THEY DON’T ALL LOOK ALIKE: BODY MODIFICATION AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN ANCIENT ATHENS

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To my parents, Bill and Peggy Schneck
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Many have published works examining the Classical Greek paradigm of Us versus Other. This paradigm was an ordering of society into a clearly divided class system. It separated the highest level of Greek society from the other (perceived) lower classes through a variety of criteria. These criteria included judgments based on race, age, gender, aesthetics, and wealth. John E. Coleman and Clark A. Walz, focusing primarily on literary evidence, have edited a volume examining Us and Other as they were divided by ethnicity and country. Nicole Laroux wrote a book using gender as well as race as the dividing lines between Us and Other. Beth Cohen edited a volume on how the Greeks represented the divisions artistically. Her chapters investigate the aesthetics of Us and Other through many different media—clothing, gesture, animalism, occupation, and race. There are many other fine studies on the division of Us and Other, these are just a few examples which weigh upon this study. This study looks at ancient Greece’s classification of humans through a lens which has yet to be adequately explored, body modification. It looks at body modification using many of the facets used in the three mentioned studies above—literature, gender, race, and
aesthetics. However, its primary focus is how the Greeks enacted body modification and how it furthered their idea of Us versus Other.

For this study a *body modification* is defined as any physical change to the body or hair undertaken to communicate a certain message or identity. Three specific types of body modification are now examined. The treatment of hair was a sign of either respectability or uncouthness. Looking both to literature and material culture, the study focuses heavily on pubic depilation. A groomed and maintained pubic region showed that one was self-controlled while an untended pubes suggested moral inferiority.

Mastectomy among the Amazons is also a concern for the study. The Athenians manipulated and enhanced the degenderization associated with breast removal through myth and art. The study also examines the practice of tattooing in antiquity. Athens used tattoos as penal and servile marks. Other societies, however, used tattoos for decorative or religious purposes. The major points of interest for this part of the study are what forms ancient tattoos took, how Athens employed and perceived them, and how Athens interacted with other tattooing societies. The investigation of these three aspects provides a sense of how Greeks used body modification to support their concept of Us and Other.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Greek world was a world deeply concerned with aesthetics and the visual. This is evident in the words καλός and κάκος, which mean not only “good” and “evil,” respectively, but also “pretty” and “ugly.” For the Greeks aesthetic quality was also moral quality. The beautiful were the good, wholesome group while the ugly were somehow defective, lesser people. This prejudice of form combined with another social structure deeply embedded in the Greek world, the culture of the Other. For the ancient Hellenes the world was divided into two groups, us and everyone else. “Us” included all freeborn Greek males of age. The sense of the Other was so strong in the Greek mentality that Greek women, children, and elderly were sometimes considered as Others. The difference between Us and the Other was a moral and intellectual distinction.\(^1\) Greeks were self-controlled, brave, politically active, and modest; meanwhile barbarians were impulsive, effeminate, and decadent. However, the divide between Greece and the world was physical as well as moral; it was, in fact, aesthetic. Greeks were the idealization of the perfect form while foreigners were ugly and brutish. The aristocratic class was born into the ideal of the innately and physically perfect citizen. Many, however, would certainly not have inherently possessed such idealized beauty; ergo they had to change themselves to achieve the perfect appearance, the body beautiful.

But the Greeks not only modified their own bodies, they went so far as to change the bodies of slaves and foreigners. It was not enough that they exemplified their “us-ness” with their own beauty, the Others that they integrated into their society had to

\(^1\) Coleman (1997).
show their “other-ness” with an ugly and deficient body. The Greeks ensured the “other-ness” of slaves and foreigners in two primary ways, direct physical change and image—modifying propaganda. The native slave population received the concrete body modifications since they were directly under Athenian power. Foreigners not subject to Greek control would have experienced propaganda in forms such as myth, literature, drama, and art meant to distort their bodily image.

These body modifications, whether temporary or permanent, real or supposed, which the Greeks and their barbarian adversaries underwent are the focus of this study. This study defines a body modification as any physical change to the body or hair undertaken to communicate a certain message or identity. However, before examining these changes it is necessary to define the ideal body beautiful.

Larissa Bonfante theorizes that Greek artists frequently portrayed their compatriots as wearing a costume of nudity. While the Egyptians and Easterners saw the naked male body as a sign of poverty and disgrace, the Greeks embraced the display of the youthful male body. This began in association with festivals in initiation as well as religious rites, including athletic competitions such as the Olympics, as early as the 15th Olympiad. Ritual nudity prepared boys for inclusion in military, political, and athletic life while it prepared girls to be wives. In the context of athletics it allowed the prowess of the athletes to be seen in just a glance since all the muscles are exposed. Masculine nudity became essential for training in the gymnasium, for physical performance, and for assessment by other citizens. The appreciation of the male figure

\[2\] Coleman (2007) argues that Greek myths were adjusted to fit a changing world view.

\[3\] Bonfante (1989) 11.
soon evolved from the ritual and athletic to the civic realm. Being naked was a type of civic duty that every citizen must fulfill. This athletic nudity soon became the costume of the Athenian citizen when Athenian citizens were represented in art.\textsuperscript{4} The costume of nudity allowed the Greek male to be seen fully exposed and in the realized ideal of beauty. This makes statuary, vases, architectural sculpture, and wall painting some of the best sources for the body beautiful.

In vase painting the ideal male body is in the full prime of youth, \textit{προθήβησ}. An exemplary example of this preference is a belly amphora\textsuperscript{5} with three dancers by Euthymides. The man on the left holds a cup in his right hand and positions his right side toward the viewer, the middle figure has his back to the viewer while holding a cane above his head, and the third man balances on his left foot with his body turned outwards. The two outer men display well-toned abdominal muscles, and the crease of the muscles around the hip bones is clearly visible. In addition, the man on the right has exceptionally well-developed oblique muscles. The middle dancer has a sturdy back with several contour lines to indicate a strong musculature. None of the men have definition lines on their arms, but the arms of the two figures not covered by fabric have a significant bulge at the location of the biceps and triceps. The legs of all three are broad, suggesting a well-exercised, strong leg, and several of them show faint muscle lines. The presence of such clear musculature and beauty indicates young, fit, and healthy bodies. Euthymides clearly meant to praise these bodies because he inscribed the vase with, “Euphronius never made anything like this!” It is generally agreed that this

\textsuperscript{4} Bonfante (1989).

\textsuperscript{5} Pedely (2002) 204. Munich, Antikensmmlungen 2307, from Vulci. ARV 26, I.
boast refers to the intricacy of his figures’ poses, yet, while he may not be boasting directly about the perfection of the bodies, it should be remembered that a Greek would not have used an imperfect or un-idealized person to display such a point of pride. Therefore, we can conclude that these figures show the ideal beauty.

The extent of the musculature might vary slightly from vase to vase and figure to figure without deviating from the ideal. Heracles is a clear example of varying levels of muscle definition within the ideal. In one vase Heracles presents a serpentine Cerberus to Eurystheus. Only his arms and legs show from behind Cerberus and from under his armor, but they are hyper defined. Despite severe damage to the paint, multiple contour lines are visible on each section of the limbs. Heracles also achieves the ideal with a more moderate amount of muscle lines in a battle scene between him and Antaios. Despite the drastic difference in visible musculature in the five figures from the three vases each is young, toned, and fit.

This ideal in body shape is evident in Greek sculpture, kouroi being the exemplars of the body beautiful. Kouroi, originally thought to have been representations of Apollo, acted as burial markers and offerings to the Gods in the form of votives. Kouroi show a universal anatomical ideal. They have svelte calves and meaty, strong thighs. The demarcation between leg and torso by defined muscles around the hip

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8 The Cerberus vase is Caeretan, which means that it may show a slightly different type of body. Many different regions may have had varying forms, but they were merely slight variations on the same ideal.
9 Richter (1960), led opinion away from the kouroi being representations of Apollo. After she swayed the scholarly opinion Ridgeway attempted to restore the former by arguing most were indeed statues of Phoebus, with the tradition, at the very least, being as pure representation of the God. For more on this debate see their respective works, Kouroi and The Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture.
bones is present. The abdominals are clearly developed and the pectorals sit firm and high on the chest. The arms show minimally, if at all, defining lines of the biceps, but the shape and bulge of the muscle are obvious. All of these features are those presented by vase painters on their idealized men. In the earlier Kouros fitness and musculature were even shown in primarily the same way as in pottery, by line rather than by three dimensionality.  

The representations of the gods in statuary show the ideal. The God Apollo was the idealization of the male body as seen in the Homeric hymn,

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ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος αίζηῳ τε κρατετῷ τε
πρωθήβῃ  χαίτης εἰλθμένος εὐρέας ὤμους
Homeric Hymn to Apollo, 449-450
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Looking like a man, vigorous and stout
And in the prime of youth, flowing hair curled on his broad shoulders

Here Apollo is described as young, strong, and in the perfect phase of youth. This is the same way the kouroi are depicted. Therefore, especially considering the potential connection of the kouroi to Apollo, it can easily be seen that the God embodies the idealized form and the kouroi are reflecting that. The Artemision Zeus is another excellent example of the body beautiful in divine art. His arms and legs have the same quantity of muscle as the Kouros and vases. His chest and torso also display nearly identical musculature; he even has the hyper-defined oblique muscles which appear on many vases.

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10 As in vase painting there are slight regional differences, but they also are variations of the same ideal. See Ridgeway, Brunilde (1977).

The faces in the examples discussed above display similar features. The dancers in Euthymides’ vase, the Kouroi, and the two Heracles’ all have large, prominent, rounded eyes that are a good distance from the nose. With the exception of the Heracles leading Cerberus, all the figures have a nose which slopes down on a relatively similar slant as the forehead then ends in a narrow point.

The hair of all the examples with the exception of Heracles in the Cerberus scene, whose hair is covered, is cut to a length between the ears and the top of shoulders. All of the hair is arranged neatly without any locks sticking out from the group. This neatly placed hair indicates the self-control on which the Greeks prided themselves. The neatness of Heracles’ hair and beard is sharply contrasted in Euphronius’ Kalyx Krater discussed above. In this wrestling scene Heracles struggles with the African Antaios. Antaios is feared for his great strength and his propensity to squeeze his opponents to death. He lives in the desert and keeps his strength through contact with the ground. He is the ultimate uncivilized barbarian, which is shown in the details of his hair and beard. Unlike the neat ringlets of Heracles’ style both are stringy and dirty, painted in rough red and black lines. This sharp juxtaposition of the control and the disorderly emphasizes that Heracles is the ideal.

Καλοί, beautiful men, in Greek art have varying amounts of facial hair. The kouroi, who represent young men, never have beards since they are not old enough to grow them yet. Artists also depicted their subjects in various stages of beard growth. In the tondo of a Kylix by Gorgos a youth wearing a laurel crown kneels holding a hare in one hand and a staff in the other. He has the young, muscular body and neatly

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arranged hair of the ideal. The only physical difference between him and a kouros is that he has a small tuft of hair sprouting along the square of his jaw. This places him between the youth of the kouroi and the age of a god yet still within the ideal.

The body beautiful for the mortal Greek male was, thus, one that reflected self-control, youth, and strength. It consisted of a fit body toned by disciplined exercise and a head with prominent eyes, a narrow and harmonious nose, and well-groomed hair. There was some variance in certain areas. According to his age a Greek may or may not have a beard, so long as it was well groomed, and he needed not have the brazen physique of a Heracles, so long as he was clearly still in shape and exercised.

The easiest parts of the Greek female aesthetic ideal to establish are the face and hair, simply because that is what we see the most, since women are usually at least partially clothed. The nose follows the same pattern as the male nose in that it slopes at nearly the same angle as the forehead, from which it continues without break. The nose also ends in a narrow tip. The mouth ranges in length, though it never dominates the face. Women’s lips usually are small and demure, never achieving too much of a pout. In contrast to this Greek ideal, a crooked or bent nose, along with full lips and protruding chins can be seen in many vases depicting foreigners, especially Africans, a good example of such being a white-ground lekythos by the Bosanuet painter. The korai, the female version of the Kouroi, had dominant roundish eyes like their male counterparts. The ideal of these large eyes seems to have something to do with Hera's

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13 Especially after the fourth century. Before then women depicted as victims, often of rape, were shown in some form of nudity.

14 The rounded and bent features of foreigners were present in males and females.

Homeric epithet, Βοώπις (Ox-eyed), since many of the korais’ eyes resemble those of oxen. Unlike men, free women always have long hair. Korai have their hair down, cascading over the back and chest. On vase images women usually have an up-do, occasionally with a head scarf or ornament.

Establishing the ideal for female bodies presents more of a problem than that of the face because women were not included in the costume of nudity. Proper Greek women were not to be seen outside the home or named publicly, so it would have been highly immoral—as well as unlikely—for a female citizen to be seen naked. There are, however, depictions of nude women. The identification of these women is largely debated. Many interpret nudity as a sign of prostitution, but this is not universally accepted. Because of the large number of prostitutes in the population and the general acceptance of nude women as prostitutes, they must be considered in this study.

While the general public would not have wanted prostitutes to have been depicted as the ideal of beauty, it is probable that the prostitutes, and their depictions, mirror the norm to a degree. The prostitute’s job is largely an aesthetic one. She needs to be arousing to attract her customers. It is not a far leap to think that she may model her appearance on the standard of beauty to which the clientele holds his wife, although the old Greek adage should be kept in mind; “We have whores to take care of our needs, courtesans for our pleasure, and wives to bear children.” This might indicate that what aroused a man was not the standard of his wife, but rather what was different from his wife, so the representation of prostitutes may actually be opposed to the ideal of the respectable house wife. This leaves the question of the feminine ideal somewhat

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16 Apollodorus, *Against Neaira* 122.
in limbo. Therefore, the only thing to do is examine images of housewives as well as (possible) prostitutes and from there look for any corollaries.

