Hyperboreus 27: 2 (2021) 213–237
DOI: 10.25990/hyperboreus.jdhz-yx79

Christian Laes

MOST SUBVERSIVE SUFFERING: PAIN AND THE REVERSAL OF ROLES IN GRAECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY*

1. Introduction: On Anachronism and How/Why to Avoid it

Franz Cumont (1868–1947) was an honourable man. At the age of seventy, 14 January 1940, he wrote a letter to his dear friend Mikhail Rostovtzeff in which he expressed, next to his worries about the threatening climate of war, his concerns about a presentation he was about to deliver at the Belgian Institute in Rome. Since he would treat a sarcophagus from Mysia with explicit erotic scenes, he had given "un sarcophage érotique" as a title. In agreement with the director of the institute, the program instead mentioned "un sarcophage hédonique", in order to avoid the unwanted presence of "une multitude de pornographes" in search for sensation.[1]

The reader of the present contribution might ask whether similar motives are behind the choice of title of this article. Are subversive suffering, pain and reversal of roles not closely connected with sado-masochism? And would the use of this specific term not have been more accurate, or at least more appealing to a wider audience? Do I, by avoiding any such term in the title, somehow relate to Cumont's fear of attracting sensationalist attention? I have to admit that I partly do so for two reasons. I am well aware of the "greatest sin of the historian", namely anachronism. Also, I am quite reluctant in getting involved in present-day discussion on "identity": I see no need for Antiquity to act as a reference point in order to justify, say, a sadomasochist identity or subculture, if any.

* This is a reworked version of my paper at the workshop "Subversive Suffering: Pain and Patient Identity", held at the University of Liverpool (June 28, 2019). I owe many thanks to Daniel King (University of Exeter) and to Georgia Petridou (University of Liverpool) for organising a wonderful day full of stimulating academic exchange. Many thanks go to Robert Garland (Colgate University) for reading a first version of this article, commenting on it and improving the language.

[1] The anecdote is mentioned by Bonnet 2000, 80.

In all, it is quintessential to realise that the modern understanding of sadomasochism is based on a presumption of psychoanalytic principles. In order to make any claims about the existence of sadomasochism in Antiquity it is not enough to point to the fact that some ancient writers apparently took pleasure in the giving and receiving of pain, but rather that there were individuals who sought out pain for its component of sexual pleasure. To quote the Austro-German psychiatrist Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebbing (1840–1902) in his foundational work on what he classified as sexual pathology:[2]

> It is not difficult to show that masochism is something essentially different from flagellation, and more comprehensive. For the masochist the principal thing is subjection to the woman; the punishment is only the expression of this relation – the most intense effect of it he can bring upon himself.

For sure, sadomasochism assumes a set of historical conditions that were not there in Antiquity: the question about the existence of it in the ancient world (or indeed in the world before psycho-analysis) may thus be dismissed as anachronistic at best, or maybe even irrelevant at large.

On the other hand, historians studying sexuality in periods before the nineteenth century have every now and then raised the possibility of writing a history of sadomasochism that compasses many centuries. In these overviews, Antiquity is only given sparse attention.[3] Surveys by mediaevalists only mention sadomasochism in rare and exceptional instances: powerplay in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* or the infamous sadist serial killer Gilles de Rais[4] – to these examples, one may add Giosefo who, in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, trashes his wife until "he had left never a bone or other part of her person whole", but tells his friend Melisso to "deem that what I shall do is but done in sport".[5] For the Greek and Roman world, it appears that there is a whole tradition of scholars who have claimed to "find" sadism and/or masochism: ranging from Vorberg (note the Latin title *Ars erotica veterum* of his book, which was written in German), over specialised studies on the ancient sexual vocabulary up to current

---

[2] Krafft-Ebing 1965, 93.

[3] Bullough 1976a and b; 1994. Largier 2007 is an important book but, besides the Lupercalia, hardly mentions Antiquity. Peakman 2013, 209–230 has a substantial chapter on sadomasochism, but again Antiquity is left without notice.

[4] Rusthon 2011 explicitly uses the terms sadism and masochism for these cases, be it in a nuanced way.

[5] Boccaccio, *Decameron* 9. 9 (transl. J. M. Rigg).

overviews and handbooks of sexuality in Antiquity.[6] In these studies, sadism is much more present than masochism though.[7] Sadomasochism as such is hardly dealt with.[8] Without explicitly stating it, most of these scholars presumably acknowledge an element of "nature" in the study of sexuality in the past. If one accepts that a certain degree of physical pain and personal degradation can stimulate sexual pleasure with individuals nowadays, it is safe to assume that such was also the case in the past. Such a stance does not mean turning to programmed determinism. "During the last two decades (…) biologists and anthropologists have developed collaborative models in which nature and culture act in tandem". Culture exerts influence upon nature, but at the same there is a strong element of re-integrating nature into the history of sexuality as a causative factor.[9]

Instead of looking for "sadomasochists in the past" – an effort as fruitless as the quest for "famous gays in history" – this paper asks whether Graeco-Roman culture bears any traces of voluntary indulging in pain and punishment as a form of sexual game. In order to answer this question, the context of slavery and the use of violence in education/sexuality needs to be acknowledged first. After this, I look for traces in ceremonies, iconography, passages with ancient authors, love poetry, and role playing by children. While I am reluctant to apply the term sadomasochism to Antiquity, I am convinced that a careful inquiry into pain and domination/reversal of roles reveals vital features of ancient society.

2. A Violent World

It would require more than one section of an article to fully elaborate the degree of violence that marked many interpersonal relations in the ancient world. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the mere fact, since it is revealing how people possibly coped with pain and suffering.

---

[6] Vorberg 1928, 177–180. Quite remarkably, but in line with psychiatric classifications of his time, the author not only includes under this heading the cruel behaviour of emperors and automutilation by priests of Cybele, but also necrophilia, foot fetishism, gerontophilia, and … "gleichgeslechtlichen Liebesparen". Studies on vocabulary: Adams 1982. See also the entries and the indices of Younger 2004 (violence [sadism] on p. 203, but no specific entry 'masochism'); Johnson–Ryan 2005; Skinner 2005.

[7] Masochism has mostly been studied from a literary angle. See Rabinowitz 2000; Formisano 2017. For the *Priapeia*-poems, scholars have pointed to the objects of Priapus' lust seeking out the punishment. See Richlin 1983.

[8] Most explicitly, with references to Krafft-Ebing, by Thüry 2001.

[9] Quote from M. B. Skinner, in an unpublished key-note "Ancient Sexuality at a New Crossroads: Beyond Binarism" (2015). See also Harper 2013 for a convincing plea for integrating nature in the study of ancient sexuality.

Most scholars agree that life in Antiquity was "violence-ridden to an extent that it is hardly tolerable for contemporary western individuals".[10] In scattered remarks and use of vocabulary, ancient writers themselves show an awareness of a distinction between institutional violence (*potestas*) and personal violence (*violentia*), also reflected in the Greek terms δύναμις and ὕβρις. Though they mostly discuss bodily violence, there also was an awareness of the psychological impact of violence.[11]

First, one has to consider the psychological effects of watching or witnessing corporal punishment, executions, or sensational spectacles of death – even cock fighting was an initiation into a bloody fighting culture.[12] More than one scholar has used the term sadism to suggest the erotic stimulus of brutality, as displayed, for instance, in Roman amphitheater games.[13]

Second, families were often depicted as hotbeds of intense internal tensions, where conflicts were dealt with in a brutal way. Wife beating presumably was common. There was no idea of "domestic violence" in law, "Violence was (…) endemic in Greek society, and violence within the *oikos* was a component of the same violence that displayed itself in public situations".[14] This is not to say that most households were living in unhappy conditions, as there also is a strong tradition that points to a sentimental ideal of married life.[15] But despite these indications that give reason for optimism, evidence of the opposite is plenty, ranging from Classical Greece up to late Antiquity.[16]

---

[10] Laes 2005, 80. See the collection of chapters in Pimentel–Rodrigues 2018.

