

Passages from Ancient to Medieval and Early Modern Societies IX

VIOLENCE, WAR, AND SUFFERING

Tampere University, August 13–15, 2025

ABSTRACTS



WEDNESDAY (August 13th)

Session 1 (13.00-15.30, room B1100)

Welcome: Trivium chair Ville Vuolanto

Opening words: Tapio Visakorpi, Vice President in Research (Tampere University)

Keynote presentation

Justine Firnhaber-Baker, University of St. Andrews

Suffering the Unimaginable: Affective Responses to Warfare in an Age of Plague

Session 2a (16.00-17.30, room B1096): War, identity, ethnicity

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Conquest and Identity: War, Violence, and Italian Peoples in Livy's *Ab urbe condita*

The massive *Ab urbe condita* by historian Titus Livius (ca. 59 BCE – 17 CE) was written during a critical period of Roman history – the birth of the Augustan principate and the Roman Empire. Considering the cultural atmosphere of the period, the significance of Italy for Roman identity cannot be underestimated. From the early empire on, Italy as a single entity was regularly highlighted; one famous case is provided by Augustus himself in his *Res gestae*, when looking back on his victory over Antony in the civil war. Indeed, Augustus created the base for further imperial politics; as pointed out by scholars, Italy became an essential part of Roman traditionalism, continuity, ideas of the republican roots of the Roman monarchy, and the Roman Empire. From this background, my paper takes a closer look at Livy's history and evaluates the role of different Italian peoples during the conquest of the peninsula. Most previous research has pointed out that Livy's attitude towards various peoples of Italy was mostly negative. After all, Rome waged wars against most of them over the centuries, with particularly fierce struggles against the Samnites. However, as my paper argues, this view is somewhat oversimplified. Violence in war was not considered a negative aspect as such by Livy, often quite the opposite. In his history, Livy uses stories of war and violence as a tool to create a power hierarchy among peoples living and fighting in Italy, with violence usually attributed to

positive traits of certain peoples. Moreover, violence is also used by Livy when he wanted to create a certain unity among Italian tribes, highlighting their cohesion and similarity against the 'other', even more violent and brutal opponents.

Iida Laurén, University of Helsinki, iida.lauren@helsinki.fi

Violence amongst Jews in Graeco-Roman Antiquity

Jewish history throughout Antiquity is traditionally told in terms of violence towards Jews: their suffering under Hellenistic rule led to the Maccabean revolt, the Jewish rebellions, the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jewish tax, and the Christian homilies against Jews. Be it an outcome of the modern postholocaust victim narrative of Jews, or the more general tendency in historiography to concentrate on large-scale conflicts, this kind of narrative overlooks most of the history of Ancient Judaism. Ancient Judaism was also innovative, and many communities flourished and developed. Furthermore, the narrative ignores that it was not only the gentile who killed and oppressed Jews. Jews themselves violated Jews as well. Winners write history and in the history of Judaism, it was the priestly class and the rabbi who decided what was told. Before Antiquity, the history of the Biblical monarchy of Israel was written by their enemies in Jerusalem. Israelites also founded new temples, for the one in Jerusalem was out of their reach. After Alexander's conquest, the Maccabees liberated Jews from the Hellenistic oppression. The Maccabees persecuted Jews both in Judea and in Egypt. To escape the terror, some Jews fled to Egypt and founded another temple. Samaritans were and were not Jews and they too partook in the violence. In Roman times, Josephus reports of incidents in which Jews in Judea had misbehaved and needed to be corrected – violence followed. Behind all these conflicts, there were religious and political motives, which divided opinions and ended up in violence. The violence was sometimes physical, but also iconoclasm and definitional boundaries, i.e. leaving someone out, condemning them, are forms of violence. In this paper, I study the "bad" Jews and the uncomfortable parts of Jewish history in Antiquity, in which Jews have used violence to solve problems amongst themselves

Claire Fauchon-Claudon, ENS de Lyon, claire.fauchon@ens-lyon.fr

Suffering in Flesh and Soul in Syriac Documentation: Violence, War and Ethnicity between the Roman and Persian Empires (1st century AD - 7th century AD)

Between Rome and Persia lived Syriac-speaking communities that develop between the 1st and 7th centuries AD. Enclosed between two powerful and often rival empires, they experienced war and violence on an almost daily basis. The wars between the Persians and the Romans began when the Romans, after conquering Greece, invaded Asia Minor and came into contact with the Parthian Empire around 100 BC. In 64 BC, Pompey

reduced Seleucid Syria to a Roman province. The Parthians, occupying the Seleucid territories east of the Euphrates, became the Roman Empire's recurring enemy in the eastern Mediterranean. The Parthian Empire came to an end in 224 AD, giving way to the Sassanids, who continued their war with the Romans. The war continued with the Byzantine Empire and ended with the expansion of Islam during the Perso-Byzantine Wars (502-628). Spread over seven centuries, the long series of conflicts between the Mediterranean and Persian worlds is one of the longest in history. Syriac sources are of little use in understanding the military situation or the political restructuring of the Roman and Persian empires. On the other hand, they do offer a true focus on the emotions and suffering associated with violence and wars. The suffering endured in these communities gave rise to a vast body of poetic, apocalyptic, eschatological, hagiographic and historiographical literature between the first and seventh centuries BC, enabling us to explore 1) the experiences that violence and war cause in individuals, families, and communities; 2) the everyday strategies (flight, retreat, despair, resilience, courage,...) for coping with threat; 3) the way in which individual trauma and collective memory of violent experiences contribute to the construction of a religious and literary identity. This literature transcends Greco-Roman and Parthian/Persian political boundaries: it offers a unique, non-Roman and non-Persian perspective on how violence and emotions contributed to the construction of ethnicity and identity in Syriac-speaking communities.

