

**Representations of the Body in Pain:  
Antiquities, the Enlightenment and the Pageantry of Museums**

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THESIS

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To Jennifer. Thank you for teaching me that hope is, indeed, the thing with feathers.

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## SUMMARY

This paper investigates visual/artistic representations of pain with a specific focus on Hellenistic sculpture from the Mediterranean world, but also inspired by a range of literary and visual works from modern film to contemporary philosophy. The experience of pain is never only one thing—physical, mental, emotional. Therefore, the representation and, by extension, the outsider's interpretation and relation to that pain, is similarly complex. As the artist's approach to pain may change, inclusion of the different kinds of representations is essential. Given the difficulty and the magnitude of the subject, a different kind of approach to writing was necessary. The human experience is not limited to a single time period or one particular medium. This paper, therefore, must cross over boundaries of disciplinary knowledge. The experience and representation of pain goes beyond the limitations of focusing on one single time period or geography, and cannot follow a single and narrow paradigm of pain. The methodology found in this paper is designed to be different than what is customary. It is designed to be a provocative piece exploring the many pathways to and from pain. Pain is a cornerstone of the human experience; art, in its many forms, can be regarded as windows into this human experience. Art, whether it is sculpture, poetry, photography or film, strives to be a medium by which pain can be effectively communicated. I employ the writings of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath and W. B. Yeats on pain to illuminate a way to access and understand the visual representations of pain with the aid of these rich literary articulations of suffering, rather than an analysis of their literary works. Instead of deconstructing Woolf, Plath and Yeats, they are invited to sit down to the table to discuss pain and its relationship to the experience of being.

## INTRODUCTION

“When the lights of health go down, the undiscovered countries that are disclosed, what wastes and deserts of the soul a slight attack of influenza brings to view, what precipices and lawns sprinkled with bright flowers a little rise of temperature reveals, what ancient and obdurate oaks are uprooted in use by the act of sickness, how we go down into the pit of death and feel the waters of annihilation close above our heads and wake thinking to find ourselves in presence of the angels and the harpers when we have a tooth out”

(Woolf 1967, 193)

“The first man who likened painting and poetry to each other must have been a man of delicate perception, who found that both arts affected him in a similar manner”

(Lessing 1930, 3)

“Pain is the original unreflective awareness of our body...pain is an immediate awareness of our body”

(Oklot 2009, 330)

Pain is defined by the Oxford English dictionary as follows: “Physical or bodily suffering; a continuous, strongly unpleasant or agonizing sensation in the body (usually in a particular part), such as arises from illness, injury, harmful physical contact” (Oxford English Dictionary n.d.). Pain is first and foremost a physical sensation. The experience of pain begins in our nerves and neurotransmitters. Pain is a solitary tactile experience, and the force of it changes us, and has throughout history. Because of the power of pain, talking about and representing

pain, whether it be one's own or that of others, requires its own brand of ethics. I could not in good conscience take the subject of this paper lightly. The first-hand experience of pain is always real. The difficulty comes in conveying that pain externally, and one inevitably risks trivializing it. When writing about pain, one must therefore be thoughtful in the truest sense of the word—that is to say, full of thought. The approach must be holistic, grounded, and most importantly, done with extreme care to the subject matter.

In the section from “On Being Ill” quoted above, Virginia Woolf tells us that pain takes us outside of ourselves and makes the world around us unrecognizable. When we are in pain, we become separated from our ideas about ourselves and the world around us. Notions that seemed fixed—who we are and how we interact with the world—suddenly become irrevocably fluid. Woolf tells us that the simple act of going to the dentist rearranges our perception of reality, and even an average trip to the dentist to have a tooth removed (not something that we generally associate as a fatal activity) makes us feel as if we are dying. Our rational minds know that we are not dying, but we feel the pain keenly. How can going to the dentist be so traumatizing? When we go to the dentist, do we not decide to do so by our own free will? Going to the dentist is a privilege; something that we pay for. We are not held against our will; in fact, we are taking care of ourselves. This act of self-care, through Woolf's eyes, results in catastrophe. The catastrophe here is the result of the dentist's handiwork: the sensation of pain. Bodily pain is so overwhelming of an experience that the foray into the realm of pain via the tooth extraction feels fatal.

This sentiment is echoed in Sylvia Plath's poem “The Cut”. In the poem, Plath has cut her thumb, and her world is undone.

What a thrill -  
My thumb instead of an onion.



The top quite gone  
Except for a sort of hinge

Of skin,  
A flap like a hat,  
Dead white.  
Then that red plush.

Little pilgrim,  
The Indian's axed your scalp.  
Your turkey wattle  
Carpet rolls

Straight from the heart.  
I step on it,  
Clutching my bottle  
Of pink fizz. A celebration, this is.  
Out of a gap  
A million soldiers run,  
Redcoats, every one.

Whose side are they on?  
O my  
Homunculus, I am ill.  
I have taken a pill to kill

The thin  
Papery feeling.  
Saboteur,  
Kamikaze man -

The stain on your  
Gauze Ku Klux Klan  
Babushka  
Darkens and tarnishes and when  
The balled  
Pulp of your heart  
Confronts its small  
Mill of silence

How you jump -  
Trepanned veteran,  
Dirty girl,  
Thumb stump  
(Plath 2008, 235)

In this poem, Sylvia Plath gives a highly evocative narrative about cutting her thumb while trying to cut an onion. She tells the reader of her pain, referring to her thumb as a “saboteur”—a traitor in her life. Much like the earlier discussed trip to the dentist taken by Woolf, we generally don’t think of a simple cut to the thumb as something that is life-changing. Plath lets the reader know otherwise. Her pain is abrupt, real and stops her in her tracks. Plath describes the flow of blood as a million running “Redcoats”—a reference back to the American Revolutionary war; her blood seeping through the open wound is seen as an act of treason. A slew of other historical malefactors also appear in her story: Kamikazes, the Ku Klux Klan, and other historical villainous caricatures cause pain for her hero, her “Trepanned veteran” of a thumb. Plath is completely overtaken by the pain of cutting her thumb. She wants us to understand that even the everyday act of cutting vegetables turns an average day into misery.

This project explores not only the ways in which pain is presented in art, but also who interrogates it and if the examination is done in an ethical manner. Pain robs individuals of their voices; often those who are subjected to physical pain are already disenfranchised. This disenfranchisement is systemic. It is experienced through the very fabric of society--from the actions of state in the form of physical torture to more mundane avenues, such as the inclusion or exclusion from cultural institutions such as museums. The inclusion of cultural narratives and objects in cultural institutions of high regard is to have one’s experiences and histories validated. The care with which certain objects are given, and the lack of care other objects and histories are treated, help create the framework of the society around us. When objects and stories are given preference in such arenas as museums—locations that are historically set up by elite members of society as societal markers of importance—we are taught in subtle ways that those cultures and objects have more inherent sociological value. The institution of the museum, which often

architecturally resembles a temple, is a place of reverence. When museums and exhibitions are deconstructed, the worshipful façade begins to fall away, and the human hand in the narrative can be more clearly seen.

The people who are victims of physical violence, terror and suppression are pushed to the margins of society automatically through their experience of pain. Does representing pain in art attempt to give these voiceless victims some form of mouthpiece? Giving the voiceless a chance to speak is what Ranajit Guha referred to as “listening to the small voice of history” (Guha 1996, 3). The small voice in history is the voice of the conquered, of the repressed. Through careful listening, with the knowledge that voice and power are interconnected, the smallest voices can be heard and those previously deprived of agency can be heard and given the possibility of self-representation and political power. But once this representation, whether it be poem sculpture or video, is able to be produced, where can it be seen? It is essential, in order to be understood in the larger framework of society, for the marginalized to have representation in the halls where they were previously excluded. In his book *Subalternity and Representation* John Beverly writes, “Power is related to representation; which representations have cognitive authority or can secure hegemony, which do not have authority or are not hegemonic” (Beverly 1999, 25). Beverly outlines a clear relationship between political power, agency and the ability to represent one’s or another’s self. Political suppression is not merely an ideological act, but also a physical one. The subjects of subjugation have access to physical agency, the ability to ensure that basic necessities of life are met and that quality of life is possible. They are physically beaten down and then left without access to the tools they need to have access to basic human needs such as clothing, shelter, and food security. In his poem “Easter 1916” W. B. Yeats describes the death of the Irish

patriots killed in the Easter Rebellion, Yeats seeks to counter the suppression of experience of the men that died in the Easter Uprising of Dublin in 1916.

We know their dream; enough  
 To know they dreamed and are dead;  
 And what if excess of love  
 Bewildered them till they died?  
 I write it out in a verse -  
 MacDonagh and MacBride  
 And Connolly and Pearse  
 Now and in time to be,  
 Wherever green is worn,  
 Are changed, changed utterly:  
 A terrible beauty is born.  
 (Yeats 1956)

In his poem, Yeats mourns the passing of these men. Things are changed for him, and out of the quagmire of the battle, something is born—namely, “a terrible beauty”. It is important that in describing the deaths of these men, Yeats here does not just stop at the word “terrible”, but extends the line to “terrible beauty”. Yeats’s treatment of the fallen men seeks to create a legacy of beauty, both in their lives and in their deaths. This poem serves not only as a witness to the lives and deaths lost in the rebellion, but also as a testament to the nature of their deaths. These rebels are not painted in a villainous light; their deaths are given meaning by the beauty that is born from the act of their deaths. Yeats’ “terrible beauty” is a phoenix rising from the ashes of the deaths of these men.

There has been a long-standing ideological relationship between beauty and pain. In *Art As Experience*, John Dewey implicitly argues that pain and suffering are necessary; a beautiful world would not be enough for us. Dewey tells us that contented pleasure is not satisfying:

"We envisage with pleasure Nirvana and a uniform heavenly bliss only because they are projected upon the background of our present world of stress and conflict. Because the actual

world...is a combination of...breaks and reunions, the experience of a living creature is capable of esthetic quality” (Dewey 1934 reprint 1980, 37).

