Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies

Front Pages

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The *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies (AJMS)* is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law, Urban Planning, Architecture and Environmental Sciences. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs (CEMA) of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement.

Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies
Editorial and Reviewers' Board

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The current issue is the second of the eighth volume of the *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies (AJMS)*, published by the Athens Institute for Education and Research.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER

Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

15th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies
11-14 April 2022, Athens, Greece

The **Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs** organizes the **15th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 11-14 April 2022, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc.You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc).

Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

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- **Dr. David Philip Wick**, Director, Arts, Humanities and Education Division, ATINER & Professor of History, Gordon College, USA.
- **Dr. Yannis Stivachtis**, Director, Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs and Associate Professor, Jean Monnet Chair & Director of International Studies Program, Virginia Tech – Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA.

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **open**
- Submission of Paper: **14 March 2022**

Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.
- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: https://www.atiner.gr/2022fees

Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

20th Annual International Conference on Politics
13-16 June 2022, Athens, Greece

The Politics & International Affairs Unit of the ATINER will hold its **20th Annual International Conference on Politics, 13-16 June 2022, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies and the Athens Journal of Social Sciences. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics, researchers and professionals in private and public organizations and governments of Politics and International Affairs and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-POL.doc).

Important Dates
- Abstract Submission: **2 May 2022**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **16 May 2022**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Yannis Stivachtis**, Director, Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs and Associate Professor, Jean Monnet Chair & Director of International Studies Program, Virginia Tech – Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA.

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Baklava Recipes from the Greek King Otto I to the Present[1]

By Osman Güldemir[*]

*Baklava is important in Turkish cuisine because of its international recognition
and its place in important days and tables in the society. It has many varieties
such as melon, curd, almond, hazelnut and pistachio from past to present.
Friedrich Unger, the confectioner of Otto I, the first king of Greece, visited
Istanbul in 1835. "Conditorie des Orients", published by Unger in 1838, is a
unique resource for Ottoman confectionery. In this study, the recipe for baklava
written by Unger was compared with the recipes for baklava in two books. The
first of these is the 19th century Ottoman Turkish cookbook Kitabüt Tabbahin.
The other is the Turkish cuisine book, which includes the recipes of today's
classic Turkish dishes. Baklava with almond recipes in these three books were
compared with three general criteria. These criteria are the material used, the
preparation of the baklava, and the nutritional values. Flour is used in all three
recipes. In the first recipe honey is used as a sweetener, in the second it can be
used honey or sugar, and in the third sugar. Their preparations are very
similar, with slight differences. Nutritional values also show changes due to the
difference in the material used.*

Keywords: *oriental confectionery, Turkish desserts, Friedrich Unger, baklava,
dessert recipe*

Introduction

In "eating and drinking", which can be explained as nutrition with various
foods and beverages, there have been changes in approximately three hundred
thousand years from the existence of human being to the present. There are many
factors that affect these changes. Of course, one of the factors is time. Then, many
factors such as geography, agriculture, animal husbandry, economy, communication,
consumption habits, belief, philosophy of life, science and culture that includes all
of them are important. Food, history and culture studies, which are quite
comprehensive, are handled in an interdisciplinary approach and in interaction
with each other. For example, historians do quantitative research on nutrition,
while ethnographers and anthropologists study the relationship between dietary
choices, the symbolic significance of different foods, diet and religious taboos,
culinary practices, table behavior, and more generally myth, culture and social
structure (Flandrin and Montanari 2013, p. 3).

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Throughout the history, we encounter patterns that are repeated and quite different in people's thoughts about food, its place and importance in daily life (Freedman 2008). However, in this field, it is quite difficult to make simple chronological comparisons like in other historical studies, due to the strong anthropological implications of food history (Montanari 1995). Because the issue is intertwined, that is, it is quite confusing and complex. For this reason, the concepts of culture, history and civilization should be included in the mind, and then it is necessary to deal with food that is also part of national identity in the axis of history and culture (Zábrodská 2017, p. 237).

It is understood that the Mediterranean food culture has achieved cumulative development and change in the historical process. In this process, it is noteworthy that especially cows, sheep and goats are raised and their meat and products are obtained, as well as milk and products. In addition, the production of grains and legumes, vegetables and fruits also add wealth. Agricultural and food activities with high added value such as grapes and activities such as beekeeping-honey cultivation have brought a distinct attraction to the Mediterranean region. Of course, there are also migrations and interactions with other geographies and civilizations (Claval and Jourdain-Annequin 2018, p. 239). Living in a wide geographical area such as Anatolia, Black Sea region, Eastern Europe and South Africa; Turkish cuisine, which is naturally a cumulative and ancient culinary culture, has remarkable features in terms of academic studies. One of these features is desserts.

Turkey is one of the Mediterranean societies has a wide variety of different category desserts such as fruity, milky, paste and made by syrup. Among these varieties, baklava is important because of its international recognition and its place in important days and tables in the society. Baklava has many varieties such as melon, curd, almond, hazelnut and pistachio from past to present (Efendi 2015, Kâmil 2015, Sefercioğlu 1985, Şirvanî 2018). Among these, melon and curd varieties, which are perceived differently today, are included in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. *Baklava with Melon*   **Figure 2.** *Baklava with Curd*

Many desserts such as baklava must have attracted attention at that time as Friedrich Unger, who was the confectioner of Otto I, the first king of Greece, visited Istanbul in 1835. He studied the works of halvah and confectioners in the city and compiled their recipes. *Oriental Confectionery*, published by Unger in

1838, is a unique resource for Ottoman confectionery. One of the recipes in this book is baklava.

Baklava is a dessert prepared by putting flavorings such as crushed peanuts, hazelnuts, walnuts and almonds between very thinly rolled doughs (Halıcı 2013, p. 35). In the *Turkish Dictionary*, with the emphasis on sherbet, it is defined as "a type of dessert made from very thin dough and cooked with ingredients such as cream, peanuts, walnuts, almonds and poured sugar sherbet on it" (Akalın et al. 2009, p. 188). Baklava is a sweet that is a multi-layered syrupy dessert known in countries stretching from Central Asia to the Balkans, from Greece to Turkey and from Turkey to Egypt in a wide geography. Although Krondl (2011) wrote that baklava existed as of the 16th century, there are different sources showed that it has been made in Turkish cuisine since the 11th century (Barkan 1979, p. 275, Bilgin 2008, p. 87, Işın 2015, p. 46, Perry 1988).

Especially in the Ottoman period, it is known that baklava was included in palace menus, distributed on special occasions in madrasahs and almshouses, and consumed during feasts and other banquet tables (Kütükoğlu 2006, pp. 244–245, Reindl-Kiel 2006, pp. 57–63, Sarı 1982, pp. 247–248). Baklava was especially preferred on important days. It is known that baklava is served in the ritual of visiting the Cardigan Sharif on the 15th day of Ramadan from the Seljuk Empire to the Ottoman Period (Akkaya and Koc 2017, p. 47). Known as *rikak*, *baklava* or *rikak baklava*, this dessert was consumed at iftar and feast tables. In addition, it is known that Janissaries are served on *ulufe* payment days (Bilgin 2016, p. 42).

Especially in the Ottoman Cuisine, there are 12 types of baklavas, whose names are given in Table 1 (Güldemir 2018, p. 72). Of course, as it is known that each baklava has different internal materials and different versions in these names, it is obvious that the number is much higher.

Table 1. *Baklava Names in 19th Century Ottoman Cuisine*

Baklava Names			
1.	Âdi Baklava (Ordinary Baklava)	7.	Kremalı Baklava (Baklava with Cream)
2.	Baklava	8.	Lorlu Baklava (Baklava with Curd)
3.	Cendere Baklava (Compressed Baklava)	9.	Musanna Kaymak Baklavası (Fake Creany Baklava)
4.	Güllaç Baklavası (Baklava with Güllaç)	10.	Pirinç Baklavası (Baklava with Rice)
5.	Kavun Baklavası (Baklava with Melon)	11.	Rikak-ı Baklava (Thin Baklava)
6.	Kaymak Baklavası, Kaymaklı Baklava (Creamy Baklava)	12.	Saray Baklavası (Palace Baklava)

There is information that baklava has a widespread presence in Arab culture and even in some sources it passed from Arabs to Turks. Baklava, which has historical, geographical and cultural depth, contains not only a plain dessert but also rituals. In other words, it is possible to establish cultural, ideological, social, economic and health relationships through baklava (Al-Ismail et al. 2020, Bardenstein 2010, Dundar 2016, Goodwin 2014).

