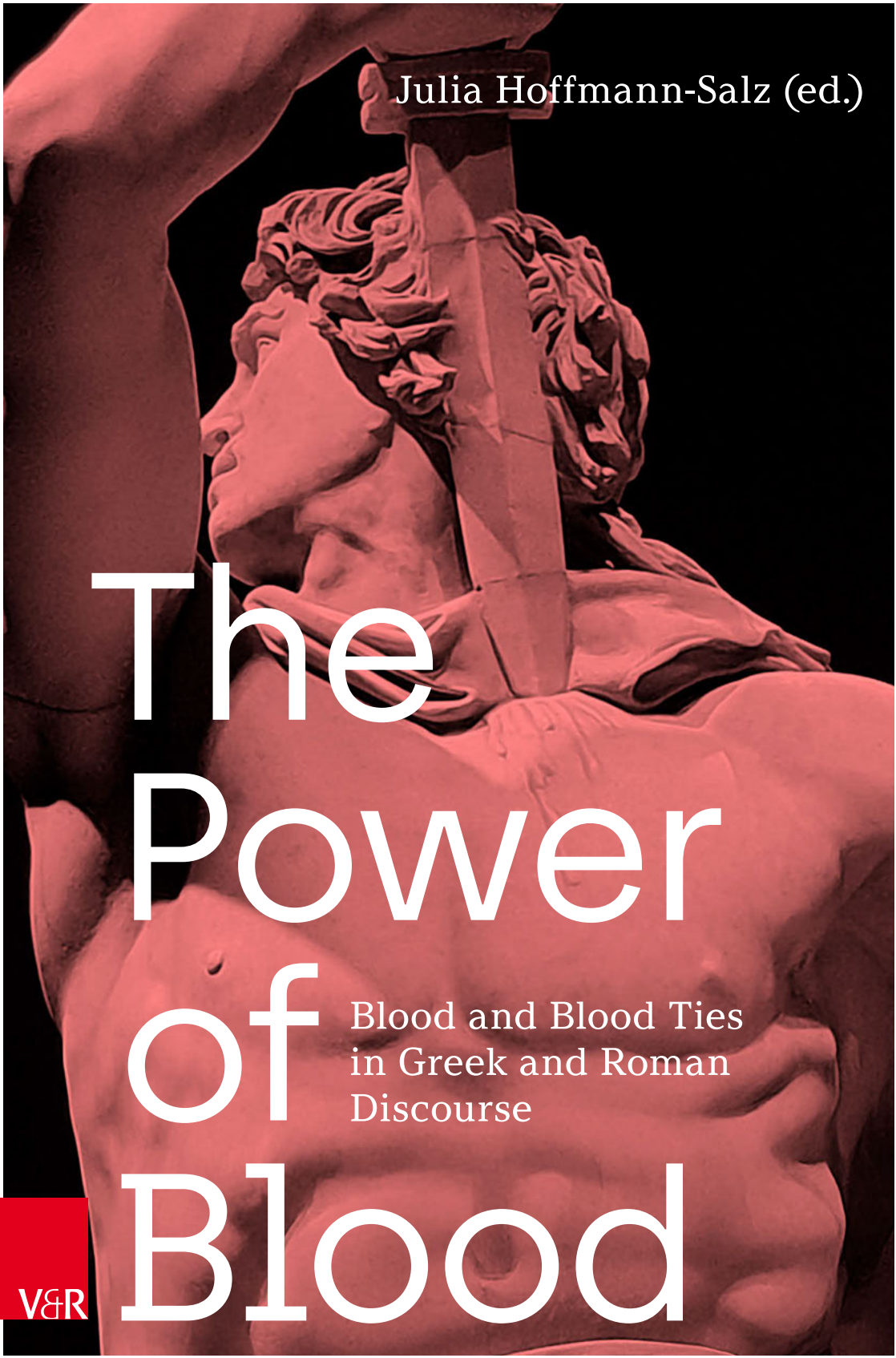
Julia Hoffmann-Salz (ed.)
The Power of Blood
Blood and Blood Ties in Greek and Roman Discourse
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Edited by Julia Hoffmann-Salz

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Preface

This volume brings together papers of an international conference hosted at the University of Mannheim in June 2024.

The conference would not have been possible without the generous funding of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, that allowed us to meet in person in Mannheim and to introduce our international colleagues to this wonderful city and its excellent university. The Fritz Thyssen Foundation is also generously funding the publication of this volume. I am very grateful for this opportunity.