Dewey tells us that the world is complex; we dream of beauty due to living in an imperfect world that is filled with strife. We wish for beauty because we experience pain; in this way, pain and beauty are interwoven in the experience of living.

But pain is not new; it is not a recent invention or discovery of writers in the Modern Age. Pain is a feeling people have experienced, explored, and attempted to explain from the dawn of our species. The existence of pain is universal. However, the individual experience of it is unique. The pain discussed in Plath’s poem and Yeats’ poems are different, as is the resulting dialogue. With this in mind, this project attempts to explore the representation of human suffering through a wide range of mediums—from Greek sculpture of the Hellenistic era to films of the Italian filmmaker Piero Pasolini from the 1960’s. While these forms of art may seem diverse, similar questions can be raised in each instance. How is suffering portrayed? Does the image of suffering pass on more suffering, or does it possibly offer some sort of catharsis? Sontag writes, “Photographs of the suffering and martyrdom of a people are more than reminders of death, of failure, of victimization. They invoke the miracle of survival” (Sontag 2003, 87). By looking at the art (in this case photographs), the viewer is able to experience an emotional journey ending with the elation of endurance. When is the representation of pain authentic? Can the stories of the suffered by told by themselves, or can they be told by others.

In his book *The Culture of Pain*, David Morris states that, “humankind—across cultures and across time—has persistently understood pain as an event that demands interpretation...we cannot simply suffer pain but almost always are compelled to make sense of it” (Morris 1991, 10). We see here that pain is not only to be experienced, but also understood and, if possible,

reasoned with. Art can serve as a much-needed translation device between pain and expression that aids this effort. In the introduction to *The Art of Art History* Donald Preziosi writes, “The modern discipline of art history is founded upon a series of assumptions regarding the meaning or significance of objects of human manufacture” (Preziosi 2009, 13). Whether art is regarded as the catalysts for social and cultural change or the products of such change, Preziosi (and this paper) seek to ask “in what way is this object a representation, expression, or embodiment...of the person, people or society that produced it” (Preziosi 2009, 9). Is it possible to represent pain in art adequately? If so, how do we begin to approach the representation of pain? There are ethical responsibilities regarding the way that pain is both represented in various media and in the way that pain is discussed in academic settings. What are the limits of those ethical responsibilities involved in both the representation and the discussions surrounding the experience of pain? It is essential to be ever vigilant of the ways in which we talk about the pain of others. Pain should never be looked upon or discussed in a manner that is casual. Pain can literally be a matter of life and death, and should be approached with gravity.

Looking at Hellenistic sculptures like “Laocoon and His Sons”, “Marsyas” and “The Dying Gaul”, we see suffering that is laid bare. In 1767 art historian and archeologist Johan Joachim Winckelmann published *History of the Art of Antiquity* in an attempt to create a systematic history of art and to establish an evolutionary course for art. Preziosi writes, “Winckelmann not only transformed the idea of the history of art into a notion that art is the emblem of the spirit of an entire culture, but also argued that it achieves an ideal moment—what later came to be referred to as ‘classical’—in which the *essential* qualities of a people are most fully and truly revealed” (Preziosi 2009, 17). Winckelmann praises the classical, pushing forth an idea of the Greek ideal. This ideal closely knits pain with beauty. Regarding “Laocoon and His

Sons” Winckelmann writes that the statue is the epitome of “noble simplicity and grandeur” (Potts 1994, 3) but in his book *Flesh and the Ideal* Alex Potts asserts that “what comes to the fore is not the poised struggle of a noble soul against adversity so much as a violent juxtaposition of beauty and pain” (Potts 1994, 3). What Winckelmann puts forward as noble is in fact suspended terror and agony. How is Laocoon’s essential character *essentially* noble when his contraction of pain is due to a convulsion from being bitten and strangled by snakes? Does the ideal that Winckelmann created still live on today, and if it does what are the ways that we can de-Enlighten our approach to these works of art in order to understand these work’s depiction of pain? Deconstructing the way that Winckelmann and his contemporaries regarded art helps shed light regarding the way that society has been taught to view what is beautiful and which stories are culturally significant. Once we are able to engage in the process of disengagement, avenues of experimentation begin to open. There is a shift in our understanding of both the representation of pain in art that coincides with the ways that we perceive classical antiquities. Once thought of as the paradigm of beauty and virtue, there now exists the possibility for the break of that narrative. The example of Pasolini’s film “Oedipus Rex”, as discussed at length later in this paper, pushes against the narrative of the “sacred” history of ancient Greece.

Museums and museum exhibits are a way to see how the ancient world is perceived in our times. Museums are performative spaces. The museum is a site of potential: to either replicate old tired ideas or challenge visitors to engage with objects and history in new ways. Exhibits have the potential to revitalize objects; to make history come alive. Conversely, they can present the visitor with outdated information that fails to invigorate both the visitor and the object. Objects can be used to reassert old paradigms, and act as reverberations of colonial history. Each object has a story, a biography of its own. Museums represent opportunity: the

chance to turn the standing narrative on its head, or continue to propagate old, and potentially inaccurate, information. These exhibits can either invite new ideas and new people to the conversation regarding human history, or they can reinforce old ideas rooted in colonial history. It is important to celebrate the objects of antiquity and learn of the biography these objects while simultaneously understanding the ways in which the elite of the Enlightenment co-opted and distorted ideas of beauty from the ancient world to justify colonial endeavors.



## II. PAIN AND BEAUTY

When one discusses pain in art, one cannot disconnect society's natural correlation of art to beauty. Discussions regarding the connection of pain to beauty may be found among the writers of the Enlightenment. Writing about the relationship between pain and beauty specifically regarding the works of the Greeks Winckelmann writes, "All movements and poses of Greek figures not marked by such traits of wisdom, but instead by passion and violence" (Winckelmann 2006, 30). During the Enlightenment, a movement called "philhellenism" came to prominence. "Philhellenism" is the love of Greek culture; in the Enlightenment philhellenism is specifically focused on the creation and love of "Classical" Greek culture. Sculptures such as "Laocoon and his Sons" became the focus for writers at this time, embodying the connection between pain and beauty. Winckelmann writes on the subject of Laocoon,

"Laocoon suffers, but he suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles: his misery touches us to the soul; but we should like to endure misery as this great man endures it... The artist must have felt in himself a the great strength of spirit which he impressed upon the marble"

(Winckelmann via Preziosi 2009, 6)

Winckelmann idolizes both the sculptor and the subject. He claims that we should all want to be like Laocoon in his hour of dire pain. How do we wish to be like anyone in the moment of extreme agony? This idea sets precedent for the reactions to suffering—that there are ways to exist in pain that are admirable, and conversely there are ways not to. Laocoon's suffering is meant to speak to us, "to the soul", as if his suffering reverberates within us. He suffers well and dies well, and provides an example for us all—this hero of the "Classical" world.

Alex Potts writes on the formation and propagation of philhellenism by Johan Joachim Winckelmann during the Enlightenment in his book *Flesh and Bone* “his reconstruction of the art of antiquity, his account of its rise, flourishing, and passing away start to suggest that the relation between contemporary art and its classic models in the past might be deeply problematic” (Potts 1994, 25). Potts puts forth the idea that Winckelmann himself created the idea of antiquity, and then devised a trajectory for the rise and demise of antiquity. The creation of the idea of “antiquity” puts a firm divide between what is “ancient” and what is “modern”; what is “old” and what is “new” with an emphasis on “ancient” and “old” being inherently good. Seen in this way, “ancient” is timeless and contains the formula for refinement. Alternately, modern is crass, debased and inherently flawed. Modern should then be looking for ways to return to the old ways, to something “pure” and beautiful. Potts writes, “A conflation of ethical nobility with formal simplicity had been a longstanding paradigm of classical aesthetics...was endowed with a new lease on life in the late eighteenth century” (Potts 1994, 1). This quarrel of the ancients and moderns implies a dangerous kind of evolution of culture. To say that culture evolves from base to grand, from simple to spectacular serves two functions: 1) it places heightened value on the ancient world as extraordinary and 2) justifies the actions of the people in the Enlightenment as being forward thinking and progressive.

In his 18<sup>th</sup> century article entitled “Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture”, Winckelmann writes, “Good taste, which is becoming more prevalent throughout the world, had its origins under the skies of Greece” (Winckelmann 2006, 27). Winckelmann’s entire statement gives pause, but especially the line “which is becoming more prevalent throughout the world”. Colonialism is in its heyday at the time of the article’s writing. Winckelmann tells us that good taste is very specific—it comes from the Greeks. If there is such

a thing as good taste, then there is certainly such a thing as bad taste. If there is an ideal for beauty there is a definite idea of what is not beautiful. Wincklemann's statement lets us know that not only is there a standard of beauty, this standard is being exported throughout the world. Given Winckelmann's effusive praise of the art of Classical Greece and the lens of Classical Greece as the ideal forms of beauty, there is the possibility that we are unable to see Greek art beyond the viewpoint of the scholars of the Enlightenment. The view that Greek art is the epitome of culture is so engrained in art historical rhetoric that it is plausible that we are unable to see around it. Classical and Hellenistic Greek art is given special and lauded place in the history of art through the ages. Kleiner writes, "Many of the cultural values of the Greeks, especially the exaltation of humanity as "the measure of all things" remain today fundamental tenets of Western civilization. In fact, these ideas are so completely part of modern Western habits of mind that most people are scarcely aware the concepts originated in Greece 2,500 years ago" (Kleiner 2013, 48)

Looking at representations of pain in art is an exploration of the way that beauty and pain are thought to interconnect and relate. In his book *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* Louis DuPre takes on David Hume. DuPre quotes Hume's statement, "The theory of beauty is thereby bound to become come subjective". Hume, drawing the conclusion from these principles collapsed the idea of beauty with the pleasure that it causes, "Pleasure and pain...are not only necessarily attendants of beauty and deformity but constitute their very essence" (DuPre 2004, 208). Hume tells us that beauty and pleasure and intertwined, as are pain and deformity. Hume informs us that beauty and pain are opposite sides of the same coin, one cannot exist without the other. The question that must be asked is "what is beauty"?

