depicted as the result of Haman's rage because a Jew's behavior has hurt his status and honor. In the context of biblical writings, this characterization is remarkable.⁸ No other biblical narrative ever correlates rage, injured pride, and the idea of annihilating an entire people group. Reading this passage in the context of Greek literary traditions, however, we can find a similar set of motifs. Several scholars have already pointed out that Mordechai's behavior bears similarities to the Greek attitude toward proskynesis, or the practice of prostrating before a God or a person of higher rank. The ideal of a free Greek man does not permit bowing down before another human being, especially not before a Persian.⁹ The resemblance between the Greek attitude toward proskynesis and the portrayal of Mordechai's refusal in Esth 3 already seems to indicate that the trigger of Haman's plan to annihilate the Jews can be linked to Greek thought. What is more, as David Konstan has demonstrated regarding a wide range of Greek literary texts, from mythical to historiographical traditions, emotions such as anger and rage were typical elements in narrative patterns justifying large-scale killings. Most often, a violent intention of this sort is preceded by a slight, by broken trust, or by treachery.¹⁰

7 For the motif of rage in court tales, see Chan, “Ira Regis.”

8 As has often been observed, Haman shows character traits condemned in wisdom literature; see Levenson, *Esther*, 68, who calls Haman “typical of a biblical fool.” This interpretation, however, cannot explain Haman's plan to exterminate the Jewish people.

9 See Macchi, “Book,” 117–119 with further references.

10 In the view of Konstan, “Anger,” 187, Haman's plan to kill the entire Jewish people seems to be “likewise motivated by indignation and an impulse to revenge.”

3 Imperial Justifications for the Jews' Annihilation

While an individual's wish for revenge could thus appear sufficient warrant for destroying entire people groups, the Esther narrative deploys another strategy, too. To gain the Persian king's support for his plan, Haman brings forward particular charges against the Jewish people (Esth 3:8), and two distinctive aspects of this passage are worth highlighting in this context. At first, in the eyes of Haman, the Jews' supraregional presence as well as their separateness from other peoples makes them a potentially uncontrollable and dangerous group. In Esth 3:8, the courtier claims that the Jews lived "dispersed and separated among the peoples" (מפוזר ומפרד בין העמים). Looking at comparative evidence from other ancient literary traditions in which, for example, rebellious city states became targets of total destruction, it is notable that these communities are localizable by their place of residence; two of the most famous examples are the Athenian campaigns against the polis of Mytilene and the islanders of Melos.¹¹ We could thus call the story of the Jews in Esther a distinctive variant of an annihilation account. The very fact that the Jewish people live dispersed is turned into a justification to attack them.

Haman's second reproach is the alleged collective Jewish transgression of imperial law. Unlike other rebellious or hostile opponents that could be subdued by violent oppression, Haman therefore concludes: "it is not appropriate for the king to tolerate them [i.e., the Jewish people]. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued for their destruction (לאבדם)" (Esth 3:8–9a). After receiving royal permission, the courtier publishes the edict that commands the Jews' annihilation. Recent scholarship has intensively discussed the possible reasons for why the courtier refers to Jewish laws.¹² The narrative implies that Haman thinks Mordechai refuses to bow down before him because such an act would violate Jewish law. Haman might therefore assume that all law-abiding Jews will similarly disrespect imperial figures. Despite the fact that this connection is not made explicit in the narrative, a thematic correlation between Torah observance and deadly threats against Jewish individuals is at least well attested in the court tales of Daniel. In any case, the Esther narrative specified only the conclusions that Haman draws from Mordechai's behavior; the courtier appeals to the imperial honor and status that is challenged by the Jewish people and their actions. He argues that "it is not appropriate for the king" (ולמלך) (אין שוה) to let the Jews' alleged collective disobedience go unpunished. While

11 See Thuc. 3.37–48 for the Mytilenian Debate and 5.84–116 for Melian Dialogue. For a recent examination of Thucydides's accounts, see Price, *Thucydides*, 89–138, 195–204.

12 Macchi, "Le droit," 92–95 and Achenbach, "Genocide," 100–101.

Haman's personal status has already been questioned by Mordechai's behavior, the courtier now transforms this action into alleged collective misbehavior that challenges the reputation of imperial power and that has to be met with the harshest punishment.

Again, comparative material from Greece can help to contextualize this thematic correlation. As historian and classicist Hans van Wees has shown, the annihilation of entire people groups is often depicted as an instance of large-scale capital punishment, which he defines as "conspicuous destruction" executed by empires.¹³ In van Wees's words, this means "a display of force designed to assert the power and status of the perpetrator in the face of a perceived challenge."¹⁴ Notably, these power demonstrations were seldom justified by actual military threats posed by the victim group. Rather, imperial agents referred to the alleged intolerable attitude of the people groups disrespecting the power of the empire. Given this evidence, we might also better understand why the Jewish scribes refer to Haman charging the Jewish people with lawlessness. The Jewish people's adherence to their customs and thus their disobedience to imperial legislation was a crucial aspect of Jewish existence that could be interpreted by non-Jews as a collective challenge to imperial power.

While there are no biblical precedents for this idea, Haman's justification for annihilating the Jewish people is similar to Greek discourses about annihilation as a means of demonstrating imperial power. This observation might contribute to scholarly proposals that we read the book of Esther in the context of the Hellenistic period. The Esther narrative certainly develops a critical outlook on these imperial patterns. From the perspective of the author or the reader, Haman's intention to systematically kill all Jews appears unsubstantiated. As the narrative continues, it becomes evident that the Jews are far from disloyal or lawless. Besides this potential to demonstrate to the reader that these charges are baseless, the imperial threat of systematic annihilation serves two additional narrative purposes. The first allows all members of the Jewish people to be portrayed as possible victims. This aspect will become important in the latter part of the book, when all Jews form a fighting collective and kill their attackers (Esth 9:1–16).

13 van Wees, "Genocide," 30–31 proposes four possible scenarios for justifying annihilation in Greek and Roman literary traditions: scenario 1 involves affronts that made the empire look weak (cf. the Melian Dialogue in Thuc. 5.84–116), scenario 2 the destruction of an enemy that is persistent in its hostility (cf. the Athenian campaign against the Aeginetans in Thuc. 2.27, 4.57), scenario 3 punishment for treachery (cf. the Mytilenian Debate in Thuc. 3.37–48), and scenario 4 punishment for a religious offense (cf. the destruction of Kirrha in Aeschin., *Orations* 2.115, 3.107–109).

14 van Wees, "Genocide," 21.

The second purpose requires a closer look at the text. Despite what we might expect in light of the narrative's context, it is not explicitly stated that the imperial army will execute the order to annihilate the Jews. By strongly emphasizing the almost global dissemination of Haman's edict (Esth 3:12–15) with the intention "that all peoples were to be ready" (לכל העמים להיות עתידים) to annihilate the Jews (Esth 3:14), the narrative seems to indicate that the Jews' attackers are to be found everywhere and among all peoples. When the Jews in the latter part of the book take up arms, then, they are fighting not imperial soldiers but a rather undefined group of hostile opponents willing to follow Haman's violent plan. What is most interesting about the latter part of the book, however, is that the imperial strategy to justify the Jews' annihilation appears to have been adapted in order to justify the violent response from the Jews.

The following analysis of the eighth chapter of the book of Esther will explore this phenomenon as an integral part of the narrative strategy to justify the Jewish exertion of collective violence. As I will demonstrate, the narration takes up important aspects from chapter 3, yet it transforms the content of Haman's reasoning. After Haman had issued an imperial edict to kill all Jews for their alleged lawlessness, now the Jews send out another imperial edict, allowing the Jews to take revenge and to kill those who seek to attack them.

4 Transforming the Charges: Justifying the Annihilation of the Jews' Enemies (Esther 8–9)

When the character of Esther approaches the king, after Haman has been executed and the Jews have been fully rehabilitated, her humble characterization stands in stark contrast to that of Haman. She falls at the king's feet, cries, seeks the ruler's pity and asks for the rescinding of Haman's edict (Esth 8:3–5).¹⁵ The Jewish behavior and their intentions thus seem to strongly differ from that of Haman. Given the unalterable nature of Persian law in the narrative, however, the king cannot simply annul Haman's edict. Instead, he transfers royal authority to the Jews and allows them to write an edict saying whatever they want (Esth 8:8). The Jews have thereby gained the same authorization Haman had for his plan (Esth 3:11).

¹⁵ Pity, like anger, could also play an important role in the emotional reaction to imperial plans of annihilation. As Konstan, *Pity*, 83 observes, the Athenian politicians in Thucydides's famous Mytilenean Dialogue "take it for granted that the emotions—above all pity and anger—are entirely appropriate in judicial contexts."

In the following passages, we can witness a unique fusion of imperial legislation and Jewish interests. The entire chapter adapts the imperial justifications of Esth 3; Mordechai issues a Jewish counter-edict and publishes it as a new law. He has replaced Haman in his position as the highest courtier, and he makes use of the imperial administrative system.¹⁶ Haman's charge of the Jews' lawlessness and separation is thereby proven wrong. A major charge against the Jews has been transformed into their main achievement. In Mordechai's edict, the former threat of annihilation is adapted in Esth 8:11 to serve Jewish interests:

אשר נתן המלך ליהודים אשר בכל עיר ועיר להקהל ולעמד על נפשם להשמיד ולהרג
ולאבד את כל חיל עם ומדינה הצרים אתם טף ונשים ושללם לבו:

[Mordechai wrote and sent out letters] by which the king authorized the Jews who were in every single city to gather and to stand up for their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods.

As several scholars have noted, this document explicitly evokes the language of Haman's edict (Esth 3:13).¹⁷ Regarding the edict's purpose to justify the Jewish exertion of collective violence, three aspects stand out. First, as has often been observed, we can detect a striking variation reflecting a more defensive tone in the Jewish decree. The notion that the Jews are allowed "to defend their lives" (ולעמד על נפשם) and to fight possible "attackers" (הצרים) fits with the broader narrative logic insofar as Mordechai's decree is a response to an already published edict with the aim to kill all Jews.¹⁸

Second, in presenting the Jewish call to arms as a response to an actual threat, the Esther narrative adapts a very common pattern of legitimizing violence. An attack on one's own people is of course one of the most universally

16 See Bezold, "Violence," 53–55.

17 See, e.g., Berg, *Book of Esther*, 107; Schmitt, *Wende*, 100; and Ego, *Ester*, 341.

18 As Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, 1–45 and Carruthers, *Esther*, 244–277 have shown, the portrayed violence of Esth 8–9 has caused much scholarly discomfort. In light of the narrative's problematic reception history, recent exegetical scholarship has tried to find alternative ways of interpreting the violent episode. Among other interpretations, scholars have proposed that the Jewish actions should be understood as a morally justified act of resistance and self-defense; see, e.g., Meinhold, *Das Buch Esther*, 75–77; Gevaryahu, "Esther;" Achenbach, "Genocide," 103–106; and Wacker, "Tödliche Gewalt," 614–617.

valid justifications for military engagement.¹⁹ Interestingly, as in other ancient accounts, the motif of retaliation forms part of the Jewish justification for violence. Mordechai's edict explicitly mentions the Jewish motivation "to take revenge on their enemies" (להנקם מאיביהם), Esth 8:13bβ).

Third, and most importantly, the slight variations in the Jewish edict cannot obscure the fact that the Jewish plan is modeled after the content of Haman's edict. The Jews deploy the same strategy of publishing an edict that refers to the same stark terminology of "annihilating, killing, and destroying," including "women and children" in the group of possible victims. This indicates that we should understand Mordechai's command as an adaptation of what has been planned against the Jews. They intend to exert collective violence on a similar scale.

This interpretation is further supported by the depiction of the Jewish battles in Esth 9:1–16. In this report, the reader becomes fully aware of how the threat of annihilation is reversed. The language of this depiction evokes the terminology of other biblical war accounts. The Jews "gather" (קהל), "stretch out their hands" (שלח יד), "slay" (הרג) and "kill" (אבד) their enemies. The Jews' opponents, on the other hand, cannot effectively fight, as "fear" (פחד) of the Jews falls upon them (Esth 8:17; 9:2–3). Despite this military terminology, the passage does not describe a clash of two armies. The report of Esth 9 exemplifies the utterly victorious nature of the Jews and their violent potential as a *people*. In fighting collectively against thousands of enemies in all cities and provinces of the Persian Empire, another of Haman's charges against the Jews—their dispersed nature—becomes a sign of their potential to exert violence on an almost global scale. In this passage, the Jewish edict's more defensive tone is also joined by more aggressive language. I refer to Esth 9:5 as one example: "And the Jews struck down all their enemies with the blow of the sword, with killing and destruction. And they did as they pleased with those who hated them" (ויכו היהודים בכל איביהם מכת חרב והרג ואבדו ויעשו בשנאיהם) (כרצונם, Esth 9:5).

Several narrative details contribute to the assumption that the Jewish battles are modeled after the former threat of annihilation. For example, the term "destruction" (אבד), which is used to designate the Jewish actions, occurred already in the previous passage, where Esther asks the king to avert the "destruction" (אבדו) of her people (Esth 8:6); the Hebrew root אבד resembles Haman's annihilation plan in the book's third chapter (Esth 3:9). The report-like style, with its focus on counting the killed attackers, also emphasizes the

19 Chaniotis, *War*, 172–181 or McHardy, *Revenge*, 25–37.

totality of the violent actions. In Esth 9, the Jews kill more than 75,000 enemies. As Jean-Daniel Macchi has shown, this considerable number equals 600 killed enemies in each of the Persian provinces.²⁰ These narrative features express the conviction that the Jews exert collective violence that is commensurate with the threat made against their community.

While the passages describing the Jewish exertion of violence reflect an interest in restraining the Jewish violence within certain bounds, the depiction of the battles can still be interpreted as an appropriation of the annihilation motif.²¹ What is more, we can conclude that the Jews are depicted as able to make use of a form of collective violence that was formerly ascribed to the empire. They organize themselves to fight back tens of thousands of their attackers in all provinces of the Persian Empire. Like the military power of empire, the actions of the Jews incite dread and intimidation among the other nations (Esth 8:17; 9:2–5). The Jews ultimately carry out the official punishment for the enemies of the state; they kill Haman's descendants and publicly exhibit their (hanged or impaled) corpses in the empire's capital (Esth 9:13–14).

5 The Threat of Annihilation: A Shared Motif in Esther and 1 Maccabees

These observations regarding the threat of imperial annihilation as an important aspect of the narrative strategy to legitimize the Jewish counter-attack and signify their own power have important repercussions for any attempt to situate the book of Esther in the larger context of ancient Jewish literature. At least within the Hebrew Bible, the correlation between the extreme threat and the Jewish use of violence is exceptional. While the motif of total destruction can be found in biblical literature as a symbol of divine anger (e.g., Exod 32:10; 33:3,

20 Macchi, *Esther*, 266 n. 106. Esther 1:1 mentions 127 provinces. The Jews have already killed enemies in the citadel of Susa (Esth 9:6) and in the city of Susa (Esth 9:14–15). Verse 16, referring to 75,000 casualties thus seems to presuppose 125 provinces remaining.

21 As has often been noted, the Jews do not kill indiscriminately, they do not seem to attack “women and children” (Esth 3:13; 8:11), and they also refrain from plundering their opponents (Esth 9:10, 15, 16), cf., e.g., Achenbach, “Genocide,” 104–106; Ruiz-Ortiz, *Dynamics*, 217; and Macchi, *Esther*, 261–265. While these aspects arguably signify a certain limitation of violent action, they also seem to convey another message that fits well with the overall narrative perspective of Esth 8–9—namely, that the Jews appear not only as terrifying and as victorious, but also as morally superior to their enemies. The characterization of the Jewish retaliation as “self-defense” thus further emphasizes the special status of the Jewish people among the other nations.

5; 2 Kgs 24:2) or as a general threat posed by unnamed enemies (e.g., Ps 83:5), there is no other tradition in which the Jews are threatened in an imperial context that made their violent retaliation necessary.²² The closest parallel to the book of Esther's distinctive justification of collective violence is to be found in 1 Maccabees, a narrative that forms part of the Greek Bible.²³

The narrative of 1 Maccabees recounts various violent conflicts and military victories of Jewish groups against their Seleucid opponents in the second century BCE.²⁴ Unlike the book of Esther, which many modern readers might easily perceive as a fictive story, 1 Maccabees is often read as work of historiography. Given its length, it contains many more "historical" details than Esther, such as personal names, place names, concrete dates, and exact numbers of fighting forces. Its style is more prosaic, narrating the course of events leading to the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty in chronological order. Furthermore, it quotes declarations of war and peace between the Seleucids and the Maccabees and also incorporates letters between the Maccabees and the Spartans or Romans (cf., e.g., 1 Macc 12:1–23 and 15:15–24). However, it is difficult to identify a categorical difference between the "fictional" nature of the Esther narrative and the "historical" quality of a text like 1 Maccabees. Tim Whitmarsh rightly points out that "[a]ncient literature did not have a strong conceptualisation of what we could call 'fiction.'"²⁵

The Esther narrative, on the one hand, clearly seeks to be read as a "historical" narrative, too. Like 1 Maccabees, it features details about its main characters, and it lists place names, dates, and official documents, such as the annihilation edict in Esth 3 and the Jewish counter-edict in Esth 8. First Maccabees, on the other hand, also uses narrative elements of fictionalization, distortion, and exaggeration. The report about how the Maccabean army—3,000 men—supposedly killed 100,000 enemies in the city of Antioch on one day (1 Macc 11:38–51) is clearly exaggerated, if not even entirely fictitious. Furthermore, from a historical point of view, it is unlikely that the all-too-favorable Spartan and Roman letters to the Jews are authentic copies of imperial documents. The difference between 1 Maccabees and the book of Esther thus lies less in genre

22 For a recent discussion of the threat of annihilation, see Kugler, *When God Wanted to Destroy*, 11, who argues that the "consciousness of the danger of annihilation" presents "one of the strongest components in Jewish myth and Jewish identity."

23 Of course, the narrative of 2 Maccabees also has many similarities to the depiction of collective violence in the book of Esther (Macchi, *Esther*, 259–260). The motif of annihilation, however, is more prominent in 1 Maccabees.

24 For a comparison of the commemoration of collective violence in 1 and 2 Maccabees, see Julia Rhyder's essay in this volume.

25 Whitmarsh and Bartsch, *Narrative*, 244.

or in the distinction between “history” and “fiction,” but rather in each book’s degree of fictionality. The Esther narrative’s look back to the Persian past allows for a higher degree of fictionalization. The temporal and ideological distance to Persia can be felt throughout the narrative. First Maccabees, in contrast, was probably written just fifty years after the (early) events took place (between 130–100 BCE). There might have still been eye-witnesses alive or, at least, fresh memories circulating about the outcome of the Maccabean revolt. Thus, unlike the Esther narrative, 1 Maccabees is much more likely to transmit (some) historically reliable information.

The main function of 1 Maccabees, after all, is ideological, not historiographical. The account interprets the aversion of the violent threats made against the Jewish people and its cult as foundational for the rise of the so-called Hasmonean dynasty in Judea. 1 Maccabees transmits the memory of how the threatened Jewish people was saved by the Maccabean leaders and how the collective violence and resistance of the Jews helped to beat back their Seleucid oppressors.²⁶ The Greeks are said to have come to Judea with the intention to force all Jews to give up their customs and to defile the temple in Jerusalem. In the most common terminology, the “Maccabean revolt” is the Jewish reaction to “religious persecution,” an aggressive attack on Judaism and the Jewish people ascribed to the Seleucid king Antiochus IV. While both terms must be disputed, they correctly denote a narrative pattern that is integral for 1 Maccabees and its justification of collective violence—namely, the attack on the Jews and their customs provokes a group around Judas Maccabaeus to recruit fellow Jews to fight back the Seleucids.

Since the nineteenth century, scholars have pointed out particular elements in the depiction of Jewish battles that are common to both the Esther narrative and 1 Maccabees.²⁷ Among other things, the date of Haman’s violent plan and the Jewish counter-attack, the thirteenth of Adar, notably matches the date of the first major Maccabean success on the battlefield against the Seleucid general Nicanor (1 Macc 7:43, 49; cf. 2 Macc 15:36). Both narratives also reflect a notable interest in instituting commemorative festivals after the Jewish victory over their enemies.²⁸ What is more, God does not play a prominent role in 1 Maccabees, which focuses on the Jews’ collective military success, somewhat

26 Proposals for the date of 1 Maccabees vary; for a recent overview, see Bernhardt, *Die jüdische Revolution*, 41–42. Because the book ends with the rule of John Hyrcanus (134–104 BCE), it was probably written after that (Tilly, *1 Makkabäer*, 48).

27 See already Graetz, *Geschichte*, 338–343 and, later, Erbt, *Die Purimsage*, 80; Paton, *Esther*, 61–83; Lebram, “Purimfest,” 217; and Achenbach, “‘Genocide,’” 107–108.

28 Macchi, “Instituting,” 102–105.

similar to the Esther narrative.²⁹ Recent scholarship reveals wide agreement that there are distinctive commonalities between the two books regarding their depiction of Jewish violence. The most established explanation for these commonalities is the assumption that Esth 9, which describes the Jewish battles and the institution of Purim, forms part of an appendix that was added during the Hasmonean period, whereas the previous chapters (Esth 1–8) are to be dated earlier.³⁰ The majority of the book of Esther is thus regarded as being free from the influence of Hasmonean ideology.

Yet, a closer look at the narrative strategies justifying the Jewish exertion of violence in 1 Maccabees and Esther raises doubts about the plausibility of this assumption. Instead, it seems more likely that even the core theme of Esther—the threat of annihilation—can be linked with 1 Maccabees. As the following examples will demonstrate, 1 Maccabees does more than depict the Jewish military action as a response to the alleged Seleucid interference with Jewish religious customs, a “religious persecution.” It frames the Seleucid actions as attacks on the very existence of the Jewish people. In other words, 1 Maccabees and Esther deploy a very similar literary strategy; the threat of annihilation justifies the collective Jewish violent retaliation.

The very first words of a Jewish character in 1 Maccabees—a short lament uttered by the Maccabean founding father, Mattathias—interprets the Seleucid’s actions as an attempt to bring “the destruction of my people” (τὸ σύντριμμα τοῦ λαοῦ μου, 1 Macc 2:7). He installs his son Judas as his successor to lead the Jews “to fight the war of the peoples” (πολεμήσει πόλεμον λαῶν, 1 Macc 2:66). After Mattathias’s death, Judas decides to go to war against the Seleucids. As he motivates his fellow Jews for this undertaking, he criticizes the Seleucids’ intentions in words that resemble the depiction of Haman and his edict in the book of Esther: “They come against us with great arrogance and lawlessness to annihilate us and our wives and children, to despoil us” (αὐτοὶ ἔρχονται ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν πλήθει ὕβρεως καὶ ἀνομίας τοῦ ἐξᾶραι ἡμᾶς καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας ἡμῶν καὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν τοῦ σκυλεῦσαι ἡμᾶς, 1 Macc 3:20).³¹

In contrast, Judas states, the Maccabees would only fight for their lives and for their customs (ἡμεῖς δὲ πολεμοῦμεν περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν νομίμων ἡμῶν, 1 Macc 3:21). In the words of the first Maccabean leader, then, the alleged threat of annihilation that the Seleucid forces pose to his people explicitly serves the

29 Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 13 and Bernhardt, *Die jüdische Revolution*, 42–43.

30 Clines, *Esther Scroll*, 40–42 and, more recently, Macchi, *Esther*, 31–37 and Ego, *Ester*, 42–50.

31 Some verses later, the narrator of 1 Maccabees characterizes the Seleucid plans as a command “to bring destruction and annihilation to the people” (οὗς ἐνετείλατο ποιῆσαι τῷ λαῷ εἰς ἀπώλειαν καὶ συντέλειαν, 1 Macc 3:42).

narrative purpose of justifying the Jewish call to arms. While the violent threat in 1 Maccabees—unlike in the Esther narrative—never reaches the level of a systematic and global attempt to wipe out the Jewish people, the mention of the women and children in 1 Macc 3:20 at least indicates that the Seleucid attacks are thought to be aimed at all members of the community living in Judea.³² On several other occasions, as well, we can observe that 1 Maccabees depicts existential violent threats against the Jewish people as an important part of its effort to justify the Jewish military actions. Only a few chapters after 1 Macc 3, it is the Seleucid general, Nicanor, who is depicted as a deceitful and aggressive character. First Maccabees 7:26 states that Nicanor “hated and was hostile to Israel” (μισοῦντα καὶ ἐχθραίνοντα τῷ Ἰσραηλ), resembling the characterization of Haman (Esth 3:5, 10; 7:6; 9:10, 24) and of the Jews’ enemies (Esth 9:1, 5). The narrator of 1 Maccabees states that Nicanor was sent by the Seleucid king to fulfill the royal command “to annihilate” or “to remove” (ἐξάιρω) the Jews (1 Macc 7:26). The following Jewish battle against Nicanor and his army thus appears as a counter-attack against his hostility.³³ The threat of annihilation is also referred to in passages like 1 Macc 5:2–27 and 1 Macc 12:53; 13:1. These examples demonstrate that two very different narratives from the Hellenistic period, 1 Maccabees and the book of Esther, deploy a similar narrative strategy. In both works, Jewish individuals step up as leading figures to call every Jew to take up arms in order to avert the existential threats made against their community. Their use of collective violence is thereby depicted as a legitimate and necessary act of defense and retaliation. The glorious nature of these actions exemplifies the military potential of the Jewish people, but it also justifies the aspirations of the Jewish leaders. This important similarity between the two books calls into question proposals that ascribe only Esth 9 and the depiction of the Jewish battles against their enemies to the Hasmoneans. It hints at the possibility that the book of Esther in its entirety should be understood as a reflection of Hasmonean ideology, in particular regarding its justification of collective violence.

32 There are even hints that the actions of the Seleucids are also perceived as attacks against Jews who live outside of Judea. Jews under attack in Greek cities are reflected in 2 Macc 6:8 (εἰς τὰς ἀστυγείτονας Ἑλληνίδας πόλεις), and 1 Macc 5 reports that the peoples around Judea (like Gilead) were also threatened.

33 Interestingly, the narrative explicitly states that this military success was possible only because the common members of the Jewish people started to join the battle: “And people came out of all the surrounding villages of Judea and outflanked them [i.e., Nicanor’s army], and they turned back against each other. And all of them fell by the sword, and not even one of them was left” (1 Macc 7:46). As in the case of Esth 9:1–16, then, the glorious victory depends on the very collective nature of the Jewish actions.

6 The Violence of the Book of Esther in Its Sociohistorical Context

What do these observations mean for the study of collective violence in general and the possible sociohistorical functions of the Esther narrative in particular? The first section of this essay has demonstrated that the book of Esther's imperial justifications for annihilating the Jewish people show some similarities with Greek accounts that were probably more well known in the Hellenistic world. This seems to indicate that local populations like the scribes composing Esther were aware of prevalent patterns used to justify large-scale killings and that they could adapt these to their own interests. As the case of Esther shows, nonmilitary reasons such as challenged imperial honor and status were thought to represent sufficient grounds for annihilating an entire people group. While the Esther narrative problematizes this rationale, it also uses the charges and threats made against the Jews in a productive way. Aspects of what Jewish scribes considered to be stereotypes about their people are refuted over the course of the narrative. What is more, the threat of annihilation even justifies the Jewish counter-attack. The threat is transformed into a glorious Jewish success, and the Jews seem to have harnessed crucial aspects of imperial power.

As such, the book of Esther exemplifies the complexity involved in analyzing depictions of mass killings in ancient narratives. The case of the Esther narrative problematizes a strict dichotomy of victor and victim; it shows that these categories were more fluid and that the perspective and evaluation of collective violence could be transformed in the course of a narrative to serve particular ideological interests. The narrative's highly fictional, hyperbolic, and ironic nature is also an important reminder to understand the memorialization of collective violence as a highly dynamic and creative ideological process. There is no evidence to back up the claim of an Achaemenid attempt to annihilate the Jewish people, and the idea of the Jews killing tens of thousands of their enemies in the Persian Empire is almost certainly fictional. These memories of a group's violent past most and foremost served purposes other than historical accuracy.

This need not to imply, however, that the book of Esther's main purpose is to entertain its readers with a dramatic plot. As Sylvie Honigman has recently demonstrated in analyzing the cultural importance and functions of fiction and entertainment in Greek, Jewish, and Demotic narratives, "the fictional aspects of the stories are secondary to the underlying didactic purpose of the text."³⁴ Reflecting on possible sociohistorical functions and didactic purposes

34 Honigman, "Novellas," 29.

of the Esther narrative related to collective violence, two points seem worth highlighting in this context. First, the Esther narrative portrays the diplomatic engagements of Jewish elites as a crucial aspect of securing Jewish survival. Referring to the past missions of Mordechai and Esther at the imperial court could help to bolster the community's trust in its contemporary political and military leaders. Second, the core motif of the Esther narrative is the existential threat against the Jewish people, and the narrative explores how they can defeat their enemies. The focus on the Jews' diplomatic and military success indicates their superiority against their opponents. This outlook might strengthen the confidence and solidarity of the Jewish community facing various threats. While some aspects of these functions are certainly common to ancient literary depictions of collective violence, the narrative use of the threat of annihilation in 1 Maccabees to justify violence and its assumed historical context in comparison with the book of Esther invites a more concrete contextualization of the Esther narrative.

In the middle of the second century, the Jewish people were facing multiple challenges, both culturally and militarily. While many aspects of what sparked the Maccabean revolt must remain disputed, two trends seem to have gained acceptance.³⁵ For one, Seleucid military action in Judea most likely was not an act of random aggression and hostility but an act of military repression to ensure stability in the region of Judea, at least from the perspective of the Seleucid king. After inner-Jewish quarrels and civil war—like violence that occurred in Jerusalem after controversies over the high priesthood (and maybe increased taxation, if Honigman is correct), the Seleucid king acted “as if Judea was in revolt” (ἀποστατεῖν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν, 2 Macc 5:11). Second, the “religious persecution” that 1 and 2 Maccabees imagine is most likely the result of a “narrative elaboration of a military suppression” that allows the Hasmoneans to be depicted as legitimate leaders of the Jewish political *and* cultic community.³⁶ In other words, the idea that the Seleucids primarily attacked the Jewish religion is not historically probable. This perspective is best explained when we consider that the main function of 1 (and 2) Maccabees was to legitimate the Hasmonean dynasty's claim to power. The Seleucids did, however, curtail the local autonomy of Judea and probably also massacred Jewish civilians as a punishment for their (allegedly) rebellious behavior. These insights have important reper-

35 Weitzman, “Plotting”; Doran, “Resistance and Revolt”; Honigman, “Religious Persecution”; and Bernhardt, *Die jüdische Revolution*, 217–328.

36 See the title of Honigman's essay: “The Religious Persecution as a Narrative Elaboration of a Military Suppression.”

cussions for the attempt to contextualize the book of Esther as a contemporary of 1 and 2 Maccabees. It allows us to interpret the threat of annihilation that the book of Esther places in the Persian period as another form of a narrative elaboration of the events that took place in Judea in the second century. One reason this is plausible is that religious persecution was not the only way to frame the Seleucids' actions in Jewish literature, as 1 Maccabees shows. Seleucid military repression could also be depicted as an attempt to annihilate the Jewish community. On the other hand, Haman's plan to wipe out all Jews in Esth 3 is similar to Greek accounts in which imperial mass killings are perceived as necessary and legitimate reactions to communities that questioned the status of the imperial powers. This perspective fits well with the insight that Antiochus IV's military measures against Judea probably followed ancient Greek convention. The idea of Esth 3 that the entire Jewish ethnos—including elderly people, women, and children—is threatened with annihilation can plausibly be interpreted as a hyperbolic elaboration of this action. The Persian context might have been particularly suitable for such a universal perspective because, among other things, the scope and efficiency of the Achaemenid administrative system was a well-known cliché about Persia in the Greek world.³⁷

The motif of annihilation in Esth 3 can therefore be interpreted as a fictionalized and dramatized retrojection of the events that took place in Judea in the second century BCE. Unlike 1 and 2 Maccabees, the book of Esther lacks any mention of the temple in Jerusalem or Jewish cultic practice. It elaborates only on the idea of annihilation; all Jews are threatened, regardless their age, place of residence, or cultic practice. The Esther narrative shares with 1 Maccabees the conviction that only a collective Jewish violent response can help to overcome this threat. This outlook was presumably of high interest for the Hasmoneans, who needed the support of their entire people. Contemporary Jewish sources also indicate that the legitimacy of Jewish military action was heavily contested.³⁸ Already within 1 Maccabees, we hear the perspective of those Jews who fled to the caves rather than fight the Seleucids (1 Macc 2:29). A similar voice can be heard in the book of Daniel, which opts for a more passive theocentric solution for the crisis. In hoping for divine salvation, the Maccabean battles are depicted as bringing "little help" (Dan 11:34). Some of the Qumran texts also hint at the existence of inner-Jewish opposition toward Hasmonean

37 See Macchi, "Book," 112–113, who refers to Xen., *Cyr.* 8.6.17–18 and Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.98.

38 Trampedach, "Die Hasmonäer," 48–60; Elgvin, "Hasmonean State Ideology," 58–62; and Elgvin, "Violence," 329–335.

militarism. Texts like the Habakkuk peshar (1 QpHab 8:8–13; 12:2–6) condemn the violent and brutal acts of the “wicked priest,” which possibly alludes to John Hyrcanus (ruling from 135–104), one of the most important and militarily active Hasmonean rulers in Judea. Hasmonean leaders are characterized figuratively in 4QTest 21–30 as Simeon and Levi, who are characterized as “vessels of violence.” The book of Esther and the celebration of Purim—which transmit and reactivate the memory of how the entire Jewish people once followed their leaders’ call to arms, came together, and fought those who wanted to annihilate them—thus could well be interpreted as an attempt to substantiate the Hasmonean claim to power. It might have even served the purpose of enhancing the willingness of some Jews to join the Hasmoneans’ military campaigns.

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Hellenizing Hanukkah: The Commemoration of Military Victory in the Books of the Maccabees

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Abstract

Early Jewish writings are replete with narratives of warfare and collective violence. Yet relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to how these accounts of violence affected the way Jews structured their festal calendar. This essay examines the festivals described in 1 and 2 Maccabees that serve to commemorate the most impressive military victories of the Maccabean revolt in the second century BCE—namely, Hanukkah, Nicanor’s Day, and Simon’s Day. Paying attention to the similarities and differences between the festal texts of 1 and 2 Maccabees, I argue that the two books employ a common commemorative strategy to foster a positive collective memory of the violence of the Maccabean revolt that could both legitimize the founding figures of the Hasmonean dynasty and compete with the commemorative cultures of other Hellenistic communities. This evidence of commemorative creativity and cultural adaptation by the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees sheds valuable light on how the memorialization of violence in the ancient Mediterranean was shaped not simply by the ideologies and institutions of discrete societies but also by their intersections and cross-cultural borrowings.

Keywords

festivals – 1 Maccabees – 2 Maccabees – military victory – commemoration – Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean

Military victory is a key theme of 1 and 2 Maccabees.¹ Written in the mid-to-late second century, these works of Jewish historiography recount how a

¹ The research presented here forms part of the Swiss National Science Foundation project “Transforming Memories of Collective Violence in the Hebrew Bible” (project number 181219). It was presented in modified form at the webinar “Historical Narratives and Memorializa-

small band of Jewish insurgents overcame incredible odds and pressures, from within and outside, to overthrow Seleucid hegemony in Judea. The two books retell the events of the rebellion in distinctive ways and may have been written in different geographical contexts; while 1 Maccabees is widely agreed to be a work of dynastic history that was written in the Hasmonean court in Jerusalem, 2 Maccabees is often considered a diasporic work that was composed in Ptolemaic Egypt.² Despite their differences, both 1 and 2 Maccabees evince a remarkable point of similarity: they share a mutual interest in promoting the new festivals allegedly instigated by Judas Maccabaeus and his band of rebels—the so-called Maccabees—to mark the dates of particularly noteworthy victories. These include the eight-day festival beginning on Chislev 25 to celebrate Hanukkah, which commemorates the rededication of the Jerusalem temple after Judas and his army defeated the Seleucid forces in battle, and a festival established on Adar 13 to commemorate the Jewish victory over the Seleucid general Nicanor. First Maccabees also describes an annual celebration on Iyyar 23 to celebrate when Judas's brother Simon Thassi captured the *acra*, a garrison in a fortified area in Jerusalem.

Despite the considerable scholarly interest that these festivals have received, few studies have explored what they might reveal about the commemorative strategies of the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees and how these strategies might compare to strategies for memorializing and celebrating victories in other eastern Mediterranean societies. This essay fills this gap by exploring how the authors of the books of the Maccabees appropriated and transformed Hellenistic commemorative patterns in fashioning new festivals to celebrate the Maccabean revolt. Paying attention to the similarities and differences between the festal texts of 1 and 2 Maccabees, I argue that the two books employ a common commemorative strategy that uses annual festivals to foster a positive collective memory of the violence of the Maccabean revolt both to legitimize the founding figures of the Hasmonean dynasty and to compete with the commemorative cultures of other Hellenistic communities. This evidence of commemorative creativity and cultural adaptation by the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees, as we shall see, sheds valuable light on how the memorialization of violence in

tion of Collective Violence” hosted by the University of Basel on November 5, 2020. I wish to thank all the participants in the webinar for their valuable feedback, which helped improve the piece for publication. I am also grateful to Angela Roskop Erisman for her insightful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own, and all dates are BCE.

2 See, e.g., Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 45–55 and Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 15–17. For the alternative view that 2 Maccabees was written in Judea, see, e.g., van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 50 and Honigman, *Tales*, 2.

the ancient Mediterranean was shaped not simply by the ideologies and institutions of discrete societies but also by their intersections and cross-cultural borrowings.

1 Festivals Commemorating Violent Victories in the Books of the Maccabees

1.1 *First Maccabees*

First Maccabees begins with a brief history of the Seleucid dynasty before recounting the events that took place in Judea from the reign of Antiochus IV to the ascension of Simon's son John Hyrcanus as high priest and leader of Judea. The initial chapters of the book allege that, after a gymnasium was established in Jerusalem in 168, Antiochus IV twice plundered the Jerusalem temple before issuing a decree demanding that local communities throughout the Seleucid kingdom give up their traditional customs. This decree is said to have wrought massive disruptions to the Jerusalem temple cult and to have ultimately caused a rebellion to erupt in Judea in 167, in which Jewish insurgents led by Judas Maccabaeus launched a series of successful guerrilla war campaigns against the Seleucid forces. By 164 Judas had succeeded in capturing the Jerusalem temple, which he set about purifying from the effects of its profanation by the Seleucids and their Jewish co-conspirators (see 1 Macc 4:36–58). First Maccabees 4:59 describes how the date of the rededication of the temple (Chislev 25) was designated by Judas, his brothers, and the “assembly of Israel” (ἐκκλησία Ἰσραηλ) as the first day of an eight-day festival that should be observed by the Jews every year.³

The rededication festival—best known by its Hebrew name, “Hanukkah”—celebrated not only the cultic agency of the Maccabees in restoring the temple to working order but also the violent battles against the Seleucids that made the rededication possible.⁴ First Maccabees 4:36 presents the rededication as the direct result of the withdrawal of the Seleucid general Lysias from Judea after his clash with Judas at Beth Zur. After Lysias withdrew to Antiochus, Judas is

3 The historicity of these events is a matter of considerable debate; see, e.g., Collins, “Temple or Taxes?”; Habicht, “Seleucids,” 324–387; Kosmin, *Time*; Ma, “Re-Examining”; Honigman, *Tales*; Schwartz, *1 Maccabees*, 51–58. For the purposes of the present discussion, however, resolving the question of the historicity of 1 Macc 1 is less important than understanding how the authors of that book preserve a particular memory of Antiochus IV's reign and the Maccabean rebellion that could serve to legitimize the Hasmonean dynasty.

4 On this aspect of Hanukkah, see further Rhyder, “Festivals and Violence,” 66–70.

said to have declared, “Look! Our enemies have been crushed! Let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate [it]” (Ἴδού συνετριβήσαν οἱ ἐχθροὶ ἡμῶν, ἀναβῶμεν καθαρῖσαι τὰ ἅγια καὶ ἐγκαινῖσαι). To further reinforce this link between military victory and temple rededication, the author of 1 Maccabees claims that the same agents who defeated Lysias on the battlefield went on to carry out the temple restoration. First Maccabees 4:37–38 states that Judas led “the entire army” (ἡ παρεμβολὴ πᾶσα) up to the temple mount and, seeing it desolate, set to work in restoring it. Then, to shield the temple from hostile forces during the eight-day restoration, he sent members of his armed forces to the *acra* to fight “until he cleansed the sanctuary” (ἕως καθαρῖση τὰ ἅγια, 1 Macc 4:41). Once the rededication was completed, Judas immediately commanded the army to fortify Mount Zion, thus strongly affirming the role of military force in assuring the survival of the rededicated temple (1 Macc 4:60–61).⁵ Finally, Hanukkah’s victorious character is reinforced by the date on which it is to be held. According to 1 Macc 4:52–54, Chislew 25 marks not only the day on which Judas and his troops restored the temple to working order but also the anniversary of Antiochus’s violent persecution and desecration of the temple four years earlier. The rededication celebration therefore reminds the community of the poetic justice of Judas’s victory against the Seleucids insofar as it reversed the Jews’ fortunes from religious repression at the hands of Antiochus to the glorious restoration of their temple and sacrificial cult.⁶

In addition to the Hanukkah festival, 1 Maccabees also describes an annual celebration to mark the date of Judas’s victory against the Seleucid general Nicanor in 161. According to 1 Macc 7:26, Antiochus IV’s nephew Demetrius I, who ascended the throne after his uncle’s death, sent Nicanor to Judea with a large army to suppress the Maccabean revolt and destroy the Jewish people. After an initial battle with Judas and his army at Caphar-salama, Nicanor is said to have traveled to Mount Zion where he confronted the Jerusalem priesthood and threatened to burn down the temple (1 Macc 7:33–35). Then, on Adar 13, Nicanor returned to face Judas and his forces but died almost the moment he met them on the battlefield. The general was then gruesomely dismembered by ordinary Jews who came out from the surrounding villages to rout the remaining Seleucid forces (1 Macc 7:39–47). Overjoyed at the death of the general who had so viciously threatened both the community and its temple, the Jewish “people” (λαὸς) collectively decided to mark the date of this victory—the thirteenth of Adar—as a day of annual rejoicing (1 Macc 7:48–49). The festival on

⁵ See further Tilly, *1 Makkabäer*, 136.

⁶ As noted, e.g., by Eckhardt, *Ethnos und Herrschaft*, 107.

this date thus effectively commemorated the successful collaboration between Judas, his forces, and the Jewish community writ large in violently humiliating their Seleucid enemies.

The final festival described in 1 Maccabees marks the date when Simon Thassi successfully besieged and captured the *acra* from the remaining Seleucid forces in Jerusalem in 141. This military victory came almost immediately after Simon, in a major diplomatic achievement, successfully petitioned Demetrius II for freedom from Seleucid taxation—an event signaling that Judea was recognized as a semiautonomous civic community within the Hellenistic sphere.⁷ Indeed, according to 1 Macc 13:42, the Jews began to refer to that year as “the first year of Simon the great high priest and commander (στρατηγού) and leader of the Jews.” Simon’s ability to follow this diplomatic achievement with the military victory of ridding Jerusalem of the last Seleucid stronghold demonstrated his power, as the Jews’ στρατηγός, to ensure not only their fiscal independence but also their military autonomy from Seleucid rule. To celebrate Simon’s victory, which saw “a great enemy crushed and [taken] out from Israel” (συνετριβη ἐχθρὸς μέγας ἐξ Ἰσραηλ, 1 Macc 13:51), the Jews joyfully processed through the *acra* with palms and musical instruments, and Simon declared the twenty-third of Iyyar an annual festival day.

1.2 *Second Maccabees*

Second Maccabees evinces a similar focus to 1 Maccabees on festivals celebrating major Maccabean victories against the Seleucids. According to 2 Macc 2:18, the book of 2 Maccabees is the result of an epitomator’s attempt to condense five volumes written by a certain Jason of Cyrene into a succinct account of the Maccabean rebellion. The resulting epitome has a much shorter timeframe than 1 Maccabees, focusing only on the events in Judea from the time of the high priest Onias III until just before the death of Judas. This reduced focus means that 2 Maccabees does not mention the festival established by Simon in 141 but speaks only of the festivals established during Judas’s military campaigns of 167–161—namely, Hanukkah and Nicanor’s Day.

