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How to Be a Man in the Greco-Roman World

How true are these characterizations of masculinity in the Greco-Roman period? Not philosophical & literary?

Gender discussions of Greco-Roman world are often based on implicit cultural standards constructed for individual roles or practices, not something so widespread/cultural as masculinity.

Thales... used to say there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: "First, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian."

—Diogenes, *Thales*, I.33

This expression of gratitude reported by Diogenes of the pre-Socratic philosopher, Thales, provides an apt gateway into the hierarchal world that we are about to enter. A person ranks higher than an animal, a man higher than a woman, and a Greek higher than a non-Greek; and, by the time of the Principate, a Roman higher than a non-Roman.¹ To these oppositions we could also add that of free versus slave—slaves, too, were like animals, women, and foreigners insofar as they lived lives of submission. In short, understanding what it meant to be a man in the Greco-Roman world meant understanding one's place in a rationally ordered cosmos in which free men were placed at the top and what fell beneath could all be classified as "unmen."²

The purpose of this chapter is to make evident the ideology of masculinity that contributed to the construction of this order. It highlights the image of the ideal man that runs across a full range of Greek and Latin texts throughout the Greco-Roman period.³ While places of difference and resistance to this ideology exist, as well as certain internal contradictions, I am primarily interested in showing

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the consistent and pervasive nature of the ideology that any such deviations were up against. The image of ideal masculinity presented in this chapter is gleaned from philosophical, anatomical, and physiognomic treatises, moral discourses, legal codes, and biblical commentary, as well as material evidence from ancient coins, altars, statues and inscriptions. I draw on texts that span several centuries ranging from the first century B.C.E. (and sometimes earlier) to texts from the fourth century C.E. This breadth is intentional, as it demonstrates the persistence and endurance of this version of masculinity. The aim is a thick and detailed description of what it meant to be masculine in this hyper-masculine culture. Together, the textual and material evidence testifies to the values and ideals of the ruling class, values which, as I argued in the introduction, undoubtedly played a role in the broader culture. Even if this picture of manliness did not represent the lived reality of most men in the empire, it had an effect on them. No matter where one lived in the empire, one would not have to look hard to find an image of masculinity that was intended to evoke admiration and honor, and to which one was supposed to aspire. When the New Testament writers worked out their Christological formulations, they did so alongside this dominant ideology of masculinity.

The Paradoxical Body

The body is perhaps the most obvious entrée into issues of sexuality and gender, because for most people, the relationship between sexual anatomy and gendered identity seems clear-cut. Male bodies equal men and masculinity; female bodies equal women and femininity. However, just as many now recognize the complexity of the relationship between physical anatomy and gendered identity in our contemporary society, so scholars are uncovering a similar complexity in the ancient world. What has become increasingly clear is that ancient masculinity was constituted more by the shape of one's life than by the shape of one's body. In fact, as we will eventually show, it is actually *incorporeity* that was viewed as the ultimate in masculine achievement.

To be sure, the body was foundational in the Greco-Roman construction of gender, insofar as Roman law required an infant's classification at birth as male or female. As one would expect, such classification was done by visual observation of the external appearance of the genitalia.⁴ Thus, initially the body did determine whether one was male or female. Still, once this classification was made, there was no guarantee that a given boy would grow to become a man. The problem was not just one of infant mortality, but whether the boy would live up to the requirements of masculinity. As Carlin A. Barton

puts it, "one was ontologically (*mas*) or a human (*homo*), one *not* being."⁵

In this sense, the body was an achievement of ideal masculinity. Toward this goal, it provided no aid. From the ancient perspective, the body lacking in masculinity earned was a masculinity that, if it fell into effeminacy, was frequently scorned by the audience.

Perhaps one reason this is so is the Aristotelian perspective, the male body was completely different in kind from the female, viewed as the perfected, more complete. Aristotle explains:

In human beings the male is superior to the female. . . . It is due to this that the male bryos is inferior to that of the female (in condition). (*Gen. an.* 775b10-12)

So, too, writing in the second century C.E.,

Now just as mankind is the most perfect of all animals, so mankind the man is more perfect than the woman, for his perfection is his excess of reason. (*On the Usefulness of the Female*)

In other words, from the perspective of the ancients, there was actually only one set of reproductive organs. Biologically, in this view, the difference amounted to the presence of additional male sameness of male and female. The reader to imagine the male gender as having productive organs inside out. The experiment is that "instead of being two sexes are linked by a common organ."

The pervasiveness of this perspective is evident in Jewish writer like Philo readily as a commentary. Explaining the sex of Christ, Philo remarks, "Male . . . because he was said by the naturalists that the fe-

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puts it, "one was ontologically a male but existentially a man. Born a male (*mas*) or a human (*homo*), one made oneself a man (*vir*). A *vir* was not a natural being."⁵

In this sense, the body was ultimately not of primary importance in the achievement of ideal masculinity. While the male body launched one on the way toward this goal, it provided no guarantee of success. Indeed, from the ancient perspective, the body lacked stability; there was no certainty that a masculinity earned was a masculinity saved. The specter of lost manliness, of a slide into effeminacy, was frequently raised before the eyes of the literate male audience.

Perhaps one reason this fear was evoked so regularly was that from an Aristotelian perspective, the male body did not provide assurance of being completely different in kind from the female body. Instead, the male body was viewed as the perfected, more complete body when compared to the female. As Aristotle explains:

In human beings the male is much hotter in its nature than the female. . . . It is due to this . . . that the perfecting of the female embryos is inferior to that of male ones (since their uterus is inferior in condition). (*Gen. an.* 775a)

So, too, writing in the second century C.E., the physician Galen comments:

Now just as mankind is the most perfect of all animals, so within mankind the man is more perfect than the woman, and the reason for his perfection is his excess of heat, for heat is Nature's primary instrument. (*On the Usefulness of the Parts*, 2.630)

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In other words, from the perspective of these influential authors, there was actually only one set of reproductive organs, "one sex," as Laqueur argues.⁶ Biologically, in this view, the difference between male and female anatomy amounted to the presence of adequate heat. Indeed, pointing to the essential sameness of male and female reproductive organs, Galen encourages his reader to imagine the male genitalia turned outside in and the woman's reproductive organs inside out. The biological implication of this thought experiment is that "instead of being divided by their reproductive anatomies, the sexes are linked by a common one."⁷

