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A Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to announce the inaugural edition of *The Classicist*! Our publication is dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of all things related to the Classics whether that be history, culture, philosophies and so much more. In this issue, you will find articles related to Roman Sumptuary Laws, Pericles, Hannibal, Sappho, and Clytemnestra.

We want to extend our most sincere gratitude to our advisor, Mr. Mccaw, who has given us invaluable help in the editing process. Sr. Dalo, who worked out all the technical details of getting our publication off the ground. And finally, our writers, without whose contribution and hard work this publication would not exist.

Sincerely,
Hanzhang & Charlie



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POLICING PURSES &
DEBARRING DRESSES:
SUMPTUARY LAWS &
WOMEN'S CLOTHING

HANZHANG SWEN

The February issue of *Vanity Fair Mexico* in 2017 features First Lady Melania Trump holding a bowl filled with jewelry in one hand and a fork in the other, twirling a diamond necklace like spaghetti, just months after her husband, President Donald Trump, wrecked Mexico's economy with a border tax.¹ On September 27, 2018, beauty guru Kim Kardashian posted on her Instagram story her outfit for a night out: a dollar-print trench coat paired with matching money-print boots and a purse in the shape of a money bag hanging from her wrist.² These over-the-top and out-of-touch displays of wealth always incite criticism and discussion. However, from Ancient Rome to modern-day America, a core part of fashion is creating an illusion: an illusion of wealth and exclusivity. "Oh, she looks rich!" is a statement you might hear in a multitude of scenarios; from a businesswoman walking into the boardroom in an impeccable suit, to a model walking down the streets of New York City with the trendiest handbag. "Wearable wealth" is a term that has been popularized in response to this phenomenon of using clothing to express wealth. With social media becoming ever more popular in the average person's daily life, flaunting an expensive outfit is as easy as clicking a button. Wearing one's wealth is far from a new phenomenon, and Kim Kardashian is far from the first woman to be criticized for dressing too ostentatiously. In fact, sumptuary laws—laws designed to control displays of extravagance—were first established in Ancient Rome in 215 BCE and continued through the Renaissance era from the 14th century to the 17th century.

When you walk into someone's house, what do you notice first? Most likely, the decorations, the tidiness,



First Lady Melania Trump on cover of *Vanity Fair Mexico* 2017

Oh, she looks rich!

Kim Kardashian's money outfit in her Instagram story post



and the location. We often judge people based on their property and appearance. For instance, a messy and unkempt house could mean that the owner themselves is disorganized and going through a rough time, while a grand mansion with spiraling marble columns could indicate magnificent wealth. Similar to how we now judge people based on their property, in Ancient Rome, women were intricately connected to men in mind, body, and soul, and their actions reflected back on their husbands' reputations. To use a cliché, women were nothing more than property. Of course, every man wants a wife who would represent him positively in public and showcase good virtues. These positive virtues were often chastity and self-control, which can be outwardly shown through the clothing and accessories the woman chooses to wear. Over time, the clothing and adornments women owned served as both the chains and the key to their freedom. Sumptuary laws aimed to take away a woman's choice of clothing and accessories, but they accomplished more than that. Not only did such legislation take away pieces of clothing, but it also took away pieces of a woman's independence. The clothing and accessories a woman owns are her own, meaning that her clothing and accessories are not controlled by her husband. By protecting her belongings, a woman is protecting her herself and her economic power.

The Lex Oppia, a law proposed in 215 BCE by C. Oppius under the consulship of Q. Fabius Maximus Verrucosus and T. Sempronius Gracchus was one of the first sumptuary laws enacted in Ancient Roman society. Among other restrictions, this law banned women from wearing more than half an ounce of gold jewelry or purple-dyed clothing and prohibited women from traveling



outside of Rome by carriage. To understand why the Lex Oppia was proposed and passed, one needs to look towards the state of Roman society, and more importantly, the major event devastating Rome at the time: the Second Punic War (Webb 46). The Second Punic War, which started in 218 BCE and lasted all the way to 201 BCE, spanned 17 years in total and was fought between Rome and Carthage over control of the Mediterranean region. Vast amounts of funding were needed throughout the duration of the war to support a large army and numerous battles. Resources, both money and manpower, were limited, and in order to gain sufficient funds to continuously hold off Carthage, Rome was desperately in need of money. It was on this desperate precipice of doom or boom that the Senate, the ruling body of Ancient Rome, created the Lex Oppia under the justification that a mechanism was needed to control the spoiling extravagance of women, which was supposedly hurting war efforts.

Eventually, the Second Punic War ended with Rome's victory over Carthage. However, the end of the war did not bring an end to the Lex Oppia. Previous justifications for the law, such as funding war measures, were now moot, but women still could not participate in public events, and their personal accessories were not returned to them. Outraged, Roman women went out into the streets to publicly pressure the Roman Senate to repeal the law. During these protests, crowds of women blocked off the houses of several important Roman politicians and refused to leave until the Lex Oppia was repealed. These efforts were successful as the abrogation of the Lex Oppia was brought to the Roman Forum, a public place where legal issues were debated. The Roman Forum previously did not allow the presence of women, but during the protests against the Lex Oppia, women were able to enter the Forum and voice their opinions.³

Soon, two senators, Cato the Elder and Lucius Valerius, started the debate regarding the repeal of the Lex Oppia. Livy's account of the debate between Cato and his opponent Valerius Antias over the Lex Oppia is one of the most extensive sources available about the political uproar that sumptuary laws caused in Roman society. Cato was the epitome of Roman conservatism and a believer in traditional Roman morals, so he opposed the repeal of the law. In contrast, Valerius was more progressive and supported the women and their goal to repeal the Lex Oppia. Livy recounts this debate with the goal of capturing the spirit of what was being said as closely as possible.