Both of these festivals celebrate the violent demise of individuals who threatened the Jewish people and their temple. In the case of Hanukkah, 2 Macc 8 tells how Judas’s impressive military victories against the Seleucid official Nicanor (2 Macc 8:8–29) and the commanders Timothy and Bacchides (2 Macc 8:30–36) created the conditions for the Maccabees to capture and purify the Jerusalem temple.⁸ Crucially, however, the temple rededication does not imme-

7 On this, see further Gruen, “When Is a Revolt Not a Revolt?,” 25–26.

8 While the official mentioned in 2 Macc 8:8–29 shares a name with the character mentioned

diately follow Judas's defeat of these two Seleucid aggressors but comes after a lengthy description of the fate of Antiochus IV after he heard the embarrassing news that his generals got trounced (2 Macc 9:1–29). Antiochus himself had just suffered a disappointing defeat in the city of Persepolis and, outraged at the news of Judas's victories in Judea, decided to travel to Jerusalem to personally quash the rising Maccabean rebellion. His plan was thwarted, however, when he was struck down with a gruesome illness on the journey by Yhwh, resulting in a most undignified and gory death. The temple rededication follows abruptly after the announcement, in 2 Macc 9:28–29, that Antiochus IV's mangled corpse was transported by a certain Seleucid named Philip to Syria. It then concludes with the resumptive statement “So thus was the manner of the death of Antiochus, the one called Epiphanes” (καὶ τὰ μὲν τῆς Ἀντιόχου τοῦ προσαγορευθέντος Ἐπιφανοῦς τελευτῆς οὕτως εἶχεν, 2 Macc 10:9).

Scholars have long puzzled over the placement of the rededication account at this point in the narrative. The story of temple rededication and festal innovation appears to interrupt the story of Antiochus's grisly demise. Observe how the description in 2 Macc 9:28–29 of Antiochus's death and the transportation of his body would seem to flow naturally to the summary notice in 10:9 had it not been interrupted by the long description of the temple rededication in 10:1–8.

Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀνδροφόνος καὶ βλάσφημος τὰ χεῖριστα παθῶν, ὡς ἑτέρους διέθηκεν, ἐπὶ ξένης ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν οἰκτίστῳ μὶ μὲν κατέστρεψε τὸν βίον. παρεκομίζετο δὲ τὸ σῶμα Φίλιππος ὁ σύντροφος αὐτοῦ, ὃς καὶ διευλαβηθεὶς τὸν υἱὸν Ἀντιόχου πρὸς Πτολεμαῖον τὸν Φιλομήτορα εἰς Αἴγυπτον διεκομίσθη. Μακαβαῖος δὲ καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ τοῦ κυρίου προάγοντος αὐτοὺς τὸ μὲν ἱερὸν ἐκομίσαντο καὶ τὴν πόλιν ... ἐδογμάτισαν δὲ μετὰ κοινου προστάγματος καὶ ψηφίσματος παντὶ τῷ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνει κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἄγειν τὰς ἡμέρας. καὶ τὰ μὲν τῆς Ἀντιόχου τοῦ προσαγορευθέντος Ἐπιφανοῦς τελευτῆς οὕτως εἶχεν.

Thus the murderer and the blasphemer, after having suffered the terrible pains he had ordained for others, had the very lamentable destiny of ending his life in a foreign land, near the mountains. And Philip, his close

in 2 Macc 14–15 (namely, Nicanor), it is unclear whether this is purely coincidental, owing to the popularity of the name “Nicanor,” or the same figure appears twice in the narrative of 2 Maccabees. Nicanor does not die in 2 Macc 8:8–29 but is forced to flee (see 2 Macc 8:24), so it is possible that the same character reappears in 2 Macc 14. This reading, however, is somewhat difficult to reconcile with 2 Macc 14:18, which speaks of Nicanor as though he had never met Judas but had only heard of his ἀνδραγαθία (“valor”) as a warrior secondhand.

companion, was carrying the body back; and then, fearful of Antiochus' son, took himself across to Egypt, to Ptolemy Philometor. Now Maccabeus and those with him, the lord leading them, recovered the sanctuary and the city ... And they decreed with a public command and a vote that the entire Jewish nation should observe every year these days [of rededication]. So thus was the manner of the death of Antiochus, the one called Epiphanes.

To explain the interruptive character of 2Macc 10:1–8, commentators have often proposed that the temple rededication account was originally located at a different point in the narrative of 2Maccabees but was shifted to its current position in the death account of Antiochus IV for reasons that remain unclear.⁹ Daniel Schwartz, by contrast, has argued that the entire rededication account is a late addition to 2Maccabees.¹⁰ Yet both of these proposed solutions are arguably unnecessary to understand the placement of the rededication account in 2Macc 10:1–8. While this placement may seem somewhat awkward at first, it arguably forms part of a larger structural device that positions both Hanukkah and Nicanor's Day as commemorating the violent death of major Seleucid enemies. The account of the downfall of Nicanor in 2Macc 15 shares with 2Macc 9:1–10:9 a common emphasis on recounting the gruesome humiliation of a major foreign aggressor, first with crushing defeats on the battlefield (2Macc 15:15–27; cf. 2Macc 9:1–3) and then with the violent destruction of the enemy's body (2Macc 15:30–35; cf. 2Macc 9:5–12, 28–29). The enemy's embarrassing demise is then followed in 2Macc 15:36 by a collective decision to instigate a new festival to celebrate the Jews' victory, which, as Jonathan Trotter has insightfully observed, is worded using very similar terminology to 2Macc 10:8.¹¹ The festal decision is then immediately followed by a declaration that Nicanor met his fate (2Macc 15:37) that is similar to 2Macc 10:9.

2Macc 10:8–9

ἔδογμάτισαν δὲ μετὰ κοινοῦ προστάγματος καὶ ψηφίσματος παντὶ τῷ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνει κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἄγειν τὰςδε τὰς ἡμέρας. καὶ τὰ μὲν τῆς Ἀντιόχου τοῦ προσαγορευθέντος Ἐπιφανοῦς τελευτῆς οὕτως εἶχεν.

9 See, e.g., Bartlett, *First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, 293–296 and Habicht, *2. Makkabäerbuch*, 249–250.

10 Schwartz, *2Maccabees*, 8–10, 371–379.

11 Trotter, “2Maccabees 10:1–8,” 120–122.

And they decreed with a public command and a vote that the entire Jewish nation should observe every year these days. So thus was the manner of the death of Antiochus, the one called Epiphanes.

2 Macc 15:36–37a

ἔδογματίσαν δὲ πάντες μετὰ κοινοῦ ψηφίσματος μηδαμῶς ἑάσαι ἀπαρασήμαντον τήνδε τὴν ἡμέραν, ἔχειν δὲ ἐπίσημον τὴν τρισκαιδεκάτην τοῦ δωδεκάτου μηνὸς Ἀδαρ λέγεται τῇ Συριακῇ φωνῇ πρὸ μιᾶς ἡμέρας τῆς Μαρδοχαϊκῆς ἡμέρας. Τῶν οὖν κατὰ Νικάνορα χωρησάντων οὕτως καὶ ἀπ’ ἐκείνων τῶν καιρῶν κρατηθείσης τῆς πόλεως ὑπὸ τῶν Εβραίων.

And they all decreed, with a public command, not to allow this day to go unobserved, but rather to keep as notable the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is called “Adar” in the Syrian language, the day before Mordechai’s Day. Such was the way the affairs concerning Nicanor turned out (...).

These parallels between the two festal descriptions of 2 Macc 10:8–9 and 2 Macc 15:36–37a suggest that the placement of the rededication account in the context of Antiochus IV’s death report is far from a haphazard afterthought. It attests to the epitomator’s concern to position Hanukkah and Nicanor’s Day as serving *complementary roles* in commemorating the Jews’ triumphs over especially detestable Seleucids who presented similar existential threats to the Jewish community and its temple.

Like 1 Maccabees, then, festivals served a crucial function in 2 Maccabees—namely, commemorating the key victories of the Maccabean rebellion and the critical role that Judas played in protecting both the community and its sanctuary from violent attack. With their emphasis on rituals of rejoicing, such as palm waving, musical processions, and thanksgiving sacrifices, the festivals encouraged collective pride in the Maccabees’ triumphs against the Seleucids during the revolt and in their ability to reclaim control over their most important institution, the Jerusalem temple. The communal decision to honor these festival days each year therefore ensures the intergenerational transmission of this positive memory of the outcomes of the guerrilla warfare waged by the Maccabees against the Seleucid kingdom.

An important difference with 1 Maccabees, however, is the inclusion of two letters, appended to the beginning of 2 Maccabees, which were allegedly written by the authorities in Jerusalem to the Jews living in Egypt, encouraging them to observe the festival of dedication (2 Macc 1:1–2:18).¹² Written in the year

¹² Most scholars agree that these letters should be classed as additions to an extant book that

124, the first letter begins with an opening salutation (1:1), followed by a series of stylized expressions of good will (1:2–5) and a short summary of the events in Jerusalem that surrounded the rededication of the temple (1:7–8).¹³ It then concludes by briefly compelling the Jews in Egypt to join in celebrating the festival of rededication (1:9).¹⁴ The second letter is much longer and presents more complex interpretive challenges. To begin with, the letter claims to have been written by “those in Jerusalem and those in Judea and the senate and Judas” (οἱ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις καὶ οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ ἡ γερουσία καὶ Ἰουδᾶς, 2 Macc 1:10). This reference to Judas is sometimes taken to indicate that the letter was written immediately after the temple rededication in 164 or 163.¹⁵ Yet the letter’s depiction of Judea as an independent civic community, governed by a γερουσία and seemingly living in peace, makes a mid-second-century date unlikely.¹⁶ Instead, a date sometime after the diplomatic achievements of Simon, perhaps during the time of John Hyrcanus (reigned 134–104) or Alexander Jannaeus (reigned 103–76), seems more probable. In this case, the reference to Judas in the letter’s opening might have been a strategy for heightening its prestige, thereby strengthening the force of its call for the Jews to keep the days of Hanukkah each year.

Both documents attached to the beginning of 2 Maccabees provide valuable evidence that attempts were made to use the book to promote at least one of

originally began with the epitomator’s preface at 2 Macc 2:19. For this observation, see, e.g., Bickerman, “Jewish Festal Letter.”

- 13 In the majority of the manuscript traditions, the letter concludes in 2 Macc 1:9 by referring to its date as ἔτους ἑκατοστοῦ ὀγδοηκοστοῦ καὶ ὀγδόου, “the 188th year” of the Seleucid era. Codices 62 and 55, however, read 148—that is, the year of the temple dedication (cf. 1 Macc 4:52)—in which case the date at the end of the letter would not refer to when the letter was sent but to the year when the festival was established (i.e., 164 BCE). While this reading is preferred by Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 143–144, the year 188 is far better attested in the manuscript tradition. In addition, the idea that the letter concludes with the date on which it was sent (i.e., 124 BCE) is consistent with Greek and Aramaic letter-writing practices, in which the date of the letter, if supplied, was typically given at the end; on this, see further Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, 152.
- 14 The letter does not mention the rededication festival explicitly; rather, it cryptically calls on the Jews in Egypt to keep τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς σκηνοπηγίας τοῦ Χασελευ μηνός, “the days of booths in the month of Chisleu” (2 Macc 1:9). The reference to Chisleu is inconsistent with the dating of Booths (Sukkot), which was held in the month of Tishri. Eckhardt, *Ethnos und Herrschaft*, 103–104 therefore suggests that the letter’s authors did have the rededication festival in mind here but refer to it by the name of the nearest festival with a distinct title (namely, σκηνοπηγία, “Booths”) because Hanukkah had not yet received its own festal name.
- 15 See, e.g., Wacholder, “Letter” and, more tentatively, Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 144.
- 16 As argued convincingly by Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 62–63.

the Maccabean festivals among Jews living in Ptolemaic Egypt in the late second century. This, in turn, suggests that there was a concern among the elites in Jerusalem to ensure that Jews in diverse locales coordinated their year so that all joined in remembering the major military achievement of the rebellion against the Seleucids—namely, the capture and rededication of the Jerusalem temple. To be sure, the letters themselves provide only very brief summaries of the violence of the revolt and are far less militaristic in tone than the narratives that follow in 2 Maccabees. Nevertheless, the fact that they are attached to the book of 2 Maccabees, which repeatedly emphasizes the military and cultic agency of Judas and his forces in protecting the temple, suggests that the letters' authors considered the Hanukkah festival to be closely bonded with the story of the Maccabean rebellion and thus to serve as an annual reminder of the Jews' triumphs against the Seleucids.

2 The Maccabean Festivals in Their Hellenistic Context

Central to all the festivals mentioned in 1 and 2 Maccabees is their shared focus on celebrating Jewish victories against foreigners who attacked the city or temple of Jerusalem. How might we explain this shared festal interest across the two books? I argue that the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees were influenced by broader developments in the festal culture of the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean of which Judea was an integrated part. Jews were not alone in taking a keen interest in commemorating military victories in the Hellenistic age. Epigraphic and historiographical sources attest to an explosion of festivals celebrating noteworthy battles, the downfall of tyrants, or the liberation of cities from foreign garrisons in the Hellenistic world.¹⁷ Such festivals typically commemorated the military accomplishments of cities, leagues, and kings against foreign enemies, which they celebrated with public processions and thanksgiving sacrifices to the gods, accompanied by prayers and hymns and followed by a banquet. Athletic, dramatic, and musical “contests” (ἀγῶνες) also frequently featured as part of the festivities.¹⁸ For example, the *Soteria* instigated in Priene in Asia Minor, mentioned in a decree issued by the city at the turn of the third century, was a two-day festival that commemorated the city's victory over Hieron, a tyrant who seized control of the city in 300 and

17 Chaniotis, *War*, 227–233.

18 For a detailed list of commemorative festivals established in the Hellenistic era, see Chaniotis, “Sich selbst feiern?,” 164–168.

was banished with his troops three years later.¹⁹ A further *Soteria* festival at Delphi was reconfigured by the Aetolian league in 246 to commemorate the Greek battle against the Galatian invasion some thirty years prior, but now with a new emphasis on the Aetolians' alleged heroics in securing the victory.²⁰

This culture of commemoration was not only fueled by the ubiquity of war in the Hellenistic era, especially in its initial turbulent decades; it also spoke to the growing importance of festivals for legitimizing political leaders, especially the various Hellenistic kings.²¹ As the leaders of young dynasties who regularly faced threats from rivals, Hellenistic monarchs often had little beyond their military prowess to justify their reigns and maintain their grip on their sprawling kingdoms. Festivals recalling their most impressive victories enabled Hellenistic kings to remind local communities of the benefits their reigns brought to the region and thereby to solicit their continued allegiance. For instance, the *Nicephoria* at Pergamon was founded in the 220s by the Pergamene king Attalos I in honor of the deity Athena Nicephoros, "the bringer of victory," after his triumph over the Galatians in Asia Minor.²² It was later expanded by Attalos's son, Eumenes II, who transformed the *Nicephoria* into crowned games to commemorate his "great successes" (ἐπιτευγμάτων μεγάλων, *RC* 50, line 3) over either the Galatians or Prusias of Bithynia.²³

While Hellenistic kings often took the initiative in establishing festivals to celebrate their military achievements, however, many of the festivals commemorating royal victories were established by local communities, without necessarily receiving instructions from the monarch to institute such honors. One such festival is mentioned in a decree issued by the Athenian council in 304/303 announcing the military triumph of the Macedonian king Demetrius I during one of the wars of the Diadochi, which institutes an annual celebration as a "memorial" (ὑπόμνημα, *SEG* 30.69 line 23) to the king's military triumph. Another noteworthy example comes from a Babylonian astronomical diary from 169/168 that mentions a procession organized by the imperial citizens of Babylonia to celebrate Antiochus IV's triumphs in Egypt during the Sixth Syrian War.²⁴ Staging such festivals provided Hellenistic communities with an

19 *SEG* 35 1142. See further Robert, "Hellenica."

20 *IG* II² 680 and Nachtergaele, *Les galates*, nos. 21–25. On the Aetolians' use of the festival to promote their interests, see Champion, "Soteria."

21 On the Hellenistic culture of war, see Chaniotis, *War*.

22 Polyb. 4, 49, 3.

23 *SIG* 629, 630 and *RC* 49, 50. See further Jones, "Diodoros Paspáros."

24 Hunger and Sachs, *Diaries*, 70–71 no. 168 A 14–15. See further Gera and Horowitz, "Antiochus IV," 242–243 and Clancier, "Antiochos IV," 358–359.

important means of negotiating their relationships with monarchs. The festivals enabled communities to compete in displaying their dynastic loyalty, while also leveraging further benefactions from the monarch whose victories were being celebrated. They also served as an important arena in which cities and leagues could reflect on the possible benefits of the resurgence of monarchy in their region, often after centuries without a ruling king. In the words of John Ma, they promoted “an agreed-upon version of the recent past” that could “reinststate social harmony and *polis* cohesion after the potentially divisive adhesion of a new power.”²⁵ They therefore formed an important mechanism by which communities could make sense of the ongoing violence of the wars waged between Hellenistic kings in their region.

Beyond these functions, commemorative festivals provided an important mechanism by which Hellenistic communities could construct a sense of their own shared history and local identity. They encouraged cities and leagues to recall the military achievements of their members who participated in major military conflicts, as well as to promote their glorious pasts across a cosmopolitan festal network. Many of the commemorative festivals established in the Hellenistic period were “Panhellenic,” insofar as they were intended to be celebrated not only by the community or monarch that established them but also by other cities, leagues, and kings who were invited to participate in the festivities.²⁶ Festal letters were sent throughout the Hellenistic world to “proclaim” (ἐπαγγέλλω) the celebration, often with the expectation that those communities who agreed to send a festal “embassy” (θεωρία) would also recognize the “inviolability” (ἀσυλία) of the sanctuaries with which the festivals were associated.²⁷ Commemorative festivals were thus an important means of enhancing the prestige of local sanctuaries across the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean, while also enabling host cities to build a base of support within the broader region.

This comparative evidence offers new possibilities for assessing why 1 and 2 Maccabees show a heightened concern to ensure that the military victories of the Maccabean revolt were commemorated with annual festivals. It suggests that Jewish authors may have appropriated and transformed means of memorializing violence known from elsewhere in the Hellenistic world in order to express their own military and political agency within the Hellenistic sphere. Of course, we should be careful not to overstrain the comparisons between the Maccabean festivals and the celebrations staged by other Mediterranean

25 Ma, *Antiochos III*, 226.

26 On Panhellenic festivals in the Hellenistic period, see Parker, “New ‘Panhellenic’ Festivals.”

27 See further Rigsby, *Asylia*.

communities in the Hellenistic era. None of the festivals established in 1 and 2 Maccabees is identical with those described in the epigraphic and historiographical sources from other Hellenistic contexts. Nonetheless, it is still possible to identify a shared preoccupation with linking festal practice with war commemoration that suggests a convergence of concerns across these diverse sources.

To begin with, the festivals described in 1 and 2 Maccabees, like other Hellenistic commemorative anniversaries, foster a collective memory that justifies the violence wielded by community leaders against foreign enemies. The Maccabean festivals encourage the Jews to join as a collective in recalling how the military agency of the Maccabees was essential in protecting the community and its temple from foreign attack during the time of Seleucid hegemony in Judea. The rededication festival and Nicanor's Day focus on the critical early years of the rebellion, during which Judas Maccabaeus is construed as a particularly heroic figure, while Simon's Day champions the Maccabees' continued use of military force long after the initial revolt to maintain lasting freedom in Judea. Together, the three festivals provide sophisticated mnemonic legitimation to the Maccabean claim that their violent use of military arms to seize the temple institution and the mantle of leadership in Judea was legitimate.

Second, the Maccabean festivals also served to elevate in the collective memory military victories that were foundational to establishing a new royal dynasty in the Hellenistic sphere. The Hasmonean monarchs claimed from the original Maccabean brothers direct descent, as well as the right to continue their military legacy as kings with control over a local army.²⁸ Like other Hellenistic festivals that commemorated royal victories, the Maccabean festivals encouraged the community to reflect each year on the most impressive victories of the new local dynasty and the collective benefits that accrued from these. Indeed, the narrative focus of both books on the *communal* nature of the festal decisions, in which not only Judas and his brothers but also the Jewish assembly and broader community agreed to establish the new celebrations, underscores the importance of local elites rallying to support the Hasmoneans and to collectively reminisce about their military achievements against the Seleucids. One of the letters in 2 Maccabees even makes an explicit link between the rededication festival and the revival of the Judean monarchy. Second Maccabees 2:17 states that the Jews in Egypt should keep the festal days out of gratitude that

28 On the history of the Hasmoneans and their dynastic claims, see, e.g., Regev, *Hasmoneans* and the essays in Berlin and Kosmin, *Middle Maccabees*.

the divinity has restored “the kingship and the priesthood and the consecration” (τὸ βασιλείον καὶ τὸ ἱεράτευμα καὶ τὸν ἁγιασμόν) in Judea.

Third, 2 Macc 1:1–2:18 may also reveal an attempt by the Jerusalem authorities to adapt the Hellenistic practice of sending festal correspondence in order to heighten the prestige of the Jerusalem temple, as well as the leaders who claimed to control it. As Jan Willem van Henten and Robert Doran have insightfully observed, the letters of 2 Macc 1:1–2:18 are broadly similar to the correspondence known from other Hellenistic Mediterranean communities that invites neighbors to celebrate the divine deliverance of a given temple against foreign attack.²⁹ The letters of 2 Maccabees differ from other Hellenistic festal letters insofar as they are addressed to a Jewish community living in Egypt rather than to neighboring non-Jews. Nonetheless, they arguably reveal a common strategy of the Jerusalem authorities and other Hellenistic communities that involved using a festival marking the deliverance of the temple from foreign attack to increase its prestige abroad, and thereby to cement its claim to deference and sponsorship. The decision to attach the letters to the story of the Maccabees’ use of military force to reclaim the temple is also revealing; it suggests that the Jerusalem authorities responsible for the letters sought to encourage the Jews in Egypt not only to give thanks for the divine deliverance of the temple but also to celebrate the day on which the founders of the Hasmonean dynasty violently assumed control of its cult. By agreeing to keep the days of Hanukkah, then, the Jews in Egypt would effectively agree to recognize the legitimacy of the new temple leadership of the Hasmonean royal high priests.

The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees therefore provide valuable evidence of how Jews creatively engaged with Hellenistic festal patterns to legitimate the young Hasmonean dynasty and promote the reconfigured Jerusalem temple cult abroad. The purpose of the festivals in 1 and 2 Maccabees is not to commemorate the past with historical accuracy, even if their accounts of the Maccabean rebellion undeniably contain historical information. Rather, it is to *construct* and *promote* a particular memory of the Maccabean revolt that harnessed Hellenistic cultural patterns to articulate the Jews’ own sociopolitical aspirations, to establish new means of celebrating their successes against foreign aggressors, and to position the Hasmonean dynasty as legitimate in both its use of military force and its control over the temple. This engagement with Hellenistic festal patterns is consistent with the broader evidence that the Jews were active participants in the Hellenistic world who were skilled in adapting and transforming Hellenistic cultural influences to assert their own sociopo-

29 van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 244–250 and Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 33–35.

litical agency. While earlier scholarship stressed the alleged incompatibility of “Judaism” and “Hellenism,” and thus the relative seclusion of Judea from Hellenistic influence, there is now a growing consensus that the Jews were no more isolated from Hellenistic civilization than any other population in the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean.³⁰ They were active participants in the Hellenistic sphere who harnessed the trends of their Hellenistic environment to advance their local interests. The creativity of the Jews in reconfiguring Hellenistic cultural patterns is further confirmed by the sophisticated borrowings that we have observed in the Maccabean festivals, which reveal the Jews’ ease in adapting Hellenistic festal trends to promote a local history of military glory and affirm the power of their new dynastic leaders.

3 Conclusion

This essay has examined the sophisticated commemorative strategies that inform the festal texts of 1 and 2 Maccabees and has positioned these within their Hellenistic context. The battles narrated in 1 and 2 Maccabees represent triumphs against a Hellenistic Empire (namely, the Seleucid kingdom), but the manner in which they are commemorated in annual festivals is far from devoid of that very Hellenistic influence. The books’ focus on festivals commemorating Jewish victories is consistent with a larger cultural pattern within the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean whereby new festivals were created to champion the military achievements of cities, leagues, and kings against foreign enemies.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to verify empirically the extent to which the festal texts of 1 and 2 Maccabees may have affected the way the Maccabean rebellion and Hasmonean dynasty were, in fact, perceived by Jews or other groups in the Hellenistic period.³¹ The lack of surviving evidence means that

30 Among many other studies to make this argument, see the recent studies by Satlow, “Beyond Influence” and Gruen, *Constructs*.

31 The earliest evidence of the impact of the commemorative festivals of 1 and 2 Maccabees on festal attitudes is arguably Megillat Ta’anit, an Aramaic document that dates between 40 and 70 CE (with a medieval commentary written in Hebrew) and lists days on which it is forbidden to fast throughout the year. Eight days of Hanukkah are mentioned in line 15, while ניקנור, “Nicanor” is mentioned in line 32 as being observed on the 13th of Adar, and the 23rd of Iyyar is mentioned in line 7 as the day when “the men of the *acra* left Jerusalem.” On this document, see further Noam, “Megillat Taanit.” Beyond Megillat Ta’anit, John 10:22 refers to τὰ ἐγκαίνια, “the dedication” as an established festival in Jerusalem but makes no mention of Nicanor’s Day or Simon’s Day. Hanukkah and Nicanor’s Day are both men-

we have needed to focus primarily on the festal discourse that is elaborated in 1 and 2 Maccabees, with an awareness that the descriptions of festal practices in these books might have stood at considerable distance from how festivals were actually practiced by ancient Jews. Yet a comparative analysis of festal discourse does not require that the descriptions of festal practices in the books of the Maccabees mirrored the way festivals were precisely celebrated. It does, however, sensitize us to the strategies employed by the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees to promote particular festal practices as relevant, even mandatory, for Jews in the Hellenistic period; to their possible ideological motivations; and to the power structures they sought to legitimize. The discursive drive is clearly to promote the most impressive victories of the Maccabean rebellion in order to position the rebels as wielding military force for the collective good and as serving as the rightful defenders of the Jerusalem temple.

The books of the Maccabees therefore attest to Jewish creativity in adapting the commemorative patterns of the broader Hellenistic environment in order to champion their own violent pasts, to affirm the sociopolitical agency of their local dynastic leaders, and to elevate the status of their temple abroad. In turn, the Maccabean festivals provide a valuable case study of the many benefits that come from a comparative approach to the study of how violence is memorialized in the ancient Mediterranean. Ancient communities did not develop commemorative practices in a state of isolation. A comparative approach to the study of violence in antiquity, as this essay has hoped to show, opens exciting possibilities for understanding the new transcultural forms that were produced within the contact zone of ancient societies, as diverse groups reacted to common challenges and interacted in an interdependent process of exchange and competition.

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tioned by Josephus; for Hanukkah, see Josephus, *AJ* 12.323–327; for Nicanor's Day, see Josephus, *AJ* 12.412. Simon's Day is missing, perhaps because Josephus ends his paraphrase of 1 Maccabees at 1 Macc 13:42, before the story of Simon's capture of the *acra*.

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Memories of Violence in the Material Imagery of Carchemish and Sam'al: The Motifs of Severed Heads and the Enemy under Chariot Horses

Izak Cornelius

Abstract

Violence and memories of violence are depicted visually in material imagery (iconography). In ancient times rulers used images to impress: to show their power, to serve as a warning, to demand obedience. Such imagery is typical of great powers like that of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. This essay contributes to the study of memories of violence by examining orthostats depicting scenes of violence dating from the first millennium BCE at the cities of Carchemish (Long Wall of Sculpture) and Sam'al (southern city gate and outer citadel gate). The material culture of these cities visualized the collective memory of smaller states that became prominent after the fall of the Bronze Age empires (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Hatti) and before the dominance by the later Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires. Such images were used to communicate the king's sociopolitical power. They were purposefully placed on strategically situated walls and gates where they could be seen by the public. The political elites who ruled these cities constructed what they wanted the memory of events to be, in this way manipulating historical memory. Such scenes maintained the status quo, created a local identity, and gave the established order a visual dimension. This essay treats the motifs of severed heads of the enemy and enemies being trampled under chariot horses. These motifs are compared with material imagery and some textual sources from other parts of ancient southwestern Asia. The loss of a head conveyed total defeat and the severed head also served as a trophy. The enemy crushed under the chariot horses indicated complete annihilation of the enemy and served as a symbol of victory.

Keywords

severed heads – chariot horses – enemies – memory – violence – cities – Carchemish – Sam'al – Zincirli – victory



The history of the world is the history of violence.

Assassin's Creed



The cultural phenomenon of violence is dealt with by various studies.¹ Violence and memories of violence can also be visually depicted in the material imagery.² Laura Battini argues that the psychological effects of images should not be underestimated. Images of blood, decapitation, destruction, siege, and deportation arouse emotions and are recorded in the brain.³ Many graphic images of violence from our day and age substantiate this, especially in the mass media. The very graphic scenes of violence from the ancient records discussed in this essay are not intended to bombard the reader with gory details but to argue that ancient rulers used such images to impress and even to intimidate: to show their power, to serve as a warning, and to demand obedience.⁴

Images of war and violence in the ancient Near East are discussed by Zainab Bahrani and in a collected volume edited by Battini.⁵ While such images are familiar from the ancient empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia, this essay considers less well-known material from the Iron Age city-states of southeastern Anatolia and the northern Levant—namely, Sam'al and Carchemish—and compares it with other material from this region as well as from other parts of the ancient world.⁶

Scenes of war and violence formed part of the decorations of the palaces inside Assyrian cities, but such scenes are found on the walls and gates of

1 See, e.g., Zimmermann, *Gewalt*; Zimmermann, *Extreme Formen*; and Fagan et al., *Cambridge World History*.

2 Nadali, "Representations" emphasizes the importance not only of the content but also of the context—i.e., where the material was found. He also highlights the significance of visual media.

3 Battini, "Consented Violence," 338.

4 Yadin, *Art*, 356 describes these monuments as somewhat crude but vivid depictions of ancient warfare.

5 Bahrani, *Rituals* and Battini, *Making Pictures*.

6 Osborne, *Syro-Anatolian City States*.

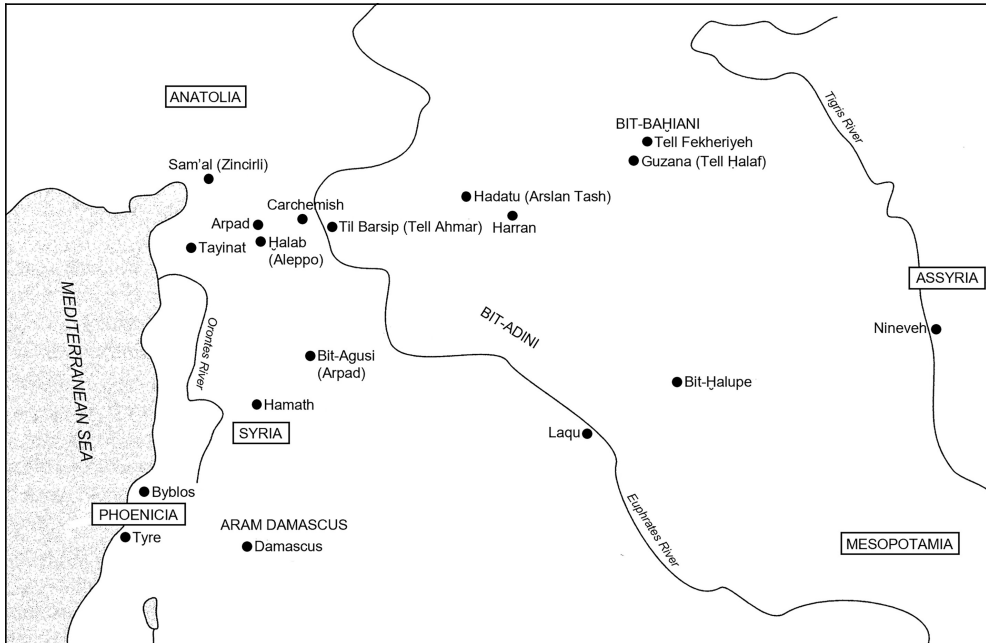


FIGURE 6.1 Map with first-millennium BCE sites discussed in the essay
DESIGNED BY THE AUTHOR AND DRAWN BY LIANI SWANEPOEL

the Levantine city-states, which were decorated with orthostat reliefs.⁷ King Katuwas of Carchemish (ca. 880 BCE) himself called attention to these features: “I adorned these gates with orthostats. They were very expensive.”⁸ Cities played a paramount role in the shaping of memory, as argued by Ömür Harmanşah.⁹ The orthostats served not simply as components of an outstanding architectural ensemble, but as personified powerful agents who bolstered the king’s sociopolitical power. Moreover, their cultural power and their social significance are not at all tied solely to the pictorial and textual narratives inscribed on them; their efficacy derives precisely from their materiality, their architectonic disposition in the form of a prestigious technology.¹⁰

Marina Pucci applied the same idea to the city of Sam’al:

Every scene seems to be “functional” to the gate structure and emphasizes from different points of view one single general concept, i.e. establishing

7 Orthostats are upright standing stones; see Harmanşah, *Cities*, 157–162 and Harmanşah, “Upright Stones.”

8 Payne, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, 68.

9 Harmanşah, *Cities*.

10 Harmanşah, “Upright Stones,” 83.

the status quo, reinforcing the identity, supporting the identification with the local dynasty, showing the established order—all elements which are essential for newborn city states to affirm their own existence and the relevance of the town wall not only as a border between town and country, but also as a border between “states,” between us and the others.¹¹

In the next two sections, the iconographic material from Carchemish and Sam'al will be examined, followed by a comparative section discussing material from the Levantine sites of Tell Tayinat, Til Barsip, and Tell Halaf as well as material from other parts of the ancient world.

1 Carchemish

Carchemish was a very important city on the west bank of the Euphrates River, with a history that goes back to the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2500 BCE); later it was the seat of Hittite rule in this region.¹² In the early first millennium BCE (Iron Age), it was one of the largest cities in the region, covering nearly 100 hectares. In the upper town was the temple of the storm god, and on the southeast side was a 36 meter long outer wall dubbed the “Long Wall of Sculpture” due to a cycle of figurative imagery found on its orthostats. The orthostats were not found in situ but scattered and fragmented, and the wall had to be reconstructed in order to interpret the function of the motifs.¹³ The fourteen orthostats are made of alternating black basalt and white (painted) limestone in order to give the effect of lighter and darker pieces; they were set on limestone blocks 1.35 meters high, with eye-catching central motifs reflecting a certain “chromatic rhythm,” as Alessandra Gilbert described them.¹⁴ The scenes represent a 13 meter long triumphal procession of soldiers and chariots¹⁵ headed by a procession of divine beings, at least as reconstructed by J. David Hawkins.¹⁶

11 Pucci, “Founding and Planning,” 70.

12 Hawkins, “Karkamiš”; Marchetti, “Karkemish”; and Marchetti, *Karkemish*. For the material imagery, see Gilbert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 19–54, 159–190; Günaydin, *Karkamiš*; Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, 29–44, 497–517, pls. 20–37; and Özyar, “Architectural Relief Sculpture,” ch. 1.

13 Aro, “Art and Architecture,” 315; Gilbert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 31–34; Günaydin, *Karkamiš*, 43–45, figs. 14–18; Hawkins, “Building Inscriptions”; Woolley, *Excavations*, 164–167, pls. 29, 31; Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, 500–503, pls. 23–25; and Özyar, “Architectural Relief Sculpture,” 76–87.

14 Gilbert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 33.

15 Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, 418 calls it a “parade.”

16 Hawkins, “Building Inscriptions,” fig. 4.

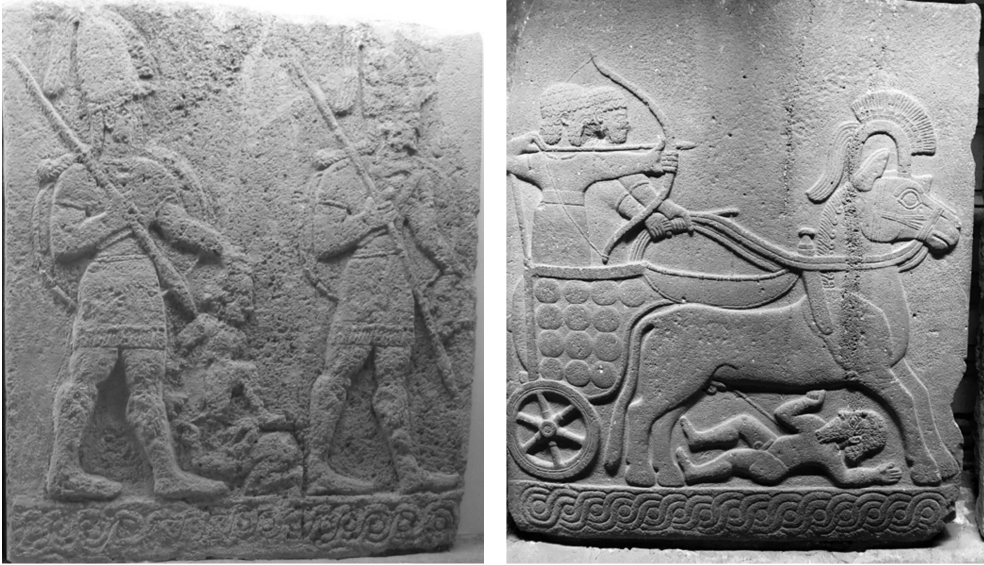


FIGURE 6.2A–B Carchemish Long Wall of Sculpture, warriors with enemies and chariot with enemy
 IMAGE: HITTITE MONUMENTS, [HTTPS://WWW.HITTITEMONUMENTS.COM](https://www.hittitemonuments.com). COURTESY OF TAYFUN BILGIN

Between the war scenes depicting soldiers and charioteers there is an inscription of King Suhis II (late tenth century BCE).¹⁷ This is the *res gestae* of the king, commemorating his victories.¹⁸ One section in the inscription might relate to the victory over the enemy shown in the imagery: “I destroyed the city ... and before him I brought a *trophy*.”¹⁹ The original material (fig. 6.2A) shows scenes of soldiers with enemies; the warriors wear short skirts and plumed helmets with shields on their backs, spears pointing downwards.²⁰ Gilibert calls the walking posture an “epitome of dignity and strength.”²¹ There are conquered enemies. The first one is kneeling in front of the warrior, and another is grabbed by the head and perhaps stabbed with the spear. The other warrior is holding the severed head of an enemy in his hand.

17 Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 164 (Carchemish 17) and Hawkins, *Corpus*, 1:88, pls. 6–7.

18 Orthmann, “Stone Sculpture,” 527.

19 Hawkins, *Corpus*, 1:88 §9–10. I.e., a “successful military engagement” as in Hawkins, *Corpus*, 1:106 §13.

20 See Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 163–164 (Carchemish 13 and 14–16, respectively).

21 Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 31 n. 72.

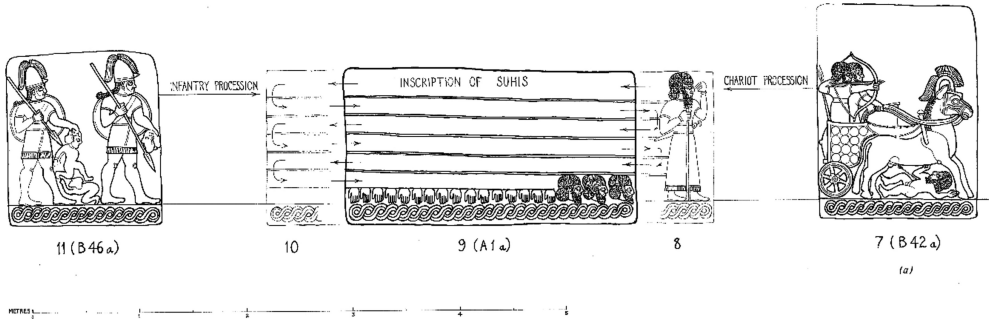


FIGURE 6.3 Carchemish Long Wall of Sculpture, inscription of King Suhis

IMAGE: HITTITE MONUMENTS, [HTTPS://WWW.HITTITEMONUMENTS.COM](https://www.hittitemonuments.com). COURTESY OF TAYFUN BILGIN

Below the hieroglyphic Luwian inscription of King Suhis (fig. 6.3) there is a decoration showing three bearded heads and sixteen hands—presumably the severed heads and hands of defeated enemies.²²

Then there are the chariot scenes, of which four depictions were found (fig. 6.2B): a driver and a warrior armed with a bow, and under the horses the defeated enemy in various positions and pierced with arrows.²³

2 Sam'al

Sam'al (Zincirli) in southern Turkey was a city of approximately 40 hectares.²⁴ The southern city gate and the outer citadel gate were decorated with orthostats showing relief scenes dated to the tenth century BCE.²⁵ The processions shown are shorter than those found at Carchemish. The remains of the southern gate show two horse riders.²⁶ One scene shows a warrior on horseback

22 Ussishkin, "On the Dating," 188. On connecting the heads and hands with the offences against the storm god in the inscription, see Hawkins, "Building Inscriptions," 111. On the severed heads, see also Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 110, 112.

23 Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 164–165 (Carchemish 18–22) and Orthmann, "Stone Sculpture," fig. 289.

24 For a city plan, see Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, pl. 2.

25 See von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen*. For the material imagery, see Cornelius, "Material Imagery"; Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 55–96, 191–221; Herrmann, "Appropriation and Emulation"; Mazzoni, "Gate"; and Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, 59–75, 537–550, pls. 55–66.

26 von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen* II, fig. 24, pl. x; Pucci, "Founding and Planning," fig. 2.; and esp.



FIGURE 6.4
Sam'al Southern Gate, horse rider
with enemy's head
IMAGE: VON LUSCHAN, *AUS-
GRABUNGEN* III, PL. XXXIVC

armed with a sword and very small bow, holding the severed head of an enemy in his left hand (fig. 6.4). The citadel gate with its orthostats dates to a later period. A simplified plan shows that the motifs reflect the divine and human worlds: on the right a procession of deities, on the left hunting and war scenes.²⁷ One scene is that of a chariot (fig. 6.5); the chariot has six-spoked wheels and is decorated with a lion's head at the back and a griffon head on the chariot pole, with a javelin at the back of the chariot. There is a driver with a whip and an archer, and under the horses is a naked defeated enemy warrior with arrows sticking in his body.

von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen* III, fig. 96, pl. xxxv and Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, fig. 25, 192 (Zincirli 5).

27 Mazzoni, "Gate"; von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen* II, pl. XIII; von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen* III, 209; and Pucci, "Founding and Planning," figs. 3–5 and esp. von Luschan, *Ausgrabungen* III, fig. 102, pl. xxxix and Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, figs. 27–28, 30, 33 (plans), with 194–195 (Zincirli 12–13).