[11] For general overviews on violence in Antiquity, see Zimmermann 2009 and 2013; Schmitz 2017. For the psychological impact, the term ὕβρις is of great relevance, since it also describes the intent of a person to commit violence, even when there was minimal physical violence committed.

[12] Laes 2005, 76 for references and literature, including Wistrand 1992 and Kyle 1998. For a number of fragments on people indulging in public executions, see Catull. 108; Cic. *Verr*. 5. 65; Ov. *Ib*. 165; Ps.-Quint. *Decl*. 247. 18 and 274. 7; Juv. *Sat*. 10. 66–67; Cass. Dio 58. 11. 5. A remarkable passage in Pl. *Resp*. 439 e – 440 a where a man feels both aversion and curiosity when looking at the corpses of the executed. On public executions in Classical Greece, see Hunter 1992. Rawson 2003, 378–381 devotes some consideration on the possible effect on children's psyche.

[13] Skinner 2005, 208–210 on "butchery for fun", using terms as "wild orgies of sadism" or "ritual of empowerment". The latter also with Barton 1993, 35 – in a book that draws heavily on psycho-analytic insights.

[14] Llewellyn-Jones 2011, 256.

[15] Dixon 1993.

[16] Damet 2012; Carucci 2018; Shaw 1987; Dossey 2008.

Third, village life as testified in papyri often seems brutal – a same degree of violence can be detected in depictions of rural life.[17]

Fourth, for schools and education from the Greek period up to late Antiquity, both in discourse and practice, the principle that being taught also implied suffering and beating, was never fundamentally doubted.[18]

Last but not least, the use of brutal force and torture against slaves was never questioned.[19] Such slave punishments even became a stock motif in theatre plays. Mark Golden has explored what he called "the unfunnier aspects of Athenian comedy, the gestures and jokes which threaten brutal punishment for slaves". He rightfully remarked how "to laugh at the maltreatment of slaves is to follow social norms (which are to apply to all slaves) despite personal inclinations".[20] The same counts for Latin comedy, as Parker observed: "Even the casual reader of Plautus must be impressed by the frequency and preponderance of jokes about the torture of slaves, the more so as this is a feature found very seldom in Greek New Comedy or in Terence".[21] It is striking though that the punishments are never administered. The humour is much more about possibilities: people laugh about what they fear. Also, there was the idea that the audience was exerting some power over the actors, who were of lower status themselves: a "ritual of empowerment" as Barton has called it.[22] None of these comedies, however, depicts "the world upside down" in the sense that a character would enjoy the beating, let alone a social inferior adminstering the beating on another who is most willing to accept it.

---

[17] Laes 2005, 77; Skinner 2005, 279–280 (referring to Apuleius', obviously coloured, depiction of rural life).

[18] Christes 2003; Laes 2005; De Bruyn 1999.

[19] Detailed descriptions of cruelties against slaves include Harrill 2003; Bradley 2017; Timmer 2017. A "classic" text includes a comparison (!) about life and the possibility of suicide: "Yonder I see instruments of torture, not indeed of a single kind, but differently contrived by different peoples; some hang their victims with head toward the ground, some impale their private parts, others stretch out their arms on a fork-shaped gibbet; I see cords, I see scourges, and for each separate limb and each joint there is a separate engine of torture! But I see also Death. There, too, are bloodthirsty enemies and proud fellow-countrymen; but yonder, too, I see Death. Slavery is no hardship when, if a man wearies of the yoke, by a single step he may pass to freedom. O Life, by the favour of Death I hold thee dear!" (Sen. *Marc*. 20. 3; tr. Basore 1932).

[20] Golden 1988.

[21] Parker 2001, 133. See also Mayer i Olivé 2018.

[22] Skinner 2005, 210 and Barton 1993.

3. The Crucial Problem of "Identification"

Writing a sociocultural history of sadomasochism in Antiquity implies trying to enter into the mental schemes, thoughts, and emotions of people from the past. Here, one faces an eternal challenge and problem. Are we not often reading things into the sources, although we cannot possibly know whether the writer/audience perceived it the way we do? With due caution, Johnson and Ryan under the heading sadomasochism quote a fragment by Hipponax, which they entitle "A Sound Thrashing". It is a piece full of unusual graphic and violent detail, possibly from a scapegoat ceremony or a ritual for the cure of impotence. The fragmentary lines 2–4 read as "Into the arse … / and [---] my balls [---] / she flogged me with a branch of fig as if I were a sacrifice" (Hipp. fr. 92 West). Johnson and Ryan's remarks are worth quoting in full: "while Hipponax does not indicate that either party receives sexual gratification from the exercise, it is worth considering why the poet chose to write such a confronting poem. Was it simply to shock? Was it to record an ancient ritual (inexplicable to modern readers)? Or, does it reflect a private fantasy of the author?"[23] There are indeed parallels with a description in Petronius, where the hero of the novel is subjected to a bizarre and painful ritual to cure his impotence (*Sat*. 138). Also here titillation has been suggested, but we are unsure whether this was the author's intention or the reaction of his audience.[24] For other passages, Johnson and Ryan are less cautious in their interpretation. A brutal threat in a letter as "if you were to grant us the opportunity to bugger you (πυγίζειν), well will it go when no longer we will thrash you" (*P. Oxy*. 3070) is understood as an indication that the acts usually performed on the addressee were sadomasochistic in nature.[25]

The same problem is strongly present in the interpretation of iconographical evidence. Some scenes of (symbolic) whipping and flagellation have been described as having an erotic undertone. But was this the artist's intention? Or the expected common reaction? Though such interpretation cannot ever be excluded, the strongly negative social connotation of the punishment of flagellation in a society where status and citizenship so much mattered is a matter to take fully into account.[26] Also, the strong link

---

[23] Johnson–Ryan 2005, 169–170.

[24] Johnson–Ryan 2005, 158–159. For both the Hipponax and the Petronius passage Henderson 1991, 22–23 has suggested "sexual sadism".

[25] Johnson–Ryan 2005, 108.

[26] Social inferior status of those whipped in Greek society: Mactoux 2009. On *verberatio* as not meant for Roman citizens, see Rodríguez Ennes 2013. The Etruscan frescoes of the so-called Tomba della Fustigazione near Tarquinia (Italy)

between whipping and initiation/fertility rites implies that such images probably were looked at from a different level, rather than just finding them sexually enticing.[27]

All this presents us with an important caveat: the challenge of looking for traces of what writers and artisans from Antiquity themselves somewhat playfully described or depicted as indulging in subversive suffering.

4. In Search for Traces in Words and Literature

4.1. *Enjoying Sexual Aggression?*

Both the Greek παίζειν and the Latin *ludere* also mean sexual play: activities of both sexes in sexual behaviour, possibly viewed as mutually pleasurable.[28] A now lost graffito from a wall in Herculaneum refers to a form of playful violence (*CIL* 4. 10694):[29]

> Longinus IV Idu[s Iu]lias / Iualias accepit vim hila(re?) / Sturnus am(ator?)
>
> Longinus. Four days before the Ides of July, he received physical force cheerfully. Starling his lover (?)...

The interpretation of this graffito is far from unproblematic. *Accepit vim* does not necessarily imply beating. It may be slang for 'to get screwed' (cf. Ov. *Met*. 1. 679: *vim passa est Phoebe*), in which case the text pretends

---

have not seldom been interpreted as erotically enticing. See Steingräber 2006, 66–69; Jones 1982, 114.