The power to determine what is beautiful is momentous and has great consequences-- that power remains unharnessed if the ideals of beauty remain subjective.

Exploring the work (and social consequences) of Winckelmann, we see that an idea of beauty is set forth. Winckelmann promoted the idea that Classical Greek art is the highest form of art and beauty. This notion of great standards of art and beauty, there is an implication that there exists something that is not beautiful. On the subject of Winckelmann's obsession with Greece, Potts writes that Winckelmann "became the model for defining the admiration, enthusiasm, and depth of response elicited by these masterpieces of art" (Potts 1994, 16). Things cannot be deemed beautiful unless there is something to contrast against them. It is no coincidence that the idea of philhellenism picked up traction during the time when colonialism and the Western Imperial project was at its height. Beauty ideals shape the way that colonialism approached "the other".

When colonial powers promote themselves as the standard of beauty, they devalue the culture and aesthetics of the world. This makes space for not only self-promotion, but provides the opportunity to "educate" and "become an example" for those people whose cultures are unable to attain the standard of beauty that has been set forth by the colonial powers. In *Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon writes, "colonialism was ...a mother who constantly prevents her basically perverse child from committing suicide or giving free rein to its malevolent instincts. The colonial mother is protecting the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology and its ontological misfortune" (Fanon 2004, 140). In this way, someone with darker skin and less-fine features can not only be shown that they are lesser, but instructed on how they will never be better, and need to be mothered, looked after and commanded. Now educated in the ways that the dark skinned are lesser, it is only natural that the

possessor of culture and beauty be their master, for they are inherently born “better”. In her book, *The Graven Image* Zainab Bahrani asserts that “culture was transported to the colonized ‘natives’ in order to ‘civilize’ them and serve ‘as a continual reminder of where civilization was really located—in the imperial center” (Bahrani 2003, 14). Here culture is used to justify the colonial project—it is “bettering” the natives, showing them what true civilization is. Bahrani states, “since the cultural is the site of the self-styled civilizing mission of colonialism of the syncretism of art and history should not be neatly separated from the related geopolitical imperatives of empire” ” (Bahrani 2003, 17). The colonial project is a civilizing project, but also a categorizing project. Bahrani asserts, “The use of aesthetics and style for defining national cultures and racial identities is the very basis of the discipline of art history” (Bahrani 2003, 49).

Art history is a discipline that was founded by scholars in the Enlightenment. Art history itself is not without politics. The ideas of beauty, and the relationship between beauty and the representation of pain, that are produced by these scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century attempt to formulate a template of the aesthetics of Western culture. Post-colonial scholars such as Bahrani, call into question the very history of art history, asks the reader to think about the inception and propagation of the notion of beauty and how that notion is used to justify colonial practices from the Enlightenment to the present day.

### III. THE BODY IN PAIN: THE DESTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE

The subject of pain is contentious—pain is hard to describe. It not only erases language, leaving the person in pain without words, but also creates a space where true empathy is nearly impossible to be found. In her essay “On Being Ill”, Virginia Woolf writes, “To look...at these things squarely in the face would need the courage of a lion-tamer; robust philosophy; a reason rooted in the bowels of the earth” (Woolf 1967, 194). Pain defies and destroys language. In her book *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Elaine Scarry writes, “(pain) brings about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language” (Scarry 1985, 4). It reduces us to our pre-language selves. Pain disrupts our sense of selves and our very being. Similarly, Ludwig Feuerbach writes in *Gesamelte Werke* that pain pushes us into non-being but he adds that it is also a necessary part of our experience of existence. That is to say, pain is both necessary for existence and takes away what it means to be “ourselves”. Feuerbach states, “Pain...is none other than a loud and very clear protest against differentiation and separation of the soul from the body,” (Feuerbach 1974, 480). Pain attempts to rend the soul from the body. The experience of pain removes reason, and leaves us in a primeval state of existence. It shuts out the world, creating a cloistered space from which we cannot escape. Pain is a prison of unbreakable walls. It separates us from the world and from ourselves, boxing us into a tight corner of claustrophobia and misery.

It is easy for us to understand when we are in pain; it is an inescapable reality. In *Phantasms of Matter in Gogol (and Gombrowicz)*, an investigation of matter and phantasms in Russian literature, Michal Oklot puts forth that “the essence of pain that imposes itself irresistibly, and, in a way, rapes the consciousness” (Oklot 2009, 316). We are unable to know

anything other than the pain which we are in. Our ability to use rational thought is cut off from us, and our consciousness is shrouded in misery. If one knows pain from first-hand experience, how is it possible for one to also inflict pain upon others? There are several schools of thought. While Elaine Scarry asserts that, "...when one speaks about "one's own physical pain" and "about another's physical pain" one might almost appear to be speaking about two wholly distinct orders of events" (Scarry 1985, 2). Scarry tells the reader that while we can understand our own physical pain, the pain of another being is so far outside from our own body and physical experience, and that therefore their pain can seem unreal or imaginary. We only know, truly know, what we ourselves experience. There is no way to authentically understand the experiences of any other being. We can imagine, we can try to relate to one another, but there is no way to experience being in the body of another being. This separation allows for the disbelief of the suffering and pain of others. The witness to violence may think that the pain of another is fake or fantastical. Oklot takes this idea further: "A torturer, by inflicting pain and arranging the human body in equilibristic geometrical figures, wants to see man as a thing and to see something in him that is not of this world" (Oklot 2009, 477). Both Scarry and Oklot argue that we are unable to connect to one another on the most basic level.

While pain can be difficult to grasp, and even more difficult to adequately express, it is alarming when pain is written about in a casual way. Scarry writes, "Physical pain...has no referential content. It is not of or for anything" (Scarry 1985, 5). It is, however, necessary for people to delve into it. The production of scholarship surrounding pain has real life consequences, and belittling pain, or making light of the subject matter is grave. "Oklot states, "speaking about pain, with lightness, in an academic tone, is one of the biggest mistakes of contemporary philosophy which is extremely bourgeois and usually created by people from the

university” (Oklot, 2009, 335). The distance here that Oklot writes about refers to the journey from the person who experiences pain to the person in the ivory tower writing about pain. The experience of pain as seen through the eyes of those who have not experienced it can easily become warped or taken out of context. What does it do to the active experience of pain and the possibility of recovery to belittle the pain of others? When people who have already been subjugated are then exposed to the further humiliation of having their pain mocked, where can they turn? Academic trivialization of pain also makes it easier for the reader to be comforted; the idea that pain is not serious gives the reader the permission to allow pain to continue. In the book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag paraphrases Aristotle in the following way, “Aristotle maintains, pity is considered to be the emotion that we owe only to those enduring undeserved misfortune” (Sontag 2003, 75). Who is to say what is deserved and undeserved misfortune? Do Oklot’s “bourgeois people from the university” get to determine who is and is not suffering; whose pain is to be pitied and whose pain is justifiable?

It is the very nature of pain—the destruction of the personal world and the reduction of the self to a bare life—that makes it essential for people not in pain to speak on behalf of those in pain. But how can a person who is not in pain, who has no true understanding of the person in pain, be able to effectively communicate that pain to others? One possible solution is art. Art is able to bring a different kind of language to the table: a visual language. In *Pain: A Cultural History* Javier Moscoso writes that, “The representation of violence coincides with the violence of the representation because, sadly perhaps, pain was never an excrescence of culture, but one of the foundational elements of its most deep-rooted values” (Moscoso 2012, 18).

Given the difficulty of describing pain, the process of representing pain is fraught. When we look at a work of art, we ask ourselves the following question: What does it do? In his book



*Philosophizing Art* Arthur Danto asks the reader how is the history of art possible? Danto asks, “Since we are aware that some things are *not* works of art, the philosophical problem...is to explain what makes the difference” (6). Danto gives the example of a cat. There are traits that are generally recognizable that make up “cats”; we can easily distinguish what is a cat and what isn’t. Art is not a cat; it is not as easily definable.

Art can function as a channel for communication. Is the artist that defines art? Or is it the viewer? Why is it necessary to show pain in art? The pain acts as a conduit, or as a mechanism that provides catharsis. Pollitt believes that art provides the balm that soothes the anxiety that comes from the human condition. Pollitt writes that art eases, “anxiety prompted by the apparent irrationality of experience and the drive to allay this anxiety by finding an order to which explains experience” (Pollitt 1972, 5). Art gives us the mechanism to physically express emotions. Pain is physical experience; it evades concrete description. Art, no matter who defines the term, gives us a physical language by which we are able to reach out from ourselves and connect with other beings.

#### IV. DEPICTIONS OF PAIN IN HELLENISTIC ART

##### A. *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife*



Figure 1.

Ludovisi *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife*, Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic work of the early 2nd century BCE, Palazzo Altemps

Colonialism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought a forced dissemination of culture to conquered peoples. In his book, *Orientalism* Edward Said described colonialism as “a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts” (Said 1978, 12). As discussed previously in in this paper, great importance had been placed on the aesthetics of Classical Greece. Are we able to unlearn the lessons taught by the scholars of the Enlightenment? Winckelmann was able to impose onto the face of art history a “new order on the vast range of textual and visual evidence relating to the art of antiquity” (Potts 1994, 13). It is essential to break this order down so that we attempt to see the art work without the lens of the Enlightenment. Zainab Bahrani states, ““failure to confront issues of alterity, ethnography, and cultural translation can turn art history into a mechanism by which ethnocentric hegemony will continue to be maintained through notions of a hierarchy of culture and civilization formulated by the racist scholarship and racist politics of the days of European imperialism. (Bahrani 2003, 47). Bahrani tells us that if we are unable to face the colonial past head-on we are perpetuating the cycle of scholarly racism.

The Hellenistic period, a modern term, dates from Alexander the Great’s death in 323 BCE to the double suicide of Queen Cleopatra of Egypt and Mark Antony in 30 BCE (Kleiner 2013, 80). In the aftermath of the demise of the empire of Alexander the Great, the kingdom of Pergamon spanned all of western and southern Asia Minor. Kleiner describes the Pergamene kings in the following way, they “enjoyed immense wealth and expended much of it on embellishing their capital city” (Kleiner 2013, 80).