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Edinburgh in February 2026

The Power of Blood

Blood and Blood Ties in Greek and Roman Discourse – An Introduction

Julia Hoffmann-Salz

Before offering advice on battle tactics in the *Iliad*, the hero Diomedes stresses his credentials for speaking in the assembly of fighting men:

> I am by lineage son to a noble sire (πατρὸς δ' ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἐγὼ γένος εὔχομαι εἶναι), Tydeus, who lies buried at Thebes. For Portheus had three noble sons, two of whom, Agrios and Melas, abode in Pleuron and rocky Calydon. The third was the horseman Oeneus, my father's father, and he was the most valour of them all. Oeneus remained in his own country, but my father (as Zeus and the other gods ordained it) migrated to Argos. He married into the family of Adrastos, and his house was one of great abundance, for he had large estates of fertile grain-growing land, with much orchard ground as well, and he had many sheep; moreover, he excelled all the Argives in the use of the spear. You must yourselves have heard whether these things are true or no; therefore, when I say well despise not my words as though I were a coward or of ignoble birth (γένος κακὸν).
> (Hom. *Il.* 14.112–129, translated by S. Butler)

Here, while the family fortune and Diomedes' father's battle credentials are important points in his argument, it is his descent from a noble line traced over three generations, that is given the fullest attention. In the *Iliad*, then, and in many later texts both from the Greek and the Roman world, descent was one of the most important aspects of a person's identity as it placed a person within a commonly accepted social framework of reference. This descent was considered to be a literal blood line, as can be seen in a passage of the *Iliad* where Diomedes meets Glaukos, fighting for the opposing Trojan side, on the battlefield and the men establish their identities by relating their family history to each other. Glaukos ends his report stating:

> This is the lineage and the blood whereof I avow me sprung.
> ταύτης τοι γενεῆς τε καὶ αἵματος εὔχομαι εἶναι.
> (Hom. *Il.* 6.211, translated by S. Butler)[1]

[1] After establishing each other's identity, it transpires that the fathers of the men were guest friends, so they decide not to fight but to exchange weapons and armour: Hom. *Il.* 6.119–236.

Descent was thus considered to be a line of common blood that connected the generations. But while descent and common blood would be such important aspects of a person's identity all through antiquity, already in the Greek world it was not the only marker of identity. This we can see in a famous passage in Herodotus, where the Athenians explain to the Spartans why they refuse to surrender to the Persian troops:

> For there are many great reasons why we should not do this, even if we so desired; first and foremost, the burning and destruction of the adornments and temples of our gods, […], and next the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech (ὅμαιμόν τε καὶ ὁμόγλωσσον), and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life, to all of which it would not befit the Athenians to be false.
> (Hdt. 8.144.2, translated by A. D. Godley)

Here, Herodotus offers two ways of perceiving the commonality of all the Greeks, that have been taken as fundamental for the understanding of identity and ethnicity in the ancient world: on the one hand, the ties of (explicitly) blood and descent, and on the other, common customs like language, religion and way of life.

While defining identity and ethnicity through blood and descent found an often problematic resonance in scholarship of the 19th and early 20th century, modern scholarship has particularly embraced the study of traditions and culture as markers of both individual or community identity and ethnicity.[2] Descent and blood ties are here considered as mostly intentionally created political, social or narratological strategies outside 'biological facts'.[3] It is nonetheless true that the ancient sources in both the Greek and the Roman world continuously referenced blood and blood ties as markers of individual and group identity as has e.g. be shown by Dench, who even devotes a chapter of her study on Roman identity to "flesh and blood" as corner stones of identity (and ethnicity).[4] This raises questions that have so far not been asked in scholarship: How did the ancient Greeks and Romans actually think about blood and the ties it created and how, concomitantly, were blood and blood ties used in different discourses?

These are pertinent questions, since blood was literally ubiquitous in the ancient world: From – often large scale – animal sacrifices to gladiatorial shows, from

2 Cf. e.g. Hall 1997; Malkin 2001; Erskine 2002; Lomas 2004; Edwards/McCollough 2008; Dench 2010; Gardner/Herring/Lomas 2013; MacInerney 2014; Becker 2014, 289–305; Dan 2007, 181–190; Cifani/Stoddard 2012; Malkin/Müller 2012, 25–37; Rothe 2019; Rantala 2019; Irvin 2021; McCoskey 2021; Robertson 2022.

3 Hall 1997, 7 ff. and chapter 4; Dan 2016, 278 and recently Gruen 2020, 218.

4 Dench 2005.

fighting in wars to accidents, from slaughter of animals for meat consumption to the actual consumption of animal blood, from bloodletting as medical therapy to menstruation and births in cramped living conditions, blood flowed rather freely in the ancient world. Seeing often large quantities of blood must have been a common occurrence in the daily lives of the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean. This led to blood and the ties it created to be a topic in different areas of ancient daily lives – and the meaning of blood in each of these areas must have seen mutual interference. Already, scholarship points to the notable influence of medicine on religion in late antiquity[5] – but surely magical practices also played a part here? And what interference can be seen between e.g. medical ideas about blood and the discourse on blood ties as binding forces in family and community relations?