The pervasiveness of this perspective can be seen in the way a Hellenistic Jewish writer like Philo readily assimilates this view in the context of his biblical commentary. Explaining the sex-specific requirement for the Passover lamb, Philo remarks, "Male . . . because male is more perfect than female. . . . [I]t is said by the naturalists that the female is nothing else than an imperfect male"

One sex
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(QE 1.7; cf. also *Spec. Laws* 1.200–201). One could hardly find a more concise statement of the Greco-Roman understanding of sex/gender categories. Maleness is associated with completion and perfection. “Female” is a non-category apart from its definition as imperfect male.⁸

For the ancient authors, the disturbing implication of this “one-sex model” of humanity, to borrow Laqueur’s term, is the possibility of gender slippage, particularly from male to female. If women were not different in kind, but simply a lesser, incomplete version of men, what was there to keep men from sliding down the axis into the female realm? As John Winkler has pointed out, the fear behind this question created an ethos in which the cultural polarity between the genders was made internal to one gender, the male.⁹ It was not enough to be clear that one was a man rather than a woman. One also needed to ensure that one was a manly man rather than a womanly man. As Maud Gleason argues, one’s masculine status had to be constantly maintained and proven through a demonstration of manly deportment. In her words, “Manhood was not a state to be definitely achieved but something always under construction and constantly open to scrutiny.”¹⁰

And here is the paradox. Although the presence of male reproductive organs could not prove one’s manliness, there were other aspects about the body that could betray it. Particular bodily traits were open to scrutiny, and the “science” of physiognomy was devoted to their analysis. Physiognomy was the discipline of discerning a person’s character, disposition, or destiny through the study of external appearances. Highlighting this link between body and character (or “soul”), the earliest treatise on physiognomy posits, “For no animal has ever existed such that it has the form of one animal and disposition of another, but the body and soul of the same creature are always such that a given disposition must necessarily follow a given form.”¹¹ Both the instability of the body and the danger of gender slippage can also be seen in this text, as the author notes, “It seems to me that the soul and body react on each other; when the character of the soul changes, it also changes the form of the body, and conversely, when the form of the body changes, it changes the character of the soul.”¹² In other words, if one behaved badly, demonstrating weakness of character, the body would react in turn: it would become more womanly.

In spite of this clear link between body and disposition, the extent to which gender was nevertheless distinct from male and female anatomy is apparent in the way this same text designates certain animals as male and female types, without correspondence to the male and female of the species. For example, the lion exhibits the most perfect male type, with its well-proportioned features (mouth, nose, eyes, forehead, neck mane, etc.), slow majestic walk, gentility and affection coupled with love of victory. The panther, on the other hand, with

its ill-articulated and ill-proportioned (and fleshy loins and hips) and its the most feminine of animals.¹³ physiognomy as well. Working the appearance of feet, ankles, lower legs up to the head with all its features quality of voice, and stature. Being an upright and brave man. Thus physiognomic corpus, circles back sexual anatomy does not necessarily characteristics reveal him.

In this sense, the ancient physicians basic anatomy and gender identification knew how to read certain corporeal gender identity. Along this line, Barton explores how ancient physicians gender identity.¹⁴ The discussion often takes the form of detailed analysis notes that “For easy reference all the onwards offer Κινάιδου / Ανδροδρογυνη).”¹⁵ Gleason summarizes as follows:

You may recognize him by the the rapid movement of his eyebrows rowed while his eyebrows and head is tilted to the side. his head never stay in one position. He his knees knock together. He upward. He has a shifting gait and drawling.¹⁶

Eyelids, eyebrows, gaits, limb characteristics that determine gender is not always easy, however, even for Chrysostom of an unnamed expert particular case. Attempting to scrutinize a person whom Dio Chrys

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its ill-articulated and ill-proportioned body (long, thin neck, narrow chest, thick and fleshy loins and hips) and its correspondingly small, furtive, tricky soul, is the most feminine of animals.¹³ All of this translates to the study of human physiognomy as well. Working up the human body, the same text treats the appearance of feet, ankles, lower legs, knees, thighs, buttocks, waist, and so on, up to the head with all its features. Also discussed are gestures, mobility of eyes, quality of voice, and stature. Being well proportioned is most critical, indicating an upright and brave man. Thus, the premise of this text, and of the entire physiognomic corpus, circles back to the paradox with which we began. While sexual anatomy does not necessarily make the man, certain physical characteristics reveal him.

In this sense, the ancient physiognomist understood that when it came to basic anatomy and gender identification, the body could be deceptive. But, if one knew how to read certain corporeal clues, one could unmask a person's real gender identity. Along this line, the work of both Maud Gleason and Tamsyn Barton explores how ancient physiognomy actually functioned in determining gender identity.¹⁴ The discussion of corporeal clues to gender identity most often takes the form of detailed analysis of gender deviance. To this end, Barton notes that "For easy reference all the treatises from Peripatetic Physiognomonica onwards offer Κιναιδίου /Ανδρογύνιον σημεῖα (signs of the *kinaidos* or androgyne)."¹⁵ Gleason summarizes Polemo's signs of the effeminate androgyne as follows:

You may recognize him by his provocatively melting glance and by the rapid movement of his intensely staring eyes. His brow is furrowed while his eyebrows and cheeks are in constant motion. His head is tilted to the side, his loins do not hold still, and his slack limbs never stay in one position. He minces along with little jumping steps; his knees knock together. He carries his hands with palms turned upward. He has a shifting gaze, and his voice is thin, weepy, shrill, and drawling.¹⁶

Eyelids, eyebrows, gaits, limbs, voices—such are the reliable bodily characteristics that determine gender if one knows how to read them. The task was not always easy, however, even for the experts. Consider the story told by Dio Chrysostom of an unnamed expert in physiognomy who is nearly baffled by a particular case. Attempting to stump him, the people bring to the physiognomist a person whom Dio Chrysostom describes as follows:

a person of rugged frame and knitted brows, squalid and in a sorry state and with callouses on his hands, wrapped in a sort of coarse

gray mantle, his body shaggy as far as the ankles and his locks
wretchedly shingled . . . (Dio Chrysostom, *1 Tars. [Or. 33] 54*)

The expert studies the man closely for a long time, but is unable to solve the case and sends him away. As the man goes, however, he sneezes. At this, the game is up, and the physiognomist immediately cries out that he is a *kinai-dos*.¹⁷ The moral of the story, according to Dio, is that one "must not think . . . that movements and actions do not vary according to sex and afford no clue to it." For Dio, these movements and actions include "voice, glance, posture . . . style of haircut, model of walking, elevation of the eye, inclination of the neck, the trick of conversing with upturned palms" (*1 Tars. [Or. 33] 52*). These are the indicators of gender identity rather than physical anatomy or even basic physical appearance.