[27] (Auto)flagellation of young and fertility was part of a tradition in Crete and Sparta that can be traced back to Mycenean times: Lebessi 1991; Bonnechère 1993 (on Xen. *Lac*. 2. 9 and Paus. 3. 16. 9–10). Flogging seems to have been part already of a fertility rite in honour of Heracles (see Ar. *Ran*. 499–501): Elderkin 1936. Purification and self-flagellation were part of the Lupercalia festivals in February: Foucher 1976. They lasted up to Christian times and were recuperated by the Christians: Green 1931. The flogging of a young woman on the fresco of the Villa dei Misteri in Pompeii is commonly interpreted as an initiation rite to marriage. See Toynbee 1929. On the fertility rite of the Nonae Caprotinae, involving whipping of fertile women, see Porte 1973. A third century CE sarcophagus with a whipping scene probably depicts initiation into a mystery cult: Gütschow 1932.

[28] Παίζειν as 'playing amorously' in Xen. *Symp*. 9. 2 and LXX *Gen*. 26. 8 (about Jacob and Rebecca). *Ludere* as sexual play in Sen. *Contr*. 1. 2. 22 (*vicinis tamen locis ludunt*; on men taking pleasure in the bride's anus during the first wedding night) or Petr. *Sat*. 11. 2 (*invenit me cum fratre ludentem*). See Adams 1982, 162–163.

[29] See also http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/graffito/AGP-EDR154434.

that Sturnus enjoyed the passive role of being penetrated.[30] It is of course impossible to find out how "cheerfully" Longinus accepted the violence of his lover Sturnus, or whether he would have appreciated the publicity of a wall graffito.[31] The situation reminds somehow of the boy-lover teacher Eumolpus who approached his pupil at night, curious whether he would "accept the offence". The boy did not appear to be reluctant to submit (Petr. *Sat*. 140. 11: *accessi temptaturus an pateretur iniuriam. Nec se reiciebat a blanditiis doctissimus puer* – note the term *blanditiis*).

As regards pleasure and violence, the following fragment by Ovid has often been quoted (*Ars am*. 1. 673–680):

> Vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis:
> Quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse volunt.
> Quaecumque est veneris subita violata rapina,
> gaudet, et inprobitas muneris instar habet.
> At quae cum posset cogi, non tacta recessit,
> ut simulet vultu gaudia, tristis erit.
> Vim passa est Phoebe: vis est allata sorori;
> et gratus raptae raptor uterque fuit.
>
> You may use force; women like you to use it; they often wish to give unwillingly what they like to give. She whom a sudden assault has taken by storm is pleased, and counts the audacity as a compliment. But she who, when she might have been compelled, departs untouched, though her looks feign joy, will yet be sad. Phoebe suffered violence, violence was used against her sister: each ravisher found favour with the ravished.[32]

Ovid's point seems to be that women like to be raped, which is not entirely the same as saying that women take a pleasure in being physically harmed.[33]

The fragment fits in a whole tradition that regards the sexual act as intrinsically violent, and no poet has elaborated more on this than Lucretius. About a lover's ardour he says that "often they set their teeth in the lips / and crush mouth on mouth, because the pleasure is not unmixed /

---

[30] Richlin 1993 is a thorough study on the possible subculture of "passive" men.

[31] Adams 1982, 198 seems inclined to a rather benign interpretation: "Such descriptions are nevertheless euphemistic, since they do not specify the nature of the violence or the corruption. The weakening of the euphemism into means of expressing an act containing no real hostility can be seen at *CIL* IV 10694".

[32] Transl. Mozley–Goold 1929.

[33] For a recent study about this idea, offensive to our sensibilities, and how to deal with it in a classroom discussion, see Wesselmann 2020.

and there are secret stings which urge them to hurt that very thing, / whatever it may be, from which those germs of frenzy grow".[34] Clinging greedily together the lovers' "limbs slacken and melt under the power of delight".[35] Mutual love is celebrated in the following immortal verses "Do you not see also, when mutual pleasure has enchained a pair, / how they are often tormented?"[36]

While some commentators have pointed to sadistic aggression as the dominant element of Lucretius' attack on love, others have commended his valorisation of female sexual response and shared pleasure.[37] Be this as it may be, these passages never point to willful role play, in which one party takes the leading role and the other the submissive one. When the delight in suffering is explicitly stated, it is invariably the dominant male party speaking, and from a contemporary point of view one can seriously doubt the pleasure of the receiving party, whether a woman or a boy.[38]

4.2. *A Specific Feature of Roman Elegy*

A lot has been written on Roman elegy, in which the *persona* seems to take delight in a reversal of the roles.[39] Being caught by Cynthia, who is depicted as a *dura puella*, Propertius has to suffer the hardships of his *militia amoris*. Pain is part and parcel of his experience (Prop. 1. 38: *heu referet quanto verba dolore mea*). As a true *domina*, Cynthia takes a very masculine role: she is allowed to have other boyfriends, but forces her

---

[34] Lucr. 4. 1080–1084: *et dentes inlidunt saepe labellis* / *osculaque adfligunt, quia non est pura voluptas* / *et stimuli subsunt qui instigant laedere id ipsum,* / *quodcumque est, rabies unde illaec germina surgunt.* The translations of Lucretius are those by Rouse 1924. For erotic biting, see Plut. *Demetr*. 27. 3 (Demetrius' carrying the bites of Lamia on his neck); Plut. *Pomp*. 2. 2 (Pompey's courtisane Flora bearing the marks of his teeth); Mart. 11. 70. 3–4.

[35] Lucr. 4. 1114: *membra voluptatis dum vi labefacta liquescunt*.

[36] Lucr. 4. 1201–1202: *nonne vides etiam quos mutua saepe voluptas* / *vinxit, ut in vinclis communibus excrucientur?*

[37] Skinner 2005, 233. See also Ov. *Ars am*. 2. 683–684 with an explicit valuation of the importance of mutual sexual gratification.

[38] In all such statements are not very different from a quote like "surely he wants it. His bottom is used to it, and he needs his daily share" (*SB* 5. 7655 – a mother recommending a regular beating for her son). See Laes 2005, 79. See Levin-Richardson 2019 for shocking reports on present-day child brothels, where it is expressed that the young prostitute enjoys the submissive treatment. For an excellent portrayal of the male-dominant and politically most incorrect discourse on sexuality in ancient Rome, see Toner 2016, 79–106.

[39] On role inversion in Roman elegy, see Lyne 1979; Murgatroyd 1981; McCarthy 1998; Eyben – Laes – Van Houdt 2003, 115–118.

lover to beg for mercy when he is caught with prostitutes at a party. In the same way, Tibullus also represents himself as submissive to his *dura puella* called Delia. Both poets inscribe themselves in the tradition of the elegy, which from Alexandrine times was viewed as a soft, emasculated and weak genre (*mollis* and *levis* are adjectives often used). At the same time, these writers play with the concept of Roman manliness. In the end, Propertius ranks himself higher on the poetical scale than his contemporary Ponticus, who composed epic poems. Indeed, his passion and enduring of love's hardships will grant him eternal fame (Prop. 1. 7. 26: *ardoris nostri magne poeta iaces* – "you lie here, as great poet of our passion"). While in most interpretations the playfulness or the social inversion in the elegiac poems has been emphasised, very few scholars have been willing to accept an autobiographic reading, regarding Propertius or Tibullus as clinical masochists.[40] While it is true that the elegists complain of the pain they experience in love, they do not claim to derive pleasure from that pain.[41] It should also be stressed that such role reversals do not exclusively belong to the field of elegy, and that one should we wary not to label "lighter" statements as masochist.[42]

Socio-cultural historians would like to know whether the feelings and sentiments as expressed in Roman elegy also found resonance with a broader audience, or even borrowed elements from a common discourse on love and erotics. Contrary to what is often believed, such evidence exists in the form of small inscribed objects spread over the provinces: pocket mirrors, *fibulae*, finger rings, hanging jewelry with gemstones, writing pens, spinning wheels, tablespoons, clay vessels, and glass vessels.[43] Such gifts every now and then refer to reciprocal gratification (*AE* 1911. 224: *veni da do vita* – "Come give life, I give you life"); to overwhelming aggression (*AE* 2009. 989: *[O]pstipe(!) si amas* – "When you love me, I will completely overwhelm you"); to burning love (Thüry 2004, 58: *us(sis)ti* – "you have set me on fire"); a blade with an obvious innuendo

[40] Such interpretation is the focus of Rabinowitz 2000. Veyne 1983 is a classic that stresses strongly the entertaining aspect of Roman elegy.