FIGURE 6.5 Sam'al Citadel Gate, chariot with enemy under horses

IMAGE: HITTITE MONUMENTS, [HTTPS://WWW.HITTITEMONUMENTS.COM](https://www.hittitemonuments.com).
COURTESY OF TAYFUN BILGIN

So far, this study has focused on material from Carchemish and Sam'al showing images of the enemy's severed head and the enemy under a chariot. These two topics will now be compared with material from other sites.²⁸

3 Comparative Material

3.1 *The Severed Head of the Enemy*

Orthostats from Carchemish show “macabre parades of dead and dying enemies” and a soldier with the head of an enemy (fig. 6.2A).²⁹ At Sam'al there is a rider holding an enemy's head (fig. 6.4). Cutting off the head of an enemy is also well-known from other sources, such as the biblical story of David and Goliath (1Sam 17:51–54), where David cut off Goliath's head and later took it to Jerusalem. The Philistines also cut off Saul's head (1Sam 31:9–10).³⁰ Rita

28 See Orthmann, *Untersuchungen* on chariot scenes (398–402) and processions of warriors (412–418).

29 Gilibert, “Religion and Propaganda,” 148 n. 62.

30 See the essay by Stephen Germany in this volume. On this motif in the Hebrew Bible,



FIGURE 6.6 Inlay from Ebla, soldier holding severed heads

IMAGE: *IPIAO*, FIG. 245. COURTESY OF SILVIA SCHROER

Dolce addresses in detail the motif of decapitation in the ancient Near East; she argues that cutting off someone's head was a distinctive act, not comparable to other types of mutilation, and therefore charged with a special symbolic and communicative significance.³¹ "Losing your head" conveyed total defeat. The severed head was a "coveted object," a trophy. Dolce shows that the motif of beheading reaches far back in the history of Western Asia, going back as far as prehistoric times at Çatalhöyük, where paintings of headless corpses depict not ancestors but defeated enemies.³²

Limestone inlays from Ebla in northern Syria show soldiers holding large heads by the hair, part of some victory parade (fig. 6.6). Staying closer to Carchemish and Sam'al in time and space, there is first a scene from the gateway of Tell Tayinat (eighth century BCE) depicting soldiers holding the heads of enemies by the hair, as at Ebla. But the heads are different, being smaller than those of the soldiers, and the bodies to which the heads belonged are still shown (fig. 6.7). There are fragments of enemy heads from Til Barsip, also held by the hair.³³ The depiction of heads alone at Carchemish (fig. 6.3) can be compared

see further 2 Sam 4:7, 12 and 16:9. On other forms of the mutilation of enemy bodies, see LeMon, "Cutting"; Minunno, "La mutilation"; and Trimm, *Fighting*, 346–367.

31 Dolce, "Head"; Dolce, "Losing One's Head: Some Hints"; Dolce, "Losing One's Head" in *the Ancient Near East*; and Nadali, "Representations," 638–641.

32 Dolce, "Losing One's Head: Some Hints," 46–47, fig. 5.3.

33 Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, pls. 54b–c.

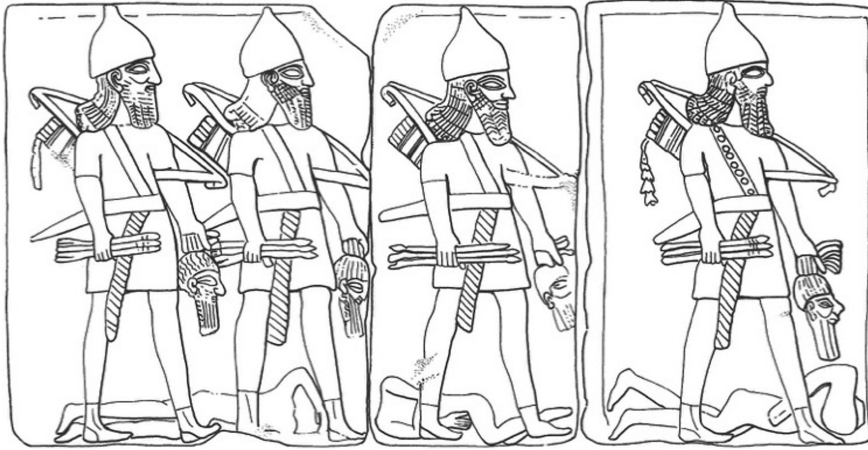


FIGURE 6.7 Tell Tayinat Gateway, soldiers holding severed heads

IMAGE: GERLACH, "TRADITION-ADAPTATION-INNOVATION," 244, PL. 5.
COURTESY OF IRIS GERLACH

with the stela of Dadusha of Eshnunna, which shows battle scenes on the upper registers and heads attacked by birds on the lower register.³⁴ This is again a motif that goes far back in history, as on the famous Stela of the Vultures from the Early Dynastic III period in Mesopotamia.³⁵

Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs contain many scenes showing decapitation of the enemy and severed heads.³⁶ Severed heads are piled up next to other booty or held high as trophies of victory. The Balawat Gates depict soldiers chopping off hands and feet, and heads are displayed on the city on the right, as described in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II: "I cut off some their arms [and] hands; I made one pile of the living [and] one of heads. I hung their heads on trees around the city."³⁷ Most famous and detailed in its depiction and descriptions is what Dominik Bonatz calls "Ashurbanipal's headhunt."³⁸ A series of reliefs (with inscriptions) depict the defeat of the Elamite king Teumman at the river Uлай and how he literally lost his head. The head is then taken

34 Dolce, "Losing One's Head: Some Hints," fig. 5.11.

35 Dolce, "Losing One's Head: Some Hints," fig. 5.10.

36 Dolce, "Losing One's Head: Some Hints," figs. 5.4 and 5.7 and Radner, "High Visibility Punishment," fig. 3.

37 Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, 2:201.

38 Bonatz, "Ashurbanipal's Headhunt." See also the works by Rita Dolce in the bibliography, as well as Miller, "Getting"; SooHoo, "Violence"; Nadali, "Battle"; and Goldstein and Weisert, "Battle."

away in a chariot to Assyria and hung on a tree as a trophy while Ashurbanipal is at a banquet.³⁹

Two examples from Egypt might suffice. The Narmer palette (ca. 3000 BCE) shows defeated enemies with severed heads between their legs.⁴⁰ New Kingdom reliefs show the counting of the severed hands of the enemy, or, as the text informs us: “total hands: 12,660.”⁴¹

3.2 *The Enemy under the Chariot Horses*

The second motif to be discussed is the depiction of the enemy under the chariot horses, which occurs at Carchemish and Zincirli (figs. 6.2B and 6.5) but also at other sites.⁴² From Tayinat, which is south of Zincirli, there is a huge figure under the chariot and horse, and it is not naked, very much in contrast to the other figures beneath the horses pulling chariots. He is shown lying on his back with his arms in the air.⁴³

Further to the east, a cruder relief (ca. tenth century BCE) from the small orthostats of Tell Halaf (eastern wall of tower IV) shows a chariot scene with an enemy lying face down under the horse.⁴⁴ The chariot has six-spoked wheels, and there is a driver and a warrior who is not firing an arrow, but holding some weapon over his shoulder. Going further back in the history in the Levant, there is a seal impression of Ishqi-Mari from Mari which shows a seated ruler and people fighting, and in the lower right part there is a wagon (not yet a chariot in the true sense of the word) with two pairs of wheels and an enemy under the belly of the horse. There is even a severed head on the wagon.⁴⁵

Ivories from Late Bronze Age Megiddo show the enemy under the horses of the charging chariots (fig. 6.8). Such scenes go back to Egyptian scarabs like one from Tell el-Far‘ah [South] and again going back to seal amulets in Egypt from the time of Thutmose I (ca. 1490 BCE). The pharaoh is shown in a chariot running down the enemy.⁴⁶ The right side of the exterior of a chariot of Thut-

39 See Goldstein and Weissert, “Battle,” figs. 268, 271 and Nadali, “Battle,” fig. 255.

40 *IPLAO*, fig. 134.

41 Muhlestein, “Violence,” fig. 10. For decapitation, see fig. 3 and Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records*, 13–14.

42 Some of the material will be published in Cornelius and van Dijk-Coombes, “Over My Dead Body,” including more figures of such scenes.

43 Orthmann, *Untersuchungen*, pl. 52F.

44 Moortgat, *Tell Halaf*, pl. 41B.

45 Beyer, “Some Observations,” fig. 1.4.

46 Keel, “Kanaanäische Sühneriten,” fig. 12 and Keel, *Corpus*, fig. 712.

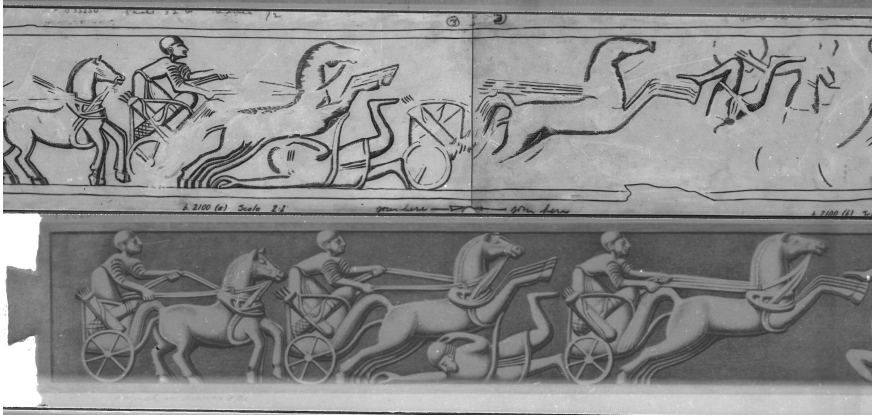


FIGURE 6.8 Chariots with enemies

IMAGE: LOUD, *MEGIDDO IVORIES*, PL. 32. COURTESY OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

mose IV shows the pharaoh as a much larger figure riding over and smashing the chariots of the Asiatic enemy on the battlefield. Arrows pierce both the Asiatic enemy soldiers and the horses.⁴⁷

The amount of comparative material from Western Asia is large, and only a few examples will be mentioned here. On the so-called Standard of Ur, the lower register of the war panel shows four wagons, each with four wheels. Beneath the equids are naked enemy soldiers lying prone on the ground.⁴⁸ The nudity of the enemies signifies that they are “degraded, deprived of identity, and impotent.”⁴⁹ The bleeding wounds are unique in the depictions of chariots driving over enemies. One unclear scene from the Old Hittite period has the enemy lying under a chariot.⁵⁰

The motif of a chariot driving over a defeated enemy in scenes of war became popular during the Neo-Assyrian Empire (935–609 BCE) as depicted on palace reliefs. One scene from the bronze bands of the Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III shows an enemy under the horses that are pulling a chariot. To the right, a second one is falling, while a third is being knocked over by the horses.⁵¹ A relief of Ashurnasirpal II from Nimrud-Kalhu shows a prostrate enemy with

47 Keel, “Kanaanäische Sühneriten,” fig. 13.

48 Hansen, “Art,” 44–47.

49 Hansen, “Art,” 46.

50 Schachner, “Gedanken,” fig. 1.

51 Schachner, *Bilder*, pl. 13.

two arrows driven quite deep into his body in a way not yet encountered.⁵² A text by King Sennacherib describes such actions as follows: “The wheels of my war chariot, which lays criminals and villains low, were bathed in blood and gore. I filled the plain with the corpses of their warriors like grass.”⁵³

4 Conclusions

These images of the severed heads of the enemy and the enemy lying under the horses clearly emphasize that the enemy has been totally defeated. In all these instances, the body of the enemy plays a key role, as it does in collective memories of violence.⁵⁴ The images served as symbols of victory, the severed heads as trophies, all indicating the power of the king.

These images were part of a common iconography of violence and power throughout the ancient Near East. In this regard, the earliest scenes of a king defeating the enemy goes back to the Egyptian Narmer palette (ca. 3000 BCE), which already shows the topos of the severed heads of the enemy. The kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (ca. 800–600 BCE) used images of violence in their palace reliefs with the motifs of severed heads and enemy under the chariot horses to a scale unsurpassed so far. The relationship and reciprocal influence between the North Syrian material imagery and what is found in the Neo-Assyrian palaces is a complex issue.⁵⁵ As far as the intended audience of scenes of assumed brutality in the Neo-Assyrian material is concerned, Bagg cautions us to look at the context where the reliefs and other monuments were placed and to whom the scenes were visible.⁵⁶

Although the imagery was universal, such images at Carchemish and Sam'al were purposefully placed on walls and gates to be observed by the public when they entered the city and as they moved around in open and public spaces. Such imagery must have had a psychological impact on the observers.⁵⁷ In the case of Carchemish, the scenes were on the Long Wall of Sculpture as part of a victory procession or parade, and the two cases at Sam'al come from the main gate and the upper citadel gate.⁵⁸

52 Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion*, pl. 2B.

53 Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions*, 183.

54 Bahrani, *Rituals* (with the subtitle *The Body and Violence*) and Di Paolo, “War Remembrance,” 153–155.

55 See the views discussed by Aro, “The Origins of the Artistic Interactions.”

56 Bagg, “Where is the Public?”

57 Pace Battini, “Consented Violence,” 338.

58 Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art*, 108.

Kings of this region built cities and used reliefs as “narrative pictures,” as visual propaganda to influence observers as part of a collective memory.⁵⁹ This collective memory shaped these societies but also played a role with regard to the future.⁶⁰ When later generations walked through the gates of the cities or along the walls and observed the scenes on the orthostat reliefs of the kings of the past, they observed the visual message of the great victorious deeds of the early kings. In this way, the scenes of violence discussed above became part of a collective memory. The political elites constructed what they wanted the memory of events to be through acts of remembrance and erasure, thereby manipulating historical memory.⁶¹ Or, as a text by King Katuwas of Carchemish puts it:

I wasted the lands, and I brought the *trophies* inside, and I came up *glorified* from those lands.⁶²

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59 Nadali, “Power of Narrative Pictures.”

60 Di Paolo, “War Remembrance”; Gilibert, “Religion and Propaganda”; Günaydin, *Karkamiš*; Nadali, “Monuments”; and Nadali, *Envisioning*. Rulers also reused monuments as a manipulation of memory; on this, see Herrmann, “Reuse” and Harmanşah, *Cities*.

61 For this reason, the Mesopotamians did not memorialize their own war dead or admit military defeat; see van de Mieroop, “Review,” 322.

62 Payne, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, 72 (emphasis mine).

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Israel's Violence in Egypt's Cultural Memory

Antonio Loprieno

Abstract

While the biblical portrayal of Egypt as the violent oppressor of the Israelite people is well known, Egyptian depictions of their northern neighbors have received less scholarly attention. Yet several iconographic and literary sources reflect on the roles of the Israelites and the Hebrews from an Egyptian perspective. This study analyzes Egyptian representations of encounters between Egyptians, Hyksos, and Israelites/Hebrews from the Late Bronze Age to the Ptolemaic period with a focus on violent conflict. By tracing distinctive shifts in the Egyptian evaluation(s), it demonstrates that the formation of ancient Egyptian history always involved processes of rewriting and reconstructing older memories regarding violent conflicts with Egypt's neighbors.

Keywords

Israel – Egypt – Hyksos – Bible – Manetho

In this essay, my aim is to shed light on the negotiable dialectic of political violence in ancient Egypt by exploring the complex representation of Israel and its violence in Egyptian iconography, epigraphy, and literary sources. Key to understanding the complex memorialization of Israelite violence in ancient Egypt is the recognition of the interchangeability of the roles of aggressor and victim in collective memory, especially with the passage of time. When we examine written material sources that are more or less contemporary with the time period being described, it can be easier to distinguish between the subjects and objects of violence in a given historical context. But when we turn to the cultural traces of violent events that have been passed down to future generations, we see much greater flexibility in how the categories of “victim” and “aggressor” can be adjusted to suit contemporary agendas.¹ In what follows, I will explore this flex-

¹ For an inspiring introduction to this issue in more recent works of historiography, see Banner, *Ever-Changing Past*.

ibility by considering the representation of acts of collective violence between ancient Egypt and Israel in the images of the past produced by Egyptian cultural agents in diverse time periods.

Among ancient civilizations, Egypt stands out as a culture with a keen sense of historical depth. References to past people or events abound in both visual and written records and, in many aspects of life, Egyptians looked to history as a source of legitimacy.² Yet, in spite of its high degree of literacy, Bronze Age Egypt did not engage in genuine historiography but privileged timeless paradigms of political function or intellectual prestige over contextualized, concrete examples of events or achievements.³ Egyptian annals, king lists, or genealogies consist of chronologically organized but semantically repetitive sequences of names, records of the height of the Nile flood, and reports of remarkable deeds.⁴ Every history is inherently ideological, but history and ideology are particularly coextensive in Bronze Age Egypt.

During the Iron Age, the picture becomes more complex. Throughout the first millennium BCE, we encounter narratives of a mythical past read against the background of a difficult present and of more intense intercultural exchange with other civilizations of the Mediterranean world, in particular with Israel and Greece. We follow the gradual emergence of a *historia* in Herodotus's sense of an investigation based on observation, opinion, or hearsay.⁵ It is in this later period of Egyptian history, then, that we will find the most relevant information regarding Egyptian cultural memory of ancient Israel's violence.

For the following discussion, it is helpful to introduce a terminological distinction concerning historical sources. Depending on their function and on the features of their later use or discovery, historical sources can be viewed as "traces," "messages," or "memories."⁶ "Traces" (German *Spuren*) such as fragments of a scene, economic texts, or objects of daily life are known to us through modern archaeological investigation. There are no traces, in this sense, of Israel's violence in Egyptian history. From a historical point of view, it seems clear that ancient Israel—as a people, and as a political entity—was a small power with no leverage to seriously attack and endanger Egypt. As we will see, however, there are messages of violent aggression by Hebrews or Israelites in Egyptian texts that create memories of Israel's violence. This essay will explore

2 Baines and Yoffee, "Order," 212–225.

3 On Egyptian historiography, see Eyre, "Is Egyptian Historical Literature 'Historical' or 'Literary'?" and Assmann, *Ägypten*, 15–38.

4 Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 17–44.

5 Loprieno, "Views," 139–153.

6 Assmann, *Ägypten*, 15–38 and Veit et al., *Spuren und Botschaften*, 11–16.

those messages across diverse historical time periods and written and visual media. We will begin, first, by exploring the scant references to Hebrews in Egyptian sources that date to the Bronze Age, which provide traces of the earliest interactions between Egyptians and Hebrews from which we can gain a more or less reliable historical framing for our enquiry. We will then explore the complex transmission—even creation—of memories about Bronze- and Iron-Age Israelite violence against Egypt in the later writings of Manetho, writings that represent the Israelite threat in a complex way, one that departs significantly from historical reality. The conclusion will outline the implications of comparing these diverse sources for how we understand the memorialization of collective violence in Egyptian cultural memory.

1 “Apiru,” “Hebrews,” and “Israel” in Bronze Age Egyptian Sources

The representation of Hebrews in the Egyptian record arguably begins in the Late Bronze Age with a scene depicted in the tomb of Puyemre I (ca. 1450 BCE, see Fig. 7.1). Here we find one of the first Egyptian occurrences of a Semitic word consisting of the three consonants *ʿpr*, the root of the word עברי, “Hebrew.” It forms part of a larger image that was meant to remind the tomb owner of his own idealized lifetime, in which Hebrews appear together with other Egyptians as regular field workers performing agricultural duties.⁷ The working Hebrews in this scene are a trace, a fragmentary remnant of the past within a larger context, in this case a tomb decoration. This representation dates to the first part of the Late Bronze Age, long before Hebrews or Israelites as we know them from biblical sources appeared on the scene of history. For later readers familiar with the biblical tradition, however, it is difficult not to think of Exod 1:13–14: “The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them” (NRSV).

The rather neutral image of Hebrew laborers that we observe in the tomb of Puyemre I relief contrasts with other images from the Bronze Age, in which Hebrew workers are depicted more negatively. If we are willing to recognize an etymological connection between Egyptian *ʿpr* (which corresponds to Akkadian *ḥabiru*) and Hebrew עברי, then we quickly see that only a few generations after the time of the Egyptian noble Puyemre (fifteenth century BCE), the (same?) *ʿpr.w* appear not as peaceful gardeners but as dangerous outlaws,

⁷ Säve-Söderbergh, “*ʿpr.w*.”



FIGURE 7.1 Hebrews straining out wine. Tomb of Puyemre I (TT 39, around 1450 BCE)
IMAGE: DAVIES, HALL, PL. XII

both in the Amarna correspondence and in Ramesside administrative and literary texts.⁸ The Hebrews are now a seminomadic population operating at the social and geographical periphery of the Late Bronze Age palatial cultures of Egypt and of the Levant.⁹ This difference arguably speaks to the importance of imperial control in the representation of Hebrews and their violent potential in Bronze Age sources: those Hebrews (and Levantine subjects more broadly) who were unwilling to submit themselves to Egyptian hegemony were considered a nuisance or political threat, while those who were integrated into Egyptian imperial structures were effectively neutralized and therefore capable of making a productive contribution.

The first and only written occurrence of the word “Israel” in Egyptian texts is a prototypical example of a message displaying Egypt’s conception of its peace-keeping role in repelling foreign violence (the relevant Egyptian verb is *shṭp*, “to make peaceful”). It is the famous Merenptah Stela, a royal inscription from around 1200 BCE that is about a military victory over the Libyans but that also refers to a people named “Israel”:

The princes are prostrate, saying, “Peace,” not one is raising his head among the Nine Bows. Now that Libya has come to ruin, Hatti is pacified, Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe: Ashkelon has been overcome, Gezer has been captured, Yano‘am has been deleted. Israel is laid waste and his seed is not; Hurru has turned into a widow because of Egypt.¹⁰

8 Moran, *Amarna Letters*, e.g., EA 271 and EA 299. Laborers referred to as *ḫr:w* are mentioned in the Ramesside letter pLeiden I 349 (Wente, *Letters*, 123, no. 145), and a literary reference is found in pHarris 500, a fictional tale on the Egyptian conquest of the city of Jaffa (Burke and Lords, “Egyptians,” 2–30).

9 Moore and Kelle, *Biblical History*, 113–144.

10 Stager, “Forging,” 90–129.

Because this is a very formalized (and thus to a certain extent fictional) text genre, we should refrain from attributing too much weight to details that may turn out to be incidental. But it is intriguing that the hieroglyphic text distinguishes here between a nomadic people such as Israel, localities such as Ashkelon, and populated regions such as Libya. Many scholars have therefore read this text against the background of the Israelite tradition about an exodus from Egypt, which involves a similar geopolitical context.¹¹ Merenptah's stela argues for a reversed exodus; it is not a narrative of Israel's liberation from Egypt's violence but one of Egypt's defense from violent external threats. The Egyptian military action to secure its control over the Levant is cast in the stela as legitimate defense against Egypt's enemies.

Although Bronze Age Egyptian sources do not explicitly depict Israel or the Hebrews as actively attacking Egypt, Israel came to be perceived as a prototypical source of violence against Egyptian statehood, religion, and customs over the course of the first millennium BCE. We shall now see why and how. In Bronze Age Egypt, the most explicit form of cultural memory is what I would call a "classicist" reference to paradigmatic episodes or individuals of the past.¹² The classical past is the model to be emulated by the less prestigious present. But things changed dramatically after the catastrophe of 1177 BCE. This date has been chosen somewhat arbitrarily to mark the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age; this single year encapsulates a period during which climatic changes became particularly virulent, the Hittite capital Hattusa was abandoned by its inhabitants, the citadel of Troy fell at the hands of the Achaeans, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, and Ramesses III was defeated by the Sea Peoples (in spite of his claim to the contrary).¹³ For later generations and throughout the first millennium BCE, the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age became a "floating gap," a perceived break in the continuity of past and present.¹⁴ During the ensuing period, Mediterranean cultures, including Egypt, show a quantitative and qualitative decline of the abundant written documentation that had characterized the Late Bronze Age. During this period of reduced literacy, traditional views of history founded on

11 For an overview, see Levy, Schneider, and Propp, *Israel's Exodus*, 3–77.

12 Loprieno, "Authorship," 27–45. On cultural memory, see further Assmann, *Moses*, 1–22.

13 Drews, *End*, 3–90 and Cline, *1177 B.C.*, 1–12.

14 The term "floating gap" was originally introduced by the anthropologist Jan Vansina to refer to the time span in oral cultures (about three generations from the present) in which narratives of the past are reinterpreted in order to adapt them to contemporary concerns, creating a radical break in the transmission of cultural texts and prompting a mythical reconstruction of the past and an archaizing (rather than classical) approach to history; see Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, 23–24 and Niethammer, "Diesseits," 25–50.

the archival continuity between past and present were enriched by an oral tradition about figures or episodes of Bronze Age history.¹⁵ It is this complex mix of continuity and change that will form the focus in the case study to which we will now turn—namely, the complex representation of Israel and Israelite violence against the Egyptians in the work of Manetho.

2 Memories of Bronze Age Violence in Manetho

Manetho of Sebennytos was a third-century BCE Egyptian priest who wrote a history of Egypt in Greek, the *Aigyptiaká*, which still constitutes a basis for modern Egyptological reconstruction, such as in its division of Egyptian history into thirty dynasties. Manetho is an important witness to the Egyptian understanding of history under Ptolemaic rule; he grew up in the cultural milieu that prevailed during the rule of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (281–46 BCE) with its interest in the national histories of the different ethnic groups that formed the multicultural society of Ptolemaic Egypt.¹⁶ A counterpart to Manetho's work on the Jewish side is the Septuagint, which arguably functioned as a national history of the Jews.¹⁷

Manetho is known to us not directly but through the later reception of two layers of readers: the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (first century CE) in his apologetic treatise *Contra Apionem* and later Church historians such as Julius Africanus or Eusebius.¹⁸ In general, Josephus chooses to comment on the portions of Manetho's text that in his opinion are especially important for Jewish

15 Very much in the same vein, the memory of Middle and Late Bronze Age events was preserved in biblical narratives during the first part of the first millennium and later canonized; see Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 1–23, 48–63, 165–194. Peoples and names of the Mycenaean age are also echoed down to Homer's epic accounts in the eighth century. For the biblical narratives; see Latacz, *Troy and Homer*, 137–142. The Iron Age is also a period of cross-fertilization among different Mediterranean traditions beyond those of Israel and Egypt. In Herodotus's Egyptian *lógos*, the Trojan War is embedded into the reign of an Egyptian king, Proteus, who keeps Helena hostage in Memphis before surrendering her to Menelaos on his way back to Sparta (*Hist.* II, 112–120), the Luwian hieroglyphs decorating the statue of a Hittite god at Karabel are interpreted as an Egyptian inscription glorifying Sesostriis after his successful campaign against the Scythians (*Hist.* II, 102–103), and the practice of circumcision among some Syro-Palestinians is seen as borrowed from Egypt but on its way out among the more progressive of them (*Hist.* II, 104).

16 Ray, "Jews," 273.

17 Rajak, *Translation and Survival*, 125–175.

18 Barclay, *Against Apion*; Labow, *Einleitung*; and Wallraff, *Julius Africanus*.

national history and identity, whereas Christian commentators are more interested in matching Manetho's text with the biblical account and in defending the continuity of a history of salvation that began with the book of Genesis. All these factors have reduced the attractiveness of Manetho's writings for modern students of Egyptian history but not his relevance for our understanding of Egypt's cultural memory.

Three of Manetho's narratives transmitted by Josephus in *Contra Apionem* are relevant here.¹⁹ The first, fragment 42, refers to the time immediately following the Middle Kingdom—in absolute chronology, the seventeenth century BCE.²⁰ During the reign of a certain Pharaoh Tutimaios, for unknown reasons a blast of God smote Egypt. Invaders of obscure origin invaded the country, burning cities, destroying temples, and enslaving people. They appointed as their king Salitis, who established himself in Memphis and administered the whole of Egypt. He placed his army in the region of the eastern Delta because he feared an attack by the Assyrians, and he founded a city by the name of Avaris. He fortified it and established an army of 240,000 soldiers to protect its borders. After a reign of nineteen years, Salitis died and was followed by another king whose name was Bnon and who reigned for forty-four years. After him came Apachnan, who reigned for thirty-six years and seven months, followed by Apophis for sixty-one years and Iannas for fifty years and one month. Finally came Assis, who reigned forty-nine years and two months. These were the first six kings of this invading group, called "Hyksos," which means "shepherd kings" because, in the sacred language (i.e., the one written in hieroglyphs), *hyk* means "king," and in the vernacular language (i.e., the one written in Demotic), *sos* means "shepherd."²¹

This passage provides several details on Egyptian images of the past in antiquity. In the name of the first Hyksos king, Salitis, we can probably recognize the trace of a double historical memory: on the one hand a factual Hyksos name, perhaps that of king *šrk*; on the other hand, the Semitic title *šalīṭ*, "the powerful one," a form of royal titulary that is well documented in late Middle Kingdom Egypt.²² I have argued elsewhere that a similar phenomenon of cross-cultural

19 Dillery, "First Egyptian Narrative History," 93–116; Gmirkin, *Berosus and Genesis*, 171–214; and Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berosus and Manetho*, 115–120.

20 Waddell, *Manetho*, 77–85.

21 Josephus adds that in a different version of Manetho's text the expression *hyk* does not mean "king," but that *hyk* or *hak* indicates the concept of "prisoner." The term would therefore mean "captive shepherds," and Josephus seems to prefer this interpretation of the compound.

22 On the name *šrk*, see Ryholt, *Political Situation*, 402. For the term *šalīṭ*, see the reference to king *mr-mšr* in the Royal Canon of Turin.

translation may also be at the roots of the mysterious *Nḥsj*, “Nubian,” the first king of the Fourteenth Dynasty according to the Turin Canon, who established the cult of the god Seth as a syncretistic version of the Canaanite Ba‘al.²³

Manetho’s account thus documents the cultural memory of the Semitic presence in Egypt during the Middle Bronze Age, already abundantly known on the basis of textual and iconographic evidence and supported by the extraordinary discovery of a Semitic alphabetic script dated to the Middle Bronze Age in the Theban desert region of Wadi el-Hôl.²⁴ Originally settlers in the eastern Nile Delta, the Hyksos gradually established in their capital Avaris (Tell el-Dab‘a) a cultural and military presence that eventually led to their control over Lower and Middle Egypt during the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Dynasties.²⁵ Hyksos kings are documented in literary king lists such as the Turin Canon but not in the more ideological, monumental king lists of Abydos or Karnak. The Hyksos developed technological innovations in weaponry and maintained specificities in their funerary customs but adopted the Egyptian high culture in terms of visual representation and style.²⁶

Hyksos anthroponyms are reminiscent of the patriarchal narratives of the Bible, starting with the “ruler of foreign country *jb-šj*” (probably *‘abi-šar*, “my father is a prince”) from the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan around 1900 BCE (fig. 7.2) and continuing with the name of the Fourteenth–Sixteenth Dynasty king *j‘qb-hr* on a royal scarab from the British Museum, in which the name “Jacob” appears.²⁷ While there are no historical traces of a direct continuity between the Middle Bronze Hyksos and the Late Bronze *‘pr:w*, there can be no doubt that these two population groups belonged to the same sociocultural ecosystem. Around 1400 BCE, about 150 years after the end of Hyksos political control and when the term “Hebrews” first appeared in Egyptian visual and written documents, a high-profile Egyptian vizier with the Semitic name *‘pr-jj*

23 Loprieno, “Nḥsj,” 211–217. The foundation of this Canaanite cult was remembered down to Ramesside times, as displayed in the “400 years stela,” called this by Egyptologists because it claims to have been written four hundred years after this religious reform. This chronological setting echoes Gen 15:13: “Then he said to Abram, ‘Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years.’”

24 Darnell, “Wadi el Hol,” 1–19. For the textual and iconographic evidence, see Luft, “Asiatics,” 291–297 and Kamrin, *Cosmos*, 93–96.

25 Bietak, “Many Ethnicities,” 73–92.

26 Prell, “Burial Customs,” 125–147. Their cultural syncretism is evident in the so-called Joseph’s statue, a nickname for a larger-than-life, fragmentary representation of a seated individual bearing a voluminous mushroom-shaped coiffure found at Avaris.

27 Ryholt, “Date,” 109–126.



FIGURE 7.2 “The Chieftain of Foreign Countries Abisar” leading a caravan of Asiatic immigrants

BENI HASAN, TOMB OF KHNUMHOTEP II (1900 BCE)

served under Amenhotep III as well as Akhenaten, both of whom will play a role in what follows.²⁸

Interestingly, Manetho (through Josephus) associates the Hyksos explicitly with the ancestors of the Jews. In a second important fragment, Manetho writes that the “shepherd kings” and their successors controlled Egypt for 511 years, after which the kings of Thebes and of the rest of Egypt rebelled against them

²⁸ Zivie, *Découverte*, 66–68.

and eventually succeeded in driving them out of Egypt under King Mispthagmuthosis, who confined them to the city of Avaris and its surroundings. Mispthagmuthosis's son Thummosis tried to conquer the city with an army of 480,000 soldiers but failed and asked the Shepherds to leave Egypt and go wherever they wanted. Then 240,000 people left Egypt, dwelled for a while in the desert, and then entered Syria. There, representing a constant threat to Assyrian power, they built in the country known as Judaea a city large enough to host all these people, and they called it "Jerusalem."²⁹ Manetho thus saw a historical connection between the Hyksos of his own tradition and the patriarchal narratives of postexilic Judaism that recounted Israel's origins and were eventually canonized in the Bible.

Manetho's third passage of interest for us concerns the end of the Bronze Age.³⁰ King Amenophis, who reigned 518 years after the expulsion of the Hyksos, developed a desire to see the gods. In order to reach this goal, his counselor Amenophis, son of Paapis, a semidivine figure, advises him to rid the country of lepers and other polluted individuals. The king followed the advice, gathered the 80,000 Egyptian people affected by a polluting disease, among whom there were also some priests, and segregated them to work in the eastern mines. The wise Amenophis, fearing divine wrath for the inhumane treatment to which the outcasts were subjected, wrote a prophecy according to which the lepers would eventually ally themselves with some enemies of Egypt and control the country for thirteen years, and he committed suicide. After many years of severe constraints, the lepers asked the king to be allowed to move to the city of Avaris, the traditional center of worship of the god Typhon, which had been uninhabited since the Hyksos left it. In Avaris, the lepers prepared the rebellion. They appointed as their leader a priest of the sun god by the name of Osarseph, who introduced a series of purity laws such as the obligation to sacrifice and eat the meat of animals that were sacred or taboo in Egypt, or the prohibition against engaging in sexual intercourse outside the confederation, and sent an embassy to the Hyksos in Jerusalem asking them to become their allies. When 200,000 Hyksos came to Avaris, king Amenophis remembered his namesake's prophecy, hid all the sacred animals and divine images, sent his son Sethos to a safe place, and organized an army of 300,000 soldiers to march against

29 Waddell, *Manetho*, 85–91. The Asiatics' negative reputation was a topos of Egyptian entertainment literature from the Late Bronze Age (as in the "Fight between the Hyksos king Apopi and the Theban ruler Seqenenre" or in Thutmose III's "Taking of Joppa"; see Manassa, *Imagining*, 30–101) to Hellenistic times (as in the "Tale of Setne Khamwase"; see Agut-Labordère and Chauveau, *Héros*, 17–65).

30 Waddell, *Manetho*, 119–131.

Avaris. Before attacking the city, however, he became fearful of the gods and retreated to Memphis. From there, accompanied by the sacred bull, Apis, he fled to Ethiopia with his army. The Ethiopian king had become an Egyptian vassal in recognition of a favor he had received from Egypt and gladly hosted the Egyptian king and his army for the prophesied period, placing an army at the border to protect them. These were the most terrible thirteen years in the entire history of Egypt, for the lepers proved much more savage than even the Hyksos had been. They burned towns and villages, ransacked temples, and destroyed divine images, roasting sacred animals and obliging priests to go around naked. During this period, Osarseph, whose name derived from the god Osiris, worshipped in Heliopolis and changed his name to Moses.

Egyptologists are unanimous in recognizing in this story the memory of a historical event that left a strong imprint on Egyptian cultural memory down to the Hellenistic period: the religious revolution of Akhenaten.³¹ Many features of the narrative confirm this link. The king's name, "Amenophis," and his desire to see the gods would indicate a memory of Akhenaten, although the reference to Amenophis son of Hapu, a historical vizier from the time immediately before Akhenaten, points to a possible merger of the figure of Akhenaten with that of his father Amenophis III.³² In addition, the motif of leprosy suggests a transferal of religious taboos onto the physical sphere.³³ Through a procedure of historical levelling, two negative episodes from the history of the Late Bronze Age—the Hyksos invasion and the religious revolution of Akhenaten—came to be perceived as causally linked. The lepers who destroy Egyptian temples take on the same role as the Hyksos. In Manetho's narrative, the internal enemies—religious outcasts—become the allies of the external enemies.

Once again, this story presents ostensible anachronisms. In the New Kingdom, the very high numbers of soldiers in the Egyptian and Hyksos armies would have been as inconceivable as the references to Assyrian military power or to an Ethiopian king who hosts the fleeing Egyptian army and saves the country from domestic as well as external impurity, reminiscent of Herodotus's narrative in *Hist.* II, 30. These references point to the memory of historical episodes not of the Late Bronze Age but of the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.³⁴

31 Assmann, *Moses*, 23–55.

32 Wildung, *Imhotep und Amenhotep*, 201–297.

33 Assmann, *Ägypten*, 440–446.

34 On the first-millennium BCE background of the name Osarseph, see Ryholt, *Political Situation*, 387–388.

Manetho's text also emphasizes the typical Iron Age connection between political violence and religious impurity. Priests—*w^cb.w*, “the pure people”—are the elite of Egyptian society in the Iron Age and the readers of a literature in which individual orthopraxy replaces the traditional, more theologically inclined approach to personal religiosity.³⁵ Like kings, they established their legitimacy in monumental genealogies, as in the case of Ankhefensakhmet of the Twenty-Second Dynasty (ca. 735 BCE), where the origins of a family of Memphite priests are dated back to the kings of the Eleventh Dynasty, or of Herodotus's 345 generations of Theban priests in *Hist.* II, 143, which stress the continuity of individual excellence.³⁶ Literary and mythological texts of this period also underscore royal piety by dwelling on the king's construction projects; as in Herodotus's *lógos*, most kings are introduced by listing the temples they restored.³⁷ In sum, late first-millennium BCE Egyptian cultural memory identified two episodes of the Bronze Age past that were at the crossroads of political and religious transgression and in which the destiny of Egyptian and Israelite cultures were seen as intertwined.

3 Conclusion

The codification of Bronze Age experiences in the first millennium BCE in Egyptian collective memory took place in an intercultural context.³⁸ Moreover,

35 Loprieno, *La pensée et l'écriture*, 33–44. On priests as social elite, see Muhs, *Ancient Egyptian Economy*, 142–210.

36 Bierbrier, “Genealogy and Chronology,” 17–44 and Moyer, “Herodotus,” 292–320.

37 See, among others, the tale of pVandier, which emphasizes the performance of temple duties by King Sisobek, and the second tale of Setne Khamwase, which presents King Menekhpri-Siamun dedicating offerings and buildings to the great temples of Egypt.

38 An interesting point of onomastics also shows that this cultural revolution took place in Egypt and Israel in a surprisingly simultaneous period. While the names of patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph fit very well with Amorite onomastics of the Bronze Age, the names in Gen 41:45 are not from the Late Bronze Age (the period for which the events are reconstructed), but from the Iron Age, more specifically the Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasties, which witnessed the development of an archaizing discourse in Egypt; these names include the one acquired by Joseph in Egypt (צפנת־פענח; cf. Egyptian *dd-p3-ntr-jw-f-nh*, “the god has said that he should live”), that of his wife (אסנת; cf. Egyptian *Ns-n.t*, “she belongs to the goddess Neith”) and those of other individuals of the story (e.g., פטי־פרע; cf. Egyptian *p3-dj-p3-Rc*, “he whom the god Re has given”). On the patriarchs and Amorite onomastics, see Schneider, *Die ausländischen Könige*, 43–49. This was the time when the dialectic between Egypt and Israel was independently codified in Egypt

engaging the question of Israel's violence in Egypt's memory requires both differentiating between Egyptian images of the past in different historical periods and appreciating how Israel's own image of the past might have begun to influence late first-millennium Egyptian traditions—a topic that has been touched on only briefly here but could be further developed. The roles of victims and aggressors in the Egyptian sources have shown to be interchangeable in the messages and memories of past violence, and this is all the more apparent for the late first-millennium traditions that look back at the distant past of the Bronze Age. On the one hand, Israel itself as a putative or real enemy is hardly present in the Egyptian sources of the Bronze Age (“Israel” is mentioned only once, around 1200 BCE). The traces thus point toward Egypt as the dominant power and potential aggressor rather than to Israel as an actual threat to Egypt. On the other hand, various social groups or populations from the Levant during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (1900–1200 BCE) who were in putative or real conflict with Egypt came to be associated with Israel and Judah in biblical texts, in later Jewish reception, and in Egyptian cultural memory. In both the Egyptian and the Israelite literary traditions, accounts of the Bronze Age past flourished in the late first millennium. The discussion of Manetho offered here suggests that the Egyptian writer was aware of (some of) Israel's own memories, and that his account blends them with Egyptian memories of this period (such as the Hyksos dynasty and the religious revolution of Akhenaten), creating a memory of Israel as a violent aggressor. Israel's violence in Egypt's cultural memory therefore has little to do with actual historical conflicts between Israel and Egypt. It should rather be seen as the product of a renewed interest in a distant (and undocumented) past in the intercultural literary environment of the late first millennium BCE.

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and in Judah, when oral traditions derived from the Mycenaean world were given written form, and when the book that gathered the cultural memory of the Israelites began its journey toward becoming the Hebrew Bible.

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Real Fights and Burlesque Parody: The Depiction of Violence in the Inaros Cycle

Damien Agut-Labordère

Abstract

The Cycle of Inaros is a collection of epic stories written in Demotic known from papyri dating to the late Hellenistic and Roman periods. These narratives depict the fights and adventures of a group of Egyptian princes and warriors who lived in the early first millennium BCE. For nearly a century these texts have been at the heart of a controversy between the proponents of a Homeric (or at least Hellenic) origin to those who see them as purely Egyptian works. The present essay analyzes these texts from a slightly different perspective—namely, it inquires into the narrative tone rather than the literary origins of some of these stories. Indeed, while some battle scenes appear to be truly epic, in the sense that they describe bloody battles, another seems comic. These different registers may reflect different types of memorialization of the historical events being depicted.

Keywords

Demotic – humor – epic literature – Petubastis – parody – narratology

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Il est probable, en effet, que les textes égyptiens recèlent encore bien des traits d'esprit ou des allusions dont la finesse nous échappe totalement, même quand leur sens littéral nous paraît intelligible.

BAUDOIN VAN DE WALLE

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The question of humor in ancient and medieval literature is one of the most difficult to address: how can we be sure whether an author is being serious or humorous?¹ Laughter is so intimately bound up with culture and even with the personality of the author that the goal of identifying comic intentionality in texts produced not only within the context of a different civilization but also two thousand years ago seems illusory. The problem becomes far more complex when it concerns epic literature, which narrates the adventures of legendary figures. In two recently published studies, Isabel Ruffell and Katharina Wesselmann have investigated the comical aspects of the Homeric lists.² It is true that the precise enumeration of details can border on the ridiculous, as in Chaucer's lists of men, places, and authorities or the lists of synonyms in Rabelais. Demotic literature most probably attests to this phenomenon in the so-called Gardening Agreement, even if this text still awaits a commented edition that takes this aspect into account.³ This *comique de liste* is perhaps also present in the most important piece of Demotic epic literature: the Cycle of Inaros, in which the enumerations of warlords, landing places, and other items regularly interrupt the narrative.⁴ But this is not the point that I wish to examine in the following pages. The purpose of this short study is to highlight the parody of battle scenes at the heart of one of the most important pieces of the Cycle of Inaros: the Battle for the Prebend of Amun. By analyzing the literary function of this parody, this essay will highlight the complex use of humor and mockery in depictions of collective violence and military agency in Demotic literature of the first millennium BCE. It will also address the questions surrounding the comparative study of these materials, especially their relationship to Homeric literature and the violent narratives it preserves, while exploring their roles in memorializing violent events in Egyptian collective memory.