Naturally, the ubiquity of blood led to a medical interest in it. In ancient medicine, blood was often regarded as the force of life itself.[6] At the same time, it was widely believed that there were four humours or fluids in the body – phlegm, bile, water and blood – and that their changing mixture was responsible for health or diseases.[7] Blood as one of these four humours was also associated with character, with one explanation for gender differences being seen in different temperatures of the blood or the larger amount of humours in the female body.[8] Similarly, the quality of blood was held responsible for hereditary traits, and this quality of blood could, according to ancient imagination, be influenced by climate and diet.[9] As the blood that flowed through the body was literally linked to the life of a person, it could also be used in necromancy to bring the dead back to life by supplying flowing blood to dead bodies[10] and encountering spilled blood could be considered a bad omen.[11] Research has already established that the late antique Christian author Tertullian in particular was influenced in his ideas about blood by medical debates of his time[12], and ideas about geographical descent and the associated hereditary characteristics are also a much-discussed topic in the Roman Republic and Imperial period.[13]

Surely influenced by the idea of the role of blood as the carrier of life, the ancient world regarded blood as the most important binding force in family and group relationships. As Aristotle notes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*:

5 Cf. Marx 2018, 511–528.
6 Vgl. Popa 2016, 284–288.
7 Hankinson 2008, 217–223; Rocca 2016, 347 ff.
8 Wildberding 2016, 337; Cadwell 2016, 360.
9 Irby/McCall/Radini 2016,303; Zucker 2016, 484–485.
10 Cf. Ogden 2001.
11 E.g. Verg. *georg.* I, 485; Suet. *Cal.* 57; Suet. *Nero*, 12; Suet. *Dom.* 15; Suet. *Galb.* 18.
12 Moreschini 2018, 382; Marx 2018, 511–528.
13 E.g. Schadee 2008, 158–180.

> Children love their parents as the source of their being; brothers love each other as being from the same source, since the identity of their relations to that source identifies them with one another, which is why we speak of 'being of the same blood' or 'of the same stock' or the like (ὅθεν φασὶ ταὐτὸν αἷμα καὶ ῥίζαν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα); brothers are therefore in a manner the same being, though embodied in separate persons.
> (Aristot. *eth. Nic.* 1161b27–28, translated by H. Rackham)[14]

Such an importance of blood ties within the family as the closest social bond can also be found in the sources of the Roman world.[15] It is therefore not surprising that blood ties also played an important role in Roman legal texts of the high Imperial period, where the law of blood was regarded as unalterable by other laws, *iura sanguinis nullo iure civili dirimi possunt.*[16]

However, blood not only bound families, but also communities, as belonging to and participation in the community was regulated by citizenship, which was determined by descent, which in turn was understood as sharing common blood, as Herodotus and Aristotle show.[17] The Hellenistic era, with its high mobility in the eastern Mediterranean, is regarded as a time when blood ties became less important due to the establishment of new communities and the formation of new local identities.[18] The Roman Empire is also considered by some scholars as a society in which the expansion of the empire, internal migration, the importation of slaves from outside the empire, social mobility and access roads to citizenship pushed the significance of blood and blood ties as an identity feature into the background. Thus Lomas, Gardner and Herring write: "Ideas of ancestry, kinship and descent are a central part of how many societies define themselves and their cultures. Being a Roman was fundamentally different. […] Increasingly, *romanitas* was not a matter of birth or ethnicity but was mutable and ever-changing cultural identity."[19]

While this surely holds true, two aspects do not fit into this narrative. The first is the enduring binding force of – often fictitious – blood ties all over the Mediterranean world. For example, the Phoenician women from Tyre in Euripides' play of the same name were able to claim a common ancestry with the Thebans[20] and the Romans famously claimed to be descendants of the Trojans.[21] Such postulated common descent also played an important role in relations between

14 cf. Plat. *leg.* 5.729c.
15 E.g. Mart. *ep.* 12.44; Ov. *met.* 2.368; Juv. *sat.* 8.1–9.
16 E.g. Dig. 50.17.8.
17 Lomas/Gardner/Herring 2013, 3–4.
18 van Bremen 2003, 317; but compare a different view e.g. in Tevdovski 2021, 7–28.
19 Lomas/Gardner/Herring 2013, 4.
20 Eur. *Phoen.* 203–225 and 239–249, cf. Vlassopoulos 2022, 15.
21 Cf. Liv. 1.1–6; Plut. *Rom.* 1.2–3.3.