The Ludovisi *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* (alternately known as *The Galatian Suicide*) is a Roman marble copy of a bronze Hellenistic sculpture from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Regarding Roman copies of Greek prototypes, Pollitt writes, “As the creative impulse in Greek culture began to wane, and as the political dominance of Rome spread throughout the Mediterranean and made the Romans increasingly the chief patrons of Greek philosophy, literature, and art, the achievements of Classical Greece came to be looked upon with an awe and reverence that only time and distance can create” (Pollitt 1986, 164). Few of the original Greek statues survive; in most cases, Roman replicas are the only available references to the originals. While the identity of the sculptor of *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* is unknown, it has been suggested that Epigonos—the court sculptor of the Attalid dynasty of Pergamon (Pollitt 1986, 87). The sculpture was most likely commissioned by Attalus I in celebration of the Pergamene victory over the Galatian/Gaulish people in modern day Turkey. Pergamon was the cultural center of the Hellenistic age, and served as the “champion and protector of the Greek cultural heritage” (Pollitt 1986, 81). Under the rule of Attalid dynasty, Pergamon flourished, and he set out to demonstrate it through works of art.

*Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* is fashioned out of white marble (which may or may not have originally been painted) and shows a soldier thrusting a sword into his chest. Looking at the angle of the sword, how does the Gaul intend to plunge the sword into his chest? There is nothing natural about the contortion of his arm. It is as if he has positioned his right arm and the dagger to inflict the maximum amount of pain. He looks backward over his shoulder with his chin lifted—as if he is defiant. He is self-aware and fully in control of his faculties. The choice of suicide is before him, and he is committed to it. He lifts the arm of a dying woman, looking like he is equally supporting her and dragging her along. He would rather die than be taken prisoner,

and has possibly killed his wife as well. The woman is slumped over, the weight of her head and torso leading her towards the ground. Her left foot is flexed, with her toes touching the ground as if to propel her forward, but her right foot is collapsed on the ground preventing any movement forward.

The sculpture is thought to have been found on the grounds of the Villa Ludovisi, in a suburb of Rome. It appears on the inventory of the Ludovisi estate taken on February 2 1623. The villa was built in the area of the ancient Gardens of Sallust where, when the Ludovisi property was built over in the late 19th century, many other antiquities were discovered. (Haskell 1981, 224).



Figure 2.

*The Dying Gaul*, Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic work of the late 3rd century BCE. Capitoline Museums, Rome.

In concert with the sculpture *The Dying Gaul*, which shows a young soldier collapsed on a shield, having been pierced by a sword, in the act of dying, *The Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* serve as both a reminder of the Gauls' defeat and as a celebration of the Pergamon victory. The young man in *The Dying Gaul* sits upon his shield, his left leg outstretched and his right leg folded underneath him. He is propped up by his right hand, his left hand grasps his right knee gently. His sword lies down near his right hand, with his right thumb resting upon the hilt. His gaze is downward, the spacing between his nose and his two elbows make a triangular shape. In that triangular shape is a gash beneath his left breast. Pollitt writes, "These 'Gauls'...were largely impervious to Greek culture." (Pollitt 1986, 80). Rather than be taken prisoner, the Gauls have elected to die. Whether they were meant to inspire the victors or serve as a warning to potential adversaries (or both) remains unknown. Pollitt writes, "The inscriptions...make it clear that peril for the victors was real, the outcome was in doubt, and their victory was a hard-won achievement" (Pollitt 1986, 96).

Lord Byron, under the misconception that the statue was a gladiator, wrote about the sculpture group in the poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

I see before me the gladiator lie  
 He leans upon his hand—his manly brow  
 Consents to death, but conquers agony,  
 And his drooped head sinks gradually low—  
 And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow  
 From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one  
 (Byron 1818)  
 Childe Harold Canto IV Stanzas 140-141

We look to the *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife*, and must ask the question “why?” The Gauls migrate west to east from Galatia into Anatolia, and are met with conflict. The sculpture is a commemoration of the loss of the Gauls. Why does this soldier kill his wife and himself? He does not present himself as if he is in physical pain. His chin is held high, he grasps the arm of his wife willing them forward on their journey towards death. This soldier reminds us that pain is not merely a state of the body, but also a state of the mind. In “The Myth of Sisyphus” Albert Camus presents a conversation about suicide, what he feels “amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy” (Camus 1955, 3). Camus argues that suicide is the result of a disjunction between meaning and life. When we are unable to feel meaning, when the tenuous relationship between meaning and life breaks, suicide creeps in to fill up the crack. Suicide creates as it destroys. Camus writes, “An act like this is prepared within the silence of the heart, as is a great work of art” (Camus 1955, 4). The body is strong as long as the mind is able to reconcile living, as living is naturally hard. Camus states “The body’s judgment is as good as the mind’s and the body shrinks from annihilation” (Camus 1955, 5). When the mind can no longer grasp meaning, and existence becomes absurd, the creative act of suicide becomes an answer. Oklot writes the following on this point, “the spirit will remain as consciousness, and that mysterious reality pain, which as something strange **“sticks out”** into the spirit, will be the “body”. (Oklot 2009, 316). In this way, the pain of the mind juts into and becomes the pain of the body, like a splinter. We are conditioned by society to go through the motions, to live out our days. We go by the design of centuries before us, and only in the break, when the mind can no longer continue to blindly continue as it has in the footsteps of our ancestors, can we see an alternative. Camus writes, “The primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia, for a second we cease to understand it because for centuries we have understood in it

solely the images and designs that we had attributed to it beforehand, because henceforth we lack the power to mark use of that artifice. The world evades us because it becomes itself again. That stage scenery masked by habit becomes again what it is” (Camus 1955, 13). We have become conditioned to live the lives that we are in. The deep past informs our current selves; once that connection breaks we have the choice to end ourselves or re-immense ourselves in the delusion of the stage. It is no wonder, then, that we are driven to categorize the world around us. The veneer of control and the desire to put an evolutionary narrative gives a sense of security—of certainty of our surroundings.

Pain provides us with a crisis of the body. Pain is both current and immediate; the red lights flash and the sirens blare. Turning to sculpture as means of representation of pain, sculpture is the opposite—it both has no time and all time. It merely physically exists, there is no alarm. Its production is not immediate, but painstakingly slow.

“Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it. That revolt of the flesh is absurd” (Camus 1955, 13).

Suicide can function as a form of political ideology. In the case of *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife*, suicide is used as powerful tool of political resistance. Turning to Terry Eagleton, he describes political ideology in the following way, “ideology has a point, a function, a practical political force; on the other hand it would seem a mere set of illusions, a set of ideas which have come unstuck from reality and now conduct an apparently autonomous life in isolation from it...one can see well enough how encouraging certain religious or metaphysical illusion may serve to mystify men and women as the their real material interests” (Eagleton 1999, 10). Illusion, however, is not a small force. It can easily translate into physical action. Not just a person’s material interests, but the very bedrock of identity can be called into question, and mass



suicide can be the result. Ideology is a powerful tool, powerful enough to move people to take their own lives.

*Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* is not a testimony of eternal suffering, but rather an attestation of triumph. If the original intention of the sculptor was meant to showcase the victory of the Pergamon's, it is successful—the Gauls are most certainly triumphed over. The Gaulish women are killed even by their own husbands to escape whatever the Pergamons have waiting for them, whether out of fear or out of defiance. Unlike statues of Marsyas or Laocoon, the *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* is not imprisoned in a moment of suffering. He may be suspended in time through the medium of marble, but he is suspended in an action of noncompliance. He does not go gently into that dark night, he rushes towards that curtain that separates life from death. His suffering is not continuous—even as he impales himself, he does not seem to suffer.

#### B. *Laocoon and His Sons*

Something stronger than the consideration that artworks themselves have a certain historical identity, where the problem is how the knowledge of this affects how we interpret and respond to those works. The question instead is why works of art in fact form a kind of history themselves, beyond mere circumstance of their being made in a specific time sequence.

(Danto 1991, 1)



Figure 3.

*Laocöon and His Sons*, Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic work of the late 3rd century BCE, Vatican Museum

One of the most famous works produced during the Hellenistic baroque era is the statue group *Laocöon and His Sons*. The Laocöon sculpture group is described as the “prototypical icon of human agony” in Western art (Spivey 2013, 25). The Laocöon sculpture depicts the Trojan priest Laocöon and his sons being viciously assaulted by sea serpents. In his essay “Laocöon”, Gotthold Lessing writes of *Laocöon and His Sons* in the following way, “From their size they could not at once uncoil themselves from the boys; there must therefore be a moment in which they had attacked the father with their heads and foreparts, while they still with their other parts enveloped the children” (Lessing 1930, 26). The figures are nearly life-sized, Laocöon is in the center. He is flanked by his sons, one on each side. His sons are smaller in stature—giving the

figure of Laocoon even more prominence. The piece, and multiple other “Laocoöns,” now reside in the Vatican museums, and has been historically attributed, by Pliny, to three sculptors from Rhodes by the names of Hagesandros, Polydoros, and Athenodoros, who were living and working in the 1st Century C.E... Pliny describes the Laocoon sculpture in his work *Natural History* as "a work to be preferred to all that the arts of painting and sculpture have produced. Out of one block of stone, the consummate artists, Hagesandros, Polydoros and Athenodoros of Rhodes made, after careful planning, Laocoon, his sons, and the snakes marvelously entwined about them” (Pliny via Spivak 2013, 26).

Pliny awards the statue such high praise, and commends the artwork above all others. The sculpture, so grand that Pliny says there is no art to surpass it, actually disappeared for several hundred years. Although it was physically gone, it was never gone from the cultural consciousness. In his book *The Nude* Kenneth Clark writes "Pliny's description of the Laocoon group had touched the imaginations of Renaissance artists, and even before its excavation attempts had been made to draw what it could have been like" (Clark 1956, 323). Was it the idea of the Trojan priest--persecuted by the gods (whether that be Apollo, Poseidon, Athena) for reasons unknown and possibly unjustifiable--unable to save his sons that captured the imagination of these artists? There are other subjects to draw; why attempt to recapture an image of a sculpture that had been lost for centuries.