Similar ideas are found in Philo, when he connects such physical characteristics with a degenerate soul. He argues:

Just as bodily properties are seen in mirrors, so those of the soul (are seen) in the face and countenance. But a shameless look and an elevated neck and a continuous movement of the eyebrows and a womanish walk and not blushing at, or being ashamed of, any evil at all is the sign of a lewd soul, which clearly pictures and describes the forms of its invisible disgraces on its visible body. (*QG 4.99*)

Like the ancient physiognomist, Philo links certain physical traits with masculinity (or the lack of it) and the state of one's soul. In this case, the already-degenerate soul is reflected in an effeminate body, but the concept can be expressed in reverse as well. Philo worries about the effects of effeminate behavior, or the "female disease," on both body and soul, a point that will be explored further in the next chapter.

The Body and the Law

Some elements of the Roman legal code confirm the relative unimportance of the body for determining masculine status and the absolute importance of social—and, in many cases, sexual—conduct. Jane Gardner's work on Roman law is especially informative in this respect. As mentioned earlier, at birth, a child's male genitalia are the deciding factor in granting male legal privilege. Yet, Gardner's work suggests that once the boy becomes an adult, the presence or absence of male reproductive organs is not what endangers that privilege. Instead, it is *acting* like a woman. That is to say, in analyzing the legal problems that resulted from physiological deficiency in persons legally classified as male,

Gardner finds that such individuals (who had at one time) the traditional aspect of male identity. Even in the case of those who were forced for curtailment of their rights, it suggests that there was a legal code focused on shared characteristics. Gardner puts it, "Cases might be for other reasons."

But here is the main point: part of a "passive" female identity accompanied proper male behavior (*muliebria passus est*, "acted like a woman") were banned (see 3.1.1.6).²⁰ Moreover, Gardner's work suggests that individuals who were voluntarily submitted to a legal process to make a will (Paulus, 3.1.1.6) versus passive behavior were treated more fully in the next chapter toward oversimplification of masculine identity resulting from, and allowed to be, a legal process.

Considering the legal process of active/passive opposition, the active members of society were being acted upon. Bodily characteristics of free men were forbidden: "penetrators" in a context where they were able to defend the boundaries. In contrast, "unmen," those who were or who subjected themselves to a legal process, their body signaled the

Acting Like a Man: Male

As discussed in the opening chapter, in different ways that gendered the scripted role that one played

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Gardner finds that such deficiency would warrant no change in legal status. Indeed, her findings suggest that at least in principle, as long as one has (or had at one time) the theoretical possibility of generative capacity, an important aspect of male identity, one's legal privileges as a man could be maintained.¹⁸ Even in the case of *castrati*, Gardner argues, their condition was not grounds for curtailment of their legal rights as male citizens. While the literature suggests that there was social disdain for their emasculated condition, the legal code focused on shameful behavior (*infamia*) rather than anatomical state. As Gardner puts it, "Castrati were not, simply as castrati, *infames*, though they might be for other reasons."¹⁹

But here is the main point: an adult male, castrated or not, who played the part of a "passive" female *did* risk losing the rights and privileges that accompanied proper masculinity. For example, catamites (that is, "*qui corpore suo muliebria passus est*," or "someone who has been physically treated like a woman") were banned, like women, from representing others in court (*Dig.* 3.1.1.6).²⁰ Moreover, Gardner notes, "In later Roman law, a man who voluntarily submitted to a homosexual act lost half his property and the capacity to make a will (Paulus, Sent 2.26.13 = Col. 5.2.2)."²¹ The importance of active versus passive behavior for the construction of masculinity will be discussed more fully in the next section, including ways in which these categories tend toward oversimplification. Still, what such laws indicate is that the core of masculine identity resided not in the body per se but rather in what one did with, and allowed to be done to, one's body.

Considering the legal code from another angle, Walters argues that the active/passive opposition meant not only that free men were defined as the active members of society, but also that they enjoyed legal protection from being acted upon. Bodily violations such as beatings and sexual penetration of free men were forbidden. In this way, true men were essentially "impenetrable penetrators" in a context that characterized "those of high social status as being able to defend the boundaries of the body from invasive assaults of all kinds."²² In contrast, "unmen," to recall Walters's term, were those who were subject to, or who subjected themselves to, bodily penetration. In other words, a penetrated body signaled the loss or absence of true manliness.²³

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Acting Like a Man: Masculinity, Sexuality, and the Virtues

As discussed in the opening chapter, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler argue in different ways that gender is always a performance, always an already-scripted role that one plays. As we have seen, in the ancient Roman world it

was not enough to be born a male, even a free Roman male citizen. One also had to *act* the part of the man. Yet, if the body was paradoxical in the way it did and did not reveal gender identity, so also the role that men were asked to play contained certain contradictions. On the one hand, acting like a man required one to assume the active role in private sexual practice as well as one's public life. At the same time, such a role also required the careful display of control and restraint, both with respect to one's passions—sexual and otherwise—and in terms of treatment of the other.²⁴ Both aspects of this manly role will be explored below.