The first hetaera in the study comes from the tondo of a cup\(^\text{17}\) by the Painter of the Agora Chairias Cups. In this scene a nude prostitute with a wrapped head and pierced ears kneels before an altar and offers a sacrifice to Aphrodite. Her face is almost the same as the ideal face, except that her chin protrudes more than normal. Her bosom is quite ample and her nipples are erect, perhaps suggesting that she is in a constant state of readiness. The lower half of her body is skinny and lean, with a contour line rising up her side, possibly to indicate abdominals. Her arms are also skinny with no muscle to speak of. The contour line below her arm runs almost to the bottom of her rib cage. There is no muscle at the position of the line; instead it is either loose skin or her shoulder blade. The presence of the skin and the visibility of the bone suggest that she is thin not from fitness, but from malnutrition. Another image of a hetaira, this time on the neck of an amphora\(^\text{18}\) by Oltos, shows a nearly identical scene. This courtesan is in the same kneeling position, but instead of making an offering she is reaching down to tie her sandal. Despite the difference in arm position she has the same two contour lines along her body, suggesting the same gauntness. A third woman who shares this frailty is the hetaira on a cup\(^\text{19}\) attributed to Onesimos. In this scene the prostitute is lounging in a symposium setting conversing with a satyr. Her face follows the feminine ideal. Her body is clearly more emaciated than the previous two prostitutes. Her breasts are not full, but rather the sides have become concave. She has


definition lines running along her body, but they do not outline muscles; instead they follow her bones on the arms and legs and the tendons on her neck. From these images it would appear that the prostitute class kept a thin body rather than a robust one.

The ideal body for a proper Greek woman is harder to ascertain from the ancient images because none of them are partially or wholly nude. Looking at the shape of the clothes, however, some things can be inferred. The waist is cinched by a belt at just above what appears to be the hips. The cinched effect usually evens out very quickly so that the torso and the lower half are a fairly straight cylinder. While the draping of the fabric may be hiding some curves of the body, this probably suggests that the women beneath were not meant to be overly voluptuous but rather were meant to have a straighter build.

Therefore, the ideal face for men and women was one with prominent eyes, straight and thin noses, and subdued mouths. Women were supposed to have long hair, either arranged neatly down or in an up-do. Men were to have neatly groomed hair cut closely below the ear. The male body beautiful was youthful in its vigor, toned, and muscular. On the other hand the desired prostitute look was probably a lithe, frail appearance, while the proper wife’s ideal form may have been a straight shape, lacking curves, but this is as yet unclear.

As stated above, this study focuses on deliberate changes made directly to the body and their moral and cultural qualitative values in the Greek eye. However, it should be mentioned that there were other ways in which the divide between Us and Other was indicated in Athenian culture. Bonfante makes the point that foreigners were depicted clothed while Greeks were often nude. Timothy J. McNiven has detailed how various
types of gestures in art demonstrate Other qualities. The use of uniform, controlled gestures verses wild and erratic movements during periods of mourning shows *sophrosyne*, extending a hand with the palm up towards an attacker displayed submission and fear, and shielding oneself from an onslaught instead of attacking back was a sign of *anandreia* or unmanliness. Other signs were also used to designate “other-ness.” Certain types of hats designated a work-man, ergo a slave, foreigner, or peasant. Natural monstrosities, such as satyrs and centaurs, gave an air of “other-ness” to a scene. Other methods such as depictions of feminine clothing, age, ethical misconduct, and vulnerability were all used to degrade the Other and separate him from Greek perfection.

However, this study focuses on how body modification affected the Us-Other paradigm. It examines in detail three separate examples of modification in the Greek world. The first is depilation, a practice that the Greeks used on themselves and their household slaves. This study argues that Greeks trimmed their pubic hair as a sign of respectability and self-control. It also briefly explores the trimming of female slaves’ hair as a symbol of servitude. Using scholars such as Bonfante and Richter to establish a base of evidence and the importance of nudity, the examination of depilation relies heavily upon primary evidence in literature, sculpture, and vase painting. It expands upon the currently accepted belief that Athenian females practiced pubic depilation and extends it to the male population as well.

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The study also examines a form of modification that the Greeks did not practice themselves, Amazonian mastectomy. The existence of the Amazons as a people is not certain, and there is some debate on the matter.\textsuperscript{22} However, this study works within the viewpoint that an Amazonian culture probably existed only in myth. There were more than likely eastern cultures which inspired the myths, as well as Scythian peoples who were influenced by them. An actual group of women running their own society, however, probably did not exist. Therefore, this example of modification exists solely in the realm of myth. At some point the Athenians were introduced to the myths of the Amazons and felt a threat from a new culture which inverted their ideas of gender roles. The Athenian response was then to include methods of degradation in their myths and art. In art Amazons were frequently made monstrous by being depicted opposite to or in conjunction with horrible creatures, such as the matching centauromachy and Amazonomachy scenes on the acropolis.\textsuperscript{23} The method of degradation this study examines is mastectomy, the story that Amazons removed a breast to improve their martial prowess. Using Tyrell heavily as well as literary and archaeological evidence this investigation explores how mastectomy was depicted in Athens, what its moral and social implications were, and one possible origin for the myth.

The third example of body modification this study examines is tattooing. Several cultures in the ancient Mediterranean practiced tattooing. The practice has elements of religion and decoration in some cultures, specifically Thrace and Egypt, while in others, such as Persia and Rome, it was a penal measure. Athenians used tattooing in this

\textsuperscript{22} For more on the debate see Loraux(1993), Sobol(1972), Tyrrell(1984).

\textsuperscript{23} Tyrrell (1984).
second vein as a punitive measure. Using C.P. Jones\textsuperscript{24} as a starting point this study examines representations of tattooing in ancient Athens, the forms it took, and how a slave might incur such a punishment. It also extensively examines the relationship and cultural interchanges between Greece, Thrace, and Persia. As a culture which tattooed the vast majority of its inhabitants, Thrace’s proximity to Athens and the size of the Thracian population in the city makes it impossible to ignore while examining Greek tattooing. The study discusses how Athens modified its tattooing practice and myths to degrade Thrace and her people. Persia’s influence on Greece after the Persian invasions in the fifth century and its heavy use of tattooing as punishment make the empire another necessity in a discussion of Greek marking. The chapter explores the complex views on tattooing in the three lands and how they appear to interact. The cultural exchange and the introduction of punitive tattooing in Athens will be important topics.

These three examples of ancient body modification provide a good sampling for a brief foray into the subject. Each has varying degrees of finality. Depilation is temporary and requires the process to be repeated for results to last for any significant time. Conversely, mastectomy is permanent as a breast cannot be re-grown. Tattooing is in the middle of permanent and temporary because once applied a tattoo does not have to be redrawn and will remain indefinitely. Tattoos can, however, be removed if so desired. Each method of modification was used by a different culture. Depilation took place in Greece and was not foreign, while mastectomy was a practice only in Amazon culture and would have been thoroughly alien to the Athenian population. Tattooing was

\textsuperscript{24} Jones (1987).
something practiced at home and abroad, so it had both domestic and foreign aspects. The moral value of the three examples also varied. Depilation was a positive thing for a Greek to practice, mastectomy a negative, and tattooing was a negative for the Athenians but a positive for the Thracians among them, ergo the Greeks knew tattoos in both lights. Finally each practice has a different grounding in mythology. Depilation does not have any myth in which it figures prominently and appears to have been a practical, everyday matter. Mastectomy, however, would have existed (almost) exclusively in the realm of myth since its practitioners, the Amazons, were also a mythical people. Tattooing functions in both realms. Tattoos were real in the city’s everyday life, but there are also etiological myths and legends explaining the advent of tattooing in Greece and its neighbors.

The scope of examination for this study is Classical Athens from the mid-sixth to the late fourth century B.C. Athens is the focus of the study because the overwhelming amount of evidence for the three selected methods of body modification come from the city. It should not be thought that Athenian ideas and practices are the same as the whole of the Greek world; however, the lack of evidence from other city-states makes it difficult to discuss them. Therefore, for this study Greece is synonymous with Athens and Greeks with Athenians. The classical period is the focus for two reasons. The first is this is the time-frame from which extant evidence for depilation, mastectomy, and tattooing begins appearing in significant numbers. Therefore, as the earliest, most easily

25 Although Athenians saw them as only negative.
26 There are reports of physicians such as Dimokodus and Archigenes who used mastectomy to treat breast cancer. This study will not focus on medical mastectomy.
studied period it is the time frame for the study. Also because, as Coleman argues\textsuperscript{27}, it was in this period that Greek ethnocentrism became its most powerful. Therefore, the study examines ancient depilation, mastectomy, and tattooing in Classical Athens to further understand how they supported the notions of Us and Other in the Greek mindset.

\textsuperscript{27} Coleman (1997). After the Persian invasion Athens began fostering a sense of cultural and politically unity in which the demonization of the Other was multiplied in art and culture.
CHAPTER 2
DEPILATION

The simplest ways in which the Greeks practiced body modification was by temporarily refiguring certain features of the body. These methods did not involve any permanent or temporary addition to the body, such as tattoos or cosmetics. Nor did they call for any major removals from the body, such as mastectomy or circumcision. Instead, they took the material which already existed on the body and reworked it to produce a desired effect. The most common area of re-apportioning was the simplest, the hair.

As discussed previously, the ideal for a Greek woman was a head of long and curled locks. This long hair was usually presented in one of two styles. The first method of styling was to have the hair prepared in some form of down-do. The simplest form of a down-do was used on the Kourai. These statues uniformly have long hair flowing over the shoulders in neatly placed tresses. Each lock of hair is distinctive and solid, neither merging with those around it nor breaking into separate strands as it grows farther from the scalp. This strong individuality of each lock on the Kourai suggests a manipulation of the hair of some kind. To maintain the neatness of the hair a headband is sometimes used. The ornamentation of these bands might vary, some being simple bands as with the Euthydikos Kore.¹ Others are more decorative, crown-like pieces such as that of the Berlin Kore.²

¹ Pedley (1993) 184.
In pottery hair flowing over the shoulders tends to give way to hair being tied loosely behind the shoulders. A krater by the Three Maidens Painter depicts a marriage procession. Many women are part of the procession, all of them with their hair down, still curled and in strands. However, it is not falling over the shoulder, but rather is gathered behind the back with the assistance of a hair tie. This style can also be noted in sculpture such as the birth of Aphrodite on the Ludovisi throne reliefs.

The second style of wearing hair was to have it bound up and off of the shoulders and the back. There were several ways of executing this up-do. The most common method was to bind it with a scarf or headband in a tight bun on the lower back of the head. The hair could also be tied up in a looser, more oblong bun usually resting higher on the head. A hydria by the Meidias Painter shows a wide range of possible manifestations of how a Greek woman might tie her hair back. The top of this vase shows the rape of the daughters of Leucippos and the bottom shows Herakles in the garden of the Hersperides. The goddesses in the bottom image display four variants of the up-do. The central two have the previously discussed bun and oblong bun. The woman closest to Herakles in the right of the image wears a decorative hair piece and appears to have her hair pinned up into a circular, nearly spherical shape. Her sister on the far left of the picture is wearing a variant of this style. She seems to have fastened her hair atop her head with none of it draping downwards.

Greek males did not style their hair to such a degree. None of the fancy up-dos are present in sculpture or vase painting. In sculpture men predominantly have their hair

\[^3\] Pedley (1993) 200.

\[^4\] Pedley (1993) 282.
cut short to the head. The kouroi have long hair like the kourai and also show the individual locks of their female counterparts. The length of a male’s hair on vase painting varies and can be as long as a woman’s or chopped short to the scalp. The diversity of lengths shows an expected practice of hair cutting and indicates at least a minimal level of attention paid to the hair.

By styling their hair Greeks achieved not only an aesthetic achievement, but also an idealistic one. They presented themselves as composed and controlled, displaying the *sophrosyne* which the Athenians valued as central to their character. They were respectable Greeks rather than uncontrollable barbarians. To further emphasize their self-control and “us-ness,” Greeks represented foreigners and slaves as having wild or imperfect hair. Evidence of this has already been discussed in the introductory chapter with the kalyx krater by Euphronius. In this vase Herakles wrestles Antaios. Herakles has short, neat hair, which curls in the back and front and a small composed beard. Antaios, however, has a long beard and hair, both of which are obviously disheveled and untended. His lack of aesthetically pleasing grooming and composure shows his wildness and “other-ness” while enhancing Herakles’ hygiene, self-control, and “us-ness.”

Female foreigners were also depicted as having wild and unkempt hair, for example in a column-krater by the Pan Painter. In this vase two Thracian women are running and brandishing swords before they slaughter Orpheus. The women have long and flowing hair. Their tresses, however, are not individually styled and neatly placed

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6 Tsiafakis in Cohen (2000). The mythological relevance and artistic frequency of Thracian women slaughtering Orpheus make this reading highly probable.
but flying about as they race toward their victim. The hair is one solid mass and singular strands of hair are visible in the tangled confusion.

Representing Others as wild and untamed in art was not enough to emphasize Athenian virtue. Foreign women who came under the power of Athenians through slavery were forced to show their inferiority in their hair. Images of servant girls with their mistresses show a clear discrepancy in the length and quality of hair. A lekythos by the Timokrates Painter\(^7\) shows a mother, her son, and the slave acting as his nurse. The mistress on this vase is tall and stately, well-dressed and jeweled. She clearly has a long head of hair which she wears in the oblong bun tied back with a head band. The slave girl next to her is significantly smaller and less regal. One of the main factors contributing to this status discrepancy is the slave’s hair. It is cropped short to just past the top of the jaw and hangs around her head, showing no notable or remarkable shape.