Otto I the King of Greece and the Book of Friedrich Unger

Friedrich Unger was the confectioner of the Greek King Otto I between 1833-1838. After Greek nationalism had been gained an independent state in 1830, with a treaty signed between England, Russia, France and Bavaria in 1832, Otto von Wittelsbach (1815-1867), the 17-year-old son of the King of Bavaria, was declared King of Greece under the name of King Otto I. However, due to Otto's young age, the Greek Kingdom was governed by three Bavarian consultants until 1835 (Clogg 1997, pp. 62–69, Pirinççi 2017, p. 63).

The person who introduced Friedrich Unger's German book named *Conditorei des Orients* (1838) to Turkish gastronomy researchers is Konya Tourism Association President Mr. Feyzi Halıcı. He presented a paper about the book at the *Traditional Turkish Cuisine Symposium* held in Konya on September 11, 1982 (Halıcı 1982). Seeing the importance of the book for the history of Ottoman cuisine, he published its Turkish translation under the name *Doğu'da Tatlıcılık (Confectionery in the East)* (Unger 1987). After seeing some of the deficiencies in this translation, Işın started to search for the original text. Finally, a few years later, she searched the internet catalogs of German libraries to find that a copy of the book was found at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. When the microfilm, which was commissioned in 2000, was printed, she saw that the text was longer than the Turkish translation and that there were beautiful and interesting colorful visuals in the book. Then she prepared and published the English translation of it (Unger 2003). She encountered many problems regarding the terms used in the work; she found both words that were not in German dictionaries and words whose definitions did not match their meanings in the text. She turned to many resources and experts to learn enough about confectionery to be able to define mysterious terms and understand recipes. Finally, the Turkish edition, which was discussed in this study, was published. There are many footnotes and explanations at the end of some chapters for the easiest understanding of the book, which contains very valuable information about the situation of Turkish confectionery in the first half of the 19th century. At the beginning of the book, Unger is introduced as "Chief Confectioner of the Venerable King of Greece". In addition, Unger wrote of his excitement to go to Greece in the service of King Otto I as follows:

"The opportunity to stay in Greece, which is one of the countries very close to the Orient, for a long time, is very great because I have the opportunity to enrich my knowledge by learning the preparation of many oriental confections. I was happy. In this regard, I have not neglected to take advantage of every opportunity from the first moment."

In addition, he states that when he came to Istanbul via Izmir, he made a lot of effort to enter the palace kitchens. But he sadly writes that he could not have this privilege. Some of the recipes in the book are explained in a very comprehensive way, while some are given very superficially. Unger occasionally criticizes by citing his professional observations (Unger 2020).

In many countries of the world, pastry has been modernized as of the 20th century and has undergone changes in terms of methods, materials and terms. For

this reason, most of the information given by Unger cannot be practically applied in today's kitchens (Işın 2005, pp. 1269–1273). With the method followed in this research, old units should be transformed into the present and the descriptions should be harmonized.

Materials and Methods

The purpose of this research is to compare the baklava recipe written by Unger (2020) with the recipes for baklava in two cook books. The determination of these two cook books were provided by the interview technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, and the statements of four experts, whose characteristics are specified in Table 2. The first of these experts is a food writer, the second is a retired lecturer, the third is a cookery instructor, and the fourth is the chef of the Ottoman cuisine-themed restaurant business.

Table 2. *Information Regarding Experts*

No.	Date of Birth	Professional Experience	Profession	Level of Education
1	1941	58 yr	Food writer	Doctorate
2	1956	44 yr	Research associate (retired)	Doctorate
3	1986	21 yr	Culinary instructor	Doctorate
4	1976	33 yr	Chef, business manager	Secondary School

The first of these cook books is the 19th century Ottoman Turkish cookbook *Kitabüt Tabbahin* (Güldemir 2015). The other is the *Turkish Cuisine* book, which includes the recipes of today's classic Turkish dishes (Halıcı 2009). The recipes of baklava with almonds in these three cook books were compared with three general criteria. The first of these criteria is the materials used in cooking almond baklava. The second criterion is the preparation of baklavas. The third criterion is the nutritional value of a portion of these recipes.

Therefore, the first stage focused on the materials in the books. In the second stage, their preparations were evaluated step by step. In the last stage, the amounts of a portion were compared by making nutritional analysis with the Nutrition Information System (Erhardt 2010). In addition to the nutritional value obtained, the daily requirement ratio for individuals aged 19-50 in Turkey are calculated. The recommended daily energy and nutrient reference values are taken from the Turkey Dietary Guidelines complies with World Health Organization data (TÜBER 2016, pp. 164–176).

Results

The findings of the research are presented under the subheadings of materials that used for cooking baklava, directions for baklava cooking and nutritional values of the recipes.

Materials

The materials included in Unger's almond baklava recipe and *Kitabüt Tabbahin*, which was focused within the scope of the research, and the materials of almond baklava in *Turkish Cuisine* recipe are presented in Table 3. The measurements of these materials in old units such as *dirhams* and *kıyye* were converted into today's modern measurement units. Then the amount in each recipe is proportioned to approximately one serving. Finally, it has been compared with the material properties and quantities. The amounts are divided into 25 for the recipes in *Kitabüt Tabbahin* and *Turkish Cuisine* books; It is divided into 16 for the recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* for this specified purpose. Consequently, it is possible to obtain tray quantities when the reverse process is performed. In these processes, the amount of flour constituting the physical structure in the portion is taken as a basis. The ingredients are listed in order of use.

Table 3. *Ingredients of the Baklava Recipes*

Oriental Confectionery		Kitabüt Tabbahin		Turkish Cuisine	
Amount	**Ingredient**	**Amount**	**Ingredient**	**Amount**	**Ingredient**
20 g	wheat flour	20 g	wheat flour	20 g	wheat flour
1.8 g	clarified butter	8 g	egg	8 g	egg
6.2 g	egg	4 ml	milk	4 ml	milk
0.3 g	salt	0.2 g	salt	0.2 g	salt
7.5 ml	water	8 g	wheat starch	8 g	wheat starch
6.2 g	wheat starch	0.8 g	clarified butter	0.8 g	clarified butter
1.2 g	clarified butter	6 g	clarified butter	10 g	clarified butter
10 g	almond	8 g	almond	10 g	almond
9.3 g	clarified butter	16 g	honey	0.8 g	sugar
10 g	honey	24 ml	water	0.08 g	cinnamon
20 ml	water	4 g	sugar	30 g	sugar
				20 ml	water
				0.4 g	lemon juice

What Unger wrote as a material and the materials used in its preparation do not match each other. For example, salt, starch, butter and water are used in its preparation although they are not listed in the ingredients (Unger 2020, p. 115). For this reason, especially these materials are written in quantities by logical adaptation to the practices of the recipe. In *Kitabüt Tabbahin*, on the other hand, there is no priority material listing (Güldemir 2015, p. 243). Therefore, the ingredients are reported while giving the description. However, the quantity of most of the materials in this book is also not specified. Therefore, quantities are determined with a logical harmonization suitable for the preparation. In the *Turkish Cuisine* book, both the ingredients and their features are clear that everyone can easily understand in modern kitchens. Otherwise, in this book, there are sugar and cinnamon in addition to almond in the filling material. Sugar and lemon juice are also different for the syrup (Halıcı 2009, pp. 240, 244–245). The use of clarified butter in Figure 3 is quite common in Turkish desserts, especially in cooking baklava. It can be said that clarified butter is the essential oil obtained by

melting the butter and taking the residue, that is, the casein contained in it. Since casein, which is a type of protein, has a very low burning rate, the dishes that it is used in decomposition are both more appetizing in appearance, more qualified in terms of taste and more recommended in terms of health (Güldemir 2018, p. 192).

Figure 3. *Clarified Butter*

Almonds, which are the defining ingredients of all three recipes, are separated from their hard shells and membranes, although they are not specified in the recipes. For this, raw almonds are left in boiling water. After about a minute, it is taken with a colander and taken into ice water and filtered. In this way, the skins are peeled off more easily.

Directions for Baklava Cooking

The directions of baklava recipes with almonds in three sources, which were focused within the scope of the research, are summarized in Table 4.
A very small amount of salt is used when kneading dough in all three recipes. When flour, water and salt come together, a gluten complex is formed. Thus, the dough can gain elasticity and structure. In this way, it is possible to give the dough the desired shape. There are also flat statements that desserts with light salt are perceived as tastier (Dizlek 2012, pp. 43–46). Centuries ago, the conscious or unconscious use of salt coincides with modern gastronomy knowledge.

