

# Defending The Patriarchy

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Classical Mythology

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## Introduction

In this paper I will explain how the longstanding social order of Roman rule was the objective of ancient philosophers and how it was achieved through misogyny to overcome the sexual power struggle between the genders. Classical Mythology started from the Greeks, but the Romans are such a reflection they can be considered an extension of the Greek myth. Ovid of course re-branded the god's for Roman nationalism, changing names and beginning a new story. Zeus, the King of the gods was now named Jupiter. However, the Greek's stories revolved around Zeus as the God of the gods who brought order and justice to the world. The Greeks were much more misogynistic than the Romans. When the two first encountered each other the Greeks assumed Rome was doomed to fail because they ate dinner with their wives.<sup>1</sup> However that is not what history tells us. Rome holds credit for the longest period of peace in written history. This time period is referred to as the *Pax Romana* or the *Pax Augusta* because it was established by the Roman Emperor Augustus after the death of Caesar.<sup>2</sup>

Augustus was a leader who wanted to renew the old Roman values that were established through religion.<sup>3</sup> At the time this would be the pagan religion that we know today as being focused upon the faith in the gods involved in Classical Mythology. Augustus himself seemed to have the essential and humanly possible traits that Zeus was given because of his might. It's important to note when reading any of the myths in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, that the poems were first being published near the end of Augustus' rule and would have finished during the *Pax*

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Natali, *Classical Mythology: Athens and Sparta*

<sup>2</sup> See Fergus Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution* 298 (2002)

<sup>3</sup> Cyril E. Robinson, *Apollo "History of Rome."* 252 - Augustus' infatuation with "old-fashioned sobriety" seemed to come from the rationality Greeks prided themselves on in their myths.

*Romana*.<sup>4</sup> Many emperors during the *Pax* were forced to make harsh decisions against their own loved ones to stand on moral principle. Augustus who exiled his own daughter, in his will would deny Julia the burial with him in his mausoleum.<sup>5</sup> One could wonder who could be so cruel...

...Of course there is a reason so few are capable of leaving a long successful dynasty. The main theme in myth surrounding divine heroes is that they are the settlers of civilizations and keeping their people safe.<sup>6</sup> It was clear from the tragic fall of Oedipus' kingdom that a mere mortal would not be capable of leaving a stable society after him. What led to his fall was the inability to act responsible in all scenarios because he was overwhelmed with attempting to manipulate against the gods will.<sup>7</sup> Male's inherent strength superiority over women gave them the highest position in the early hierarchies. This means women will never have a direct final say in any decision. Eventually they found their powerful place to be in the ears of the kings, leading to women using their sexual charm to advance their power. Abnormal events in history like *Prima Nocta* are proof that heroes separate sex from emotion and are immune, while inspiring men to become kings.<sup>8</sup> This is shown prominently in the story of the Argonauts when they stumbled upon an Amazonian society and felt the need to build a settlement there. The Amazons represented multiple repressed emotions that women were perceived to have by the ancients. Mainly in this particular myth we see the need of our divine heroes capabilities to domesticate the natural desires and forces of women.<sup>9</sup> A motif that is involved in plenty of the societal

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<sup>4</sup> Fergus Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution* 340-341 (2002) - This section of writing is detailing not just the timeline but the physical connection Augustus and Ovid shared in reality

<sup>5</sup> Edward Champlin, *Augustus' Will* 163

<sup>6</sup> Barry Powell *Classical Mythology* 332-333 Powell discusses hero's triumph over nature

<sup>7</sup> Oedipus was the rare non-divine hero in mythology. In attempts to overcome his destiny of a broken civilization given by the oracle, he caused it.

<sup>8</sup> *Prima Nocta*, was the ritual right for the king to take every new bride's virginity.