The Cycle of Inaros (hereafter called the Cycle) is a group of Demotic literary texts relating the adventures of Egyptian warriors (*rmt.w qnqn*). These warriors were the descendants or the companions of Inaros of Athribis, a historical figure involved in Egypt's resistance against the Assyrians who later became a key figure in Egyptian epic literature. The action of these so-called epic tales takes

1 The epigraph is from van de Walle, *L'Humour*, 21.

2 Ruffell, "Aesthetics" and Wesselmann, "Homeric Heroes."

3 Parker, "Late Demotic Gardening Agreement."

4 One of these lists, concerning tribunes (*b3k.t*) occupied by warlords, will be discussed briefly in the second part of this essay.

place against the backdrop of Egyptian history during the first half of the first millennium BCE.⁵

Three of these epic tales are particularly well preserved: The Battle for the Prebend of Amun (Prebend), The Battle for the Armor of Inaros (Armor), and Petekhons and the Amazons (Amazons). In 1910, Wilhelm Spiegelberg formulated the hypothesis that these narratives may have been influenced by Homeric literature.⁶ He noted that several of the duels punctuating the tales are similar to *monomachiae* that pit different warriors against each other in the *Iliad*. Later, Günther Roeder insisted that in the *Iliad* as in the “Armor” the possession of a weapon belonging to a dead hero was the object of the disputes.⁷ In 1996, Friedhelm Hoffmann summarized all of these discussions in the introduction to his new edition of the Armor.⁸ He concluded that most of the so-called Homeric features identified until then could just as well have come from earlier Egyptian literature—with the exception of the conflicts concerning weapons that had belonged to a great dead warrior. Hoffmann’s skepticism provoked a reaction by Heinz Joseph Thissen and, more recently, by Ian Rutherford who, rather than evoking the direct influences of Homeric texts on demotic epic literature, prefers to emphasize the presence of more broadly Greek or Aramaic literary traits within the Cycle.⁹ But these debates are far removed from the issues I will discuss here.¹⁰

The question of humor in Demotic literature is part of a broader framework that concerns the narratological analysis of texts, focusing not on the narrative itself but on the way the story is told. Narratological study of Egyptian literary texts was initiated by John Baines in an article published in 1998 devoted to the Story of Wenamun.¹¹ In the field of Demotic studies, Richard Jasnow paved the way in 2007.¹² He noted the originality of the passages in the Cycle devoted to descriptions of landscapes, buildings, and objects: “Still particularly in the Inaros Cycle, these are elaborate passages which little resemble anything

5 On the historicity of Inaros, see Quack, “Inaros.”

6 Spiegelberg, *Der Sagenkreis*, 10.

7 Roeder, *Altägyptische Erzählungen*, 337.

8 Hoffmann, *Der Kampf*, 49–105.

9 Thissen, “Homerischer Einfluss” and Rutherford, “The Earliest Cross-Cultural Reception.”

10 An excellent overview of the debate concerning Homeric influence on the Cycle can be found in Salim, “Cultural Identity,” 114–120. See also Quack, “Gibt es eine ägyptische Homer-Rezeption?,” who examines in great detail the circumstances in which Homer was received by Egyptian literati.

11 Baines, “On *Wenamun*.”

12 Jasnow, “Through Demotic Eyes.”

found in earlier material.”¹³ Before that, in 2001, Jasnow published another study on humor in Demotic literature, which remains an essential introduction to the question of humor in Egyptian literature of the first millennium BCE.¹⁴ Despite a somewhat disillusioned conclusion (“the subject of humor is inherently inviting, but quite treacherous”), this work provides a firm ground for future research.¹⁵ Indeed, it played a major role in the passages devoted to humor in Jacqueline Jay’s recent book *Orality and Literacy in the Demotic Tales* (2016). The author brings out comical repetition in the story of Amasis and the Sailor and erotic puns in Setne I but concludes that the Cycle seems to be devoid of any comical features.¹⁶ The hypothesis I will defend here is that humor also plays a role in these epic narratives. Moreover, it is embedded in the most dramatic scenes: those depicting battles. While some of these are clearly fights to the death, others are more akin to fist fights or brawls. At the end, there are two ways to stage the violence in the Cycle, an epic one and a burlesque one, two ways of recounting historical violence that could correspond to two models of memorialization. After a general overview of the main texts of the Cycle, I will consider the two types of battle scenes, epic and comic.

1 The Inaros Cycle: An Overview

In this section, I will briefly describe the three main stories of the Cycle. The Prebend is known to us thanks to the so-called Papyrus Spiegelberg from the first century BCE, which comes from Akhmim, in Middle Egypt.¹⁷ The first several columns of this text are damaged to the extent that we do not know the

13 Jasnow, “Through Demotic Eyes,” 442. I have recently discussed the literary techniques used in the Cycle’s detailed descriptions of royal or princely fleets in Agut-Labordère, “Flottes royales.” I failed to mention there Jasnow’s analysis of the “description of the sacred bark of Amun” (pSpiegelberg 1.1–2.2) (440–441). Yet it is questionable to what extent the description of Amun’s sacred bark constitutes a description in a strict sense; the nautical terms are, in fact, scattered among theological and mythological references. This passage seems to be primarily an exegesis of the theological meaning of the boat; following Traunecker, “Le Pap. Spiegelberg,” Jasnow compares this description to that of the boat of Horus in CT 398. The intentionality thus seems very different from that observed in my aforementioned article.

14 Jasnow, “And Pharaoh Laughed,” 62–69.

15 Jasnow, “And Pharaoh Laughed,” 62.

16 For “Amasis and the Sailor,” see Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 98. For Setne I, see Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 103–104 and Rutherford, “Earliest Cross-Cultural Reception,” 248 n. 14.

17 Spiegelberg, *Der Sagenkreis*.

precise length of the scroll.¹⁸ The beginning of the story must therefore be reconstructed on the basis of fragments preserved in Paris and Philadelphia.¹⁹ It begins in Tanis, the capital of the Pharaoh Petubastis. At the instigation of one of his advisers, captain Jeho, Petubastis decides to organize a grand tour in the south of the country under the pretext of celebrating the feasts of the local gods. In reality, Petubastis wants to reinforce royal control over these remote provinces. The main goal of the expedition is the holy city of Thebes, where the royal visit coincides with the great annual festival during which the god Amun leaves his shrine at Karnak to cross the Nile and visit the temples on the left bank. Petubastis wishes to take the opportunity to impose his son, Prince Chahor, at the head of the Theban clergy by recovering for him the prebend of the high priest of Amun. Yet he does not anticipate encountering a mysterious “young priest” accompanied by his thirteen herdsmen of Pi-Djuf (*p3 13 3m n Pr-dwf*), ready to do anything to dispute the precious prebend with the king and his men.

The Armor is known from Papyrus Krall from the Fayum, dated to the first half of the second century CE.²⁰ This long text has some twenty-six columns. The story begins in the aftermath of a successful defense against an Assyrian invasion. Egypt has regained peace under the debonair rule of Pharaoh Petubastis. Yet a sacrilege committed in one temple, presumably related to the theft of the sacred armor of the late King Inaros, leads the god Osiris to summon the council of gods to inflict punishment on the entire country. The gods then send two demons to sow discord between the Egyptian princes, who will come to blows over the possession of the armor of Inaros.

The story of the Amazons is the most poorly preserved of the three texts. It is taken from two papyri, probably dating to the second century CE, coming from Dime (Soknopaiu Nesos) in the northern Fayum. The son of Prince Pekrur, the valiant Count Petekhons, undertook the conquest of Asia at the head of an Assyrian army. He invaded the mythical “country of the women” located in the east, in the direction of India.²¹

All these epic stories are rooted in specific episodes of Egyptian history of the first millennium BCE. “Armour” takes place a few years after the Assyrian invasion of 671 BCE and before the advent of the Saite dynasty in 664 BCE. The presence of the Assyrian army in the account of Amazons places its narrative setting before 614 BCE. The date of the historical events to which the

18 Hoffmann, “Die Länge.”

19 Agut-Labordère, “Des fragments.”

20 Hoffmann, *Der Kampf*.

21 Hoffmann, *Ägypter und Amazonen* and Collombert, “Padikhonsou.”

Prebend relates is more delicate, but it is likely to derive from the expedition led by Osorkon B in Thebaid during the ninth century BCE. This last episode is known from a long inscription designated as the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon carved inside the Bubastide portico of the Karnak temple. This text was written under the authority of Osorkon (known as Osorkon B), the eldest son of King Takelot II of Tanis (850–25 BCE). It tells how this prince imposed himself as head of the clergy of Amun of Thebes against the advice of some of the local elite. Like Takelot II, King Petubastis reigned from Tanis and, like Prince Osorkon B, the royal son Chahor of the Prebend wishes to become the high priest of Amun.²²

To sum up, the Hellenistic and Roman Inaros Cycle memorializes political and military events from the ninth and seventh centuries BCE. It is impossible to know precisely when the different stories that make up the Cycle were imagined and set down in writing, but it is certain that the Cycle bears witness to how Egyptians living during the Hellenistic and Roman periods perceived the history of the first part of the first millennium BCE.

Even if all the tales of the Cycle are rooted in historical reality, we still have to distinguish between the truly epic fights characterized by bloody battles in the Armor and the Amazons, on the one hand, and the conflicts in the Prebend on the other, in which the fights are more akin to wrestling than to the archetypal duel between Achilles and Hector.²³

2 Epic Battles in the Armor and the Amazons

In general, the ethics of combat—that is, the warrior's moral code—reflected in the Armor is of an aristocratic nature. This means that the fighters renounce trickery and, even more importantly, employ the skills provided by military training. The winner owes his victory solely to his physical strength, as expressed by Pami, son of Inaros, addressing General Urtiameno: “Did you act by using your physical strength (*p3y=k in-nht.t n nmty*) or by [...] your excellence (*p3y=k t^lqn¹*) in military art?” (Armor 7.8–9).²⁴ As in Greek epic and medieval chivalry literature, the warrior ethos is accompanied by an aestheticization of weaponry. The proponents of the hypothesis of a Homeric influence on the

22 Agut-Labordère, “Flottes royales”, 18–19.

23 “In general, scenes of battle and combat are far more extended in *Armor* than in *Amazons* and *Prebend* and, in this respect, *Armor* provides the best parallel to the *Iliad*” (Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 175).

24 The reading *tkn* is proposed by Chauveau, “Review of *Der Kampf*,” 615.

Cycle have compared this passage to the “dressing and arming scene” identified among the Homeric type scenes. Also perfectly Homeric are the man-to-man duels (*monomachiae*) that punctuate the Cycle. In the Armor, the same General Urtiameno says to Pami: “then the war will become as a one to one (fight) (*w'wb3 w'*), again, for the armor” (Armor 9.12–13). The fights of the Cycles are ritualized, like medieval tournaments. A passage in the Armor describes the “architectural” preparations that precede a battle:²⁵

A high tribune (*b3k.t*) was erected f(or) Pharaoh Petubastis. Another was erected for the Chief-of-the-East Pekrur, in front of it (*wb3f*). One was erected for Jeho, son of Chahor. Another was erected for Petekhons, in front of it (*wb3f*). One was erected for Welheni, the general of Meidum. Another was erected for the Royal son Chahor, the son of Pharaoh Petubastis, in front of it (*wb3f*). (Armor 18.9–12)

The list goes on for a few more lines, describing three more pairs of tribunes.²⁶ This passage is followed by a new list of Egyptian military leaders who are arranged by Petubastis on the battlefield like pieces on a chessboard.

Pharaoh then said: ‘Chief-of-the-East Pekrur! I see that there is no one (except me) who is able to place the two shields by pairs (*'wy.w*), province against province (*tš wb3 tš*), city against city (*tmy wb3 tmy*)’ (Armor 18.20–21).

‘General Urtiameno, you are the adversary (*iry ddy*) of General Pami, the young son of Inaros, bear (the shock of) his twenty-seven warriors (who are) with him and who were part of the Forty Heroes, the divine sons of the noble Inaros. Those of the province of Heliopolis! Dispose against the army of the province of Mendes, (that) which is so numerous. Whoa! The most valiant Petekhons, you are the adversary of the Royal son Chahor, the son of the pharaoh Petubastis’ (Armor 18.30–32; 19.1–3)

Afterwards, it is indeed a fight to the death that is described. The arrival of Montubaal, a new protagonist, in the melee is accompanied by massive carnage:

25 On the placement of the warriors face-to-face on the battlefield, see Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 171–172.

26 The list of tribunes should be seen in parallel with the list of moorings; see pSpiegelberg 17.24–18.3.

He (= Montubaal) slipped into his armour with his war equipment (*stbh qnqn*) and leapt into the midst of the army of the province of Sebennytos and (also against) those of Mendes, those of Djure, those of Natho, and (all) the camp of Ourtiamenno. He accomplishes great carnage and devastation among them (*dl'f' h'3 wty iwtw*) like Sekhmet in her hour of rage when she spreads fire in the brushwood. The (enemy) army scattered (*dl'*) before them, while one made a carnage of their eyes and a slaughter of their hearts (*iwtw ir h'3 <n> i[r].tsw š'y n h'3.tsw*), they did not tire of sowing devastation (*wty*) among them (Armor 18.30–32; 19.1–3).

The same bloody violence is attested in the story of Petekhons and the Amazons. When the Assyrian army led by the hero is destroyed by Sarpote, queen of the Amazons:

[Sarpote rushed] into the army of the [Assyrians who formed] a multitude and slaughtered [many of them]. Those who stood in the way made their place of battle a place of death] in an instant. Those who aspired [to fight, she made them fall in the same way. It is] a massacre and a butchery [terrible that she] inflicted [on them soon. The killing of a bird of prey falling] among fowls, that is what [Sarpote did] against the Assyrians. The immolation] of the serpent Apophis, that is what Sarpote did [against the army of Petekhons ...] (Amazons 3.8–12).

It seems that the intra-Egyptian struggles that followed the Assyrian invasion were fixed in Egyptian memory in the form of aristocratic jousting organized by a royal power incapable of restraining them. Yet these are not simulated battles; some of the combatants are killed on the field.²⁷

3 A Comic Battle in the “Prebend”

The Prebend shows a very different type of fight in which the protagonists engage without the clear intention of shedding the blood of their opponents, as in the so-called mock battles described by classical British anthropology.²⁸

²⁷ This type of arranged fight recalls the “Combat of the Thirty” in Brittany in March 1351 between two lords, Jean Beaumanoir and Jean de Montfort, each of whom had the right to be accompanied by thirty armed partisans; see Luce, *Chroniques*, 338–340.

²⁸ Fournier, “Introduction,” 456, who refers to the works of McLennan, *Primitive Marriage* and Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer*.

When Prince Chahor, son of Petubastis, realizes that the young priest challenges his right to claim the prebend of Amun, he defies his opponent in single combat. All this begins as an ordinary epic battle scene, with the arming of the warriors:²⁹

Prince Chahor then retired to the chapel, dropped the royal linen garment on his back and adorned himself with gold ornaments, brought his warrior outfit, and donned the insignia of command (*n3 s3 [n p3] 'š-sħn*) and he returned to the dromos of Amun [while] the young priest [had retired] to the chapel itself. There was a young servant who was hiding among the crowd, clutching a beautifully decorated new breastplate. The young priest beckoned to him and he received (immediately) the breastplate in his hands. He put it on and returned to the dromos of Amun (Prebend 3.21–4.5).

At the first moment of the fight, Chahor's son exhorts the crowd to help his father. But the intervention of the "thirteen strong herdsmen" accompanying the young priest breaks the ardor of Chahor's friends. This scene has a comic undertone:

Then Jeho, son of Chahor, opened his mouth and uttered a deep battle cry (*3rl hrš rmt-qnqn*) to the army, saying: "Can you stand (there) near Amun while a herdsman fights Pharaoh's son, without you having let him feel your weapons?" Then the Egyptian crowds were agitated on all sides: those from Tanis, Mendes, Natho, Sebennytos, the soldiers from the four rough(er) provinces of Egypt (*p3 4 tš hrš n Kmy*), they came and marched to the ba<ttle>field to defend Royal Prince Chahor. The thirteen herdsmen of Pi-Djuf marched in the middle of the army, clad in their armor with their bull-faced helmet on their heads, their shields flanking their arms, and their hands laden with their scimitars. They came to the right and left of the young priest as their voices rang out: "We swear here before god Amun, the great god, who manifests himself here on this day: No one in the world among you will let the prophet of Horempi of Bouto (another designation for the young priest) hear a word without the ground drinking his blood (and) the aura of his '...¹ courage (*p3hy n t3yʃf nmt3.t '...¹!*)" The terror of the thirteen herdsmen (was in) the heart of Pharaoh and the

29 On this kind of type scene, see Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 166–169.

army; no one in the world could open his mouth to say a word (*bn-pw rh rmt n p3 t3 wpy hrwf r md.t*) (Prebend 4.8–22).

It should be noted that, far from standing up valiantly against his son's adversaries, Pharaoh Petubastis is paralyzed by the same terror that gripped his troops. The fear that so easily penetrates his heart before the battle has even begun highlights the comic dimension of the king's character. The attitude of Petubastis, and of his army, recalls the description of Saul and his troops when the giant Goliath launched his terrible challenge: "When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and terror-stricken" (1Sam 17:11, NJPS). The cowardice of Petubastis leads him to refrain from fighting and instead to rely on the advice of Amun. One can imagine his relief when the oracle advises the king to equip the sacred bark with a stretcher and a sail of royal linen and, moreover, to wait "until that the business between us (Petubastis and his men) and the herdsmen comes to an end" (*š'-tw n3 md.t wsf iwṭ-n irm n3'3m*, Prebend 6.7–8). The use of the verb *wsf* is very interesting in this context because it expresses the passivity of the king who, faced with the violent challenge of the herdsmen, chooses to let the matter "rot" by itself.³⁰

Unsurprisingly, a little further on in the story, Petubastis is also mocked by his subjects. Prince Petekhons thus responds to the king's call for help with derision, using derogatory language to refer to Petubastis: "the Tanitic birdcatcher of the *hlt*-bird (*p3 hm hlt rmt n T'ne*), the Butic sailor *gp* 'of' *wrs* (*p3 hyṭ gp 'n' wrs 'n' rmt T'p3*), this Petubastis son of Chahor to whom I did not say 'Pharaoh!'" (Prebend 13.14–15).³¹ Prince Petekhons outright denies that Petubastis is a king. It is even more pathetic and, indeed, comical (at least for the contemporary reader) that Petubastis was aware of the weakness of his authority. In fact, he anticipates the disobedience of the "young men" of the north whom he calls to the rescue. Addressing Pekrur, he says:

By Amun! If I invite them [to come to the South], they will not go because of the affront I made to them when I went (myself) to Thebes, without having invited them to the feast of the Great God Amun, my father. Pekrur,

30 Erichsen, *Demotische Glossar*, 100 notes the meaning of *wsf* as "to be lazy" ("faul sein").

31 This passage is commented upon in detail by Salim, "Cultural Identity," 79–80. The term *hlt* should probably be compared to Coptic ελατ, "flying creature, bird"; see Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 671b. The suggestion made by Jasnow, "And Pharaoh Laughed", 71 n. 59 to relate *hlt* with *štl* "ichneumon" should probably be discarded for the reasons given by Quack, "As He Disregarded," 33 n. 43 and Quack and Hoffmann, *Anthologie*, 379 n. *bt*. On the Butic sailor, I follow the suggestion made by Quack, "As He Disregarded," 33 n. 44.

Chief-of-the-East! It is for you to invite them. If anyone (else) invites them, they will not respond (Prebend 11.10–14).

The ridicule of the royal family in the story of the Prebend reaches its peak when one reads the account of the duel between Prince Chahor and the young priest:

The young priest then pounced on (*fy ... r-hn-hr*) the Royal Prince Chahor, like a lion on a ...³² in the desert (*m-qdy p3 nty iw w' m3y ir-f r-db3 ... n tw*), like a nurse with her fidgety child (*m-qdy p3 nty iw w'.t mnh-iry.t [ir-f r-db3] p3y-s hm-hl swg*). He grabs the inner part of his armor (*t3y-f p3 hn n n3y-f lbše(.w)*). He made him go to the ground (*dif iw r p3 itne*). He tied it to [...] (*sh-f s [...]*). He threw it on the road before him (*hw-y-f s r p3 myt h3.t-f*).³³ The thirteen herdsmen rushed down the path after him, and no one could hurt them, so great was the terror they inspired. Their attention turned to the boat of Amun. They boarded it, leaving their weapons on the ground. They sent Royal Prince Chahor to the bottom of the Amun's boat, tied with Cádiz rope, and dropped the hatch³⁴ on him (*iw-f sh w' msh-t n Gtetn di<w> iw p3 tms r-hr-f*). They sent the sailors and rowers back to the dock. They placed their shields beside them and washed for the feast. They brought the bread, meat, and wine that was on board. They drank and enjoyed themselves (*swr-w ir-w hrw nfr*) as they watched over the docks toward the epiphany of the great god Amen, while offerings were presented and incense burned before him (Prebend 4.24; 5.1–16).

What I perceive as comic in this passage is based on at least three elements. The first is the content of the two metaphors describing the action of the young priest against the unfortunate Prince Chahor. If the content of the first metaphor escapes us in part, the second one is clear and rather humiliating for Petubastis's son, who is compared to a turbulent child seized by his nurse. The prince is lifted up in the air by the young priest, like in a wrestling match, then

32 This animal remains unidentified. See the suggestions made by Spiegelberg, *Der Sagenkreis*, 19 (wild donkey [?]); Agut and Chauveau, *Héros, magiciens et sages*, 77 (jerboa, desert rat) and Quack and Hoffmann, *Anthologie*, 109 (small cattle [?]).

33 The structure of this passage, organized around a series of short verbal sentences, is discussed by Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 86–87.

34 The translation “hatch” is rather conjectural. In Demotic, *tms* usually designates a “tomb”; see Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar*, 633. In the Prebend, *tms* is determined by the sign for wood and must, in the naval context, designate by analogy a “boat hold.” This term seems to refer to the hold as a whole, not to the “hatch” specifically.

the loser is tied up and thrown to the bottom of the sacred bark of Amun. The young priest doesn't even bother to draw his sword and instead just grabs his opponent. Impeded and powerless, the prince is thrown without further ado into the hold of Amun's boat. The humiliation is complete when the winners, without worrying any further about the unfortunate loser, meet to enjoy a banquet on the deck of the boat. The comic dimension of this fight, which could be better qualified as a brawl, comes from the total imbalance between the protagonists. This deep disequilibrium between the fighters is not attested in the Amazons or in the Armor; Sarpote and Pekrur fight against opponents who are in a position to defeat them. Compared to these figures, the fight between the young priest and Chahor appears as a farce.³⁵

4 Conclusion: Two Types of Memorialization?

In the end, it appears that the Cycle juxtaposes very different, even opposing, literary genres. If stories, or parts of stories, are really epic in the sense that they concern glory in battle and powerful princes of the past, the Cycle also contains at least one comic passage in which some heroes of the past are ridiculed. By comparing the pathetic struggle engaged in by Prince Chahor against the thirteen herdsmen with the bloody melees attested in the Armor, it is possible to characterize the comic process at work here as a parody, a burlesque imitation of one of the most important type scenes of the Cycle.³⁶ Nevertheless, one question remains: is the comic dimension related to the whole story narrated in the Prebend, or exclusively to the figure of Petubastis, who could be considered as a comic character?³⁷ I must confess that it is still impossible for me to answer this question in a satisfactory manner, although I wonder whether the latter of the two possibilities is perhaps preferable. Pursuing this question further, however, would require a larger study than this one.

It is at this point of reflection that the notion of memorialization allows us to go a little further. Indeed, one will observe that the two stories linked to the memorialization of the Assyrian invasions, the Armor and the Amazons,

35 This last scene is indeed a parody of Egyptian epic literature by an author who knows its codes but subverts them for the reader's pleasure. This type of parody exists in European literature, as in the figure of Frère Jean des Entonneurs in Rabelais.

36 On parody in Middle Egyptian literature, see Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, 36–37. Concerning New Kingdom Literature, the "Taking of Joppa" is sometimes treated as a parody of royal inscriptions; see Jay, *Orality and Literacy*, 43. On the role of humor in this tale, see also Manassa, *Imagining*, 84.

37 On King Petubastis as a literary figure, see Salim, "Cultural Identity," 79–81.

contain real epic battles, while the one linked to a conflict between Egyptian princes is of a parodic nature. Although the small sample size of only three stories does not allow for certainty on this question, I would suggest that this difference is the result of two processes of memorialization. While the internal conflicts between Egyptian kinglets left a memory of a period marked by ridicule, the memory of the Egyptian heroes who fought against the Assyrians remained full of glory. To conclude, we could distinguish between two types of memorialization processes of the violence at work in the Cycle: an epic form of memorialization, which places death and carnage at the end of the battle, and a comic form of memorialization, where confrontations between more or less historical figures turn into a farce.

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Material Responses to Collective Violence in Classical Greece

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Abstract

The visual qualities of the Greek Classical style—poise, balance, harmony—and its post-antique legacy can belie the violence of its time. In fact, there were many violent representations in Classical Greek art (480–323 BCE). This essay first discusses some of the main iconographic and stylistic characteristics of explicit images of collective violence in order to correct misperceptions and probe how depictions related to norms, expectations, and memories. It then extends discussion to material responses that are less dependent on pictures. Organized around different participants in collective violence—warriors, the gods, and mourners—it reveals how material culture offered different ways in different contexts for people to engage with and respond to acts of collective violence. Objects were a mechanism for shaping a rhetoric of just war and for focusing the community on moments of triumph and acts of sacrifice. Although objects offered a medium for individual responses and even dissent, taken together the material responses to collective violence operated at so many different time scales and in such a variety of spaces in the cityscape and the landscape that they served to promote both the cohesion of a community through shared memories and its participation in ongoing violence.

Keywords

community – Greece – historiography – memory – myths – reception – sanctuaries – violence – war dead – war memorials

This essay offers a different perspective from most of the contributions to this book, in focusing both on Greece—specifically, Greece in the Classical period (480–323)—and on its art.¹ Both choices might seem counterintuitive for a

¹ All dates BCE unless otherwise stated.

book about violence and memory. Ever since the Renaissance (and, arguably, ever since the Romans), Classical Greece and its material culture have been treated in ways that downplay or ignore violence and highlight opposite qualities. It is the humanism of Greek culture that antiquarians, scholars, and admirers have stressed, as well as its alleged ability to ennoble the modern viewer.² They have focused on lofty ideals that are seen to emerge from the Greek valuation of the human body, which can be found not only in philosophy, literature, and medicine but also in art. A “classic” Greek statue is a naked man, alone and undisturbed, at peace with himself and the world (fig. 9.1). When we look at these naked men, and at Classical art in general, we tend to speak of the poise, balance, harmony, and clarity of form conveyed by the Classical style. From this perspective, there is little emotion or passion and certainly no violence. Reemployed in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the Classical style and the Classical architectural orders have been used to convey a sense of grandeur and timelessness, not least to war memorials.³ The quiet majesty and poise of the Classical style seem to speak to the peace of the deceased and to their undying, timeless memory.

Any student of the history of Classical Greece can tell you that this picture is distorted.⁴ The Classical style, and the way that it has been used in neo-Classical monuments, can obfuscate the actual violence of the time; there is a disconnect between the way we think about the style and its appearance, and what actually happened. The Classical period is bookmarked by violent events. Most modern accounts begin the period with the Persian destruction of Athens in 480 and end it with the death of Alexander in 323. In between, Greeks battled Persians, Carthaginians, Macedonians, and each other. A year without conflict was unusual.⁵ The most important historical texts of the fifth century concern the Persian Wars (Herodotus), and the Peloponnesian War (Thucydides). Myths—which circulated in written, oral, and visual forms—were replete with acts of violence, starting with Cronos’s castration of Uranus. And then there is the violence that took place within cities and homes: husbands against wives and masters against slaves. The Classical style, for all its majesty, can belie the dangers and horrors of life in the Classical period.

2 Vout, *Classical Art* offers an excellent recent study of the reception of Classical Greek art. See also Squire, *Art*.

3 Borg, *War Memorials* and Texier, *Les architectes*.

4 For the violent side of Greece, see esp. Fischer and Moraw, *Die andere Seite*.

5 For war as a defining feature of Classical Greek culture and politics, see Meier, “Die Rolle” and Pritchard, *Athenian Democracy*.



FIGURE 9.1 Diadumenos. Roman marble copy of a Classical bronze original by Polyclitus, mid-fifth century
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. 25.78.56. FLETCHER FUND, 1925

Accordingly, this essay first presents some of the evidence for representations of violence in Classical Greece, all the while drawing attention to some of the characteristics that differ from Near Eastern art and considering the implications for how people thought about collective violence. It then looks beyond explicit representations at what I call “material responses” to collective violence: how people used material culture, broadly conceived (i.e., not just pictures), in order to commemorate, conceptualize, and respond to war. It is not possible in a contribution of this length to be comprehensive, and readers can find more detailed treatment elsewhere.⁶ The purpose here is to draw attention to a range of functions of material culture, showing the intersection of objects with personal and collective memories.

1 Depictions of Violence

Considering the historiography of Classical Greek art, it will be useful at the outset to discuss some explicitly violent representations; I will not attempt to offer a complete survey but will instead draw attention to some characteristic qualities.⁷ Depictions of collective violence were not uncommon in Classical Greece, and they appeared on a variety of different media and in many different contexts. The most overt depictions were battle scenes that were generic, historical, and mythical in subject matter. In painting, these scenes occurred at multiple scales, from the monumental battle of Marathon in the Stoa Poikile in the Athenian agora to comparatively smaller representations on vases.⁸ The presence of large-scale paintings of a commemorative nature in civic space is perhaps unsurprising and not so different from the way depictions of war functioned in other societies, ancient and modern. The vase-paintings, however, merit more comment, as they draw attention to some of the distinctively Greek cultural functions of violent representations (fig. 9.2).⁹ Often these vases were intended for a symposium context, and it is evident that images of conflict were thought appropriate to accompany convivial drinking. Looking on representations of violence provided visual pleasure to the participants. They afforded

6 On war and art, see esp. Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*. On memory, see Arrington, *Ashes*; Giangulio, “Do Societies Remember?”; and Yates, *States*.

7 For a more complete survey of violence in Greek art, particularly in vase painting, see Muth, *Gewalt*.

8 On the painting program in the Stoa Poikile, see, e.g., Stansbury-O'Donnell, “Painting Program” and Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*, 107–108.

9 On the function of these images, see Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*, 4.



FIGURE 9.2 Centauromachy and Amazonomachy. Attic terracotta red-figure volute krater attributed to the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs, ca. 450
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. 07.286.84. ROGERS FUND, 1907

visual interest and contributed to the heroic and masculine atmosphere of the all-male drinking event. The images shaped cultural norms and expectations by showing Greek men fighting persons and creatures who exhibited ὕβρις (“pride”) rather than σωφροσύνη (“moderation”), and by showing masculine courage against a strong and worthy foe. In a symposium, the pictures con-

tributed to the cultured atmosphere and provided conversation pieces, posing the question to drinkers of how they might behave and what type of character they would adopt.¹⁰ In other words, the images were less intent on recording real events and more focused on participating in the social and collective lives of users. They shaped how the participants thought and how they acted.

The same subject matter—battles—appeared in sanctuaries, where they were frequent parts of the decorative programs of temples.¹¹ Images depicting the battle between the gods and the giants were particularly common. For example, a gigantomachy appears on the eastern metopes of the Parthenon, the iconic monument of the Classical style, which is often held up as a triumph of human achievement and a monument to human ideals.¹² But it has plenty of gore, and not only on its eastern metopes. On the western metopes, Amazons and Greeks battle ferociously. Sometimes Greeks win, but they also die wretchedly and pitifully, speared by Amazons towering over them on horseback (fig. 9.3).¹³ The northern metopes of the building contain scenes from the sack of Troy, and on the south, Greeks battle centaurs. The violence continued on the inside, on the cult statue of Athena Parthenos, whose decoration echoed much of the building's exterior. Her sandals showed a centauromachy; on the interior of her large shield was a gigantomachy; and on the exterior was an Amazonomachy in silver or gilded bronze. It is possible to reconstruct the iconography of the exterior of the shield on the basis of multiple copies, and a few particularly violent scenes stand out: a wounded Amazon is about to be clobbered by a battle axe; one fleeing Amazon is being stabbed in the back, while another is pulled savagely back by the hair; and at the bottom of the shield, which would have been about eye-level to the ancient viewer, lie a dead Amazon and a dead Greek.¹⁴

It was not just mythical battles that received visual form in sacred space. For example, on the temple of Athena Nike, located near the Parthenon, Persians battle Greeks on the south frieze.¹⁵ In addition to the subject matter, details of the iconography betray the degree of violence taking place. Figures leap,

10 The literature on images and the symposium is extensive. See, e.g., Lissarrague, *Aesthetics* and Osborne, "Projecting," who both emphasize the social dynamic and the act of performance.

11 For war and sacred space, see Arrington, *Ashes*, 125–176.

12 For the sculptural program of the Parthenon, see Knell, *Mythos und Polis*; Castriota, *Myth*; Hurwit, *Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*; and Schwab, "Celebrations."

13 On the western metopes, see Praschniker, "Neue Parthenonstudien."

14 For the reconstruction, see Harrison, "Composition." On the shield, see Davison, *Pheidias*, 94–117 and Arrington, *Ashes*, 154–166.

15 Blümel, *Der Fries* and Blümel, "Der Fries."



FIGURE 9.3 Amazonomachy. Drawings and reconstructions of the western metopes on the Parthenon by Camillo Praschniker. Originals: 447–438

IMAGE: DAVID CONNELLY/PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, AFTER PRASCHNIKER, “NEUE PARTHENONSTUDIEN.”

pull, stab, pierce, crumple, and contort. Such depictions would have been much more legible, vivid, and dramatic with their original painted colors, when blood could be added. We must also remember that parts of the weapons were made in bronze and added to the marble sculpture, attracting attention through their metallic gleam and heightening the emotion and realism of the depiction.

Despite the gore, there are some notable differences in the depiction of collective violence in Classical Greek art when compared to Near Eastern art. One important difference is the notion that the dead body in Greek art is beautiful. Its beauty had both aesthetic and civic aspects: a beautiful dead and a beautiful death.¹⁶ This was partly the result of strong religious and ethical notions in Greece guiding conceptions of the dead, including the dead in battle. The

16 Loraux, “Mourir.”

deceased had to be treated with respect and buried; not to do so was a punishable affront to gods and humans. In hoplite warfare, the signal of the end of a battle was when one side requested permission to return to the field of conflict to recover the fallen, and it was nearly always granted. The respect for the dead influenced the way Greeks represented the deceased in literature and the visual arts. At least as far back as Homer, corpses could be described in glowing terms. Priam says, "It is altogether meet for a young man to lie dead, torn by the sharp bronze of war; though dead, all about him is beautiful (*καλά*)" (Hom. *Il.* 22.71–73; cf. Tyrt. 10 27–30). Shortly thereafter, when Hector dies, Achaeans gather around to gaze in admiration at his body (Hom. *Il.* 22.370–371). This conceit of the *καλὸς θάνατος*, the beautiful death, finds a visual parallel in bodies like the ones on the Parthenon shield. The Amazon and Greek corpses at the viewer's eye level were rendered into an image of beauty; they look like they are sleeping.¹⁷ Another example is in figure 9.2, where a Greek perishes at the very center of the composition. The virtuoso foreshortening of his leg and the intricate painting of his muscles draws attention to the beauty of his body. Enemies, too, could be shown sympathetically when wounded, like the Amazon corpse on the Athena Parthenos shield. One set of interesting examples are multiple wounded Amazons allegedly made by several different sculptors for the temple of Artemis at Ephesus (figs. 9.4a–4b).¹⁸ They may have had a local appeal, emphasizing the role of the temple as a place of refuge, but they had a visual appeal, too, trading on the beauty of the wounded. The positive aesthetic treatment of enemies, while not ubiquitous in Greek art, nevertheless differs from the more consistent othering of the enemy body in much Roman and Near Eastern art, where opponents are crushed.

In these visual portrayals of the dead, the Greeks showed not only the enemy dead but also their own dead, as we have seen already (figs. 9.2–3). This was not the case in every culture; there are almost no deceased Neo-Assyrians on their palace reliefs. In contrast, dead Greeks are not uncommon. Even on the Parthenon, the mythical opponents make it relatively straightforward to identify the many dead or defeated Greeks facing Amazons and centaurs (fig. 9.3). Images of collective violence, therefore, were not representations of outright victory. Instead, they represented a struggle in which the stakes were evident, individual loss was possible, and the outcome was not immediately clear. The conflict is undecided. The Greek word to describe these scenes is *ἀγών* (*agōn*). The majority of the images of collective violence in Greece were depictions of *agōn* rather than victory.¹⁹

17 On the beautiful death, see esp. Vermeule, *Aspects* and Loraux, "Mourir."

18 Plin., *HN* 34.53 and Kansteiner et al., *Der Neue Overbeck*, 2:284–286, 472–473.

19 On *agōn*, see Arrington, *Ashes*, 95, 106–108, 111–113, 122, 141, 210, 228, 279.



FIGURE 9.4A Wounded Amazon. Roman marble copy of a Classical bronze type associated with a contest for the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, including Phidias, Polyclitus, and Cresilas, ca. 440–430 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. 21.114. GIFT OF JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER JR., 1932



FIGURE 9.4B Detail of the wound in Fig. 9.4a.

In Classical Greek art, the undecided nature of the outcome was heightened by the propensity to show a moment of tension immediately before an action rather than an action itself. Artists often showed the moment just before something happened. A discus thrower, for example, is not shown hurling a disc but appears tense and coiled, on the verge of spinning and letting the discus fly. Even the standing naked male, a quintessential image in Greek art, is characterized by his potential energy rather than his action. The contrapposto stance, with the weight on one leg, enlivens the muscles and makes them ripple and flex, but the figure does not walk. Instead, he is on the point of action. In depictions of violence, this mode of rendering could make an image less gory but all the more tense. Weapons do not necessarily need to make contact to convey violence. For example, behind the fallen Greek in figure 9.2, a hoplite spear is inches from the chest of an Amazon, who raises a battle axe. We the viewers consider how the contest, the *agōn*, might end.

This preference for a tense moment of anticipation helps explain the popularity of the warrior's departure scene in vase paintings.²⁰ Instead of the triumphal return so central to other peoples—not least, the Romans—Greek art frequently shows warriors leaving for battle. The neck amphora in figure 9.5 is a good example. The warrior holds a spear and wears a sword; his servant behind him carries his shield and helmet. The warrior faces two figures, likely his parents. His mother holds a libation bowl, and his seated father clasps his hand. Father and son lock gazes, with their line of sight emphasized by the line their arms create. The warrior hovers between home and battlefield: on one side are the members of the *oikos*, on the other the servant with his military equipment. His body sways to one and the other, with the motion evident in the positioning of his feet, knees, hips, and shoulders. Neither we nor the figures know if this is the last time that the warrior and his kin will see each other alive. For all its poise, close looking at the image reveals that it is filled with tension and implicit violence.

Up to this point, I have been focusing on the ways in which collective violence was represented or implied and looking at subject matter, iconography, and style. But this type of visual language is really only just one small aspect of a much broader material culture. In the rest of this essay, I turn to other types of material culture in various settings that offer insights into how people and communities used objects and things in ways that shaped perceptions of and

20 On departure scenes, see Arrington, *Ashes*, 267–272 and Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*, 145–150.



FIGURE 9.5 Departure scene. Attic terracotta red-figure neck-amphora attributed to the Lykaon Painter, ca. 440 BCE
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. 06.1021.116. ROGERS FUND,
1906

responses to conflict. I organize the following three sections around three of the protagonists in war and its aftermath: the gods, the war dead, and the survivors/mourners.

2 The Gods: Dedications on the Battlefield and in Sanctuaries

It was common practice in Greece, and indeed throughout the ancient world, to dedicate a portion of military spoils to the gods following victories.²¹ This was an important material response to the act of collective violence, and it took place in different settings, with different temporal relationships to the military acts themselves. Some dedications occurred immediately after battle, others decades later.

On the battlefield itself, victors erected a trophy to Zeus Tropaeus.²² It was made out of armor stripped from the enemy dead or gathered from the field of battle and fashioned into a relatively small, makeshift monument (fig. 9.6). It was placed on the battlefield at the location where the tide of battle had turned and where one side fled. This spot was called τροπή, a turning, whence the word *tropaion* and our “trophy.” Although these trophies could take on a permanent and monumental form, in the early Classical period they still were supposed to be makeshift and impermanent (Diod. Sic. 13.24.5–6), and they only gradually received more enduring forms, like stone columns.²³ Through their materials and setting, these trophies were closely linked to the acts of violence on the battlefield that they commemorated.

More distant from the battlefield in terms of both space and time was another type of dedication, which consisted of armor or other war loot deposited in sanctuaries in thanksgiving.²⁴ The dedications could be performed by groups of people, such as the *polis*, or by individuals. Storerooms at Olympia, for example, teem with helmets taken from battlefields, most of which seem to be dedications from individuals rather than states, and which could be inscribed with the name of the dedicator. Conversely, after the Athenian victory over the Spartans at Sphakteria, they took shields from the field and placed

21 See, e.g., Meyer, “Bilder und Vorbilder.”

22 On battlefield trophies, see Pritchett, *Greek State*, 264–275; Meyer, “Bilder und Vorbilder”; and Rabe, *Tropaia*.

23 On the debate about when the temporary memorials began to be constructed, and when the practice ended, see Bergmann, “Beyond Victory and Defeat,” 112–113 and Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*, 104–105.

24 See, e.g., Gauer, *Weihgeschenke*.



FIGURE 9.6 Nike erecting a trophy on the battlefield. Attic terracotta red-figure pelike by the Trophy Painter, ca. 450–440

BOSTON, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS 20.187. FRANCIS BARTLETT DONATION OF 1912. IMAGE © MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

them prominently on the bastion of the temple of Athena Nike at Athens.²⁵ They were carefully secured to a wall and given a structural frame and a monumental background, becoming part of the public complex of sacred buildings. These objects were highly visible through their number, material, and placement. They could have been fixed to such a public structure only with some level of public approval, although Aristophanes's play *Knights* suggests that not all were pleased with the decision.²⁶

Often the tithes from the spoils of battle were used to build a temple or a statue in a *polis* or Panhellenic sanctuary. The spoils of battle thus were transformed or converted into a new form that, unlike the trophy on the field, had little to do with the realia of the battle itself. These monuments financed from spoils could take multiple forms, such as Phidias's now-lost statue of Athena Promachos funded from spoils in the Persian Wars.²⁷ It was a colossal bronze statue so tall that mariners could see it from the edges of Attica. Compared to a trophy on the battlefield or a dedication of actual spoils, the erection of such a statue took several years to complete. A temple, another type of converted spoil, took even longer. Cumulatively, these dedications long after a victory made sanctuaries a place for the continuous commemoration of events. Year after year, new victories were commemorated by the simple dedications of actual spoils, and all the while the commemorative, converted monuments of prior victories continued to come into being.

Sanctuaries were considered fitting places for commemorating victories because of the role the gods were thought to have in conflict. Simply put, one could not win without the gods on one's side. Consequently, a victory signaled divine participation and approval. The dedicated spoils and the buildings and monuments were acts of piety for actions in the past, of course, thanking the gods for a victory. But they looked forward, too. They sought to secure the ongoing grace (*χάρις*) and favor of the gods.²⁸ Dedications also spoke to a mortal audience by showing members of the community, and any visitors, that the *polis* had a positive relationship with the gods in the past, and by suggesting that this relationship would continue in the future as well.

The sanctuary setting framed the war memorials in particular ways, shaping how people thought about conflicts. The physical contexts colored the war memorials, as it were. By communicating that the outcome of the battle was in

25 For the suggestion, see Lippman, Scahill, and Schultz, "Knights 843–859."

26 See previous note.

27 Kansteiner et al., *Der Neue Overbeck*, 2:146–164.

28 On *χάρις*, see Parker, "Pleasing Thighs."

accordance with the desire of the gods, sanctuary settings asserted that the war was a just war. The juxtaposition of actual and mythical battles strengthened this parallel. To return to the Acropolis and to the Parthenon metopes, we can think about the ways in which the representation of Amazons functioned in this space, at this time. Although the Parthenon was built with military spoils from the Persian Wars, the antagonists of the Greeks in the western metopes are Amazons. They served as mythological paradigms for the Persians.²⁹ They enabled Greeks to depict and conceive of the Persians as other—namely, as wild women and fearsome creatures from the east. Ancient viewers looking on the Greeks fighting Amazons could think about the more recent battles against the Persians that they had fought without seeing the horror of the recent sack of the Acropolis or the representations of recent dead. The images of Amazons further allowed Athenians to inscribe the Persian War into a narrative of seemingly never-ending yet divinely sanctioned strife. This visual message was directed toward the Athenians, but also toward visitors from other *poleis* to the Acropolis. At this time, in the second half of the fifth century, Greek *poleis* vied for hegemony, and Athens was particularly adept at using its accomplishments and sacrifices during the Persian Wars to claim legitimacy and moral superiority.³⁰

The commemoration of military victories in sanctuaries was so important to ancient Greeks that Panhellenic sanctuaries became places of intense competition in and through war monuments. The temple of Zeus at Olympia, for example, was itself erected from spoils that Elis had acquired in battle against its local antagonist, Pisa. Then, in 457, the Spartans placed shields on the temple to celebrate their victory over the Argives at Tanagra. A few decades later, the Naupaktians and Messenians dedicated a statue of Nike on a tall pedestal next to the building, possibly commemorating a victory over none other than the Spartans (fig. 9.7).³¹ Examples of competing monuments from *poleis* were not unusual in Panhellenic sanctuaries, which were themselves the sites of intensive athletic competition.³² While the iconography of all these dedications was not violent—neither the temple, the shields, nor the statue represents military violence per se—they participated in a practice of using material culture

29 For this parallel, see Castriota, *Myth*.

30 On the use of monuments to transform momentary victories into more enduring political power, see Hölscher, “Images of War,” 15–16 and Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*, 91. For contestation over the memory of the Persian Wars, see Yates, *States*.