Session 2b (16.00-17.30, room B1097): Women under the threat of violence

Vasiliki Kousoulini, University of Patras, vasiakous@yahoo.gr & Georgia Dimopoulou, University of Patras, gdimopoul@upatras.gr

Trust and Disgust after the Fall of Troy: A Study of Violence in Euripides' Hecuba and Trojan Women

Trust and disgust, these two emotions that are the exact opposite of each other according to modern psychology (e.g., in Plutchik's wheel of emotions), have a complex but underexplored relationship in ancient Greek literature. Disgust impedes rational processing and favors visceral responses to its stimuli. This emotion affects a person's evaluative mental process and affects his/her perception of justice. Disgust also prepares the psychological ground that is necessary for acts of extreme violence. Disgust leaves little room for trust which has social aspects and heavily depends on cognitive functions. The concept of trust can aid us in understanding violence since trust rests on the foundation of true power. Euripides' Hecuba, a play produced in 424 BC, takes place after the Trojan War but before the Greeks departed Troy and describes women's experiences after the fall of this city. The events of this tragedy take place on the coast of Thrace. Trojan Women is a tragedy produced in 415 BC that focuses on the

consequences of war through the lens of women and children and follows the fates of the women of Troy just after the sack of their city. Some of the women try to counteract the acts of violence experienced by them by committing or enabling other violent acts. In both plays, a series of speakers attempt to elicit the physical or moral disgust of others by describing or presenting stimuli that usually provoke this emotion (e.g., dead or aging bodies, bloody wounds, the internals of a human body, Erinyes, Dionysian references, moral transgressions) to implicate them in acts of violence. This paper is interested in the interplay between disgust and trust and their relation to tragic pity and fear in an environment imbued with violence

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The family of Germanicus at the front lines of the Roman empire: women, children and lineage as tools of crisis management

The paper deals, primarily, with the narrative of Tacitus on the events at the German front of the Roman empire by the death of Augustus in AD 14. According to Tacitus, the Roman troops there were about to mutiny, willing to hail Germanicus rather than Tiberius as the new ruler. In contrast with the Republican norms, Germanicus' wife Agrippina and at least some of their children lived at the military camp with Germanicus. I'll discuss the role of women and children in Tacitus' version of the episode and argue that the presence of the descendants of Augustus is deliberately used to underline the shameful nature of the mutiny and to channel emotions. I'm particularly interested in the portrait of Agrippina in the story: an armless lady who should have been protected but who proves to be more courageous than most soldiers. I'll compare the actions of Agrippina in some later events, too, and discuss how she is described by Tacitus to behave herself under the threat of violence and death. It is also interesting to study the activities of Germanicus and Agrippina as a couple facing threat of violence. The description of Germanicus' death and its aftermath is illustrative up to the tragical death of Agrippina. After the death of Germanicus it is a question of mourning and revenge. Agrippina is first described by Tacitus as helpless, but growing defiant and revengeful. Even if the focus of the paper is on the narrative of Tacitus comparisons to texts referring to or dealing with the same episodes will be made.

Joanna Vadenbring, independent, joanna.vadenbring@alumni.eui.eu

'There is so much illness and death here'. Women, children and suffering during the Scanian War 1676-79

In the autumn of 1678, Geese Cornelÿsdaatter wrote to her sister in the village of Gårdstånga (Gaardeatang) to ask if she and her husband were still alive. The above quote is from her letter. Geese prayed to God that they would meet again in this life, but the

situation was uncertain, and there was nothing to eat. This was the situation in large parts of Scania/Skåne during the latter part of the Scanian War, when most of the territory was no man's land and the population had no authority to turn to. I aim to analyse letters and pleas from women trying to contact family and friends and/or appealing to the absent authorities for help. Their perspective can provide an increased understanding of what war meant to ordinary people at the time. Did these women hold one side or the other responsible? Did they see the illnesses that came with the war as divine vengeance or something the soldiers brought upon them? The Danish National Archives contains a collection of petitions and intercepted letters from the Scanian War that contain many private letters from the local population. I want to study the way that women perceived the suffering caused by the war and how they tried to remedy the troubles the war was causing, for example by asking for permission to run their husbands' business or to obtain a tax reduction because they could not plough as much land as their deceased husbands. I will analyse these women's responses to conflict against the background of similar situations in other parts of Europe, as analysed by scholars from Christine de Pisan to John A. Lynn and Mary E. Ailes.