With respect to sexual practice, the first demand meant quite literally that one must be the actor, rather than one acted upon. This was because from the philosophical sphere to the social, masculinity was understood to be the active, rational, generative principle of the cosmos. Thus, Aristotle can speak of males as more divine or "godlike" (θεϊότερον) due to their active role in creation (*Gen. an.* 732a9). Similarly, Philo explains that "the female gender is maternal, passive, corporeal and sense-perceptible while the male is active, rational, incorporeal and more akin to mind and thought" (*QE* 1.8). Thus, the activity of men was linked to the creative activity of the gods.

Second, and related to the first point, to be active often involved expressing one's dominion over another. To be passive meant to submit to this domination. In the Roman setting, the popularity of the god Priapus illustrates the importance of this aspect of masculinity. Priapus was an extraordinarily well-endowed fertility god, frequently depicted in paintings and statues with his oversized member ready to defend the garden or household against intruders through penetration of the enemy.²⁵ Aside from depictions of Priapus, phallic images were found throughout the empire on a wide variety of objects, such as jewelry, pottery, masonry, and street-corner plaques. As a sign of fertility and strength, the phallus was venerated, and the symbol was used as an apotropaic charm. Phallic wind chimes and front-door plaques graced the home, so that the phallic image was ever present in one's comings and goings in the Roman world. Its ubiquity reminded those who would be men that generation and domination through penetration was an essential part of the act.²⁶

Yet, in spite of this pervasive presence of the phallus, there were other acts, besides or instead of sexual ones, that defined masculinity. Sexual penetration was not the only way for members of the Greco-Roman elite to demonstrate manliness; nor was it even the preferable way. Instead, to become a *vir* in the Greco-Roman world, one was required to demonstrate manliness through the practice of particular virtues. Indeed, as Williams and others have pointed out, *virtus*, often translated as "virtue," is etymologically equivalent to "manliness."²⁷ As one popular (if incorrect) etymology ran:

So the male was named greater than in woman received its name. Like one letter changed and been) *mollis* [softness]. *Opif.* 12.16–17)

Such an etymological claim: true man and virtue. In Ku maleness in the Roman un: nitions of masculinity from:

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Julian must be reckone: for his glorious deeds a: that there are four card: justice, and courage: an: military skill, dignity, p: cultivated both singly a: *Marc.* 25.4.1)³¹

Among the virtues liste: control is listed first. Cicero

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So the male was named man [*vir*], because strength in him is
 greater than in woman. Hence, too, courage (or valor) [*virtus*] has
 received its name. Likewise, woman . . . is from the word for softness,
 one letter changed and one taken away, as though (it should have
 been) *mollier* [softness], rather than *mulier* [woman]. (Lactantius,
Opif. 12.16–17)

Such an etymological claim makes explicit the perceived relationship between
 the man and virtue. In Kuefler's words, "Virtue was so intimately linked to
 maleness in the Roman universe that it is impossible to separate Roman def-
 initions of masculinity from more general notions of ideal human behavior."²⁸

Moreover, the link between masculinity and virtue, especially the virtues of
 leading elite men, had a long history before its use in Roman imperial ideol-
 ogy. As J. R. Fears illustrates, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, written in the fourth
 century B.C.E., uses the life story of Cyrus as a cipher for defining the ideal
 Hellenistic king. As Fears summarizes:

The good king must be a model to his subjects; by his virtues he
 ensures the continued well-being of the commonwealth. Hence,
 through his actions he shows himself possessed of the noblest vir-
 tues: piety towards gods and men, wisdom, courage and prowess in
 battle, temperance, generosity, faithfulness, and love of truth.²⁹

This ideological heritage, Fears goes on to argue, enters the Roman Republic
 and builds to a crescendo in the Principate of the late first and early second
 centuries, especially through the cult of Virtues propagated by the successive
 emperors.³⁰ The next chapter will examine the degree to which Caesar Au-
 gustus was a key figure in construing the emperor as a model of all the best of
 Roman masculinity. For now, the accolade given the Roman Emperor Julian by
 the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus is enough to demonstrate
 Fears's point:

Julian must be reckoned a man [*vir*] of heroic stature, conspicuous
 for his glorious deeds and his innate majesty. Philosophers tell us
 that there are four cardinal virtues [*virtutes*]: self-control, wisdom,
 justice, and courage; and in addition to these certain practical gifts:
 military skill, dignity, prosperity, and generosity. All these Julian
 cultivated both singly and as a whole with utmost care. (*Amm.*
Marc. 25.4.1)³¹

Among the virtues listed by Ammianus, it is no coincidence that self-
 control is listed first. Cicero had already described *ordo et moderatio* as that

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which "dreads rashness; it shrinks from injuring anyone by wanton word or deed; and it fears to do or say anything that may appear unmanly [*parum virile*]" (*Fin.* 2.47). By the first century, largely under the influence of Stoic teaching, self-control emerges among the most important keys to ideal masculinity. The notion finds its way into multiple cultural discourses—not only the teachings of the moral philosophers, but also the evaluations of historians, the romance novels from this period, and the literature of the Jewish and Christian communities.³² Moderation, or self-mastery, was frequently discussed in terms of mastery of the passions, especially lust and anger, but also self-restraint in eating, drinking, and luxury in general.

Nero's lack
of virtues
= questioning
masculinity

If Julian serves as a positive example of the connection between virtue and masculinity, Nero provides a negative one with respect to self-control. Suetonius goes on at length about Nero's "acts of wantonness, lust, extravagance, avarice and cruelty" (*Nero* 26.1). It is just these vices that call into question one's masculinity and suggest a "softness" in character.³³ To these vices are added complaints of Nero's sexual improprieties with freeborn boys and married women (*Nero* 28.1), precisely the two categories there were off limits to the sexual exploits of Roman men. Dio Cassius's account of rebellion against Nero also includes a challenge to Nero's manliness. In his *Roman History*, Dio describes Nero's opponent, Gaius Julius Vindex, as one "powerful in body, shrewd intelligence, skilled in warfare," as Gaius rallies his followers and challenges the virility of Nero:

Believe me, I have seen that man (if man he is who has married Sporus and been given in marriage to Pythagoras) in the circle of the theatre, that is, in the orchestra, sometimes holding the lyre and dressed in loose tunic and buskins, and again wearing high-soled shoes and mask. (*DioCass* 63.4)

Thus is Nero repeatedly charged with lack of self-control in all areas of his life. He represents the opposite of self-restraint, the submission to one's desires and a sliding down the scale from man to unman. Julian, in contrast, exhibits only manly traits, including, as Ammianus includes in his description, his chastity after the death of his wife, his moderation in eating and sleeping, and his frugality of living. Chapter 3 will return to this notion of the emperor being a measure of masculinity for the empire. Indeed, as shown in the examples of Nero in the first century C.E. and Julian in the fourth, following Augustus, the connections between imperial leadership, masculinity, and virtue become commonplaces in Roman historians' descriptions of reputable and disreputable emperors.³⁴

As mentioned above, the notion of masculinity was tied to reproduction. In this context, the notion of masculinity and beyond is often it came to define discussions of effeminacy.