On January 14, 1506 (Richter 1992, 13), Felix de Fredis discovered the statute outside the city limits of Rome. Pollitt writes, “The Laokoon was discovered in 1506 in the structure on the Mons Oppius which had once been part of the Golden House of Nero and had apparently been incorporated into a new dwelling for the Emperor Titus” (Pollitt 1986, 120). The Florentine

architect Giuliano da Sangallo and his eleven-year-old son Francesco da Sangallo, later a sculptor, who wrote an account over sixty years later:

“The first time I was in Rome when I was very young, the pope was told about the discovery of some very beautiful statues in a vineyard near Santa Maria Maggiore. The pope ordered one of his officers to run and tell Giuliano da Sangallo to go and see them. So he set off immediately. Since Michelangelo Buonarroti was always to be found at our house, my father having summoned him and having assigned him the commission of the pope’s tomb, my father wanted him to come along, too. I joined up with my father and off we went. I climbed down to where the statues were when immediately my father said, “That is the Laocoön, which Pliny mentions”. Then they dug the hole wider so that they could pull the statue out. As soon as it was visible everyone started to draw all the while discoursing on ancient things, chatting as well about the ones in Florence.”

(Barkan 1999, 7)

In *Art and the Hellenistic Age* J. J. Pollitt states that it is believed that the Laocoon statue had been used as decoration for the subterranean baths of the Roman emperor Titus (79-81 C.E.). Once unearthed, Pope Julius II sent the architect Giuliano di Sangallo, and di Sangallo's house-guest Michelangelo, to investigate. The two men were in the first groupings of people to see the statue re-emerge from the ground. The statue was transported two months later, under the orders of Julius II, to the Belvedere Courtyard of the Vatican. It was installed between the Belvedere Apollo and a Venus. (Pollitt 1988, 124)

Virgil’s “Aeneid” describes the screams of Laocoon in the following manner  
 “at the same time he raised to the stars hair-raising shouts like the roars of a bull when it flees wounded from a sacrificial altar and shakes the ineffectual axe from its neck”:

*Clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:  
 quales mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
 taurus, et incertam excussit cervice securim.*

Unlike the martyrdom stories surrounding the lives and deaths of the saints, there are conflicting stories surround the attack on Laocoon and his sons. In Virgil’s *Aeneid* Laocoon was

a priest of Poseidon. Laocoon was tragically killed, alongside his sons, for throwing a spear at the Trojan horse as a means to expose the ruse and treachery at play. In the eighth or seventh century, Greek poet Arktinos tells the same story in the *Iliu Persis* (Sack of Troy) —Laocoon the Trojan priest attempting to expose the fraudulent Greek “gift” horse. However in this telling, one son is able to extricate himself from the sea serpent and lives. In Sophocles, he was a priest of Apollo. Other stories tell that Laocoon was supposed to remain unmarried, and was punished for taking a wife. Additional stories tell of Laocoon making love to his wife in a divine space and being punished for this act. This passage, for examples, comes from Virgil’s *Aeneid*:

Laocoon, by lot named priest of Neptune,  
 was sacrificing then a giant bull  
 upon the customary altars, when  
 two snakes with endless coils, from Tenedos  
 strike out across the tranquil deep (I shudder  
 to tell what happened), resting on the waters,  
 advancing shoreward side by side; their breasts  
 erect among the waves, their blood-red crests  
 are higher than the breakers. And behind,  
 the rest of them skims on along the sea;  
 their mighty backs curved in folks. The foaming  
 sal surge is roaring. Now they reach the fields.  
 Their eyes are drenched with blood and fire--they burn.  
 They link their hissing jaws with quivering tongues.  
 We scatter at the sight. Our blood is gone.  
 They strike a straight line toward Laocoon.  
 At first each snake entwines the tiny bodies  
 of his two sons in an embrace, then feasts  
 its fangs on their defenseless limbs. The pair  
 next seize upon Laocoon himself,  
 who nears to help his sons, carrying weapons.  
 They wind around his waist and twice around  
 his throat. They throttle him with scaly backs;  
 their head and steep necks tower over him.  
 He struggles with his hands to rip their knots,  
 his headbands soaked in filth and in dark venom,  
 while he lifts high his hideous cries to heaven,  
 just like the bellows of a wounded bull  
 when it has fled the altar, shaking off  
 an unsure ax. But now the snakes escape:

twin dragons, gliding to the citadel  
 of cruel Pallas, her high shrines. They hide  
 beneath the goddess' feet, beneath her shield.  
 Virgil, *Aeneid II* 195-227

Is it pure chance that the Laocoon has captured the imagination of artists throughout the centuries and the academic minds of scholars such as Winckelmann and Lessing? The Laocoon is, in essentials, the raw expression of agony captured in marble. It is an attempt to defy the impermanence of pain in one of the most permanent physical materials. The pain is so very evident--every inch of the group is writhing, screaming out from the attack of the serpents. Lessing writes, "The idea of binding the father with his two sons into one group by the deadly serpents is unquestionably a very happy one, evincing an uncommonly graphic fancy" (Lessing 1930, 26). Regarding the classification of Greek art Pollitt asserts that, "In all periods of Greek art great works were produced; facile generalizations about 'primitiveness', 'maturity' and 'decadence' are almost always inadequate" (Pollitt 1972, 2). Pollitt tells us that the organizational system for art works is inherently limited and deficient. Instead of attempting to apply an evolutionary story-line to art, it is important to allow each work to have its own biography and significance. In *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* J. J. Pollitt discusses the concept of ethos and pathos. Pollitt writes, "*ethos*, a man's 'character' as formed by inheritance, habit and self-discipline, and *pathos*, his spontaneous reaction to experiences in the external world" (Pollitt 1972, 43). How does the way we read Laocoon change when we try to apply the ideas of ethos and pathos to the figures? The "noble grandeur" of Winckelmann may be wiped away, in its place is the image of the sheer agony of a man and his sons. In contrast with the art of martyrdom which offers the possibility for absolution and honor, there is no redemption or reward for the pain of Laocoon or his sons. Regarding religious depictions of suffering, Moscoso

writes, “At the moment of execution, the celebration of blood resembles the liturgy; or the reverse: the Eucharist is devised as a collective recreation of a public execution” (Moscoso 2012, 11). In this way, the act of martyrdom is connected directly with salvation; pain and suffering in this world lead to promise of life everlasting. Salvation, however, is not something that is offered to Laocoon. He and his sons are set in a permanent state of agony. In his treatise on the Laocoon group “Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture” Johann Joachim Winckelmann describes the statue group in the following way, “Such a soul is reflected in the face of Laocoon—and not in the face alone—despite his violent suffering. The pain is revealed in all the muscles and sinews of his body, and we ourselves can almost feel it as we observe the painful contraction of the abdomen alone without regarding the face and other parts of the body” (Winckelmann via Preziosi 2009, 27). Here Winckelmann says that we *\*almost\** feel the pain ourselves. This is on contrast to Elaine Scarry’s argument that states that we cannot hope to relate to the pain of another. Laocoon’s entire body is wracked with pain, “revealed in all of the muscles and sinews”. There is no comfort for Laocoon; he is consumed with pain. Laocoon no longer is a symbol for how we ought to behave as we face mortality; he is merely a man in the moment of his agony.

## V. REPRESENTATIONS OF MYTHOLOGY

### A. Marsyas



Figure 4.

*Marsyas under Apollo's Punishment*, İstanbul Archaeology Museum.



One version of the myth of Marsyas follows thusly: Athena, goddess of wisdom, the arts and courage amongst others invented the double flute, or *aulos*. Pleased with her invention, she played the flute on Mount Olympus. However, when she played the flute the air caused her cheeks to puff out. As a result of looking so strange, Aphrodite and Hera mocked Athena at great length. Enraged over being tormented over the flute, Aphrodite cursed the flute and left it at the banks of a river. Marsyas, a satyr and companion of Dionysus, found the flute and took it. Stories conflict as to whether Marsyas, feeling overly confident in his musical abilities and filled with hubris, challenged Apollo or if Apollo, the god of music, was angered by Marsyas' musical abilities, which were rumored to match his own. Either way, Apollo and Marsyas struck a deal and a duel was set. The victor would be able to do whatever he wanted to the loser. The contest was judged by the Muses, with Apollo playing the lyre and Marsyas playing Athena's discarded flute. At first, the two appeared to be evenly matched. And here again there are two possible stories. The first tells that in the second round Apollo turned his lyre upside down and began to play. Marsyas was unable to turn his instrument upside down, and lost. The second version tells that the tides/judges turned against Marsyas when Apollo began to sing. Marsyas protested that the voice and the lyre were two separate instruments, but Apollo argued that Marsyas was "singing" into the flute, which was essentially the same. Both stories have the same outcome: Marsyas the satyr lost, and Apollo could do with him whatever he wanted. Marsyas was flayed alive by a cave near Celaenae. According to Ovid's *Metamorphosis* as Marsyas is flayed he asks Apollo, "quid me mihi detrahis?" Or, "Why do you peel me away from myself?" (Ovid *Metamorphosis* 1975, 385). In describing his torture, Ovid does not spare his readers. He is graphic in his details.

*Clamanti cutis est summos direpta per artus,  
Nec quicquam nisi mulnus erat' cruor undique manat  
Detectiqu patent nervi, trepidaeque sine ull  
Pelle mmicant venae; salientia viscera possis  
Et perlucetes numerera in pectore fibras*

The skin was torn off the screaming Marsyas from the top of his limbs, so he was nothing but one great wound. Blood flowed everywhere, the exposed nerves were visible, his veins throbbed and quivered with no skin to cover them; and you could count his entrails as they palpitated and shining fibers of the tissue in his chest.  
Ovid *Metamorphosis* 6.387-91

Ovid provides us with a very vivid and horrifying account of Marsyas' suffering. It is almost anatomical and scientific in nature. Javier Moscosco writes, "The anatomized body shares in the dramatic idealization of physical suffering exhibited by other visual approximations of violence...The connection between pain and knowledge melds with the victor of faith, with the triumph of death or, in the extreme, with the Man of Sorrows, who shows, through the scars on His skin and the signs on His body, the most visible traces of His recent story. Although all anatomical representations have many common features, historians of art and medicine have underscored in this context the depictions of the flaying of Marsyas" (Moscosco p. 29). With the anatomized body, we can understand a direct relationship between pain and the body. Pain is no longer abstract—it leaves blood and scars in its wake.