Cato's core argument was that women were morally corrupt without the guidance of men and thus the Lex Oppia was required to keep them in check. It was clear from the language Cato used in this debate that he viewed women as an inferior species to men. He described women as "untamed creatures," and established that it was a man's responsibility to control his woman. In other words, Cato believed that the



Roman Jewellery

Lex Oppia was meant to serve as a moral check against women's "wild" and "uncontrollable" nature. However, underlying Cato's argument about the inferiority of women was fear. Cato admitted that women were quite capable of disrupting Roman society with their "female violence," which is why the Lex Oppia was needed to ensure that women never gained too much power. Cato's speech confirmed that men had an innate fear that they could not control women and that without regulation, women could take back control.⁴

On the other side, Valerius argued that the Lex Oppia's original purpose was to be used as a war measure, and since the war had ended, so should the Lex Oppia. To defend his argument, Valerius brings up the positive contributions women made during the war effort. For instance, Valerius reminds the Roman Senate that Roman widows took on the role of treasurer in order to provide financial support for the army. Further, Valerius points out that not only did women not recklessly spend their inheritances, but they actually put their money back into the war effort to help Rome win. However, Valerius agreed with Cato that women were the weaker sex but he differed from Cato in that Valerius argued that because women were the weaker sex, they deserved to keep this small privilege of choosing their own clothing and accessories.⁵

Valerius won the debate, and the repeal of the Lex Oppia marked a pivotal moment in the fight for gender equality. By coming together to protest the Lex Oppia, women formed an alliance and were able to make political demands on a scale previously unseen. In fact, the repeal of the Lex Oppia paved the way for future protests by women. In 42 BC roughly a hundred years after the repeal of the Lex Oppia, Hortensia—a Roman orator and noblewoman—followed in the footsteps of the Lex Oppia protests and publicly debated against the high taxation rates imposed on Rome's wealthiest women and succeeded in reducing those taxes.⁶ These small concessions were ultimately unimportant against the overwhelming oppression of Rome's patriarchal society as women still had very limited rights. Nevertheless, the Lex Oppia protests and Hortensia proved that change was possible incrementally.



Miniature of women protesting against the Lex Oppia from Facta et Dicta Memorabilia by Valerius Maximus, translated by Simon de Hesdin and Nicholas Gonesse, 1479

Hannibal: The General Who Almost Conquered Rome

ETHAN FURMAN

The Roman Empire, before its collapse in 476 AD, was thought to have been unconquerable. Its enormous population size and land area was unmatched in ancient times. Rome was the ancient pinnacle of military strength, philosophy, oratory, and history. However, there was one man who came the closest to toppling the sprawling empire: Hannibal. One of the greatest military strategists of the ancient world, Hannibal Barca led the Carthaginian forces against Rome during the Second Punic War from 218 to 201 BCE. Hannibal, known for his audacious attacks against the Romans, had many amazing victories during his war campaign, but Carthage was eventually defeated by Rome in 202 BCE. The two main accounts of his life that we know exist are from the Greek historian Polybius and the Roman historian Livy. Both of these accounts are filled with the author's biases and left much unknown, but what we know for certain is that Hannibal was an unwavering general, resourceful strategist, and military genius who left an indelible mark on the ancient world.