Plutarch, for example, attributed to his passion for time in villas and gardens, a man with no self-control. The word choice seems to suggest that the power over others was not the questions that stretches his head with Pompey's desire for his same category as other men. The finger was a common sign of manliness.³⁵ Regarding the seeking is less a general lack of control.

In fact, charges of effeminacy, because adult Romans did not think of themselves as effeminately after women, sexual stereotype: neither of any kind than were of masculinity merely. As Edwards puts it, "essentially concerned with complex business ever."

Moving outside the lack of self-control perhaps make a man soft. Cicerone inspecting his province daily dinner parties for men would accompany they were the men. (*Terr.* 2.5.81). Similar

As mentioned above, the emphasis on self-control complicates the ideology of masculinity, insofar as it seems to push against the idea of generativity and reproduction. In this sense, Greco-Roman masculinity cannot be reduced strictly to the notion of activity vs. passivity in sexual roles. In fact, by the first century and beyond, self-control appears to trump the active/passive binary when it came to defining ideal masculinity. This is seen, for example in accusations of effeminacy even if one's sexual desires were for one's wife.³⁵

Plutarch, for example, reports the public mockery of Pompey, who "weakly succumbed to his passion for this young wife," apparently spending too much time in villas and gardens with her. Pompey's opponent asks, "Who is this autocrat with no self-control?" (αὐτοκράτωρ ἀκόλαστος, my translation). The word choice seems intentionally ironic here, since one who had absolute power over others was expected to have control over himself. Even more telling are the questions that follow: "Who is the man who seeks other men? Who scratches his head with one finger?" (*Pomp.* 48.5–7, my translation). Here Pompey's desire for his wife, certainly active desire, is nevertheless put in the same category as other effeminate behavior.³⁶ The reference to scratching with one finger was a commonplace in the literature—a gesture associated with unmanliness.³⁷ Regarding the charge of "seeking after other men," the object of the seeking is less of an issue than the seeking itself, that is, Pompey's general lack of control over his sexual passion.³⁸

In fact, charges of effeminacy are frequently accompanied by charges of adultery, because adultery was another case of a lack of restraint. Apparently, Romans did not think twice about the idea of an effeminate man seeking voraciously after women.³⁹ Richlin points out that this was simply the Roman sexual stereotype: "effeminate men were thought to be more interested in sex of any kind than were more rugged types."⁴⁰ Again, this suggests that to think of masculinity merely in terms of active versus passive is an oversimplification. As Edwards puts it, "Accusations of effeminacy . . . need not be seen as essentially concerned with sexual 'passivity.' . . . 'To be male' was a rather more complex business even in specifically sexual contexts."⁴¹

Moving outside the sexual arena, one finds further critique of excess and lack of self-control pertaining to luxury, greed, and avarice. All were thought to make a man soft. Cicero mocks Verres, who, instead of spending his summer inspecting his province or going to sea like other respectable governors, had daily dinner parties for women. On remarking that only Verres and his young son would accompany the women at the table, Cicero continues, "and as they were the men, I might well have said that no men at all were present" (*Verr.* 2.5.81). Similarly, Pliny complains that Antony outdid the proverbial

Self-control
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extravagance of both women and foreigners with his shameful use of a golden toilet (Nat. 33.50).

On the topic of avarice, Gellius records an interesting discussion of a passage from Sallust's *Catiline*. The passage in question reads:

Avarice implies a desire for money, which no wise man covets; steeped as it were with noxious poisons, it renders the most manly body and soul effeminate; it is ever unbounded, nor can either plenty or want make it less.

The puzzled Favorinus asks:

How does avarice make a man's body effeminate? For I seem to grasp in general the meaning of his statement that it has that effect on a manly soul, but how it also makes his body effeminate I do not yet comprehend.

The conversation continues until a certain learned man weighs in,

We observe that almost all those whose minds are possessed and corrupted by avarice and who have devoted themselves to the acquisition of money from any and every source, so regulate their lives, that compared with money they neglect manly toil and attention to bodily exercise, as they do everything else. For they are commonly intent upon indoor and sedentary pursuits, in which all their vigour of mind and body is enfeebled and, as Sallust says, "rendered effeminate." (*Noct. att.* 3.1)

As with Philo's discussion of the degenerate soul being reflected in the body, here is an instance of a particular vice resulting in the emasculating of both soul and body.

The gendered implications of anger present another case of cultural contradictions. In what follows, I discuss the gender complexities of anger in some detail because, as we will see, it is a problem on both the human and divine levels. As such, it provides an example of the way masculine ideology did not just involve men but had implications for the gods as well. The basic problem is whether anger should be regarded as a loss of control and therefore effeminizing, or as an active display of one's convictions—a manly act.

For many, it was obvious that true men should not lose their dignity through a violent display of anger against another. Appealing to the physiognomic argument, Plutarch points to how the "countenance, color, gait, and voice" change when someone is angry (*Cohib. ira.* 455f), so that he appears in a state "contrary to nature" (*Cohib. ira.* 456b). The angry man's conduct turns

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him into an undignified and unmanly figure. Marcus Aurelius reflects the same position in his meditations on anger:

In moments of anger, let the thought always be present that loss of temper is no sign of manliness, but that there is more virility, as well as more natural humanity, in one who shows himself gentle and peaceable; he it is who gives proof of strength and nerve and manliness, not his angry and discontented fellow. Anger is as much a mark of weakness as is grief; in both of them men receive a wound, and submit to a defeat. (*Meditations* II.18)⁴²

Anger
as
unmanly

Given this view, it should come as no surprise that anger is associated with women. So Plutarch argues:

Just as with the body a bruise results from a great blow so with the most delicate souls the inclination to inflict pain produces a greater outburst of anger in proportion to their greater weakness.