[41] Frederick 1997.

[42] An Elvis Presley song from 1957 has the following lines: *I just wanna be your teddy bear / Put a chain around my neck / and lead me anywhere. Oh let me be, your teddy bear*. In the Greek tradition, one finds Anac. 22. 15–16: καὶ σάνδαλον γενοίμην, μόνον πόσιν πάτει μέ ("I wish I were a sandal and that you only trod on me") or Philostr. *Ep*. 37: ὦ ἄδετοι πόδες, ὦ κάλλος ἐλεύθερον, ὦ τρισευδαίμων ἐγὼ καὶ μακάριος, ἐὰν πατῇ με ("Oh feet untethered! Oh beauty released! Oh a thousand times happy and jubilant me, if she were to tread on me"). For a catalogue of what is labeled as masochism with Philostratus, see Gallé Cejudo 2018.

[43] All the following examples are quoted, illustrated and explained by Thüry 2004.

(*CIL* 13. 10024. 58 a: *Si da*/*s do* – "if you do it to me, I will be thoroughly with you too");[44] and even an explicit allusion to the elegiac *servitium amoris* on a spin whorl (*ILTG* 524: *Ave domina* / *siti{i}o* – "Hail, mistress, I am thirsty"). These objects and their messages from all over the empire beg the question as to whether the elegiac poets invented a language of love and erotics that spread out over the Latin-speaking provinces, or whether they picked up and integrated a vocabulary that already was widespread.[45]

In all, it would be a gross overstatement to say that the use of violence is excessively praised or viewed as agreeable to both parties in the elegiac tradition. "To beat your girl" (*verberare puellam*) indeed is a motif with Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius, but in general the act is viewed as outrageous to a beloved one, unworthy of a Roman, and even a sort of blasphemous action.[46] It is true that Ovid added an element of comical addition to the subject of feminine violence, but this should rather be compared with scratches, rage at women's hair, body and clothes as one encounters in modern cinematography. "In spite of the seriousness of the actions, (…) situations are chararacterized by a level of comedy that erases every sentiment of indignation that one could feel for the outrage suffered by women".[47]

5. Pleasure and Reversal of Roles in Iconography

5.1. *The Greek Dossier of Sandal Spanking*

Sandal-spanking seems to have been a particular feature of punishment in domestic situations, among parents of both sexes, as depicted on Greek vases. The album by Beck lists thirteen cases, the majority of which come from Athens in the late sixth or the fifth century BCE, with some examples from Italy (Etruscan or Puglian).[48] Again, it is a matter of interpretation of whether one would like to interprete these scenes as erotic. One wonders what is behind a depiction on a hydria in which a naked boy who has just been punished shows five sandal marks on his body, while an apparently naked young woman is kneeling before a bare-chested reclining young

[44] Adams 1982, 20–22 on knives as phallic symbols.

[45] A question often overlooked, but highlighted in works as Pichin 1902 and Stroh 1983.

[46] Key texts are Tib. 1. 10. 51–68; Prop. 2. 5. 17–30; Ov. *Ars* 2. 169–176; Prop. 4. 5. 27–32. For analysis of the motif, see Dimundo 2018.

[47] Comical addition in Ov. *Am*. 1. 7, on which see Dimundo 2018, 125–134 (quote on p. 134).

[48] Beck 1975, 44–46, with plates 50–53.

man.[49] There were obvious different layers to the iconography, as sandals were connoted with sexual readiness, while also barefootedness was sometimes linked with the corruption of youth.[50] In Athens, Aphrodite with the sandal was worshipped as a goddess of marriage and fertility. Various depictions of the goddess raising the sandal in order to hit have the same meaning as fertility rites involving flagellation.[51]

A pelike by Euphronios (Villa Giulia 12109) has attracted particular attention. It depicts a seated youth raising a sandal to a boy with a semi-erection. Could this image refer to shared sadomasochism?[52] Others have suggested that the boy was a slave, caught during the sexual act, and therefore due to be punished.[53] We may indeed imagine how these depictions were understood differently, according to viewers – while the audience would perceive the different layers depending on their personal taste and sentiments.[54]

5.2. *The Roman Depictions of (Armed) Dominant Women*

For Roman evidence from the province, we should turn our attention to the so-called Rhône-medals, vases with applied molded scenes. Dating from the second to the third century CE, the picture on the medals are quite unique, not only because of their depicting quite extraordinary erotic scenes, but also because of the accompanying text, which functions as in comics. Although the medals have been properly brought together, an updated scholarly edition is lacking.[55] The following table gives an overview of what is available and relevant for the present chapter.[56]

---

[49] Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum 530. See Beck 1975, pl. 53 n. 274. See also Mitchell 2009, 203–205.

[50] Younger 2004, 172. See also Kilmer 1993, 108–110 and 121–124 and the comprehensive chapter by Levine 2005, 55–72. Surprisingly little is said on the erotics of footwear in the recent volume by Pickup–Waite 2019.

[51] Deonna 1936.

[52] Glazebrook 2014, 165. The interpretation of shared sadomasochism with Shapiro 2000, 29.

[53] Lear–Cantarella 2008, 121–123 with images.

[54] As different scholars indeed tend to see different layers too. See Sparkes 1977, 309: "Ch. VI deals with punishments, and one wonders if perhaps erotic stimulation might not play a major part in some scenes".

[55] Wuilleumier–Audin 1952. In the table, I will use *W–A* as an abbreviation for this volume.

[56] This table is based on the findings listed by Thüry 2001; Thüry 2008, 295–302. In the last column, * indicate that the reader can find the image via Manfred Clauss Epigraphik Datenbank (http://www.manfredclauss.de/), while ** means that Thüry 2001 offers an image.