<sup>9</sup> In Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* These women are only described as Amazons

tragedies present in mythology are based on the concept of *miasma*.<sup>10</sup> *Miasma* was such an important theory to the early theologians that they would place blame for plagues on societies on the idea that the gods were so utterly repulsed by the immoral actions of one person or event. This is why, using their legends, they instilled strict black and white moral strictures onto society. They used their gods' idolized memory and placed them as heroes in places that man could find themselves in to relate to and inspire the people to act properly in tense situations.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus' throne is about to become vacant. The cause and solution would be credited to Athena, the warrior daughter of Zeus. This story begins with Athena recognizing the pain within Odysseus and requests of her father in prayer to bring justice for him.<sup>11</sup> Her role is crucial in these lines, as she is the one who initiates the ruling decision of Zeus. Athena then sets off to see a troubled Telemachus and inspires him to the emotional state to be strong enough to fight off the challengers to his future throne.<sup>12</sup> Most importantly of all, this emotional distress to both Athena and Odysseus is only relevant and worthy of action if their overlord was pleased by what is to come. "Father of us all, thou son of Cronos, high above all lords, if indeed this is now well pleasing to the blessed gods... let us send forth Hermes... may declare to fair-tressed nymph our fixed resolve..."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Barry Powell, *Classical Mythology* 46 Miasma is the idea of pollution and originated from the spilt blood from childbirth, (ancient stillbirths?)

<sup>11</sup> Homer, *Odyssey I* [44]

<sup>12</sup> Homer, *Odyssey I* [80]

<sup>13</sup> Home, *Odyssey I* [80] 2-6

*Pax Romana Establishing History*

An all forgotten part of myth is our timeline. Most don't realize that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was written after Jesus Christ's famous birth. Making these writing's the contemporary basis for the story of Jesus' life. The Christian denominations continued their patriarchal rule for centuries passed down when Jesus picked only men as his apostles.<sup>14</sup> The impact has gone so far that only in recent modern times have women gained independence. The Catholic Church's empire was born in this period making this the Roman monarchy that put him to death. Augustus in his rule actually exiled Ovid from Rome.<sup>15</sup> This resulted in discussion about Ovid's writing, it was thought to have had its own before and after time frame, the pre-Augustan and post-Augustan. His writing's post-exile was from another city named Tomoil; from here he writes about the greater effect that is coming from the loss of the Emperor Augustus.<sup>16</sup> In the turmoil of the succession of Augustus' throne Ovid saw the importance of passing down the values that Augustus prided his reign on, his successor was only his step-son, bloodline to his wife Livia.<sup>17</sup> Keeping in line with hereditary tradition but manipulating it to the greatest benefit. This Roman Empire went on and made impacts all the way to modern society. Women, relative to history have very recently gained direct privilege in our political atmosphere. Livia, Augustus' wife, was a prominent role model for women involved in politics and helped push boundaries "So Livia was allowed, encouraged, impelled to step out into the public world ... the unprecedented event was properly publicized..."<sup>18</sup> During Augustus' reign, he introduced

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<sup>14</sup> The 12 apostles were the beginnings of the Catholic Church, they were designated as leaders to spread his message, and thereafter men for many generations were the only leaders inside the Church

<sup>15</sup> Fergus Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution* see Ovid in Rome 330-331

<sup>16</sup> Fergus Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution* 347-49

<sup>17</sup> Britannica Encyclopedia, Tiberius | Biography

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Purcell, *Livia and the Womanhood of Rome* 86

legislation that mirrored his loved ideals of the old history. Most notably for leading to his daughter Julia's exile was the punishment for adultery, and the other most important ones to him were the regulation of divorce.<sup>19</sup> This impact of the importance of the morals Augustus cared for was imprinted into memory of the Roman citizens when Augustus remarked on several occasions detesting his daughter Julia, who was discovered to be philandering with the men of his own court. Ashamed, he banished her permanently from Rome and even put to death some of her lovers.<sup>20</sup> The Roman Emperors that immediately followed Augustus had their reigns impacted by women's manipulation with adultery.