THURSDAY (August 14th)

Session 3a (9.00-10.30, room B1096): Violence towards non-combatants

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Between Collective and Individual Affects: SubjectMaking in Eustathios' Narrative of the Capture of Thessaloniki

The history of medieval Thessaloniki is remarkable for its detailed accounts of at least five sieges and conquests preserved over the centuries. These narratives illuminate not only the city's turbulent historical events but also the diverse perspectives and approaches to narrating war, violence, trauma, and the captivity of its inhabitants. The conquest and sack of Thessaloniki by the Norman armies of the Kingdom of Sicily in 1185 were documented by Eustathios, the city's bishop and one of the most prominent Byzantine scholars, who personally witnessed these traumatic events. His Capture of Thessaloniki has been extensively studied for its historiographical significance, narrative elements, and, more recently, as a work of witness literature within the theoretical frameworks of Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Building on previous scholarship, this paper offers a novel interpretation of the text through the lens of collective subjectivity and performative storytelling. Earlier analyses have focused on the affective dimensions from the perspective of the author's response to trauma, the text's narrative structure, and its possible reception by readers. In contrast, this study examines how affects shape the text's character spaces and narratorial positions, and how the text's narrative form may have contributed to the production of specific political subjects. It investigates the interplay of individual and collective affects—whether appropriated or anonymous—and their connections to the existence, agency, actions, and causality of specific characters. Drawing on social theories of crowds as affective multiplicities and Sara Ahmed's conceptualization of affects as performative intensities emerging between individual and collective bodies, this study explores how these dynamics shape their bodily surfaces. Ultimately, it provides insights into the processes of making and unmaking of premodern collective subjects through embodied experiences of violence, transcending individual rational or identitarian affiliations.

Juho Wilskman, independent, juho.wilskman@gmail.com

Treatment of Non-Combatants in the Aegean Region at the Turn of the 13th and 14th Centuries

Byzantium lost western Anatolia to the Turks in the early fourteenth century. It also faced conflicts with the Catalan Company, its former mercenaries, as well as various other

enemies in Europe. The era and region under discussion allow for a comparison of how Byzantines, Turks, Latins, and steppe nomads allegedly treated non-combatants, or how they believed non-combatants should be treated. The sources, for instance, suggest differing attitudes towards sexual violence, sympathy for victims, and the interactions between soldiers and women. In my paper, I demonstrate how the treatment of non-combatants played a significant role in these events. The mistreatment of civilians not only had serious consequences for relations between the Byzantines and their mercenaries but also affected the relationships between Catalan and Alan troops in Byzantine service. During this period, the treatment of non-combatants underwent a shift. Enslaving one's coreligionist was detested. There is very little evidence that Greek and Latin Christians would have enslaved each other in the thirteenth century. However, enslavement was more prevalent in conflicts between Muslims and Christians. The Turkish conquest of western Anatolia led to a significant supply of Orthodox Christian slaves. Many of these were purchased by Latins, who also began enslaving their Greek captives on a large scale. The supply of slaves created its own demand. The Catalan Company, in particular, is notorious for enslaving Greek captives, as noted in previous research. Slave-taking had a profound impact on the profits generated by war. I argue that this influenced the way wars were conducted. Certain types of conflict were more sustainable, leading to more aggressive raiding, particularly by sea, for the purposes of plunder and countering such operations.

Session 3b (9.00-10.30, room B1097): Emotions and violence

Rosie Wyles, University of Durham, mary.r.wyles@durham.ac.uk

Euripides' Phoenician Women: the emotions of a family at war

Euripides' *Phoenician Women* presents us with a confrontational scene, rich in implicit violence, as the two sons of Oedipus meet in the presence of their mother Jocasta, who attempts to mediate. This scene (261-637), a prelude to the civil war, is, as Craik long ago acknowledged, intensely emotional. An analysis of the scene's language reveals references to an extensive range of emotions and related terms: fear (263, 269, 361-2, 384, and 514), confidence/daring (268, 270, 599, 600), trust (272, 600, 634), pleasure (314, 316, 317, 338), longing (320-1, 330, 384), love (359, 622), grief/suffering/tears (323, 330, 334, 335, 354, 366, 370-3, 618-19, 623), suicidal desire (330-333), revenge (cursing, 334), hatred (374, 479, 540, 606), 'unhappiness'/harm (*kakos*) (379, 381, 388-9, 405, 418, 480, 528, 585), pain (394, 431), anger (*thumos*) (454, 461), suffering injustice (467, 611, 620), shame (510), happiness (533, 549), madness (535), envy (545), and honour (550). The scene allows the audience to view emotional responses to the threat of war through multiple perspectives. The choice of characters, and unusual inclusion of Jocasta who in other versions of the myth kills herself before this, allows for the view of individuals,

contrasting genders, and a family on the imminent conflict. The prospect of not just a war, but a civil war with brothers set against one another, allows for an intensified exploration of the emotions at stake. This paper builds on my previous work (Wyles (2020)) on this scene's implicit violence to explore the emotional responses to war it displays, with a particular focus on potential gender differences in this respect. My analysis will be informed by the discussion of emotions presented in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* Book 2. This paper is intended to complement Professor Hall's keynote paper on the chorus in Aeschylus' *Septem*, as this presents another perspective and response to the prospect of this same war.