The short, jaw length hair was not used only for young servants. This hair-cut can be seen in a lekytho by the Phiale Pinter.\(^8\) Here a mistress and her elderly slave woman mourn at a grave. The Greek woman has the usual long, styled hair. The slave, probably the nurse of the deceased, has the same short cut as the previous example. She is clearly identified as a Thracian slave by her kneeling posture, which diminishes her height in relation to her mistress, and the tattoos on her neck and arms. In another example, this time in a red-figure hydria attributed to the Aegisthus Painter,\(^9\) three adult slaves gather water at a fountain. The tattoos on their legs and arms clearly identify

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\(^8\) Cohen (2000) 244. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 19355.

them as Thracians. In addition to their nationality they can be recognized as slaves because all three have short, jaw-length hair.

This hair style clearly is not the one favored by Thracians, as evidenced in the countless representations of free Thracians with long, wild flowing hair. Thracians clearly chose for themselves long hair styles, yet in these examples they all wear short, unremarkable cuts. This contradiction between free and captive Thracians shows that some third party is responsible for the compromised length. The responsible parties are the slaves’ owners. The owners wanted to raise themselves up as the ideal while denigrating the slaves as inferior Others. This happened in three ways. The owners clearly mark the slaves off from the rest of respectable society by giving them a deviant hair cut. A citizen would not be able to mistake a slave girl for a free woman because of her hair. A Greek woman would not wear such a short length. It also takes away the possibility of the slave styling her hair in a way similar to her mistress’. There is no possibility of the slaves taking control over their own hair and modifying it with a bun or some other style attributed to free women to attempt to fit in. They have been given a style and have no say over their own appearance. Third, it takes away the natural preference of their kinswomen. Thracians, as well as other foreigners, wore their hair long. But when enslaved, the Greek masters ignore that preference and instead force their own idea of what the slave should be. This would create a disconnect from a slave’s home culture and further degrade the slave.

The hair on the head was not the only area of pilatory modification. The Greeks also practiced various levels of depilation on their body hair. The main focus of the body

10 As in the previous example where two Thracians rush to kill Orpheus.
hair was the pubes. The depilation of the pubic hair can be seen in literature, especially comedy, as well as in art. Various different styles of pubes are evident in some of the earliest statuary.

In the earliest examples of kouroi, 615 B.C., until 570 B.C.\(^{11}\) only one shape of pubes is found, a triangle rising several inches up the groin from the genitals and extending uninterrupted from hip bone to hip bone. The texture of the pubes differs from kouros to kouros, either having no texture\(^ {12}\) or having a curly texture like the hair of the head.\(^ {13}\) The curled texture is simply trying to render the pubes realistically. The smooth pubes would be representing a pubes which had been trimmed or maintained. However, the similar shape of both groups is more important than the textures. Like the hair of the head both types of pubes are contained in a set area and end very neatly. This suggests that the pubes may have been groomed in a partial depilation. This evidence is strengthened with the advent of the Tenea-volomandra group\(^ {14}\) when a new style of pubic shape appears. This shape, like the straight triangle of the previous kouroi, rises from the genitals and extends from hip bone to hip bone. The top does not end in a straight line; instead the top of the pubes consists of two concave bends which join in a point before the beginning of the abdomen. This radical change in shape suggests that the Athenians almost certainly altered their own pubes from their natural shape, or at least attempted to.

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\(^{11}\) This time frame covers the two periods Richter (1960), calls the Sounion and the Orchomenos-Thera groups.

\(^{12}\) Richter (1960) 49, 67; Nos 12, 41.

\(^{13}\) Richter (1960) 53; No 17.

\(^{14}\) About 575-550 B.C.
The depilation, or rather partial depilation, seen in the kouroi is supported by Athenian comedy and by red-figure vases. Aristophanes gives an abundance of evidence for pubic depilation. In his play “The Frogs” a slave woman describes several dancing girls as

\[ \text{ἡβθλλωσαι κάρτι παρατετιλμέναι} \]
Aristophanes Rana 516

In full youthful vigor and just now plucked.\(^{15}\)

This passage clearly points out the dancing girls as having been depilated, by themselves or some third party. This also presents one of three methods by which ancient depilation was practiced, plucking. The two methods can also be found within the Aristophanic corpus. The most common of these alternate methods was singeing with a lamp. In the Lysistrata an elderly Athenian woman promises someone that if they were to see her genitals

\[ \text{Ἁιι᾽ Ὁκνο νπθ ίδνηο/} \]
\[ \text{ἀπηνλ θνκήηελ, αιι’απεςη/} \]
\[ \text{ισκέλνλ} \]
Aristophanes Lysistrata 823-28

But you will not find it long haired; I singed it with a lamp.\(^{16}\)

The third method of pubic depilation that Aristophanes gives is by rubbing hot ash or embers over the genital region.

\[ \text{Αλλ’ Ὄμος ουκ ἰδοις/} \]
\[ \text{αυτον κομὴτην, αλλ’απεψι/} \]
\[ \text{λωμένον τω λυχνω.} \]
Aristophanes Thesmophoriazusae 537-543

\[^{15}\text{The translation is that of Kilmer (1982).}\]

\[^{16}\text{Translation also by Kilmer (1982).}\]
Woman- We’ll get ashes somewhere and strip this woman’s genitals
Mnesilochos- Gosh! Not my genitals, ladies…are there reasons why I should be punished by you, by having my hair removed?¹⁷

This method of pubic depilation, due to its obvious physical pain, is clearly used as a punishment or social control. It cannot be said, however, that all depilation was a form of punishment as the old woman in the Lysistrata clearly has done it of her own volition. This form of punishment was used for men as well as women. In the passage from the Thesmophoriazusae, although pubic scalding is threatened against a man the angry women think they are speaking to a woman. A similar passage that Kilmer mentions¹⁸ has the same punishment being enforced against a man, showing that some depilation was practiced with males, although it does not prove that male depilation was ever voluntary.

This passage, as well as the previous two, suggests that wholesale depilation was not the goal of depilation or a desirable end. The attackers do not threaten merely to scald Mnesilochos, but to scald him with the purpose of cleansing his genitals of hair. In response Mnesilochos responds in horror at the thought of having his groin de-haired; he does not even mention the prospect of being burned or physically harmed. The old woman in the Lysistrata does not say that she has removed her pubic hair entirely, merely that the hair is not long. Kilmer astutely observes that it would indeed be impossible to completely remove pubic hair without causing serious injury to the privates. He also claims that the hair was not entirely removed when it was plucked.

¹⁷ Translation adapted from Kilmer (1982). Genitals is taken as the translation for τον χοιρον
¹⁸ Nub. 1083.
Kilmer argues that another passage from the *Lysistrata* proves that perfect removal was not the goal of depilation.

Λυς. Νη μα Δία Βοιωτία, Καλόν γ´έχουσα το πεδίον. Καλ. Και νη Δία κομψότατα την βληχώ γε παρατετιμένη. Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 87-89

Lys- Yes, by Zeus, Boeotia, for she has such a lovely plain
Kal- Yes, by Zeus, the one with the very neatly plucked
pennyroyal

Here Kilmer argues that since they say “the very neatly plucked pennyroyal,” as opposed to the cleanly plucked, that some pubic hair was desired. This argument certainly seems sound, especially in light of the other two examples provided by Aristophanes. So henceforth the assumption that a bit of short, well-groomed, and shaped pubic hair was the desired ideal.

It is clear from Aristophanes that women depilated and that in certain cases of punishment men were also depilated. However, this is not the only evidence for pubic depilation. The corpus of Greek vases provides ample evidence for the practice of depilation.

In the most recently discovered vase by the Dinos painter, a scene of blatant depilation is the focal point. On the left side of the vase is a seated woman who has cast off her robe and wears only the cross-chest cords intended to secure her outfit. In her left hand she holds a lit oil lamp above her crotch and with her right she secures the next patch of groin to be depilated. The work she does with her right hand, the proximity of the lamp to her groin, and her intent gaze towards her groin make clear that she is in

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19 Translation by Kilmer (1982).
the process of depilation. Across from her is a standing woman who has opened her chiton and leaves of the chest chords for partial coverage. As she stares into the distance a winged figure, almost certainly Eros, crouches by her knees and attends to her groin. Eros is holding a lit oil lamp just below her genitals as he takes hold of a yet un-worked patch of the pubes with his right hand. A close inspection of the standing woman’s *mons* supports Kilmer’s theory that depilation was not meant to, or able to, fully remove the pubes. In between Eros’ fingers are glimpses of hair. It may be possible that these patches of hair have not been treated by the deity; however, it is more likely that they have already been treated and remain present in a shortened state. The hair is barely lighter than the skin of her flesh, as if it has less mass than the purely black pubes seen in other vases, yet it clearly is still present and is more than just a stain on the vase. This middle ground between flesh tone and black clearly indicates that the hair has merely been shortened.

A vase in the style of the Foundry painter\(^2\) shows another example of partial depilation by singeing. A nude woman with a woolen cap over her hair squats over a crater and urinates. As she spreads her legs to relieve herself she gives a clear view of her genital region. Faint patches of hair above the genitals appear to be partially removed and shortened. This woman clearly has practiced some depilation, since her pubes is not the dark black of her hair. Yet it still is visible, suggesting she only removed part of her pubic hair.

While there is not literary evidence of male depilation by singeing, there is evidence in vases that males used this method. A vase by the Shovalov painter shows

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\(^2\) Boardman (175) 262. Berlin 3757, Antikenmuseum StMPK, Berlin.
two young Athenians moments before fornication begins.\textsuperscript{22} The male is seated in a chair, clutching the bottom in an obvious sign of nervousness, with his robe around his knees and his erect phallus exposed. The girl, completely nude except for a head scarf, has her hands on the back of the chair and is tentatively climbing on top of her soon-to-be lover. The pubic hair of both is exposed and while their shapes cannot be discerned, due to the side view of both subjects, the shading of the pubes clearly shows that one has been depilated and one has not. The female’s pubes is a solid shade of black showing no gap or hint of flesh. The male’s pubic hair, however, is much lighter and bits of flesh are visible through the hair. This tonal difference clearly shows that he has been depilated, by himself or another. Following the example of the previous two vases it can safely be assumed by the appearance of the partially depilated pubes, light with patches of flesh, that the method of depilation was singeing instead of plucking.

One of the earliest examples of the pubes on red figure is the belly amphora by Euthymides.\textsuperscript{23} On this vase Euthymides paints three dancing, partially nude males. The central figure, who dances with a wooden staff, has turned his back to the viewer and only his muscular backside is visible. The figure on the left holds a sympotic cup and dances with his side to the viewer. While his genitals are visible he has no pubic hair. This absence is probably due to the newness of the technique and the limited space presented on the groin by the position. The figure on the right, however, is dancing fully exposing his front to the viewer, including his pubes. The shape of his pubes timidly takes the shape of the earliest kouroi, a simple triangle extending up from the genitals. It


\textsuperscript{23} Pedely (2002) 204. Munich, Antikensmmlungen 2307, from Vulci. ARV 26, I.
does not follow the earliest kouroi shape in that it does not reach from hip bone to hip bone, but begins inwardly on the groin. This marginal space suggests that this man took part in some depilation, though it was rather modest. A Proto-Panaitian cup\textsuperscript{24} shows a male reclining nude, presumably at some sympotic event, holding a bough of wheat above his head with his legs spread open and his genitals exposed. The style of pubes has evolved from the simple triangle into the later style of kouroi pubes, a triangle with the top consisting of two concave bends ending in a point beneath the abdomen. The appearance of this shape suggests a more elaborate practice of depilation with a more complex shape of the pubes. These earliest shapes of the pubes could not have been made with an oil lamp, and their solid black color suggests that they were not. Therefore they must have been formed by the second process of depilation, plucking.

The shape of the plucked pubes in red figure evolved past these basic shapes adapted from the kouroi. A cup by the Schneurleer Painter\textsuperscript{25} shows a stout yet muscular man squatting partially nude with his legs spread open. The man’s pubic hair is an altered form of the two bends with a point shape. The lower portion of the pubes is no longer a simple triangle; instead it extends higher than it previously did, past the point in which the two bends originally began. The lower half also thins as it rises, instead of broadening like a triangle, but then at the midway point begins to widen again, resembling the curvature of an hour glass. Instead of situating the concave bends vertically to place the central point as the apex of the pubes, the painter orients them horizontally, pointing the corners on the same level as the central point. In the famous

\textsuperscript{24} Boardman (1975) 220. Munich, Antikensammlungen 2636, from Vulci. ARV 317, 16.

\textsuperscript{25} Boardman (1975) 84. Brussels, Musees Royaux R 259. ARV 169, 7.
Sarpedon cup by Euphronios,\textsuperscript{26} this evolution of the two bends with a point shape continues. While Hermes oversees the conveyance of the body from battle by Hypnos and Thanatos Sarpedon lies bloodied and naked, his pubes lies exposed. It follows the same shape as the previous example with one difference. The outside corners of the two bends have been placed much higher than previously, making the central point the lowest lying of the three.