Table: "Sadomasochism" based on the examples in Thüry 2001

	Main edition	Province/ place	Text	Translation	Image
1	*CIL* 12. 5687, 38; *CAG* 84. 3, p. 285	Gallia Narbonensis/ Orange	Vides / quam be/ne cha/las	You see how good you are in bed.	**
2	Eros p. 298	Gallia Narbonensis/ Arles	[R]umpes me.	Transpierce me!	* / **
3	*W–A* 69; *CAG* 84. 3, p. 285	Gallia Narbonensis/ Orange	Ita valea(m) / decet me.	May I stay healthy in this way. It fits me.	**
4	*W–A* 68; *CAG* 69. 1, p. 356	Gallia Narbonensis/ Sainte-Colombe	Ita valea(m) decet me	May I stay healthy in this way. It fits me.	
5	*CIL* 12. 5687. 34	Gallia Narbonensis/ Sainte-Colombe	Ita valea(m) decet me	May I stay healthy in this way. It fits me.	
6	*W–A* 70; *CIL* 12. 5687. 28	Gallia Narbonensis/ Sainte-Colombe	Orte vene / est	Right away. It is good.	
7	*W–A* 74; *CAG* 69. 2, p. 819; *AE* 1982. 712. 13	Lugudunensis/ Lyon	[Orte] scutu[s est]	Really! It is a shield.	**
8	*CIL* 12. 5687. 37; *CAG* 84. 3, p. 285	Gallia Narbonensis/ Orange	Vicisti / domi/na. // D[a mer-?]/ ce[dem?]	You have won, mistress. // Give me money (?)	
9	*CAG* 84. 3, p. 286	Gallia Narbonensis/ Orange	Tu sola nica	You alone, win!	
10	*W-A* 71; *CAG* 69. 1, p. 356	Gallia Narbonensis/ Sainte-Colombe	Tu sola nica	You alone, win!	
11	*CAG* 69. 2, p. 818	Lugudunensis/ Lyon	Tu sola nica	You alone, win!	
12	*CIL* 13. 10013. 30	Germania Inferior/ Xanten	Tu sola nica	You alone, win!	**

The Rhône-medals indeed show examples of reversal of sexual roles in different forms, but it remains to be seen in how far physical pain seems to be involved (as Thüry rather swiftly turns to the use of the term sadomasochism).

First, there are some instances of "dominating" women, taking the lead in sexual play. On medal no. 1 it is suggested that the naked woman sitting in the top position is speaking. She apparently encourages a (less experienced?) man, and makes compliments about his sexual performance (no. 1, fig. 1 a).[57] One observes a same position in no. 2, where a woman encourages her partner to do the job properly and thoroughly.[58] On four other medals, one of which has a different text, the woman sits in the top position, facing her male partner with her back (nos. 3–6). She is holding a mirror in the right hand. From the open mouth, it is clear that this time the words of the man are echoed, who is at the same time emptying the content of a rhyton vase. It looks as if he is hoping for his sexual vigour to continue, and he is apparently pleased by the image of himself in the mirror.[59]

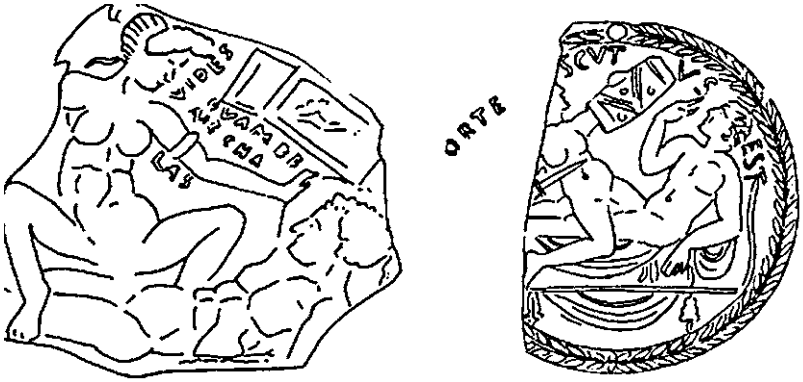

Fig. 1 a–b (left to right): table no. 1 and no. 7

Second, even more dominance and exertion of power is suggested when the woman is wearing arms. In no. 7 (fig. 1 b), a naked woman is sitting on the top, while holding a shield on her left arm, and a sword in her right hand.

---

[57] Thüry 2001, 573. On *c(h)alare*, see Adams 1982, 172–173. As the Greek χαλάω, it refers to 'relax', 'set down', 'slacken'. With the female partner speaking, there might be another reversal of the roles, since *calare* also means 'to open the vagina' (*OLD* s.v.[2]). See Adkin 2011 referring to Ps.-Probus *Nom. gramm*. 4. 215. 20 (Keil).

[58] Thüry 2001, 571–572, interpreting the future indicative *rumpes* as a mode which comes close to the imperative. Adams 1982, 150–151 on *(dis)rumpere* as a metaphor of bursting.

[59] Thüry 2001, 572.

In what looks like a playful parrying gesture, her reclining male partner is raising his right. The arms possibly suggest a female gladiator or fighter.[60] As the shield acts as a symbol for protection, the combination with the obviously phallic sword gives the whole setting a humoristic air of reversal of roles. Also the male resistance and submission needs to be understood in this way.[61] Another erotic medal from Orange, now lost and with no drawing surviving, reportedly pictured a woman sitting on top with a sword in her right hand (no. 8). The dialogue between the two partners mentions the handing over of money and might thus refer to a scene in a brothel.[62] Erotic scenes with women holding weapons are common on lamps. A popular scene (fig. 2) shows a reclining male, his right hand under the cushion and his left hand on his flank. His partner is sitting on him, while holding a curved dagger with her right hand and a small rectangular shield with her left hand. She thereby shows the features of a Thracian gladiator's equipment.

Fig. 2: woman holding arms on an erotic lamp,
Chrzanovski–Djaoui 2018, 155

Copies of such lamps were found in Northern Iberian and Rhine Valley regions. Originating from Italy, they were mostly produced by Gallic workshops, and found all over the Rhône valley and in the South of

[60] *Scutus* exists as a variant for *scutum* with Turpil. *com*. 40 Ribbeck³ (= Non. Marc. 226 Müller). Taillardat 1998 dismisses this possibility, and prefers to translate as "Quick! It has been reached!" (*scutus* as the participle *secutus* with passive meaning), pointing to the metaphor of sports and charioteering. Taillardat fails to take into account the clear depiction of a shield.

[61] Thüry 2001, 573–574. Adams 1982, 21–22 on the sword as a sexual symbol. Thüry also suggests that a shield could be a symbol for female genitals, but he fails to give evidence for this, and it is hard to see how it could. Adams does not mention the shield as a sexual symbol.

[62] Thüry 2001, 574.

France.[63] Weapons were indeed a popular metaphor for sexual play, and a fascination with female gladiators was part of the Roman mental sphere.[64]

Finally, a set of four medals (no. 9–12) have a somewhat similar iconography as no. 3–6, with the woman "riding" in top position, facing her partner with her back and holding a mirror in her right hand. The man holds a crown in his right hand and a palm in his left, both symbols of victory in sports and circus games. In combination with the Greek word *nica*, these items symbolise the erotic victory of the lady: the metaphor of riding and circus charioteering is eminently present.[65]

In all, it is difficult to assess how such images and depictions impacted on their viewers. In fact, nos. 7–12 would be unique instances of the receiving party acknowledging pleasure or gratification in submission. Maybe these images only aroused laughter: they may have comically confirmed fears and obsessions. But perhaps they also prompted their Roman viewers to question the one-sided, typically male-oriented model of penetrating and being penetrated and to explore other less conventional forms of sexuality that gave both partners an active role and promised mutual satisfaction. Whether such exploration went beyond the vicissitudes of viewing and imagination, we may never know with certainty.[66]

6. Role Play and Children

There are psychological mechanisms that come close to sadism or masochism in role playing, when one role is forcefully imposed by one person on another. In the case of children and young people, this is already highlighted by Herodotus in an anecdote about the so-called Game of the King, by which one young person assigned (unpleasant) tasks to a peer. Herodotus' story is about the later Persian king Cyrus the Great, who as a boy was thought to be the son of a cowherd. When ten-year-old Cyrus

[63] Chrzanovski–Djaoui 2018, 155.

[64] Adams 1982, 19–22 on weaponry as sexual metaphor, noting that "Words for weapons lent themselves readily to risqué jokes" (p. 19). On female gladiators and erotic fascination, see Mañas 2011; Laes 2019b.