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Grief, anger, and pity: Violent death and its emotional consequences in Latin funerary inscription

It is not too often that Latin funerary epigraphy provides us with clues regarding the cause of someone's death. In most cases, obviously, the cause must have been considered natural (such as illness or old age) and, thus, not worthy of specific commemoration. In case of violent or accidental death, however, we do have several interesting cases available. Causes of death in Roman epigraphy, in general, have been discussed and thematically analyzed at least by U. Ehmig (2013) and A. Rubel (2023). Violent death in the Roman world has, moreover, been discussed by A. Gunella (1995), and there are case studies of individual inscriptions (e.g. Panciera 2006). The previous studies, however, have been primarily interested in the reasons and causes, not the emotional consequences that violent death may have entailed. It is the objective of this paper to analyze the material from an emotion history perspective. The data for the study consists of c. 100 Latin inscriptions from Italy and the Latin-speaking provinces. In most of the cases, the cause of death has been explicitly mentioned (e.g. *occisus* / *interfectus*), many cases even including information of the perpetrator (e.g. *a latronibus* / *a commilitone* / *a servo*). The analysis will focus on various feelings connected with grief, such as sadness, anger, and pity as well as various rhetorical and other strategies of consolation. These strategies, in turn, will be analyzed in relation to the ancient philosophical and rhetorical theories and attitudes on emotions. In addition, the analysis will take into account – whenever possible – the monumental, iconographic, and spatial aspects of the inscriptions involved (e.g. what kind of a monument are we dealing with, how was it decorated, where was it located, who were the intended audience, etc.).

References: A. Rubel (2023), 'Mors immatura. The causes of death in inscriptions from the Roman Empire', in: R. Kogălniceanu et al. (eds.), *Homines, Funera, Astra: The Multiple Faces of Death and Burial*, Oxford: 99– 110; U. Ehmig (2013), 'Subjektive und faktische Risiken. Motivgründe und Todesursachen in lateinischen Inschriften als Beispiele für Nachrichtenauswahl in der römischen Kaiserzeit', *Chiron* 43: 127–198; A. Gunella (1995), 'Morti improvvise e violente nelle iscrizioni latine', in: *La mort au quotidien dans le monde romain*, Paris: 9–22; S. Panciera (2006), 'Occisus a malibus', in: S. Panciera (ed.), *Epigrafi, epigrafia, epigrafisti*, Roma: 977–981

Susanna Niiranen, Tampere University, susanna.niiranen@jyu.fi

Killing St Olaf – Weapons of Martyrdom

The Viking king Olaf Haraldsson was killed at the Battle of Stiklestad on 29 July 1030. According to the widely circulated account in Snorri Sturluson's saga, Olaf was first injured by an axe wound above his left knee. He was then struck by a spear that pierced under his armor and into his stomach before receiving a final wound to his neck. The role of the weapons and the injuries they caused was significant in the Olavian martyrdom and sanctification. The paper analyzes the meanings of the battle, violence and suffering in various representations (both textual and visual discourses) on St Olaf from a long-term perspective and demonstrates the use of history for political purposes not only in the Middle Ages, but also in the modern era. Finally, it explores how recent archaeological findings align with the medieval tradition associated with Olaf's knee wound

Session 4 (11.00-12.15, room B1100)

Keynote presentation

Marian Füssel, University of Göttingen

Feelings in a World on Fire: Doing Emotions during the Seven Years War

Session 5a (13.30-15.00, room B1096) Violence in the domestic space

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Ripped earrings and gendered double-standards in classical Greece

The narrative section of Lysias' speech Against Eratosthenes is one of the most nailbiting sequences in classical Attic oratory. The Athenian oligarchs are after the metics and their property. They set out to raid their homes and their targets include the family of Lysias. The orator barely escapes, but his brother Polemarchus is arrested and put to death. So greedy and depraved were their persecutors — as Lysias comments emphatically, out of the chronological sequence of the narrative — that they ripped the earrings off the ears of Polemarchus' wife (Lys. 12.19). This act of physical and psychological violence against a woman has a later parallel in the story of the defeat of Jugurtha as told by Plutarch in

his Life of Marius (12.4). As the Numidian king is thrown into jail after being led as captive in the triumphal procession, he is violently deprived of his clothes and of his golden earring and his earlobe is torn in the process. While Plutarch adds this gory detail as he depicts the downfall and humiliation of Jugurtha, Lysias makes no mention of any consequences of the violent action on the body or mind of Polemarchus' wife; the rhetorical function of the account of this brutal action is that of reinforcing the idea that greed made Lysias' persecutors cross yet another line and violate another man's oikos for something as petty as a pair of earrings. As a passage from Aristotle's Rhetoric (1.12.35) illustrates, domestic violence would most likely never surface in fourth-century Athens, as victims would allegedly be too ashamed to disclose it. The case presented by Lysias, however, suggests that this would still be a man's business even if violence on a woman was perpetrated by a stranger

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Sic Formosa Fuit - Domestic Violence and Women's Suffering in Roman Poetry