The shape evolves even further as evidenced by the interior of a cup by the Antiphon Painter.\textsuperscript{27} In this image a cloaked and hatted hunter prepares to spear a boar which is charging him. During the action the hunter’s pubic hair is exposed. It extends upward from his genitals in a thin line, showing only a slight bend outwards at the bottom and the top. At the top of the line a flattened version of the two bends with a point appears. The outer corners are the terminal point for a horizontal line which extends upward only in the middle to form the central point. Another variation of this can be seen in a column crater by the Florence painter.\textsuperscript{28} This crater shows a scene in the midst of Theseus’ centauromachy. As men and centaurs battle and a woman cowes on the ground, Theseus stands in the middle of the composition completely nude and punching a centaur threatening to crush him with a boulder. The height of his pubes has been almost eliminated. He simply bears a thick line extending past his hip bones with another line rising slightly from the middle, above the genitals. None of these shapes, save those resembling those copied from the kouroi, come close to accurately representing the natural form of the pubes. Therefore, the abundance of shapes in male

\textsuperscript{26} Boardman (1975) 22. New York, Metropolitan Museum 1972.11.10.

\textsuperscript{27} Boardman (1975) 240. Baltimore, Walters Arts Gallery 48.2115. ARV 336, 16.

\textsuperscript{28} Boardman (1989) 36. Florence 3997. ARV 541, 1.
pubic hair must stem from depilation by plucking, since if it were singe depilation the shading would be lighter than black.

The female pubes, when not depilated by an oil lamp, usually are represented very simply. A prime example is the Kalpis vase by the Kleophrades Painter.²⁹ In the middle of the sack of Troy Cassandra takes refuge beneath a statue of Athena. Her cloak is thrown open and she shows a simple triangle, extending from hip bone to hip bone, of pubic hair. There are examples of a variety of shapes among female pubic hair. A plate by the Nikostenes Painter³⁰ shows a nude woman with two artificial phalli, the one in her left hand is being inserted into the mouth while the right one is pressed against her genitals. Her pubes is unique in that it has no remaining parts above the vagina; all that remains are two thick, vertical strips on either lip. Due to the shape, completeness of the hair removal, and the solid black tone of the strips this woman obviously depilated herself by plucking.

It has been firmly proven that pubic depilation and shaping were part of the nude athletic costume. How depilating the pubes differentiated the Greek from the barbarian Other should now be examined. Evidence concerning the Greek attitude towards body and pubic hair can be found by once again looking to Aristophanes:

Κατωνάκην τον χοιρον αποστέλλουν
Aristophanes Ecclesiazusae 723-724

The genitals plucked as if a woolen garment.

This line comes from Praxagora’s rant against the unkempt appearance of the pubes prostitutes and slaves. Kilmer says that their pubes being likened to woolen

garment gives the idea that they are not maintained well, and thus are too course, long, and irregular. This clearly is a source of shame for the prostitutes and slaves, while having well-groomed and neat pubes is a source of pride and boasting for the Greeks. Some understanding of why this is may be ascertained from the presentation of Megarian’s second daughter:

Αἰ δ’ ἀν παχθνῆ θαλαρνηαληε ηξηρί
Κάλλιστος εσται χοίρος Αφροδίτα θυειν
Aristophanes Acharnians 791-792

When it’s a bit fatter and blooms with the first hair
She’ll make the loveliest little piggy to sacrifice to Aphrodite

Here it is evident that the ideal of beauty for women is when the pubic hair begins to grow and is still fresh and small. This fits with the Greek ideal of youth and vitality that they glorified in such art as statuary and vase painting. This creates a twofold reason for Greek women to practice depilation, for decorum and pride as well as for sexual attractiveness. Aristophanes’ connection of unkempt pubic hair with slaves and prostitutes almost certainly confirms that any free-born Athenian woman would have practiced a certain level of depilation. No respectable woman would have been caught with whorish pubic hair. Also by depilating they were giving themselves and their genital regions a more youthful appearance. By appearing more youthful they were closer to the ideal aesthetic.

The motivation for males shaping their pubic hair, as part of their costume of nudity, was more complex than the motivation of their female counterparts. The decency aspect of well-groomed pubes would certainly have been present. The stigma of shabbiness applied to male and to female slaves. However, another aspect of

31 Translation by Kilmer (1982).
decency was associated with the male genital aesthetic, that of the ideal prepuce. While the Greeks were proud of their nudity, they seemed to have kept some sense of modesty which was applied exclusively to the head of the penis. Hodges argues that the Greeks valued a longer foreskin because the head had to be hidden from view at all times to avoid dishonor. This taboo began because the only time the head of a penis would be visible is when one had an erection, assuming a normal-sized prepuce. Since erections were signs of a lack of control the prepuce became a sign of self-control and respectability. Since the pubes acts as a type of protection and covering for the penis as a whole, it became associated with the desired modesty of the genital region. If the prepuce was a sign of self-control, a wild and untamed pubes would ruin the mask of the foreskin. Thus it was necessary for Greek men to maintain the pubic hair in order to retain their respectability. In this way the prepuce and the pubes become like the perizoma and the chiton, respectively, of the genitals in absence of actual clothing.

In a desire to achieve the ideal of youth, neither too old nor too young, men and women did not remove all of their pubic hair. Men, however, had an added incentive not to remove the entire pubes. Smoothness of the body was a womanly attribute while burliness and hair were manly characteristics.

Ινα δασυνθείν ολή
Και μηδέν είην ἐτι γυναικι προσφερήσ
Aristophanes Ecclesiazusae 60

So that I’d get bushy all over and no longer resemble a woman at all.

Here the woman in Aristophanes’ play has thrown her razor away in order to be hairy like a man, establishing that to have a hairy body was to be a man and to be
smooth and hairless was to be a woman. This convention of men being hairy certainly would have applied to chest and stomach hair as well as the pubes.

There is evidence of this convention in vase painting. As a general rule human males in vase painting are not represented with any visible body hair. This convention is probably an attempt to keep the subjects on the vases close to the youthful ideal seen in the kouroi. However, in extreme cases body hair is included to send a message of masculinity. The interior of a cup by Onesimos\textsuperscript{32} shows a rare case of body hair illustrating masculinity. In it an unknown man stands naked above a large shield while he contemplates a helmet held in his left hand. His pubes is in a properly trimmed shape extending from the genitals in a thick vertical line which bisects a thick horizontal line which ends the pubic region. The hair, however, continues along the middle of his abdomen, spreads across his pectoral muscles and finally stops at his clavicles. This cup shows the quintessential manly figure, a lean and muscular man with an infibulated penis, a good amount of body hair, and well-groomed pubes surrounded with the instruments of war as his sole companion.

How body hair can send different messages is well demonstrated in two works by the Brygos painter. The first work,\textsuperscript{33} the interior of a cup, is a scene of mourning over the recently dead Ajax. A fully clothed woman moves to drape a cloth over the body of Ajax, which is lying skewered in the sand. Even though Ajax died in a dishonorable way the painter gives him his due as one of the greatest warriors of the Greeks. His body is unmarred and still lean looking. He is given the small member with prepuce intact. He


has a tidy, short pubes which transitions into a thin line of hair running up the stomach and fringing each pectoral muscle. By portraying Ajax with a respectable pubes and ample body hair the Brygos painter add two honorable and manly components to Ajax’s costume of nudity. This honor is sharply contrasted on the Brygos Painters’ skyphos depicting the ransom of Hector. In this scene Priam and four slaves bring treasure to Achilles who is lounging in a bed over the body of Hector.\textsuperscript{34} Hector lies beneath the bed in much the same position as Ajax, except that Hector’s body is mutilated and hairless. The only things visible on his chest and stomach are wounds and the hanging adornments of Achilles couch cover the view of Hector’s genitals and pubes. Hector, though a great warrior and brave fighter, was the main enemy of the Greeks and thus the painter gave him no bodily honors. He is denied the chest hair of Ajax, hence he is less manly, and the indications that he may have been a respectable or self-controlling man, the prepuce and pubes, are covered, effectively emasculating him entirely and setting him firmly in the category of Other.

A well-kept pubes need not be accompanied by body hair to signify a manly, proper Greek. Two cups by Douris demonstrate how an unaccompanied pubes can achieve the same effect. The first example\textsuperscript{35} shows a partially clothed Greek engaged in some kind of ritual dance. The clay which originally comprised his pubes has fallen off; however, the outline is still visible. While it was still on the vase it was in either a simple triangle shape or the two bends with a point shape. The second example\textsuperscript{36} shows the

\textsuperscript{34} Cohen (2000) 233. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum inv. 3710, from Cerveteri. ARV 380, 171. After Furtwangler-Reichhold, pl. 84.


\textsuperscript{36} Boardman (1975) 292. Paris, Louvre G 115, from Capua. ARV 434, 74.
body of Memnon, an Ethiopian ally of the Trojans, being carried away by the goddess Eos. His pubes has no particular shape and does not show any sign of depilation. Neither figure has any body hair but both have pubic hair. The Greek, dancing piously, has a trimmed pubes in an acceptable shape, showing that he is a proper Athenian man. Memnon on the other hand, being a foreigner and enemy to the Greeks, has a wild and untamed pubes, denying him the respectability of being part of the Greek “Us”.

This paradigm of a depilated pubes being the sign of manliness works in interactions between Greeks also. In a scene on a psykter by Euthymides37 two Greek men practice wrestling, presumably at the gymnasium. Both youths are almost identical in terms of face, hair, and body composition. The only difference is that the man who is winning, having the other man firmly around the neck and right arm-pit, has a pubes while the losing Greek is bare around his genitals. There are two possibilities for the differences in the men’s pubes. The pubes on the winning man is quite faint and may be just beginning to grow, meaning that he is recently passed into manhood. This would then, perhaps, make the reason for the loser’s lack of pubes that he has not gone through puberty and is still just a youth. The pubes and lack of it, if it is the case that one has hit puberty, signify why the winner is beating the loser, because he is more of a man than the loser. Another possibility is that the winner’s pubes is faint because of oil lamp depilation, and the loser’s missing pubes was over depilated. In either case, the presence and lack of a pubes would still symbolize the manliness of the winner and the inferiority of the loser.

37 Boardman (1975) 36. Turin, Museo di Antichita 4123, from Vulci. ARV 28, 11.
This is the ultimate goal of the trimmed pubes. It is a symbol of self-control, power, and respectability, a symbol of “Us-ness.” Foreigners and Others have unkempt, untamed pubic hair. This standard applies to all the hair of the body as well. Greeks have well-tended, composed hair and Barbarians have wild, uncontrolled locks. In all representations the barbarian is wholly wild and not tended to while the Greek is groomed and controlled.
CHAPTER 3
MASTECTOMY

The most violent method of body modification in the ancient as well as modern world is the removal of part of the body. Medical texts show that amputation was a frequently used practice among the medical professionals of the time. One of the more famous stories about medical amputations is the episode in which a Greek doctor traveling in Persia is called to consult the Queen Mother, Atossa, who is suffering from a breast tumor. The doctor does not offer a herbal or pharmaceutical remedy, but rather responds by removing the tumor and with this partial mastectomy saves the queen’s life. Amputation did not just have a medical purpose though. Certain procedures had religious meaning, such as Jewish circumcision. In Greece, amputation was employed as a means of separating ethnic groups and re-enforcing social roles. It was to this effect that the Greeks used the myth of Amazonian mastectomy. Breast removal was implemented to keep the Amazons in a position of inferiority and to preserve Greek superiority.

In this chapter we will focus on the Amazons because they were very much in the forefront of the Athenian conscience during the Classical period. Castriota¹ says that after the defeat of the Persians in the early fifth century Athenians began to see themselves as the strongest and foremost of the Greeks. Since they were so instrumental in the defeat of Darius and Xerxes they were the quintessential Greeks. As their own confidence grew they began to conflate their victories to the level of myth. The Persians became equated with mythological aggressors against Athens, specifically the

Centaurs and the Amazons. The defeats of these two groups became popular topics in art and architecture, appearing on two of the monumental structures of the time, the Theseion and the metopes of the Parthenon. Despite their role in boosting the Athenian ego, the Amazons actually were dangerous to the thought process they were meant to enhance.

The Amazons were dangerous to the Greek identity for many reasons, the most prominent of which is that they were so powerful. One of the main Amazonian episodes in myth is the attack upon the Acropolis which Theseus warded off. There are several versions of the story. One version says that Theseus makes a trip to Themiscyra with several friends where he rapes and abducts an Amazon, Antiope, whom he then makes his wife. The reaction of Antiope’s tribe was to attack Athens in retaliation. They lose. Certain other versions report that after Theseus deserted his victim for an Athenian woman Antiope attempts to kill Theseus during the wedding, but is slain herself.

While the Amazons are totally routed in both versions, the story presents a problem for the Athenian ideology. The first is the strength of the Amazonian army. According to the myth the Amazons accumulated an empire in their eastern homeland while Athens was still a solitary city-state. They had even surpassed the Athenians in martial technology since they were the first to use iron armor and fight on horseback. The thought that a foreign army could have penetrated into Attica so far as to mount an

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2 Various vase painters also give Hippolyte, Glauce, and Melanippe as names of the victim.
3 Lysias 2.4.
attack on the Acropolis would have been a disturbing one. Also, the notion that women had the boldness to attack a city of men would also have jarred the psyche.

The supposed strength of the Amazons was also demonstrated in Herodotus’ account of the foundation of the Sauromatians. After their defeat at Thermodon the Amazons were loaded onto ships to be taken to Greece as slaves. But during the Greeks’ nostos the prisoners revolted and captured the ship, killing all of their captors. However, since they did not know how to sail they drifted until they landed in Scythia. After a series of skirmishes the Scythians succeeded in courting the women and wed them. But the Amazons showed that they were the dominant partners in the marriages when they forced their husbands to leave their homes with their inheritance and live where the wives wanted them to. The Amazons were women who refused to submit to men the way Athenian women were required to. They once again inverted the Greek norm by completely reversing the gender roles in marriage. The men left their homes with dowries and were joined to the women.