[65] Thüry 2001, 574–575. See also Thüry 2017 on no. 12. For the "riding" woman, Taillardat 1998, 91 has pointed to Arist. *Lys*. 677–678: ἱππικώτατον γάρ ἐστι χρῆμα κἄποχον γυνή, / κοὐκ ἂν ἀπολίσθοι τρέχοντος ("For everyone knows how talented they all are in the saddle, having long practised how to straddle. No matter how they're jogged there up and down, they're never thrown"). Adams 1982, 165–166 has extensively collected the evidence on the sexual metaphor of riding.

[66] Eyben – Laes – Van Houdt 2003, 124 and Clarke 1998, 279. For the topic of women's active roles, see Levin-Richardson – Kamen 2015.

was assigned the role of king in the aforementioned roleplaying game, he had one of his peers, a son of a Median aristocrat, whipped because he did not obey the king's orders. This boy's father went to court, together with his unfortunate son to complain about the mistreatment, which was still apparent on the boy's shoulders. To Herodotus, the story is not about the abuse of power and possible psychological pleasure taken in it, but the foreshadowing of Cyrus as a real leader, revealing his true royal nature (Hdt. 1. 114–115). Surely, the anecdote does not suggest that sexual pleasure was involved, but the mechanism cannot be ruled out.

The foretelling character of role playing and the Game of the King possibly resonate in an anecdote in Tacitus, where seventeen-year-old Nero during the Saturnalia festivities imposes the unpleasant task of singing in public to his thirteen-year-old, shy rival Britannicus. The boy got away with it by reciting a song hinting at his expulsion from his father's house and throne, and thereby invoked the pity of the bystanders (Tac. *Ann*. 13. 15). In an almost contemporary text, Plutarch offers a remarkable account of an incident at a birthday party, with children of different ages and families gathering together. A role playing game of playing judge resulted in an attractive boy being locked up into a separate chamber. Had he not been helped by young Cato, who understood what was going on, the game would have resulted in sexual molestation (Plut. *Cat. Mi*. 2. 5–6). According to his biographer in the *Historia Augusta*, young Septimius Severus indulged in playing the judge before he went to school. Though it is not said so explicitly, his standing with the rods and axes before him, again suggests an element of domination and violence involved (*SHA Sev*. 1. 4).

All these stories obviously have to be read and understood in their literary context and they should not be taken at face value. With due methodological caution, they can serve as examples to study bullying in the past – in the same way, they make readers consider the possibility of mechanisms of domination and subversion of roles, and some individuals taking pleasure in this.[67]

7. Conclusion

This article has dealt with descriptions or depictions of domination and reversal of sexual roles in Graeco-Roman Antiquity. This was a time long

[67] For an analysis of these stories within the context of bullying, see Laes 2019a, 37–41.

before the terms ‘sadism’ and ‘masochism’ were coined. The former has its origin in Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), while the latter is named after Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836–1895). Both authors wrote novels about their sexual fantasies. Both terms were introduced into medical terminology and a wider audience by the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) in his foundational *Neue Forschungen auf dem Gebiet der Psychopathia sexualis* from 1890, quoted at the beginning of this essay.

This study has demonstrated how deliberate actions of inflicting or receiving pain for pleasure are only rarely mentioned in ancient art and literature. In scattered literary fragments, one finds references to joy and pleasure in inflicting pain, but the voice of the receiving party is hardly ever heard. Roman elegy with themes as *servitium amoris*, *militia amoris* and *dura puella* seems to come closest to psychological masochism, though the pleasure in receiving pain is not explicitly acknowledged, while in elegies the use of physical violence towards one’s lover is either frowned upon or described in a slightly humorous way. Depictions of ritual flagellation and Greek vases with the motif of spanking may arouse the suspicion of subversive pleasure in suffering with the spectators, though many different interpretations of this particular iconography have been suggested. Some motifs on Roman ceramic from the western provinces explicitly play with themes as dominant and/or armed women, with some men reportedly acknowledging their taking pleasure in being dominated, but the element of pain is not strongly present on these ceramics. From the point of view of a present-day psychologist, the role play described in some ancient accounts points to dominance and taking pleasure in submitting to one’s peers, though this is not an interpretation the ancient writers themselves would share.

On further consideration, the absence of sadomasochism in Antiquity deserves further notice. The somewhat controversial Hite-report has dealt with the connection between an authoritarian-patriarchal education, beating and sadomasochism in contemporary American society.[68] In the wake of new social history, Lawrence Stone provided interesting evidence of sexual fantasies in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century diaries that are explicitly connected with the memory of corporal punishment in childhood.[69] All major historical surveys on the theme (see n. 3) mention Christianity with its emphasis on suffering and affliction as a possible starting point referring, for instance, to Jerome’s dream of his

[68] Hite 1994, 77–81.
[69] Stone 1977, 439–441.

flagellation in *Epist*. 12.[70] Yet such mentions are a far cry from the explicit acknowledgment of sexual joy and pleasure taken in such acts.

To our contemporary tastes and sensibilities, ancient society was a violent society, as were many civilisations of the past. Yet this begs the question as to why there wasn't any explicit emphasis on subversive suffering as erotic play until the very late eighteenth century. The historian of mentalities Turner has explained how culture and mentality in Western-Europe became increasingly sensitive to pain from the Industrial Revolution on. Anaesthesia, the aspirin and morphine are nineteenth century developments. Public opinion increasingly condemned violent action against animals (the debate on vivisection), prisoners, women and children.[71] Turner also pointed out some remarkable changes in everyday life. Technological progress increased the craving for life's conveniences. The Industrial Revolution caused many people to break through the rather isolated existence of permanently living in one's own village at the countryside. They went to live in big cities and communities, got to know other people, which caused their sense of empathy to increase. The civilisation process as described by Norbert Elias continued: people learn to control themselves (and thus are expected to behave less violent towards others), whereas their concentrating on self-control accounts for the greater focus on their own pains and discomforts.[72] Obviously the point is not that people from the past put up stoically with the severest pains and remained indifferent towards the sufferings of their fellow-men:[73] it is rather the sensitivity towards pain that significantly increased in the last two centuries of the western world.

---

[70] Quite unsurprisingly, psychohistorians have studied how children were taught that love and pain, submission and physical power relations go together. Some have used this evidence to explain the authoritarian image of God as held up by Gregory the Great: Mounteer 1988.

[71] Also other theories have advanced a turning-point in nineteenth century Western views. The Expanding Circle by the cultural philosopher and champion of animal rights P. Singer is socio-biologically inspired. He considers the ethical ability as a modus operandi of the human mind. Initially people observe their own well-being, but gradually extend it to members of the tribe, neighbouring people and eventually to the whole of the world population (The Declaration of Human Rights). Singer also wants to extend this expanding circle of sympathy and empathy towards animals. See Singer 1981.

[72] Turner 1980; Elias 1939.

[73] A controversial thesis adhered to by the Dutch metabletician Van den Bergh, but convincingly refuted by de Moulin, in an inspiring article with testimonies on medicine and pain of patients throughout the centuries, from Greek antiquity up to the nineteenth century. On the experiencing of pain in Antiquity, see Zurhake 2020.

From a biological point of view, one can indeed presume a certain element of domination and submission for sexual life in Antiquity, as well as some people's readiness to acknowledge this in a playful way. However, pain was too much a reality of daily life for it to become a true and outspoken theme in defining one's or other's sexual appetites or practices. The rather casual approach towards pain and suffering is a feature Antiquity shared with almost all societies from the past, with the exception of the western world from the early nineteenth century on. Only in such new conditions of life, the concept of sadomasochism gradually emerged, first classified as pathology or paraphilia in the medical records, and only very recently subject of a movement striving for recognition of its identity. All this is a far cry from Antiquity, where we only discover rare playful allusions to subversive suffering – almost invariably from the side of the dominator, and almost never from the receiving party.