#### Augustus & co as Jupiter

After Zeus has taken his place as God of the gods he was expecting a child from his Titan wife Metis. She was the goddess of all things wisdom. In Hesiod's original creation story, which began the written myth, had Zeus eating Metis whole and eventually bore Athena himself.<sup>21</sup> His daughter Athena is a recurring character throughout myth intervening to help divine heroes, requesting her father's help. The Greeks used the birth of Athena as an example of Zeus' transcendence above all natural, while Ovid never mentioned the birth story of his Athena, *Minerva*. This is excluded because of the Roman's woman's place inside the rulers home. Different from the scared Greeks, they understood the need for their perspective. Myths are representing the culture that wrote them.<sup>22</sup> Augustus has such an impact on the *Metamorphoses*

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<sup>19</sup> Cyril Robinson, *Apollo History of Rome: The Augustan Revival* 252-259

<sup>20</sup> Cyril Robinson, *Apollo History of Rome: The Problem of the Succession* 273 - 275- In this section is outlined the dilemmas and very hypocritical thoughts towards the throne- he made a future emperor divorce his wife to marry his daughter to choose him as successor

<sup>21</sup> Hesiod *Theogony* in text Athena is named *Athene* until born shortly after to imply being birthed of Zeus changed her fate

<sup>22</sup> Barry Powell, *Classical Mythology: The Nature of Myth*, 3

that he is compared to Jupiter in the first book.<sup>23</sup> Augustus' third and final wife Livia was an adviser for him during his reign. Not only this, but her role was much more impactful. Her role in the public eye wasn't something that was expected, and she still had private roles hidden. She even played a part in determining Augustus' predecessors.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the following emperors didn't have the same success with their wives. This is shown in the *Metamorphoses*. Zeus' destructive wife Hera remains in the new story as Juno. Her first appearance will remain consistent throughout the tale as the representation of chaos and danger that arises from adultery. Juno suddenly appears to have a feeling her husband is betraying her; she immediately goes to investigate and to surprise none, Jupiter is aware and already attempting to hide his act, knowing it is immoral.<sup>25</sup> Messalina, who was the wife of Emperor Claudius who was one of the first leaders during the Pax Romana- was known for committing adultery, and adultery was involved in an attempt she made to overthrow her husband from the throne.<sup>26</sup> Augustus was memorialized by the Roman citizens as a god after his success as an Emperor.<sup>27</sup> This deification was in response to how Augustus was able to tame his wife and maintain his rule for so long. The active wife throughout can be a representation of women getting involved with the succession of the throne.

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<sup>23</sup> Ovid *Metamorphoses* [202]

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Purcell *Livia and the Womanhood of Rome*: 3 - describes the intimate difference in her roles in her public and private life.

<sup>25</sup> Ovid *Metamorphoses* [601]

<sup>26</sup> Britannica Encyclopedia, Tiberius | Biography

<sup>27</sup> A theme present in myth where heros seek elevation to the god's through immortality, that is often completed through their stable, noble place in history.

### Amazonians & the Argonauts

“Wretched men, does the murder of kindred keep us from our native land? Or is it in want of marriage that we have come hither from thence, in scorn of our countrywomen?... No fair renown shall we win by thus tarrying so long with stranger women; nor will some god seize and give us at our prayer a fleece that moves of itself...”<sup>28</sup> Heracles was the most successful hero and the only one to be remembered as a god after his passing. To Heracles, it’s clear from his contemplation in his monologue that to him there is no honour in sex without the glory. He does not want to mate with the women as he detests their moral selfishness. This birth issue was overlooked by the women when they outcast all the males, willing to lose their kingdom for eternity over temporary pain. This is most important to Heracles, as the cause of his twelve labours was in madness delivered by Hera. Under a spell of madness Hercules killed two of his children and his wife.<sup>29</sup> Hercules’ famous twelve labours were his reconciliation to the god’s for this event and led to him having more children spread far and wide. So much in fact that the future Spartan’s would claim their heritage line originates from Hercules’ seed and thus forever cementing his legacy on Earth.<sup>30</sup> This is the extended inspiration all men have.

One of Hercules’ labours in fact caused a war with the Amazonian society where he killed their queen.<sup>31</sup> Amazons showcase the desires of all inner women. The reason the Amazons will mate with the divine heroes is because that is the only way they can guarantee heroic males. The rest of men are worthless to them. As they all contribute to the society that mistreats them

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<sup>28</sup> Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* [853] 8-11 - Wretched was used to describe women in grief of being unable to mate with the divine heros in the beginning of this book.