Table 4. *Recipes of the Baklava with Almonds*

Oriental Confectionery	Kitabüt Tabbahin	Turkish Cuisine
Knead flour, clarified butter, eggs, salt and water. Cut it into small pieces, roll, and roll out a little with a rolling pin. Sprinkle these small circles with starch, stack and roll them together with a thin and long rolling pin to the thickness of a paper. Place the phyllo dough in the oiled tray. Sprinkle unshelled and chopped almonds between layers. Pour some clarified butter over it. When the layers are completed, cut them into a diamond shape and pour the remaining clarified butter. Bake in an oven that is not too hot. Mix the water and honey, heat and pour over.	Knead dough with flour, eggs, milk and salt. Cut it into pieces, roll it up, let it rest. Roll out doughs by sprinkling starch. Spread five doughs on a greased tray and drizzle with clarified butter. Sprinkle crushed almonds every ten phyllo doughs. Cut it into a diamond shape when 35-50 times according to thickness and materials. Pour clarified butter over it. Bake in the oven until golden brown. Mix honey and water and boil until it becomes thick syrup. Pour the sherbet over the baked baklava. Place it on plates and top with granulated sugar.	Knead dough with flour, eggs, water and salt. Cut into 16 pieces, roll and rest. Sprinkle starch on each piece and roll out doughs, spread on an oiled tray. Sprinkle with clarified butter with a brush in every three doughs. Crush the almonds with sugar and cinnamon. Spread this mixture after the ninth dough. Place all doughs on top of the dough by greasing once in three doughs. Cut with the oiled sharp knife's tip by pressing it. Pour clarified butter over it. Bake in the oven until golden brown. Mix sugar, water and lemon juice. Take it 2 minutes after boiling. After the baklava has cooled, pour the warmish syrup on it.

There is no description in the recipe for the preparation of the dough and the roll out the doughs in *Kitabüt Tabbahin* (Güldemir 2015, pp. 243, 290–291). Therefore, it is necessary to logically complete these materials and their preparation. In this book, almonds are crushed and thinned, unlike Unger's recipe. Almonds are chopped in Unger's recipe. The cutting method is not specified in all three recipes. However, the classic diamond cut is in the form of a *diamond shape* as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. *Classical Baklava Cutting Shape (Diamond Shape)*

The *Turkish Cuisine* book contains the steps of the process that everyone can easily perceive and practice in the kitchen. However, it is noteworthy that in this book and the other two, the degree of cooking in the oven is not specified (Halıcı 2009, pp. 240, 244–245). Naturally, it is necessary to access other sources for the information that desserts such as baklava should be cooked at a temperature of ~170 °C.

At the end of baklava recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery*, it is located in expression "*here it is baklava known in the whole of Greece and Turkey*" (Unger 2020, p. 115). This means that baklava was known as a popular dessert in this geography in the 1800s.

Nutritional Values of the Recipes

The nutritional values of baklava with almonds in the three books considered within the scope of the research and the percentages of meeting the daily requirement for individuals aged 19-50 are given in Table 5. The coverage percentages were calculated separately for men and women, and then their averages were taken and wrote in a single value in the table.

Table 5. *Nutritional Values and Percentages of Meeting Daily Needs of the Baklava's*

Energy and Nutrients	Oriental Confectionery		Kitabüt Tabbahin		Turkish Cuisine	
	Values	**%**	**Values**	**%**	**Values**	**%**
Energy (kcal)	280.2	15	273.8	15	493.7	26
CHO (g)	28	11	38.1	15	82.2	33
Fiber (g)	1.8	7	1.6	6	1.8	7
Protein (g)	5.3	8	5.2	7	5.7	8
Fat (g)	16.3	28	11	19	15.4	26
Vit A (mcg)	92.2	13	60	9	86.6	13
Vit C (mg)	0.3	0	0.5	1	0.3	0
Vit E (mg)	3	25	2.4	20	3	25
Thiamin (mg)	0	0	0	0	0.1	9
Riboflavin (mg)	0.1	9	0.1	9	0.1	9
Vit B12 (mcg)	0.1	3	0.1	3	0.1	3
Folate (mcg)	9.8	3	9.9	3	11	3
Iron (mg)	0.7	5	0.7	5	0.8	6
Zinc (mg)	0.6	6	0.5	5	0.6	6
Calcium (mg)	16.4	2	21.1	2	23.7	2
Phosphorus (mg)	64.1	12	63.8	12	70.9	13

Baklava with almond recipes have the lowest energy content in *Kitabüt Tabbahin* (273.8 kcal) and the highest in *Turkish Cuisine* with 493 kcal. The recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* book meets the daily carbohydrate requirement at a rate of 11%. The fiber, protein, vitamin C, vitamin E, riboflavin, vitamin B12, folate, iron, zinc, calcium and phosphorus content of all three recipes are similar. The recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* book meets the daily fat requirement at a rate of 28%. The vitamin C content of all the recipes is almost nonexistent. The

daily vitamin E requirement is met by 25% of the recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* book and the recipe in *Turkish Cuisine*. In general, baklava with almonds has a rich content except for some components. Paying attention to the portion size and consumption frequency is important for a healthy diet (Baysal 2007).

Conclusions

In this research, it was aimed to compare the baklava recipe written by Unger (*Oriental Confectionery*) with the recipes of baklava in two cook books. The first of these cook books is the 19th century Ottoman Turkish cookbook *Kitabüt Tabbahin*. The other is the *Turkish Cuisine* book, which includes the recipes of today's classic Turkish dishes. The recipes of baklava with almonds in these three cook books were compared with three general criteria. The first of these criteria is the material used, the second is the preparation of the baklava, and the third is the nutritional values. The first stage focused on the materials in the books. In the second stage, their preparations were evaluated. In the last stage, the amounts of a portion were compared by making nutritional analysis with the Nutrition Information System. In addition to the nutritional value obtained, the daily requirement ratio for individuals aged 19-50 in Turkey are calculated. The recommended daily energy and nutrient reference values are from Turkey Dietary Guidelines.

Flour, salt, almond and clarified butter are used in all three recipes. In the first recipe, especially honey is used as a sweetener, it is emphasized that honey or sugar can be used in the second, and sugar is used in the third. In the *Turkish Cuisine* book, where Unger's recipe is compared, both the ingredients and their features are clear that everyone can easily understand in modern kitchens. Besides, this book contains sugar and cinnamon in addition to almonds in its filling material. Sugar and lemon juice are also different in sherbet. In *Kitabüt Tabbahin*, there is no recipe for the preparation of the dough and the roll out doughs. Therefore, it is necessary to logically complete these materials and their preparation. In this book, almonds are crushed and thinned, unlike Unger's recipe. The cutting method is not specified in all three recipes. Again, the cooking degree is not specified in all three recipes. Their preparation techniques are very similar, with slight differences.

Nutritional values also exhibit minor changes due to the difference in the material used. Baklava with almond recipes have the lowest energy content in *Kitabüt Tabbahin* and the highest in *Turkish Cuisine* with 493 kcal. The recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* book meets the daily carbohydrate requirement at a rate of 11%. The fiber, protein, vitamin C, vitamin E, riboflavin, vitamin B12, folate, iron, zinc, calcium and phosphorus content of all three recipes are similar. The recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* book meets the daily oil requirement at a rate of 28%. The vitamin C content of the recipes is almost nonexistent. The daily vitamin E requirement is met by 25% of the recipe in the *Oriental Confectionery* book and the recipe in *Turkish Cuisine*. In general, baklava with almonds has a rich content except for some components.

In future studies, preparation of standard recipes of three practices and their sensory analysis will enable different evaluations. Also, simply tracing the baklava from sources in different languages can quench the curiosity about the origin of this dessert. Compiling the information and recipes of baklava in historical sources can also enable scientific evaluation of the similarities and differences between them. In the nine groups that Balata et al.'s (2019, p. 236) analysis of Mediterranean destinations revealed, confectionery products, i.e., desserts, are also identified as a potential priority. Therefore, with the knowledge that ethnic restaurants are on the rise (Harris 2016, p. 270), different types of baklavas can be offered to customers in such restaurants and especially in Mediterranean destinations.

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A Proposal upon the Figure of Hermes as an Ancient God of Fire (According to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*)

By Felice Vinci[*] and Arduino Maiuri[±]

The origin and meaning of Hermes, whose figure is full of different and even contradictory aspects, has never been clarified. Now, starting from a passage from the Homeric Hymn dedicated to him – in which Hermes is considered the one "who first invented fire-sticks and fire" – as well as on the fact that he is often associated with Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, we propose here that he was originally a god of fire. This immediately explains his attributions, the meaning of his name and even the shape of the caduceus. Moreover, the Hermes-Hestia couple corresponds to the conception of the two fires in the Vedic world: one is the quadrangular "male fire" of the sky, while the other is the round "female fire" of the earth. This original dimension of Hermes as a god of fire also links him to lightning, that produces forest fires and is considered a divine omen, which explains his function as the messenger of the gods. At this point, it is even possible to identify the original counterpart of Hermes in the Roman world: he was not Mercury, but the ancient god Terminus, whose original dimension linked to fire gradually faded over the centuries, as it happened also for Hermes.