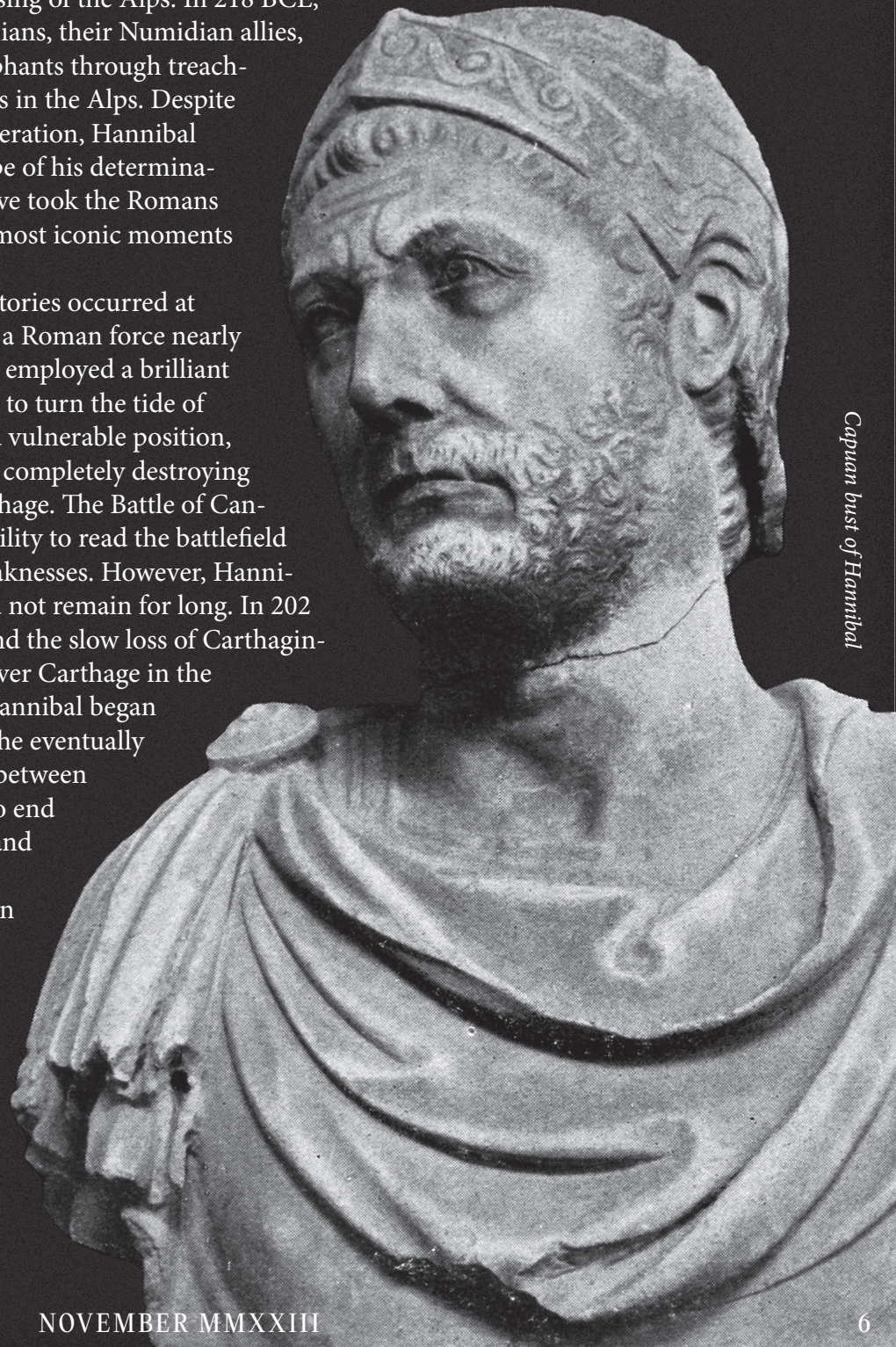
Hannibal Barca was born in 247 BCE in Carthage, modern day Tunisia. He grew up under the guidance of his father, a well-known and decorated Carthaginian general named Hamilcar Barca. Hamilcar was a general in the

Carthaginian army during the First Punic War from 264 to 241 BCE and fought against the Roman Empire. Hamilcar developed an intense hatred for Rome because of the damages inflicted on Carthage by the Romans after the First Punic War. In fact, it was said that Hamilcar made Hannibal swear total hatred towards the Romans; this oath was something that Hannibal continued to live by and act upon until his death.

Hamilcar eventually took Hannibal to Spain, along with his brother-in-law, Hasdrubal. When Hamilcar died in battle, Hasdrubal succeeded him to control the Carthaginian forces in Iberia. However, Hasdrubal was soon assassinated and 26 year old Hannibal took control of the Carthaginian army in Spain in 221 BCE. Three years later Hannibal completed his arguably most famous achievement, and one that remains a testament to his bravery and military genius: the crossing of the Alps. In 218 BCE, Hannibal led a mixed army of Carthaginians, their Numidian allies, advanced war technologies, and war elephants through treacherous terrain and inhospitable conditions in the Alps. Despite suffering significant losses during the operation, Hannibal emerged in Italy, demonstrating the scope of his determination and his strategic brilliance. This move took the Romans by surprise and gave birth to one of the most iconic moments in military history.

One of Hannibal's most celebrated victories occurred at the Battle of Cannae in 216 BCE. Facing a Roman force nearly twice the size of his own army, Hannibal employed a brilliant double-envelopment and pincer strategy to turn the tide of the battle. By drawing the Romans into a vulnerable position, he flanked and surrounded the Romans, completely destroying their forces in a decisive victory for Carthage. The Battle of Cannae is a perfect example of Hannibal's ability to read the battlefield and adapt his strategy to his enemy's weaknesses. However, Hannibal's military and tactical dominance did not remain for long. In 202 BCE, after many years of grueling war and the slow loss of Carthaginian allies and support, Rome prevailed over Carthage in the decisive Battle of Zama. After the war, Hannibal began his political career within Carthage, but he eventually committed suicide by poison sometime between 183 and 181 BCE. Hannibal felt forced to end his life as the Romans closed in on him and he feared there would be no escape.

Even though Hannibal's campaign against Rome was ultimately unsuccessful, he established himself as one of the greatest historical military thinkers, inspiring future leaders like Napoleon Bonaparte. Additionally, Hannibal's story and spirit serves as a testament to human resilience and the tenacity of one individual against insurmountable odds. His relentless pursuit of a seemingly impossible goal can be an inspiration to all.