<sup>29</sup> Bryan Natali, *Classical Mythology*: Herakles

<sup>30</sup> Bryan Natali, *Classical Mythology*: Herakles

<sup>31</sup> Barry Powell, *Classical Mythology* 379 & 415- Noting too that on page 419 “Hippolytus” the queen shows the history of the queen and asks in prayer “why oh why Zeus, did you ever bring to life ... this false-faced breed of women?”



so. Argonaut mythology indicated a need to repopulate the Amazonian community. The trope that is used here is that only heroes are able to control the natural urges a woman has that are too strong for the ordinary man, and that men must provide safety to society. So the women must do it on their terms.

### Telemachus' Motivation & Guidance

After Telemachus has been convinced of his destiny by Athena; Telemachus in conversation coincidentally makes his first commandment as king. What Telemachus uses as justification for his interjection with instruction lies in the implication of warfare.<sup>32</sup> Eurymachus, in response, comforts his concerns: “Never may that man come who by violence and against thy will shall wrest thy possessions from thee, while men yet live in Ithaca”.<sup>33</sup> In the following response despite Athena, goddess and daughter of Zeus was the one who revealed to Telemachus his future he still is unable to confide that he is taking advice from a woman. “So spoke Telemachus, but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess.”<sup>34</sup>

Going back to ancient Greek culture women only had the purpose in life of marriage and child breeding/care. Neither of which did they have a direct say in. Girls would be sold off to a groom as they reach sexual maturity.<sup>35</sup> As unfortunate as it may be, it gave women their only tools of power in classical times. Both being through their offspring, a boy to achieve honour through battle or to simply have a child conceived by a hero. What this does in turn of course is give the men inspiration to be great. It is why Athena weaponized her beauty to attract

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<sup>32</sup> Homer, *Odyssey 1*, [365] - I think it's relevant to note the repetition Homer made in referring to Telemachus (and company) as wise.

<sup>33</sup> Homer, *Odyssey 1*, [399] 3-4

<sup>34</sup> Homer, *Odyssey 1*, [412] 5-6 - In Telemachus' answer he kept referring to Athena as a male- withholding the information that he has been instructed by a woman.

<sup>35</sup> Barry Powell, *Classical Mythology* 40

Telemachus to a certain destiny. Far back in these classical times was the era of *prima nocta*, which meant only the most powerful family was safe. This gives grave incentive for all to do all they can to reach the top of the power structure of the society they are in. "To many their fear is bane; for many have come upon their doom while shunning doom."<sup>36</sup>

### Concluding

What we have examined in this paper is the conflict that arises between men and women. The creation stories all have three gods as the ruler. In times without peace which no longer exist men have reigned. The lifestyle that was lived out by the Greeks and Romans were attempts to please the dangerous men atop the hierarchy. These men have strong faith in the gods that allow them to overcome the mysterious danger of nature that others cannot. After they slay the beast the reward is most commonly a sexual object. The nature of these men is completely driven by their sexual desires which make women essential to them and society. Intelligent women who wanted change were always outmatched in strength by the strongest male. It appears they understood the ability to manipulate men though, through power and sex. Clear that the men needed sex, unable to go on journeys without taking a new woman as a prize. We see in the early emperors during the *Pax* that women would use their sexual motivation to get another man to overtake the throne. Although Rome showed that women's influence was important, the conflict between the genders was too great. This makes all of humanity stray from the morals that led to success. The stable society was accepted by the ancients as the best way of life. They put in religion that took away women's entire rights to ensure the highest male would always be

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<sup>36</sup> Seneca the Younger, *Oedipus* - The end of Oedipus' tale he is reflecting upon how he made the mistakes that costed him his kingdom

content. Some think the ritual of the king having sex with new brides was to spread their seed, but Gilgamesh makes it clear he just wants to and continues despite the people praying for the gods to stop him.<sup>37</sup> He will not stop, as it is his fuel. His drive to conquer. The terror comes when these strong men are fighting over a woman. Religion gets thrown out the window, leading to a crumbling people. Women today are leading the atheist conversion in their social justice movement. Assuming that history will repeat itself once again, my question is who will be the next Ovid?

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<sup>37</sup> Bryan Natali, *Classical Mythology: Gilgamesh and Heroic Myth*

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