Christian Laes
University of Manchester
christian.laes@manchester.ac.uk

Bibliography

J. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London 1982).
N. Adkin, "What Did Pan Say to Syrinx?: Etymology in Ovid, Metamorphoses, I, 698–712", *Eirene* 47 (2011) 144–149.
C. A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: the Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, NJ 1993).
J. W. Basore (tr.), *Seneca. Moral Essays II: De Consolatione ad Marciam. De Vita Beata. De Otio. De Tranquillitate Animi. De Brevitate Vitae. De Consolatione ad Polybium. De Consolatione ad Helviam*, LCL 254 (Cambridge, MA 1932).
F. Beck, *Album of Greek Education. The Greeks at School and at Play* (Sydney 1975).
P. Bonnechère, "Orthia et la flagellation des éphèbes spartiates : un souvenir chimérique de sacrifice humain", *Kernos* 6 (1993) 11–22.
C. Bonnet, " 'L'immortalité appartient au sage' : Franz Cumont et l'art érotique", *DHA* 26: 2 (2000) 77–97.
K. Bradley, "Auspeitschung. Rome", in: *Handwörterbuch der antiken Sklaverei* I (Stuttgart 2017) 318–320.
V. L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York 1976).
V. L. Bullough, *Sex, Society and History* (New York 1976).
V. L. Bullough, "Sadism, Masochism and History, or When is Behaviour Sado-Masochistic?", in: R. Porter, M. Teich (eds.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science. The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge 1994) 47–62.

M. Carucci, "Domestic Violence in Roman Imperial Society", in: M. C. Pimentel, N. S. Rodrigues (eds.), *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leuven 2018) 59–73.

L. Chrzanovski, D. Djaoui, "A (Partial) Iconographical Dictionary of Early Roman Imperial Lamps (70–130 AD). A Short Study of 290 Discus-Motifs Adorning the Lamps Discovered within the Harbor Garbage Covering the 'Arles-Rhône 3' Shipwreck and of their Geographic Repartition", *Peuce* 16 (2018) 55–198.

J. Christes, "Et nos manum ferulae subduximus. Von brutaler Pädagogik bei Griechen und Römer", in: U. Krebs and J. Forster (eds.), *Vom Opfer zum Täter? Gewalt in Schule und Erziehung von den Sumerern bis zur Gegenwart* (Bad Heilbrun 2003) 51–70.

J. R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking. Construction of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C. – A.D. 250* (Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA – London 1998).

A. Damet, *La septième porte. Les conflits familiaux dans l'Athène classique* (Paris 2012).

T. S. De Bruyn, "Flogging a Son: the Emergence of the Pater Flagellans in Latin Christian Discourse", *JEC* 7: 2 (1999) 249–290.

D. de Moulin, "A Historical-Phenomenological Study of Bodily Pain in Western Man", *BHM* 48 (1974) 540–570.

W. Deonna, "Aphrodite, la femme et la sandale", *Revue internationale de sociologie* 1 (1936) 5–63.

R. Dimundo, "The Motif of verberare puellam in Latin Elegiac Poetry", in: M. C. Pimentel, N. S. Rodrigues (eds.), *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leuven 2018) 117–137.

S. Dixon, "The Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family", in: B. Rawson (ed.), *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome* (Canberra–Oxford) 99–113.

L. Dossey, "Wife Beating and Manliness in Late Antiquity", *P&P* 199: 1 (2008) 3–40.

G. W. Elderkin, "Xanthias and Herakles", *CPh* 31 (1936) 69–70.

N. Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (Basel 1939).

E. Eyben, C. Laes, T. Van Houdt, *AMOR-ROMA. Liefde en erotiek in Rome* (Leuven 2003).

M. Formisano, "'Im Sinne der Antike': Masochism as Roman Error in Venus in Furs", in: B. Duffalo (ed.), *Roman Error: Classical Reception and the Problem of Rome's Flaws* (Oxford 2017) 153–178.

L. Foucher, "Flagellation et rite de fécondité aux Lupercales", *ABPO* 83 (1976) 273–280.

D. Frederick, "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman Elegy", in: J. P. Hallett, M. B. Skinner (eds.), *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton NJ 1997) 172–196.

R. J. Gallé Cejudo, "The Rhetoric of Violence and Erotic Masochism in the Epistles of Philostratus", in: M. C. Pimentel, N. S. Rodrigues (eds.), *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leuven 2018) 181–194.

A. Glazebrook, " 'Sex Ed' at the Archaic Symposium. Prostitutes, Boys, and Paideia", in: M. Masterson, N. Rabinowitz, J. Robson (eds.), *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World* (London – New York 2014) 157–178.
M. Golden, "The Effects of Slavery on Citizen Households and Children: Aeschylus, Aristophanes and Athens", *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 15: 3 (1988) 455–475.
W. Mc. A. Green, "The Lupercalia in the Fifth Century", *CPh* 26 (1931) 60–69.
M. Gütschow, "Eine Reliefplatte aus der Katakombe des Praetextatus", *RAC* 8 (1932) 119–145.
J. A. Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: a Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms", in: D. Balch, C. Osiek (eds.), *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids MI, 2003) 231–254.
K. Harper, "Culture, Nature, and History: The Case of Ancient Sexuality", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55: 4 (2013) 986–1016.
J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Poetry* (Oxford ²1991).
S. Hite, *The Hite Report on the Family: Eroticism and Power Between Parents and Children* (New York 1994).
V. Hunter, "Constructing the Body of the Citizen: Corporal Punishment in Classical Athens", *EMC/CV* 36 (1992) 271–291.
M. Johnson, T. Ryan, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature. A Sourcebook* (London – New York 2005).
C. Jones, *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (Austin, TX 1982).
M. F. Kilmer, *Greek Erotica on Attic-Red Figure Vases* (London 1993).
R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*, tr. F. S. Klaf (New York 1965 [orig. ¹²1903]).
D. G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (London – New York 1998).
C. Laes, "Child Beating in Roman Antiquity. Some Reconsiderations", in: K. Mustakallio, J. Hanska, H.-L. Sainio, V. Vuolanto (eds.), *Hoping for Continuity. Childhood, Education and Death in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Rome 2005) 75–89.
C. Laes, "Children and Bullying/Harassment in Graeco-Roman Antiquity", *CJ* 115: 1 (2019) 33–60.
C. Laes, "Ongewone gladiatoren", *Hermeneus* 91: 1 (2019) 8–15.
N. Largier, *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal*. Tr. G. Harman (New York 2007).
A. Lear, E. Cantarella, *Images of Greek Pederasty. Boys Were Their Gods* (London – New York 2008).
A. Lebessi, "Flagellation ou autoflagellation: données iconographiques pour une tentative d'interprétation", *BCH* 115 (1991) 99–123.
S. Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii. Sex, Class, and Gender at the Margins of Roman Society* (Cambridge 2019).
S. Levin-Richardson, D. Kamen, "Lusty Ladies in the Roman Imaginary", in: R. Blondell, K. Ormand (eds.), *Ancient Sex: New Essays* (Columbus, OH 2015) 231–252.