31 Kansteiner et al., *Der Neue Overbeck*, 2:634–638.

32 For the competition of monuments, see Hölscher, “Die Nike”; Scott, *Delphi and Olympia*; and Hölscher, *Krieg und Kunst*, 128–130.



FIGURE 9.7 Nike. Marble victory monument at Olympia dedicated by Naupaktians and Messenians, made by Paeonius of Mende, 425–420
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF OLYMPIA. IMAGE: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:NIKE_OF_PAIONIOS,_OLYMPIA_ARCHAEOLOGICAL_MUSEUM_\(16149728289\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nike_of_Paionios,_Olympia_Archaeological_Museum_(16149728289).jpg) (CAROLE RADDOTO)

to commemorate and justify acts of collective violence, focusing the community on moments of victory in the past and on divine sanction for continuous conflict in the future.³³

3 The War Dead: Casualty Lists in the Public Cemetery

Another important space in which Greeks used objects to respond to acts of collective violence was the public cemetery, where military casualties were buried.³⁴ The public cemetery with the best documentation was located just outside the walls of Athens, where burials started in approximately 500, while the Athenian democracy was still young. At this time of political and social transformations, there was a fundamental shift in the treatment of the war dead. Earlier, they had been buried on the battlefield or transported home for burial at the hands of kin; in about 500 they began to be cremated consistently on the battlefield. The ashes then were transported back to Athens, where they awaited a ceremony of public burial that took place once a year (Thuc. 2.34.1–7). In this ritual, the ashes were organized according to political tribes and put on display for three days in a public space, most likely the Agora. People came to visit the remains and bring offerings. In a major shift from previous commemorative practices, mourners did not have the bodies of their own dead to lament. They did not even have the ashes of their own dead to mourn; these were mass remains on display. They were then transported to the public cemetery, the so-called *δημόσιον σήμα*, which lay to the northwest of the city walls in the vicinity of the Academy Road. The graves were marked by casualty lists, and a leading member of the community delivered a funeral oration over the deceased, a somewhat formulaic text that described the *polis* more than the dead.³⁵

The stones marking the graves were large slabs of marble, usually undecorated, that listed the names of the dead (fig. 9.8). Sometimes they were accompanied by additional text, such as a description of where people died or an epigram. Significantly, the names of the dead were listed by first name alone

33 On the future tense of commemorations, see Franchi, “Memories.”

34 On the public cemetery, see Arrington, “Topographic Semantics” and Arrington, *Ashes*, 55–90. For burials prior to the Persian Wars, see Bergmann, “Beyond Victory and Defeat,” 116–117.

35 On the casualty lists, see Arrington, “Inscribing Defeat” and Arrington, *Ashes*, 90–123. On the funeral oration, see Pritchard, *Athenian Funeral Oration*. Loraux, *L'invention* remains fundamental.

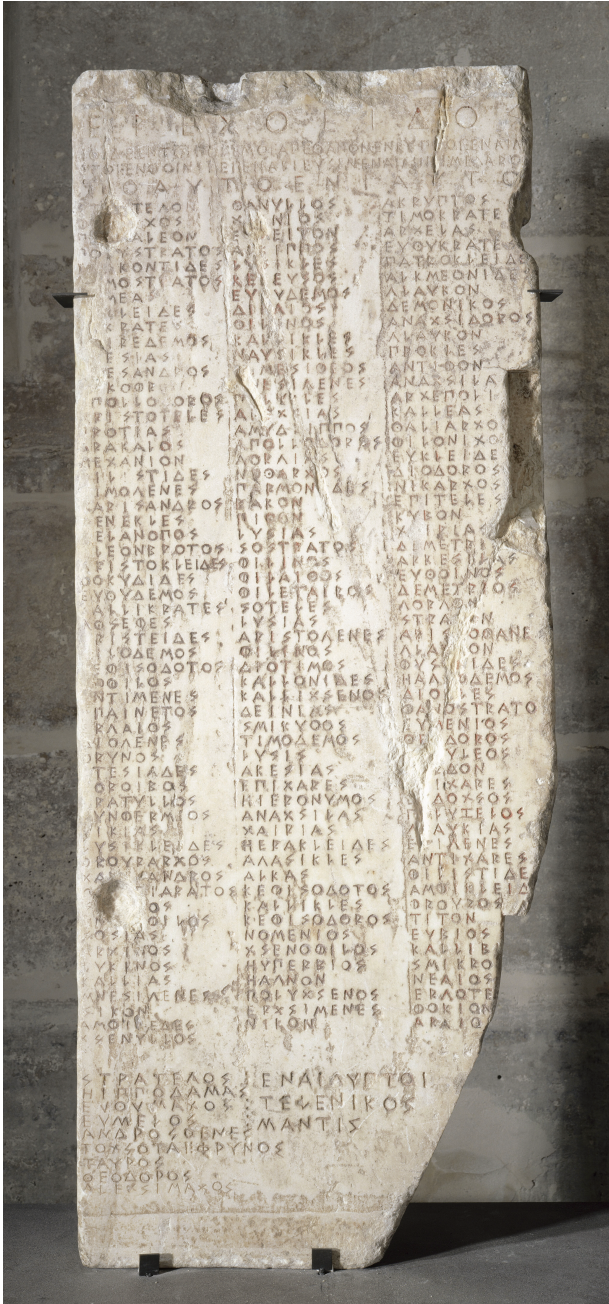


FIGURE 9.8
 Casualty list for the tribe
 Erechtheis, marble. Per-
 haps 460
 PARIS, MUSÉE DU
 LOUVRE MA 863.
 IMAGE: HERVÉ
 LEWANDOWSKI ©
 RMN-GRAND PALAIS/
 ART RESOURCE, NEW
 YORK

and organized according to the political tribes of Athens. Patronymics were absent. Political identity and participation in a collective effort thus became paramount and received visual and material form on the stones.

Clearly many aspects of this burial ritual emphasized the community rather than the individual deceased. From the display of the bones and ashes to the format of the lists to the language of the oration, the collective and political identity rather than the individuality or heroism of the deceased was paramount. The *polis* assumed the familial role of burying the dead.

It is not a coincidence that the public cemetery took shape as the political community came into being, a nascent democracy in which participation and cohesion were paramount. The public cemetery and its rituals were part of the development of a civic sphere of life in early Classical Athens. To focus on individual exploits of the dead was elitist and could offer an opportunity for surviving families to make claims to authority or status on the basis of the accomplishments of their ancestors. The names on the casualty lists and the uniform burial for all the dead equalized the citizens who came from many different paths of life, declaring that the way they died and the city for which they fell gave them value, not how they had lived or the families to which they had belonged. The public cemetery was a space in which the city came together as a community to honor the fallen and to define itself through their choice to accept sacrifice for the greater good.

Despite the general absence of images from casualty lists—depictions of battle as such—the stones still had visual properties. Large and imposing, their marble surfaces glittered in the sun. They were clean, solid, and austere. And they performed a visual function with social and cultural significance: they transformed the loss of life into claims about the resolve and survival of the community. In their form, they emphasized strength, community, and resilience. Over the years, gathered together on the landscape, they became focal points or sites of memory that families could visit. Tending a grave of the war dead and tying a ribbon around a casualty list or pouring a libation, a mourning mother, for example, remembered her son (fig. 9.9). At the same time, her act honored those others whose ashes were intermingled with her son's and who were named on the same stone. As other mourners across the city participated in similar rituals, the stones became sites of aggregate remembrance.

One problem the public cemetery faced was that, unlike the sanctuaries, which served as arenas for the commemoration specifically of victories, they contained the dead from crushing defeats as well.³⁶ The names on the stones

36 On this problem, see further Arrington, "Inscribing Defeat."



FIGURE 9.9 Visit to the grave, probably the public graves, because of the unusually high number of fillets on the stelae and the placement of multiple monuments near each other. Attic terracotta white-ground lekythos attributed to the Vouini Painter, ca. 460–450
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. 35.11.5. PURCHASE, ANONYMOUS GIFT, 1935

testified to the very real human cost of violence and conflict, and sometimes to the political and military failures of the community. This could cause challenges to those looking at the stones. The grief of family members confronting loss could be heightened by the negative outcome of the conflict. To remember the dead from the triumph at Marathon was one matter, to remember the dead from the debacle at Sicily another. Members of the political community faced with such a monument were forced to confront the costs of their collective decisions. In response, the lists presented an austere form trading on their size and on the strength of stone, and they conveyed little information about the conflicts in which the deceased fell. The orator in the funeral speech, too, spoke more about the city and its ideals than what actually had happened in the military engagements of the year. The stones and the burial rituals served to emphasize attitudes more than events, and they commemorated the city—and its ongoing existence—as much as the passing of the dead. Over the decades, as the casualty lists accumulated on the landscape, they created a narrative that extended beyond any specific event. Like the juxtaposition of mythical and historic battles in sanctuaries, they testified to a nearly continuous history of risk, toil, and struggle (ἀγών). Those mourners who came for the annual burial cemetery would see that the recent dead were but the latest in a long history of conflict. And male citizens looking at a sea of stones that had been erected year after year had to face the fact that they, too, might be on a casualty list some day.

8 The Living: Mourning the Departed

When mourners visited the remains of the war dead on display or buried in the public cemetery, they could bring objects with them. Thucydides explicitly says: “On the third day before burial they make a tent and display the remains of the departed, and everyone can bring to his kin whatever he wants” (Thuc. 2.34.2). One object they might bring were white-ground lekythoi (fig. 9.10).³⁷ These were relatively small ceramic unguent containers, easily portable. When corpses were present in the burial ritual, scented oils or perfumes within the vase could be applied to the body. They were also typical grave offerings deposited within or above tombs. The lekythos shape had existed for centuries; the white ground was new. It allowed for the painting of more colorful scenes with a more varied brushstroke than the red-figure technique of vase painting. Production of white-ground lekythoi began around the same time as the public

37 On the white-ground lekythoi, see Oakley, *Picturing* and Arrington, *Ashes*, 239–274.



FIGURE 9.10 Visit to the grave. Attic terracotta white-ground lekythos attributed to the Inscription Painter, ca. 460–450
BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN, ANTIKENSAMMLUNG V.1.3245. IMAGE: JOHANNES LAURENTIUS/ART RESOURCE, NEW YORK

cemetery developed, and, while they were not used exclusively in public burials, they may have been developed for this new ritual.

These vases facilitated the interaction of individuals with the ritual of public burial. We can think of them as props or extensions of the bodies of mourners, allowing people to participate in the new ritual by bringing an offering and depositing it alongside the ashes or at the tomb, with decoration that was fitting for the occasion. The new technology of white-ground lekythoi was particularly meaningful at a time when burial rituals had changed so dramatically, with the individual dead no longer accessible to families in their homes but on display en masse in a public space. The vases were brought from the home, thereby connecting hearth and cemetery, private and public spheres.

In contrast to the types of art discussed so far in this essay, these vases offered not only a means to engage with the collective ritual but also a canvas for more individual and personal expressions. The iconography relates to private attitudes toward death, the city, and collective violence that people may have held. The differences from the public imagery are striking. Apart from a few



FIGURES 9.11A–B Visit to the grave. Attic terracotta white-ground lekythos attributed to the Bosanquet Painter, ca. 440–430
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. 23.160.39. ROGERS FUND, 1923

representations of public graves and battle scenes on the lekythoi, much of the iconography is quite different from what was shown in the public sphere (on battlefields or in the agora, sanctuaries, and public cemetery). Most often, the lekythoi (white-ground and red-figure alike) show mourners singly or in pairs visiting a tomb monument to engage in rites of remembrance. They bring offerings for the grave like fillets or vases, including lekythoi (figs. 9.9–11). The mourners are usually women, who were closely linked in Greek thought and life with the home as a physical and social structure (οἶκος). The scenes are not triumphalist or victorious; on the contrary, they are quiet and retrospective, pendants to the departure scenes described above. They underscore the role of the οἶκος (*oikos*) in tending the graves of the dead and preserving memories, and they offer windows onto private grief.

At the tomb, there is often another figure present, who can be identified as the deceased on the basis of his clothing (military or traveler garb), close physi-

cal connection to the grave (sitting on it or touching it), hand gestures (pointing at the earth below or gesturing in greeting toward the visitor), or the presence of a small winged spirit hovering above his head. The identification, however, can be ambiguous, in part because he was otherwise portrayed as he appeared in life, as a living person. This deceased was not necessarily someone who died in battle, and it also could be a woman. In some cases, however, the military garb of the deceased suggests that he was a military casualty. For example, in figure 9.10, a young girl (possibly a slave) visits a grave and carries on her head a basket of offerings (fillets and pomegranates). Her left hand is open in greeting, and her right hand proffers a lekythos. The figure across from her is a hoplite, no doubt the deceased. He is either merely characterized as a warrior, or he died in battle.

The grave monuments in these scenes serve an interesting visual function. Many of them are a size, shape, and material that did not actually exist.³⁸ And when the lekythoi are found in private graves, there is no correlation of the images of funerary monuments on the lekythoi with the actual markers at the grave. Sometimes they may show a public tomb for the war dead. More often, it seems that they show a generic monument: it is the idea of the tomb as a site of encounter and remembrance that they convey, where memory depends on the personal act of tending the tomb, an act most often performed by women.

Ancient Greeks do seem to have believed that it was possible to see the dead. Written sources such as epic poems and tragedies have ghosts appear to the living, and there are numerous references to the dead wandering above ground.³⁹ The lekythoi posit that this type of vision was possible. Ritual activity could trigger the appearance of the dead. In figure 9.11, for example, just as the woman visiting the grave pours a libation, the deceased holding spears in his hand appears, gesturing toward her.⁴⁰ The lekythoi on the steps of the tomb are the traces of repeated visits to tend the grave and remember the dead, and they show remembrance as an ongoing act. In other cases, mourners on the lekythoi do not seem to respond to the figure of the deceased.⁴¹ With the figure of the dead, seen or not, the lekythoi configure graves as sites where they were present and aware of the rituals that were performed at their tomb. This presence responded to the double absence of the war dead from

38 For the representations of grave monuments, see Nakayama, "Untersuchung."

39 Hom., *Il.* 23.54–107; Aesch., *Pers.* 681–842; Aesch., *Eum.* 94–139; and Eur., *Hec.* 1–58. See also Johnston, *Restless Dead* and Parker, *Polytheism and Society*, 290–316.

40 On the significance of the placement of his feet, which signals that he has just arrived at the tomb, see Arrington, "Fallen Vessels."

41 E.g. Athens, National Museum 1959 and Beazley Archive Pottery Database 209240.



FIGURES 9.12A–B Visit to the grave. Attic terracotta white-ground lekythos attributed to the Achilles Painter, ca. 450–445
 BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN, ANTIKENSAMMLUNG 1983.1. IMAGE: JOHANNES LAURENTIUS/ART RESOURCE, NEW YORK

families, because death removed the warrior from life, and the public burial ritual removed the corpse from the home. The white-ground lekythoi reimagine the presence of the dead: present at the grave site and present in the mind of mourners.

Such imagery provided comfort to survivors and encouraged ongoing acts of personal remembrance. By shifting remembrance from the acts of a collective group to the lives of single persons, however, they also emphasized the role for the individual within the community and thereby opened a space for dissent from the public rhetoric. The grief of families focalized the act of valor of a single deceased rather than the equality of the dead. In addition, their grief drew attention to the downsides of the decisions of the community by throwing into focus the human losses in military conflict, which the funeral oration avoided. The personal consequences of collective violence are evident in figure 9.12, where an old man visits a tomb and sees a younger man with military equipment; it is presumably his son who died in battle. The father openly

grieves at the sight, putting a hand over his face. It is worth emphasizing the degree to which this image departs in multiple ways from the civic ideology governing public burial. Where the city took the role of a family member and buried the dead as part of a larger group, the image emphasizes family and intergenerational relationships. The dead as an individual is portrayed, and he is portrayed in a particular way: glorious in his nudity, musculature, and balanced pose. In fact, he looks remarkably like a bronze statue. This is far from the homogenizing public rhetoric, where all war dead are united through their act of daring on behalf of the city. The father's grief when confronted with the tomb and sight of the dead could bring glory to the fallen and the community, but it could also lead to questioning the steep price of the conflict itself.

9 Conclusions

Collective violence was marked across the Classical Greek landscape at multiple temporal moments. Trophies were erected on the battlefield soon after a specific battle. The dedication of spoils in sanctuaries occurred later, and the transformation of spoils into statues or buildings took place over the course of years. In the Athenian public cemetery, the burial of the dead occurred annually, with a short or medium time lag following a battle and the commemoration of the dead. These different temporal moments of commemoration created various types of memories and served varying social functions. A battlefield trophy, designed originally to be impermanent, provided an immediate response to the trauma of conflict. Spoils brought the results of battle home and made a victory tangibly present to the community. A statue in a sanctuary crystallized a victory as particularly momentous and significant; it created a cultural memory, singling out an island of time on which a community could focus and linking a community to its deity. The casualty lists, in contrast to all these victory monuments, emphasized not so much discrete events as people and their attitudes, celebrating their character and the city for which they died. *Lekythoi*, meanwhile, allowed mourners to think of their own dead and to remember those qualities that the civic ideology left aside.

Together, these traces of collective violence created a continuum of physical marks across the cityscape and landscape: in the countryside, in the suburbs of the city, in the agora, on the acropolis. Reminders of violence were inescapable and unavoidable to the people living and moving through their daily lives. And, by enumerating the dead from victories and defeats alike in the cemeteries, and by conflating distant past and ever present in the sanctuaries, the monuments

and memorials created a narrative of ongoing struggle and strife. In short, the material responses to collective violence made it more likely that Greeks would continue to fight bloody wars. It was a cycle that helped the community cohere, but it came at a considerable cost.

Material culture was not passive but active. Rather than merely record events that took place, it shaped perceptions, expectations, and concepts about what had happened in the past and what would happen in the future. It made violence normal and justifiable and created a discourse of cultural hegemony and divine justification. Despite its quiet grandeur, Classical art could create havoc.

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Remembering and Forgetting the Sack of Athens

David C. Yates

Abstract

This essay explores the complex interplay of victory and defeat in the Athenian commemorative tradition regarding the Persian sack of Athens in 480 and 479 BCE. According to the Athenians, Athens had been wholly evacuated, so the Persians sacked an empty city. The material damages sustained, particularly to the temples, were emphasized in order to underscore the determination of the Athenians who went on to defeat the Persians at Salamis and subsequently establish hegemony within the Greek world. Yet our non-Athenian sources make clear that some Athenians remained in the city and died trying to defend the Acropolis. Although the fate of these few has often struck moderns as similar to that of the three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae, none of the many surviving Athenian commemorations of the war ever mentions them. This essay argues that the Athenians were in fact quite sensitive to the negative implications of their city's downfall, implications closely tied to the loss of human life on the Acropolis. Despite the conspicuous commemoration of material damage, the violence done to the few who remained threatened to challenge the sense of agency that stood at the heart of the Athenian narrative of courageous resistance and ultimate victory. The Athenians had manifestly emerged from the Persian War as both victims and victors, but they had no interest in that kind of story. Their postwar bid for hegemony within the Greek world was based in no small part on their record of victory against the Persians, and that was the story they told themselves and others.

Keywords

Greece – Persian War – Athens – memory – violence – war – trauma – Acropolis – Xerxes – Herodotus – Themistocles

In September of 480 BCE, Xerxes's massive invasion of Greece neared its putative target, the city of Athens.¹ Almost twenty years earlier, the Atheni-

1 All dates are BCE unless otherwise noted. My thanks to the editors for inviting me to con-

ans had aided the Ionians in a failed attempt to revolt from Persian rule. A subsequent Persian campaign to punish the Athenians had fallen to defeat at Marathon. Now, ten years on from that defeat, Xerxes planned to make an example of Athens. The city had been largely abandoned by the time he arrived, but its few remaining defenders were killed, and the city was almost completely destroyed in two separate sacks, one in 480 and another the following year. The impact of this cultural trauma on the Athenians is hard to overstate, and its commemoration continued to occupy a conspicuous place within Athenian social memory of the war for centuries to come. Indeed, the sack of Athens was arguably the most prominently commemorated episode of the Persian War at Athens. Although the Athenians were eager to recall the material loss they suffered at the hands of the Persians, they ignored those few who died trying to defend the Acropolis, the sacred heart of the city. This cannot be attributed simply to the relatively low number of Athenians involved. As Jeffery Alexander argues, “such failures to recognize collective traumas, much less to incorporate their lessons into collective identity, do not result from the intrinsic nature of the original suffering.”² Rather, collective trauma is a socially mediated attribution.³ Our answer to why the Athenians ignored the human loss that accompanied the sack of their city lies not in the event itself, but in the commemorative strategies they subsequently adopted in order to understand and ultimately make use of that trauma.

I argue that the Athenians reframed the loss of their city in a story that emphasized Athenian agency.⁴ Loss became an intentional sacrifice that led to victory over the Persians and subsequent hegemony within the Greek world. In such a master narrative, the violence to Athenian bodies perpetrated by the Persians in the sack proved an embarrassment that was generally forgotten and occasionally denied.⁵ I begin with the dominant Athenian narrative of the sack, then turn to our sources for the failed defense of the Acropolis, and conclude by examining those factors that disposed the Athenians to ignore this particularly poignant aspect of a much-commemorated trauma.

tribute to this volume and to Debby Boedeker, David Konstan, and Kurt Raaflaub for providing many helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

2 Alexander, “Toward a Theory,” 26 (= Alexander, *Trauma*, 30).

3 Alexander, “Toward a Theory”; Alexander, *Trauma*; and Alexander and Breese, “Introduction.”

4 For the importance of agency in recollecting and commemorating collective violence and trauma, see Ammann and Rhyder, “Transforming.”

5 For master narratives generally, see Yates, *States*, 14–16 with earlier bibliography. For their use in the study of collective trauma, see Alexander, “Toward a Theory,” 12–15 (= Alexander, *Trauma*, 17–19).

1 The Sack of Athens in the Athenian Tradition

The Athenians erected several prominent monuments to their victory over Persia. Athens and Attica were dotted with them. The Panhellenic shrine at Delphi boasted no fewer than four massive Persian War monuments erected by the Athenians, more than any other single state.⁶ The battles of the war became a staple in Athenian discourse. Yet, even within such a crowded tradition, the sack of Athens held pride of place. When the Athenians returned to their devastated city, they began to rebuild but decided to leave their temples in ruins.⁷ The charred remains of these prominent temples would have rooted the Persian sack deeply within Athenian collective memory. Even when a rebuilding program finally began some thirty years later, clear efforts were taken to retain the ruins within the city and throughout Attica.⁸ Nowhere was this policy clearer than on the Acropolis. There, architectural features of the lost temples were conspicuously built into the new retaining walls in such a way as to evoke their original appearance.⁹ More conspicuous still were the ruins of the temple of Athena Polias. This temple had been the most sacred of the city and stood at the center of the Acropolis. When the rebuilding program began, the gleaming new Parthenon, Erechtheum, Propylaea, and a host of smaller structures were all positioned around the scorched ruins of the old temple.¹⁰ It was a striking commemoration, all the more so because this temple (and the other remain-

6 Yates, *States*, 118 n. 103.

7 Ferrari, "Ancient Temple"; Kousser, "Destruction and Memory"; and Proietti, "Fare i conti," 78–84. The decision to leave temples in ruins is often associated with the so-called Oath of Plataea, some versions of which include a prohibition against rebuilding temples destroyed by the Persians. The authenticity of the Oath (and especially the prohibition against rebuilding temples) is debatable, however. For more, see Yates, *States*, 189–191 and Proietti, *Prima*, 242–248 with earlier bibliography.

8 On ruins and the shaping of collective memories of violence, see further the essay by Angelika Berlejung in this volume.

9 Meiggs, *Athenian Empire*, 506; see also Dinsmoor, "Burning of the Opisthodomos at Athens II," 315; R. Rhodes, *Architecture and Meaning*, 32–34; Hurwit, *Athenian Acropolis*, 142; Hurwit, *Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 70; Ferrari, "Ancient Temple," 25; Kousser, "Destruction and Memory," 270–271; Hölscher, "Athen," 140; Shear, *Trophies*, 8; Garland, *Athens*, 116; Meyer, "Acropolis," 96–97; and Proietti, *Prima*, 237–242.

10 The temple was not completely destroyed by the Persians; see Hurwit, *Athenian Acropolis*, 144; Hurwit, *Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 70; and Hurwit, "Space and Theme," 23–25. Enough remained to catch fire in the late fifth or early fourth century; see Xen., *Hell.* 1.6.1 with Dinsmoor, "Burning of the Opisthodomos at Athens I." The exact date at which it ceased to be used is uncertain, however; see Dinsmoor, "Burning of the Opisthodomos at Athens I" and "Burning of the Opisthodomos at Athens II"; Ferrari, "Ancient Temple"; Hur-

ing ruins) likely continued to function as active cult sites.¹¹ The sack of Athens was deeply rooted both in the physical space of the city and in its daily routines.

To understand the larger master narrative that these ruins were intended to evoke in the minds of the Athenians who saw them, we must turn to the narrative treatments of the sack of Athens in our surviving Athenian authors. Three prove particularly illustrative. In the first book of his history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides includes a speech delivered by an Athenian delegation to Sparta, in which the events of Xerxes's invasion receive considerable attention. Its dramatic date is 432/1. Although the content is almost certainly a product of Thucydides's historical imagination, we have every reason to believe that he is representing popular Athenian notions of the past in this case.¹² The orator Lysias produced an even more detailed account in his *Epitaphios Logos*, or *Funerary Oration*, written in the early years of the fourth century. Lysias was not himself an Athenian but a long-time resident alien. Nevertheless, his speech (whether intended for delivery or for publication as a rhetorical display) conforms to the conventions of the formal speeches delivered at the state funeral for those Athenians who had fallen in warfare.¹³ Its tone was explicitly patriotic and naturally reproduced dominant Athenian commemorative narratives.¹⁴ A few years later, the orator Isocrates adopted much the same tone when he wrote a speech advocating for a Panhellenic war against the Persian Empire.

wit, *Athenian Acropolis*, 143–144; Hurwit, *Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 76–78; Hurwit, “Space and Theme,” 23–25; Linders, “Location”; Kousser, “Destruction and Memory,” 270; and Meyer, “Acropolis,” 103.

- 11 Kousser, “Destruction and Memory,” 269 and Proietti, *Prima*, 234; see also Ferrari, “Ancient Temple,” 26 n. 95 for other temples that continued to be used after the Persian sack.
- 12 De Romilly, *Thucydides*, 242; Raubitschek, “Speech,” 37–39; Walters, “We Fought Alone”; Loraux, *Invention of Athens*, 156; Hornblower, *Commentary*, 1:118; Tzifopoulos, “Thucydidean Rhetoric,” 102; Konstantinopoulos, “Thuk. 173,2–74,3”; Konstantinopoulos, “Persian Wars,” 66; and Rood, “Thucydides' Persian Wars,” 144.
- 13 Loraux, *Invention of Athens*, 8–10; Ruffing, “Salamis,” 18; and Todd, *Commentary*, 163–164. As an almost annual speech performed in Athens at a widely attended public funeral, the *Funerary Oration* would have acted as a “trauma drama,” in the words of Alexander and Breese, “Introduction,” xxvii: “these scripts are not descriptions of what is; they are arguments for what must have been and, at least implicitly, of what should be. The truth of cultural scripts emerges, not from their descriptive accuracy, but from the power of their enactment. Trauma scripts are performed as symbolic actions in the theaters of everyday collective life.” See also Alexander, “Toward a Theory,” 12–15 and Alexander, *Trauma*, 61–63.
- 14 For more on the genre of the *Funerary Oration*, see Walters, “Rhetoric”; Loraux, *Invention of Athens*; Steinbock, *Social Memory*, 49–58; and Pritchard, *Athenian Funeral Oration*.

He argued that the campaign should be led by Athens and Sparta, but his presentation of events (especially the Persian War) is designed to show Athens's particular claim to that honor.¹⁵

Thucydides's Athenian ambassadors arrive as the Spartans and their allies were debating war against Athens. The ambassadors were dispatched on other business but take the opportunity to address the Spartans, hoping to dissuade them from declaring war by showing them what kinds of enemies the Athenians were likely to be (Thuc. 1.72.1). They skip over the mythological period and begin with the Persian War (1.73.2). After a brief comment on the battle of Marathon (1.73.4), they turn to the events surrounding the sack of Athens and the subsequent battle of Salamis, which constitute the bulk of their argument from history (1.73.4–75.1).¹⁶ The ambassadors recall that the Athenians, realizing that they could not face the Persians by land, took to their ships with their entire population (πανδημεί, 1.73.4). The resulting battle at Salamis proved decisive, as was shown by Xerxes's subsequent withdrawal from Europe. After this brief recapitulation, the ambassadors provide three arguments proving that credit for the victory belongs to Athens. The first and second—that they provided the most ships and the wisest general (Themistocles)—are addressed in short order (1.74.1). The third and longest demonstrates that the Athenians had also shown “the most unstinting zeal” (προθυμίαν ἀοκνοτάτην, 1.74.1–4).¹⁷ It is here that the sack of Athens, merely implied before, garners explicit attention. All the states north of Athens had already surrendered to the Persians, and the rest (including the Spartans and their Peloponnesian allies) had abandoned them.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the Athenians decided to continue the fight against Persia by leaving their city and destroying their own property (1.74.2).¹⁹ The ambassadors go on to explain that, although the Spartans and their allies

15 For the special place of Athens in Isocrates's Panhellenic vision, see Perlman, “Isocrates' ‘Philippus’: A Reinterpretation”; Perlman, “Isocrates' ‘Philippus’ and Panhellenism”; Gillis, “Isocrates' *Panegyricus*,” 56–60; De Romilly, “Isocrates,” 6; and J. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 207–210.

16 De Romilly, *Thucydides*, 244 and Tzifopoulos, “Thucydidean Rhetoric,” 96.

17 Thucydides has another Athenian speaker make this same point, along with the first, later in his history; see Thuc. 6.83.1 with De Romilly, *Thucydides*, 245–246. I have generally sought out existing translations (noted in parentheses when used), but on occasion I supply modifications or even my own version to bring out a particular point.

18 Hornblower, *Commentary*, 1:119; Konstantinopoulos, “Thuc. I 73,2–74,3,” 200; Konstantinopoulos, “Persian Wars,” 67; Debnar, *Speaking*, 52; and Zali, “Herodotus,” 39 for more on the Athenian jab at the Spartans here.

19 This momentous decision appears again both in Themistocles's speech before the Spartans and Pericles's first speech; see Thuc. 1.91.5 and 1.144.3 with Rood, “Thucydides' Persian Wars,” 146–148 and T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 71–72.

still had cities, Athens was no more; although the allies fought for themselves, the Athenians saved both themselves and the rest (1.74.3).²⁰ Had they, like others, feared for their land or had they become dispirited because of its loss, Persia would have won with ease (1.74.4). The ambassadors conclude that the Athenians deserve their current empire because of their decisive contribution to the victory over Persia (1.75.1).²¹

Lysias's treatment of these events in his *Epitaphios Logos* is situated within a longer historical narrative that includes the earlier battles of Thermopylae and Artemisium. It is the Spartan defeat in the former that forces the Athenians to withdraw from the latter and leaves Athens exposed to attack (Lys. 2.27–32).²² Again, the Athenians are faced with the reality that they cannot oppose the Persians on both land and sea.²³ The choice is between deserting their homeland to continue the war and joining the barbarians in enslaving the other Greeks, as many had already done (2.32–33).²⁴ As in Thucydides, the choice has clear implications for the other Greeks, but Lysias is more explicit in assigning elevated motives to the Athenians who choose to abandon their city “on behalf of Greece” (ὕπερ τῆς Ἑλλάδος), despite the poverty and exile their plan will entail (Lys. 2.33).²⁵ Women and children are deposited on the nearby island of Salamis; the allied fleet assembles there as well (2.34). Lysias devotes a substantial portion of his narrative to imagining the fears and emotions of those present, both on Salamis and in the fleet (2.34–37).²⁶ The fate of Athens and Attica appears prominently. The Athenians lament their situation, “understanding that their city was now deserted, that their land was being ravaged and overrun by the barbarians, that the temples were being burnt, and that horrors of every kind were close upon them” (2.37, tr. Lamb). The battle of Salamis ensues, narrated with similar pathos (2.38–40). Lysias asks who would not wonder at the daring of such men, who “abandoned their city and embarked on their ships, and pitted their own few lives against the multitude of Asia” (2.40, tr. Lamb). He ends, like Thucydides, by confirming that the Athenians proved most responsible for the victory at Salamis (2.42).²⁷ Themistocles and the number of ships are mentioned again, but, instead of zeal, Lysias focuses on the

20 Raubitschek, “Speech,” 37.

21 Kierdorf, *Erlebnis und Darstellung*, 102; Wickersham, *Hegemony*, 39; Ruffing, “Salamis,” 14–15; and Zali, “Herodotus,” 39.

22 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 155; Ruffing, “Salamis,” 18; and Todd, *Commentary*, 239.

23 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 157.

24 The Medism of the Greeks north of Athens is noted earlier (Lys. 2.29).

25 Ruffing, “Salamis,” 18 and Todd, *Commentary*, 245.

26 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 156 and Loraux, *Invention of Athens*, 169.

27 Kierdorf, *Erlebnis und Darstellung*, 103 and Konstantinopoulos, “Thuk. 1 73,2–74,3,” 197.

experience of the Athenian sailors. Nevertheless, the Athenian victory and the sacrifice that made it possible continues to justify their subsequent empire (2.43–44).²⁸

Isocrates's account of the sack of Athens in his *Panegyricus* is quite close to (and likely in dialogue with) that of his fellow orator, Lysias.²⁹ Here, too, the failure of the Spartans to hold Thermopylae forces the Athenian fleet from Artemisium and exposes Athens to danger (Isoc. 4.92). He is careful to mention that every significant Greek state north of Athens had already submitted and was now fighting for the Persians, but, like Thucydides, he also emphasizes the failure of Athens's Peloponnesian allies to aid in its defense (4.93).³⁰ Rather than betray their unworthy allies and receive exceptional rewards from Xerxes for doing so, the Athenians decide to evacuate their entire population from the city (ἄπαντα τὸν ὄχλον τὸν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως, 4.96). Again, strategic necessity plays a role, as the Athenians lack the capacity to face the Persians on land and sea simultaneously, but Isocrates also imputes to the Athenians broader reflections on the nature of leadership. While lesser states might submit for safety, it is the responsibility of those who claim hegemony to be destroyed rather than fall into bondage (4.95).³¹ The evacuation of the city inspires Isocrates to ask “how could men be shown to be braver or more devoted to Greece than our ancestors, who, to avoid bringing slavery upon the rest of the Greeks, endured to see their city made desolate, their land ravaged, their sanctuaries rifled, their temples burned, and all the forces of the enemy closing in upon their own country” (4.96, tr. Norlin). The Panhellenic tone, visible here and elsewhere in the passage, parallels that of Lysias and reflects Isocrates's larger intellectual program.³² As the Athenians prepare to fight at Salamis alone, they are at last joined by their Peloponnesian allies, who realize that the defeat of the Athenians at Salamis would mean their own defeat as well (4.97).³³ Isocrates expressly

28 Ruffing, “Salamis,” 19.

29 For the possibility that Isocrates is here reacting to Lysias, see Gillis, “Isocrates' *Panegyricus*,” 53; Pownall, “Panhellenism,” 19; and Todd, *Commentary*, 162.

30 Buchner, *Der Panegyrikos*, 103; Gillis, “Isocrates' *Panegyricus*,” 66; Eucken, *Isokrates*, 156; Porciani, “L'ideologia,” 33; and Konstantinopoulos, “Thuk. 1 73,2–74,3,” 200.

31 Usher, *Isocrates*, 171.

32 For Isocrates and Panhellenism, see Perlman, “Isocrates' ‘Philippus’ and Panhellenism,” 370–371; Perlman, “Panhellenism,” 25–26; Sakellariou, “Panhellenism,” 129; Cawkwell, “Isocrates,” 324–326; Cawkwell, *Greek Wars*, 6; De Romilly, “Isocrates,” 9–12; Green, “Metamorphosis,” 6; Flower, “From Simonides to Isocrates,” 93–95; and Mitchell, *Panhellenism*, xix.

33 Buchner, *Der Panegyrikos*, 107; Gillis, “Isocrates' *Panegyricus*,” 67; and Konstantinopoulos, “Persian Wars,” 67.

refuses to indulge in the dramatic description of the battle that inspired Lysias and ends instead with a direct argument about hegemony—his central topic in the speech.³⁴ He asserts that “our city was so far superior while she stood unharmed that even after she had been laid waste she contributed more ships to the battle for the deliverance of Greece than all the others put together” (4.98, tr. Norlin). Because this battle secured the salvation of Greece, it is Athens that deserves hegemony (4.99).³⁵

Our Athenian authors tell different stories about the sack of Athens, each for different rhetorical purposes, yet some significant commonalities emerge.³⁶ Each embeds the sack of Athens within a narrative about the subsequent battle of Salamis.³⁷ The evacuation itself emerges from strategic necessity, although both Lysias and Isocrates also cite a loftier attachment to Greek freedom.³⁸ However motivated, our Athenian narratives suggest that the evacuation was a complete success that included the entire population of the city. The point is made explicitly by Thucydides and Isocrates; Lysias strongly implies it. All of our authors emphasize the extent of the damage done in Attica. Thucydides speaks of the Athenians abandoning their city and destroying their own property. Lysias and Isocrates note pillaged land as well as the temples burned and looted. This final point would have had particular resonance in light of the intentional ruins in Athens, still visible almost a century later for the Athenian audiences of Lysias and Isocrates. The losses suffered during the Persian sack are always mentioned to support the argument that the Athenians thereby made a greater contribution to the victory than the other allies.³⁹ This argument is reinforced in Thucydides and Isocrates with explicit criticism of the fair-weather support of Athens’s Peloponnesian allies.⁴⁰ Finally, all three sources agree that the actions of the Athenians before and during the battle of Salamis served to justify Athenian hegemony within the Greek world.

In short, the trauma of the Persian sack was embedded within a story of determination and triumph that critically reserved significant agency for the Athenians themselves.⁴¹ Thucydides’s insistence that the Athenians destroyed

34 For this refusal as a direct reaction to Lysias, see Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 156; Usher, *Isocrates*, 172; and Todd, *Commentary*, 243.

35 Buchner, *Der Panegyrikos*, 108; Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 157–158; and Eucken, *Isocrates*, 156.

36 Ruffing, “Salamis,” 21.

37 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 157 notes the prominence of the evacuation of Athens within the Salamis narratives that appear in the orators generally.

38 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 160.

39 Konstantinopoulos, “Persian Wars,” 67.

40 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 161; see also Jameson, “Decree,” 204.

41 The monuments of the Acropolis have been interpreted to support a similar commemo-

their own property (τὰ οἰκεῖα διαφθείραντες, Thuc. 1.74.2) rather than suffering it to be destroyed is particularly notable in this regard.⁴² Thucydides, Lysias, and Isocrates are our three most extensive Athenian narratives of the Persian sack, but brief references in our other Athenian sources suggest close familiarity with the same basic master narrative.⁴³ In these similarities we can glimpse the outlines of what most Athenians would likely have called to mind when they saw the ruins left within their city.

2 Human Loss

The material loss suffered by the Athenians during the Persian sack of their city was central to the larger master narrative that gave the prominent commemorations of that event meaning. None of our sources suggests (and some implicitly deny) that any Athenians died in the sack. Rather, the evacuation is complete, and the Persians occupy and devastate an empty city and countryside. The confidence of our Athenian sources is surprising in light of the almost certain fact that some Athenians did remain in Attica, and a few even mounted an ultimately failed defense of the Acropolis. This tradition is quite different from the one represented by our Athenian sources above. There, a consistent and largely uniform narrative of events is easily visible, but, in the case of the Acropolis defenders, it is difficult to establish the basic facts of what occurred. The weakness of the tradition regarding the human cost of the sack suggests that the omission of the Athenian sources we examined above was no accident. Rather, the Athenians deliberately ignored and perhaps even actively suppressed the memory of those who died during the Persian sack.

Our earliest source for the failed attempt to defend the Acropolis comes from Herodotus. He begins along much the same lines as our Athenian sources. Strategic necessity has forced a total evacuation of Attica (*Hist.* 8.40–41). The

rative narrative; see Ferrari, “Ancient Temple,” 27–31; Kousser, “Destruction and Memory,” 271–272; and Meyer, “Acropolis.” For the representation of loss as a sacrifice for victory in Greek commemoration more generally, see the essay by Nathan T. Arrington in this volume.

42 On this phrase (with Thuc. 6.82.4), see Classen and Steup, *Thucydides*, 1:210. The word itself reappears in the same speech, telling in the passive, when the Athenians contemplate what would have happened to the other Greeks if the Athenians had become dispirited, “as though destroyed” (ὡς διεφθαρμένοι: 1.74.4).

43 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 155–161 and Ruffing, “Salamis.” For more on the Persian policy of looting and destroying Greek temples, see Rung, “Burning.” For Greek notions of vengeance for those wrongs, see n. 119.

Peloponnesians refuse to defend the Athenians by land, and the frustration of the latter is noted specifically (8.40). When Xerxes arrives, he finds the town of Athens empty (αἰρέουσι ἔρημον τὸ ἄστυ, 8.51.2). But, in Herodotus, the Acropolis is still defended by “some few Athenians” (τινας ὀλίγους ... τῶν Ἀθηναίων). They are the treasurers of the temple (ταμίας τοῦ ἱεροῦ) and “poor men” (πένητας ἀνθρώπους), who have reinforced the Acropolis defenses with doors and wooden planks. Herodotus mentions two reasons for their refusal to evacuate: poverty and an oracle. Poverty is, at first glance, self-explanatory. Evacuation from Attica required some means, and these people did not possess them. The oracle in question had been delivered to the Athenians at Delphi some time earlier, and it claimed that all would fall to the Persians except for the wooden walls (7.141.3–4). The Athenians decided that the wooden walls referred to the fleet (7.142–143), but a few believed that the oracle referred to the Acropolis, because it had once been protected by wooden walls, and they stayed behind to defend it.

Despite the uninspiring force that remained and the ramshackle defenses they added to the Acropolis, they put up a stout defense. At least two direct assaults failed.⁴⁴ Negotiations failed as well (Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.52.2). Xerxes was at a loss for a considerable amount of time (ἐπὶ χρόνον συγχρόν) and managed to take the Acropolis only by stealth (8.52–53).⁴⁵ Herodotus portrays the Athenian defenders in heroic terms.⁴⁶ When their wooden stockade was set alight, those defenses are said to have betrayed the Athenians, and even then “they were nevertheless (ὁμῶς) continuing to defend themselves” (8.52.1). When

44 Herodotus's account lacks specificity on this point, but two distinct assaults prior to the final and successful attack can be discerned. The first begins with a volley of flaming arrows that sets the wooden defenses on fire and ends with a direct attack on the defenders (*Hist.* 8.52.1). After negotiations fail, the defenders roll stones against Persians who are approaching the gate in an apparent second attack (8.52.2). It is unclear if other attacks preceded the final sneak attack during the “long period” in which Xerxes was at a loss (8.52.2).

45 Herodotus explains that a small group of Persians scaled a part of the Acropolis so steep that it had been left undefended by the Athenians (*Hist.* 8.53.1); for the exact location, see Dontas, “True Aglaurion.” The exact length of time that Xerxes was at a loss is debatable. Sealey, “Again the Siege,” 188–190 provides the most detailed discussion, but see also Bury, “Aristides,” 416; Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:439; Munro, “Xerxes' Invasion,” 304; Burn, *Persia*, 435–436; Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion*, 203; Lehmann, “Bemerkungen,” 278 n. 10; Lazenby, *Defense*, 156; Asheri, *Erodoto*, 254; Strauss, *Battle*, 70; and A. Bowie, *Herodotus*, 139–140.