Furthermore, the Amazons had to be made more solidly a group of Others because of their similarity to the ideal virtues of the Greek males. The primary functions of an Athenian citizen were to participate politically and to serve his city militarily. Every boy went through a two-year training program as an ephebe before he entered his mandatory hoplite service. Each man was expected to participate in the military until he was unable to serve due to either old age or physical injury. Martial strength was necessary, as well as the strength to be part of the political machinery of Athens and to maintain order in one’s household. The Amazons also valued strength and bellicosity among their tribeswomen. Every myth associated with them is one associated with war.
and violence. Theirs was a fundamentally belligerent society which valued strength and boldness, two virtues reserved for men in Athens. The Amazons were so bold that they attacked several of Greece’s greatest heroes—Theseus, Heracles, and Achilles. Several ancient authors even report that bravery and combat were held in such esteem in Amazonian society that before she could become a hunter an Amazon would have to kill a man in battle.\(^4\)

Amazons also possessed knowledge and wit. In Herodotus’ episode of the Sauromatians the warrior women show themselves to be the intellectual superiors to their Scythians mates. The women were able to learn Scythian quickly. However, the men could not master the Amazonian tongue, so their wives became the facilitators of communication.

It is likely that the Greeks saw something of themselves in the myth of the Amazons’ major military action, the invasion of Attica. A ruler, Theseus, violates \textit{xenia} by abducting a woman, Antiope, while in a foreign land. The reaction of the native people is to launch a retaliatory assault against the offending country, resulting in a siege. This follows the plot line of the Trojan War almost exactly. Priam steals away Menelaus’ wife, Helen, while they are envoys in his land. This prompts the Achaeans to rally their troops and set sail against Troy, besieging the city for ten years. Other than the players the only major difference between the two tales is that Agamemnon’s army is victorious while the Amazons are destroyed, since they always lose to their Greek enemies. These campaigns were so alike that the Greeks would have felt the need to distance themselves from the Amazons. The defeat of the Amazons would have given

\(^4\) In some sources the number increased to three.
the Athenians some of the distance they needed. However, the strengths of the Amazons and the similarities in their capabilities put them dangerously close to being on par with the Athenians. As Castriota says, the Amazons would have needed a moral or some other kind of defect to explain their loss. Because of this the need to lower the status of the Amazons by reinforcing their status as defective Others arose, so the myth of Amazonian mastectomy was developed.

The most pervasive evidence for the belief that Amazons practiced mastectomy is the popular etymology of their name. Since antiquity one of the explanations of the name Amazon is that it is a compound of ἀ and μαζός, meaning literally “breast-less.” While this is not the only proposed etymology of the word, it is not the only meaning of the etymology, it was one of the most popular among the ancients. The truth behind the etymology is less important than the acquired meaning it had among the people. The Amazons were associated by their very name with a modified body. To say their name was a reminder that their body was not whole. An Amazon did not have the complete, ideal body of an Athenian, male or female, and thus she would always be an outsider and inferior to any Athenian, no matter how similar the two peoples’ virtues or military exploits were.

Athenian art presents the most ambiguous evidence for the mastectomy myth. This is because no piece of statuary or vase painting depicts an Amazon having undergone a literal breast removal. I suspect the reason for this is that the artists were concerned for the aesthetic appeal of their works. Greek art in the Classical period was

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5 Some scholars such as Vivante (2007), and Lefkowitz (1986), assert that the word ὀμαζός was a foreign loan word, so this Greek etymology is impossible.

6 Some have purposed that “breast-less,” instead of meaning the physical lack of a breast, refers to the fact that subservient males would have raised the children so they would not have been breast fed.
concerned with showing a serene and visually pleasing scene. Athens did not share the fascination with grotesque mutilation and gore that Rome and modern day America does. Even in battle scenes almost no bloodshed is shown. Rather than depicting bloodied and cloven bodies The Greeks depicted the fallen simply as lying on the ground still whole. Only their prostrate postures show that they are, in fact, dead. A prime example of this is the namesake kylix of the Penthesilea painter. In this scene Achilles and another Greek battle Penthesilea and one of her Amazonian comrades. The anonymous Amazon has already been slain and is lying on the edge of the scene. Since she is on the ground with her limbs crumpled and not engaging in the action she is clearly dead. No wounds, however, are visible and it would appear that she has not been touched at all.

Usually the mutilation of battle is shown either right before the blow has been dealt or at the moment of penetration before the blood has had time to flow. One of the few vases in the Attic corpus to show blood is the Sarpedon cup by Euphronius. In this cup Hypnos and Thanatos carry away a slain Sarpedon in the middle of battle. Instead of having the common, unbroken body the hero shows three open wounds, one on his left leg, another on his lower abdomen, and the third on his chest. All three wounds are not only visible, but all are gushing blood. The vase, however, is not the norm but rather the exception. Most scenes avoid this level of gore and show bodies as unbroken as possible. It is in this trend of avoiding physical irregularities that artists did not show

9 This does not apply to irregularities which did not tarnish the aesthetics of the scene such as foreign facial features, depilation, or tattooing, all discussed in the other chapters of this study.
physical mastectomy, since it would have inserted an unpleasant mutilation into their otherwise pleasant scene.

The Athenians still wanted to include the Amazons’ deficiency in their works, but they could not show the outright modification. Therefore, they turned to symbolism and subtlety to display their message. In black-figure vases the overwhelming way to portray Amazons was with no breasts at all. They are always clad in a breast plate which shows no curvature to indicate a bosom. A krater shows Herakles’ Amazonomachy.¹⁰ In this scene three Greeks battle with three Amazons. On the right side of the vase the Amazon is overcome by the Greek, while the inverse is taking place on the left. This is a common convention with Amazonomachy scenes. In the middle, Herakles battles with Hippolyta in a yet-undecided skirmish. Each of the three women has a breast plate which, except for design, is identical to their male counterparts’; there is no curvature to indicate anything but a bare chest is underneath. This absence of any depicted breast implies the notion of mastectomy. In other black-figure vases women are depicted with full chests, but these women are not. They are as flat as their martial opponents. This is a subtle hint at mastectomy, but it is still there. The lack of a visible bosom would have reminded the viewer that the Amazons were missing a part of their womanhood.

Some painters continued depicting Amazons with no breasts after the advent of the red-figure technique; however, a new method of symbolic mastectomy was developed. This method was to make the right breast the spot where Amazons’ were injured. A vase that shows this strategy is a Kantharos by the Amymone Painter.¹¹ This

¹⁰ Von Bothmer (1957) pl. XLIV.
vase shows the Amazonomachy of Herakles. On the far right of the scene an Amazon warrior on her knees aims her bow while a Greek moves to strike her from behind. In the center Herakles stabs Hippolyta as another Amazon charges him from the left. The significance of this scene is that Herakles stabs Hippolyta in the top her right breast. The right breast was the one that the Amazons removed. Herakles’ stabbing her on the spot of the alleged amputation cannot be coincidence. It is clearly meant to remind the viewer of Amazonian mastectomy. Revisiting the Penthesilea cup an assault on the breast is again evident. In the center of the tondo Achilles looks Penthesilea in the eye as he stabs her in her right breast. This also would have reminded an Athenian of Penthesilea’s mutilation.

Some painters took the theme of a wounded bosom a step farther by delving into the rare portrayal of blood. A kalpis by the Berlin Painter\textsuperscript{12} shows a young Greek and an Amazon, both nude, engaged in battle. The Amazon is on the ground as the Greek is stabbing her in the leg with his spear. The peculiar thing about this vase is that the Amazon has already suffered a wound under her right breast which is bleeding significantly. This bleeding wound would have also reminded the viewer of mastectomy, without having to actually show a mutilated body.

Statuary also showed Amazonian mastectomy symbolically, although in a different way from pottery. Sculptures used the method of hiding one breast behind a tunic. The Roman copy of a statue by Phidias shows an Amazon in a tunic with her quiver and shield. Her head and left hand have been lost, and in her raised right hand a bow has also been broken. Her tunic is clasped only over her right shoulder, covering

that side of her chest and leaving her left breast exposed. This configuration of the tunic is applicable for the vast majority of Amazonian sculpture. Which breast is covered and which is exposed sometimes alternates, at times the right is exposed and at others the left. The exposure of a specific one of the breasts may have had some symbolic variance from sculpture to sculpture or may have changed due to the space the statue would be placed in, or possibly for other aesthetic reasons. Which breast exposed is less important than the idea of one breast being hidden while the other is visible. This would have given the sense that one breast is there, while the other is gone. Hence this would have carried the weight of a modified body. In this way the sculpture could show mastectomy without having to actually show a deformed body.

The practice of breast removal is also recorded by several Greek authors, such as Diodorus Siculus;

τῶν δὲ θηλυτερῶν τὸν δεξίον μαστὸν ἔπέκασον, ἵνα μὴ κατὰ τὰς ἀκμὰς τῶν σωμάτων ἐπαρομένους ἐνοχλήσῃ ἀφ’ ἄρ’ ᾖς αἰτίας συμβηνᾷ τὸ ἐθνος τῶν Ἀμαζώνων ταύτῃς τυχεῖν τὴς προσμορίας. Diodorus Bibliotheca Historica 2.45.3-7

They burned the right breast of the infants so that it would not be a nuisance swelling up during the maturing of the body, for this reason it happened that the race of the Amazons got such a name.

It is significant that the modification occurred at childhood and with fire, rather than cutting. Burning the breast tissue away served two purposes of disfiguration to the Athenians. First it prevented that part of the bosom from growing properly during puberty, thus the chest would only be half complete during adulthood. Second, it left a burn scar. If the breast tissue was removed the procedure would have left an incision scar. This incision scar would have resembled a scar left behind by a battle wound. The
resemblance to a battle scar would have carried with it a sense of bravery or valor. Instead, it was a burn scar. Burning and branding was a common penal measure in Athens, as evidenced in Aristophanes,

Woman- Τέρφαν ποθεν λαβοθσι
Ταύτης αποψώσαμεν τον χοιρον
Μνεσιλοχος- Μη δητα τόν γε χοιρον ω γθναικες
Δια τουτο πιλλμονην με δει δοθναι δικην ύφ’υμων
Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 537-543

Woman- We’ll get ashes somewhere and strip this woman’s genitals
Mnesilochos- Gosh! Not my genitals, ladies…are there reasons why I should be punished by you, by having my hair removed?

This type of corporal punishment would have left a burn scar. No Athenian would have been punished in such a way, so only an inferior Other would have a burn scar. Thus by making fire the method of mastectomy, the Athenians rendered the Amazonian chest incomplete and a sign of degradation.

To perform the mastectomy during a girl’s youth was an inversion of the initiation rites of an Athenian maiden. Tyrrell argues that the *Thesmophoria* was an important transition from childhood to womanhood. The symbolism and practices illustrating birth and chastity put the participants simultaneously in the role of mother and daughter. This bonding experience between the community’s old and young was an important preparation for motherhood. However, Amazons did not prepare their daughters for motherhood. Instead they removed a vital method of bonding between mother and child by severely reducing the possibility of breast feeding. The ritual of stunting the chest’s growth instead prepares the Amazons for a life in the realm of men, since the space left
in the absence of a breast was supposed to have aided in the shooting of bows and throwing of javelins.

While this initiation prepared its participant to join the world of men, it did not actually make her a man. Conversely, she remained a female after the scorching was performed but was taken out of the realm of women since the possibility of complete motherhood was removed. As Tyrrell says, she was stuck in a liminal phase between man and woman. She cannot be considered either fully woman for she has lost motherhood and marriage, nor can she be considered fully man because physically she is still female. Thus the Amazons are degendered and belong to neither sex. They are complete Others to all races, not just to the Greeks.

The origin of this degendering appears to be connected to one of the Amazons’ patron deities, Cybele. Also known as the Great Mother, Cybele was a fertility and earth goddess whose worship originated in Phrygia. The connection between the Amazons and the worship of Cybele is highly plausible since the earliest location of the Amazons is Phrygia. Pendants and votives to Cybele have also been found in grave sites of warrior women in the Scythian region, further strengthening the connection between Cybele and the Amazons.

The most commonly known of Cybele’s devotees are the Galli, male priests who are initiated into the cult through castration. Through their castration the Galli lose their gender. They are no longer men in the sense that they cannot produce more heirs or soldiers for their country. They have also lost the ability to participate politically in their home city. In Catullus 63, after castrating himself Attis, the first Gallus, bemoans the loss of his country ahead of the loss of his own manhood. Although they can no longer
participate in the realm of men, the Galli have not become women. They cannot bear children but are still biologically men. It can be considered, however, that they have entered the realm of women. They have become attendants to Cybele and the priests of her worship. So in this way they have been married to the Great Mother and run her cult as if running a household, the duty of a good Athenian wife.