Hermes in the Ancient Mythographic Tradition

The figure of Hermes is very complex. He is the messenger of the gods and their intermediary with the men; he is the protector of shepherds, merchants and thieves; he is the *Ψυχαγωγός* or the *Ψυχοπομπός*, because he accompanies the souls of the dead to the afterlife; he is the *Ἀργειφόντης*, because he killed Argos, and the *Κυνάγχης*, because he strangled a dog; he is the *Τετράγονος*, that is, "the Quadrangular"; he is also a stone-god and the god of piles of stones, in a bizarre contrast with the wings on his feet, which make him very fast and unpredictable (Allan 2018, Miller and Strauss Clay 2019).

All this means that his real image is hidden behind a set, or rather, an inextricable tangle of heterogeneous if not antithetical attributions, which until now have made it very difficult to understand his origin and meaning. The same can be said of his name, which has not yet been adequately explained (Stockmeier 1988).

The key to the problem could be that Hermes is closely associated with Hestia, the goddess of the hearth and the sacred fire (North 2001, Friedman 2002, Kajava 2004), in the first of the *Homeric Hymns* dedicated to her. Not only that,

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because on the basis of the great statue of Zeus, in Olympia (Barringer 2010, Burton 2015), Phidias represented the Twelve Gods[2]. Between the Sun and the Moon these twelve divinities, grouped two by two, were ordered into six pairs, a god and a goddess. Among these divine couples, Hermes-Hestia is a problem, because there is nothing in their genealogy and legend to justify such an association (Vernant 1963, p. 12).

However, sometimes it is precisely the anomalies that can indicate the solution of the problems. In fact, this apparently bizarre juxtaposition between these two deities fits perfectly with a key passage of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, which states that he was the inventor of fire (Johnston 2002, Vergados 2011, Jarczyk 2017): "He gathered a pile of wood and began to seek the art of fire./ He took a beautiful laurel branch and turned it into a pomegranate one,/ holding it in his hands, and the hot smoke rose up./ For it was Hermes who first invented fire-sticks and fire" (σὺν δ᾽ ἐφόρει ξύλα πολλά, πυρὸς δ᾽ ἐπεμαίετο τέχνην./ Δάφνης ἀγλαὸν ὄζον ἑλὼν ἀπέλεψε σιδήρῳ/, ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃ· ἄμπνυτο δὲ θερμὸς ἀυτμή./ Ἑρμῆς τοι πυρήια πῦρ τ᾽ ἀνέδωκε, *Hymn. Herm.* 107–111).

Since his name is comparable to the Sanskrit term *gharmah*, "heat", whose root is found in the Greek adjective θερμός, "hot", "ardent" (but also the Armenian *jerm* has the same meaning), it is reasonable to suppose that an ancient god of fire was hiding behind his features and his very name. On the other hand, this is not surprising, considering that also the Babylonian god Nusku (Lewy and Lewy 1948), messenger of the god Enlil and intermediary between gods and men, was a god of fire: another of his names is Girru or Gerra, perhaps comparable to *gharmah*.

So Hermes and Hestia are related to each other, as Hestia personifies the sacred fire and the hearth inside the houses (Carandini 2015), while Hermes represents the open fire, lit in the bivouacs by those who travel, work or wander at night, such as shepherds, merchants, travellers and thieves... In short, all those who in ancient Greece considered him their tutelary god.

This is the key to understand all of his multiple attributions. Hermes is both the god of domestic and wild animals (*Hymn. Herm.* 569–571), because during the night the shepherds' fire protects the ones but terrifies the others. Fire also has a very strong power – that's why he is considered a god – but it is ambivalent: in fact it is beneficial for men, but it is changeable, bizarre and unpredictable; moreover, it becomes very dangerous when it spreads too quickly or in an uncontrolled way, especially if it is powered by the wind. This perfectly explains Hermes' "wings on his feet", a lively metaphor of its tendency to spread very rapidly and above all to rise upwards. In addition, fire often "steals" the goods of men, that is, plants, trees, crops, livestock, which was probably another reason for considering him the god of thieves.

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[2]According to Brown (1947, p. 114), the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* was motivated by the establishment of the Altar of the Twelve Gods in Athens in 522/521 B.C. Newly observed congruencies between the *Hymn* and circumstances in Peisistratid Athens seem to confirm his theory (Johnston and Mulroy 2009-2010).

As for the fact that Hermes is called Ἀργειφόντης and Κυνάγχης, that is killer or strangler of dogs, this could allude to some mythical episode, unknown to us, in which a dog was suffocated by the smoke of a fire, perhaps in a sheepfold.

Moreover, Hermes has shamanic aspects (which show his great antiquity, that overshadowed his original attribution). He is in fact a psychopomp god, who leads the souls of the dead to the afterlife (*Od.* XXIV, 1–10), with an obvious reference to the fire of the pyres on which the bodies of the dead were burnt. He is also a music god, who in fact invents the lyre (κιθάρα) in the *Homeric Hymn* dedicated to him: indeed music has a strong shamanic dimension, not to mention the night bivouacs around the fire. The latter are also the key to understanding why baby Hermes, while he is in the arms of his elder brother Apollo, emits a noise: the reference is to the crackle of the fire (not surprisingly, the term of the Sicilian dialect, *pirita*, that expresses this idea contains the root of πῦρ, "fire"), whereas the sun, that is Apollo, gives light and heat without making any noise.

Hermes, moreover, is "eager for meat" ("after which the glorious Hermes began to desire the sacred food": ἔνθ᾽ ὁσίης κρεάων ἠράσσατο κύδιμος Ἑρμῆς, *Hymn. Herm.* 130), but does not eat it ("his intrepid heart did not obey him": οὐδ᾽ ὥς οἱ ἐπείθετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ, v. 133), just like the fire of sacrifices that burns the victims. On the other hand, the sacrifice of oxen (vv. 121–123) is similar to that of an ox performed by Prometheus (Hes., *Theog*. 536–541), who is also a "thief god" linked to fire (Lloyd-Jones 2003, Baumbach 2014, Yona 2014-2015). However, these two characters are very different: Hermes is the messenger of Zeus, while Prometheus is a fierce opponent of the latter. In reality, while Hermes is the fire that ignites and spreads in the world naturally, for example when lightning strikes a tree, instead Prometheus is linked to Hephaestus, revealing that it is the fire of the forge and the fusion of the metals, which symbolizes the "Promethean" desire of *Homo faber* (Ferrarin 2000-2001) to master the forces of nature and to compete against the gods themselves by using technology: hence his rivalry with Zeus.

At this point it also becomes clear why Hermes is considered a stone-god, linked to stones: the reference is to flint, the stone that if struck noisily produces a spark – that is, a kind of little lightning bolt – which in turn is capable, just like real lightning, of producing a fire. On the other hand, for an archaic mentality it is natural to believe that the glare of lightning, followed by the roar of thunder, is produced by the equally noisy percussion of the hammer of a celestial god: let's think of the Nordic Thor as well as of Tiermes, a Lapp god of lightning (Bosi 1995, p. 114), whose similarity with the name of Hermes (and with the Greek θερμός, whose root is linked to Hermes) appears rather curious. Regarding the relationship between Hermes and Tiermes, it is deepened in another study (Maiuri and Vinci 2021), in which an explanation of the anomaly of the lunar cycle found in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (Humbert 1967, p. 108) is proposed.

In short, Hermes presumably was born in remote prehistoric times as a god of fire, as confirmed by his connection with Hestia. And it is from lightning (which causes fires in forests and trees) that his original dimension of fire of open spaces originates, as well as his function as a messenger of the gods (as probably also happened to his Mesopotamian colleague Nusku): that's why thunders that accompany lightning strikes have always been considered signs and omens of the

divine will. In light of all this, it can be deduced that the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* is a "literary fossil", which providentially escaped the troubles of history over the millennia.

Hermes, Hestia and the Two Vedic Fires

About the singular attribution of Τετράγονος, a piece of information handed down by Pausanias (2nd century AD) is enlightening. He says that in a city of his time there was a stone statue depicting a quadrangular Hermes, in front of which was the hearth of Hestia (Vernant 1978, p. 195). This not only confirms what has already emerged so far, but makes us take a further step forward: in fact it corresponds to the geometry of the two fires of sacrifices in the primitive Vedic religion, on which Georges Dumézil dwells. He says that "during the ceremony, the sacrificer's wife stands by the first fire. It indicates the bond with the earth [...] and, therefore, it is round. The other axial fire, east of the first, is called *āhavanīya*, the fire of offerings [...] Its smoke brings the gifts of men to the gods [...] This fire is 'the other world', 'the sky' and, therefore, it is oriented according to the cardinal points and is quadrangular" (Dumézil 1977, p. 278).