Capuan bust of Hannibal

Fresco of a woman holding writing implements, a wax tablet, and a stylus. She is commonly called Sappho, but is actually a high-society Pompeian woman.

SAPPHO



SARINA SHAH

When it comes to talking about entertainment, the Ancient Romans and Greeks were the star of the show. Through poetry, music, philosophy, and even playwriting, Ancient culture was filled with stories and tales to be told for lifetimes. Their revolutionary impact on entertainment culture still inspires poets today.

One of the most revolutionary lyrical poets of Ancient times was Sappho, a woman born on the island of Lesbos, in the city of Mytilene, known for its arts during 7th century BCE. From her childhood, Sappho was part of a strong circle of adolescent women, educated in the arts and culture, foreshadowing her career as a writer. Her poetry primarily focused on love and female experiences within society and it was inspired by her own romantic interests. However, Sappho didn't solely write about romantic love. Instead, her writing can distinctly be recognized as one depicting a sisterhood of women. Sappho wrote about platonic relationships, female friendship, competition, and even forbidden romantic relationships between women. Sappho's work was read at a similar frequency as Sophocles and even Virgil, and was often lyrical, or accompanied by the lyre. Interestingly, Sappho composed her writing during a time period where poetry was transforming from "epic" format to writing that was more personal and authentic. It was because of this change in cul-

ture that Sappho wrote in the local dialect (Aeolic) and composed her own poetic metric.

Her writing style consisted of three aspects: a stanza, a dactyl (3 syllable foot, with one stressed and two unstressed), and a trochee (unstressed-stressed). Her poetic metric, known as the Sapphic meter, widely influenced various Ancient Greek poets.

The most famous poem written by Sappho is one called the "Hymn of Venus," detailing the importance Aphrodite plays in a mortal's life. Sappho describes Aphrodite as the spiritual embodiment of love and desire, depicting her as an individual who has the ability to transform the ideals of both women and men. She uses vivid imagery (a revolutionary mechanism for her time) to display the forces of love, and Aphrodite's irresistible power to sway mortals. Through this poem, Sappho gives light into the internal lives of women; their thought processes, social and daily life, and their feelings. Sappho's other poem "It's no use, mother dear" similarly challenges the role of women during this time, describing her experiences performing household chores such as weaving and observing the intersectionality between domesticity and romantic love within Greek society.

Even within her time, her work was circulated widely, so much so that both Ovid and Catullus (extremely famous Latin poets) were inspired by it. For instance,



The Disciples of Sappho by Thomas Ralph Spence

Ovid was known for his elegiac or seemingly mournful tone of poetry and his exploration of love. However, within his writing, he widely drew from Sappho's authenticity in describing love and heartbreak within her writing as well as her intimate portrayal of emotions. Sappho struck a careful balance between complexity and simplicity regarding romance, a tactic which various poets used. Similarly, in Catullus's work, he wrote the poem "He seems to be equal to a god" where he talks about his enamoration for Lesbia. He uses rich sensory details as Sappho had, and uses personal narratives instead of using the traditional epic format. When incorporating immense admiration for an individual, Sappho was the baseline and the rubric when it came to writing about romance.

However, her writing

style didn't only influence writers in the Classical age. Even today, we can see poets who use the Sapphic stanza, or incorporate her poems within their own writing. For instance, modern writers such as Hilda Doolittle, or even Ann Carson used her to explore themes of sexuality, desire and romantic love as a metric for their own work.

Sappho's legacy today, doesn't only take the form of poetry; she's also the figurehead of two extremely important social movements today, spearheading both the feminist movement and LGBTQ+ pride representation. From the feminist lens, poetry during Greek society was heavily dominated by male poets which provided an abundance of male romance and homosexuality but a lack of representation for women. The fact that Sappho was able to align herself

with some of the most famous poets throughout history, while having her power diminished and still having to conform to gender expectations is extraordinary. Additionally, not only does Sappho represent agency and autonomy within her poems, she was also involved in the lives of young women as well. She had run a small academy in the island of Lesbos for young unmarried women to educate them around topics relating to arts and culture.

The second place, in which we can clearly see Sappho's impact in our community is towards the pride movement, as she has been a figurehead for thousands of queer individuals today. Her place in literature is one that is extremely important for LGBTQ+ youth, because her writing provides representation, as well as an unapologetic notion of

love and appreciation for same-sex relationships. This increased representation provides queer youth with culture and art that is beautiful, poetic and flowing; it validates them and their identities. For instance, while queer representation was frequently written about in Ancient Greece, it only was looked at from the perspective of males. Sappho gives us the other side of the equation, and talks about female homosexuality. That's why today, the term "sapphic" is used to refer to women who were under the queer umbrella.

Ultimately, Sappho will always be renowned as one of the most successful female poets in history in regards to her contributions to not only poetry but also social movements, radical ideals and stylistic metrics. She was a revolutionary artist – one that will be remembered for years to come.