That is why women are more irascible than men. (*Cohib. ira.* 457a)

Similarly, Seneca evokes a woman/animal comparison when he says, "it is for women to rage in anger, for wild beasts doubtless—and yet not even the noble sort of these—to bite and worry their prostrate victims" (*Clem.* I.5.5). Or, as he puts it more bluntly, "anger is a most womanish and childish weakness" (*Ira.* I.20.3).⁴³

From this position, the philosophers make the next logical step. If true men should not display their anger, God especially should not be subject to anger.⁴⁴ Cicero claims that "it is the commonly accepted view of all philosophers that God is never angry, never hurtful" (*Off.* 3.102). He reflects such views as handed down from Epicurus that God "is exempt from outbursts of anger and partiality, for all such things are weaknesses" (in other words, effeminizing).⁴⁵ Clearly, for the Jewish or Christian Greek who knew anything of the biblical portrait of God, this aspect of Greco-Roman masculine ideology presented difficulties.

Philo, for one, understands the dilemma. In his essay *On the Unchangeableness of God*, he denies that God was susceptible to any pathos or passion whatsoever, in spite of Genesis 6:7: "I will blot out man from the face of the earth . . . because I have grown angry that I made them." This means that Philo must explain why the author (Moses) misrepresented God, who has no human weakness. His solution lies in the need for instruction and discipline. Just as an ill-disciplined slave needs a frightening master to train them, so Moses understands that a fool must be admonished through depiction of a threatening and angry god (*Deus* 60–68).⁴⁶ In this way, Philo preserves the reputations of

God, Moses, and the scripture. He also solves the problem of an angry, effeminate god.

But there were other, competing claims regarding the relationship between anger and manliness. Even as he refutes the position, Plutarch admits that some do understand anger as a manly act. Apparently, there are “many” for whom the drive and ferocity produced by anger indicate “activity,” “boldness,” “force of character,” “firmness of resolution,” even “hatred of evil” (*Cohib. ira.* 456f). In this view, rather than threatening one’s masculinity, anger actually displayed it. As David Brakke puts it:

Because anger motivated a man to action in righting wrongs to himself and others, because its opposite appeared to be passivity in the face of challenges from other males, because—to put it simply—it raised the body’s temperature, anger appeared to be a characteristic of masculinity, a sign that a man was indeed a manly man.⁴⁷

Philo might have drawn on this competing perspective to exonerate the biblical deity. By the fourth century, the Christian writer Lactantius does just this. He comments, “I have often noticed . . . that many people believe that which even some philosophers have held, namely, that God does not get angry” (*Ir.* 1.1). Lactantius goes on to dispute both the Epicurean and the Stoic arguments about God’s lack of anger, which points both to the popularity of this position and to the problem it caused for Christians.⁴⁸ The biblical God clearly became angry on a regular basis throughout the Old and New Testament. Did this impugn God’s virtuous character, his masculinity?

Lactantius refutes both the Epicurean notion that the gods have no emotions and the Stoic reasoning that God, as an exemplar of moral virtue, would never get angry. Instead, he asserts that God’s anger is a consequence of his kindness (*Ir.* 6). One cannot exist without the other. Unlike humans, however, God has power over his anger, not vice versa. Moreover, God’s anger is not temporal. He has eternal anger at those who continue in sin (*Ir.* 21). The fourth-century bishop Basil extends this notion to men. While he is opposed to the unseemly display of anger in most cases, he also suggests the possibility of a “proper anger,” one that is linked to “hatred of sin.” Moreover, Basil makes clear with not-so-subtle imagery that this type of anger actually aids the cause of masculinity. “If the soul should become enervated from pleasure,” he argues, “anger hardens it as with a tincture of iron and restores it from a most weak and flaccid state to strictness and vigor” (*Against Those Prone to Anger*, 456).⁴⁹

Thus, with the case of anger, as with the tension between generativity and sexual restraint, one finds another place of contradiction. It is another instance,

as Brakke suggests, in which the odds with itself. Also notable is the perspective that might impugn anger: even worse, the masculinity of God.

Masculinity, Courage, and Pain

If true men avoided anger, lust, and other passions, the positive side they sought opportunity. The Latin *vir* is a cognate of virtue, courage or manliness. They are expressed in terms of courage in the example, Cicero defends the reputation fought a war “against a lot of women” the “hard fighting” and the officer.

Noble acts of suicide were all many such examples to draw on, as described by Suetonius. Accusations Otho was enough to overcome the during life. Suetonius begins the “neither Otho’s person nor his” according to Suetonius, Otho was his body hair plucked, wearing an effeminate behavior, Suetonius in harmony with his life excited the his death as follows:

Many of the soldiers who were he lay dead, weeping bitterly an incomparable emperor at his bier. . . . In short, the greatest most bitterly while he lived in dead. . . .” (*Otho* 12)

Otho’s willingness to take his life in death and civil strife made him a

To have courage, or to be bravely. A true man should not writes at length on this topic, reminding him that he is a vir

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as Brakke suggests, in which the Greco-Roman ideology of masculinity is at odds with itself. Also notable is the degree of attention devoted to a cultural perspective that might impugn the gendered identity of Christian men, and even worse, the masculinity of God.

Masculinity, Courage, and Pain

If true men avoided anger, lust, luxury, avarice, and excess of any kind, on the positive side they sought opportunities for manly displays of courage. Whereas the Latin *vir* is a cognate of *virtus*, the Greek *andreia* can be rendered either courage or manliness. They are one and the same. Such displays were often expressed in terms of courage in battle with a formidable opponent. So, for example, Cicero defends the reputation of Murena, disputing Cato's claims that he fought a war "against a lot of women" (the Mithridates). Cicero speaks instead of the "hard fighting" and the officer's unquestionable courage in battle (*Mur.* 31).