communities and is referred to in scholarship as 'kinship diplomacy'. And it was precisely this that was emphasized in Hellenistic times, for example by invoking the kinship between communities in inscriptions.[22] The common terms to express this – *syngeneia*, *oikeiotes*, *homophylia*, *consanguinitas* – underline the continuous importance, that common descent understood as and, at least in Latin, explicitly expressed as common blood relations was given in ancient communities, even if this was an invented common descent.[23]

The second aspect that does not quite fit into the narrative of the increasing irrelevance of blood and blood ties, particularly in the Roman Imperial period, is the consistent use of blood and blood ties not only to bind individuals and groups together, but also to demarcate them and set them apart. Suetonius, for example, reports on the activities of the emperor Augustus:

> Considering it of extreme importance to preserve the Roman people pure, and untainted with a mixture of foreign or servile blood (*ab omni colluvione peregrini ac servilis sanguinis incorruptum servare populum*), he not only bestowed the freedom of the city with a sparing hand, but laid some restriction upon the practice of manumitting slaves.
> (Suet. *Aug.* 40, translated by A. Thomson)

Similar ideas underlie e.g. the description of the emperor Maximinus Thrax as *mixobarbaros* in Herodian.[24] At the same time, ideas about 'bad' blood can be found in the sources about Roman society itself, for example when Juvenal comments on the mixing of the blood of senators and knights under Claudius, which to his mind disrupt the traditional social order and thus undermine Roman society.[25] Tertullian, too, discusses perceived negative consequences for society caused by sexual licentiousness that would lead to a mixture of blood (*sanguinis mixtiones*) and to the disruption of the 'natural' order.[26]

These ideas show the enduring importance of blood and blood ties in ancient society: Suetonius and Juvenal wrote in the early second century CE and thus at a time when the Roman Empire is considered to be at the height of its integrative power! Herodian and Tertullian both lived and worked after the *constitutio Antoniniana*, which conferred Roman citizenship on all free inhabitants of the empire and should have annihilated the importance of blood and blood ties for the community! The fact that blood and blood ties continued to be so meaningful

22 Musti 1963, 225–239; Elwyn 1991; Curty 1995; Jones 1999; Lücke 2000; Patterson 2010a.
23 Cf. Patterson 2010b, 109–118; Russo 2012, 228–256.
24 Hdt. 6.8.1.
25 Juv. *sat.* 6.624–626.
26 Tert. *nat.* 1.16.12.

in ancient discourses on the belonging of individuals and groups underlines the relevance of the category of blood/blood ties for antiquity on the one hand and, on the other hand, allows us to ask more precisely in which contexts and within which ideological frameworks this category appears in the discourse – and what exactly was meant by it.

This is particularly pertinent, as – at the same time as its use in identity discourses and medical studies – not only animal but also human blood was part of religious and magical rituals in antiquity, which gave it a further level of meaning.[27] In magic, blood was often "dark blood"[28] when it was associated with dark magic or was 'sucked' from the object of magical rituals, e.g. in love magic[29]. Curse tablets show that enemies were bound with blood[30], and blood could be demanded as a form of payment for wrongs committed, as in an example from Roman Britain:

> […] whether slave or free, whether male or female. Do not allow them to stand or sit, to drink or eat, or to buy off these provocations(?) unless with their own blood …
> (TheDefix 710)

This idea that blood could be used as a form of payment has been reinforced by Christianity, where the blood of Christ played such a prominent role in the redemption of humanity.[31] To set apart this use of blood from comparable practices in other religions, the church fathers later argued that the cup of blood used in the Lord's Supper was not a literal but a metaphorical reference to blood, with the wine and bread symbolizing the blood and body of Christ.[32] In this, Christians not only had to distinguish their religion from pagan rituals and ideas, but also from Judaism, where (animal) blood also played a role in ritual.[33] Using blood in religion was thus also part of a discourse on identity and belonging.

Finally, blood was of course also ever present in violent conflicts and on ancient battle fields and – because of the frequency of such violent conflicts – was not only an aspect of ancient daily lives, but also an ever-present topic in the ancient sources.[34] In reporting on violent events, however, ancient authors debate how literally bloody their narration should be, with many authors preferring not to be too explicit in their descriptions as is explained e.g. by Diodorus, when reporting on the cruel deeds of the tyrant Agathocles in Sicily:

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27 E.g. Faraone 2009, 227–255.
28 E.g. Theokr. 2.10–13 and 53–56.
29 Cf. Faraone 1999, 94.
30 TheDefix 1090.
31 1 Kor 11:25; 10:16; cf. Kaše 2021, 137–156.
32 Cf. Rebillard 2012, 47.
33 Cf. Selkin Wise 2008, 185.
34 D'Huys 1987, 209–210.