Ovid doesn't stop at the description of the torture. He further draws his readers in, immersing them in the painful scene.

*Illum ruricolae, silvarum numina, Fauni  
et satyri fratres et tunc quoque carus Olympus  
et numphae flerunt, et quisquis montibus illis  
langerosque greges armentaque buceera pavit*

The woodland gods, the fauns, his brother satyrs,  
The nymphs, and even Olympus, whom he loved

Through all his agony, all wept for him  
 With every shepherd looking after his flocks  
 Along those mountainsides.  
 Ovid *Metamorphosis* 6.395-5

What should be a bucolic pastoral scene is a horrifying blood bath. The tears of his friends and family weep for Marsyas; so much so that they literally cry a river. The river is given Marsyas' name as a tribute to the suffered satyr.

Looking at the statue "The Hanging Marsyas", a Roman copy of an original of ca. 200-150 BCE we see the satyr strung up by Apollo. Describing this statue, J. J. Pollitt states, "The dramatic force which must have characterized the original seems well preserved in one of the best replicas of the Marsyas, in Istanbul" (Pollitt 1986, 119). Here we see Marsyas tied to a tree, shown in anticipation of the punishment he is about to receive. The moment before Apollo begins to flay Marsyas is a moment of extreme tension—possibly the tensest moment of the entire Marsyas/Apollo tale. Marsyas' head is tilted towards the ground; he cannot escape his terrible fate. He is captured eternally in this moment of anticipation. There is nowhere for him to go and nothing for him to do but await what he knows will be an excruciating death. In a footnote, Pollitt notes that there are two series of Roman replicas of the Marsyas type, an older "white" group and a younger "red" group that was made of "red marble...which accentuates the pathos of the figure" (Pollitt 1986, 310). Here, the horror of Marsyas was rendered even more ghastly and gruesome in a vibrant red marble.

In *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* J. J. Pollitt writes, "The Hellenist Age too was a period of psychological readjustment in which community life and the ideals of a circumscribed, familiar society lost much of their force... Thus voluntary withdrawal in the fourth century and a far-reaching change in social conditions in the Hellenistic period brought

both eras to the same point—a preoccupation with *personal* and *general* experiences rather than with *communal* experience” (Pollitt 1972, 142-143). We see that exemplified here with Marsyas. His personal suffering is the center of this sculpture; the viewer is only concerned for Marsyas’ personal experience (or rather, what he is about to experience).

Is our experience of Marsyas’ story different if we think that he challenged Apollo? Do we feel more sympathy for the satyr if he was merely talented at playing the flute, invoking the ire of the god? If Marsyas was pleased with his playing, and he approached Apollo, he can be seen as a victim of his own hubris. While the punishment of being flayed alive seems extreme, we console ourselves with the thought, “that’s what he gets for challenging a god” (and the god of music nonetheless). Marsyas is then used as a teaching tool; how not to behave. The gods will brook no rival, and Marsyas is an example to us all to keep our pride and self-importance at bay. Does this idea, that Marsyas “deserves” to be punished, make the story of the torture of Marsyas easier to accept? The story of Marsyas is almost too horrible to bear. His suffering is too great, and comes without any hope of redemption. There is no easing of Marsyas’ pain, only unending agony.

If, however, Marsyas did not challenge Apollo, and Apollo was jealous of Marsyas’ skill, a different story emerges. Having done nothing to provoke the wrath of the god, Marsyas becomes a victim of circumstance and of his own talent. Here emerges an innocent victim. The piteous Marsyas, receives the vengeance of a god that he has done nothing to. In this way too, Marsyas can be used as an example. The world is a cold and unpredictable place, who knows when one of the gods may descend and make your life unbearable. But does Marsyas’ clear innocence make it more difficult for us to look at his body, about to be stripped of its skin? The result is the same. Marsyas suffers, his loved ones are bereaved, and the river Marsyas takes his

name in his honor. In each instance, his tale can teach a lesson about the unfairness of life, how punishment does not always match the ‘crime’, and how arbitrary the gods can truly be.

#### B. Pasolini’s *Edipo Re* and the Re-imagination of the Oracle and Delphi

There is a certain kind of aesthetic that audiences have become accustomed to when presented with stories that take place in the ancient world. These movies and television shows involve togas, gladiators, and winsome soundtracks with lots of dolorous violins and plaintive singing playing in the background. Stephen McGrath writes, “the values of the toga flicks themselves turn out to be remarkably consistent; they’re about spectacle and about warriors so heroic and good-looking that they will stand out in all the crowd scenes” (McGrath 2004, 1). How do we move away from the toga epics that we have become accustomed to seeing? Preziosi writes, “The taste of which the Greeks exhibited in their works of art was unique and has seldom been taken far from its source without loss” (Preziosi 2009, 27). Surely when Homer wrote *The Iliad* he did not have Wolfgang Petersons’ *Troy* blond Odysseus or an Achilles in a crop top in mind. However, the sword and sandal epic has entered the collective conscience as the way to tell a story about ancient Greece. Does this mean that breaking away from tradition will automatically result in failure? To move away from what audiences expect in terms of Greek stories is a gamble, without a doubt. Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini attempted to break with tradition and turned both the stories of *Medea* and *Oedipus Rex* on their heads by removing all tropes, all familiar landscape and soundtracks. *Edipo Re* is an attack on the senses.

Pasolini takes advantage of the audience’s familiarity with the myth. He begins the play and ends the play with material that is not in the play, but the telling of the story of Edipo Re

takes place in chronological order. Chronological order, however, is the only thing that the viewer can rely on in terms of familiarity. Pasolini attempts to break every stereotype, and immerses the viewer in an unknown land. The film was shot in Morocco. The landscape is unescapably barren. There are a few sparse trees, the land is largely dust and barren wilderness. This gives the film the feeling of otherworldliness—the scenery seems so remote and so removed, could be set on Mars as easily as any location on Earth.

The soundtrack is intentionally otherworldly, and cannot be connected to a specific place or time. Pasolini uses Japanese and Rumanian music in the film because of their “ambiguity and even, perhaps, their possible unsuitability in a film about a Greek ruler. Pasolini himself has said that the quality of the Rumanion (sic) folk music that most attracted him was its indefinable character... ahistorical and atemporal” (Urbano 2000, 182). Pasolini does his level best to take us outside from everything we’ve ever thought we knew about Oedipus Rex, and presents us with unfamiliar landscape and a cornucopia of sounds. He disrupts our understanding of Greek tragedy, and gives us unfamiliar language of his own devising. Oedipus himself is not the type of hero that we are familiar with. He is brutish, and he cheats. He spends much of the film shouting at others, and is wholly unlikeable. Upon first hearing that he is indeed having sex with his mother, Oedipus denies it so thoroughly that he proceeds to go have sex with Jocasta.

You are waking me from sleep.  
 No: understand that I’ve wept many tears,  
 And traveled many roads in wandering thought,  
 I looked thoroughly, I kept finding  
 Only one cure, and I’ve acted on it.  
 I’ve sent Menoeceus’ son, my brother-in-law  
 Creon, off to Phoebus’ Delphic shrine,  
 To delve into what I might do or say  
 To guard this city. It’s time. He’s due.  
 I’m pained, worried about what he’s doing.  
 He’s been gone more than the usual time,  
 The needed time. Still, when he does arrive,

Id' be an evil man if I did not  
Do everything suggest by the god.

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 65-77

In Pasolini's film, *Edipo* visits the Delphic Oracle. Pasolini takes the opportunity to turn the idea of the oracle on its head. We the audience are expecting our lead to meet with someone who is sensuous, wears flowing robes and is situated near an altar surrounded by stone columns. Instead, *Edipo* meets the oracle in a desert under a tree. She has a cadre of robed followers, but they are largely uninterested in our hero. The Oracle is terrifying. She is completely desexualized. She wears an amorphous burlap sack, and on her head is a two-tiered white mask which has dried grass sprouting from the top and streaming down from the bottom. The mask has a carved figurine adhered to it, making it seem all the more alarming. She screams when she speaks in a hoarse voice, and stuffs her mouth with a piece of fruit while banishing *Edipo*. The entire scene is too jarring to seem mystical. Even though the audience does not like *Edipo*'s character (Robert White says he is ““a sneak and a bully and has the table manners of a troglodyte”), we want him to get out of that scene and away from the Oracle. Even if *Edipo* cannot escape the predestination of his fate, the audience knows he can at least escape the presence of the Oracle.

Comparing Pasolini's *Edipo Re* experience with the oracle of Delphi with the British fantasy television show *Atlantis* (2013-2015), we see an entirely different take on the character. *Atlantis*, inspired by Greek mythology and the myth of the lost underwater city of Atlantis follows a modern-day “Jason”—a submarine pilot who locates the city of Atlantis only to be pulled through a portal, finding himself up against demi-gods, gods and King Minos himself. In episode 13 of season one, there is a scene with Pasiphae, King Minos' scheming treacherous

wife, and the Oracle of Delphi. Here we are shown all of the familiar tropes. There is a grand temple with gigantic statuary. Oversized columns line the room, and there are multiple fire pits. An altar is placed directly in the center. Pasiphae is praying to the gods, preparing to sacrifice the palace maid Ariadne. The Oracle mysteriously appears from behind a corner. She wears a form-fitted plum dress, complete with brooch. Her dress has a hood that frames her face. Her hair is done in soft curls. She looks very human, very relatable. She tries to persuade Pasiphae, telling her that sacrificing Ariadne will make the gods angry. The Oracle is not intimidating in her message—she sounds more like an aunt giving her slightly younger niece dating advice.