At this point it can be said that the Vedic concept of the main "two fires", male and female, was also present in the religion of ancient Greece. This, therefore, represents the last memory of a common heritage, dating back to the time when the common ancestors of the Greeks and the Indians were still undivided (Macedo 2020).

The same concept appears in the Germanic world, where on the occasion of the Walpurgis Night (Barletta 2013), the eve of the Christian feast day of Saint Walpurga (1 May), according to tradition the witches meet to celebrate their Sabbath on the top of Mount Brocken, where there are two large rocks, called *Hexenaltar* ("Witches Altar") and *Teufelskanzel* ("Devil's Pulpit"): the latter, quadrangular in shape, corresponds to the "male fire", while the former is the "female fire" of the Vedic world (Figure 1).

It is also noteworthy that on the same day, May 1st, according to Roman mythology there was the feast of *Paliliae* (Ov., *Fast.* IV, 721–862), when shepherds used to light fires on the Palatine hill (Vanggard 1971, Gjerstad 1976, Toporov 1977). In this regard, it seems significant that one of the two peaks of the Palatine was called *Cermalus* (Castagnoli 1977), a name that has the same root as Hermes; moreover, in a previous work (Vinci and Maiuri 2017: cfr. also Nissan et al. 2019, *max.* pp. 104–124) we have shown that the Palatine is the counterpart on the Earth of Maia, the goddess (Hermes' mother connected to 1 May, as Ovid says in his *Fasti*) who is the central star of the seven Pleiades, of which the Seven Hills of Rome are the projection (according to the traditional saying of the *Emerald Tablet*, attributed to Hermes Trismegistus: "As above, so below"). In the same work we also show that Maia was the secret protective deity of Rome, while in later works (Vinci and Maiuri 2019, 2021a) we demonstrate that the traditional founding date of Rome, April 21, is also linked to the seven Pleiades. Incidentally, it is also curious that Cermalus is almost the same name as the biblical Mount

Carmel, where the prophet Elijah made fire come down from heaven to burn up a sacrifice (*1 Kings* 18:38).

Figure 1. *"Devil's Pulpit" and "Witches' Altar" - Harz National Park (Lower Saxony)*

Still upon Rome, Georges Dumézil emphasizes that "the Roman practice of sacred fires has remarkable analogies with the Indian practice [...] On the altar [...] the offering will be burnt and thus transmitted to the god; however, there must absolutely be a hearth next to the altar" (Dumézil 1977, p. 280). In short, the conception of the two fires is found in the archaic Roman world, in which Vesta, identical to Hestia for both function and name (Ampolo 2005), with her circular temple represents the fire of the earth: so *Virgines Vestales* were the priestesses who ensured the purification of the city (del Basso 1974, Martini 2004, Wildfang 2006, Arvanitis 2010).

Now, investigating the Roman divinities to look for some analogy with Hermes, it emerges that the ancient god Terminus (Piccaluga 1974, De Sanctis 2005), whose name also seems to recall both θερμός and Tiermes, represents "a cult of the terminal stones, the boundary stones of private properties" (Dumézil 1977, p. 386). In fact, Ovid says of him: "O Terminus, whether you are a stone or a log in the field,/ you too are a god since ancient times" (*Termine, sive lapis sive es defossus in agro/ stipes, ab antiquis tu quoque numen habes*, Ov., *Fasti* II, 641–642). On the other hand, Homer himself calls τέρματα (*Il.* XXIII, 333) the turning-post of a chariot race, consisting of a dry log with two stones beside it.

Ovid goes on to narrate that on February 23 a rustic altar was set up to honour the god Terminus, with stacked pieces of wood and branches planted on the

ground, that were then lit and on which sacrificial offerings were burned (Ov., *Fasti* II, 645–656). He also mentions a characteristic of the temple that Terminus shared with Jupiter on the Capitol: "Even now, so that he sees nothing but the stars above him,/ the roof of that temple has a small opening" (*nunc quoque, se supra ne quid nisi sidera cernat,/ exiguum templi tecta foramen habent*, vv. 671–672).

It was, therefore, a temple open upwards, which corroborates Terminus' heavenly dimension and in particular the fact that he originally represented the heavenly fire, just like Hermes. Incidentally, this could give the *oculus*, the circular hole at the top of the roof of the Pantheon, a meaning that is not merely functional: since that structure, as its name implies, was dedicated "to all the gods", it was necessary that the roof was open, in order to avoid that some heavenly divinities, such as Terminus, felt "out of place", that is, uncomfortable in a closed environment.

It is also noteworthy that the names of Terminus and Tiermes recall Turms, the Etruscan god who corresponds to Hermes[3], and even the Tummo, or "inner fire", the ancient meditation technique practiced by Tibetan Buddhist monks: here is another point of contact with the primitive undivided Indo-European world.

In short, even if in the Roman world the correspondent of Hermes is Mercury, who in fact retains many of his attributions, in reality it is probable that in a remote prehistory his true *alter ego* in the original dimension of god of fire was Terminus, whose original nature, however, has gradually faded over the centuries. On the other hand, even Hermes over time has lost his true nature, whose memory has remained only in his *Hymn* which can be considered a "fossil" dating back to the dawn of time.

The last appearance of Hermes as a heavenly messenger is found in Dante's *Inferno*. In fact, the portrait that Homer makes of him in the episode of the fifth book of the *Odyssey* (in which Hermes goes to the island of the goddess Calypso to communicate to her the injunction, by Zeus, to leave Ulysses free to return to Ithaca) has inspired the mysterious character "from heaven" who in the 9th canto of the *Inferno* allows Dante and Virgil to enter the city of the damned, as we have shown in another work dedicated to the great poet on the 700th anniversary of his death (Vinci and Maiuri 2021b).

Returning to Hermes, the hitherto unclear meaning[4] of the caduceus traditionally attributed to him – a stick with two wings at the top, around which two snakes coil – is explained immediately in the light of what has just been said: remembering how Hermes produced fire – "he took a beautiful laurel branch and turned it into a pomegranate one,/ holding it in his hands, and the hot smoke rose up" (*Hymn. Herm.* 108–109) – it is evident that the caduceus is the wooden branch, used by many archaic cultures, which, if rotated in both directions in a hole made in a wooden table, lights the flame by rubbing. In this interpretation, the two snakes

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[3]His name would be a cast of the Greek Ἑρμῆς, with the initial tau to be understood as an article, since often in archaic Greek the theonym provided for it (Clackson 2017).

[4]A strange group of funerary reliefs in Roman Dalmatia shows new details, from the classical iconography of the god: instead of a money bag, there is a second rod in the other hand too. From an anthropological point of view the two rods make him at the same time a messenger of the gods and a magician, perfectly capable of waking the dead (Luliç 2019).

represent the double rotary motion, clockwise and counterclockwise, with which the stick is alternately whirled between the palms of the hands until the fire ignites (as for the "wings", they are a vivid representation of the "hot smoke" arising when the fire is lit).

It must also be said that the symbol of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine (Panagiotidou 2016), consisting of a stick around which one snake coils, is similar to the caduceus, but it is not identical. Assuming also in this case a rotary ophidic motion, but always in the same sense, because the snake is one, it can be assumed that this alludes to the trepanation of the skull, a surgical practice, and sometimes also a ritual, already in ancient times – we speak of the Neolithic, if not even the Mesolithic – widespread in various parts of the world (Bertonazzi 2018).

Conclusion

This original dimension of Hermes as a god of fire – clearly indicated in the Homeric hymn dedicated to him and corroborated by his otherwise incomprehensible relationship with Hestia – on the one hand makes it possible to explain all his multiple attributions, on the other hand can be traced back to the primitive Indo-European civilization, which confirms his great antiquity. The methodology used in this contribution therefore consists in a new critical examination of the sources, and in particular of the *Hymn to Hermes*, which places due emphasis on some aspects to which sector studies had not yet paid the right attention. The comparative reading of these testimonies with elements typical of other cultures favors a broader and transversal approach to the question as a whole, both on a diachronic level and in the search for historical-religious and anthropological consonances.

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Public Health Institutions in Italy in the 20th Century

By Massimiliano Paniga[*]

Only recently studied by Italian historiography, public health is one of the most important sectors of a modern Welfare system. During the Twentieth century Italy faced the hygienic and sanitary problem often with different ways and tools than other European countries. The aim of this article is to understand better the attitude and the development of the main public health institutions, both at the central and peripheral level, during the three great phases that marked the history of Italy in the last century: the liberal age, fascism and the Republic, as well as to highlight the organisations, men and structures that exercised decisive functions in the bureaucratic and administrative State machine. The essay focuses on the most significative legislative measures (for example, the "Testi Unici" of 1907 and 1934) and the turning points that have changed the sector on the institutional plan, from the creation of the Directorate-General for Public Health inside the Ministry of the Interior, and destined to remain for the entire Fascist period, to the birth, in the post-war years, of the High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health, then replaced by the Ministry of Health, until the establishment of the National Health Service in 1978.