> We must keep our accounts of these events free from the artificially tragic tone that is habitual with historians, chiefly because of our pity for the victims, but also because no one of our readers has a desire to hear all the details when his own understanding can readily supply them. For men who by day in the streets and throughout the market place were bold to butcher those who had done no harm need no writer to set forth what they did at night when by themselves in the homes, and how they conducted themselves toward orphaned maidens and toward women who were bereft of any to defend them and had fallen into the absolute power of their direst enemies.
> (Diod. 19.7.4–5, translated by C. H. Oldfather)

Discourse on and attitude towards blood in the ancient sources was thus not only determined by opinions and ideas of the authors of these sources on blood itself, but clearly also a question of genre with especially tragedy and epic acceptable fields for more explicit mentions than historiography. This gives blood – or more particularly explicit mentions of blood – special narrative power as it was clearly considered to be able to elicit strong emotions.

This is also visible in the depiction of blood in Greek and Roman art. In the Greek world, war was the central topic of art and its early depiction showed extreme violence including blood. However, according to Hölscher, after the 7th century BCE, fighting scenes on vases either in group or single combat no longer allowed for a clear attribution of the fighters to a 'side' in the conflict, thus stressing the element of fate in winning or losing in a fight.[35] And Muth argues that while at the beginning of the 5th century, fighting scenes on vases showed very explicit violence including graphic depiction of wounds with blood gushing out, from the middle of the century, the focus of the fighting scenes shifted towards a more implicit depiction of violence. Now, scenes depicted the moment before deathly (and bloody) wounds were inflicted. Muth believes that this shift was caused by a desire to highlight the victor in the scene in his fulfilment of the ideal of masculine battle prowess and to erase any feeling of empathy towards the victim. She stresses that this change was not the result of a changed attitude towards violence, but a need to highlight the glory of victory, thus effectively perpetuating military success as the prime aim for Greek men.[36] Arrington highlights that these scenes on vases were often meant for private consumption, e.g. in the context of the *symposium*, where male battle values would particularly resonate, but there were also large scale paintings depicting – often mythical – battle scenes in Greek *poleis* and in sanctuaries. These scenes could be rather gory and show dead bodies, but also particularly focused on showing the moment before or after the final blow.[37] Omitting

35 Hölscher 2019, 21–42.
36 Muth 2005, 192–205.
37 Arrington 2013, 162–169.

explicit mentions of blood in historiography may thus have been determined by general tastes of audiences.These tastes seem to have changed in the Hellenistic era, as Chaniotis argues that "[b]lood is visible in colourful works of Hellenistic art", where painted bodies are shown "covered with blood". Crass violence and its bloody consequences were, however, predominantly shown on barbarian bodies, not Greek bodies. At the same time, Hellenistic historiography according to Chaniotis also preferred more colourful battle descriptions with vivid "references to dust and fire, to sudden movements, to the color of clothes".[38]

Zimmermann stresses that the Romans actively displayed bloody and gruesome violence of battlefields i. e. in the paintings and images carried along in triumphal processions. These deliberately showed scenes of deaths and destruction on battlefields, but also in captured towns and civilian settlements, where blood flowed.[39] In fact, Lusnia underlines that "scenes of violence appear in nearly every artistic medium produced by the Romans, from grand-scale public art to private displays in homes, villas and tombs, and even on personal objects such as gems and lamps."[40] And obviously, the Romans enjoyed watching live-action bloodshed in their arenas and depicting the gory arena scenes in mosaics, wall paintings and other media in their houses.[41] Romans were thus far more used to seeing blood in context with (visual) fighting narratives and that may have made them more accepting or even expectant of blood in other media and discourses, too, while, of course, maintaining the high regard for glory won in war.[42]

The ubiquitousness of blood in these different contexts will surely have given any mentioning of blood and blood ties a multi-layered meaning. However, there has as yet been no systematic study of the use and meaning of blood and blood ties in ancient Greek and Roman discourse that would allow for a full understanding of how, when and why blood and blood ties were used and discussed in the ancient world.[43] To understand this, however, is particularly pertinent in debates on identity and ethnicity, at a time when new methodologies such as DNA research seem to be able to offer 'definite' and 'scientific' solutions for questions of identity and ethnicity[44] – while anthropological studies continue to stress that "ethnic

38 Chaniotis 2005, 196–207.

39 Zimmermann 2013, 245–254. Similarly, Hölscher stresses that at least from Augustus onwards, all public monuments in Rome were focused on the display of war and victory: Hölscher 2019, 262.

40 Lusnia 2020, 654.

41 Cf. Dunbabin 2016, 171–229; Fagan 2016.

42 Cf. Lusnia 2020, 682: "Every violent image, however, was a means of visualising power that reflected social and political roles in Roman society."