Noble acts of suicide were also counted as displays of bravery. There are many such examples to draw on, but one notable example is the suicide of Otho as described by Suetonius. According to Suetonius, the courageous suicide of Otho was enough to overcome the reputation of effeminacy that he had gained during life. Suetonius begins the account of Otho's suicide by opining that "neither Otho's person nor his bearing suggested such great courage." According to Suetonius, Otho was most womanly in personal hygiene—having his body hair plucked, wearing a wig, shaving his face every day. Given this effeminate behavior, Suetonius notes that his manly death that was "so little in harmony with his life excited the greater marvel." He describes the reaction to his death as follows:

Many of the soldiers who were present kissed his hands and feet as he lay dead, weeping bitterly and calling him the bravest of men and an incomparable emperor, and then at once slew themselves beside his bier. . . . In short, the greater part of those who had hated him most bitterly while he lived lauded him to the skies when he was dead. . . ." (*Otho* 12)

Otho's willingness to take his life for the good of others by circumventing more death and civil strife made him a true man.

To have courage, or to be "manly," also meant one should bear pain bravely. A true man should not exhibit tears or distress when in pain. Cicero writes at length on this topic, exhorting Publius Sittus to bear his pain bravely, reminding him that he is a *vir*, even while being a *homo* (*Fam.* 5.17.3).⁵⁰ In

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a similar way, he tells of Gaius Marius, who underwent surgery without constraints for one leg, but opted out of surgery on the other. As Cicero puts it, "Thus being a man [*vir*], he bore pain, being a human [*homo*] he refused to bear greater without actual necessity" (*Tusc.* 2.22.53). Again, pointing to the larger principle at work, Cicero concludes, "The whole point then is to be master of yourself" (*Tusc.* 2.22.53). Drawing on the familiar contrast, Cicero makes clear that to do otherwise would be to act in a "slavelike" or "womanish" way (*Tusc.* 2.22.55).

To summarize the discussion thus far, concepts of masculinity and effeminacy were part of a larger system designed to separate true men from everyone else. In this system, as Williams observes, "the oppositional pair masculine/effeminate can be aligned with various other binarisms such as moderation/excess; hardness/softness; courage/timidity; strength/weakness; activity/passivity; sexual penetration/being sexually penetrated; and encompassing all of these, domination/submission."⁵¹ Indeed, as was clear in the accusation against Pompey, the point of self-mastery was ultimately mastery over others. Dio Chrysostom makes this explicit when he asks, "If a man is not competent to govern a single man, and that too a man who is very close to him, in fact his constant companion, and if, again, he cannot guide a single soul, and that his own, how could he be king?" (*Regn. tyr. Or.* 62.1). Or, in Williams's words, "A man must exercise dominion over his own body and his own desires as well as the bodies and desires of those under his jurisdiction—his wife, children and slaves—just as the Roman citizenry as a whole ideally dominates most of the rest of the world."⁵²

Learning to Be a Man

Having detailed the dominant ideology of masculinity that coursed through the veins of the Greco-Roman world, it may be useful to examine the process of transfusion from culture to individual. Apart from whatever enculturation a boy received from his family, the primary place where a young boy would begin to learn how to be a man would be the educational system. As W. Bloomer has aptly put it, "When first the child puts pen to paper, or stylus to wax, he practices a kind of social distinction."⁵³

Boys (and some girls) from elite families were schooled at an early age with gnomonic school texts. Thus, their training in literacy involved the copying and recopying of literary maxims.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, many of these maxims concern virtue, either general statements such as "Practice virtue" or "Flee blame," or statements regarding particularly virtuous behavior—being truthful, just,

and so on.⁵⁵ But a large Teresa Morgan cites the "Don't trust a woman with final catastrophe." She goes

Women are wild, evil, and are dangerous. They were not for the tall, want, but an educated beginning of *hamar*

Here is a place where destruction of women. But culine identity? In part, women, thereby reinforcing identity. To become a man uncontrollable. It is to be

In addition to these stories of men to emulate reflected in Seneca's insistence his point through the objections of his interlocutor. Droned to death in all this. Despising Death, you will that ("And why should I suicide in the face of a

This education through the first step in constructing that the two professions of successful general and to become a perfect orator. "Consequently," he says, ceptional gifts of speech. For this reason, Quintilian of such virtues as courage association between rhetoric a declamatory style that

Declaimers are guilty castrate boys in order just as the slave-deal

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and so on.⁵⁵ But a large portion of these literary quotes also concern women. Teresa Morgan cites the following: "Touch a woman and open your tomb." "Don't trust a woman with your *bios*." "For an old man to become a lover is the final catastrophe." She goes on to summarize the overall point of these maxims:

Women are wild, evil, uncontrollable. They should always be silent and are dangerous when they confer; life would be carefree if it were not for the talk of women. They know nothing but what they want, but an educated woman is a dangerous anomaly. Woman is the beginning of *hamartia*. She must be ruled.⁵⁶

Here is a place where one could say much about the misogynistic construction of women. But what do such texts do for the construction of masculine identity? In part, they present young boys with a negative image of women, thereby reinforcing all that is positive about the pursuit of a manly identity. To become a man means becoming the opposite of wild, evil, and uncontrollable. It is to be the ruler rather than the ruled.

In addition to these negative examples, boys were also schooled with stories of men to emulate. The degree to which such stories were repeated is reflected in Seneca's instructions on facing death fearlessly. After illustrating his point through the example of the courageous Mucius, Seneca voices the objections of his interlocutor, Lucilius: "Oh," you say, "those stories have been droned to death in all the schools; pretty soon, when you reach the topic, 'On Despising Death,' you will be telling me about Cato." Seneca goes on to do just that ("And why should I not?" he asks), relating the story of Cato's noble suicide in the face of a life under Caesar's triumvirate (*Ep.* 24.6).