Introduction

Italian historiography has only recently addressed the field of medicine and public health. Until the 1970s historians had shown a substantial lack of interest in the subject, treating it marginally and episodically by those working in economic history and historical demography (especially modernists and with approaches not always integrable to each other), and which had epidemic diseases as their object of privileged research. The only exception is the 1967 volume by Renato Alessi on the Italian health system, published on the occasion of the congress celebrating the centenary of the laws of administrative unification (Alessi 1967). The increase in attention paid to the living conditions of the lower classes and to the links between political, economic, social and cultural issues led to a broadening of horizons and to the development of a strand of studies on public health which were certainly not very rich in contributions but which had an autonomous distinction. The seventies was a turning point, gradual and not linear, accompanied by a thematic expansion and a change in interpretative trends. In particular, the research of contemporary historians has evolved according to trajectories conditioned by political history, with an inevitable reverberation on the modalities and timing of the diffusion in our country of the methodologies of social history.

A fundamental contribution to national historiography was made by Franco Della Peruta, who tried to focus his gaze on a more institutional direction of the

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problem, through some very important essays on the administrative structures and health legislation of the liberal state (Della Peruta 1980). Other studies (such as those by Cherubini (1977, 1980) and Cosmacini (1980, 1982) have moved along this line. This direction reached perhaps its highest moment with the publication of volume VII, entitled *Disease and Medicine,* of the *Annals of the History of Italy,* published by Einaudi in 1984 and edited by Della Peruta (Della Peruta 1984). According to Maria Luisa Betri and Edoardo Bressan, this work concludes the most vital cycle of studies on contemporary health care (Bressan and Betri 1989, p. 121). A few years later, in fact, a period of stagnation followed. It will be necessary to wait until the early 1990s for a partial resumption of research and, in this case the work of the Institute for Public Administration Science of 1990, on the occasion of the centenary of the Crispine reforms, is very important. This publication reserved a whole volume for the Social Administration, which constitutes an important recovery of institutional issues, in the wake of which other work has resumed, even though numerically rather limited (ISAP 1990).

What emerges from the main studies, even the most recent ones, is the predominant interest in the liberal age, which very often represents the term *ad quem* for Italian historiography, that is, when the political ruling class, this is a well-established opinion among historians, initiated the process of building the Welfare State. It is therefore thanks to Giovanna Vicarelli to have analyzed in an organic way the health policy implemented by fascism, until then little explored except by the essays of Domenico Preti (Vicarelli 1997, Preti 1982, Preti 1987). The more advanced the twentieth century, the publications on health history becomes fewer. Historiography gives inadequate attention to the political and institutional events of public health in republican Italy, which is quite surprising, especially in view of the abundance of coeval sources. If we exclude the work of Saverio Luzzi, who reconstructs, intertwining social history with the history of the institutions, the set of processes and political battles that led our country to modify in the post-war period the hygiene conditions of Italians and health facilities (Luzzi 2004), the whole output is limited to a few brief hints in works of a general nature, of other sectors or of Cosmacini's works, where, however, the heart of the problem is the history of medicine (Cosmacini 1994, Cosmacini 2005). It was only in the last period, thanks to Chiara Giorgi and Ilaria Pavan, that some short but significant contributions were made to the national health service and its establishment in 1978 (Giorgi and Pavan 2018, 2021).

From this jarring point of view is the comparison with some foreign experiences, where the government of health and hygiene policies has aroused considerable interest and in several cases has intertwined the analyses in the history of the institutions with a more attentive approach to the history of medicine and health. It was Anglo-Saxon historiography that devoted a very important space to this subject, starting with the approval of the National Health Service in 1946, linking it to the construction of a welfare system and the consolidation of the modern European state.[1]

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[1] Among the most significant works on the British National Health Service: Granshow (1988), Honigsbaum (1989), Timmins (1996), Briant (1998), Rivett (1998), Eversley (2001, pp. 53–75),

Research Objectives

This article analyzes the development of public health institutions in Italy during the 20th century. The intention is to better understand the attitude of the Italian State and the measures it has taken in the face of the health and hygiene problem during the main stages of its history, the liberal age, fascism, and the republic years, and to highlight the bodies, men and structures which exercised decisive functions in the relevant bureaucratic and administrative machinery. It becomes, therefore, inescapable to answer some questions: what is the legacy, in the field of health administration, of the previous Kingdom of Sardinia? Are there any elements of continuity or discontinuity between the three historical periods listed above?

This essay inserts this examination into the evolutionary dynamics of the Italian welfare state, which, from the beginning, acquired characteristics quite peculiar compared to other European countries. It consists essentially of four sections. The first addresses the liberal period, with the measures at the end of the nineteenth century that gave the Italian State a more suitable administrative structure to face the economic and social challenges linked to the phenomenon of industrialization. These are the years that see Italy, like other European countries, committed to laying the foundations for the construction of a welfare state, with a series of measures to support the most deprived sections of the population. A straight transition occurred at the institutional level with the creation in 1888 of the Directorate-General for Public Health at the Ministry of the Interior, a body destined to have a long life in the Italian bureaucratic system. During the Giolittian age, the "Testo Unico" on Health Laws was passed in 1907, while another significant moment it occurred in the immediate post-war period, with the failed attempt to create compulsory health insurance.

This objective was achieved by fascism, though only in 1943, when the regime was close to falling. It is precisely the fascist dictatorship that is the focus of the second section, which will highlight the inclusion of health policy in the logic of Mussolini's totalitarian project, as well as its relationship, and that of the more general social activities, with the corporative apparatus of the regime, which is intended to significantly change the profile of the liberal administrative organization. The proliferation of public bodies initiated by fascism was accompanied by a legislative fervor which led in July 1934 to the adoption of the new "Testo Unico" on Health Laws, which replaced the 1907 text mentioned above.

The third section is reserved for the years of the Republic, which had a very important start with the creation, in 1945, of the High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health, replacing the old Directorate-General for Public Health. The law entrusted the newly established institution with the task of coordinating and monitoring the bodies active in the health sector, all in connection with the development of the Italian welfare system. From this point of view, it is almost inevitable to make a comparison with Great Britain, where, at the same time,

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Webster (2002), Steward (2002, pp. 113–134), Rintala (2003), Gorsky (2008, pp. 437–460), Webster (2008, pp. 33–36), Jones (2015, pp. 77–80).

Clement Attlee's Labour government approved the National Health Service. In Italy, such a goal was achieved only in 1978, twenty years after another important result obtained by the Central Health Administration, the Ministry of Health, which put an end to the short, but not secondary, experience of the High Commission.

The fourth and final section of the article contains the conclusions, which will seek to draw up a final and long-term assessment of the evolution and role played by the main health institutions in Italy during the last century, while seeking to maintain a comparative logic with the foreign countries.

The Liberal Phase

In 1861 Italy had 22 million inhabitants, most of them illiterate and dedicated to an agricultural activity that presented elements of modernity only in the area of the Po Valley, while central Italy was dominated by the sharecropping, and in the South by the latifundium. In many rural regions of the South living conditions were at the limits of physical subsistence, with the population often subject to typical nutrition diseases, on all pellagra, and forced to live in small and unhealthy dwellings. The few industrialized areas of the country featured work situations where the use of female and child labor was extensive marked by a high number of work hours per week and in total absence of the most elementary hygiene standards.

The fledgling Italian State largely inherited the administrative structures and legislation of the Kingdom of Sardinia, which, as is well known, had led the process of national unification with Cavour in the previous decade. In the field of public health, the Royal Decree no. 3793 of the Savoy State of 20 November 1859 was extended to the rest of the country, and then replaced, in March 1865, by Annex C to the Law of Administrative Unification. The two measures differed little from each other and provided for a health facility centered in the Ministry of the Interior, where a health office, usually chaired by a doctor, and in the outskirts on prefects and mayors, functioned. The system, thus agreed on, favored the repressive side and police functions, aimed at both controlling the health of the population and reporting potential epidemic outbreaks.

In these early years of life there was a lot of criticism of a health system that often worked in a cumbersome way, with several elements of uncertainty and contradictory to each other. It will be necessary to wait until 1888 to see the adoption of a measure that completely overhauls the sector. Law No. 5849 of 22 December constitutes a fundamental hub in the history of Italian health institutions, so much so that it remains in force, in the main lines, until the late twentieth century. It was an integral part of the program to strengthen the State and the government authority put in place by the President of the Council Francesco Crispi.

One of the essential aspects of the measure was the creation of a Directorate of Public Health at the Ministry of the Interior, composed of elements with the necessary technical capacity and entrusted to the skills of the hygienist Luigi Pagliani, professor at the University of Turin and student of Jacob Moleschott.