43 But see van Braun/Wulf 2007 and Knust/Gross 2010 addressing some of these issues for later periods.

44 E.g. Reitsema et al. 2022.

identities are artificial constructs, referring to a shared experience"[45]. Before these modern debates can go forward, it is essential to ascertain what the ancient Greek and Romans actually thought about blood and blood ties and how multiple layers of meaning mutually influenced each other in ancient discourse – in other words: What was the power of blood in the Greek and Roman world and how did the diverse areas in which blood is given meaning and power in the ancient world intersect and interact? As readers of this volume of contributions originating in a stimulating conference at the University of Mannheim in 2024 will discover, they do so continuously and conspicuously.

This already becomes evident in the first two contributions of this volume that look at blood from the perspective of ancient medicine. In his contribution on blood in medical works of Roman Imperial times, Jan Timmer systematically collects Roman ideas on the origin of blood (believed to be found in the liver), blood circulation, composition of blood, illnesses related to blood and blood as symptom for illnesses, but also blood as cure both through bloodletting (ideally stopped before the patient dies!) and through blood as a component in medications. He stresses, *inter alia*, that while Roman authors collected a wide array of medical information, a fixation on the idea of the four humours and in particular the influence of Galen on stressing the origin of blood in the liver precluded the discovery of blood circulation. This imminence of Galen is explored further in the contribution by Teun Tieleman, who not only demonstrates Galen's attitude towards blood, which Galen considered to be the basic nutriment for the body, produced in the liver through concoction of the food taken into the body. Tieleman also shows that Galen's ideas were deeply embedded in Graeco-Roman culture of his time, e.g. in his view of the world as divinely and providentially created or his ideas on the moral decline of his time. Both contributions stress that medical knowledge in antiquity was not an unbiased science, but reflective of social attitudes of the time. This becomes particularly apparent in discussions of practices derogatorily labelled folk medicine, that are also a topic in the contributions both of Timmer and of Tieleman.

The connection between medical theory and social attitudes towards blood becomes even more evident in the two following contributions: Laurence Totelin discusses (folk) tales of the *striges*, monsters particularly associated with infants and infant death as a means to 'rationalize' the fear surrounding early infancy and high child mortality. She can trace a strong association of the *striges* with breast feeding and breast milk, a substance believed in ancient medicine to be concocted in women's bodies from menstrual blood. In his contribution on bodily humours in the Aesop Novel, Christian Laes demonstrates attitudes towards bodily fluids and more importantly, attitudes towards control over bodily fluids as reflective of

45 Häussler 2013, 36.

general attitudes towards gender, class and status within Roman society. While blood itself usually could not be controlled, other bodily fluids – that were considered to derive from blood in medical and popular theory – should be. Both texts underline not only the permeation of medical theories into popular culture, but also the other way round, the predetermination of medical theories through social norms such as gender and class ideology.

The following two contributions highlight use and meaning of blood in religious contexts. Jessica Lamont looks at blood, death and magical ritual practices in the Greek and Roman world, focusing in particular on ideas of pollution and retribution as become apparent in Greek magical papyri and curse tablets from Roman Britain and Classical Athens. These private texts show a prevalent view of blood as a powerful – and dangerous – agent clearly invested with this power because of its perceived fundamental connection to life and death. This idea was also important in animal sacrifices as performed for public rituals and made these publicly performed animal sacrifices the pivotal point for debates on the role of religion in the later Roman Empire as Bruno Bleckmann shows in his contribution on the rejection of bloody sacrifices by Constantine. Bleckmann places the measures of Constantine against bloody sacrifices into a wider debate in Neoplatonic philosophy as well as the general population on how to connect with the Gods and what role the state should play in it. Both contributions highlight that religious practices, too, were deeply embedded in attitudes and social norms within their communities. Continuities as well as changes in rituals (such as the rejection of blood sacrifices) were thus reflective of wider developements.

How fundamental this debate was and how far a rejection of blood sacrifices was a departure from traditional Roman views becomes particularly apparent when considering the following two contributions that focus on stories of early Rome telling tales of human blood sacrifices as moral, political and legal lessons for the early Roman principate: Karen Klaiber Hersch analyses Livy's account of the story of Tanaquil, a powerful queen in early Rome, whose actions – at least in Livy – flout all conventional expectations for women: Tanaquil actively prevents her own children from becoming her husband's successor, but instead installs a divinely ordained young man unrelated to her on the throne. Klaiber Hersch compares this story with the later story of the end of early Roman monarchy and the role of Brutus in installing the Republic in Livy. She can show how deliberately Livy uses his parallel narration of the two stories to promote divine ordination over blood lines in the selection of leaders – and in each case, the bloody corpse of a family member plays a pivotal role as the sign used to enshrine the regime change as binding to the community. In a comparable case, Carlo Pelloso analyses the murder of Virgina by her own father Virginius, in order to spare her from being violated by Appius. The legal case brought against Appius in the aftermath of the murder as reported in Livy offers a complex problem of sacred law, as Virginus uses his daughter's blood to curse Appius. Comparing this case to the two cases that Klaiber