PERICLES

PRAGMATIC LEADER AND GENERAL

HENRY SWEENEY

The Peloponnesian war was one of the most groundbreaking conflicts in Greek history, and at the forefront of its fight was Pericles. The war was initially started by revolts of city-states in Boeotia who wanted to convert the democratic pro-Athenian government to an oligarchic pro-Peloponnesian government. Athens' military was just recovering from earlier wars with Persia in Cyprus and Egypt, with a rough economic and political situation at hand. It was during this time that Pericles was the leading politician in the Athenian space and thus in charge of this new situation. Although in a difficult place, over the next 20 years, Pericles proved to be one of the most impactful leaders of classical Greece, setting up Athens' power and superiority in the Peloponnesian wars through his leadership and military tactics.

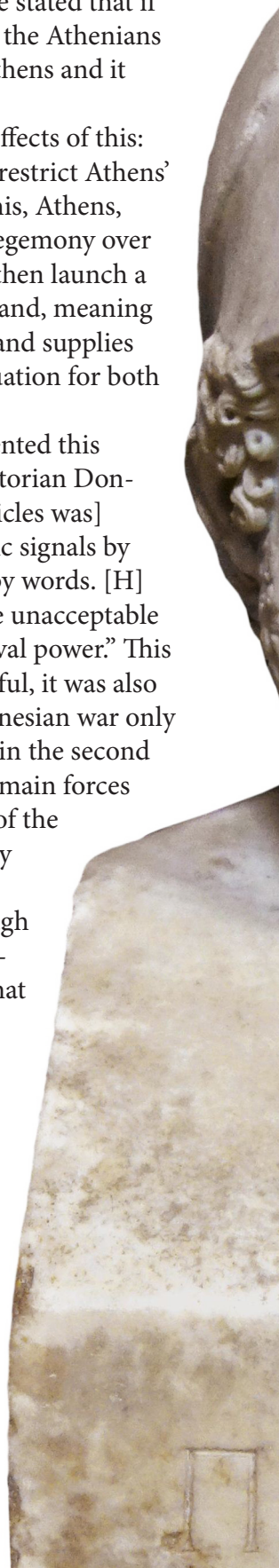
Pericles's military strategies and prudence during the Peloponnesian wars illustrate his importance to Athens' victory. As Boeotia and Euboea revolted, Pericles led an army to Euboea to quell the rebellion but advised against attacking Boeotia, as they had many more troops and the home field advantage. This advice however was not followed, and another general by the name of Tolmades led an army to attempt to put down Boeotia. As a result, when Tolmades suffered a miraculous defeat, he lost many soldiers and died during the process. A similar situation took place in Megara, an isthmus to the west of Attica. As Pericles quickly led his army into the plains of Attica, he encountered troops from the Peloponnesus and Boeotia under Spartan general Pleistoanax. Far outnumbering the Athenian army, Pleistonanax and Pericles convened to discuss a diplomatic end to the fighting. As a master negotiator, Pericles managed to stop the Spartan army

in their tracks and set a 30 years of peace with the Peloponnesians. He stated that if the Spartans were to attack, the Athenians would flee to the walls of Athens and it would start a lengthy siege.

Pericles understood the effects of this: the siege could not entirely restrict Athens' access to supplies. Due to this, Athens, maintaining a clear naval hegemony over other Greek powers, could then launch a series of forays on Spartan land, meaning both sides would lose men and supplies -- which was a lose-lose situation for both parties

Ultimately, Pericles prevented this from happening, as Yale historian Donald Kagan claims that "[Pericles was] a man who [sent] diplomatic signals by action, rather than merely by words. [H]is intention was to avoid the unacceptable change in the balance of naval power." This military strategy was so useful, it was also used in the second Peloponnesian war only 15 years later. For instance, in the second war, Pericles instructed the main forces of Athens to remain inside of the walls to let the superior navy launch raids and attacks on port cities of Sparta. Although it caused unrest in the Athenian population, it meant that Athens would not commit and lose a large amount of soldiers to a heavily Spartan-favored land battle. He was successfully able to avoid mass conflict and bloodshed.