Even though Roman society was inherently violent against women, Roman authors rarely discuss this violence in other than exemplary or moralistic manner. Still, violence as a factor in women's injuries or permanent disabilities cannot be ignored; with premodern medicine and inadequate care, many injuries could lead to a permanent disability. Despite domestic violence and violence against citizen women being prohibited by law and by religion, as it is referred to as an act "that draws down the gods", violence occurred regularly, even leading to death. Obituaries of the murdered women show us that their violent husbands were seldom prosecuted or rarely suffered any punishment under law. This presentation aims to explore how domestic violence is portrayed in Roman poetry, how women's suffering is presented, what motifs create the archetypal "suffering woman", and what consequences, if any, did the narrators face for their actions. Another intent of this presentation is to explore why women's bodily experiences, and the suffering, injured, or disabled bodies of women are omitted from these narratives. The suffering woman in these poems is an object without a real personhood and without boundaries. Women's pain and suffering is also sexualised; women's bodily autonomy and men's desires create the main conflict in these poems. Even though accounts describing sexual and physical abuse in the Roman world have survived, Roman authors are remarkably silent about the brutal outcomes of the violence in poetry. Instead, they carefully construct an image of a suffering, yet desirable woman, whose bodily experiences simply do not exist. This presentation proposes that the experienced realities of domestic violence survivors differed drastically from literary depictions. The poems often focus on the guilt and shame experienced by the perpetrator. In real life, women experienced the harshest consequences: injury, permanent disability, and even death.

Anna-Liisa Rafael, University of Helsinki, anna-liisa.tolonen@helsinki.fi

Balancing Cruelty and Care: Medieval Portrayals of Jewish Mothers and their Child Sacrifices in Times of War

In my paper, I provide a comparative reading of the story of the mother and her seven martyred sons, which was first preserved in the Books of the Maccabees of Hellenistic Jewish provenance. My focus will be on the version of the story found in the tenth-century Sefer Yosippon, a Hebrew chronicle of postbiblical Jewish history, and its Arabic translation, which contributed to the book's spread beyond Jewish circles to Christians and Muslims. I analyze how the memory of the martyred children and their mother is reworked in these medieval accounts, and how the protagonists' and especially the mother's feelings towards her children are described, since this is an aspect of the story that one finds most elaborated in the Hebrew Sefer Yosippon vis-à-vis the ancient Maccabean accounts, and again in the Arabic translations vis-à-vis the Hebrew work. I argue that, the medieval accounts accommodate the story to history, while, at the same time, they present the mother as an exceptional, famed and godly figure without a peer among either martyrs or mothers. I also compare this mother to another exceptional female figure that features in the same texts, i.e., the starving mother who ate her own baby during the Roman Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE (this story is not from the Books of the Maccabees, but Josephus' Jewish War). Different versions of this tragic, cannibal story have already been analyzed comparatively (esp. Binyam 2017; Pareles 2023), these studies suggesting that the Sefer Yosippon both in Hebrew and in Arabic treat the mother with considerable sympathy and explain her violent actions with her motherly love to her child. Although these two mothers are strikingly different in their behavior, both stories use the theme of child sacrifice to discuss reproductivity, nurture, suffering, and survival.

Session 5b (13.30-15.00, room B1097) Responses to War and Violence

Sini Kangas, Tampere University, sini.kangas@tuni.fi

The View of the Aggressors in Twelfth-century Sources of the Crusades: Authorial Responses

This paper examines the emotional reactions of early crusaders to military, religious and socially motivated acts of violence in the Latin chronicles of the First and Third Crusade and the Old French chansons of the crusades. The time span of the examples studied extends from around 1080 to around 1192. The presentation begins by defining the basic terminology of "violence" in high medieval Latin and Old French historiography and crusade literature. Violence per se refers to harmful and/or illegal acts motivated by

sinful intentions. Similar acts, if they are based on acceptable and even meritorious aims, are not treated in terms of violence, but are referred to as vengeance (retribution), correction and judgement. The emotions associated by the authors with violent acts range from anxiety and fear to relief, joy and pride. Positive or negative connotations can be interpreted not only according to the author's assessment of the moral (and legal) context of the act, but also according to the social status of the perpetrator. In twelfth-century crusade propaganda, the use of force was generally accepted for Christian aristocrats fighting with swords and spears, while attitudes towards similar acts committed by commoners were more ambivalent. In particular, the violent poor were criticized. Unsurprisingly, the origin of the victim determines the assessment of the act. While violence against enemy combatants is positively understood, intergroup violence between fellow Christians is seen as condemnable and appears only rarely in the sources. Violence against non-Christian noncombatants was basically considered acceptable, with the possible exception of the killing of infants, which provoked mixed reactions from the authors. In the sources examined, violence included both reciprocal and unilateral acts. There were few clear cases of self-damage, limited to enemies committing suicide in desperate situations.