Hersch discusses, it becomes clear that again a bloody body is needed to initiate regime change – Appius, too, is overthrown – and that this human blood spill is framed as a transgressive act galvanizing political action. This could be explained by medical theories that saw blood as the life substance, but it is also embedded in religious practices of blood sacrifice and shows similarities to the use of blood in curse tablets as discussed by Lamont, where blood is utilized as a binding substance to ensure the fulfilment of the curse. Livy's stories of early Rome may have cleverly played with these popular ideas and frame the trope of the bloody murdered body to institute regime change to lend legitimacy to the establishment of the principate by Octavian/Augustus.

The role of blood as a binding substance is also the topic of the following contributions that deal with blood in family and identity discourse. Emily Kearns traces blood and blood lines in expressions of family ties in the archaic and classical Greek world. She discusses possible origins for the idea that blood was the essential essence in reproduction widely popular from Aristotle onwards, but potentially much older. Furthermore, Kearns can show that γενεή or γένος are the far more frequent and usual terms to describe family ties in the sources, while explicit references to blood are especially used in particularly emotional events such as violence and murder. This is corroborated by the contribution of Angelika Kellner who focusses on genealogies, which were a common means of creating connection in the Greek world in private contexts, in dynasties and in inter-community relations. While the creation of elaborate genealogies was very popular and she can distinguish different types of genealogies and kinship terms, these were explicitly expressed as blood lines only under very specific circumstances. Concomitantly, Sabine Müller shows that while – often intentionally created fictive – kinship played an important part in the strategy of legitimization of Argead rule and the Macedonian royal house claimed kinship with a number of different Greek communities when it served their political purpose, it never actually expressed it with explicit reference to blood as far as we can tell, instead our sources use terms such as *syngeneia*.[46] While this term carried a strong significance of descent and passages like those from Aristotle and Herodotus quoted above make clear that descent and kinship were widely considered to be a bloodline, that is a commonality of shared blood, this was rarely expressed explicitly in those sources that Kearns, Kellner and Müller looked at – apart from Greek tragedy, as Kearns underlines. Clearly common descent was considered to be a strong binding force, activated or even invented when politically opportune – but the blood in descent ties was only made explicit in highly emotional contexts such as in Greek tragedy. This underlines the particularly emotional power of blood, that was evoked with caution.

46 E.g. Diod. 17.4.1.

How such an attitude towards blood lines impacted different aspects of ancient social interaction can be seen in the following two papers. Werner Eck discusses the marriage choices of Roman auxiliary soldiers as attested to in the Roman military diplomas with which not only the auxiliary soldiers, but also their wives and children were given Roman citizenship. He can show that while some soldiers married wives from their home region, there is an almost equally large number of soldiers who married women from the regions that they were stationed in. In everyday marriage practice, then, blood ties and the ethnicity/community they created only played a role as an individual choice – not as any form of social norm, despite apparent criticism of 'mixing blood' in the literary sources quoted above. In this, the wider population of the Roman Empire clearly was far more open than upper class intellectuals such as Suetonius and later Tertullian suggest. Kendra Eshleman goes on to show how descent impacted representation and self-representation of orators of the Second Sophistic. She can demonstrate that while there were strong family connections between prominent Imperial-era sophists and these were frequently made explicit in inscriptions, Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists* deliberately omits or downplays these blood links in favour of stressing teacher-student-links as an intellectual lineage that mattered more. Eshleman stresses that this was clearly not the common consensus, but Philostratus' counterargument against this consensus. It may be worthwhile to ask whether Philostratus' position was part of a broader intellectual discourse negating the power of blood that Neoplatonic philosophy with its opposition to bloody sacrifice as discussed in the contribution of Bleckmann also drew on.

If so, it is tempting to connect this debate to the evolving discourse on blood in violence that the final two papers of the volume discuss. Julia Hoffmann-Salz traces explicit mentions of blood in selected battle and conflict narratives from Homer to Tacitus. She argues that blood is not only used in strategies of othering and moral judgement in historiography, but following the *Iliad*, it is considered to be the physical expression of human life and spilling blood is used as a currency to achieve glory. And it is this aspect that later authors would continue to make use of. While blood was rarely explicitly mentioned in Greek conflict narratives, Roman authors from the turn of the era onwards were far happier to write about literal blood spill and particularly stress this idea of blood as currency. Carlo Arrighi also looks at blood in bloodshed and focusses on the narration of bloodspill in strategies of othering that position the Romans as the great civilizers spilling blood of their opponents – of course – only to bring order, while the barbarians are driven by baser instincts like pure bloodlust. He sees this motive evolving since Republican times but resonating particularly in late antiquity, when the Romans increasingly found themselves on the defensive. This also strongly ties in with the idea of blood as currency, here paid by barbarians to create Roman order. With Roman authors clearly more ready to make the power of blood explicit than their Greek colleagues, it is maybe not surprising that after the bloody events of the third century CE, this

power had to be contained and large scale public blood spill in animal sacrifices became too close to home to offer hope and comfort.