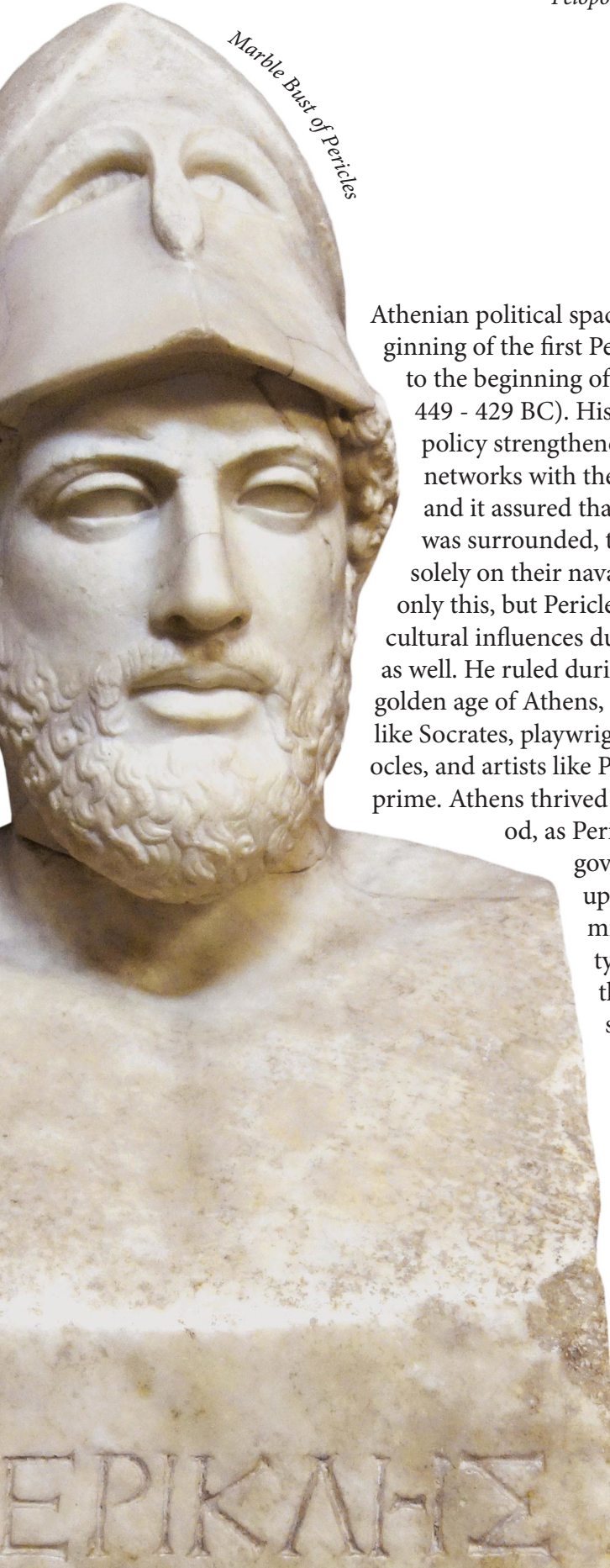
However, not only were Pericles' military strategies sound, but leadership in peacetime through oratory abilities demonstrated that he was an extremely cunning leader. Pericles dominated the



Pericles's Funeral Oration by Phillip Foltz depicting his speech for the dead at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War



Marble Bust of Pericles



Athenian political space from the beginning of the first Peloponnesian war to the beginning of the second war (449 - 429 BC). His naval-focused policy strengthened Athens' trade networks with their Delian allies, and it assured that even if Athens was surrounded, they could last solely on their naval hegemony. Not only this, but Pericles had immense cultural influences during his reign as well. He ruled during the so-called golden age of Athens, with thinkers like Socrates, playwrights like Sophocles, and artists like Phidias in their prime. Athens thrived during this period, as Pericles led a stable government to uphold democracy, military superiority, and passion for the arts all in the same period.

His oratory abilities especially, are exemplified by his famous funeral oration in the winter of 430 BC. In this speech, he orates to the public and the bodies of dead Athenian soldiers, describing

Athens regional pride. He extensively praises democracy and describes Athens as the world's center for culture and education. In this extensive speech, he reinvigorates the Athenian public and restores the morale of many Athenians who had been crushed by the plague and the siege of the Attica plain. Furthermore, he describes his goal in the war, and makes it overwhelmingly clear to an emotional audience that his goal is to uphold a democratic institution and avenge those who had lost their lives in battle, which historian Barry Strauss claims is a crucial reason he garnered so much support in his rule. In general, Pericles was an incredible speaker and leader in peacetime, and thus this steadfast nature was transformed into a more prudent strategy in war time.

Considering both his policies in peacetime and in war, Pericles was an incredibly pragmatic leader whose vision was unfortunately cut short due to his premature death. He was a skilled orator and tactician, and he understood what many later Athenian leaders did not: if Athens was methodical and maintained naval superiority, it could outlast its opponents in a drawn out war. This mindset was very foresighted, and although it seems to not have worked in the beginning of the second Peloponnesian war, one must take into account extraordinary conditions that Pericles was faced with as well as his enemies. Pericles, on all accounts, was an incredible leader, whose vision for prudence and neutrality can be emulated with success even to this present day.