Irit Kleiman, Boston University, kleiman@bu.edu

On Painted Eggs, and other Metonymies of Survival

Written in Old French and bracingly alive, Jean de Joinville's genre-bending, narrative mash-up provides a key source for the Seventh Crusade (1248-1252) and the reign of French king Louis IX. In English, Joinville's text is usually read in a Penguin edition titled *Chronicles of the Crusades* (trans. Smith, 2008). In France, Joinville's work is almost always known as the *Life of Saint Louis*. Conventional wisdom rarely strays from the view that Joinville's text is a work of hagiography, or at least royal biography, of the charismatic and devout Louis IX. That view may serve a particular set of ideas about sanctity or the French nation, but it does not serve Joinville's text or his readers. Joinville writes about the hubris of invasion; the friendship between men at arms; and the economic, ecological, and moral violence of war. His memoir offers a raw, even brutal, portrayal of what it meant to go to war, survive the death of almost all one's companions, then return home again. To begin reckoning with the violence and destruction Joinville narrates, the reader must also confront his rendering of war as paradigmatically human, and also dehumanizing. What is at stake in debates about Joinville's text is our view of History on its broadest scale. What truth status do we grant to a single individual, or the knowledge that comes from a body's lived experiences? How does individual memory become collective memory, and collective memory individual? What stories do we tell about the memory of war and conquest? How do we untangle the forms of representation that make a nation and its kings at once profane and sacred? Joinville's writing about flesh wounds and reliquaries, sea winds and sung prayers, eels and boiled eggs, are more than

“filler” to his testimony about the king. They are the substance of his memoir. It is potentially facile, but also necessary, to recognize the continuity between medieval crusades and Napoleonic dreams of empire, and between literal lieux de mémoire (“sites of memory”) like Paris’s Sainte-Chapelle and intangible ones such as Joinville’s history. Often, the abject in Joinville’s narrative—and there is a lot of it—gets silenced, or sublimated to a narrative of Christian exaltation. Joinville the haggard, oozing, weeping, survivor of a war filled with fevers and rotting corpses is not the hero a nation wants to contemplate for too long. Joinville is an author who is cited unceasingly, but nearly always as a historical source. We are in the habit of pointing to what he says and ignoring how he says it. We tend to think about Crusade narratives in relation to external events. My readings shift the reader’s attention towards the internal, taking them from a reading experience shaped by the discovery of historical plot as a series of events, towards an eclectic mode of reading shaped by the theoretical tools of contemporary cultural and literary criticism. I focus on textual imagery, figurations of structure, and affective content in order to ask and answer a series of questions about war, literature, and memory.

Mari Välimäki, University of Turku, marivaz@utu.fi

Experiences of War in the 17th Century Academic Community in Turku, Sweden

In this paper I will explore how the academic community in Turku was affected by the Swedish wars in the middle of the 17th century. Even though the professors and the students were exempt from the duty to serve in the military and Turku was not a stage for battles, it didn’t mean that the wars would not have affected the academic community. This presentation will focus especially on the summer of 1656 when the War of Rupture began between Russia and Sweden. During the summer Russia attacked Swedish areas in Livonia and also the university town of Tartu was under attack. Professor Olaus Wexionius worked at the Academy of Tartu and he fled together with his family from Tartu to Turku to stay with their relatives, the family of local bishop Petraeus. Wexionius was married to Petraeus daughter. At the same time with the Russian attack Turku suffered from two town fires. Petrus Magni Gyllenius, a student in the Royal Academy of Turku and a private tutor for the bishop Petraeus’ younger sons, describes the fires in his diary as well as the panic they caused among the town dwellers which mixed with the fear of Russia attacking also Turku. Also, professor Wexionius describes in his letter the effects that the Russian attack on Tartu and fleeing had on him. He was unable to work for two years. In the presentation I will bring a new perspective – the academic community – to recent studies on how the early modern wars affected the local communities in the home front (e.g. Talvitie & Granqvist 2021) by using different sources such as various egodocuments and the protocols of the academic consistory court. I will ask how the fear of war made people behave and what did the multigenerational academic community do in order to take care of its members.

Session 6a (15.30-17.00, room B1096) Structures of violence and suffering

Katariina Mustakallio, Tampere University, katariina.mustakallio@tuni.fi

Grain Shortage and Hunger: Roman Measures Against Food Shortages in the Roman Port Area

In Roman historical writings, we frequently find information about food shortages from the Republican times onwards. These shortages were usually caused by wars and leap years, especially in areas from which the Romans imported large amounts of grain from the Republican period onwards, such as Sicily, North Africa and Egypt. Additionally, storms and shipwrecks in the Mediterranean also contributed to these shortages. During these times of acute crisis, leading men of the Republic and later the emperors took extra measures to solve the problem, which brought turmoil and devastating situations to society. They gave, for example, privileges to certain shipowners and builders to prepare huge vessels to transport the grain. In these situations, the Roman port area from Ostia to Portus became the focal point of the entire empire. This was because a major part of all imports to Rome, where over 1 million people lived, came through this route. Without stabilizing Rome first, no part of the administration was capable of functioning. In this paper, I will study the different measures the state took to address these situations and the kinds of threats they faced during times of hunger from the Republican times up until Late Antiquity.