Figure 5.

*Edipo Re*, 1967





Figure 6.

*Altantis*, 2015

How do we fight against the way we have been programmed by the scholars of Enlightenment in the way that we look at the Roman copies of Greek art? By rethinking the grandeur and privilege that surrounds Greek art, we are able to disrupt the narrative that has been handed down from Wincklemann and the philhellenes of the Enlightenment. Filmmakers like Pasolini challenge conventions and removing familiar elements, so that something new can be created. This new creation helps us understand both the conventions of the past and the possibilities of the future. Looking at Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini's films, we are shown what it takes to break with traditional ideas of representation of Greek mythology. Pasolini seeks to de-Enlighten our minds by acknowledging our aesthetic expectations that have been established and then turning those expectations on their head. Pasolini alienates us from the Enlightenment and its thought models.

## VI. EPILOGUE: THE PAGEANTRY OF MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

### A. Introduction

Museums are spaces for interpretation and information dissemination. The museum is site brimming with learning possibilities: to either reproduce old ideas or push visitors to engage and interact with objects and history in new ways. Exhibits have the potential to revitalize objects; to make history come alive. Conversely, they can present the visitor with outdated information that fails to invigorate both the visitor and the object. Objects can be used to reassert old paradigms, and act as reverberations of colonial history. Each object has a story, a biography of its own. To fail to engage the visitor in that story is to fail both the visitor and the object. Silent objects rely on curators to tell their stories. When curators place objects into categories that are broader ideas, potentially harmful ideologies, such as “primitive” or “modern”, they put forth their own ideas regarding the object’s value. When we categorize objects as “less than”, we strip objects of their worth and their own personal histories.

In the article "The Art Museum as Ritual" Carol Duncan writes, "Since their appearance in the late eighteenth century, art museums have regularly been compared to older ceremonial monuments such as palaces or temples. Indeed through most of their history they were deliberately designed to resemble them" (Duncan 1995, 10). In this, we can see the museum as a site of power and perceived knowledge. The very architecture reinforces the idea that the museum is a sacred place, a place to be revered. Duncan continues, "A ritual site of any kind is a place programmed for the enactment of something" (Duncan 1995, 11). Duncan is specifically talking about how the space of the museum is used, "...the museum's sequenced spaces and arrangement of objects, its lighting and architectural details constitute a dramatic field--that both

structures and invites a performance" (Duncan 1995, 12). This insightful observation sheds light on how museums can be used to help the visitor encounter difficult histories. The museum exterior comforts the visitor, as does the sequencing of objects carefully laid out by curators. The museum space is perceived to be a safe space; it is a place of learning and authority. Brooms writes, "the museum is a public sphere which both shapes and is shaped by constantly changing public discourse...when people enter museums they do not leave their cultures and identities at home...as such, museums are symbols and sites for playing out history social relations of identity and difference, knowledge and power, and theory of representation" (Brooms 2011, 511). The museum is both a space of ritual and holds the potential for radical change. This paradox allows the museum space to be considered by the public to be the source of knowledge and politically charged at the same time.

Museum exhibits often contain a storyline or narrative. Storytelling is a tactic intended to engage the visitor during their visit. A plot can make the exhibit more engaging and enhance the visitor experience. For many people, museums are foreign and uncomfortable places, designed for the upper echelons of society. In his article regarding the destruction of antiquities by ISIS, Elliot Colla argues that "for most of the modern period most of the world's largest museums have been off limits to most people. While institutions like the British Museum relied on state subsidies, they excluded the vast majority of British citizens by way of dress codes, entrance fees or by simply limiting their opening hours to times when most people had to be at jobs"(Colla 2015). Now that dress codes are no longer a source of restriction, there is often no mandatory fee and hours of operations have been expanded, the museum is theoretically open to a wider cross-section of society. However, old societal attitudes can be pervasive, and museums often find themselves struggling to appeal to a wider section of the populace. Colla states that there are two

extreme attitudes towards museum objects: veneration and vandalism. Between those two attitudes exists varying levels of interest and indifference. For regular museum-goers who, to use Colla's term, venerate objects, one finds an attitude of appreciation for the objects; the feeling of veneration can equate in society to a mark of culture. In other words, by definition, "those who appreciate the value of such objects are civilized. Those who do not appreciate their value are barbarians" (Colla 2015). When an exhibit fails to help those who might be struggling with the museum experience feel comfortable and engaged, the museum as an institution can make the visitor feel even more of an outsider than before they stepped through the doors of the exhibit. Curators have great responsibility—they set the tone by which an audience receives both the information and objects that are presented in an exhibit. Curators have the both the ability to present objects and history as they have been presented in the past through the colonial lens that museums were built on or ability to transform history and present objects in new and vibrant ways to make objects come alive for museum visitors.

#### B. "The Greeks: Agamemnon to Alexander the Great" Exhibit

From November 25 through April 10<sup>th</sup> of 2015, The Field Museum hosted the exhibit "The Greeks: Agamemnon to Alexander the Great". The exhibit boasted that it contained more than 500 artifacts from ancient Greece. The website encouraged visitors to: "explore epic stories from the perspectives of the ancient Greeks themselves, including men and women known to us through historical accounts, mythical tales and the archeological record". The exhibit attempted to create an evolutionary history of Greek art--to take the viewer on a journey of exploration from a "primitive" to "sophisticated" Greek culture. The exhibit was filled with an excessive

number of objects, and while the text claimed to be able to make connections between the objects, those connections did not necessary translate for the viewers. Why did the curators of the exhibit feel that it was necessary to create an evolutionary narrative for the objects? Why is it necessary to display objects from such a vast time frame? I argue that by forcing the objects into an evolutionary storyline that does not exist and by presenting over 500 objects in one show does a disservice to the individual biographies of the objects in the exhibit.

The exhibit attempts to give the impression that the artifacts track the evolution of Greek culture. It is arranged in chronological order, from Greece's "primitive" beginnings in the Neolithic Period and continues through the reign of Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE). The hope of the curators is to portray the objects in the exhibit as pivotal moments in Greek culture—that Greek history is great due to its legacy of grandeur. But this legacy is built on more "primitive" times. In an interview with WTTW Chicago Public Media, Field Museum exhibit project manager Susan Neill stated "What people are really able to see here is the emergence of western civilization. We see the roots of democracy, and theater, and philosophy, and the Olympic games, and all of these things that we come to think of as who we are and forming who we are." (Vitali 2015). The idea that there is an "emergence" of civilization devalues the lives of the past and breeds a fanaticism in museums to overlay a story for the objects, instead of letting the objects exist for themselves. Likewise, in her book *Exhibit Labels: an Interpretive Approach* Beverly Serrell writes, "Some exhibit developers have no self-control when selecting content for an exhibition." (Serrell 2015, 4). From exhibition layout to label writing, a lack of self-control, lack of limitation and lack of inhibition plagues "The Greeks: Agamemnon to Alexander the Great".

The importance the curator places on the later objects in the exhibit expresses itself both in terms of layout of the exhibit and the care that is taken in the label writing and presentation of the objects themselves. The first few rooms of the exhibit with the more “primitive” objects has low lighting with and overcrowding of objects. The space is dark and claustrophobic, as shown in the image below. Even taking object size and potential different lighting needed to conserve objects into account, the first space (beyond the large introductory panel and video) feels overly crowded.

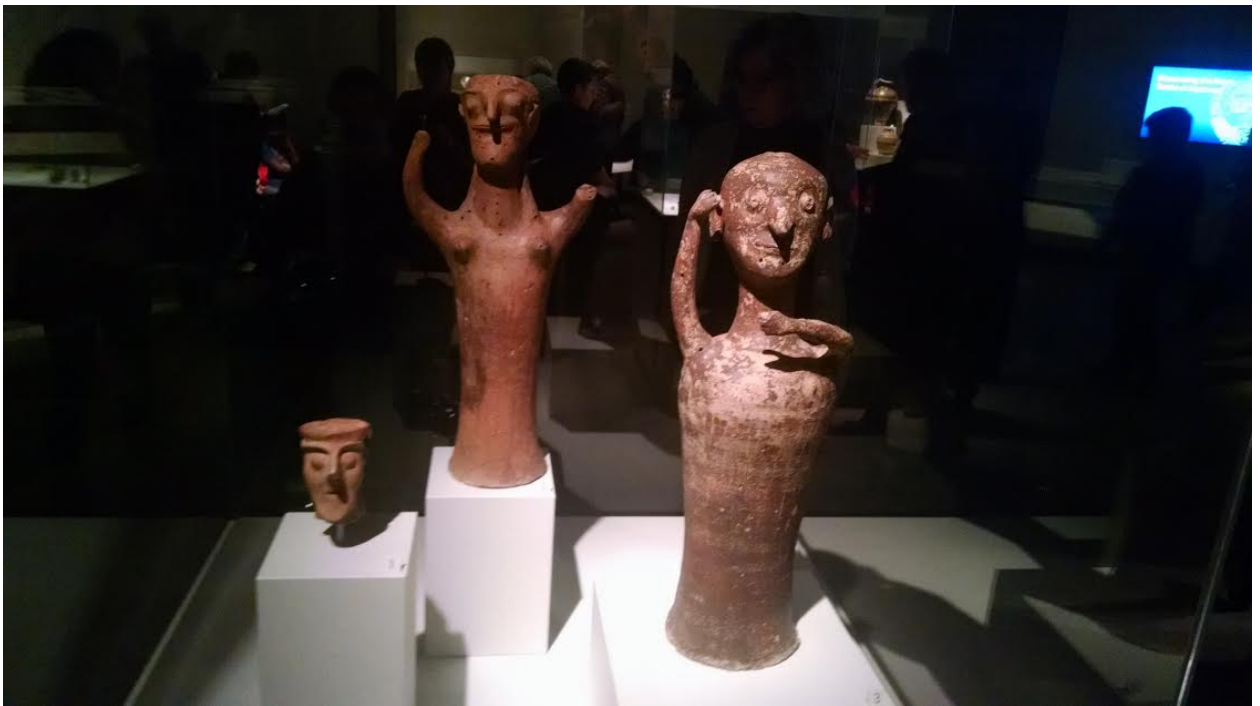


Figure 7.