Among the innovations of Law No 5849 are the reorganization of the system of health boards, introduced at the various territorial levels in 1865, the establishment of two new figures of hygienist officials included in the different steps of the public administration, the health officer and the provincial doctor, dependent respectively on the mayor and the prefect, and free medical care for the poor, which was provided by staff paid by the municipal administrations, usually conducted by a doctor and a midwife or entrusted on pious works and/or other charitable charities.

The reforms implemented by Crispi had the merit of providing innovative solutions to the needs of contemporary society, setting up a hygienic and health system that left, in the words of Giovanna Vicarelli, "a large part of the interventions of health care to the poor to pious works, after their control and rationalization", channelling "on two main tracks, the public and the private-charitable, the Italian health system" (Vicarelli 1997, p. 111). Indisputable was the renewal brought to the hygienic state of the Kingdom, culminating in the realization of works for the restoration of cities, rural municipalities and the countryside as well as for the repression of endemic-epidemic diseases.

However, for some historians Crispi's health care system did not seem to stray too far from traditional logic. In fact, state interventionism, rather than in direct form, remained conceived in terms of monitoring and controlling the center, i.e., the Ministry of the Interior, and the action of local authorities. According to Enzo Bartocci, Crispina law "on the one hand continues to respond to the principles of *lassez-faire*, albeit with greater flexibility and greater controls, on the other hand it pursues the purpose of the painless transformation of traditional forms of assistance inherited from the past" (Bartocci 1999, p. 180).

The conclusion of Crispi's government experience did not interrupt the reform and renewal of the administrative apparatus. A strong driver was provided by the Directorate of Public Health, who pursued a plan of iron centralization of functions and control over the peripheries, making it an experimental laboratory of the interweaving of administrative practice and medical science. Overall, the last glimpse of the nineteenth century is considered by historiographers to be the initial phase of the Italian welfare state[2]. The problems linked to industrialization, with the phenomena of proletarianization and urbanization of the popular masses, convinced a part of the liberal ruling class to look with interest at the Bismark experience in Germany and to put forward more concrete proposals on the subject of social legislation. The decisive date is 1898, when compulsory accident insurance was introduced, the first organic law dealing with safety at work, and a public scheme, still voluntary, for old age and invalidity.

It is therefore of great interest to try to understand the relationship between the reorganization of health systems and the random factors usually identified at the origin of the welfare state, namely industrialization, urbanization and the establishment of the workers' movement, which pervaded Italy at the turn of the two centuries. The impression inferred from the scientific literature is that health

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[2]On the origins and the development of the Italian Welfare State see: Ferrera (1984), Ascoli (1984), Paci (1989), Gaeta and Viscomi (1996, pp. 227–276), Girotti (1998), Saraceno (1998), Conti and Silei (2005), Ascoli (2011), Ferrera et al. (2012), Mattera (2012), Giorgi and Pavan (2021).

policies were not so much a reaction to the social and living conditions of the population as a useful tool for creating the conditions for the process of modernization.

During the Giolittian age, the expansion of social policy continued, accompanied by the consolidation and extension of health functions and apparatus in the public administration, with a tangible increase in staff both at central and peripheral level. From this point of view, the most interesting aspect to highlight is the strong continuity in the staff found at the top of the health administration, all officials trained in Pagliani's time. No substantial alterations were introduced into the hierarchy of competencies and the internal articulation of ministerial offices. This continuity can be extended to the more general role of the public authorities in this field. Despite the commendable efforts made in the social field in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, the state administration was always rather defiladed. Most of the burden of hygiene and public health interventions continued to weigh on local authorities, leaving the central power with tasks of simple superintendence. This situation emerged above all with the promulgation of the "Testo Unico" of 1907, that, in an attempt "to put order in the congeria of decrees, regulations, laws and instructions that had seen the light of day since 1888" (Cea 2019, p. 108), strengthened state bodies on the periphery through a better definition of the competencies of the health officer, the creation of consortia for the management of pharmaciesand the conferral of additional powers, and therefore an increase in expenses, to the municipal administrations in the field of home care medicine and midwifery of people in need. The "Testo Unico" of 1907 also had the merit of officially recognizing the Directorate of Public Health at the legislative level, who in the meantime was elevated to the rank of Directorate-General.

It was the outbreak of war that imposed a more direct role of the State in social policies, which, instead of being interrupted, suffered "a multiplier effect", destined to continue in the post-war years, with an even greater flow of legislative measures which opened a new phase in the development of the Italian welfare state. Public health doesn't seem to participate much in this copious legislative production, with the plan for compulsory health insurance finding no place on the government agenda. The issue had been the subject of discussion in the palaces of politics since the Giolittian period and had its main support from the medical class and the union, both of which were conscious of the undignified health conditions in which the poorest population found themselves. Innovative proposals were tabled in Parliament and working groups were formed to study the problem, but these initiatives, especially the reform provisions envisaged in 1919 by the Abbiate Commission[3], met with strong opposition from the most conservative circles of society, from the agricultural and industrial business class to hospital administrations, to the political formations very sensitive to the significant financial outlay that the State would have incurred. In particular, the hostility of the clerical world stood out, controlling, in an almost monopolistic form, the complex system of public institutions of assistance and charity. Against the idea of compulsory sickness

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[3]Appointed shortly before the defeat of Caporetto and chaired by Mario Abbiate, the Commission completed its work in the last weeks of 1919, producing two draft laws, one more innovative and advanced, the other of a more limited scope, but which were not taken into   account by Parliament.

insurance there was a large concentration of political, economic and social forces, which prevented the achievement of a very difficult and laborious goal to be crossed even for the fascist regime (Sepe 1999, pp. 190–192).

Fascism

> The physical health of the people must be in first place ... we must seriously watch over the fate of race, we must take care of race, starting with motherhood and childhood ... not fundamental but preliminary data of the political and therefore economic and moral power of nations is their demographic power.[4]

These are the words used by Mussolini in the famous ascension speech given to the Chamber of Deputies on May 26, 1927. The advent of fascism in power, following the march on Rome in October 1922, impressed on the state's health policy a marked ideological curvature in the framework of a totalitarian political project that aimed to bring Italy back to the glories of imperial Rome, restoring it to a central role among the great Western powers. According to Mussolini, numbers were synonymous with power and formed the indispensable premise of a nation's greatness. For this reason, fascism put in place a whole series of initiatives in support of the birth rate and the family. These initiatives achieved some results. Very visible was, for example, the reduction in the mortality rate in the first decade of the regime. From 1922 to 1933 the rate was reduced from 18.1 to 13.7‰, lower than that of the French and Spanish, and remained constant during the 1930s, until Italy's entry into World War II, when an increase occurred that reached 15.2‰ in 1943. In fact, the reasons for such a trend did not seem to be linked to the effects of the health policy of the regime, but to the gradual improvement of people's standard of living and the overall health and hygiene situation of the country. The measures introduced by fascism had a limited effect on the health of the population and became impressive social achievements (on all the reclamation works of large national territories and the fight against malaria) for the propaganda carried out by the regime and for representing urgencies largely disregarded by the liberal ruling class.

Unfortunately, a favorable trend in the state of health of Italians was matched by an increase in inequalities linked to social position and place of residence. The populations of the Mezzogiorno, the workers and the peasants were the subjects who, over the years, saw a deterioration in the quality of life, especially in urban areas and in certain locations in Sicily and Sardinia, where ancylostomiasis and echinococcosis maintained high levels of contagion and mortality (in the South also malaria and trachome continued to be very dangerous pathologies) (Vicarelli 1997).

If we broaden the horizon of reasoning to the social policy of fascism and its methods of implementation, it is evident how much the assumptions on which it was based, in the words of Domenico Preti, "were such as to empty and frustrate

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[4]Parliamentary Acts, Legislature XXVII, Chamber of Deputies, *Discussions*, sitting of 26 May 1927.

the achievement of many of those objectives that publicly the propaganda of the regime was pointing to as safe destinations of the measures taken ... and for which valuable economic resources were used. The protection of work and health in Italy in the twenties confirmed the inconsistency of fascist social policy, both with regard to the traditional means used and with respect to the purposes intended, vehemently when demagogically, to achieve" (Preti 1987, p. 110).

From the mid-1920s, under the pressure of fascist ideology, there was a progressive absorption into the public sphere of social activities and their connection with the corporate apparatus of the regime so strenuous that it significantly changed the profile of the administrative organization of the previous liberal period, up to distinguish the path of the Italian welfare state from that of other Western countries.