46 Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:437–438 and Gauer, “Parthenonische Amazonomachie,” 40 identify some dismissive references to the group, particularly as Herodotus introduces them and provides their motivation (*Hist.* 8.51), but even so their fight is manifestly presented in a far more positive light; see Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:439.

peace was offered, they “did not even listen” (οὐδὲ λόγους ... ἐνεδέχοντο) and fought back all the more (8.52.2). Their deaths are equally striking. Once their position became hopeless, some jumped from the walls;⁴⁷ others fled to the temple as suppliants, only to be murdered by the Persians in what the Greeks considered an extreme act of impiety (8.53.2).⁴⁸ When word of what happened to the Athenians on the Acropolis reached the Greek fleet at Salamis, it set off a panic, and some contingents fled before a formal meeting of the war council could be called to confirm the decision to depart (8.56).

There are a number of problems with Herodotus’s story, leaving aside its total absence from the dominant Athenian narrative. It is not entirely clear how the two motives—poverty and the oracle—work here. Presumably the treasurers, who were drawn from Athens’s highest property class (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 8.1), had the means to escape and so were motivated by the oracle, but are we to imagine that the poor were doubly motivated or responding only to their lack of means?⁴⁹ Earlier, Herodotus noted that this interpretation of the oracle was advanced by “some of the elders” (*Hist.* 7.142.1), not the poor.⁵⁰ If poverty was the principal factor, why were so few affected? Most societies, including

47 Asheri, *Erodoto*, 255–256 and A. Bowie, *Herodotus*, 140 both see a close connection between the suicide of these defenders and the myth of Aglauros, whose precinct Herodotus uses to locate the place from which the Persians stole upon the Acropolis. But there were two versions of the myth, and each scholar presumes Herodotus/the defenders themselves had a different one in mind. In the older version, Aglauros disobeys Athena, falls into madness, and jumps from the Acropolis. Bowie thinks that the defenders may have had this version in mind and plunged to their deaths believing that they had offended the gods by misreading the oracle. We might also attribute this connection to Herodotus himself instead or as well. Asheri thinks the other, later version of the myth a more natural fit, which would make Herodotus the earliest source for it. Here, Aglauros courageously jumps from the Acropolis to save the city. It is, however, impossible to know whether Herodotus or the Athenians themselves were motivated by a particular version of this myth. If Herodotus intends his readers to see a connection, he does not make it explicit. Van Rookhuijzen, “Where Aglauros Once Fell Down,” 37–43 suggests that perhaps the entire episode is a fabrication of Herodotus’ Athenian informants.

48 The first oracle that advised the Athenians to flee refers to the temples themselves dripping with sweat, shaking with fear, “as blood gushes darkly from the tops of their roofs” (Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.140.3; tr. Purvis). These lines may anticipate the murder of the suppliants. There is naturally some debate whether the wording (or even the substance) of the oracles is authentic (and so predates the sack of Athens) or a subsequent invention, written with the events of the sack in mind; see Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle*, 124–128; Bowden, *Classical Athens*, 100–107; and Vannicelli, *Erodoto*, 465–466 with earlier bibliography.

49 Sealey, “Again the Siege,” 184 rightly notes the curious fact that all of the treasurers would then seem to have adopted the same minority interpretation of the oracle.

50 Garland, *Athens*, 41 conjectures that the poor should have been somewhat more open to evacuation because they had less property to lose.

democratic Athens, contain rather more have-nots than haves. Even the word Herodotus uses for the poor (πένηται) does not refer to the poorest Athenians, the destitute (πτωχοί), but to the working poor.⁵¹ This group (and those even poorer) should be much larger than simply “some few Athenians.”⁵² He does mention five hundred prisoners who were captured in Attica at this time in a later book (9.99.2), but that would not be enough to account for the short-fall.⁵³ It is also surprising that the few defenders Herodotus describes managed such a vigorous defense for such a long time.⁵⁴ Xerxes’s use of negotiators and finally a sneak attack suggests that his own massive army was incapable of otherwise forcing the issue.⁵⁵ We must also address the somewhat confusing fact that the fall of the Acropolis set off a significant panic in the fleet at Salamis. News of the Persian victory interrupted a meeting that had been specifically called to debate where the fleet would face the Persians “since Attica had now been given up for lost” (8.49.1, tr. Purvis). If that was the general assumption, surely the defeat of a few stubborn and poverty-stricken defenders would have come as no surprise.⁵⁶

We do have other sources for the failed defense of the Acropolis. A substantial fragment from the physician Ctesias, who wrote a history of the Persian Empire a few decades after Herodotus, preserves the outlines of his account. Reference to a defense of the Acropolis also appears in the enigmatic Themistocles Decree, a third-century BCE inscription, found in Troezen, that alleges to be a copy of the resolution that (among other matters) detailed the evacuation of Athens. Later biographers of the Athenian general Themistocles, Cornelius Nepos and Plutarch, also touch on the sack or its immediate circumstances. The travel writer Pausanias includes two passing references. Finally, we have the orators Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides, who mention these events briefly in their speeches. Far from clarifying the Herodotean version, these

51 The distinction is made explicitly in Aristophanes’s *Wealth* (*Plut.* 550–554); the other passages in which Herodotus uses πένηται suggests that he too understood the group to be poor but not utterly destitute (see *Hist.* 1.133.1, 2.47.3, and 4.65.1), as would be expected from a word that ultimately derives from the verb for manual labor (πένομαι).

52 For concerns about Herodotus’s explanation here, see Burn, *Persia*, 431 and Gauer, “Parthenonische Amazonomachie,” 40.

53 For more on these prisoners, see Burn, *Persia*, 430–431; Green, *Greco-Persian Wars*, 160; and Flower and Marincola, *Herodotus*, 275.

54 Bury, “Aristides,” 416; Sealey, “Again the Siege,” 184; Robertson, “True Meaning,” 10 n. 16; Strauss, *Battle*, 70; and Bowden, *Classical Athens*, 104.

55 Sealey, “Again the Siege,” 189–190.

56 For more on this incongruity, see Bury, “Aristides,” 416; Grundy, *Great Persian War*, 356–357; Knight, “Defense,” 174; Hignett, *Xerxes’ Invasion*, 203; Sealey, “Again the Siege,” 187; Lazenby, *Defense*, 157; Bowden, *Classical Athens*, 104; and Garland, *Athens*, 74.

authors raise even more questions.⁵⁷ None agrees with Herodotus about the identity of the defenders. A damaged portion of the Themistocles Decree seems to mention treasurers along with priestesses who are to be left on the Acropolis (ML 23.11–12), but Nepos mentions only priests, and he pairs that group not with the poor, but with some older men (Nep. *Them.* 2.8). Plutarch notes only the older men (Plut. *Them.* 10.5).⁵⁸ Aelius Aristides briefly refers to “some who were left behind out of necessity” (*Or.* 3.251) but does not specify further.⁵⁹

Such disagreements obviously have implications for the numbers involved. Like the poor, the old should be a significant group. Plutarch, at least, refers to them as “many” (πολλοί).⁶⁰ Treasurers and priestesses (or priests) would comprise a much smaller number. There is also the question of motivation. Poverty disappears with the poor. Pausanias still includes the misunderstood oracle (Paus. 1.18.2), but he is the only later source to do so. Plutarch claims that the old were too aged to leave (διὰ γῆρας ὑπολειπόμενοι, *Them.* 10.5); the Themistocles Decree states that the priestesses and treasurers who remained on the Acropolis were ordered to defend the “things of the gods.”⁶¹ Nepos includes the old men in this charge as well (*ad sacra procuranda*, *Them.* 2.8), so he likely envisions that they remained for reasons other than their infirmity—or, at least, not

57 Grundy, *Great Persian War*, 357.

58 Knight, “Defense,” 174–175 attempts to argue that Herodotus has misunderstood his own sources, who (he alleges) agreed with Nepos and Plutarch and stated that those left behind were the old. He makes much of Herodotus’s phrase ἀσθενεῖν βίου, which does include a word that otherwise means weakness, but in conjunction with βίος it certainly refers to poverty. Herodotus’s meaning is unambiguous, which even Knight concedes. To assume that the phrase caused Herodotus to misunderstand what he was told, almost certainly by more than one informant, seems an unwarranted stretch.

59 We cannot necessarily conclude that Aelius Aristides has Plutarch’s older men in mind, because he earlier states that that group had been transferred to Salamis (*Or.* 3.247), a claim that forms the basis for the restoration of a similar clause in the damaged text of the Themistocles Decree; see ML 23.10 with Jameson, “Decree,” 212–213. For more on the possible relationship between Plutarch and Aelius Aristides, see Graninger, “Plutarch,” 310 n. 9.

60 It should be noted that Nepos contradicts Plutarch here, specifying that the old men were “few,” but he does not agree with Plutarch about the motivation of these older men (see below). Some editors have emended the text of Plutarch so that the word “many” (now πολλόν) modifies the pity felt for the old men. There is, however, no textual basis for the change, which seems rather to emerge from the apparent contradiction with our other accounts; see Frost, *Plutarch’s Themistocles*, 122. But, as our discussion of the sources for this event must make clear, contradiction alone is no firm basis for any such emendation.

61 The order is largely reconstructed (ἐν τῇ Ἀκροπόλει μένειν φυλάττοντας τὰ τῶν θεῶν, ML 23.11–12) but stands to reason.

just for that reason. It is not, however, immediately clear what moveable items of religious or intrinsic value the Athenians would have left behind.⁶²

The nature of the fight that follows is also confused. Plutarch mentions no fight on the Acropolis at all. His older men simply vanish from the narrative once their abandonment on the shore has given him an opportunity to reflect on the pathos of the moment.⁶³ Dio Chrysostom's speech reproduces what he claims to be a Persian version, which similarly ignores any battle but simply states that Xerxes "captured and razed the city of the Athenians and sold into slavery all who did not escape" (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 11.149, tr. Cohoon). Nepos notes the killing of the priests he says were ordered to stay on the Acropolis. No mention is made of the older men. But the act is presented as a slaughter, not a fight (*interfectis sacerdotibus*). Indeed, he is quite clear that the Acropolis had no defenders (*nullis defendentibus*, *Nep. Them.* 4.1). Justin, whose epitome relies on a lost history of the first century CE, goes even further when he states that Xerxes burned an empty city and "since he was not able to savage people with weapons, he savaged the buildings with fire" (*quoniam ferro in homines non poterat, in aedificia igne grassatur, Epit.* 2.12). Only Pausanias and Ctesias seem to have a true defense of the Acropolis in mind. Pausanias identifies the place where the Persians secretly stole in behind the Athenian defenders (Paus. 1.18.2). The details he provides—the sneak attack and the oracle—suggest that he is following Herodotus.⁶⁴ Ctesias, on the other hand, provides a very different picture of the defense. The Athenians flee to Salamis (φεύγουσιν εἰς Σαλαμῖνα). Some remain on the Acropolis and do mount a defense, but they, too, ultimately flee during the night (τέλος κάκείνων νυκτὶ φυγόντων, *FGRH* 688 F13.30). The panic that falls over the Greek fleet as a result of the fight is generally ignored. Nepos alone mentions it in connection with the fall of the Acropolis (*Nep. Them.* 4.2), but the fact is even more bedeviling here because he maintains that no actual engagement (aside from the slaughter of the priests) took place.⁶⁵

62 Lehmann, "Bemerkungen," 277–278; Pritchett, *Greek State*, 102–103; Green, *Greco-Persian Wars*, 167; Samons, *Empire*, 31–32; and Blösel, *Themistokles*, 250.

63 Lazenby, *Defense*, 154 expresses serious reservations about the stories of the elderly being left behind. Frost, *Plutarch's Themistocles*, 122 suggests that Plutarch is not attempting to correct Herodotus but merely to elicit pity by "writing a stock departure scene."

64 For Pausanias' use of Herodotus generally, see Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide*, 97, but it is worth noting that Pausanias is far more dismissive of the Acropolis defenders than his likely source, as he omits their bravery against the Persians and characterizes their subsequent defeat as a slaughter (Μῆδοι κατεφόνευσαν Ἀθηναίων τοὺς πλείον τι ἐς τὸν χρησμόν ἢ Θεμιστοκλῆς εἰδέναι νομίζοντας καὶ τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ξύλοις καὶ σταυροῖς ἀποτειχίσαντας).

65 Diodorus twice notes the panic that gripped the fleet and does connect it with the dev-

Our surviving evidence for the human loss associated with the sack of Athens is a mess. An uncertain group of people with uncertain motives fought a stunningly effective or largely perfunctory engagement with the Persians that may or may not have set off a major panic in the nearby Greek fleet at Salamis. Yet we cannot simply conclude that no such event occurred. Herodotus is too reliable a source, writing well within living memory of the sack.⁶⁶ The inherent inadequacies of his account require some explanation other than pure invention. Some of the contradictions of our later sources might be explicable as conscious corrections of Herodotus. The absence of the poor might very well reflect an ancient reaction to the improbability of the claim. Two fourth-century authors, Aristotle and the local Athenian historian Cleidemus, explain how funds were provided for those serving in the fleet.⁶⁷ The substitution of the elderly might respond to Herodotus's claim that the contrary interpretation of the oracle was advanced by "some of the elders" (τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ... μετεξέτεροι, 7.142.1), but that would itself be curious because our later sources do not generally connect the oracle to the defense of the Acropolis.⁶⁸ In fact, the insistence that the priests (and the elderly) had been ordered to defend the Acropolis may have been intended to suggest that their actions were part of the planned evacuation as well.⁶⁹ Herodotus's account of the Persian War

astation of Attica (Diod. Sic. 11.15.2 and 11.16.2) but makes no mention of any attempt to defend the Acropolis, perhaps a result of the abbreviations involved in his reworking of Ephorus's longer account.

- 66 Even Van Rookhuijzen, "Where Aglauros Once Fell Down," 30, who is otherwise quite skeptical of Herodotus's strict historical reliability in this case, concedes that the Persian siege occurred.
- 67 Aristotle (or the author of the *Athenaion Politeia*, if not Aristotle) claimed that the Council of the Areopagus had raised the money to pay the rowers to embark on the ships after the generals had issued the evacuation order (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 23.1). Plutarch attributes to Cleidemus a story that Themistocles used a religious pretext to search the baggage of those evacuating and confiscated the money he found to pay the crews (Plut. *Them.* 10.4 = Cleidemus, *FGrH* 323 F21). For more on these contradictory versions, see Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion*, 199–200; Podlecki, *Life*, 19; Frost, *Plutarch's Themistocles*, 120–121; P. Rhodes, *Commentary*, 287–289; P. Rhodes, *Athenian Constitution*, 257–258; Lazenby, *Defense*, 154–155; Ruffing, "Salamis," 26–27; and Harding, *Story*, 104–105. It is perhaps notable in this context that Isocrates characterizes those who were evacuated from Athens as an ὄχλος (Isoc. 4.96), which would evoke images of the poor masses of the Athenian population.
- 68 Gauer, "Parthenonische Amazonomachie," 40 presupposes that the elders who had advocated for the defense of the Acropolis according to Herodotus (*Hist.* 7.142.1) did in fact remain.
- 69 Jameson, "Decree," 214; Lehmann, "Bemerkungen;" and Blösel, *Themistokles*, 249–251.

was by no means considered sacrosanct in antiquity, but it remains notable that he exerted so little influence over the subsequent tradition in this case.⁷⁰ Scholarly focus has generally fallen on the resulting historical problems.⁷¹ For our purposes, however, the weakness of the commemorative tradition itself is more telling.

It is worth reiterating that none of our sources for the Athenians who died during the sack of Athens is Athenian, which is odd because the Athenians were otherwise quite keen to talk about the Persian sack of their city.⁷² This silence extends beyond our surviving literary sources. Athens was the most prolific producer of Persian War monuments in the ancient world. Aside from the ruins noted above, the Athenians erected numerous grand monuments to their actions at the battles of Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis, and Plataea. The ongoing war with Persia, pursued under the auspices of the Delian League down to the middle of the fifth century, also garnered significant attention.⁷³ Yet, among this rather substantial body of material, no commemoration I am aware of honors those who fell defending the Acropolis.⁷⁴ John Barron has argued that an epigram on a heavily damaged monument refers to that event, but subsequent work on the inscription casts serious doubt on his con-

70 Priestley, *Herodotus*, 161–162.

71 Some have suggested that the Athenians invested far more in holding the Acropolis than even Herodotus allows; see Bury, “Aristides,” 416–417; Munro, “Some Observations,” 321; Munro, “Xerxes’ Invasion,” 303; Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:437; Burn, *Persia*, 431; Sealey, “Again the Siege”; Robertson, “True Meaning,” 10 n. 16; Green, *Greco-Persian Wars*, 160–161; Bowden, *Classical Athens*, 103–104; and Garland, *Athens*, 63–64. But, against this possibility, see Grundy, *Great Persian War*, 358; How and Wells, *Commentary*, 2:252; Knight, “Defense,” 175; Hignett, *Xerxes’ Invasion*, 203; Masaracchia, *La battaglia*, 182; Lazenby, *Defense*, 153; and Balcer, *Persian Conquest*, 260. Van Rookhuijzen, “Where Aglauros Once Fell Down,” however, argues that Herodotus’s account, far from a reliable record of the event, has been much influenced by preexisting and developing commemorations associated with the Acropolis and its immediate surroundings.

72 A case can be made that the Themistocles Decree is an Athenian source, but see Johanson, “Inscription” against this possibility. Even if we conceded that the substance of the decree is ultimately Athenian, its reference to the loss of life on the Acropolis would remain brief and implicit.

73 For the Athenian commemoration of the Persian War, see West, “Greek Public Monuments”; Gauer, *Weihgeschenke*; Flashar, “Die Sieger”; Hölkeskamp, “Marathon;” Gehrke, “Marathon (490 v. Chr.) als Mythos” (= Gehrke, “Marathon: A European Charter Myth”); Jung, *Marathon und Plataiai*; Ruffing, “Salamis”; Bridges, Hall, and Rhodes, *Cultural Responses*; Buraselis and Meidani, *Marathon*; Buraselis and Koulakiotis, *Marathon*; Carey and Edwards, *Marathon*; and Yates, *States*.

74 Strauss, *Battle of Salamis*, 71.

clusions (*IG* I³ 503/4).⁷⁵ Even if (for the sake of argument) we conceded Barron's interpretation, the difference in emphasis would remain. Barron himself concludes that the Acropolis defenders would not have been the sole subject of the monument, which must have honored a rather larger group of those who fell fighting the Persians. The lines that may refer to the Acropolis defenders were, moreover, almost certainly added later.⁷⁶ The defenders of the Acropolis, if mentioned at all, would have been an afterthought to a monument otherwise dedicated to the more prominent engagements of the Persian War.

To the silence (or near silence) of our Athenian sources we might add some possible examples of intentional suppression. The process of creating the powerful ruins that populated the Acropolis involved not just the retention of certain ruins but the disposal of others. Certain temples, their architectural features, and even the charred statues of the gods were retained.⁷⁷ But the vast majority of the statues were removed, buried as fill for the Acropolis's new retaining walls. Rachel Kousser has suggested that their removal was not by chance.⁷⁸ These statues had been hacked and so, like the intentional ruins, preserved signs of Persian violence, but here they mimicked violence against human bodies: "faces smashed, their throats slit, and their hands and feet broken off."⁷⁹ Kousser argues that in this case the signs of Persian violence were simply too real.⁸⁰ The effect could only have been heightened for those who knew the Acropolis defenders and what they had likely endured at the hands of their Persian attackers. If these statues were buried because they evoked violence toward human bodies (and there is a fair amount of conjecture here), it would add support to the conclusion that the Athenians intentionally suppressed—literally buried—indications that Athenian bodies had suffered any violence during the Persian sack of their city.⁸¹

75 Barron, "All for Salamis"; but see now Meyer, "Bilder und Vorbilder," 299–305; Petrovic, *Kommentar*, 158–177; Petrovic, "Battle," 47–53; E. Bowie, "Marathon," 204–212; Keesling, "Callimachus Monument," 117–118; and Proietti, *Prima*, 144–152 with earlier bibliography.

76 Meiggs and Lewis, *Selection*, 54–55; Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, 221–222; Barron, "All for Salamis," 140; Meyer, "Bilder und Vorbilder," 302; Petrovic, *Kommentar*, 166; E. Bowie, "Marathon," 206; Keesling, "Callimachus Monument," 117–118; and Proietti, *Prima*, 144.

77 For temples and architectural features, see pp. 191–192 above. For the statues still visible to Pausanias in the second century CE, see Hurwit, *Athenian Acropolis*, 141 and Proietti, "Fare i conti," 81.

78 Kousser, "Destruction and Memory," 272; see also Proietti, *Prima*, 231.

79 Kousser, "Destruction and Memory," 272.

80 See also Korres, "On the North Acropolis Wall," 184.

81 Kousser, "Destruction and Memory," 274 raises the possibility that the suffering of the Acropolis defenders may have been recalled through the sack of Troy; see also Ferrari, "Ilioupersis." Although the suffering Trojans are often depicted sympathetically, we should

Another example may be lurking in the evolving myth of the Amazonian attack on Athens. The Athenians often brought their preexisting myths into analogy with current events. Several were associated with the Persian War, most notably the Trojan War, the Centauromachy, the Gigantomachy, and the Amazonomachy.⁸² While each formed a complex relationship with several components of the Persian War, there are strong reasons for associating the Amazonomachy with the sack of Athens.⁸³ The myth had previously featured an expedition, led by Heracles and/or Theseus, against the Amazons in their distant homeland. But in the wake of Xerxes's invasion, popular retellings at Athens began to focus on an Amazonian invasion of Greece, culminating in an attack on the Acropolis.⁸⁴ The myth was further brought into alignment with the actual sack of Athens as the Amazons were said to have been based on the Areopagus (Aesch. *Eum.* 685–690), the very place that Herodotus says the Per-

not automatically assume that they were meant to evoke the Acropolis defenders. The sack of Troy was, for example, depicted on the Stoa Poikile (along with the battle of Marathon), but the scene in question likely featured the sons of Theseus, Acamas and Demophon, prominently and positively; see Castriota, *Myth*, 128. Something similar has been posited for the Parthenon's northern metopes; see Castriota, *Myth*, 168. For more on the valorization of the Greeks on the Parthenon metopes, see Castriota, *Myth*, 165–174 and Shear, *Trophies*, 110–112, 118–119. The prominent Athenian presence among the Greeks would, in this case at least, make a direct parallel between the Trojans and the Athenians difficult, although not impossible.

- 82 For more on the connection between these myths and contemporary stereotypes of the Persians, see Woodford, "More Light," 162; Boardman, "Herakles"; DuBois, *Centaur and Amazons*; Shapiro, "Amazons," 114; Tyrrell, *Amazons*, 9–21, 49–52; Vickers, "Persepolis," 13; Blok, *Early Amazons*, 441; Stewart, "Imag(in)ing"; Hölscher, "Images and Political Identity," 163–169; Hurwit, *Athenian Acropolis*, 169–170; Hurwit, *Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 124; J. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 178; Johnson, "Persians"; Meyer, "Bilder und Vorbilder," 289; Whitaker, "Art and Ideology," 166; Shear, *Trophies*, 117–120; and Honigman, "Commemorative Fictions," 80–82.
- 83 Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:438–439; Ras, "L'Amazonomachie," 192; E. Harrison, "Composition," 128; E. Harrison, "Motifs," 295–296; Gauer, "Parthenonische Amazonomachie," 38–40; Castriota, *Myth*, 51; Castriota, "Feminizing," 91; Hurwit, *Athenian Acropolis*, 169; Hurwit, *Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 124; Asheri, *Erodoto*, 253–254; Kousser, "Destruction and Memory," 277; Hölscher, "Athen," 135; Mayor, *Amazons*, 279–283 (with considerable reservations); and Van Rookhuijzen, "Where Aglauros Once Fell Down," 29–37. For connections between the Amazonomachy and other events in the Persian War, see Walters, "Rhetoric," 25–26 n. 42 and Boardman, "Herakles," 14, as well as E. Harrison, "Motifs," 307, 310 and Gauer, "Parthenonische Amazonomachie," 38.
- 84 On the increasing popularity of the Amazonian attack on Athens, see Merck, "City's Achievements," 103–104; Boardman, "Herakles"; DuBois, *Centaur and Amazons*, 59–64; Tyrrell, *Amazons*, 5; Castriota, *Myth*, 44–47; Castriota, "Feminizing," 90–91; and Martini, "Die visuelle Präsenz," 173–179.

sians used as their base during their assault (*Hist.* 8.52.1).⁸⁵ What is particularly notable about this analogy, however, is that it serves as a kind of counterpresent memory.⁸⁶ Although quite close to the actual events of the sack, the Amazonian myth diverged in important ways that served to correct “deficiencies experienced in the present.”⁸⁷ If we can trust our convoluted tradition, the Acropolis was defended by people who failed to meet the ideal image of the Greek male warrior (priests or priestesses, treasurers, the poor, and/or the elderly). The Amazons faced the cream of the Athenian warrior elite, led by no less than Theseus himself. The Persians took the Acropolis and killed its defenders. The Amazons, on the other hand, were heroically defeated, and the Acropolis was saved. Given the close parallels to the sack of Athens otherwise, the Athenians would seem to have touched up their present defeat with a glorious victory in the past.⁸⁸

The Athenians made much of the material losses they suffered as a result of the Persian sack. The temples in particular stood as powerful, daily reminders. Nor were the Athenians unwilling to recall the extreme difficulties suffered by their ancestors who were forced to evacuate their city hastily and stake everything on the naval battle at Salamis. Lysias’s emotive account stands out in this regard.⁸⁹ But no surviving Athenian source recalls the lives lost during the

85 The reconstruction by E. Harrison, “Motifs,” 300–311 of the Amazonomachy depicted on the shield of Athena in the Parthenon yields other possible parallels. To these could be added the figure of an Athenian tossing a boulder from the Acropolis, which recalls the use of large boulders by the Acropolis defenders of 480; see Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.52.2 with Ras, “L’Amazonomachie,” 192 n. 2; E. Harrison, “Composition,” 128–129; and Van Rookhuijzen, “Where Aglauros Once Fell Down,” 35–36.

86 The phrase was coined by Theissen, “Tradition und Entscheidung” but developed further by Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 78–80 (= Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 62–63). Both focus on the power of counterpresent memories to subvert the present and offer opportunities for change, but there is no clear indication that the myth of the Amazons played any such role in this case.

87 Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 62; see also Ammann and Rhyder, “Transforming,” 5. Something similar has been suggested in reference to Euripides’s *Suppliant Women*, which can be read as a kind of corrective to the recent Athenian defeat at Delium; see Foster, “Military Defeat,” 109–111.

88 Stewart, “Imag(in)ing,” 582 and Kousser, “Destruction and Memory,” 277. If we follow those who argue that the oracles advising flight from Athens were invented after the war (see n. 48), those oracles would then represent a parallel effort to touch up the past by making the evacuation of Athens a divine mandate; see Dougherty, “Ships,” 139 n. 16 and Proietti, “Athens,” 84 n. 17.

89 See pp. 194–195. The Troezenians also erected a colonnade in their agora to commemorate the Athenian refugees they received and supported; see Paus. 2.31.7 with Arafat, “Records,” 205–206.

sack of Athens. The uniform silence of our Athenian sources, along with two possible examples of active suppression, suggests that this is no accident of survival. The Athenians had no interest in commemorating the human cost of the Persian sack. Of course, much Persian War commemoration has been lost, and it is possible that a fuller record would show some recollection of human loss within the Athenian tradition. But even if we allow for some lost examples, the overall impression of our Athenian evidence would remain the same. At the very center of one of the most prominently commemorated events of the Persian War—the sack of Athens—stood a total, or perhaps just near total, silence. This silence may go some way to explaining the state of the tradition that does survive regarding the defense of the Acropolis. If not actively maintained within the Athenian memorial community, the personal memories that Herodotus encountered in the 430s may very well have already become too uncertain to reconstruct fully or satisfactorily.⁹⁰ The continued silence of the otherwise loquacious Athenian sources for the Persian War could have only presented additional problems as later historians began to wrestle with Herodotus's version.

3 The Shame and Pride of Trauma

The Athenians who fell defending the Acropolis were not forgotten by their fellow citizens because they were few or because their failed attempt lacked objective historical significance. That is not a sufficient explanation for why events are commemorated as collective traumas. Indeed, the intimate connection between the fallen and the much-celebrated sack of Athens makes any such explanation almost impossible. The answer lies instead in the commemorative strategies the Athenians adopted in the wake of the war. We might naturally think of the politics of memory leading up to and then immediately after the event, but here we encounter an inevitable limitation. The basic facts of the Acropolis's defense—who, why, and with what success—are uncertain; so, too, are the exact relationships between these variables and the major political figures at the time, most notably Themistocles. As it is, such an endeavor

90 For the importance of memorial communities for maintaining collective memories, see Yates, *States*, 12–14 with earlier bibliography. Van Rookhuijzen, “Where Aglauros Once Fell Down” envisions a scenario in which the events Herodotus records in his own account had become quite popular at Athens and were routinely told to visitors. If such had become the case in the late fifth century, we would have to conclude that the practice quickly disappeared in order to account for the silence of our Athenian sources.

would require significant speculation. For our present purposes, it is better to focus on what can be said with confidence. In the years after the Persian War, the Athenians were eagerly pressing their case for hegemony within the Greek world. As we saw in Thucydides, Lysias, and Isocrates, Athenian heroics in the Persian War played a major role in that effort. In this environment, the sack of Athens quickly emerged as a point of both pride and shame, a contradiction defined by the question of agency.

In their own dominant narrative, the Athenians took a bold risk in evacuating their city, a risk that quickly paid off in the stunning naval victory at Salamis. At the same time, the loss of their city and its defenders could be (and sometimes was) interpreted quite differently. Herodotus suggests that the defense of the Acropolis was inspired by political and economic divisions within the Athenian citizenry (*Hist.* 8.51.2) and that it ended, heroics aside, with suicide and slaughter (*Hist.* 8.53.2). Ctesias defines the entire Athenian evacuation as a flight and claims that even the Acropolis defenders fled soon thereafter (*FGrH* 688 F13.30). Dio Chrysostom could speak of the Persians simply taking Athens and selling those who failed to escape into slavery (11.149). This is a far cry from the patriotic retellings of our Athenian sources. Alexander observes that “it is only when narratives of triumph are challenged, when individual deaths seem worthless or polluted, when those who have fallen are seen not as sacrificing for a noble cause but as wasted victims of irresponsible chicanery, that wars become traumatic indeed.”⁹¹ The implications of division, defeat, flight, and enslavement had the potential to undercut rather than underscore subsequent accomplishments on the battlefield.⁹² We need not rely on supposition to conclude that the Athenians were conscious of the negative implications that could be associated with the much celebrated sack of their city. There is, in fact, considerable evidence that they were sensitive to it from the beginning and remained so throughout the Classical period.

No surviving source speaks so directly to this insecurity as Aeschylus's *Persae*, a tragedy about the events of Salamis written a mere eight years after the battle. The play is set in Persia, where news of the defeat is reported to the queen mother and a chorus of Persian elders. As the messenger begins to relay the events that had destroyed the Persian fleet, the queen asks how many Greek ships could inflict such damage (*Aesch. Pers.* 333–336). The messenger responds that numbers counted for nothing. A few lines later the queen picks this general inquiry back up, inviting the messenger to provide greater detail

91 Alexander, *Trauma*, 3.

92 Lazenby, *Defense*, 155 and Garland, *Athens*, 42 note the particular effect evacuation would have had on a people who made much of their autochthony.

about the battle itself (350–352), but in the intervening lines Aeschylus adds a curious exchange about the city of Athens.⁹³ The messenger ends his initial discussion of the numbers by attributing the Persian defeat to divine intervention: “the gods have saved the city of the goddess Pallas” (θεοὶ πόλιν σώζουσι Παλλάδος θεᾶς, Aesch. *Pers.* 347, tr. Sommerstein).⁹⁴ The claim is ambiguous at best. The word *polis* can refer to the physical town or to the political community that inhabits it.⁹⁵ The latter meaning produces a valid claim; the former, a patently false one. But Aeschylus does not simply allow this ambiguity to stand. Rather, he draws added attention to it by having the queen respond: “Then the city of Athens is still unsacked?” (ἔτ’ ἄρ’ Ἀθηνῶν ἔστ’ ἀπόρθητος πόλις, 348, tr. Sommerstein). The question is striking. It forces the audience to confront the ambiguity of the messenger’s comment. The city had been sacked. Even the circumstances of that sack are deftly recalled with the word ἀπόρθητος, the same word used in the oracle that declared that only the so-called wooden walls would remain ἀπόρθητος (Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.141.3).⁹⁶ The reality of the human tragedy that befell the Athenians is intentionally recalled, but the messenger, far from acknowledging this reality, offers rather a bold reinterpretation of the event that preserves Athenian agency: “while she has her men, her defenses are secure” (Aesch. *Pers.* 349, tr. Sommerstein).⁹⁷

It goes without saying that Aeschylus has pressed his characterization of the Persian messenger quite far.⁹⁸ We might rather expect him to make much of the sack of Athens—the one silver lining to the otherwise dismal end of the

93 Broadhead, *Persae*, 118 and Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 181 note a strong break when the queen invites the messenger to recount the battle, which is further highlighted when the earlier topic of numbers is recalled by the queen’s fears that Xerxes had become arrogant because of the number of his ships (πλήθει καταυχίσας νεών, Aesch. *Pers.* 352).

94 Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 67 rightly notes the unprompted nature of the messenger’s claim.

95 For more on the meanings and uses of *polis*, see Hansen, “ΠΟΛΙΣ”; Hansen, “Hellenic *Polis*”; Hansen, “Was Every *Polis* State Centered on a *Polis* Town?”; Hansen, *Polis*; J. Hall, “*Polis*”; J. Hall, “*Rise*”; Van der Vliet, “*Reflections*”; Gehrke, “*States*”; and Strauss, “*Classical Greek Polis*.”

96 Broadhead, *Persae*, 118; T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 53; Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 180–181; Dougherty, “*Ships*,” 136 n. 13; and Lockwood, “*Political Theorizing*,” 383 n. 2. Nor is this the only occasion on which Aeschylus seems to echo these oracles or allude to the sack of the city; see Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 44 and Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 78. See n. 48 for questions of the oracle’s authenticity and date.

97 The sentiment appeared already in Alcaeus (fr. 112.10) and would continue to appear in various contexts; see, e.g., Soph. *OT* 56–57 and Thuc. 7.77.7 with Podlecki, *Aeschylus*, 58; E. Hall, *Aeschylus*, 135; T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 71; and Dougherty, “*Ships*.” For later uses of this same basic line of thought in reference to the sack of Athens, see pp. 214–215.

98 Gagarin, *Aeschylean Drama*, 33–34 and Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 180.

Persian campaign in 480.⁹⁹ But it speaks to the sensitivities of the Athenian audience that Aeschylus went out of his way to summon and then dismiss the implications of defeat surrounding the sack of the city.¹⁰⁰

If the messenger's reinterpretation is any indication, these sensitivities are intimately connected to the loss of life. The messenger's response implicitly concedes the loss of the physical town, otherwise the insistence that the city still stands if its men remain would make no sense. Later, the ghost of Darius also presupposes physical damage when he connects the punishment the Persians have suffered and are soon to suffer with Xerxes's decision to "plunder the images of the gods and set fire to temples: altars have vanished, and the abodes of deities have been ruined, uprooted, wrenched from their foundations" (Aesch. *Pers.* 809–812, tr. Sommerstein).¹⁰¹ The prominent notice of material damage can come as no surprise. Aeschylus's original audience would have still been surrounded by its manifest signs. Yet neither the messenger nor Darius gives any hint of human loss on the part of the Athenians. Indeed, the continued preservation of Athenian manpower is critical to the argument Aeschylus has placed into the mouth of the messenger. In short, material loss is acknowledged, but human loss is not.¹⁰² It can hardly be a coincidence that the general line of Aeschylus's distinction anticipates the later Athenian tradition where the former is commemorated but the latter ignored.

The denial that the *polis* of Athens had, in fact, been sacked gains added meaning within the larger context of the play. It is worth stating the obvious

99 Broadhead, *Persae*, 118. Herodotus presents a telling contrast. He has his Artemisia emphasize the importance of the sack of Athens before the battle (*Hist.* 8.68.2), and an announcement of the event in Persia is met with much celebration (8.99.1). Even after the defeat at Salamis, Mardonius points to earlier victories as reasons for confidence, averring that "none of the men who suppose that they are now complete victors will step off their ships and try to oppose you, nor will anyone from the mainland. Those who have already done so have paid the penalty" (8.100.2, tr. Purvis). A. Bowie, *Herodotus*, 190 is right to see a reference to Thermopylae here, but the more recent events on the Acropolis can hardly be excluded, as Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:515 rightly notes.

100 A. Bowie, *Herodotus*, 137–138 suggests that the exchange was intended to play down the sack of the city, but ignoring it altogether would surely have been a more effective method if Aeschylus had intended to draw attention away from it. For more on the role of Athenian loss in the play, see Proietti, *Prima*, 257–267.

101 Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 311. For more on these lines and what they suggest about the damage inflicted on the city by the Persians, see Perdrizet, "Le témoignage." The material damage inflicted by the Persians also lurks behind the exhortation of the Greeks prior to the battle; see lines 402–405 with Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 70, although more than the actual sack of the city is understood in that passage.

102 Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 67.

here—namely, that the *Persae* is a tragedy about the Persians, not the Athenians. It is the queen, the Persian elders, Xerxes, and his subjects who experience trauma on the stage. The initial reaction of the queen to the news of Xerxes's defeat is an almost textbook rendition of psychological trauma. Fifty-one lines after the messenger begins to explain what happened, she finally speaks: "I have been silent all this time because I was struck dumb with misery by this catastrophe. The event is so monstrous that one can neither speak nor ask about the sufferings it involved" (Aesch. *Pers.* 290–292, tr. Sommerstein).¹⁰³

The violence suffered by the Persian troops is then explained in grueling detail.¹⁰⁴ The waters off Salamis are red with blood; its beaches are choked with Persian bodies (Aesch. *Pers.* 419–421).¹⁰⁵ Those who fell into the water were struck and boned like fish (424–426); those trapped on the nearby island of Psyttaleia were butchered limb from limb (447–471). The use of words normally applied to slaughtering animals—boned (ἐρράχιζον, 426), butchered (κρεοκοποῦσι, 463)—is particularly interesting because it evokes the image of a powerless and passive enemy that has lost all agency.¹⁰⁶ The messenger then adds a rather long description of the hardships endured by the Persian army that attempted to escape to the north (480–514). The passage is remarkable both for its vivid images of starving Persians dying of thirst and exposure and equally for the fact that it is likely a product of fiction.¹⁰⁷ The Persians were well supplied, and they maintained control over northern and much of central Greece until the next year.¹⁰⁸ It is tempting to speculate that Aeschylus attributed to the Persians the sufferings of forced migration, the horrors of which the Athenians must have contemplated as they evacuated their city.¹⁰⁹

103 For more on this silence in Aeschylus, see Broadhead, *Persae*, 103–105; Podlecki, *Aeschylus*, 53; E. Hall, *Aeschylus*, 132; and Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 65.

104 This focus on Persian suffering will be developed further by Timotheus in his *Nome* of the same name; see Hordern, *Fragments*, 122; and Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 151–154.

105 Anderson, "Imagery," 171–172.

106 For more on the imagery of animal slaughter here, see Broadhead, *Persae*, 132–133; E. Hall, *Aeschylus*, 140, 142; T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 112; Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 72; and Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 212.

107 Dumortier, "La retraite"; Kierdorf, *Erlebnis und Darstellung*, 72; Podlecki, *Aeschylus*, 69; Horsfall, "Aeschylus"; Lincoln, "Death," 14–15; Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 76–77; and Lockwood, "Political Theorizing," 393–394. Herodotus reports a somewhat milder version of these hardships (*Hist.* 8.115), but here too doubts have been raised about the strict historicity of the account; see A. Bowie, *Herodotus*, 208.

108 Burn, *Persia*, 471; Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion*, 268–269; Green, *Greco-Persian Wars*, 216–217; and Garland, *Athens*, 88.

109 For more on refugees in Greek warfare, see Raaflaub, "War," 29–30.

But, for all the vividness of the messenger's speech, the trauma of the *Persae* is essentially a domestic one. The action of the play takes place at the Persian court. The fears and laments of wives and parents are noted repeatedly.¹¹⁰ Persia itself and several Persian cities are said now to be empty.¹¹¹ The reversal is unmistakable. The fate that Athens did suffer—to be made empty, in the words of Lysias (Lys. 2.37) and Isocrates (4.96)—is experienced by the Persians themselves.¹¹² But in the case of Persia, the physical structures remain, while the people are lost.¹¹³ In light of the messenger's reinterpretation, it is not Athens that is sacked in the *Persae* but the cities of the Persians.¹¹⁴

Aeschylus's presentation of the sack with its combination of reinterpretation and reversal was not popularly used at Athens. As noted above, most Athenian narratives simply avoided the topic, drawing the sack in patriotic and triumphant tones without acknowledging any possibility that it could be presented otherwise. Nevertheless, we do catch another glimpse of Aeschylus's commemorative strategy a century and a half later in Lycurgus's prosecution of Leocrates, used tellingly when the dominant Athenian narrative is challenged.

Lycurgus, who came to prominence in the 330s, prosecuted Leocrates on a charge of treason for abandoning the city in the wake of the Athenian loss to Macedonia at the battle of Chaeronea. In the course of his speech, Lycurgus claims that Leocrates's friends were citing the famed evacuation of Athens

110 The loss that will be suffered by the Persian families is anticipated several times before the messenger's speech (Aesch. *Pers.* 63–64, 120–125, 131–139) and then stated as a matter of fact once the news of Salamis has been announced (286–289, 537–547); see also Anderson, "Imagery," 170; Gagarin, *Aeschylean Drama*, 37–38; E. Hall, *Aeschylus*, 117; Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 157–158; Bachvarova and Dutsch, "Mourning," 91; and Lockwood, "Political Theorizing," 395.

111 See Aesch. *Pers.* 119, 548–549, 718, 730, 760–761 with Anderson, "Imagery," 169; Kelley, "Variable Repetition," 214–215; E. Hall, *Aeschylus*, 116–117; T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 71; Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 42; Garvie, *Aeschylus*, 88 and 289; and Bachvarova and Dutsch, "Mourning." That the campaign comprised all the young men of Asia and that losses on that campaign were total is noted throughout; see Aesch. *Pers.* 12–13, 59–60, 255, 670 with T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 72.

112 Rosenbloom, "Shouting," 191; Dougherty, "Ships, Walls, Men," 137 n. 14; and Proietti, "Athens," 83 n. 12.

113 T. Harrison, *Emptiness*, 71.

114 The queen's response to Darius's inquiries about the current state of affairs in Persia brings this reversal home quite succinctly: "the fortunes of the Persians are utterly ruined" (διαπεπρόθηται, Aesch. *Pers.* 714, tr. Sommerstein). This word recalls the queen's earlier question to the messenger: "then the city of Athens is still unsacked?" (ἀπρόρητος, Aesch. *Pers.* 348); see Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus*, 90.

before Salamis as a precedent for his own flight (Lycurg. *Leoc.* 68).¹¹⁵ Because it is Lycurgus's belief that Leocrates is a traitor for fleeing his city in a time of need, the comparison strikes at the core of the dominant Athenian narrative inasmuch as it insinuates that the evacuation was a flight, just as Ctesias said decades before.¹¹⁶ Lycurgus responds that the Athenians "did not desert the *polis* (οὐ γὰρ τὴν πόλιν ἐξέλιπον); they simply changed the scene, making a wise decision in the face of the growing menace" (69, tr. Burt modified).¹¹⁷ This is an updated version of Aeschylus's reinterpretation. Here again, the *polis* denotes the political community, which the Athenians had not abandoned. Nevertheless, the inherent ambiguity of the word also allows Lycurgus to indulge in a patriotic fiction, if only implicitly. The Athenians had not *really* abandoned their city.¹¹⁸ Lycurgus is also quick to detail the vengeance that they later won while campaigning in Persian territory, all in somewhat exaggerated terms.¹¹⁹ They destroyed Phoenicia and Cilicia, triumphed at the battle of Eurymedon, and "harassed all Asia" (ἄπασαν δὲ τὴν Ἀσίαν κακῶς ποιοῦντες, 72). Finally, Lycurgus connects these later victories with the first act of vengeance, the battle of Salamis: "not content with erecting a trophy in Salamis, they fixed for the Persians the boundaries necessary for Greek freedom" (73, tr. Burt).