Samuli Simelius, University of Helsinki,

Inequality and Violence: Roman Urban Case Studies

Inequality was a defining characteristic of Roman society. It manifested in disparities of wealth, access to resources, and quality of life, alongside rigid social and legal hierarchies such as slavery, which allowed the exploitation and abuse of lower social strata. A plausible hypothesis might suggest that such inequality would intensify social tensions and lead to violence. However, evidence of urban violence directly linked to economic and social inequality in Roman cities is surprisingly scarce. This paper explores this paradox and seeks to uncover potential explanations, employing the underutilized concept of health inequality as a key analytical framework. The study analyzes archaeological evidence from private properties as proxies for studying inequality, applying computational methods like the Gini coefficient to quantify economic disparities. The research includes cities such as Herculaneum, Pompeii, Ostia, Delos, and Priene, which represent diverse geographic regions and periods of the Roman Empire. These findings are juxtaposed with records of violent conflicts and catastrophic events such as earthquakes, fires, and famines to evaluate their impact on social dynamics and emotional reactions. Additionally, preliminary estimates of health

inequality are examined alongside historical narratives about how communities addressed these crises, focusing on the social dimensions of suffering, resilience, and communal solidarity. The ultimate goal is to reevaluate how Roman urban societies managed challenges and inequality, examining whether their responses prioritized communal welfare or allowed the privileged to exploit crises for personal gain. By integrating economic, social, and health dimensions of inequality with an emphasis on lived experiences, this paper sheds light on the resilience and fragility of ancient urban societies, contributing to broader discussions on the interplay between inequality, violence, suffering, and communal strategies in historical contexts.

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Drunken violence and emotions in early modern Finland

Premodern drinking is usually depicted as excessive and violent. Especially the 17th century, when distilled spirits gained popularity, is seen as an era of violent drinking habits. Historically, it is used as a contrast to the later Enlightenment and Modern Era when drinking habits gradually “civilized”. In this paper, I will challenge this traditional view of premodern drinking by analyzing drunken violence in 17th -century rural Finland. Court records that deal with accused or suspected acts of drunken violence are used to form a more nuanced view on early modern drinking and associated emotions. Even in severe cases, the feelings of joy and friendship can be present, and drunken violence can be seen as funny or amusing. Somewhat surprisingly, drunkenness is not very often used as an excuse for violent behavior, and even when it was, it did not affect the case. Violence was not only a drunken outburst but also a way to defend one’s honor in early modern Finland. Since most drunken violence described in early modern court records is between adult men, the experiences and emotions are mostly male, but the gendered aspects and other intersectional themes are also discussed in the paper. The ethical aspects of studying drunken violence are also taken into consideration. By analyzing the emotions connected with drunken violence, I will form a more nuanced view on premodern drinking and the various social meanings of it.

Session 6b (15.30-17.00, room B1097) Experiences and politics of violence

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False Generalizations of Violent Warfare in Herodotus and Thucydides

The ancient Greek historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, are conventionally known in relation to the wars they wrote about: The Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War. In historiography, political history and popular history of warfare their attitudes towards

warfare are summarized from famous statements such as Thucydides' reasoning that the growth of the power of Athens inevitably led to conflict with the hegemonic Sparta. (Thuc. 1.23.) This statement has been given outsize importance in determining the rationale for war in Thucydides. Similarly, the Melian Dialogue is used as a prime example in the interpretations of ancient Greek warfare and war is seen as the most important subject matter for history writing because both Herodotus and Thucydides wrote about it.

In this paper, I claim that these specific statements, while not false in themselves, account for exaggerated generalizations of the Greek historians' understanding for the rationale for war. By comparing select, widely used passages to a wider selection of descriptions of similar passages from the Histories of Herodotus and the Peloponnesian War of Thucydides, we get a more nuanced view of their argumentation and understanding. One that could be described as more merciful and having a less cynical view of human motivations and actions during wartime. The ideas these two writers promote are not descriptive of solely the ancient Greek way of thought, as many elements from especially Herodotus' narratives stem from Persian and other non-Greek traditions.

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Violent actions as a source of bad dreams and nightmares in ancient literature

Engaging in violent actions is often associated with disturbing dreams in ancient literature. Numerous accounts describe individuals who committed acts of violence as subsequently suffering from nightmares. Ancient authors were particularly interested in the psychological consequences of transgressive violent crimes, such as despotic cruelty or the murder of relatives. Nightmares resulting from such transgressions were sometimes interpreted as resulting from divine interventions demanding atonement, which was typically exacted through the dreamer's violent death. On the other hand, the mental agony caused by oppressive dreams could often be seen as part of the transgressor's "punishment". These accounts appear to reflect a belief that the human mind could not remain unaffected by committing excessively violent deeds. The fear (φόβος, terror) and mental agitation (ταραχή) induced by these dreams could severely undermine the mental well-being of the offender. In extreme cases, this distress could instill a paranoid fear that resulted in further violence or even drove the individual to suicide.