Figurines crowded together in a dimly lit space. The space is so dark and crowded that people push past the objects without giving them much notice.

As you move through the exhibit, to the more “fined” and “cultured” objects, the space between each cases containing objects is greater. When a visitor arrives to this room, it feels as though the other rooms were leading up to this space.



Figure 8.

Open space and brighter lights invite the audience to spend time with the objects

### C. Object Labels: A Comparison

“The purpose of interpretive labels is to contribute to the overall visitor experience in a positive, enlightening, provocative and meaningful way. Interpretive labels address visitors’ unspoken concerns: What’s in it for me? Why should I care? How will knowing this improve my life...(interpretive labels) intend to tell stories, contrast points of view, present challenging issues, or strive to change people’s attitudes.”

(Serrell 2015, 6)

Labels of objects are meant to enhance visitor experiences in museums. Labels encourage visitor “buy in”; they should reaffirm the reasons that the visitor came to the museum in the first

place. They are often a link between the visitor and the object; the tone of the label can set the experience of the object to the visitor. In comparing two of the labels, one from an object on display earlier part of the exhibit and one from a later part, the bias of the curator towards the later object becomes clear. This bias reinforces a false evolutionary timeline by including incomplete/false information for the first object and by praising the specificity of the later object. Let's look at the following two objects (figures 3-4) to compare their labels.

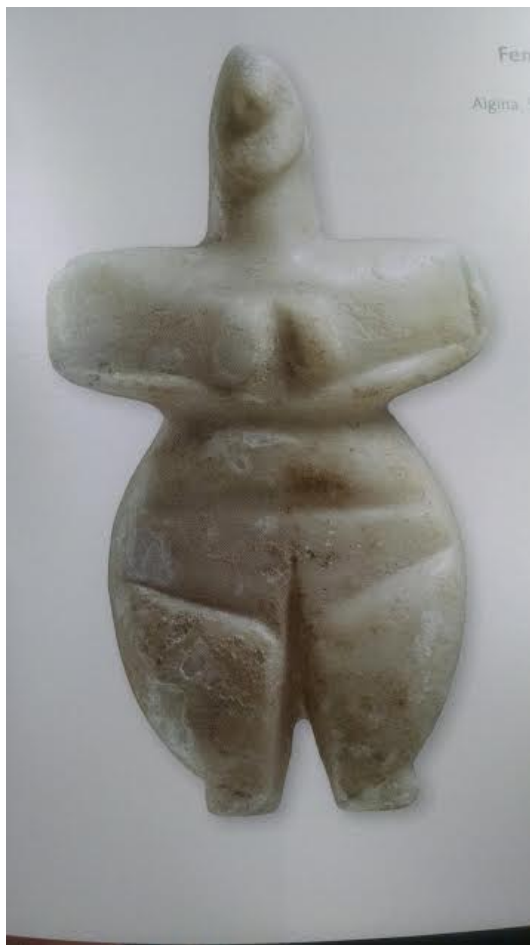


Figure 9.

Female Figurine, Stone, Algina 5300-4800 BCE



The label for the female figurine reads “Figurines symbolizing reproduction through the female form, with emphasized breasts, belly and public area, became widespread. They were likely used in fertility and initiation rites” (Clark 2014, 12).

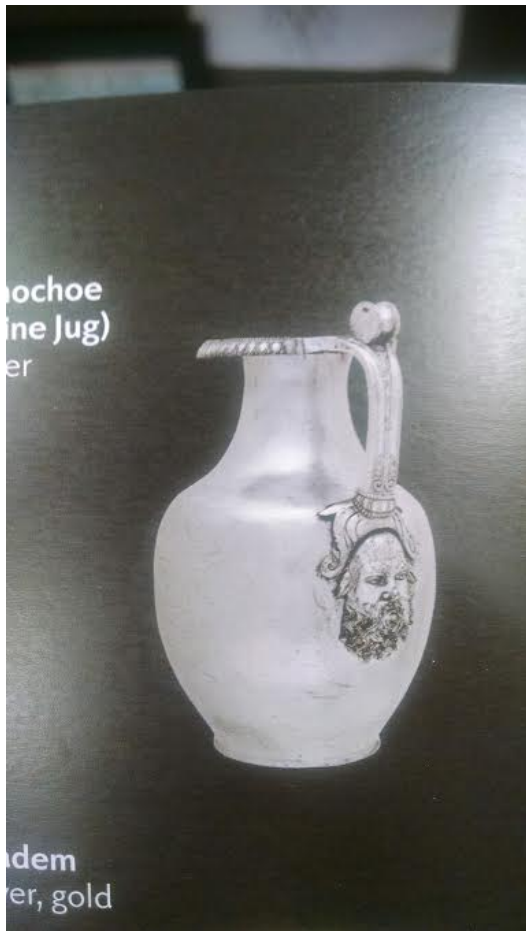


Figure 10.

Oinochoe (Wine Jug), Silver,

Found in Philip II's tomb, Aigai, 336 BCE

“This silver *oinochoe* is decorated with a relief head of the satyr, Silenus, a mythical figure associated with Dionysus, the god of wine. It is one of the finest surviving examples in the Greek world”. (Clark 2014, 37)

The figurine is described as a fertility figure—a term that is generic and possibly inaccurate. The wine jug is described as “the finest”. Why is one object given clear and obvious preference over the other? Is the wine jug singled out by material or by specificity? Regarding their work on the Neolithic figurines of Catalhoyuk in the article “Articulate Bodies: Form and Figures at Catalhoyuk” Carolyn Nakamura and Lynn Meskell write, “Regardless of form and material, figurines were common and ultimately disposable, rather than guarded, protected and handed down over generations” (Nakamura 2009, 206). Is it due to the fact that the figurine could be one of many and previously owned by no one in particular that dictates its low rank, and that the jug was owned by a specific owner, specifically an owner who is esteemed? The figurine is presented to the public in a way that denotes the “prehistoric” elements of the figurine. An emphasis is placed on the overt sexuality of the figurine. Nakamura and Meskell argue that labeling figurines as sexual reductive; by looking at the figurine as a “goddess” figure, we only see the figurines through our contemporary lens. In the attempt to characterize something as “primitive”, we overlay a narrative that has no evidence. To see these figurines as purely sexual pigeonholes them, and does not allow for other possibilities.

Nakamura and Meskell state,

Human figures commonly evoke of have even become synonymous with goddess veneration, the female domestic sphere, and ritual or cultic activities. However, such ideas are often grounded in Euro-American stereotypes and values and are, therefore deeply problematic when projected back onto the past. Ancient and non-Western female forms have especially sustained projections of Westernized views of the female body, fertility, and sexuality. Large breasts, stomach and buttocks...are highly sexualized features in the West, and they may or may not have held the same connotation in the

Neolithic. While the prominence of such traits might signify fertility, it could also denote excess, abundance, or age.  
(Nakamura and Meskell 2009, 208)

To state that an object was “likely used” one way or another is purely speculative. Arthur Berger writes in his book *What Objects Mean: An Introduction to Material Culture*, “Because they deal with objects of the past, archeologists have no way or directly corroborating their guesses as to the meaning of objects to the culture they were found in” (Berger 2014, 120). It is dangerous, then, to write labels such as the one that was written for this particular figurine. The information contained in the label is possibly the only information that visitors will come into contact with for figurines. By parroting existing stereotypes, the curator deprives the visitor of the rich conversations that are currently taking place regarding objects such as these.

#### D. Conclusions

All objects have a biography; they have a life story. They are created, they meet people, they serve functions, they may go on journeys, and, in some cases, they find their way to a shelf in a museum. Objects that are in museums are considered special, or singular. We can see from the example above, some objects are more singular than others. This is largely due to the function that they serve in society. In his widely cited article Igor Kopytoff tells us that it is “Because it is done by groups(of people), it bears the stamp of collective approval, channels the individual drive for singularization, and takes on the weight of cultural sacredness” (Kopytoff 1986, 81). Kopytoff argues that the objects are set aside because the group or society marks them as special. These objects are deemed holy. Writing about the autobiography of objects, Chris Gosden states, “At the heart of the notion of biography are questions about the links between

people and things: about the ways meanings and values are accumulated and transformed.”  
(Gosden 1999, 2)

In his book *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach attempts to make sense of the violence that surrounds the experience and performativity of the violence. Roach directly speaks to both the excess of and the performative nature of violence. In the chapter "Echoes in the Bone", Joseph Roach writes, "violence is the performance of waste...violence is never senseless but always meaningful...all violence is excessive...all violence is performative...In the circum-Atlantic economy of superabundance, violence occupies a portion of the cultural category that includes the aesthetic" (Roach 1996, 41). Violence is not merely performed and then released into the ether. It is internalized into the body of the sufferer and passed down through generations. When we inherit or bear witness to violence, we become part of its legacy. While visiting an exhibit on ancient Greece is not the same as perpetrating a violent crime, by promoting a specific kind of history has the “right” kind of history—in this case Greece and philhellenism—the museum exhibit does not allow an entry point for the visitor who does not ascribe to a philhellenic world view. A museum guest can be easily overwhelmed by the sheer breadth of the material, not understand the obscure and fictional narrative presented to them by the curator, and feel completely disconnected by their museum experience. This disconnection is a form a violence, specifically to the non-white museum visitor. By continuously placing this fictionalized Greek ideal and history as the history of civilization, the practices of colonialism are reified in our daily lives.

Continuing to make ancient history separate from current history, we do damage to the attitudes people carry regarding both ancient history and museum objects. It is necessary that the “primitive” figurine is generic and the jug special due to the need to reinforce the narrative that

Greek civilization was undeveloped and became less primal over time? The false narrative of evolution from primitivism to the (better, more accomplished and *obviously* more desirable) modern is a dangerous and fractious one. This evolutionary journey both diminishes the accomplishments and people of the past while further isolating vulnerable communities from the museum experience.

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