Lycurgus does not reproduce Aeschylus's account. He is reacting to a particular claim that turns his focus from the loss of life on the Acropolis to the earlier evacuation. His account also lacks the violence of Aeschylus's language. Nevertheless, his basic reaction, a combination of reinterpretation and reversal, is the same; so too is its object—namely, to define the Athenians as agents in their own trauma narrative. Even a century and a half on and despite the conspicuous celebration of the material damages suffered, the Athenians were still touchy about the negative implications that the sack of their city could entail.

115 Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 160; Engels, *Rede*, 149; Azoulay, "Lycurgue," 158 n. 23; and Roisman and Edwards, *Lycurgus*, 43 and 152.

116 See pp. 202 and 209.

117 Lycurgus's narrative of the Persian War otherwise follows the dominant Athenian narrative quite closely; see Steinbock, "Lesson," 288; Engels, "Lykurgos' Speech," 27; and Roisman and Edwards, *Lycurgus*, 32.

118 Plato may very well be mocking just such flights of historical reinterpretation when he includes in his own mock funerary oration a claim that the Athenians had emerged from the Peloponnesian War undefeated because they had lost only to themselves (Pl. *Menex.* 243d); see Walters, "Rhetoric," 9–10.

119 Engels, *Rede*, 152. Like our other surviving Athenian sources, Lycurgus viewed the sack of Athens as an event that had already been amply avenged; see Yates, *States*, 212–213. For the contrary view of Alexander the Great, see p. 219.

Lycurgus and Aeschylus are not the only ancient authors to reflect a certain sensitivity to the potentially embarrassing implications of the Persian sack of Athens. In his account of the debates that preceded the battle of Salamis, Herodotus has a Corinthian admiral admonish Themistocles that “when he could demonstrate that he had a *polis*, then he should contribute his opinions” (*Hist.* 8.61.1, tr. Purvis modified). The comment is an obvious slight, intended to silence the outspoken Athenian general, now advocating for a naval battle at Salamis. Themistocles does not take the insult lightly and responds with his own version of Aeschylus’s basic reinterpretation: “he (Themistocles) declared that in fact the Athenians’ *polis* and land were greater than theirs, as long as they had 200 ships of their own, fully manned, for none of the Greeks could repulse them if they were to launch an assault” (8.61.2, tr. Purvis modified). Here, too, the *polis* is the people (with ships), not the physical town.¹²⁰ But now Herodotus’s Themistocles adds a darker implication.¹²¹ Those men, under arms, were not merely a defense but a potential threat to their enemies, even if they were fellow Greeks. Agency again plays a central role. Plutarch, ultimately looking back to Herodotus, preserves something very similar in his biography of Themistocles (*Plut. Them.* 11.3–4).¹²² Justin takes the argument out of a polemical context and makes his Themistocles use it to convince his fellow Athenians to evacuate the city in the first place: “the people, not the walls, are the homeland; the state is located, not in buildings, but in its citizens” (*Epit.* 2.12). Although the dominant Athenian narrative did not recognize or respond to the shameful implications of the Persian sack, reinterpretations like those we see in Aeschylus and Lycurgus seem to have been a sufficiently prominent part of the overall tradition to make an impact on later historians and biographers.

We should mention one final indication that the Athenians were sensitive to the sack of their city, particularly its human cost. The Athenians had first come into conflict with the Persians when they aided the Ionians in their revolt against the Persian Empire in 499. The revolt was led by Miletus, a wealthy and powerful city on the western coast of Asia Minor and an Athenian colony. Six years later, the revolt fell to defeat, and Miletus was besieged and sacked. Those

120 Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:450; Asheri, *Erodoto*, 262; Blösel, *Themistokles*, 193; and Dougherty, “Ships,” 140–142. Podlecki, *Political Background*, 16–17 and Péron, “Réalité,” 5 raise the possibility that Aeschylus is alluding to Themistocles, who may well have said the lines attributed to him either to the Corinthian admiral, Adeimantus, or perhaps to others who disapproved of his naval strategy.

121 Macan, *Herodotus*, 1:450 feels that the explicit threat “spoils the beautiful crescendo of Themistokles’ arguments, being the most direct and brutal, if that indeed was what he meant.”

122 Frost, *Plutarch’s Themistocles*, 129.

who were not killed outright were enslaved and deported to Mesopotamia (Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.18–20). Herodotus notes the effect that the event had at Athens (6.21.2). Public grief was expressed in numerous ways, but he specifies only one: the tragedian Phrynichus produced a play about the event, the *Sack of Miletus*. The topic was unusual. Leaving aside a handful of other historical dramas (including the *Persae*), Greek tragedy focused on the mythological past. Almost nothing of the play remains, but it presumably detailed the human tragedy that accompanied Miletus's fall.

The reaction of the audience was notable. After breaking into tears, they took immediate legal action against Phrynichus and his play. He was fined the considerable sum of 1000 drachmas, and the play was, by law, never to be staged again. Herodotus explains the actions of the Athenians by saying that the play had “reminded them of their own evils” (ὡς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκίγια κακά, *Hist.* 6.21.2, tr. Purvis). It is not the sufferings of the Milesians that provoke the Athenian reaction but what those sufferings implied about “their own evils,” or, more literally, “their evils at home.” The *Sack of Miletus* has traditionally been dated to the years immediately after the event itself, roughly 492, but a later date, in the years after the sack of Athens, has also been proposed.¹²³ If so, we would have even more reason to conclude that the Athenians were especially sensitive to the loss of life that occurred during the sack of their own city.¹²⁴

The evidence that the Athenians were ashamed of the negative implications that could be associated with the sack of their town, as well as their resulting tendency to ignore the human cost of its failed defense, raises the critical question: Why did they not attempt to heroize the fallen? It has often been noted that, in outline, the deaths of the Acropolis defenders match the legend that quickly emerged about the battle of Thermopylae, where a small number of defenders fought courageously against a vastly superior Persian force.¹²⁵

123 Roisman, “On Phrynichos’ *Sack of Miletos*”; Badian, “Phrynichus”; Proietti, “Athens,” 86–90; and Proietti, *Prima*, 249–253; *contra* Rosenbloom, “Shouting,” 171–172.

124 Roisman, “On Phrynichos’ *Sack of Miletos*,” 20 raises this very possibility when he suggests that “perhaps the memories he (unintentionally?) stirred of familiar sites which had been destroyed or of the Athenians who remained in the city and bore the brunt of the Persian attack, were too powerful.” Rosenbloom, “Shouting,” 172 suggests that the play could have evoked similar fears of a potential sack of Athens in the future back in 492, but such a conclusion requires more conjecture about contemporary Athenian perceptions of the Persian threat.

125 A. Bowie, *Herodotus*, 137 provides a good comparison of the two events in Herodotus’s narrative, but see also Burn, *Persia*, 435; Lehmann, “Bemerkungen,” 279; Sealey, “Again the Siege,” 192; Strauss, *Battle*, 71; and Van Rookhuijzen, “Where Aglauros Once Fell Down,” 40–41. Blösel, *Themistokles*, 250 raises a similar point but instead of Thermopylae cites the successful defense of Delphi (Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.36–39).

They fell to defeat, but an honorable one that elevated the fallen to the status of heroes.¹²⁶ Indeed, the similarities in Herodotus's account of the two failed efforts are close enough to suggest that he may have had a comparison in mind, but therein lay the problem for the Athenians and the likely reason they did not take the seemingly obvious step of commemorating their own defeat. In Herodotus's version, the defense of the Acropolis appears as a kind of lesser Thermopylae. Let us set aside the rather obvious fact that it is not related with as much pomp and detail, because that might easily be the result of an Athenian tradition that had already begun to relegate the event to obscurity. The three hundred Spartans were the crème of Sparta's hoplite elite, led by their king, Leonidas, a direct descendant of Heracles.¹²⁷ Whoever the Acropolis defenders were, they do not seem to have fit that description. Perhaps more importantly, Herodotus explains that Leonidas decided to fight and die at Thermopylae because of an oracle that presented Sparta with a choice: "As for you who dwell in the vast land of Sparta, / Either your city of glory will perish, sacked by the Perseids, / Or else the boundaries of Sparta will grieve for the death of a king born of Heracles" (*Hist.* 7.220.4, tr. Purvis modified).¹²⁸ Sparta faced the possibility of being destroyed, but in his death Leonidas successfully wards off the fate that did befall the Athenians despite the efforts of the Acropolis defenders.

The possibility of celebrating an event constantly in the shadow of Sparta's greater accomplishment was likely enough to foreclose the possibility of heroizing those who fell defending the Acropolis. Sparta and Athens were vying for hegemony. The Athenians were eager to compete with the memory of Thermopylae, but they opted for the battle of Artemisium. Here Athenian tradition touted the victory of their fleet over the Persians, while the Spartans, heroics aside, still lost and so forced the victorious Athenians back to Salamis (*Lys.* 2.31–32 and *Isoc.* 4.92).¹²⁹ This rather more flattering comparison connects directly to the dominant narrative of the Persian sack of Athens examined above. The city, now exposed because of the Spartan defeat at Thermopylae, must be abandoned. Whereas the Spartans avoid any material damage to their city, the

126 For the developing myth of Thermopylae in the Classical period, see Albertz, *Exemplarisches Heldentum*, 50–66; Brown, "Remembering"; and Trundle, "Spartan Responses."

127 For more on the composition of the three hundred Spartans, see Matthew, "Was the Greek Defense of Thermopylae in 480 BC a Suicide Mission?," 71–73.

128 The historicity of this oracle is also subject to debate; see Trundle, "Spartan Responses," 156. For our purposes it matters only that it had become associated with the battle quite early on.

129 Walters, "Rhetoric," 5; Nouhaud, *L'utilisation*, 184; and Yates, *States*, 88–89.

Athenians courageously accept the loss of theirs for the greater good. The Spartans, on the other hand, act only to secure their own self-interest. The story is ready-made to justify Athenian imperial ambitions after the war. The sack of Athens plays a central role, but only to the extent that it did not imply defeat. The material loss served the critical function of proving Athenian courage and determination, while simultaneously creating a sharp contrast to the selfish Spartans. Human loss, on the other hand, had the potential to deflate Athenian pretensions by juxtaposing their ultimate victory to the painful defeat that preceded it, all of which invited a much less flattering comparison with Sparta.

4 Conclusion

The sack of Athens by the Persians in 480 and again in 479 represented a significant and abrupt disruption to Athenian collective identity, but its commemoration as a trauma was not the result of an immediate or unreflexive reaction. Rather, the Athenians propagated a carefully constructed recollection that emphasized select elements of that trauma while ignoring others. Central to the dominant commemorative narrative at Athens was the continued agency of the Athenians in the face of adversity. In Thucydides, Lysias, and Isocrates, the material loss suffered underscored what the Athenians had sacrificed for their subsequent victory over the impious Persians at Salamis. As Aeschylus has a bitter Xerxes admit when he finally returns to court, “alas, all who looked upon ancient, hateful Athens died in one stroke, gasping wretchedly on the shore” (*Aesch. Pers.* 974–977). The ruins left throughout Attica and prominently on the Acropolis told a tale of victory, not defeat. At the same time, however, those ruins had the potential to tell a very different kind of story. Herodotus and a handful of subsequent historians, biographers, and intellectuals preserved accounts of a failed effort to defend the Acropolis, in which the defenders are ultimately cast as the victims of Persian violence. Today, nearly two and a half millennia later, we can easily imagine a commemorative narrative that could have celebrated these few doomed defenders as veritable heroes, but the Athenians did not do so. The dominant Athenian narrative simply omitted them and presented the evacuation of Attica as total. There is also evidence of active suppression. Aeschylus’s brief reference to the sack of Athens, along with those few sources that echo it, suggest that the Athenians were quite sensitive to the negative implications that the sack of their city could hold, implications closely tied to the loss of human life on the Acropolis. Despite the conspicuous commemoration of material damage, the violence done to those few Athenians

who remained threatened to challenge the sense of agency that stood at the heart of the Athenian narrative of courageous resistance and ultimate victory.

The Athenians emerged from the Persian War as both victims and victors, but they had no interest in that kind of story.¹³⁰ Their bid for hegemony was based in no small part on their record of victory in the Persian War, and that was the story they told themselves and others.¹³¹ Yet, despite the efforts of the Athenians, the memory of what happened on the Acropolis survived, albeit imperfectly. Collective memory is subject to manipulation but is seldom under the complete control of those who attempt to do so. The Athenians crafted a particular story about their trauma, but it is worth noting that, at almost the same time as Lycurgus was presenting the Athenian defeat as no defeat at all and in any case an offense amply avenged by the Athenians themselves, Alexander the Great was sacking the Persian capital of Persepolis, allegedly as revenge for the Persian attack on Athens, an event that in his mind (and propaganda) was a grievous defeat long in need of requital.¹³² The Athenians, the victors of their own trauma narrative, had become the victims of Alexander's.

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130 The conclusion of this essay generally serves to underscore the critique of the terms “victim” and “victor” by Ammann and Rhyder, “Transforming,” 6: “individuals involved in war and conflict are rarely just the subject or object of violence. Those who suffer violence are also capable of inflicting it; and those who emerge from a conflict as a victor will also have suffered losses.”

131 There is an intriguing parallel in the case of China's state commemoration of the Second World War. There, a dominant narrative of class struggle resulted in very little attention being given to the atrocities of the war. The heroics of Chinese communist guerilla fighters were noted but not the sufferings endured at the hands of their foreign enemies. As Gao, “Revolutionary Trauma,” 70 concludes, “the only central binary that could emerge in the narrative of the War is that of the ‘David versus Goliath’ genre—absolutely not the ‘helpless victim versus ruthless perpetrator’ set.”

132 For more on Alexander's use of the Persian War in his own propaganda, see Yates, *States*, 202–248, esp. 233–240 for the sack of Persepolis.

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The Darkest Hour (?): Military Defeats during the Second Punic War in Roman Memory Culture

Simon Lentzsch

Abstract

This essay deals with the representation and interpretation of Roman military defeats of the Second Punic War in the later Roman tradition, especially in Roman historiography of the late Republican and early Imperial periods. It argues that the ongoing process of reinterpreting these events enabled the Romans to transform these disasters into helpful lessons from their own past. The Roman defeats in this war were not only explained but also used to demonstrate Rome's outstanding ability to learn and recover from defeats, which caused a rebirth of true Roman spirit and restored unity among the Romans. Remembering acts of collective violence thus became an important part of the narratives the Romans told about their past. As a result, the defeats of the Second Punic War were seen not only as the darkest hours of Roman history but also as a time of national testing in which their defeats helped the Romans to rediscover their own virtues.

Keywords

Second Punic War – Roman defeats – Cannae – Livy – Roman memory culture – Ab Urbe Condita – Lake Trasimene

The history of the Roman Republic was an extraordinary story of political and military success, one that already impressed contemporaries such as the Greek historian Polybius.¹ After gaining control of the Italian peninsula, the armies of the Roman Republic were able to bring first the western and then the eastern Mediterranean under Roman control within only a few generations.² It is thus easy to understand that the Roman poet Virgil, a contemporary of Augustus, in

¹ Polyb. 1.1–4.

² For accessible general surveys see, e.g., Rich, "Fear"; Rosenstein, *Rome and the Mediterranean*; Sommer, *Rom*; Blösel, *Die römische Republik*; and Bradley, *Early Rome*.

the third book of the *Aeneid* had Jupiter promise an *imperium sine fine* to the Roman people, an empire whose conquests were sacralized by the Romans' supreme god.³ The successes of the Republic were remembered not only in this famous work of historical epic, but also in many other areas of Roman culture—in historiographical records, dramas, poems, speeches in front of the Roman people, monuments, and public rituals, especially the triumphal procession.⁴ After Augustus's reign, the empire did not collapse but continued to develop into one of the largest and most enduring ruling structures in European history.⁵

Yet this story also contains dark chapters. We can find one of these in the twenty-second book of the *Ab Urbe Condita*, a monumental historiographical work written by Livy, another contemporary of Augustus and Virgil.⁶ In this passage, Livy describes the reactions in Rome and Italy to the news of the outcome of the first operations of the Second Punic War, which had been particularly devastating for the Romans and their allies with the heavy defeats at the river Trebia in autumn of 218 BCE and at Lake Trasimene in early summer of 217.⁷ In this situation, several Roman allies came to assure them of their allegiance. Hieron II, king of Syracuse and one of the most loyal allies of the Republic, had sent his envoys encouraging messages, which they now delivered to the Senate in Rome. Hieron was shaken by the misfortune of the Romans, especially by the death of their commander C. Flaminius at the battle of Lake Trasimene. No personal loss, and not even that of his empire, could have hit him harder. Yet he knew very well, so he said, that the greatness of the Roman people was almost more remarkable in adversity than in good times; Rome would therefore survive this dark hour as well. In order to underscore his message, Hieron sent not only words but also auxiliary troops, money, grain, and—just a few months after two of the most severe military defeats in Roman history to date—a statue of the goddess Victoria made of pure gold.⁸ The Sen-

3 Verg. *Aen.* 1.279.

4 See, e.g., Hölscher, "Images of War"; Itgenshorst, *Tota illa pompa*; Beard, *Roman Triumph*; Östenberg, *Staging*; Lange and Vervaet, *Roman Republican Triumph*; Hölkeskamp, "Hierarchie und Konsens," 209–218; Hölkeskamp, "Self-Fashioning"; and Davies, *Architecture and Politics*, 29–32, 61–65, 110–130, 168–174, 199–205, 224–236, 257–264, all with further references.

5 On this transition, see Eich, *Die römische Kaiserzeit*, 11–53.

6 On Livy, especially the third decade, see Levene, *Religion*; Levene, *Livy*; Pausch, *Livius*; Lentzsch, *Roma*, 305–366; Oakley, "Livy"; Van Gils and Kroon, "Discourse-Linguistic Strategies"; and Briscoe and Hornblower, "Livy," all with references to older literature.

7 Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent dates are BCE.

8 Livy 22.37.1–9.

ate gladly accepted the latter as a good omen and gave the goddess a new home in Rome's most important temple, to Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol in Rome.⁹

Of course, Hieron II was able to make these observations only because the Roman Republic had suffered enough defeats on the battlefield. The king himself had witnessed some of these during the First Punic War, in whose early years he himself had fought the Romans.¹⁰ Yet it was not only in the wars against Carthage that the Roman legions had paid a high price on their way to hegemony in the Mediterranean. This way was "marked with blood"—that of their enemies but also of their own soldiers.¹¹ To draw up a list of all Roman defeats of the Republican era hardly seems possible due to large gaps in our sources.¹² Even a cautious estimate comes to about ninety Roman military defeats on a larger scale—that is, with at least five thousand fallen soldiers on the Roman side.¹³ The defeat of Roman armies on the battlefield was therefore a regular occurrence during the whole Republican period.

Perhaps one could assume that these defeats were rather marginalized in Roman tradition, that the Romans wanted to forget their darkest hours, especially in a culture that valued and celebrated military success in such varied forms as Roman culture did.¹⁴ In this study, however, I aim to show that this was not the case; rather, the Romans found various ways of remembering their own defeats and incorporating them into the picture they drew of themselves and their history and thus made these dark hours a part of their collective identity.¹⁵ Among the numerous Roman defeats of the Republican period, I will concentrate on major defeats of the Second Punic War (218–201) and analyze representations and interpretations of these events in important Roman sources from the Republic and Early Empire, especially in the historiographical tradition.

9 Livy 22.37.10–12.

10 On Hieron II, esp. his role during the First Punic War, see Lehmler, *Syrakus*, 52–55.

11 Schulz, *Feldherren*, 180. On the often high Roman casualties in war, see also Rosenstein, *Rome at War*, 107–140 and Clark, "Defeat," 191.

12 On this problem, see already Turner, "Imperial Reactions," 279 and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 4.

13 Schulz, *Feldherren*, 180. Lists of Roman defeats can give an idea; see Rosenstein, *Imperatores*, 179–204; Clark, *Triumph*, xi–xiii; and Engerbeaud, *Rome*, 473–501.

14 See n. 4.

15 For a general discussion of the term "collective identity," see Straub, "Identität," 290–300.

1 Hannibal's Triumphs: The First Years of the Second Punic War (218–216)

The course of events that led to the devastating Roman defeats to which Hieron II reacted in his message started in Spain, when, in late 219, the army of the Carthaginian commander (*strategos*) Hannibal conquered the city of Sagunt on the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula. The Romans claimed Sagunt as their ally and, therefore, declared war on the Carthaginians when they were not willing to deliver Hannibal, who had ordered the attack. While the Roman side was still preparing their strategy, Hannibal led his army of perhaps thirty thousand soldiers across the Pyrenees and the Alps. Late in 218, his troops reached Italy, and, probably in December of 218, at the river Trebia, they won the first major battle of the war. In spring of 217, the Carthaginians marched south, passed the Apennine, and ambushed a second Roman army at the northern bank of Lake Trasimene in Etruria. This army had been under the command of the aforementioned consul C. Flaminius, who himself died in combat.¹⁶ This victory opened the way for the Carthaginian advance to central and southern Italy, where Hannibal's army could now devastate the country.¹⁷ In the following year, the Romans tried to end the invasion by mobilizing the largest army the Republic had yet seen. According to Livy, the two new elected consuls, C. Terentius Varro und L. Aemilius Paullus, led into battle eight legions and the contingents of the Italian allies, probably totaling around ninety thousand soldiers. With these forces they faced Hannibal's army, which was not even half its size, in the height of summer in 216 at the village of Cannae in Apulia. At Cannae, the Roman army suffered one of the most devastating defeats not only in Rome's long history, but in European military history in general. According to the lowest estimates, over forty-five thousand Roman and Italian soldiers were killed on a single day. Furthermore, at least thirty thousand men had fallen in the earlier battles during the two previous years, and thousands more had been captured.¹⁸ In the years that followed, the Roman Republic fell into a severe military, political, and economic crisis that lasted for years and marks one of the most dangerous situations in Roman history. The Romans of later times would therefore have had every reason to forget these dark hours, months, and years. Yet they did not.

16 Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, 62–67 and Seibert, *Hannibal*, 147–156.

17 Erdkamp, *Hunger*, 141–142; Seibert, *Hannibal*, 167–170; and Christ, *Hannibal*, 83–84.

18 The vast number of studies on Cannae is almost impossible to survey, but see, recently, Le Bohec, *Histoire*, 189–192; Daly, *Cannae*; Goldsworthy, *Cannae*; and Beck, "Cannae," each with references to older literature.

2 The Darkest Hour (?): Representations and Interpretations of Rome's Defeats in Roman Historiography

Unfortunately, we do not know how Romans and other Italians reacted to the news of the outcome of the battles at Lake Trasimene or Cannae in the days, weeks, and months that followed these events. Roman historiographical accounts preserved extended records of these reactions, but the earliest of these accounts to have survived is Livy's, which was written nearly two hundred years later.¹⁹ Reactions from the time immediately after Rome's defeats are thus no longer preserved. We know, however, that the first Roman historian, Q. Fabius Pictor, who himself fought in the Second Punic War, probably devoted large parts of his work to the account of this conflict, but his books are preserved only in fragments, few of them relating to this war.²⁰

Another Roman historian who actively fought the Carthaginians was M. Porcius Cato the Elder. His text, the *Origines*, is also preserved only in fragments, but one of these gives at least an idea of how the defeat might have been presented here: "Then the Master of the Horse advised the Carthaginian dictator: 'Send the cavalry to Rome with me; on the fifth day your dinner will have been cooked for you on the Capitol.'" ²¹ And: "Then the dictator the following day ordered the Master of the Horse to be summoned: 'I shall send you, if you wish, with the cavalry.' 'Too late,' said the Master of the Horse, 'they have already been alerted.'" ²² These short sentences were almost certainly originally part of Cato's account of the immediate aftermath of the battle of Cannae.²³ In the first fragment the commander of the Carthaginian cavalry, who is sometimes called Maharbal in later accounts, urges Hannibal (here with the title *dictator*, probably in the sense of general without a colleague) to send him to the city of Rome and let him conquer the Roman capital within days. But the *dictator* hesitates until it is too late.²⁴ Although these fragments offer only a few lines

19 For extensive discussions of these traditions see, e.g., Beck, "Cannae" and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 249–304.

20 *FRHist* 1 F 22 = *FRH* 1 F 31 (= Polyb. 3.8.1–8); *FRHist* 1 F 23 = *FRH* 1 F 32 (= Livy 22.7.1–4).

21 *FRHist* 5 F *78 (= Gell. 10.24.7; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.4.26: *igitur dictatorem Carthaginiensium magister equitum monuit: 'mitte mecum Romam equitatum; diequinti in Capitolio tibi cena cocta erit'*).

22 *FRHist* 5 F 79 (= Gell. 2.19.9: *deinde dictator iubet postridie magistrum equitum arcessi: 'mitam te, si uis, cum equitibus.' sero est, inquit magister equitum, 'iam rescuere'*).

23 See the commentary in *FRHist* 3, 126–127.

24 Livy 22.5.1–2; Val. Max. 9.5.ext. 3; Flor. 1.22.19–20; Amm. Marc. 18.5.6. In the Livian tradition, Hannibal's cavalry officer is called Maharbal. In Plut. *Vit. Fab.* 17.1 he is named Barca, and in Silius Italicus's *Punica* (Sil. *Pun.* 10.375–376) it is Hannibal's brother Mago who commands the Carthaginian cavalry.

of Cato's work, the short sentences indicate that the *Origines* emphasized the threat to the city of Rome itself by Hannibal—whether or not he would really have been able to capture Rome—and we should especially note that the Capitol is mentioned here. The Capitol was the political and religious center not only of the city of Rome, but of its empire more generally.²⁵ According to several sources, the Capitoline hill had been the last stronghold that the Romans could defend when Celtic warriors from northern Italy had captured Rome in the early fourth century. This so-called Gallic disaster had a prominent place in the cultural memory of the Republic and the Early Empire.²⁶ It therefore seems that, according to Cato, Hannibal was close to achieving what not even the Gauls were able to do—namely, conquer Rome and the Capitol and perhaps change Rome's history forever. Here Cato provides an interesting glimpse of the idea of counterfactual history in Roman culture. What would have happened if Hannibal had ordered his cavalry to march on Rome? Would the Roman success story never have developed?

Most modern researchers would deny the possibility that Hannibal's troops had a chance to succeed.²⁷ The whole dialogue is probably an invention, yet it may indicate how severe and devastating Cato (as a contemporary witness of the war) saw the time immediately after the battle of Cannae; it was a point at which Rome's history could have taken another path.²⁸ Unfortunately, because Cato's full account is not preserved, it is not possible to confirm this interpretation and discover whether and, if so, how Cato may have further emphasized this line of thought.

In the late first century BCE, however, Livy also included this dialogue in his account of the war, where we can closely analyze how he integrated the Roman defeats and their aftermath in his narrative of the history of Rome. Livy's version can be found in books 21–30, the third decade, of his work. This section, although of course in many ways connected to the rest of the *Ab Urbe Condita*, can be characterized as a monograph of its own, with its own narrative arcs, climaxes, and, at the end, after long and severe perils, redemption and victory for the Roman side.²⁹

25 Hölkeskamp, "Capitol," 144–147 and Walter, *Memoria*, 160–161.

26 See, e.g., Ungern-Sternberg, "Eine Katastrophe"; Ungern-Sternberg, "Gefahr"; Richardson, *Fabii*, 116–152; Engerbeaud, *Rome*, 391–426; and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 73–149, all with further references.

27 See, e.g., Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, 85–86; Le Bohec, *Histoire*, 203; Erdkamp, *Hunger*, 177–178; and Schulz, *Feldherren*, 212.

28 Cf. Beck, "Cannae," 218: "Der Erinnerungsort Cannae wurde damit auf alle Zeiten zum Denkmal dafür, daß die römische Erfolgsstory wenigstens einmal, im Jahr 216, auf des Messers Schneide stand." See also Lentzsch, *Roma*, 271 and Oakley, "Livy," 178–179.

29 On the composition of Livy's third decade, see the masterful analysis in Levene, *Livy*, 1–81.

Livy's interpretation of the events and results of the Second Punic War is a moral one, in which a lack of respect for the Senate and the community's political rules, as well as a lack of reverence for the gods, have dire consequences. Successes are likewise attributed primarily to holding on to traditional values and the outstanding ability of Rome's exemplary generals and soldiers (rather than, for example, superior military resources).³⁰ In Livy's text, the defeats of the war offer an opportunity to reflect on the consequences of character defects among generals and the Roman people in general, on the value of *concordia* and the dangers of *discordia*, and on the path that led the Romans out of this most severe crisis.³¹ Especially in this part of his work, defeats are caused above all by the recklessness and selfish striving for fame of individual generals as well as by the disunity of the Roman people.

In the first years of the war, Livy saw this disunity increase more and more in both nature and extent, culminating in the greatest defeat of the war at Cannae. At first in his account of the battle at the River Trebia, the dispute between individual commanders who cannot agree on the strategy of their campaign smolders, then, in the run-up to the battle of Lake Trasimene, *discordia* spreads to the whole army in the field, and, before the campaign that is to end at Cannae, it finally reaches the capital and the people as a whole, with fatal consequences for the entire Republic.³² In his account of the events in Rome, Livy focuses especially on the elections and other internal political conflicts in late 217/early 216, which are fought between a morally upright Senate and its most prominent representatives L. Aemilius Paullus (one of the consuls of the year 216) and Q. Fabius Maximus (dictator in 217 and one of the most experienced leaders of the Republic) on the one side, and popular demagogues from outside the establishment, above all C. Terentius Varro (the other consul of 216) on the other. Varro, who is portrayed as a man of questionable family background but with strong support from large parts of the *plebs*, attacks the

See also Van Gils and Kroon, "Discourse-Linguistic Strategies," 193–194 and Ridley, "Livy," 17: "The third decade was perhaps the most self-contained, most monograph-like, of all his work."

- 30 On Livy's explanations for Roman defeats in the Second Punic War and for his moral interpretation see Ridley, "Livy"; Levene, *Livy*, 261–316; and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 214–366, with further references.
- 31 On *concordia* and *discordia* as leitmotifs in Livy's narrative of the Cannae campaign, see also Van Gils and Kroon, "Discourse-Linguistic Strategies," 220–222.
- 32 Cf. Oakley, "Livy," 169: "the thematic expansion to the battle highlights above all the disunity in the state caused by the improvidence and folly of Varro, who follows a long line of other improvident commanders."

war strategy of the Senate and calls for a quick attack on the Carthaginian army, while Paullus and Fabius attempt to follow a more careful strategy.³³

A closer look at some passages reveals more details of Livy's narrative. For instance, in an early chapter of book 22, C. Flaminius, one of the consuls of the year 217, decides to confront Hannibal's army against the counsel of the Senate and his war council in the camp (my emphasis):

The consul had become headstrong as a result of his earlier consulship, *having no respect, not just for the laws and the Senate, but even for the gods*. His natural recklessness had been further nourished by good luck, which had secured him success in civilian and in military life. *It was therefore perfectly clear that Flaminius would have no regard for god or man, and that his conduct would be characterized throughout by arrogance and lack of caution*. And, to make him more ready to yield to his natural defects, the Carthaginian was preparing to stimulate him and stir him to action. [...]

He gave the order for the standards to be quickly pulled from the ground, and he himself leaped onto his horse. But the horse suddenly took a stumble, throwing the consul over its head. All the bystanders were terrified at *this apparently dreadful omen for the start of the campaign* but, to add to it, word was brought that, despite the standards-bearer's greatest efforts, one of the standards could not be pulled out of the ground. [...]

The officers, as well as disagreeing with Flaminius' strategy, were also dismayed by the twofold portent; but the rank and file in general were delighted with their commander's determination—they felt optimism, without asking themselves what it was based on.³⁴

33 Livy 22.25.18–19; 22.26.1–4; 22.34.1–35.1; 22.39.4–8; 22.41.1–3; 22.42.3–12; 22.44.5; 22.45.5. On these passages, see Bruckmann, *Die römischen Niederlagen*, 73–75; Burck, *Einführung*, 93–97; Will, “Imperatores”; Bernard, *Le portrait*, 139–141; Geist, *Der gescheiterte Feldherr*, 78–79, 103; Levene, *Livy*, 170–171, 189; Lentzsch, *Roma*, 321–323; Oakley, “Livy,” 163–166; and Van Gils and Kroon, “Discourse-Linguistic Strategies,” 209–222.

34 Livy 22.3.4–14: *consul ferox ab consulatu priore et non modo legum aut patrum maiestatis, sed ne deorum quidem satis metuens; hanc insitam ingenio eius temeritatem fortuna tuna prospero civilibus bellicisque rebus successu aluerat. (5) Itaque satis apparebat nec deos nec homines consulentem ferociter omnia ac praepropere acturum; quoque pronior esset in vitia sua, agitare eum atque irritare Poenus parat, [...]. (11) Haec simul increpans cum ocuis signa convelli iuberet et ipse in equum insilisset, equus repente corruit consulemque lapsum super caput effudit. (12) Territis omnibus, qui circa erant, velut foedo omine incipiendae rei, insuper nuntiatur signum omni vi moliente signifero convelli nequire. [...]. (14) Incedere inde agmen coepit primoribus, superquam quod dissenserant ab consilio, territis etiam duplici prodigio, milite in vulgus laeto ferocia ducis, cum spem magis ipsam quam causam spei intueretur*. All translations of Livy's text in this essay follow the translation by J.C. Yardley.

Apparently, even the gods themselves warn the Roman general, who ignores all human objections and divine signs, such that his actions lead to the fatal consequences at the northern bank of Lake Trasimene.³⁵

In two other passages that are set before the Cannae campaign, Livy describes how the experienced general and politician Q. Fabius Maximus counsels his political ally L. Aemilius Paullus who is to lead the Roman army against Hannibal together with his colleague C. Terentius Varro. In Fabius's opinion, Varro is even more dangerous than Hannibal because he will stir up the army against his colleague and bring ruin to all Romans.

For you are wrong, Lucius Paullus, if you think you will have any less of a fight with Gaius Terentius Varro than you will with Hannibal, *and I wonder if you might not in future have this man [Varro] as a more dangerous adversary than that redoubtable enemy of ours.*

*With Hannibal you will fight only in the battlefield; with Varro you are going to be fighting in all places, and at all times. Against Hannibal and his legions you will have to do battle with your cavalry and infantry; Varro, as commander, is going to attack you with your own soldiers.*³⁶

In the next section, both generals and their armies leave Rome. Yet as Livy underscores, they do not leave together; each is accompanied by only a part of the *populus Romanus*, which thus presents itself as deeply divided. "They say that *Paullus* left after this conversation, with the *leading senators at his side*. The *plebeian consul was attended by his plebeian adherents*, a group impressive in numbers, but lacking men of distinction."³⁷ As a careful reader would expect, this disunity leads to disastrous results.³⁸ The Romans will lose the following battle, and thousands of them indeed do lose their lives.³⁹

35 Levene, *Religion*, 38–43 and Levene, *Livy*, 288–291.

36 Livy 22.39.4–5: *Erras enim, L. Paule, si tibi minus certaminis cum C. Terentio quam cum Hannibale futurum censes; nescio, an infestior hic adversarius quam ille hostis maneat; cum illo in acie tantum, cum hoc omnibus locis ac temporibus certaturus es; adversus Hannibalem legionesque eius tuis equitibus ac peditibus pugnandum tibi est, Varro dux tuis militibus te est oppugnaturus.*

37 Livy 22.40.4: *Ab hoc sermone profectum Paulum tradunt prosequentibus primoribus patrum: plebeium consulem sua plebes prosecuta, turba conspectior, cum dignitates deessent.*

38 On the ways in which Livy stirs his readership through his narrative, see Pausch, *Livius*.

39 According to Livy, 45,500 infantry soldiers died and 2,700 men of the cavalry forces died at Cannae (Livy 22.49.15). Polybius has even higher numbers (Polyb. 3.117.2–4: 70,000 and 5,630). The casualties for the Roman side at Lake Trasimene are reported as 15,000 soldiers killed and 10,000 or 15,000 captured (Polyb. 3.84.7; Livy 22.7.2–4). On these numbers,

Although Livy presents consuls such as Flaminius and Varro as highly responsible for the defeats that occurred under their command, he adds more nuance to their characterization in his battle descriptions. For instance, in the description of the fighting at Lake Trasimene, Livy crafts an image of the consul Flaminius who, despite all the defects of character he showed earlier, now proves himself as a capable battle commander and fighter. He fights bravely, serves as a shining example to his men, and eventually meets an honorable death on the battlefield. This passage seems to be a Livian invention (or, at least, he integrated it masterfully in his wider narrative), because Polybius gives no description of Flaminius's heroic last fight in his account, which is earlier than Livy's.⁴⁰

Livy's account of this death in battle also demonstrates the complexity of the Livian narrative. Although Flaminius is portrayed as an exemplary warrior in the face of defeat, Livy also brings to attention the consul's former weaknesses, as well as the unholy and harmful opposition to the Senate and the gods that had marked Flaminius's entire career. He is killed by a Celtic warrior (Livy even knows his name, which is unusual for Celtic characters in his work), who aims to take revenge for his people who were killed in an earlier Roman campaign into Gaul that was led by Flaminius in his first consulate, allegedly against the will of a strong majority in the Senate.⁴¹ This passage, therefore, can—and perhaps was intended to be—interpreted in at least two ways. On the one hand, it is a lesson in how moral vices and defects, especially opposition to the Senate and ignorance of the will of the gods, fall back on a person in the end. On the other hand, it also illustrates how true Roman character is revealed in the hour of battle and in the face of defeat, so that even a demagogic outsider such as Flaminius fights and dies as a hero on the field, thereby fulfilling his duties toward the Roman people.⁴²

The death of a Roman commander also forms the central passage of Livy's description of the fighting at Cannae.⁴³ Here L. Aemilius Paullus—portrayed earlier in the text as a capable commander, a righteous man, and champion of the senatorial establishment—follows his colleague, Varro, who is in charge

cf. Walbank, *Commentary*, 1:419–420, 440; Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, 65; Seibert, *Hannibal*, 153–154; Goldsworthy, *Cannae*, 155; and Daly, *Cannae*, 23, 198.

40 Livy 22.6.1–2. On this passage, cf. Ridley, "Livy," 24; Levene, *Livy*, 171, n. 18; and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 343–344.

41 Livy 22.6.2–4.

42 Cf. Levene, *Religion*, 39–40; Levene, *Livy*, 290; Johner, *La violence*, 109–110; Beck, *Karriere und Hierarchie*, 267; and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 330–331.

43 Cf. Van Gils and Kroon, "Discourse-Linguistic Strategies," 224: "The Peak of this scene and [...] of the Cannae story at large."

of the command of the whole army on the day of battle, into the fight, even though he strongly objects to Varro's tactical approach.⁴⁴ After he engages in the fight to lead his soldiers against the Carthaginians, we find him dying, covered in blood, and leaning against a rock, at which point the battle pauses for a moment or two so that he can give final instructions to one of his loyal soldiers and set unity among the Romans above his own fate:

The military tribune Gnaeus Lentulus was riding by when his eyes fell on the consul sitting on a rock and covered with blood.

"Lucius Aemilius," he said, "on you alone the gods should look with favor, *the one man free of blame for today's debacle*. Take this horse while you still have some strength left. I shall be at your side; I can raise you up and protect you, so that you do not add tragedy to this battle with the death of a consul. Even without that there is enough to weep and grieve for."

"God bless your courage, Gnaeus Cornelius," replied the consul, "but do not waste in useless pity the little time you have to escape the enemy's clutches. Go, take this official message to the Senate: they must see to the fortifications of the city of Rome, and secure them with troops, before the victorious enemy arrives. [...]"

*For myself, let me breathe my last amidst my men, the victims of this massacre. Thus I can avoid standing trial again after my consulship, or coming forward as my colleague's accuser, to defend my innocence by blaming another.*⁴⁵

44 Livy 22.41.3; 22.45.5. That Paullus opposed Varro's tactic and simply followed his colleague out of loyalty on the battlefield, as Livy reports, does not seem trustworthy. Cf. Lazenby, *Livy*, 78–79; Seibert, *Hannibal*, 189 n. 2.; and Beck, "Cannae," 213.

45 Livy 22.49.6–11: *Cn. Lentulus tribunus militum cum praetervehens equo sedentem in saxo cruore oppletum consulem vidisset, 'L. Aemili' inquit, 'quern unum insontem culpa cladis hodiernae dei respicere debent, cape hunc equum, dum et tibi virium aliquid superest et comes ego te tollere possum ac protegere. Ne funestam hanc pugnam morte consulis feceris; etiam sine hoc lacrimarum satis luctusque est.' Ad ea consul: 'Tu quidem, Cn. Corneli, macte virtute esto; sed cave, frustra miserando exiguum tempus e manibus hostium evadendi absumas. Abi, nuntia publice patribus urbem Romanam muniant ac priusquam victor hostis adventat, praesidiis firment; privatim Q. Fabio <L.> Aemilium praeceptorum eius memorem et vixisse adhuc et mori. Me in hac strage militum meorum patere exspirare, ne aut reus iterum e consulatu sim aut accusator collegae existam, ut alieno crimine innocentiam meam protegam'.* On this passage, see most recently Oakley, "Livy," 168 and Buijs, "ET RATIO," 280–281.

His colleague, Varro, leaves the battlefield alive. Remarkably, we now no longer find in Livy any accusations against the fleeing consul, who was earlier portrayed as highly responsible for the inner conflict and the implementation of a fatal strategy. On the contrary, we see him return to Rome in an often quoted and discussed passage at the end of book 22.

And yet these defeats and allied defections prompted no talk of peace anywhere amongst the Romans, neither before the consul's arrival in Rome, nor after his return, which brought back to mind the disaster they had suffered. *Such was the strength of character of the citizenry at that very time, that, on the return of the consul from the debacle for which he was primarily responsible, people of all classes streamed out to meet him, and thanked him for not having lost confidence in the republic.* Had he been a Carthaginian leader there is no manner of punishment that he would not have faced.⁴⁶

As mentioned above, in the previous chapters of Livy's text, Varro is blamed for his behavior and his decisions that led to Rome's defeat. According to Livy, Varro was a rebellious demagogue who forced a wedge between the Senate and the Roman people and, consequently, contributed to the deep discord on the Roman side. Furthermore, he is characterized as a popular leader of great military incompetence. As Livy emphasizes, this man is now, after the defeat, met by "people of all classes," which in a way mirrors the earlier passage mentioned above in which Varro and Paullus leave Rome in disunity and are each accompanied only by their own supporters.⁴⁷

Whereas discord and inner conflict once dominated the political scene in Rome, therefore, now concord and solidarity is demonstrated; it was the defeat, one could conclude, that brought back the virtues and the attitude that rank, in Livy's interpretation, is among the most important preconditions for Rome's enduring military and political success.⁴⁸ The Carthaginians would have severely punished a general like Varro, who lost so many soldiers and such an important battle. But the Romans, because they are morally upright and able

46 Livy 22.61.13–15: *Nec tamen eae clades defectionesque sociorum moverunt, ut pacis usquam mentio apud Romanos fieret neque ante consulis Romam adventum nec postquam is rediit renovavitque memoriam acceptae cladis; quo in tempore ipso adeo magno animo civitas fuit, ut consuli ex tanta clade, cuius ipse causa maxima fuisset, redeunti et obviam itum frequenter ab omnibus ordinibus sit et gratiae actae, quod de re publica non desperasset; qui si Carthaginiensium ductor fuisset, nihil recusandum supplicii foret.*

47 Cf. Livy 22.40.4. See also Oakley, "Livy," 182.

48 Cf. Lentzsch, *Roma*, 339–351, with further references.

to stand together in a crisis, do not punish their own fighters, not even Varro.⁴⁹ Livy urges his readers to understand that this would not have been the Roman way. For Romans, defeat is a punishment for their disunity and neglect of divine prodigies, but it is also an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and to reunite the entire Roman people when they bear with exemplary strength of character the kind of disaster that, as Livy emphasizes a few passages earlier, would cause any other nation to collapse.⁵⁰ Moreover, because *concordia* has now been regained, the Senate and the people of Rome are prepared to drive the foreign invaders out of Italy.