D. Levine, "EPATON BAMA (Her Lovely Footsteps): The Erotics of Feet in Ancient Greece", in: D. L. Cairns (eds.), *Body Language in the Greek and Roman World* (Swansea 2005) 55–72.
L. Llewellyn-Jones, "Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women in Ancient Greece", in: S. Lambert (ed.), *Sociable Man. Essays in Social History in Honour of Nick Fisher* (Swansea 2011).
R. O. A. M. Lyne, "Servitium Amoris", *CQ* 29 (1979) 117–130.
M.-M. Mactoux, "Esclave, fouet, rituel", in: L. Bodiou (ed.), *Chemin faisant: mythes, cultes et société en Grèce ancienne : mélanges en l'honneur de Pierre Brulé* (Rennes 2009) 59–70.
A. Mañas, "New Evidence of Female Gladiators: the Bronze Statuette at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe of Hamburg", *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28: 18 (2011) 2726–2752.
M. Mayer i Olivé, "Violence against Slaves as an Element of Theatre in Plautus", in: M. C. Pimentel, N. S. Rodrigues (eds.), *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leuven 2018) 21–42.
K. McCarthy, "Servitium amoris: amor servitii", in: S. R. Joshel, S. Murnaghan (eds.), *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations* (London – New York 1998) 174–192.
A. Mitchell, *Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour* (Cambridge 2009).
C. A. Mounteer, "God the Father and Gregory the Great: The Discovery of a Late Roman Childhood", *Journal of Psychohistory* 26: 1 (1998) 436–448.
J. H. Mozley (tr.), G. P. Goold (rev.), *Ovid. Art of Love. Cosmetics. Remedies for Love. Ibis. Walnut-tree. Sea Fishing. Consolation*, LCL 232 (Cambridge, MA 1929).
P. Murgatroyd, "Militia amoris and the Roman Elegists", *Latomus* 40 (1981) 59–79.
H. Parker, "Crucially Funny, or Tranio on the Couch: the Servus Callidus and Jokes about Torture", in: E. Segal (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Menander, Plautus and Terence* (Oxford 2001) 127–137.
J. Peakman, *The Pleasure's All Mine: A History of Perverse Sex* (London 2013).
R. Pichin, *De sermone amatorio apud Latinos elegiarum scriptores* (Paris 1902).
S. Pickup, S. Waite (eds.), *Shoes, Slippers and Sandals. Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity* (London 2019).
M. C. Pimentel, N. S. Rodrigues (eds.), *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leuven 2018).
D. Porte, "Le devin, son bouc et Junon. (Ovide, Fastes II, 425–452)", *REL* 51 (1973) 171–189.
J. Rabinowitz, "Joyous Dread. Erotic Masochism and Initiatory Symbolism in the Poetry of Propertius", in: C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History 10* (Brussels 2000) 209–231.
B. Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford 2003).
A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus. Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New Haven, CT 1983).

A. Richlin, “Not Before Homosexuality: the Materiality of the ‘Cinaedus’ and the Roman Law against Love between Men”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3 (1993) 523–573.
L. Rodríguez Ennes, “Algunas cuestiones en torno a la ‘verberatio’”, *SDHI* 79: 2 (2013) 883–897.
W. H. D. Rouse (tr.), *Lucretius. On the Nature of Things. Rev. by M. F. Smith*, LCL 181 (Cambridge, MA 1924).
C. J. Rusthon, “Sexual Variations”, in: R. Evans (ed.), *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Middle Ages* (London 2011) 81–100.
W. Schmitz, “Gewalt”, *Handwörterbuch der antiken Sklaverei* II (Stuttgart 2017) 1181–1191.
H. A. Shapiro, “Leagros and Euphronios: Painting Pederasty in Athens”, in: T. Hubbard (ed.), *Greek Love Reconsidered* (New York 2000) 12–32.
B. Shaw, “The Family in Late Antiquity: the Experience of Augustine”, *P&P* 115: 1 (1987) 3–51.
P. Singer, *Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology* (Princeton, NJ 1981).
M. B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Malden, MA – Oxford 2005).
B. A. Sparkes, rev.: “F. A. Beck, *Album of Greek Education*”, *CR* 27: 2 (1977) 308–309.
S. Steingräber, *Abundance of Life. Etruscan Wallpainting* (Malibu Beach, CA 2006).
L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England (1500–1800)* (London 1977).
W. Stroh, “Die Ursprünge der römischen Liebeselegie. Ein altes Problem im Licht eines neuen Fundes”, *Poetica* 15 (1983) 205–246.
J. Taillardat, “Orte scutus est”, *RPh* 72: 1 (1998) 87–93.
G. E. Thüry, “Die Palme für die ‘Domina’. Masochismus in der Antike”, *AW* 32: 6 (2001) 571–576.
G. E. Thüry, “Römer sucht Römerin. Liebeswerbung in römischen Kleininschriften”, *Pegasus-Onlinezeitschrift* 4: 1 (2004) 54–67.
G. E. Thüry, “Die erotischen Inschriften des instrumentum domesticum. Ein Überblick”, in: M. Hainzmann, R. Wedenig (eds.), *Instrumenta Inscripta Latina II: Akten des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums, Klagenfurt, 5.–8. Mai 2005* (Klagensfurt 2008) 295–302.
G. Thüry, “Ein Fund von Rhônekeramik aus Xanten”, in: M. Müller (ed.), *Grabung, Forschung, Präsentation [2017]: Sammelband* (Darmstadt 2017) 155–167.
J. Timmer, “Auspeitschung. Griechenland”, *Handwörterbuch der antiken Sklaverei* I (Stuttgart 2017) 315–318.
J. Toner, *Release Your Inner Roman. A Treatise by Nobleman Marcus Sidonius Falx* (New York 2016).
J. M. C. Toynbee, “The Villa Item and a Bride’s Ordeal”, *JRS* 19 (1929) 67–87.
J. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast. Animals, Pain and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore, MD – London 1980).
P. Veyne, *L’élégie érotique romain. L’amour, la poésie et l’occident* (Paris 1983).
G. Vorberg, *Ars erotica veterum* (Mainz 1928).

P. Wuilleumier, A. Audin, *Les médaillons d'applique gallo-romains de la vallée du Rhône* (Paris 1952).
K. Wesselmann, "Antike Idealen – verschenkte Potentialen? Sperrige Inhalte des Altsprachenunterrichts nach #metoo", *Cursor* 16 (2020) 34–42.
M. Wistrand, *Entertainment and Violence in Ancient Rome. The Attitudes of Roman Writers in the First Century* (Göteborg 1992).
J. G. Younger, *Sex in the Ancient World. From A to Z* (London – New York 2004).
M. Zimmermann (ed.), *Extreme Formen von Gewalt in Bild und Text des Altertums* (Munich 2009).
M. Zimmermann, *Gewalt: Die dunkle Seite der Antike* (Munich 2013).
L. Zurhake, "Chronical Pain and Illness: Pain and Meaning: Interpreting Chronic Pain and Illness in Greco-Roman Antiquity", in: C. Laes (ed.), *A Cultural History of Disability in Antiquity* (London 2020) 47–65.

This paper asks whether Graeco-Roman culture bears any traces of voluntary indulging in pain and punishment as a form of sexual game. In order to answer such a question, the context of slavery and the use of violence in education needs to be acknowledged first. After this, I look for traces in ceremonies, iconography, love poetry, and role playing by children. More than a century ago, scholars had already tried to identify sado-masochism in Antiquity. Though such is surely an anachronistic approach, a careful inquiry of pain and reversal of roles reveals vital features of ancient society.

В статье ставится вопрос, есть ли в греко-римской культуре следы удовольствия от боли и наказания как разновидности сексуальной игры. С этой целью автор в первую очередь обращается к рассмотрению рабства и телесных наказаний в образовании, затем пытается найти следы проявления "садомазохизма" в ритуалах, иконографии, любовной поэзии и детских ролевых играх. Попытка выявить садомазохизм в античности уже была предпринята учеными более ста лет тому назад. Этому подходу, несомненно, присущ анахронизм, однако внимательное исследование боли и обмена ролями позволяет выявить сущностные черты античного общества.

CONSPECTUS

Статьи сопровождаются резюме на русском и английском языке
Summary in Russian and English