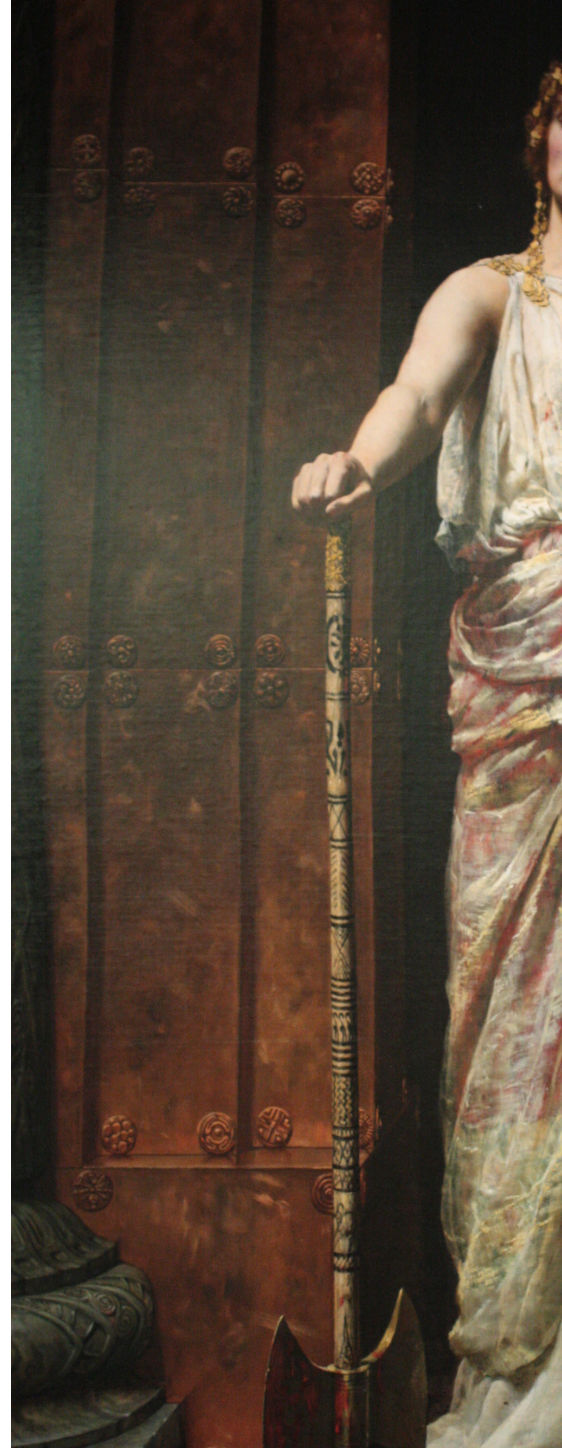
She was the dark side of every coin. Never matching the beauty of her renowned twin sister Helen of Troy, less faithful than her cousin Penelope, the loyal wife of Odysseus. You may know her as the Queen of Mycenae, the mortal Princess of Sparta. But one moment defined her as the bloodthirsty, furious, and ruthless woman she would forever be pictured as: the moment when she murdered her husband Agamemnon. Except, was she really a fanatical murderer, or rather one of the only women in the Ancient times who would take up the mantle of action, the arbiter of justice? Is Clytemnestra the villain she has morphed into or rather miscast by time?

Clytemnestra was born to King Tyndareus and Queen Leda of Sparta in a time that will be forever ingrained as the epi-center of Greek storytelling. Her mother birthed a set of twins, though they had different fathers. Clytemnestra was the daughter of the mortal Tyndareus, but her sister Helen was the child of Zeus, King of the Gods. From the outset, Helen was special, quickly becoming famous all over the world for her beauty. But as they grew up, the story would become complicated for the less dazzling, highly opinionated Clytemnestra, who married a king named Tantalus, who by all accounts she was happy with. She had just birthed their son when two men began to seek refuge in her father's house: Menelaus and Agamemnon of the house of Atreus. Though Menelaus quickly became infatuated with the beautiful Helen, Clytemnestra was the woman who caught his older brother Agamemnon's eye.

Helen was given an almost unprecedented choice for a woman at that time: the choice of her spouse. She chose Menelaus, and Agamemnon, growing jealous that his brother had gotten the bride he wanted while he did not, committed the first unforgivable act that would send Clytemnestra's life on a downward spiral: he killed Tantalus and infant child in cold blood, taking Clytemnestra as his prize. They were married soon after, though one can imagine the deep resentment, hatred and fear Clytemnestra felt for this man with whom she was forced into matrimony. She would have three children with him: Iphigenia, Orestes and Electra. But soon after, larger events would begin to shape Clytemnestra's life, when her sister Helen was kidnapped by the Trojan prince Paris. Agamemnon, now the most powerful king in Greece, rallied the former suitors of Helen to win her back for his brother, thus starting one of the most infamous wars in history: the Trojan War.

However, a detail often glossed over took place before the fighting ever began. When all the boats were docked in the port of Aulis, Agamemnon angered Artemis, and she cursed the Greeks to have no wind to sail to Troy. Distraught, Agamemnon consulted an oracle, who told him that the wind would return if he sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia. Agamemnon agreed, tricking Clytemnestra by telling her that their daughter would be marrying the greatest of warriors, Achilles. By the time Clytemnestra got wind of the deceit, the deed was done, in many tellings by Agamemnon's own hand.

IN DEFE



CLYTEM

SENSE OF



NESTRA

John Collier's Clytemnestra

This was the second of Clytemnestra's children killed by Agamemnon, and her grief was overpowering and shattering.

However, Clytemnestra differentiated herself from the multitude of tragic mothers in Greek mythology in a simple way: she viewed herself as capable of taking action and changing her own story, as a result, she was treated as a woman of unimaginable villainy. Clytemnestra was not idle while her husband was fighting, nor was she, like her cousin Penelope, the image of faithful domesticity. Instead, she found a partner in a man named Aegisthos, the cousin of Agamemnon who had his own reasons for despising the King of Mycenae: Agamemnon had slaughtered his family. Clytemnestra and Aegisthos waited patiently for Agamemnon to return. Clytemnestra led Agamemnon to a prepared bath, and in some versions, watched Aegisthos kill him. But there is another, more intriguing narrative, that she did the deed herself.