In a series of passages Livy describes how the Romans, under the impression of their defeats, discuss its causes and the lessons they have learned. After all their earlier mistakes and moral failures, the Romans now show themselves as willing to learn and ready to face the challenge of Hannibal's army united. In fact, as Hieron II had announced after the defeat at Lake Trasimene, they are almost more admirable in misfortune than in fortune. For Livy is now able to report numerous acts of heroic self-sacrifice and examples of greater moral stability than could be observed in the first years of the war. This is especially true for the Senate. Particularly in the immediate aftermath of the most severe defeats, the Senate now appears as a center of prudent action and, under the leadership of the experienced and respected Q. Fabius Maximus, makes many decisions with great unity that, although somewhat unusual, lead to the rescue of the Republic.⁵¹

Two examples may illustrate this. The first one is taken from Livy's description of the battlefield at Cannae on the morning after the battle. Here the Carthaginian soldiers "gather the spoils and inspect the slaughter, which was a shocking sight even to the enemy," which gives a testament of the highly violent scenes of fighting the day before. It should be noted that this passage is one of the rather rare examples of more detailed battlefield account in Livy's work, because it seems that he generally tried to avoid such descriptions. After the most disastrous of all Roman defeats up to that point in Rome's history, however, the images of "some gory figures" appear who "rose up from the midst of the carnage when their wounds, smarting in the cool of the morning roused

49 On stereotypical descriptions of Carthaginians, see Gruen, *Rethinking*, 99–140, who, however, also sheds light on nuanced perspectives on the Carthaginians in Greek and Roman literature.

50 Livy 22.54.10–11.

51 Livy 22.55.1–57.1; 22.57.7–12. Cf. Bruckmann, *Die römischen Niederlagen*, 94; Beck, "Cannae," 209–210; Jaeger, *Livy's Written Rome*, 99–103; Lentzsch, *Roma*, 335–336; and Oakley, "Livy," 171.

them to consciousness, and then they were cut down by the enemy.” But even this depressing passage holds a little spark of hope for the Roman side, because the Carthaginians find a

Numidian, with nose and ears torn off, who was pulled out alive from beneath a dead Roman who was lying on top of him. When the Roman found his hands no longer able to hold a weapon, his anger had turned to fury and he had died while he was tearing his enemy apart with his teeth.

The message is clear: any Roman would fight to the very last to defend his homeland against the foreign invaders.⁵²

The second example is the story of the prisoners of Cannae, which was widely remembered and often quoted in the Roman tradition.⁵³ After the battle, a division of several thousand Roman soldiers was captured. According not only to Livy, but also to other historiographical accounts and passages in speeches of Cicero or in poems of the Imperial period, these soldiers are accused of not attempting to escape and fight their way through the Carthaginian ranks. That they surrendered and were taken captive would have put the Senate and the Republic as a whole in an unfavorable position due to the demands for ransom that Hannibal could now make. In fact, the Roman Senate probably refused to buy back these prisoners, who were then sold into slavery. In the cultural memory of the Roman Republic, this incident henceforth served as a negative example of the characterless behavior of desperate soldiers, on the one hand, and as a glorious hour of the principled Senate, which did not deviate from the observance of its principles even in the greatest distress and need.⁵⁴ Unity and virtues, Livy’s readership can learn, are restored not merely by the experience of defeat, but above all through the leadership of the Senate, which had regained its leading role in the Republic and which set the greater good and exemplary behavior above the individual.⁵⁵

Consequently, the hours and days after Cannae are indeed in Livy’s text (and not only there) one of the darkest hours in the history of the Republic. At the same time, however, they bring the rebirth of true Roman spirit and concord among the Roman people. This line of thought fits well with the time in which Livy wrote and published his text. The fact that his account of the Hanni-

52 Livy 22.51.5–9. On this passage, see also Oakley, “Livy,” 172.

53 The whole passage is in Livy 22.58.2–61.10. Cf. Oakley, “Livy,” 176–177, with an emphasis on the speeches in this passage.

54 Walter, “Die Botschaft.”

55 Cf. Bruckmann, *Die römischen Niederlagen*, 94.

balic War places the center of prudent action in the Senate, while discord and the associated failures are interpreted as the result of rebellious activities on the part of individual demagogic tribunes or other troublemakers shows Livy's alignment with the values of the old Republic. As a child of the time of the civil wars, Livy, like many of his contemporaries, had ample opportunity to learn to appreciate the high value of inner unity. It is surely the case, then, that he saw this unity as a central prerequisite for the well-being of Rome in the past as well as in the present.⁵⁶

3 New Hope Inspired by Rome's Darkest Hour

Livy's influential account, as well as further representations and reinterpretations in other works that followed *Ab Urbe Condita*, enabled the defeats of the Second Punic War to retain their place in the historical memory of the Romans until Late Antiquity. For example, in the fourth century CE, Ammianus Marcellinus recalled the battle of Cannae to describe the great military disaster of his own lifetime, the battle of Adrianople (378 CE). In terms of its extent, this disaster, in which even the Roman emperor Valens I himself had fallen, could only be compared with the defeat of Cannae.⁵⁷ A generation later, only a few years after the sack of Rome by a Gothic army in the year 410 CE, the poet Rutilius Claudius Namatianus mentions Hannibal in the context of a veritable hymn to Rome in the first book of his poem *De reditu suo* as an example of a dangerous crisis overcome by eternal Rome. The defeats of the old days are at the same time a lesson and a sign of hope, because what "cannot be sunk rises again with greater energy, sped higher in their rebound from lowest depths; and, as the torch held downward regains fresh strength," so, too, does Rome strive "from lowly fortune [...] more radiant aloft."⁵⁸ Rutilius refers to defeats in Roman history, after which Rome rose again and again; the Romans, it seems, were for Rutilius, as they were for Hieron II six hundred years before, more admirable and remarkable in adversity than in good times.

Yet, if Ammian's recourse to Cannae or Rutilius's hymn to the resilience of Rome had some evocative intent, or both hoped that history would repeat itself once more, they would have been disappointed. In contrast to the Republic of

56 On this topic, see Ridley, "Livy," 30, 38; Dahlheim, "T. Livius," 60–61, 66–72; Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 280–287; and Lentzsch, *Roma*, 343.

57 Amm. Marc. 31.13.14. Cf. Meier and Patzold, *August 410*, 78. On these events, see Meier, *Geschichte*, 171–183.

58 Rut. Namat. 1.115–132.

the Punic Wars, the Roman Empire of their time was not able to recover again. More than six hundred years after the trial by Hannibal's army and the dark hours of the Second Punic War, a new world emerged on the ruins of the western Roman Empire, a world in which the idea of an eternal Rome was carried on, but in a different form.⁵⁹

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59 Cf. Lentzsch, *Roma*, 429–430 for further references.

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Rebellious Narratives, Repeat Engagements, and Roman Historiography

Jessica H. Clark

Abstract

This chapter examines Latin terms for rebellion, defection, and desertion. It concludes that they had distinct connotations and were used by Roman historical writers to characterize the actions of their allies and enemies in morally distinct ways. Discussion of selected examples shows that Roman authors were remarkably precise and unexpectedly subtle in distinguishing among the ambiguous but inevitable shifts in loyalty that recur throughout their wars. What might seem a minor semantic choice could predetermine an audience's expectations for how a Roman commander responded to a foreign party; certain terms imply legitimate shifts of alliance or strategy, while others convey intransigence or perfidy. The latter characterization could be deployed to justify particularly brutal actions against defeated foes and make such actions appear as measured and predictable responses to bad actors. Romans' writing about wars rendered groups effectively culpable in their own destruction insofar as their actions, however retroactively defined by word choices, foreshadow consistent results for their people. Whereas we might perceive politicking or speciousness in Romans' responses to massacres and mass enslavements, Roman audiences might have little difficulty assessing the (self-defined) legitimacy of a commander's punitive response.

Keywords

Roman Republic – Latin prose – historiography – war – rebellion – Cato (M. Porcius) – Caesar (C. Julius)

States and rulers in antiquity knew virtually no limits on their exercise of force.¹ There were no effective restrictions on weapons or tactics or acknowledged

1 I would like to express my appreciation to scholars and institutions supporting open-access publishing or who broadened the availability of their digital platforms while COVID-19 lim-

protections for noncombatants, and religious or diplomatic prohibitions were more often invoked in the breach than observed in the field.² At the same time, ancient states and rulers were acutely attuned to questions of legitimation and justification with regard to acts of collective violence. Representations of state violence therefore frequently focus upon the righteousness of the actors and the culpability of those harmed. This rhetoric, and the very real consequences it frames, is remarkably consistent across time and place in antiquity. The aim of this essay is to explore one aspect of this—namely, the use of distinct verbs by Roman writers to characterize shifts in alliance and related movements between the cessation or engagement of hostilities. I will argue that these Latin terms were freighted with specific valences that their authors and audiences understood well but that the modern scholarly apparatus, including dictionaries and translations, may obscure.³ Although the set of words examined here is small, it is sufficient to demonstrate the contingency of terms used to justify acts of mass violence, and to suggest the fallibility of objective criteria for the evaluation of such acts.

Historians of ancient warfare are familiar with a basic script for collective violence, as considered from the perspective of the aggressors: one party, having asserted dominance over another, establishes rules for compliance and dire consequences for the lack thereof.⁴ When the other party breaks the rules, those consequences are represented as legitimate responses to the informed decisions of the rule-breakers.⁵ Within this narrative, the victims of violence are positioned as its instigators insofar as they knowingly chose to commit the acts that precipitated predictable harm to themselves. These acts additionally may be cast as deceptive violations of legal covenants and thereby represented as objectively, as well as diplomatically, wrong.⁶ This process elevates a histor-

ited access to print resources, and also to the seminar organizers and participants. Citations are illustrative rather than comprehensive or definitive, and translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

- 2 Roymans, "Roman Massacre," 179–180; Lavan, "Devastation." Dam and Polanski, "Brutalities" offer a diachronic analysis of imperial responses to peripheral communities.
- 3 On the Romans' control of the "just war" discourse, see Cornwell, "Construction." Assumptions about the continuity or universality of certain *casus belli* can foster an artificial impression of consistency in war planning, when the evidence instead suggests consistency in *ex post facto* explanations. On related issues of Latin vocabulary, see Lavan, "Peace and Empire" and Gibson, "Tacitus."
- 4 The activation of these narratives by groups subjected to collective violence is a complementary but separate question.
- 5 See further Ando, "*Pax Romana*."
- 6 As discussed by Maria Brosius, "Violence Exacted and Violence Suffered: From the Persian King's Perspective to that of the Enemies of the Empire" (paper presented at the conference

ical episode to the level of metanarrative: the audience for that narrative is led to reenact the judgment of the author-authority, confirming the propriety of extreme sanctions against oath breakers lest, in resisting that emplotment of a given historical sequence, the audience finds itself liable to the same fate.⁷ The legitimization of collective violence is thus fundamentally a historiographical act, dependent upon a retrospective symbiosis between readers and killers, wherein those readers align themselves with the perpetrators by virtue of the very words they hear.

In what follows, three Latin verbs—*rebello*, *descisco*, and *deficio*—guide our exploration of Roman attitudes toward acts that might precipitate intentional group violence. While this essay makes no claims of comprehensiveness, the examples discussed will illuminate how choices among similar words can differently inform readers' apprehensions of the justice of such violence. Verb choices on the part of authors have implications for how the Romans responded to groups who challenged or diverged from their control; conversely, the subtlety of some of those choices carries with it a warning against historical generalizations of the type summarized above. Because Latin vocabulary offered authors the option of selecting morally neutral or strongly disprobatory terms for the same acts—such as transferring allegiance from one side to another or renewing conflict after a period of negotiations—such acts cannot be understood as automatically or consistently prompting a punitive response. Rather, the chosen response informed, retrospectively, the words used to develop its antecedent narrative.

The Latin language has many words that describe someone exiting an association with someone else. In the context of military or political narratives, these words can describe rebellion, desertion, or unilateral withdrawal from a prior agreement; they can connote betrayal or abandonment, insurgency, failure, or dissolution. Some verbs, like *prodo* or *desero*, specifically denote negatively evaluated withdrawals in a martial context: deceitful surrenders, desertion, or flight. Other verbs, like *relinquo*, can simply mean that someone left, without a necessary moral judgment; abandoning a camp, for example, can be a practical decision. The same semantic dichotomy exists with regard to foreign relations, insofar as an ally can betray the terms of a treaty in a treacherous manner, but it is also possible that one party might determine that an agreement was no longer in effect without acting in manifestly bad faith. In the Roman Republic,

"Historical Narratives and Memorialization of Collective Violence in Antiquity," University of Basel, October 15, 2020).

7 Dietl, "Preface," xxiv. On the ways in which "symbolic violence" perpetuates physical violence, see Thapar-Björkert, Samelius, and Sanghera, "Exploring."

this latter possibility was delimited by diplomatic devices such as time limits on treaties or by deliberately subjective criteria within treaty agreements, which all but guaranteed that one side could find its way out, should it so choose.⁸

Roman historians are familiar with Rome's adroit exploitation of these criteria, which is a recurrent factor in the wars of hegemonic expansion that so define the mid-Republic. Yet Romans also worked to strengthen alliances that their own actions jeopardized. This is particularly notable in the early second century BCE, when the Roman Senate engaged in active diplomacy on both sides of the Alps, including gift exchanges and restitution for acts of aggression that the state disavowed.⁹ Such activity is implied or assumed in numerous instances in the Republic and early Empire. Although it is not always emphasized in the sources, Romans did not reflexively assert dominance in their negotiations with their neighbors, nor did they take for granted that such dominance would be assumed.¹⁰ Romans and the people they fought understood that the absence of violence was an active state, and that it might be more complicated *not* to inflict harm than it was to inflict it.¹¹ Roman commanders who negotiated without inflicting extreme violence might face political opprobrium at home, which could lead to formal or informal charges that clemency had resulted from bribes or self-interest.¹² At the same time, extreme violence could be the cause of political difficulties, especially when it did not resolve, or instead encouraged, danger to Rome.¹³ Commanders and the historians who represented their campaigns were therefore invested in the terms with which such violence or its absence was apprehended by their audiences.

8 See, e.g., Livy 9.37.12 (truce of thirty years) and Livy 29.12 (Peace of Phoenike).

9 See Bourdin, "Pratiques," with references.

10 On the complexities of power in the Roman world, see Woolf, "Rulers." The negotiations between the Roman emperor Augustus and Queen Amanirenas of Meroë are a compelling example of the intricate relationships between military and other forms of authority (Strabo, *Geogr.* 17.1.54).

11 Cornwell, *Pax*, esp. 1–5, 11–29.

12 The wars terminated by P. and L. Cornelius Scipio are illustrative; see Bellomo, "Le trattative." On the lesser glory attendant upon "population transfers" compared to deaths or mass enslavements, see Boatwright, "Acceptance and Approval," 126–127, 139–140.

13 The response of Cato the Younger to Caesar's mass killing of the Usipetes and Tencteri is a famous example; see Roymans, "Roman Massacre." Speeches and trials drew attention to violence that exceeded accepted parameters; for an example, see Clark, *Triumph*, 151–154.

1 Cato and *Rebello*

M. Porcius Cato, as both commander and historian, provides a uniquely situated example. Cato's long life spanned a period of dramatic transitions at Rome (234–149 BCE), and he shaped the reception of that period in part through his authorship of the first prose history in Latin and the preservation of his many speeches. As consul in 195, he commanded an army in Spain and claimed that he subdued as many towns as he spent days in the region (approximately one hundred). Cato, however, did not subdue all of these towns by force. The later military writer Frontinus opens his work on *Stratagems* with an illustrative anecdote (1.1.1):

M. Porcius Cato devictas a se Hispaniae civitates existimabat in tempore rebellaturas fiducia murorum. Scripsit itaque singulis, ut diruerent munita, minatus bellum, nisi confestim obtemperassent, epistulasque universis civitatibus eodem die reddi iussit. Unaquaeque urbium sibi soli credidit imperatum; contumaces conspiratio potuit facere, si omnibus idem denuntiari notum fuisset.

Marcus Porcius Cato reckoned that the Spanish states subdued by him would, in time, return to war, with trust in their walls. He wrote therefore to them individually that they should destroy their fortifications, having threatened war if they did not swiftly obey, and he ordered that the letters be delivered to all the states on the same day. Every one of the cities believed itself alone to be so ordered; resisting, it would have been possible to band together if it had been known that the same orders were sent to all.

The key word here is *rebellaturas*, from the verb *rebello*. In the year after Cato's time in Spain, the next Roman commander in the area reported that the states there had indeed returned to war; the first-century historian Livy uses the same verb (*rebellaverunt*) to characterize their action.¹⁴ Although that ultimately proved an exaggeration, the threat was taken seriously in Rome. Its credibility stemmed in part from Cato's decision to respond to the threat of renewed war not by unleashing extreme violence, but by stratagem. This left him vulnerable to political attacks on the efficacy of his campaigns, in a way that mass slaughter or enslavements would not.

14 Livy 35.1.1–2; see further Clark, "Defeat," 202–206.

In this context, repetition of the verb *rebello* across different authors and contexts related to Cato in Spain is significant.¹⁵ Although the Latin verb has produced cognates across modern language families, it is itself relatively rare in extant texts, with Livy accounting for more than half of its uses (fifty-four of ninety-seven). Only one-third of Livy's uses are of *rebello* as a conjugated verb; adjectival or subordinate forms predominate across all authors. This pattern extends through uses of the noun *rebellio* and adjective *rebellis*.¹⁶ Further, almost half of Livy's seventy-two uses of all the *rebell** words occur in his first ten books, when war termination and its seeming endless cyclicity posed a particular historiographical problem, and a further fifth cluster in books 33, 34, and 35, with a concentration around Cato. Given the overall rarity of the term, this patterning suggests that the verb was not an unmarked descriptor for subjects' martial resistance to Roman hegemony. Unlike its modern cognates, moreover, *rebello* does not assume a power differential; a plurality of its uses instead assume that the parties shifting between states of active conflict had equal standing to do so. This applies as well to phrases such as *rebellionem facere* or *bellum renovare* and other related expressions, which carry no necessary connotations of prior defeat or subjugation.¹⁷ The term *rebello* may thus have been a particular favorite of Livy's, or he may have found it used comparably by his lost predecessors. Regardless, its application to Cato's Spanish opponents denotes not "rebellion" but a specific context of continued war.

This context is important for its levels of nuance. There is no censure implied in Frontinus's use of *rebello*. Cato's victories were genuine, but the defeated states still retained lands, central places, and local autonomy, and, because Cato believed that they might return to war, they also retained some degree of operational capacity as combatants. Conversely, while Cato may have expected that they would accept his authority, he, too, can threaten renewed war. Cato has achieved a negotiated defeat, so, as victor, he could set terms and incentivize their acceptance, but it was (at least theoretically) possible for his enemies to reject those terms, and, with them, their defeated status. There were, in 195 BCE, no expectations of fealty on either side. This anecdote thus captures a moment

15 Aur. Vict. *De vir. ill.* 47.1; Livy 34.13.9; 34.17.5. Keeline, "Apparatus," 346–348 discusses the connections.

16 Fourteen other authors use the verb an average of three times each, ranging between once and six times. *Rebellis* and *rebellio* are uncommon; *rebellio* occurs thirty-six times (seventeen in Livy, eleven in Tacitus), and *rebellis* thirty (thirteen in Tacitus, twelve in imperial poets).

17 Murphy, "Re-Bell-Compounds," considers this word family across authors and argues convincingly that it carries no automatic connotation of prior defeat.

in Roman war-making when military success might generate a stable hiatus in conflict or instead become part of a series of continued engagements; the parties operate under the assumptions of an agonistic, but not necessarily antagonistic, relationship.¹⁸

Actions that can be described by the verb *rebello* did not create a moral schism among the concerned parties here: the verb acknowledges that legitimate strategic fluidity can exist even as victors and defeated work to define a new steady state for their relations. This seems both realistic and pragmatic. In any given region, Romans' fortunes on the battlefield might vary significantly before they achieved (or declared) victory, with series of seasonal truces punctuating years of fighting. Many wars were prosecuted without acts of mass violence beyond the battlefield, and defeated polities—at least in the third and second centuries BCE—might well be left in possession of their lands. A verb that allowed Romans to describe renewed war without attaching pejorative labels to their opponents might seem likely to be in common parlance, then, and it is noteworthy that writers instead preferred to deemphasize the iterative nature of these campaigns. The semantic range of *rebello*, moreover, might apply only in cases where prior public diplomacy had not shaped Romans' expectations of their opponents, and such situations, involving new regions under contestation, were relatively rare. At least in historiographical terms, Latin writers preferred verbs that situated opposing parties within a diplomatic context, emphasizing not the fact of war (as *rebello* would) but the act of rupture or realignment that precipitated it.

2 Cornelius Nepos, Julius Caesar, and *Descisco*

The Latin verb *descisco* is sometimes glossed or translated as a synonym for *rebello*.¹⁹ Both words have the advantage of a reasonably literal etymological connection to their primary meaning; just as *rebello* is to “re-war,” *descisco* is to “split from” or “break from.” While *descisco* occurs somewhat more frequently, in part because of its moral or philosophical use to describe a departure from (for example) life or reason, it, too, has a more constrained use in Latin than

18 “Agonism” is a much-discussed model in political theory; see, e.g., Honig, *Political Theory*, 69–73.

19 This is the case in one major Latin-English dictionary (Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *rebello*). See also Adams, “Language,” 352 n. 1, where *rebellaturos* at Tac. *Ann.* 12.50.2 is represented as an archaism. It is in fact an emendation for the mss. *bellaturos*; see Keeline, “Apparatus,” 346.

its subsumption under the morally freighted terms “desert” or “rebel” would imply.²⁰ Like *rebello*, *descisco* appears to be a term that Latin writers could use to describe the termination of an association without prejudicing an audience’s apprehension of the subject’s motives or subsequent fate.

This is well illustrated by the five uses of *descisco* by the first-century BCE biographer Cornelius Nepos. In the *Life of Alcibiades*, the Persians “feared that he [Alcibiades], led by love of country, might break from them at some point” (*per timuerunt ne caritate patriae ductus aliquando ab ipsis descisceret*, Corn. Nep. *Alc.* 5.1). Here *descisco* stands alone, but in other instances Nepos pairs it with other verbs of leaving in such a way as to suggest important differences between objectively similar acts. In the *Hamilcar*, to describe the outbreak of the Mercenary War, Nepos writes that “the hired soldiers, whom they had used against the Romans, broke away” (*mercennarii milites, qui<bus usi> adversus Romanos fuerant, desciverunt*, Corn. Nep. *Ham.* 2.2) and sparked a major internal war, in which “these men ‘conveyed away’ all Africa” (*hi totam abalienarunt Africam*), before Hamilcar was able to restore the towns thus separated (*abalienata*) to their alliances with Carthage.²¹ The verb *abalieno* allows Nepos to be clear about what has happened—Carthage was isolated, but recovered—but vague about specifics; his words avoid the issue of existing treaty agreements, a delicate subject given Rome’s questionable behavior during this war. The hired soldiers’ split from Carthage, in contrast, is unproblematic because a contractual arrangement was assumed. Similarly, in describing the Social War in the very brief *Life of Timotheus*, Nepos uses *deficio* and *descisco* to characterize different allies’ withdrawal from Athens’s empire (*defecerat Samus, descierat*

20 For *descisco* as found thirty-seven times in Livy, twenty-five in Tacitus, but not used by Sallust, see Gleason, “Unused Words,” 84. Latin dictionaries vest the term with a clearly negative color, most strongly Calonghi, *Dizionario*, s.v. *descisco* (“scostarsi, allontanarsi = diventar infidele, mancar di fede, e come infidele, ribelli [...] desistere, rinunciare [...] far difezione, ribellarsi, degenerare”) and Georges, *Ausführliches lateinisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch*, s.v. *descisco* (“abtrünnig-, untreu werden, abfallen, u. mit dem term. ad quem abfallend zu jmd. übergehen; [...] auf etw. verfallen, wohin ausarten”). Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire* is more neutral in its primary definition (“se détacher de, se séparer de”) but translates its examples with *défection*. Likewise, Valbuena, *Diccionario* defines *descisco* relatively neutrally in the abstract (“abandonarse, salirse, irse, retirarse”) but then defines its use in Livy in highly negative terms (“rebellarse, amotinarse, faltar á la fe”); Miguel, *Nuevo diccionario* is neutral.

21 Nepos uses the verb *abalieno* twice to describe the loss of Carthage’s allies (Corn. Nep. *Ham.* 2.3, 2.4) and one other time, when reporting a speech by Agesilaus on Tissaphernes’ poor choices: *dicebat, quod Tissaphernes periurio suo et homines suis rebus abalienaret et deos sibi iratos redderet*, Corn. Nep. *Ag.* 2.5. The verb was uncommon in antiquity; Cicero accounts for twenty-five of its fifty-five total uses.

Hellespontus, Corn. Nep. *Timoth.* 3.1). Here, because Nepos's representation of the historical events is inaccurate, the reason for the different verbs is unrecoverable.

Two further uses of *descisco* occur in the *Life of Datames*. Datames decides to depart the service of King Artaxerxes (*desciscere a rege consuit*, Corn. Nep. *Dat.* 5.5) when counseled that he is unlikely to receive fair treatment; Nepos emphasizes that Datames "did not do anything that was unworthy of his own honor" (*neque tamen quicquam fecit, quod fide sua esset indignum*). His eldest son subsequently chose to side with Artaxerxes and revealed his father's plan: "his eldest son Sysinas broke away from this man, however, and went over to the king, and he reported about the defection of his father" (*ab hoc tamen viro Sysinas, maximo natu filius, descit ad regemque transiit et de defectione patris detulit*, Corn. Nep. *Dat.* 7.1). This is Nepos's only use of the noun *defectio*, although he uses the verb *deficio* six times. Overall, Nepos seems to employ *deficio* for breaks in alliances that are legitimately addressed by the opposing party; the defectors may have their own reasons for defecting, but those reasons are not represented as objectively valid, and the actors suffer accordingly.²² In this light, Nepos's characterization of Datames is more subtle than it might first appear, as the virtuous Datames effects a legitimate separation, and his son does the same, but in so doing characterizes his father's action in negative terms. This invites the reader to consider whether Datames's son was motivated to depart from his father's side because he perceived his father's actions as illegitimate, or, alternatively, whether he understood that he had to represent his father's act as illegitimate in order to justify his split to the king, lest he appear unpleasantly lacking in filial piety. Read with the examples above, this suggests that, when Nepos was writing, it might seem possible to distinguish semantically between an acceptable or neutral parting (in the sense that it ought to have been possible to do it without repercussions) and one that was not.

In this way, *descisco* occupies a comparable moral position as *rebello* insofar as it describes a shift in alliance, with attendant military implications, that did not characterize the actor as faithless or deserving of retribution. Uses of *descisco* in other contemporary authors support this interpretation. Julius Caesar, for example, used *descisco* twice, both in the *Bellum Civile*. In the first case, Caesar describes the towns' shift in alliance (in his favor) with *descisco* (Caes. *BCiv.* 1.60); the verb there allows him to succinctly report the act without char-

22 For Nepos, *deficio* pertains usually to those who have left a king's service (Corn. Nep. *Ag.* 7.2; *Cim.* 2.4; *Con.* 2.2, 3.1; *Timoth.* 3.1; *Dat.* 2.1), effectively moving toward rebellion; in Caesar's uses of *deficio* or *defectio*, his or Rome's side commonly takes the place of royal authority.

acterizing his new allies as oath breakers. In the second, an impassioned speech given by Caesar's lieutenant Curio, Caesar, like Nepos in the *Datames*, exploits the contrast between neutral and negative verbs for changing sides.²³ Caesar has Curio represent their opponents as seeking that the soldiers break from Caesar (using *descisco*): "there are those who urge you to separate from us" (*sunt qui vos hortentur ut a nobis desciscatis*, Caes. *BCiv.* 2.32). Curio further asserts that the Pompeians accuse these soldiers of having deserted and betrayed them (*desertos, proditos*), when Pompey's commanders are the ones who behaved thus (*deseruit, proditi*). In practical terms, these are all the same actions or decisions. Caesar carefully avoids applying terms of moral judgment to his soldiers, however, as his use of *descisco* allows him to present whatever they may be contemplating in neutral terms. He reserves words of opprobrium for their confirmed opponents in leadership roles, whom he also represents as directing their condemnation against the soldiers. In this part of Curio's speech, Caesar succinctly aligns himself with soldiers and Romans who, he recognizes, may be influenced by a variety of factors and who are unlikely to be swayed by accusations of bad faith in this context of civil war. The verbs in this speech thus play with the contrast between legitimate and perfidious transfers of allegiance.

The anonymous continuers of Caesar offer two further examples. The author of the *Alexandrian War* uses *descisco* to describe Caesar's perspective on some residents of Alexandria whom he believed had aligned themselves with him; as with the towns who performed that same verb (discussed above), this is a legitimate shift in alliance from Caesar's perspective. The author cannot resist noting his own belief that all Alexandrians were "a group most suited to betrayal" (*aptissimum esse hoc genus ad proditorem*, *B. Alex.* 7.2), but he does not transfer that opinion to his characterization of Caesar's apprehension of events. In the *African War*, *descisco* is again used to characterize a shift in allegiance, as a group of soldiers, "persuaded by the name of Caesar, break away from King Juba" (*Caesarisque nomine persuasi a rege Iuba desciscunt*, *B. Afr.* 55.1). These casual uses are particularly illustrative; in both cases, allegiances legitimately and unremarkably shift to Caesar. Altogether, *descisco* appears neutral in the act but adaptable for its context, a way to discuss defections that one wishes to assert are not acceptable grounds for punitive retaliation—as opposed to desertions in the heat of battle, which, when acknowledged as such, might set soldiers beyond the protection of their new commanders.²⁴

23 On Curio's speech, see Grillo, "Speeches," 141–142; on Curio and the politics of the time, Logghe, "Gentleman."

24 On desertion in the context of command relationships, see Milne, "Family Paradigms," 34–37; in civil war, see Phang, *Roman Military Service*, 147–150.

This remains a semantic distinction, yet it is a semantic distinction that aimed to construct a legal, military, and moral reality for its audience. Both *descisco* and *rebello* offered Latin writers terms for describing a departure from one status or association toward another without predetermining an audience's understanding of the moral correctness of that departure. In general, *rebello* conveys motion away from a settled status with regard to Rome, while *descisco* occurs when a group or person switched allegiance in Rome's favor or when a Roman writer had no investment in either side. While any particular use of either word might merit a more contextualized interpretation, the overall patterns discerned above are sufficient to distinguish these verbs from their morally freighted counterparts. Although this is not a surprising conclusion, it is worth emphasizing that the existence of neutral terms for recommencing a state of war or departing from a state of alliance presumes the understanding that such actions were not inherently or universally wrong. Because no surviving use of either term refers to an action undertaken by the author or a group with which the author expressly and currently identifies, however, the issues are not quite so straightforward. The subjects of either verb, relative either to Romans specifically or to a hegemon more generally, are often other than the assumed community of the author and audience. The verbs thus establish a relationship of power in which one party asserts its authority to determine the moral legitimacy of another's decision. The power differential is widened by the instability of its basis, because the criteria for that determination are contingent upon the interests of the determining party and thus neither consistent nor transparent.

3 *Deficio and Defectio*

The verb *deficio* is far more common than *rebello* or *descisco* and denotes both a general leave-taking and a more specific act of failure or absence. Although the noun *defectio* has clear negative connotations in legal or diplomatic contexts, *deficio* can be used to articulate a middle ground between *descisco* and *desero* ("desert").²⁵ Sallust, who does not use *descisco*, uses *deficio* four times in the *Jugurthine War*, in contexts that do not assume the moral valence that attends betrayal. After a first use in which the Roman commander Metellus exhorts his soldiers not to give way (because they have no camp to which they might retreat, not because it would show poor character), three uses describe towns

²⁵ See further Pérez Lopez, "Les quaestiones" and Kenty, "Altera Roma," 70.

that have broken with Jugurtha and which he sought, both with threats and rewards, to regain.²⁶ Sallust thus uses *deficio* when the town of Sicca removed itself from alliance with Jugurtha and gave aid to the Romans (“the town which, first of all of them after his defeat in battle, defected from the king,” *quod oppidum primum omnium post malam pugnam ab rege defecerat*, Sall. *Iug.* 56). A surprise maneuver by Jugurtha, coupled with the threat of harm and the promise of a restored alliance (including “freedom without fear,” *libertas sine metu*), led the town to turn on the Romans and rejoin Jugurtha. Sallust, like the anonymous author of the *Alexandrian War* discussed above, takes this opportunity to generalize about the opportunism of Numidians, but that quality did not discourage either the Romans or Jugurtha from collaborating with the residents of Sicca. This tolerance, however motivated by expedience, contrasts with Sallust’s assertion just prior to his reference to Sicca that Jugurtha could rely on the superlative fealty of deserters to his side because they did not have the option of survival if they failed.²⁷ A commander, whether Roman or not, could choose which shifts of alliance were tolerable and which were not.

Two examples, from Caesar and Livy, suffice to support this point. Caesar begins the third book of his *Commentaries on the Gallic War* with an impression of stability, quickly dispelled (Caes. *B Gall.* 3.1–10). At this point in his campaign, Caesar had represented a series of escalating victories and diplomatic settlements to his audience at Rome. He had gone so far as to depart Gaul, under the impression that he had successfully opened a route through the Alps for Italian trade and resolved the major conflicts in that region. As book 3 opens, however, Caesar leads his audience swiftly through a review of how wrong he was, not through his own errors or those of his legates, but because he trusted the Gallic leaders with whom he, for his part, had negotiated in good faith. His legate Galba faces renewed war with the same Gauls with whom he had planned to spend the winter, and his legion faces a hard battle, which they almost do not win. Afterward, Galba destroys the Gauls’ town, and Caesar again briefly thinks there is stability, so he marches north to explore the possibility of invading

26 Sallust has *deficio* once about property (Sall. *Cat.* 13.4). The four uses in the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, all military in context, cluster around the example discussed above (Sall. *Iug.* 51.4, 56.3, 61.1, 66.1). He uses *defectio* twice to refer to the *defectio sociorum* (*Hist.* 1 fr. 20; 2 fr. 43.6 Ramsey). On the historical importance of personal connections in local alliances, see Prag, “Troops and Commanders,” 110, with references.

27 Sall. *Iug.* 56: *Oppidanos hortatur, moenia defendant, additis auxilio perfugis, quod genus ex copiis regis, quia fallere nequibat, firmissimum erat*. Although Roman writers frequently represent desertion as bringing certain execution (as here), commanders had a great deal of discretion; see Phang, *Roman Military Service*, 120–123, 147–150.

Britain. There he finds renewed war at his heels and summarizes the Gauls' perfidy as a way of framing the difficult battle to come. In that contest, Caesar's army reengages with the heretofore ill-defined polity of the Veneti, and imposes a definitive defeat, but only after multiple attempts and varied strategies.²⁸ Caesar needs a scant eight words to complete the campaign: "therefore, after having killed the whole senate, he sold the remaining people into slavery" (*itaque omni senatu necato reliquos sub corona vendidit*, 3.16).

His readers, primed by the preceding narrative, may well have viewed this response as moderate. Prior to this, Caesar had made repeated references to capitulations on the part of various groups of Gauls.²⁹ In this context, when he again receives an act of surrender, an attentive audience would seem conditioned not to believe it. The terms (*itaque se suaque omnia Caesari dederunt*, Caes. *BGall.* 3.16) echo those employed at regular intervals in the preceding chapters, underscoring his representation of his enemies as willful violators of their agreements. This is disingenuous, of course, because those prior references describe a single (if extended) episode involving a different, and geographically quite distinct, people. The generalization is the point, however, as Caesar immediately characterizes another large coalition that threatens a separate detachment of his forces as those "who had defected" (*quae defecerant*, 3.17).³⁰ These states contrast with those against whom Caesar acts at the close of book 3, the Morini and Menapii, whom he characterizes explicitly as remaining in arms and having never sought peace diplomatically (3.28). The point, ultimately, is that, by his own admission, the expectations of Caesar and his lieutenants define the strategic landscapes through which they move.³¹ His opponents are consequently responsible for understanding the state of their relations with Caesar from his perspective and adapting accordingly; Caesar positions his own errors as the result of his persona as a negotiator in simple good faith, while the various Gallic polities appear to exploit and violate diplo-

28 Caesar's narrative of his campaigns against the Veneti has rightly attracted attention for its literary complexity; see, e.g., Erickson, "Falling Masts," with references.

29 Caes. *BGall.* 3.1: *missis ad eum undique legatis obsidibusque datis et pace facta*; 3.3: *quod deditioe facta obsidibusque acceptis nihil de bello timendum existimaverat*; 3.7: *his rebus gestis cum omnibus de causis Caesar pacatam Galliam existimaret*; 3.10: *tamen multa Caesarem ad id bellum incitabant: iniuria retentorum equitum Romanorum, rebellio facta post deditioem, defectio datis obsidibus, tot civitatum coniuratio ...*

30 On *deficio* and *defectio* as denoting "rebellion" in Caesar, see Grillo, "Caesarian Intertextualities," 260 n. 11, within a larger discussion of Caesar's manipulation of this idea through the perspectives of his characters (such as Ambiorix, 259–260).

31 On the crucial interconnections of Caesar's campaigning and his use of writing, see Osgood, "Pen," 329, 336, 352–353.

matic conventions.³² In semantic terms, this is accomplished by the specificity of Caesar's phrasing: a return to war after a formal submission (*rebellio facta post deditionem*) and a breaking away despite the pledging of hostages (*defectio datis obsidibus*). The modifying clauses assign agency, and thence responsibility, to the Gauls, neatly avoiding the question of whether they understood their actions in the same terms as Caesar.

Despite the complex motivations of Caesar's *Commentaries*, his use of these terms aligns with that of others. In a description of Cato's campaign in Spain, recounting events that preceded the stratagem discussed at the beginning of this essay, Livy uses a comparable pattern of events to predetermine the audience's understanding of events. After praising Cato's specific tactical decisions in an important victory, Livy describes first his immediate opponents, then their neighbors, and thereafter a wide swath of states through which he travelled as voluntarily giving their submission to Cato (*in deditionem compulit; multi et aliarum civitatum ... dediderunt se; legati dedentium civitates suas occurrebant*, Livy 34.16.4–7). Cato treated them kindly, and Livy asserts his complete dominion in the region (*omnis cis Hiberum Hispania perdomita erat*). At that point, a rumor (that Livy claims was false) inspired military resistance from the Bergistani (*Bergistanorum civitatis septem castella defecerunt*, 34.16.8). Cato addresses this without extreme measures, but when the Bergistani again break away (*eidem ... defecerunt*, 34.16.9) Cato again defeats them and this time sells them all into slavery (*sub corona venire omnes*, 34.16.10). This group thus found itself in the curious position of having their “defecting” be the Romans' motivation for the initiation of conflict, for their subsequent destruction, and thereafter for Cato's sweeping elimination of towns' fortifications.³³ As with Caesar, this narrative makes no effort to avoid the implication that a Roman commander's decisions were informed by his understanding of his opponents' actions rather than an independently documented or objectively asserted chain of events. A first “breaking away” may generate few consequences, while a second prompts extreme violence. The combination may thence be generalized into an impression of unwarranted and iterative aggression, and that impression may then be invoked as the basis for preemptive actions against unrelated groups. Those groups may have entered into voluntary agreements, absent preceding military defeat, yet now find themselves the object of demonstrably sincere threats of mass killing or enslavement.

32 Rambaud, *L'art*, 123, compares Caesar's (representation of his) actions and the expectations under which the Veneti likely operated.

33 Livy 34.17.5: *consul interim rebellione Bergistanorum ictus, ceteras quoque civitates ratus per occasionem idem facturas, arma omnibus cis Hiberum Hispania adimit.*

4 *Deficio, Descisco, Rebello*

Ultimately, because formal diplomatic agreements required the subscription of parties in Rome, agreements between Romans abroad and their opponents occupied the realm of legal fiction prior to the ratification of the commander's acts in Rome. A commander's remarkable autonomy was matched by that of his foes, and the language with which Roman writers characterize movements to and from states of war or association reflect that. On the one hand, determinations of the justness or correctness of a commander's choices were expressly predicated on what he knew or believed, and in this way a response to perceived disaffection might be as valid as if it constituted a real betrayal. On the other hand, Rome's opponents could be represented as responsible for the consequences of those perceptions regardless of their distance from any conscious acts or intentions. In this way, the ability of *deficio* and *defectio* to denote genuinely wrong acts allows Latin authors to construct strategic reality. That said, however, what a comparison with *rebello* and *descisco* helps make clear is that these acts were wrong because of the perspective of the writer or speaker; there was nothing inherent in the renewal of war or the displacement of allegiance that brought massacre or mass enslavement at the hands of the Romans. It may be obvious, but it is worth stating explicitly that the people Rome fought could not know what verbs Romans would use to characterize their actions, so they could not act to mitigate the Roman response.

Several points emerge from the preceding discussion. In the context of Roman military narratives, *rebello* and *rebellio* obtain in situations where there may be some flexibility in the definition (and reassertion) of diplomatic relations. Livy's frequent use of this word family makes clear sense in the context of repeated wars with people whom he does not want to represent as perfidious or refractory. Yet these words are uncommon precisely because they accept a certain ambiguity with regard to conflict termination. Romans share much of their known world with people occupying this unresolved status, and they do so largely without detailed commentary in our sources. It is rather the moments of movement, when one party or the other decides that this indeterminate zone does not allow them sufficiently to pursue their interests, that prompt assessment. At those points, Roman writers seem markedly to prefer to predetermine their readers' opinions about renewed conflict through the use of words like *deficio*, in combination with specific, contextualized circumstances expressly focalized through the commander in the field. Thus, although Roman vocabulary allowed for the possibility that those rendered noncombatant by force might well later renew war, and some military agreements might fairly

be exchanged for others, in most cases, Latin writers make a choice, in moral terms, of how to present events as a preview to the expected fate of those implicated.

Vocabulary also informs the details of modern military history. While a handful of Latin verbs are often translated (or understood) in the sense of “revolt” or “desert,” these words governed distinct semantic spheres, transcribing the world of difference between a resurgent foe and an oath breaker, a traitor and a survivor. Importantly, they cannot be taken alone as evidence for antecedent bilateral agreements, nor should they be vested with explanatory force in the analysis of Roman military decisions. Too often, they are used to construct rather than to describe. That is not to say that no conclusions may ever be drawn from these narratives, but to suggest that a modern reader’s understanding of (for example) “to rebel,” *se rebeller*, *rebellieren*, or *rebelarse* does not make the Bergistani or the Veneti “rebels.” Although this limits the inferences that any one word may prompt, these verbs also potentially offer other types of information. Conversely, the translation of sets of different Latin words with a single word (like “rebel” or “defect”) in another language creates the impression that Romans faced near-constant military insurrection when the strategic realities were more complex. To the extent that specific word choices can define an enemy as “from within” or “still outside,” they may help to contextualize Romans’ justification of the use of force and isolate their attempts to normalize the application of extreme tactics against civilians. Of no less value is the possibility that we may better recognize the perspectives of the people fighting Romans, or better see them beneath the decoupage of centuries of inherited images of “the resisting other.”³⁴

The introduction of this essay set forth a recurrent template within which ancient and modern military historians write episodes of collective violence. Although this model narrative of rebellion and punishment may be found across millennia and well beyond the Mediterranean, that is evidence for the shared modes with which hegemon justified their acts, not for contemporary ancient policies. It is, moreover, worth a certain degree of philological pedantry in order to avoid uncritically recapitulating the Romans’ own very freighted assertions of their enemies’ morals and motives. Published translations inadvertently may participate in the same *ex post facto* rationalizations of violence that Romans used and, at worst, can sustain circular arguments in support not of understanding Roman antiquity but of the Classical imaginary that past

34 Well illustrated by Kreiner, “Overburdened Gauls.” On the importance of confronting the trope, see Cassibry, “Tyranny.”

scholars wished Rome to be. Latin writers had the vocabulary that allowed them to separate a neutral or positive change of alliance from one that was inherently illegitimate, but, because they deployed those words to their own advantage and not necessarily in relation to diplomatic realities, their violence against supposedly disloyal subjects cannot be understood as predicated on those peoples' conscious acts; they did not know what verb they were enacting. Historians rightly regret the absence of historical records generated by Rome's opponents, but, in this light, they are unlikely to regret that as much as the people whose history was written by the words the Romans chose for them.

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This book reveals how violent pasts were constructed by ancient Mediterranean societies, the ideologies they served, and the socio-political processes and institutions they facilitated. Combining case studies from Anatolia, Egypt, Greece, Israel/ Judah, and Rome, it moves beyond essentialist dichotomies such as “victors” and “vanquished” to offer a new paradigm for studying representations of past violence across diverse media, from funerary texts to literary works, chronicles, monumental reliefs, and other material artefacts such as ruins. It thus paves the way for a new comparative approach to the study of collective violence in the ancient world.

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