Violence as a Communal Experience During Johannes Messenius' Imprisonment

Swedish historian Johannes Messenius (1579–1636) was famously charged with treason and sent to a remote imprisonment at Kajaneborg (Castle of Kajaani), where he remained incarcerated accompanied by his family for nearly two decades. The prisoner's own writings and re-discovered contemporary sources paint a picture of hardships and violence. Messenius' imprisonment has received little attention in research and has served mostly as a tragi-romantic backdrop for his literary work. I have previously argued that while violence was a part of military culture and not uncommon among early 16th - century officeholders, the remote location of Kajaneborg enabled arbitrary violence due to lack of surveillance by the central government and the difficulty of appealing to the authorities. In this paper, I focus on the experiences and emotions of Messenius and the surrounding community in response to the violence endured. The staff and the soldiers appointed to Kajaneborg formed a community that both inflicted and reacted to Messenius' suffering. The nearby peasant population experienced their own share of violence from the castle's officers. Sources of early modern prison experience in Sweden are few. The main value of the sometimes unreliable and incomplete narratives relating to Messenius' imprisonment lies not in determining the veracity of the claims presented, but in glimpses of how people experienced the situation. This ranged from empathy and outrage to indifference and gleeful malice. The sources illustrate a group of soldiers unwilling to participate in the violence, a bailiff describing the treatment as horrible tyranny, and the accused officers attempting to shift blame. The paper presents that what has been considered as the suffering of one upper-class family was in fact a socially shared experience that elicited both positive and negative responses dividing the community. The study relates to the histories of experience, emotions, violence, and the early modern prison system.

FRIDAY (August 15)

Session 7 (9.00-10.15, room B1100)

Keynote presentation

Edith Hall, Durham University

Women under Siege: the Trauma of the Chorus of Aeschylus' "Seven against Thebes"

Session 8 (10.45-12.45, room B1100): The Suffering Male Body in Western Art and Culture

Elina Pyy, University of Helsinki, elinaannasylviapyy@gmail.com

Seneca on Screen: Revenge, Power and the Aesthetics of Violence in 21st Century Cinema

Senecan tragedy is characterised by rhetorical excess, moral extremity, and stylised depictions of violence. In Seneca's plays, revenge operates not only as a personal emotional drive but as a destabilising cosmic force - a phenomenon that blurs the boundaries between justice and monstrosity. Figures such as Atreus and Medea commit acts of calculated cruelty not merely to punish, but to assert control over their worlds and narratives, transforming suffering into spectacle. This ritualised aesthetics of vengeance - mediated through centuries of classical and Shakespearean reception - finds a powerful afterlife in modern cinema.

I explore that legacy through one of the most iconic revenge dramas of the 2000s: Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill 1 & 2 (2003 & 2004). The films resonate deeply with the Senecan tradition, drawing especially rich parallels with Thyestes and Medea. Like Atreus, The Bride enacts a meticulously orchestrated revenge, channeling her sense of betrayal into stylised, ceremonial violence that asserts not just retribution but narrative power. In both cases, the protagonist reshapes the moral universe through extreme acts, positioning themselves in the god-like role of the avenging fury. At the same time, The Bride recalls the tragic figure of Medea: a betrayed woman whose rage is both horrifying and sympathetic, and whose maternal identity is weaponised in the service of revenge. The fusion of these Senecan archetypes - Atreus' cold ceremonial violence and Medea's emotionally charged fury - makes Tarantino's Kill Bill a fascinating modern embodiment of classical revenge tragedy, in which vengeance becomes a medium for identity, agency, and catharsis.

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Masculinity and the Experience of Pain in Roman Literature: The Case of Regulus and Its Reception

A man must uphold his word, even at the cost of suffering. He must also be prepared to endure extreme physical pain and mental hardship when circumstances demand it. His actions should serve the collective good rather than personal gain. These principles have been deeply embedded in Western thought through the story of Marcus Atilius Regulus, a Roman figure renowned for his unwavering commitment to duty.

This presentation explores how the myth of Regulus is depicted in the works of Cicero, Seneca, Horace, and Silius Italicus, analyzing their philosophical and literary interpretations of suffering and sacrifice—particularly the emphasis on fides (“faithfulness”) and patientia (“endurance”). Furthermore, it examines how early Christian writers—Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Augustine—engaged with Regulus’ narrative to shape the concept of Christian martyrdom and define Christianity’s role within the Roman imperial framework.

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“How to jest on great men’s little weaknesses” – ridiculing the Trojan war in 19th century English comedy

I explore how the conflicts of early 19th century England were reflected in the usage of the Trojan war narrative. I focus on how humour and comedic plays addressed the grave themes of violence and war. Especially through the soldiers’ behaviour, the war they fought was transformed into something ridiculous and trivial, highlighting the absurdity of it but also distancing the audience from its cruel nature. Simultaneously, England participated in many conflicts, which were reflected on the stage – how did the plays employ the Trojan war to negotiate contemporary feelings of war? How did they continue for example Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida’s theme of demystifying its ancient heroes?

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The Suffering of Laocoon and the Image of a Finnish Hero

The figure of Laocoon in the famous ancient sculpture became the focal point of an intensive debate over ideal expressions of pain during the latter half of the eighteenth-century. The opinions of J. J. Winckelmann and G.E. Lessing on the subject were still

quoted by Finnish aesthetic thinkers a century later during the years of active nation building and inventing of images of heroes from the verses of Kalevala. This presentation studies the influence of ancient representations of suffering men on the depictions of Kalevalan heroes by artists such as C.E. Sjöstrand and A. Gallen-Kallela.

Session 9 (room B1100) Concluding Remarks and Discussion (12.45 – 13.15)

Thank you for your participation!



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