One can only imagine how this tale of a powerful, intelligent woman with a deep hatred for her own husband and a will to take action would have terrified the men of Ancient Greece, and so they cast her into the deepest pits of evil, until even the name "Clytemnestra" became synonymous with "the worst type of woman."

Unfortunately, Clytemnestra's story did not end there, and she would end up killing Cassandra as well due to her belief that she was a symbol of Agamemnon's infidelity. And the deaths do not stop there. Clytemnestra's son, Orestes, was bound by Ancient Greek law to avenge his father, and would in due time murder his own mother, famously encouraged by his sister Electra, of the eponymous "Electra Complex."

I have always wondered at this point what made Agamemnon's life more sacred than Clytemnestra's, why he was the one that needed to be avenged. Or even further, why was Agamemnon more important than the innocent Iphigenia, sacrificed to an ambitious king's plot?

Perhaps Clytemnestra was thinking the same thing, as she would send the spirits of vengeance to the world above, tormenting her son. Even in death, she was never silent, though one can't help but feel pity for everyone left in the wake of the mess of blood and betrayal that Clytemnestra's life became.

So who was Clytemnestra really? A vengeful, unfaithful wife or a woman who viewed herself as able to craft her own tale? There are no easy answers to these quandaries. As for me, I will always feel a sense of sympathy for a woman who had her voice stolen so many times that she viewed violence as the only answer. Perhaps in truth it is a time for a reexamination of myth and belief, and the part stories play in shaping lives, even to this day, long after people have by and large moved on from the myth of a woman robbed of everything except what she herself could claim. So I will fall on the side of attempting to understand Clytemnestra rather than imprison her in yet another trap she didn't choose, that of the "aggressive woman."

The

Kylix depicting a Persian soldier (left) fighting a Greek hoplite (right).



Of the

ZACK PELOSKY

The Greco-Persian war was a series of kinetic conflicts between the uber-powerful Persian Empire and the formidable amalgamation of city-states under the jurisdiction of the Greek Empire. Commencing in 499 BCE, the war lasted nearly five decades until the two empires signed a peace treaty in 449 BCE.

In 547 BCE, at the preliminary zenith of the enormous Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great - the father

of the Achaemenid Empire - invaded Greek Ionia (present day Turkey). Subsequently, Cyrus endowed the Ionian colonies to numerous tyrants who served as puppets to the looming Persian empire. However, this proved to be a fatal mistake as the occupation served to be the catalyst of the 50 year war that followed.

In 499 BCE, several Ionian states rebelled against their occupying power, the Persian Empire. Express-

ing their discontent, the Greeks felt that death was preferable to living at the whims of capricious despots. Therefore, four formerly Greek city states in the Asian minor rebelled with the Ionians in a conflict known as the Ionian revolt. This revolt served as the first major conflict in the Greco-Persian war.

Initially, these Ionian sovereignties found success as they triumphed over the discomobulated Persian Empire and thereafter

Persia

Periclares

regained much of their territory. Still, under the new Persian Emperor Darius, the Persian army (One of the largest in human history) led a three-pronged attack against the Ionians and, once again, defeated much of the Greek army. However, the Athenians who proved to be the most powerful city-state at the time, pledged nearly two-dozen warships to support the Ionian effort against the Persian. Therefore, small battle continued until 494 BCE. Then, the

Persian Army and Navy had regrouped and decisively quelled the nearly successful rebellion.

Though the revolt had ended, Darius was irate as the Athenians supported the anti-Persian naval effort. Therefore, seeking revenge, Darius organized and prepared for an all-out invasion of mainland Greece. In 492, Darius and his son-in-law Mardonius commenced the re-integration of semi-autonomous Thrace. The next year, Darius

ordered the invasion of Euboea and Eretria. After nearly a week of combat, the city was surrendered to the Persians.

In the following months, the Persian fleet and army sailed to Marathon, where they met the well trained and equipped Athenian army. For the first five days, the battle remained a stalemate. Then, Darius ordered the retreat of the Persians to allow them to sail to Athens and take advantage of the

Preco-

preoccupied Greek army. However, unexpectedly, nearly 10,000 Greek warriors surrendered the high ground and began to attack the Persian infantry. The risk paid off; 6,400 Persian bodies were counted while the Athenians lost only 192. Immediately after, the Athenians raced to Athens and arrived before the Persians. Knowing the Athenians had returned before the Persians could attack, the fleet retreated back to Asia.

In the wake of the naval retreat, a post war period of informal conflict

lasted for the next decade. However, the newer emperor Xerxes (the son of Darius), planned another invasion. The empires clashed at the legendary battle of Thermopylae. Leonidas, the King of Sparta, was able to secure a decisive Greek victory despite losing the territory. In a hail mary, a few hundred Greek warriors were able to kill thousands of Persians, despite a 100% casualty level.

Months later, the empires met at Salamis. Ending in a Greek victory, the Greek navy was able to flank the

Persians and sink over 200 Persian vessels. In turn, the Greeks seized naval superiority and essentially made any Persian invasion effort improbable.

For the next three decades, small, indecisive battles occurred with no decisive victor. Greek counterattacks and invasion efforts ensued, but they only ended in stalemate with little territorial gain. The war finally concluded in 449 BCE with a peace treaty between the two emperors.

in war

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