The Amazons and Galli, two devotee groups to Cybele, have been degendered in mirror opposite ways of each other. The Galli lose their masculinity and are thrust into the realm of women, while never truly becoming feminine, and the Amazons cast off their femininity and enter the world of men, but never become fully masculine. Each has what the other needs and lacks what the other has. While it cannot be proven for certain, the coincidence of this mirror change is too much to overlook. The Greeks almost certainly developed the idea of Amazonian mastectomy from the cult of Cybele. It is possible that breast removal was a part of initiation in the earliest form of the cult, and the Athenians propagated the idea as the practice died off. The lack of any evidence, textual or otherwise, makes this unlikely. What is far more likely is that the early Amazons were devoted to Cybele in some function. The Greeks saw a threat in idea of a powerful matriarchal society with a similar set of virtues and talent. To counteract this they sought to change the Amazons in order to degrade them and put them firmly in the box of Other. The Athenians had to change the mythology of the Amazons. For this they looked to a cult which their enemies observed, Cybele. They modified the idea of the already degendered Galli to fit a female model and applied it to the Amazons.
In this way Athenians used body modification to degrade the Amazons. By playing on gender and aesthetic ideals Greeks destroyed the Amazonian body and took the Amazons out of the realm of both genders. In changing the myths and lowering the Amazonian status Athens raised themselves up by re-enforcing their own superiority and perfection.
CHAPTER 4
TATTOOS

The third form of body modification which this study discusses is tattooing. There is record of tattooing in most of the ancient Mediterranean cultures, including Egypt, Greece, and Rome. C. P. Jones identifies three motives for tattooing in the ancient world—religious, decorative, and punitive.¹

Religious tattoos can be split into two main groups, apotropaic and dedicatory. The latter type offered a person into the service of a deity. Herodotus says,

> Ἡν δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμέρας, τὸ καὶ νῦν ἔστι, Ὑρακλέος ἱρὸν, ἐς τὸ ἤν καταφυγὼν οἰκέτης ὁτεὶ ὑμὶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπιβάληται στίγματα ἱρά, ἐσυνόν διδοὺς τῷ θεῷ, οὖκ ἔξομεν τούτοιν ἀψαθαι. Herodotus Histories 2.113

Now there was, and still is, on the coast a temple sacred to Herakles; if a servant of any man takes refuge there and is branded with certain sacred marks, delivering himself to the god, he may not be touched.

By applying the στίγματα ἱρά to his arm, the slave received sanctuary from the pursuit of his master in exchange for entering into the service of the deity.² Thus the tattoo would act as a signifier of the slave’s new enrollment in the god’s order. In this way the mark was a protection, a means of claiming sanctuary. Religious tattoos also functioned as apotropaic or luck-bringing symbols. Female mummies from the necropolis at Deir el-Bahari bear dotted tattoos on their limbs and net patterns over their abdomens.³

¹ Jones (1987) 139-155.
² Jones (1987), speculates that mark may have been, ἐσυνόν διδοὺς τῷ θεῷ, but there is no evidence for this in the actual text.
Fletcher speculates that when the women were pregnant the net pattern would act as a protective barrier for the fetus, growing and changing as the baby developed.

Religious tattooing was primarily practiced in Egypt. With a few exceptions the practice did not penetrate into Greek customs. The religious aspect of tattooing, therefore, will not be the focus of this chapter. Rather the other two forms, decorative and punitive, will be inspected more closely in terms of how they interacted in classical Athens. These two forms of tattooing will be the focus of the chapter because they both appear in Athens with decorative tattooing in the Thracian population and punitive in the Greek and slave populations.

The only ancient Mediterranean culture that appears to have tattooed for decorative purposes was Thrace. The Dissoi Logoi tells us that all other cultures saw a tattoo as a sign of punishment. The Thracians, on the other hand, considered a tattoo a pleasant sight. In addition to aesthetic reasons, Thracians tattooed themselves to show status and wealth. Herodotus says,

\[ \text{Καὶ τὸ μὲν ἔστιχθαι ἐυγελὲο κέκριται, τὸ δὲ ἀστικτὸν ἄγεννες} \]

Herodotus *Histories* 5.6

And to be tattooed shows a noble birth, while an un-tattooed man is a peasant.

Tattoos were a symbol of privilege in Thrace. Conversely, the lack of tattoos was a sign of low birth and poverty. In this way the Thracians were unique among their neighbors, valuing the modifications as a privilege.

While passages like those above show definitively the Thracian practice of tattooing, the corpus of Greek vase painting provides the most abundant source of

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4 Diels. Vors. 2. 408.
evidence for Thracian tattooing. On a hydria by the Aegisthus painter⁵ a group of women are fetching water from the city fountain. The woman at the left of the scene bends down to pick up a hydria. The woman in the center of the scene holds a jar on her head with one hand while lifting her garment with the other. At the far right of the vase a third woman fills her hydria from the spout. All three women can be identified as slave women not only because of the physical labor they perform, but also by their cropped haircuts.⁶ Each woman has a line of scale-like tattoos running up her arm from the wrist to a part of the arm which is obscured by clothing. The middle woman reveals that her legs are also tattooed by lifting up the hem of her chiton. The tattoos identify all three women as Thracians for the reader. The characters on a skyphos by the Pistoixenes painter⁷ show a similar pattern of markings. On this vase Herakles, followed by an elderly attendant, walks along the road. The attendant is depicted as inferior to Heracles by her shortened stature, wrinkled face, and, of course, her gender. She is further degraded by the tattoos on her arms and legs. The marks on her feet resemble those of the women at the fountain, scale-like box shapes. Her arm tattoos are not the same. Although they run from along her arms like those of the other women she does not have the scale pattern. Instead she has three simple, parallel lines running from her wrist to just below the elbow.

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⁶ A method used by the Athenians as a means of denigrating slaves discussed in a previous chapter of this study.

Not all Thracians, however, exhibited linear tattoos along the arms and legs. We can see a break from this precedent in a lekythos by the Phiale Painter. In this grave scene a mistress and her servant are positioned on either side of a grave stele. The mistress stands calmly on the right holding a small rabbit, presumably for sacrifice. The other woman is on her knees and mourning the deceased. She can be identified as a slave, probably the wet nurse of the dead child, by her mourning posture and short hair. She can also be identified as Thracian by three tattoos on her arms. Instead of following the linear pattern discussed in the previous example, her tattoos are small markings independent of each other. On her right arm she has one marking on her forearm and another on her bicep, both a small geometric pattern. On her lower left arm are two small worm-like lines.

It is not just enslaved Thracians who show tattoos, but also their free countrymen. On a famous column-krater attributed to the Pan Painter, two women on either side of the vase run towards an unidentified figure brandishing swords. The tattoos along their limbs clearly identify them as Thracian. Their tattoos are an assortment of fairly independent images, rows of dots, zig-zags, rosettes, and wild animals. These women, however, are clearly free as evidenced by their long hair which flows behind them as they run. A fragmentary vase by the Pistoxenes Painter shows another un-enslaved Thracian with tattoos. This scene shows a standing Thracian woman interacting with a seated male. A lyre hangs on the wall above the male, probably identifying him as Orpheus. As on the previous vase the woman is clearly not

10 Despoina Tsiafakis in Cohen (2000) 375, believes they are racing to murder Orpheus.
a slave because of her long hair which falls in fairly well-kept tresses. Her tattooing is less extensive than that found on the previous vase, but instead resembles the fairly modest amount of markings in the examples of slave Thracians. This woman also combines the two styles of tattoos, linear patterns running along the extremities and small independent images. Extending from the wrist to two-thirds up the fore arm is a series of thick diagonal lines bordered by two parallel lines on the top and bottom. On her exposed shoulder is a small rudimentary drawing of an animal, probably a dog or deer. At the base of her neck she also displays a series of dot tattoos. Unfortunately, the vase is fragmentary and her legs no longer survive, so no information on their levels of tattooing can be obtained.

While Thracians engaged in decorative tattooing, Athenians refrained from participating in the practice. The Greek ideal body, as discussed in the introductory chapter, was a lean, undamaged body. A permanent mark, which would have been applied by striking the body with a needle, would not have been suitable for a citizen. Therefore, they would not have participated in decorative tattooing. They did, however, practice punitive tattooing. Tattoos were a common method of punishment for slaves within the Athenian population. Slaves were often denied consideration as a person, let alone as a citizen. Therefore, while a citizen could not be permanently marked, there was no problem in marking a slave.

Literature gives clues concerning what offenses might get a slave tattooed and what form that tattoo might take. In his fifth mime Herondas gives an example of what might incur such a penalty,

λέγε μοι σύ, Γάστρων, ἡδ' ὑπερκορής οὐτω
ὡςτ' οὐκέτ' ἀρκεὶ τάμα σοι σκέλεα κινεῖν
ἀλλ᾿ Ἀμφυταῖη τῇ Μένωνος ἔγκεισαι;
Herondas mime 5.1-3

Just tell me, Gastron! You’re tired of me and have not you had enough of russling about in my legs but you’re sleeping with Menon’s Amphytiae.

In this scene Bitinna, the mistress of the household, is enraged because she suspects that her slave Gastron, whom she has been using for her own sexual pleasure, has been sleeping with another woman. This leads to a long discussion between the two and another slave on the proper punishment for Gastron. Although she does not go through with executing her threats, the final penalty Bitinna decides fit for Gastron is to tattoo him across the forehead.

Another crime which more commonly would get a slave tattooed was to run away from his master, as evidenced from the *Birds* by Aristophanes,

Εἰ δὲ τυγχάνει τις ύμων δραπέτης ἔστιγμένος,
ἀπαγάγος οὗτος παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ποικίλος κεκλήσεται.
Aristophanes *Birds* 760-761

If he happens upon some tattooed runaway slave of yours, then I shall call him a spotted francolin.

In this scene the chorus of birds is singing to the audience comparing the morality of the humans and animals. When the chorus leader gets to slaves he dismisses the crime of escaping by saying the slave is merely a little bird. He does, however, take care to call the escaped slave tattooed, and the bird he compares the slave to is covered in black spots, as if it is tattooed itself. In another of Aristophanes’ works, the *Frogs*, Pluto wants to punish the Athenian politicians. When they take a while to heed his summons, Pluto threatens to chain and tattoo them all for not being speedy enough.

The three offenses the passages mentioned have one quality in common. All of them deal with insubordination and disloyalty. Gastron has, supposedly, been fooling
around behind his mistress’s back, the runaway slave has forsaken his household, and the politicians are apparently ignoring Pluto’s orders. They all show disrespect to their masters and are met with the prospect of being marked. It seems that disloyalty in many forms was a general reason for masters to mark their slaves. In fact, in Menander’s *Samia* Demeas threatens to bind and tattoo Parmeno for being ἀσεβής, impious.

These passages suggest two possible forms these punitive tattoos may have taken. The first is from the *Birds*. The runaway slave is compared to a spotted francolin. The chorus leader compares the slaves specifically to the francolin, thus implying a physical resemblance between the bird and the tattooed fugitive. The francolin, depending on species, has several possible configurations of markings. Most have feathers with a dark center and bright outer-lining. When lying flat these feathers appear almost scale-like. Some francolins continue a similar pattern in the feathers on their underbelly. Other species have alternating light and dark lines running along their underbelly. However, because of the distribution of the different species, the most likely type that Aristophanes is referring to is the black francolin. This species has a black underbelly with white spots along its stomach, shoulders, and neck. If Aristophanes is saying that tattooed runaways look like this bird, then it can be speculated that some penal tattoos had a spotted pattern. This would fit with several examples of spot marks discussed earlier, such as the Egyptian women and some of the Thracians who have speckles around florets and in linear patterns.

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11 Of the 40 varieties of Francolin, only a handful live outside of Southern Africa.
Other passages in literature, however, provide much stronger evidence for penal tattoos that were not dots, but rather writing. When she is deciding to tattoo Gastron, Bitinna does not talk about bespeckling him,

οὐ τὴν Τύραννον, ἀλλ' ἐπείπερ οὐκ οἶδεν,
ἀνθρώπος ὢν, ἐωτόν, αὐτίκ' εἴδήσει
ἐν τῷ μετώπω τὸ ἐπίγραμμα ἔχων τοῦτο.
Herondas *Mime* 5.77-79

I'm not a tyrant, but if he still does not know himself, that he is a man, he'll know again when he has this inscription on his forehead.

Instead she says she wants a tattoo that will remind him about himself and his crime, being an unfaithful man. Dots probably would not have accomplished this goal. It is not entirely clear what she has in mind, but her use of ἐπίγραμμα seems to suggest she has some kind of phrase in mind. Guy Davenport and several others seem to think she is implying the Socratic phrase, “Know thyself.” The text does not make it explicit, so Davenport’s reading cannot be determined for certain. Talk of epigrams does certainly suggest lettering though. Bion and Plato do, however, make it very explicit that slaves were penalized with linguistic tattoos. Plato says that slaves would often be tattooed with the title of their offense as a reminder to themselves and others of what they have done. Bion says that his father’s master was so harsh that he put a paragraph, συγγραφήν, on his dad’s face. Insight into what some specific writing may have been can be found by skipping ahead in time to a scholion of Aeschines which says the common phrase for runaway slaves was κάτεχε μὲ φεύγω, stop me, I’m a run-away. In

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12 Davenport (1981)
addition to the offense, Gustafson argues that criminals may have been marked with the form of punishment or the name of the person overseeing the punishment.\textsuperscript{13}

Evidence for punitive tattoos in archaeology is decidedly less abundant. No vase or statue shows a written tattoo, which is the most likely manifestation of the penal tattoo. Many vases show Thracian women with the spotted pattern suggested by the francolin symbolism of the \textit{Birds}. These vases may, therefore, show examples of punitive tattoos though it cannot be proven. They are more likely decorative marks applied voluntarily by the Thracians themselves. The lack of written tattoos suggests that Athenians did not depict penal tattoos, but rather the decorative ones of free and enslaved Thracians. The lack of punitive tattoos probably has to do with aesthetic considerations. As discussed in a previous chapter, the Athenians tended not to show disfigured or mutilated bodies. Rather than show grotesque forms they preferred to show relatively whole bodies and portray imperfections generally through small wounds or symbolism. Thus, to depict a forced body modification on one’s face or arms would have been like depicting an amputated hand or severed breast. This would have offended their Greek sensibilities.