Clearly, blood was never simply a fluid: The intentionally selective use of explicit mentions of blood in the sources apparent in all contributions, the debate on its use in event narrations in historiography as well as the different tastes in writing about and depicting blood in the Greek and the Roman worlds plainly show that blood was considered to be a powerful substance in antiquity. This power was fed by the multi-layered meaning given to this substance, that intrinsically linked biological/medical, religious/magical and social believes. Its widely held acceptance and even centrality to ancient communities' ideas about themselves can best be illustrated through its manipulation – from the deliberate omission of blood from some accounts to the equally deliberate inclusion of blood in other instances. It is no wonder, then, that Mark Antony managed to galvanize the Roman populace into action with a rousing speech next to the theatrically displayed bloodied body of the freshly murdered Iulius Ceasar, as Cassius Dio vividly describes:

> And Antony aroused them still more by bringing the body most inconsiderately into the Forum, exposing it all covered with blood as it was and with gaping wounds, and then delivering over it a speech, which was very ornate and brilliant, to be sure, but out of place on that occasion. He spoke somewhat as follows: "[…] Nay, though you enacted many laws that men might not be killed by their personal foes, yet how mercilessly you yourself were slain by your friends! And now, the victim of assassination, you lie dead in the Forum through which you often led the triumph crowned; wounded to death, you have been cast down upon the rostra from which you often addressed the people. Woe for the blood-bespattered locks of gray, alas for the rent robe, which you assumed, it seems, only that you might be slain in it!"
> (Cass.Dio 44.35.4–49.4, translated by E. Carey)

Blood had power – and that power was used.

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Ein ganz besondrer Saft?

Blut bei den medizinischen Fachschriftstellern der römischen Kaiserzeit

Jan Timmer

„Blut ist ein ganz besondrer Saft."[1] So weiß es Mephistopheles in Goethes *Faust - Der Tragödie erster Teil*, als er den Doktor im Studierzimmer zur Unterschrift unter den Pakt bewegen möchte. Und zumindest mit Blick auf die zahlreichen Redewendungen, die von der Flüssigkeit handeln, hat er wohl auch recht. Kaum ein „Saft" dürfte im Deutschen derart präsent sein: Unsere Verwandten sind unser „Fleisch und Blut". Wir zahlen „Blutgeld" oder kämpfen „bis auf's Blut". Blut ist „dicker als Wasser". Es verbindet sich mit „Boden", „Eisen" oder „Schweiß und Tränen". Und manchmal „klebt es an unseren Händen". Dazu passt, dass man, wenn man an Blut denkt oder von ihm spricht, häufig dessen symbolische Bedeutung im Blick hat. Blut stiftet Gemeinschaft, es reinigt von Sünden, es steht für Leidenschaft und Aufopferung, es erscheint als Urkraft allen Lebens.[2] Allerdings kann es auch durchaus negative, ja gefährliche Züge aufweisen: Wo Blut Gemeinschaft begründet, als Identitätsmarker fungiert, da kann das „falsche" Blut auch zur Grundlage von Exklusionen verschiedenster Ausprägung werden.[3]

Dieser Fokus auf die symbolische Seite des Blutes ist nicht nur im alltäglichen (Sprach)Gebrauch üblich, sondern gilt auch für die kulturwissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit der Flüssigkeit: Wo man sich in den letzten Jahren mit Blut beschäftigt hat, ging es überwiegend um einen solchen metaphorischen Gebrauch: Blut als Verweis auf Gemeinschaft, auf Familienverbindungen, auf gemeinsame Abstammung, als Teil religiöser Zeichensysteme, insbesondere im Rahmen des christlichen Abendmahls.[4] Michel Foucaults Formulierung vom Blut als „Realität mit Symbolfunktion" stellt das physische Objekt zwar neben die symbolische Bedeutung, aber in der Praxis ist die Symbolik für den Kulturwissenschaftler häufig interessanter und präsenter als die „Realität".[5]

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1 Goethe 2019 [1808], 1740.
2 Bradburne 2001; von Braun/Wulf 2007a; Knust/Groß 2010a.
3 Weber 2010.
4 Eine umfangreiche Bibliographie bieten Tahl/Kopytto 2010.
5 Foucault 2019, 176.