This education through school drills using maxims and models was the first step in constructing men of status and distinction. Indeed, Cicero claims that the two professions that raise men to the highest level of distinction are the successful general and the good orator (*Mur.* 30). According to Quintilian, to become a perfect orator what is most essential is to be a good man (*vir bonus*). "Consequently," he says, "we demand of him not merely the possession of exceptional gifts of speech, but of all the virtues of character as well" (*Inst.* 1.Pr. 9). For this reason, Quintilian explains, he "shall frequently be compelled to speak of such virtues as courage, justice, self-control" (*Inst.* 1.Pr.12). Highlighting the association between rhetoric and true masculinity, Quintilian complains about a declamatory style that has lost its vigor and become "flaccid and nerveless":

Declaimers are guilty of exactly the same offence as slave-dealers who castrate boys in order to increase the attractions of their beauty. For just as the slave-dealer regards strength and muscle, and above all the

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beard and other natural characteristic of manhood as blemishes, and soften down all that would be sturdy if allowed to grow, on the ground that is it harsh and hard, even so we conceal the manly form of eloquence and power of speaking closely and forcibly by giving it a delicate complexion of style and, so long as what we say is smooth and polished, are absolutely indifferent as to whether our words have any power or no. (*Inst.* 5.12.18)

In contrast, Quintilian urges that a young man in training should strive for victory in the schools, equipping himself with weapons and learning “how to strike the vitals of his foe and protect his own” (*Inst.* 5.12.20).

Such training in rhetoric constituted the highest level of education and was reserved for the most elite class. To accentuate the vigor of this training and its ultimate goal, the educational process was often described as a steep road leading to virtue. This link between the arduous educational journey and the attainment of masculinity is obvious in such texts as Lucian’s *Rhetorum praeceptor*. In this amusing parody, Lucian’s narrator, a teacher of rhetoric, offers two roads to rhetoric: one difficult, one easy. While seemingly skewering both paths, Lucian provides useful insight into the gendered connotation of rhetorical training. His “teacher” urges the student to choose the quick and easy route. But it soon becomes clear that if one avoids long, hard educational training and “takes the road that is easy and downhill” toward the mastery of rhetoric, among the causalities will be one’s masculinity. The downhill road can lead only to becoming a ridiculously absurd and womanly imposter of rhetoric.

Such gender implications are clear as the teacher describes the guide for the difficult road as “a vigorous man with hard muscles and a manly stride, who shows heavy tan on his body, and is bold-eyed and alert” (*Rh.Pr* 9). Along with making the student “dig-up long buried speeches as if they were something tremendously helpful,” this guide “will say that hard work, scant sleep, abstention from wine, and untidiness are necessary and indispensable; it is impossible, says he, to get over the road without them” (*Rh.Pr* 9–10). But the teacher urges the student to “bid a long good-bye to that hairy, unduly masculine fellow, leaving him to climb up himself, all blown and dripping with sweat and lead up what others he can delude” (*Rh.Pr* 10). Instead, the student should turn to the easy road. On this path, the guide to rhetoric will be “a wholly clever and wholly handsome gentleman with a mincing gait, a thin neck, a languishing eye, and a honeyed voice, who distils perfume, scratches his head with the tip of his finger, and carefully dresses his hair”; in short, a wholly effeminate man (*Rh.Pr* 11). The equipment necessary for the training includes “ignorance; secondly, recklessness, and thereto effrontery and

shamelessness. Modesty, re at home, for they are usele hand.” Clothing should eit should be the high Attic typ so Lucian goes on with ton clear.

In a more serious vein with effeminacy. He bemoa blaming their effeminate li

Look at our young men can stay awake to take Libidinous delight in s tes. Braiding the hair, woman’s competing in themselves with filthy themselves. Which of y talent and diligence—i less, they stay like that by a storm, careless of

In keeping with the elder S warnings against an effemi use of rhetorical figures.⁵⁷ woman and slaves. So, for not permit the student’s ha beneath the belly,” lest th common among maidserv Joy Connolly puts it, traini inine and servile practice. upright posture, unwaveri enacted his social dominan of transforming a youth in

In the early part of a b physical as well as mental suggest that physical beatir from classical Greece thro categorical overlap between tributed to this practice. Pl when he advises that child rather than by “blows or il

shamelessness. Modesty, respectability, self-restraint and blushes may be left at home, for they are useless and somewhat of a hindrance to the matter in hand." Clothing should either be brightly colored or transparent, and sandals should be the high Attic type that women wear, with many slits (*Rh.Pr* 15). And so Lucian goes on with tongue firmly in cheek, making his point abundantly clear.

In a more serious vein, the elder Seneca also links lack of rhetorical skill with effeminacy. He bemoans the absence of this skill in the youth of the day, blaming their effeminate lifestyle:

Look at our young men: they are lazy, their intellects asleep; no-one can stay awake to take pains over a single honest pursuit. . . .

Libidinous delight in song and dance transfixes these effemina-tes. Braiding the hair, refining the voice till it is as caressing as a woman's competing in bodily softness with women, beautifying themselves with filthy fineries—this is the pattern our youths set themselves. Which of your contemporaries—quite apart from his talent and diligence—is sufficiently a man? Born feeble and spine-less, they stay like that throughout their lives: taking others' chastity by a storm, careless of their own. (*Controv.* 1, Pr. 8–9)

In keeping with the elder Seneca's perspective, Roman oratory is replete with warnings against an effeminacy that might be detected in phrasing, syntax, or use of rhetorical figures.⁵⁷ Often these warnings came by way of reference to woman and slaves. So, for example, Quintilian urges that instructors "should not permit the student's hand to be raised above the level of the eyes or lowered beneath the belly," lest the youth appear to imitate the "lively movements common among maidservants and unmarried women" (*Inst.* 11.3.112). Or, as Joy Connolly puts it, training in rhetoric involved "erasing any traces of feminine and servile practice, disciplining [the student's] body to maintain an upright posture, unwavering gaze, restrained gestures, and other signs that enacted his social dominance." Such discipline "was paramount to the project of transforming a youth into a master."⁵⁸

In the early part of a boy's *paideia*, this disciplining of the body involved physical as well as mental discipline. Indeed, there is abundant evidence to suggest that physical beatings were a common part of a young boy's education from classical Greece through the empire. Catherine Atherton points to the categorical overlap between children, animals, and slaves that may have contributed to this practice. Plutarch seems to be the exception to typical practice when he advises that children ought to be led by encouragement and reason, rather than by "blows or ill treatment," since the latter are "more fitting for