It was acceptable to show tattooed Thracians for two reasons. The first is that their tattoos would not be considered injuries or forcible modification. Thracians voluntarily tattooed themselves; the process was not something forced upon them. Therefore, their tattoos would not have carried the same grotesque implication as a slave’s corrective tattoo or an Amazon’s cauterized chest. The second reason is that Thracian tattoos acted as ethnic identifiers. Thracians’ extensive tattooing was

\textsuperscript{13} Gustafson (1997) 79-105.
essentially exclusive to their country, so someone bearing their markings could be instantly identified as a Thracian. Thus a painter could easily identify a Thracian by giving him tattoos. Ethnic markers are used in Greek vase painting for other races as well. In addition to color they distinguished Ethiopians by giving them rounded facial features. They also used clothing, such as the Persian garb used in the Eurymedon vase. These ethnic markers often imply a moral and physical inferiority to Athenian beauty, as has been discussed in the two previous chapters. The moral connotation of Thracians’ tattoos will be discussed briefly.

Jones says that there indeed is an extant vase which depicts an example of punitive tattooing.\textsuperscript{14} In this neck amphora two bands of ivy leaves frame the Goddesses Justice and Injustice locked in combat. The woman on the left is wearing a simple robe and her hair is bound in a simple bun. With her left hand she grabs her opponent’s shoulder, restraining her. She raises an axe into the air with her right hand and is preparing to strike the other woman’s head with it. The woman in the right of the scene was fleeing from her assailant, but is now falling to her knees. She raises her right arm in the air as she turns her torso to face her attacker. The paint is too eroded to distinguish her clothing other than the edges of her sleeves and her hair is not bound, but flowing wildly down. Her arms are covered in solid dark, circular tattoos.

Jones argues that since the tattooed woman is labeled Adikia, Injustice, her markings must be penal. As the goddess of injustice she embodies crime, and evidently the punishment of a crime which in this case would be tattoos. However, it is unlikely that these spots are penal. Jones rightly notes that it is odd that the tattoos are on her

\textsuperscript{14} Jones (1987) 147.
arms. If they were punitive they would more likely show up on her face. The tattoos’ shape also suggests that they are not punitive. These tattoos are not literary, as evidence discussed above most strongly suggests penal markings are, but rather round. They may indeed be penalty spots as suggested by the francolin, although their placement on the arms instead of the chest and neck makes it unlikely. Rather than penal tattoos, they more resemble Thracian tattoos.

If these tattoos are meant to emulate Thracian tattoos the question of meaning arises: What purpose would the painter have in portraying the goddess as a Thracian? It is in this question that the moral connotation of tattoos can be found in Athenian vase painting. This scene seems to have two layers. The first and obvious one is a battle between right and wrong, just and unjust. The depictions of the two characters, however, seems to show a battle between two mortal women. The one who is winning has proper clothing and a respectable, controlled up-do. The losing woman has wild, untamed hair and her arms are covered in disgraceful tattoos. Both of these elements are present in the depictions of free Thracian women previously examined. If the woman on the right is a Thracian, then the other female is probably an Athenian woman.

This interpretation of the two fighters shows a degradation of Thracians in two ways. The first is in the foreign woman’s defeat. The battle lessens her in comparison to the Athenian woman. First, she is fleeing while the Athenian is pursuing, showing a clear power dynamic with the Greek in a superior position. Second, the Athenian woman is restraining her and is about to deal her opponent the death blow. By fleeing and subsequently losing the fight, the Thracian woman shows that she is more
cowardly, less self-controlled, and weaker than her Athenian counterpart. The second way that this vase denigrates the Thracian woman is seen by combining the two layers of interpretation. Adikia is clearly inferior to Dike, Justice, because she represents injustice and, ergo, is on the losing end of the battle. The Thracian woman is weaker than the Athenian, so she is the defeated one. Putting these readings together associates the Thracian woman with Adikia and the Athenian with Dike. Now the Greek does not just win because she is physically stronger, but because she is just and therefore morally superior while the Thracian now loses because she is weaker and unjust. This places a moral degeneracy over the whole Thracian race. Greeks are the just, strong people while their northern neighbors are the weak, morally deficient ones.

The association of Thrace with injustice in this vase can be applied to the losing woman’s tattoos as well. There are two physical differences between the women—their hair and arms. The woman on the left has bound hair and clean skin while the one on the right has unbound hair and numerous decorative tattoos. While wild, flowing hair is a characteristic of free Thracians in vase painting, it is not exclusive to them. Therefore her wild hair is not adequate identification of her ethnicity. Her type of tattoos, however, are exclusive to Thrace. The Greeks did not use this style of tattoos as a trademark for any other people, so she must be a Thracian. In this way her tattoos become a mark of her moral inferiority. The tattoos are the way in which one identifies her as a Thracian, thus assigning the accusation of injustice to the right group. The tattoos have become, in this example, a symbol of Thrace’s degradation. In the other vases examined above this means of identification can impose other types of inferiority than just injustice. When the Greeks depicted the Thracians as slaves, tattoos connected all of Thrace to slavery.
In the same way when free Thracians are depicted as wild with untamed hair and vestments, their tattoos become a marker of their barbarism.

Thrace, being a neighbor of Greece, had frequent contact with Athens. Contact began during the Iron Age in the 8th century. The archaeological record suggests that the Greeks set the tone for Graeco-Thracian relations by establishing colonies along the northern shore of the Aegean Sea. This caused tension for centuries. Thrace was in constant conflict with the attempted settlements. The ongoing battles between the two cultures would have led to victories for both. With each victory Greece would have taken prisoners of war. The settlers would have taken women and children from conquered towns and used them as slaves both in the new settlements and home cities on the mainland. This would have meant that a steady supply of Thracian slaves was introduced into the Greek population over several centuries, making Thrace a constant presence domestically.

Sometime in the late sixth and early fifth centuries tensions between Thrace and Greece eased and they entered into relatively peaceful trade. Hoddinott offers 431 B.C. as the date of complete pacification because of the marriage of Sitalkes and the sister of Nymphodorus, an Abderan leader. As the atmosphere of trade grew, exposure of Thracian culture on the Greek mainland continued. The Thracian contingent in Athens shifted from one of prisoners of war to a more economic population. Trade would have brought businessmen, sailors, and craftspeople into the city. In addition to a certain number of freedmen, Athens would have still been in contact with a large Thracian slave

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population. Thracians were notorious in antiquity for selling their own children into slavery. Thus, a considerable slave population still would have been present, even though the supply of prisoners of war had ended.

This study argues that the strong Thracian presence in Athenian culture shaped Athens’ view on tattooing. Determining the strength of the influence depends on this question: when did Athens begin tattooing its slave population? At what point in its social evolution did Athens adopt this practice, and when did the Greeks come into contact with the Thracians relative to the adoption of penal marking? The answer could help to indicate whether Thrace was an impetus in taking up tattooing or if it caused some change in an already established custom.

Jones claims that Athenian punitive tattooing came about in the early fifth century.¹⁸ He argues for a westward progression of penal tattoos. For him the point of origin for the practice is in Persia, another culture that is known to have tattooed its slave. From Persia the penal markings worked their way west to Greece. From there, they were picked up by Rome after the conquest of Greece.

For this argument he uses three passages about Persian tattoos. The first passage involves tattooing a slave, not as a means of punishment, but of communication,

⁰ γὰρ
 Ἰστιαίος βουλόμενος τῷ Ἀρισταγόρῃ σημηναῖ ἀποστῆναι
 5.35.10ἀλλως μὲν οὖδαμῶς εἰς ἀσφάλειας σημηναὶ ὡστε φυλασσο-
 μένων τῶν ὀδών, ὁ δὲ τῶν δούλων τὸν πιστότατον ἀπο-
 ξυρώσας τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔστηξε καὶ ἀνέμειν ἀναφύναι τὰς
 τρίχας· ὡς δὲ ἀνέφυσαν τάχιστα, ἀπέπεκπε ἐσ Μίλητον
 ἐντελόμενος αὐτῷ ἄλλο μὲν οὐδὲν, ἐπεάν δὲ ἀπίκηται ἐς
 5.35.15Μίλητον, κελεῦειν Αρισταγόρην ξυρῶσαντα μιν τὰς τρίχας

¹⁸ Jones (1987) 146.
Because Histiaeus wanted to signal Aristogoras to rebel but had no other secure signal since the roads were being guarded, shaving the most trusted of his slaves he tattooed his head and waited for the hair to grow back. As soon as it had grown back, he sent him to Miletus with no other command than, whenever he arrived at Miletus, he would tell Aristogoras to shave him and read his head.

In this passage the slave's tattoo does not appear to be a negative, but rather has a (presumably) positive effect for the two city states. Also it is interesting that the slave was chosen to be marked not because of fault or infidelity, as would expected in a culture of penal tattooing, but rather for his trustworthiness and virtue. The tattoo is also unique because it was not intended to punish disloyalty, but rather to incite it. It was a signal to Aristogoras, ruler of Miletus, that he should revolt against Persian rule and lend support to the rivals of Darius. Since this example clearly does not follow the Greek paradigm of penal tattooing, nor the Persian system for that matter, Jones' argument that it suggests that Greece adopted the practice from Persia is not a strong one. The other two examples, however, support his theory more. Both come from the Herodotian account of Xerxes' campaign in the second Persian war. The first of these is Xerxes' crossing of the Hellesponte;

When Xerxes learned this, being terribly angry he ordered the Hellesponte to be struck with 300 lashes of the whip and fetters to be thrown into the sea. I even hear he called tattooers and ordered them to tattoo the Hellesponte.
Here Xerxes follows the typical fashion of penal tattooing discussed above. A subject, the Hellesponte, was disobedient and was punished by being bound, fettered, and tattooed. In this case it was also whipped 300 times.

The last passage Jones uses to support his argument is Herodotus 7.233. In this section a band of Thebans approaches Xerxes’ camp with the intent of defecting, are mistaken as enemies, and apprehended. Xerxes murders a few of the group. He tattoos many of the remaining men with the royal mark, possibly marking them as his property. This anecdote also follows the precedent of administering tattoos as means of punishment. These tattoos are somewhat ironic since Xerxes did not know the Thebans’ intention at the time of their application. He could not have meant them as retaliation against disloyalty. Herodotus certainly knew this and would have seen the irony.

These passages lend credence to Jones’ theory in two ways. They show that Persians practiced tattooing as a punitive measure. They also demonstrate that penal tattoos were a part of the Graeco-Persian interactions, so it is possible that Greece learned the practice from Persia.

Jones’ argument is also supported by examples of Persian influence in Athenian culture in realms outside of tattooing. A popular trend after the Persian invasions was to adopt the opulent dress of the Medes. Many scholars even believe that Persia had a large influence on Greek art. Kawami believes there was an interchange in sculptural...

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19 There is some debate as to whether these last two passages refer to tattooing or branding. Since this study is using the word στίγμα and its related words as tattoo Herodotus will be thought to mean tattoos. See Jones (1987), and Macan (1908) 49.

styles and themes.\textsuperscript{21} Some scholars even see Persian influence in the Acropolis. Root argues that the Apadana in Persepolis heavily influenced the Parthenon\textsuperscript{22}. She argues that the program of the Parthenon frieze is heavily influenced by, if not copied from, its eastern counterpart. The precedent of Persian influence supports the possibility that Greece adopted penal tattooing from the east.

Jones’ argument, however, encounters trouble with the dating. He implies that Greece learned the practice during the second Persian war in 480 B.C., but does not provide a specific date. The passages he cites all refer to this period of conflict, two of them specifically to a single campaign. Jones therefore makes his argument as if penal tattooing was first introduced during the war. This, however, cannot be proven. If it is assumed that penal tattooing was introduced into Athens by the Persians, since an exact date cannot be determined, the possibility that the custom traded cultures at first contact rather than during the later Persian wars must be allowed. This leaves the question of when Athens first came into contact with Persia. Greece certainly would have had dealings with them during the conquests of Ionia and Thrace in the late sixth to the early fifth centuries. Contact probably happened before that. Some scholars argue for Greek influence in Persian masonry and sculpture in the early sixth century.\textsuperscript{23} It is likely, as well, that there was interaction between the cultures earlier due to trade. However, since this cannot be securely placed, this study takes the early sixth century as the earliest that tattooing could have been transferred to the Greeks by the Persians.

\textsuperscript{21} Kawami (1986) 259-267.
\textsuperscript{22} Root (1985) 103-120.
\textsuperscript{23} Richter (1946) 15-30.
Literary evidence, however, suggests that punitive tattooing was an earlier practice than the earliest contact with Persia would support. The Orpheus myth shows that the concept of penal tattoos was present in Greek culture very early. The earliest archaeological evidence of Orpheus is the Sikyonian treasury’s metope at Delphi, which has been dated to the early sixth century. The earliest literary mention of Orpheus is Pindar’s fourth ode from 462 B.C. Both instances depict Orpheus as one of the Argonauts. Christopolus\textsuperscript{24} argues that his inclusion as an Argonaut suggests that Orpheus was a much older figure than Pindar’s ode. He argues that the expedition of the Argo was part of the epic tradition of Greece and would have been well known by the bards. The tales of the Argo and its crew would have had to originate and circulate from an early date to have become part of this oral tradition. Therefore, the tales of Orpheus are older than the Persian wars. It cannot be determined exactly when the myth of Orpheus’ journeying began relative to his inclusion in the crew of the Argo. Christopolus believes that the individual adventures of the Argonauts are to some degree contemporaneous with the story of the expedition since the tradition was to recite each crewman’s individual exploits as well as the main voyage. This weakens the argument that penal tattooing came from Persia, since it was an older concept than Greece’s interaction with its eastern neighbor.

In the myth Orpheus, the world’s most talented musician, goes into the underworld to rescue his love, Eurydice. After charming Hades with his music, he is allowed to take her soul out of the underworld, but loses her when he disobeys Hades’ order not to look back. In his grief Orpheus wanders all over the world. His travels

\textsuperscript{24} Christopolus (1991) 205-222.
eventually bring him to Thrace where he gets into an altercation with the local women. During the fight the women kill and dismember him. There are several versions of what happens next. Phanocles says that the Thracian men took vengeance against their wives:

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ἀς ἀλόχους ἔστιζον, ἵν' ἐν χροὶ σήματ' ἔχουσαι
κυάνεα στυγεροῦ μή λελάθοιντο φόνου.
Phanocles Fragment 1.25-26
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They tattooed their wives, so that having blue marks on their skin, they would not forget the hateful murder.

The men tattoo the women as a punishment. Another passage from an anonymous author does not say that the Thracian husbands enforce punishment, but rather the women punish themselves. It says that out of grief they bloodied their own arms with tattoos and marks. An account by Clearchus says that after the Scythians defeated the Thracians in battle, the Scythian women marked the defeated with tattoos as a symbol of their loss.

All three versions act as etiologies for Thracian tattooing. They vary in who first applied the tattoos. However, the myth does not match the actual Thracian practice. In reality tattooing in Thrace fell into the decorative category. Thracians saw tattoos as signs of status and high birth. The myth, however, places them in the penal category. Clearchus' account is the only version which attempts to reconcile the difference. He says that afterwards Thracians took up tattooing as a means of lessoning their shame and turning tattoos into marks of honor. The other two variations of the etiology do not mention the discrepancy. This myth is an example of how Athenians used myth to

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25 Anth. Pal. 7.10.

26 Athen. 12. 524.
degrade the Other. It is not, however, an etiology of Athenian tattooing. It is still unclear exactly how or when Athens began tattooing. Aside from Jones’ argument of Persian introduction of the practice, there is no evidence that points to an exact date for the origin of Greek penal tattooing. Some possibilities for the introduction to Greece of tattooing will be discussed below, though the actual introduction cannot be firmly proven.

Athens, as discussed above, had much contact with Thrace. This contact exposed them to decorative tattoos. It was this feature of the Thracians that Athenians took up to denigrate them and make them inferior. As with the Amazons of the previous chapter, the Athenians would have felt a need to lower the Thracians to protect their own cultural identity.

The Thracians would have posed a threat for two reasons. The first is that archaeological evidence suggests the initial contact between Athens and Thrace was hostile. Mainland Greeks were attempting to colonize Thrace, resulting in war between the natives and the invaders. Ergo, the Thracians from the earliest interactions were enemies of the Greeks. An enemy with whom one is actively engaged in combat would need to be denigrated. The second reason that Athenians would have needed to devalue the Thracians is that they were constantly exposed to them. As discussed above, a large part of the Athenian slave population was Thracian. The wars in the first two centuries of relations would have provided prisoners of war as slaves, and economic cooperation after that provided freely sold slaves. Since they continually lived with Thracians in their households the barrier of Us and Other would have needed to be quite strong to prevent any bonding or comradery.
Tattoos would have been an easy choice for the Athenians to use to denigrate the Thracians for several reasons. The most obvious is that they were the most visible and unique Thracian feature, so the Greeks did not have to look hard to find this “flaw.” Tattoos also violated the Athenian concept of the body beautiful. Athenians valued the well-groomed, lean, and whole body. Marring that perfection with a tattoo disagreed with their aesthetic sensibilities. The Greeks would also have needed to downgrade tattoos because the Thracians were proud of their markings. They were signs of virtue and nobility that the Athenians could not take away. Athenians would have wanted to sully these marks of pride and denigrate tattoos in their own minds, even if the Thracians saw tattoos as status symbols.

Thus, like the myth of Amazonian mastectomy, the Greeks developed a myth to explain the negative moral qualities connected with a foreigner’s body modification. The Orpheus myth served the purpose of immortalizing the Greek-Thracian conflict and how the Thracians came out as the losers. Orpheus was living abroad when he was murdered by a group of crazed foreigners, the female Thracians. As retribution the criminal group was punished, in this case with permanent marks of their crime. This recalls the conflicts over Greek colonization attempts in the area. The Greeks went abroad and were attacked by the barbarian locals. The Thracians were then subjected to Greek domination in the Aegean. It also served to obliterate the sense of pride that Thracians would have felt over their tattoos, replacing it instead with the notion that the marks were scars of wrongdoing and moral inferiority.

\[27\] Thracians were also well-known for having red hair, another obvious physical trait. Tattoos, however were a self-inflicted trait, actively chosen by someone as opposed to hair color. Thus by degrading tattoos the Greeks implicated the moral character of the Thracians.
This manipulation of myth brings the study back to the question posed earlier: At what point did Athens begin punitive tattooing and when did it come into contact with Thrace? Myths are stories that take time to form and take hold across a culture. This means that the Orpheus myth must be much older than Greek interaction with the Persians. Coleman argues that myths were used and expanded to elevate Greek superiority and lower other groups long before Greece and Persia came into conflict.²⁸ Greeks were in contact with Thracians as early as the eighth century, while the earliest contact that can be securely established between Greece and Persia is the sixth century. This means that Thrace had an impact on Greek myth-making much earlier than Persia. Also, the Orpheus myth is older than the accounts, which lead Jones to believe that penal tattooing was introduced by the Persians. Therefore, it is plausible, and in fact likely, that the penal tattoos in the Orpheus myth were present before exposure to Persian punitive tattooing. While it is still possible that Persia did, in fact, give Greece penal tattooing, it seems very unlikely, although, the strong Persian influence after the failed invasions of Darius and Xerxes as well as Greece’s heightened ethnocentrism afterwards²⁹ suggest that Athenians probably circulated the Persian tattoo stories to further “Other-ize” tattooing.

Thrace’s introduction of decorative tattooing to Greece relative to Greece’s adoption of penal tattoos cannot, unfortunately, be definitively proven. There is not enough textual or archaeological evidence to determine whether Athenians implemented punitive tattoos and then met the Thracians, or if these events happened

in reverse order. The order of the events, as well as the (re)introduction of penal tattoos by the Persians, leaves three possible scenarios for Greece’s development of the practice and how it affected myth and attitudes towards Thrace.

The least likely of these scenarios is that Greeks made contact with Thracians in the eighth century and were introduced to decorative tattooing. Then, as suggested by Jones, penal tattooing was not taken up until the Persian wars. This means that Athens would have learned about punitive tattooing three hundred years after they learned about decorative tattooing. Then, to take up the new practice they would have had to find a way to reconcile the Thracians’ positive view of tattoos with their new, negative view. Thus, they would have had to add Orpheus’ murder and its subsequent punishment to the myth. They would have had to do this effectively enough to spread a new story, which subordinated a well-established custom well enough that it would make it into art and literature a generation later. This seems highly unlikely.

The next option is that Greeks were introduced to tattooing when they first came into contact with the Thracians. They needed a propaganda point with which to degrade the new people ideologically and morally. Noticing the tattoos as a break from their aesthetics and a point of pride for their new enemy, they attacked tattoos. The myth of Orpheus’ death and its punishment is developed sometime in the eighth century. The myth then leads to a practical custom, tattooing slaves and criminals, including Thracians taken as prisoners of war. The myth has now become an etiology for both cultures’ practices. Some centuries later, after the Persian wars, Athenians are exposed to another culture that uses punitive tattooing at the same time that Athens is
experiencing a boom in ethnocentrism. Then stories about Persian use of the practice are circulated to emphasize and re-enforce an already established custom.

The third scenario is that tattooing is introduced to Greece, Thrace, and Persia independently. Greece and Persia use it punitively, while Thrace develops a decorative tradition. Then when Thracians and Greeks come into contact in the eighth century, Athens is faced with a dilemma. Athens faces a problem since this new culture has an inverted view concerning one of their customs. Therefore, to reconcile the two practices while still maintaining their superiority, Greece develops Orpheus' death myth. Then, as in the second possibility, Athens uses Persia's invasion to re-enforce the negative connotations of tattoos.

It is not, at this point, possible to determine which scenario was the true progression of events. Because of the early age of the Orpheus myth and Graeco-Thracian interactions it is least likely that Greece learned punitive tattooing from Persia. With the other two options it is harder to determine which is more probable, although it is interesting that Thracians tattooed patterns and pictures while Athenians probably tattooed words. Since tattooing took two different physical forms in the two cultures, it is most likely that Greece did not learn tattooing from Thrace, but from some other unidentifiable source. Regardless of which path the development of tattoos in Greece took, each shows how Athens used tattoos to denigrate the Thracians and show their own superiority. They took something that was important to the Thracian people and twisted it to become a negative, further cementing Thracians as the Other.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The three methods of body modification discussed demonstrate how Athenians joined the physical with the intellectual to raise themselves up and lower their enemies at the same time. The Athenian sense of self required an opposite to their ideal. They needed someone to be the Other. As the borders of their known world expanded, they added each new country to the list of Others. Coleman says that they succeed in “other-izing” these peoples in several ways.¹ A lack of interest in the cultural donations of their eastern neighbors led to a misunderstanding of these peoples’ potential value, so they seemed worthless. Lack of interest easily allowed the Greeks to have a sense of cultural and intellectual superiority. Coleman also claims that the Greeks class system made it second nature to dismiss other peoples. The biggest source of “us-ness,” according to Coleman, was Athens’ military prowess and its ability to create more slaves. By being the best martial force it easily enforced their paradigm of Us versus Other. Coleman, however, does not connect Athens’ need for superiority to aesthetics and physicality.² As I have demonstrated Athenians were able to connect their moral and cultural prestige to the physical ideal through body modification.

Athenians boosted their own appearance of up-rightness and sophrosyne through the grooming of their hair. Men kept their hair neat and trimmed. Women kept it long, styling it either with some form of hair tie or up it up with a scarf. Athenians also practiced pubic depilation. Depilation was especially useful for males because part of their public life was spent nude. While the costume of nudity was a point of pride for the

¹ Coleman (1997).
² He also, unfortunately, insists on forcing his own moral judgments into the final pages of his fine article.
Greeks, they still needed something to display some kind of modesty. The prepuce and pubic hair together acted as clothes while naked. They were a surrogate *perizoma* and *chiton*. Since their pubic hair acted as clothing it had to be neat and trimmed, just like their regular clothes. In this way a neat and controlled *pubes* was a sign of Greek self-control and nobility. Good Athenians had short, manicured pubic hair while slaves, whores, and barbarians had wild, untamed crotches. The Others were always unkempt and therefore impulsive and unrestrained. It was not just pubic hair which needed to be groomed, but all hair on the body had to be well composed.

The Greeks took away the martial virtues and strength of the Amazons through mastectomy. The Amazons existed as rumor on the edge of civilization, a tribe run by women who were as powerful as the Athenian citizens. This story was a threat to the Athenian sense of superiority, so they modified the Amazonian myth and emphasized the new change. They created the story that the Amazons burned a breast off every woman before puberty. While this (supposedly) made them better warriors, it also degendered them. They became stuck in a liminal phase between man and woman. They did not truly belong to either world. They belonged to no world. Now it no longer mattered how strong or independent the Amazons in the stories were, because they were degendered and therefore degraded. By their own choice to undergo mastectomy, they were lowered to a status beneath the Athenians. The Amazons’ physical imperfection was a sign of their moral imperfections. Their mutilation, by comparison, was a signal of the Athenians’ righteousness.

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The Athenians also “other-ized” through tattoos. Through tattooing they degraded two groups of people, slaves and Thracians. They used tattoos to punish criminals and delinquent slaves, permanently marking them with proof of their transgressions. This marred the body and removed the tattooed person from the concept of a clean and pure body. A slave’s moral failing became a physical failing. They also counteracted the Thracian’s positive view of tattoos through myth. Thracians saw tattoos as a mark of nobility and wealth. This was in conflict with Greece’s notion of tattoos as marks of shame. So at some point in Greek interaction with Thrace, the myth of Orpheus was developed into an etiology for Thracian tattooing. Thracians no longer tattooed for pride, but rather as a punishment for killing Orpheus. Their good quality had been turned into a reminder of their lawlessness and violence. Then during Xerxes’ invasion Persians were added to the legends of tattooing in order to emphasize the shame of tattoos.

Athens modified their own bodies as well their slaves and neighbors. They practiced body modification in real life as well as in myth and legend. They modified to signify both good and bad qualities. Through the three practices examined in this study—depilation, mastectomy, and tattooing—Athenians were able to emphasize their ethnic superiority by connecting physical change with moral quality and thus define in every way possible their concept of Us versus Other. While this study looked at three areas of body modification, body modification can be studied in other areas. Cosmetics or circumcision, for example, still need examination. However, this study provides a first look into the realm of body modification as a basis for further study to better understand Greek society and its relationship with its ancient neighbors.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Daniel John Schneck was born in Maple Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, to Bill and Peggy Schneck in 1987. He was the youngest of five children, being preceded by James, David, Brian, and Katie. He attended Trinity High School where he first learned Latin and was active in many extra-curricular activities. He then attended John Carroll University in University Heights, Ohio where he doubled majored in Classical Civilization and Classical Languages and minored in History as well as Creative Writing. Daniel next enrolled at the University of Florida where he earned a Master of Arts degree in Classical Philology. In the fall of 2011 he began teaching high school Latin in Jacksonville, Florida.