One of the characteristic features of the health system established by fascism was the high degree of fragmentation and the subtraction of competencies from the central authority, which continued to revolve around the Directorate-General for Public Health of the Ministry of the Interior. With this in mind, the ministry that most absorbed health activities was that of the Corporations. Instead of calling for the improvement of the municipal and provincial hygiene offices, the General Regulation on Occupational Hygiene, approved by Royal Decree No 530 of 14 April 1927, created at that Ministry a medical labour inspectorate, with the respective organs and factory doctors, for the discipline and hygiene and health surveillance of industrial, commercial and agricultural companies. The Ministry of Agriculture, by reason of the Law of 24 December 1929, was reserved functions in the field of integral reclamation, including corrective works aimed at preventing the spread of malaria and protecting workers. Also in 1929 the sanitary and renovation works, for example the construction of social housing, was assigned to the Ministry of Public Works, limiting to the simple opinion of the Superior Health Council the intervention on the projects, and not all, of the Health Administration, while in 1938 health service was created at the Ministry of Colonies independent of the apparatuses of the Directorate General. An even more negative impact in 1942 came from the formation of the Directorate-General for Food within the Ministry of Agriculture, which extended its powers to public health sector.

Fascism created a considerable number of offices and public bodies, outside the Directorate-General and with budgetary and action autonomy with respect to the health surveillance bodies of the Ministry of the Interior, hindering any hypothesis of coordination of the sector. The category included, for example, the provincial antitubercular consortia, provided for by a law of 1927 with diagnostic and prophylaxis tasks. Also in 1927, the fight against tuberculosis was strengthened by the establishment of compulsory insurance. Both instruments soon showed significant limits in terms of insurance coverage and financial resources, generating a serious and progressive disparity in treatment between those assisted by consortia, often belonging to the poorest classes, and insured at the Cassa, lower in number and privileged, destined to drag on until the years of Republican Italy.

Speaking of public bodies, in 1925 the National Opera for Motherhood and Children was born, with the intention of providing assistance to pregnant women, mothers in need and abandoned, infant and children from families in difficulty.

These objectives had to be achieved through the creation of institutions on the territory, the financing of existing ones and the coordination of all public and private entities over which the ONMI exercised supervision and control. It was up to the body to disseminate standards and methods for prenatal and child care and hygiene, a fundamental objective which was well integrated into the demographic policy of fascism[5].

The process of institutional de-strengthening initiated by fascism through intense legislative production and which diverted the trend towards the reunification of health activities under the leadership of a single body, the Directorate-General for Public Health, also involved local authorities, facilitated by the radical and authoritarian changes made to them in the late 1920s. In particular, the municipalities were taken away from all opportunities for initiative and responsibility in the prophylaxis of important social diseases and narrowed the scope to assist poor citizens, a formal detection of infectious diseases and little else, putting the figure of the health officer in crisis.

The legislative fervor of the regime led in July 1934 to the "Testo Unico" of the health laws, approved by Royal Decree No. 1265. The most important aspect, since reading the first article, was the strong continuity with the previous legislation, especially in the way of understanding health, which was still linked to a police function and the protection of public order. The "Testo Unico" showed little adherence to scientific progress and changed social conditions, bringing together in a somewhat disorderly way the laws previously enacted by the Ministry of the Interior. The consideration will be confirmed several years later by Giovanni Petragnani, university professor of hygiene and bacteriology and Director General of Public Health from 1935 to 1943, in an article that appeared in the journal "Annals of Public Health":

> The "Testo Unico" of the health laws of 1934 was drafted without in the mind of the minister of the interior at the time having born the conviction that it was the responsibility of the Health Administration to direct all the services of care and that all activities linked with the defense of health should be under its direct control. The reason for this is that, as recently as 1934, the powers relating directly to the fight against infectious diseases appeared to be preeminent and, I would say, sufficient for the health administration. It was not warned, even by the most senior medical officials, that the health and social progress, which had already been achieved and in impressive evolution, required the adaptation of the health administration to the new situation (Petragnani 1955, pp. 762–763).

Together with the drafting of the "Testo Unico", the other major aspect in the field of health policy on which fascism concentrated, or perhaps it would be better to say did a little, was that of establishing a compulsory health insurance scheme. The problem, as we have seen, had been dragging on for years and was an unsolved legacy of the liberal age, which had not been able to deal decisively with the widespread expansion of the mutual assistance funds of the various professional categories, distributed in a disorganic way throughout the territory, with duplication

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[5]On the National Opera for Motherhood and Childhood see above all: Minesso (2007).

and waste of all kinds. It was the promulgation of the Labour Charter in 1927 that rekindled interest in the issue and opened up a heated political debate within the regime that dragged on until the war years, when Parliament debated, in May 1942, a bill approved by a Council of Ministers, that had recognized the urgent need for a coordinating body and the unification of sickness funds. Ending a long-running affair, with Law No. 138 of 11 January 1943 the "Ente mutualità fascista" - National Institute for Sickness Assistance for Workers (INAM) was born.

Unfortunately, thanks to a general situation close to catastrophic, with Italy increasingly in difficulty in the Second World War, the ambitious INAM project remained "little more than a simulacrum", devoid of concrete effects (Sepe 1999, p. 217). Moreover, the plan for health insurance had a scope that transcended the sphere of health policy and extended to the welfare sector as a whole, steeped in conservatism and hegemonized by clerical forces. For Domenico Preti, the two things went hand in hand and no modernization of public health could have taken place "without a simultaneous refoundation on a lay basis, and no longer voluntarist and charitable, of the welfare system", including the hospital network, which had to be subtracted "from the particularisms, inequalities, anarchy in which the legislation on IPAB[6] continued to maintain it" (Preti 1987, p. 251). The outcome of the affair was also influenced by the many uncertainties of fascism with regard to the establishment of compulsory health insurance. The regime preferred not to deviate too far from the liberal model that had progressively supplanted the system focused on mutual aid societies in favor of one marked by company sickness funds. Fragmentation of interventions, disparities between categories, areas of the country and in the collection of contributions, duplications, clientelist use and inopportune of mutual structures ended up strengthening and becoming almost ordinary elements of a system destined to drag on in the years of republican Italy, heavily conditioning the future of the sector.

The Republican Years

A few weeks after the end of the war, in the midst of enormous political, economic and social and material difficulties, a major innovation came to the administrative apparatus of public health. The Italian Government issued a decree, number 417 of 12 July 1945, which established the High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health, ending, after almost 60 years of life, the Directorate-General for Public Health[7]. The legal system and powers were governed by Legislative Decree No 446 of 31 July 1945, which gave the institution essential tasks in the protection of health, coordination and supervision of health organizations and bodies set up with the aim of preventing and combating social diseases. The new institution aimed to meet the need, manifested above all by the medical class, for greater autonomy of the health administration and its reconstruction on a basis more in line with the growing development of welfare services and the increasing powers of public authorities in the social field.

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[6]IPAB: "Istituzione Pubblica di Assistenza e Beneficenza".
[7]On High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health, see: Paniga (2021).

In truth, the choice made by the executive only partially fulfilled the autonomy claims, without significantly affecting the disparity of guidelines and the disorder that resided in the sector. Decrees Nos 417 and 446 only increased in rank the Directorate-General for Public Health, placing it halfway between the simple Ministerial Division and the structure of a Dicastery and immediately highlighting, for the High Commission, a series of significant shortcomings. It could not, for example, take part in meetings of the Council of Ministers, unless explicitly invited (and in any case without the right to vote), and sign the draft laws which he himself formulated, which were to pass under the Presidency of the Council. Limitations were reserved for the activity, with considerable powers in the field of hygiene and public health remaining in the hands of ministerial apparatuses, certain parallel administrations, prefects and local authorities such as municipalities and provinces. The limited powers of ACIS[8] and the deterioration in the quality of many services provided corresponded to an inadequate distribution of financial resources, insufficient to cope with the social and health conditions of post-war Italy. The years saw a gradual increase in appropriations for the High Commission, but these remained always less than necessary. The spending of time did not even change the proportions between the different budget items, with a preponderant position occupied by antitubercular care and motherhood and childhood.

The need for its modernization was also evident from the comparison with those countries where there was already a central and truly autonomous entity, in short, a Ministry of Health. Looking more broadly, it was the Italian welfare state itself that was taking on a different appearance than in the rest of western democracies. In Britain, an inescapable post-war term of comparison in the field of social security, Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee decided to mark government activity with a welfare policy focused on building a free and universal national health system. Italy, on the other hand, continued along the path mapped out by the recent past, strengthening the mutual system, which caused profound differences in treatment between the various professional categories. Protection against diseases remained entrusted to an insurance scheme, without proceeding, in Cosmacini's words, "towards a courageous and responsible choice on the part of the State in defense of its biological heritage", which took into account the epidemiological changes taking place.

Public health continued to show major shortcomings in coordination, overlapping of skills, operational slowness, duplication of personnel and equipment: all situations that generated a great waste of energy and financial resources, making healthy organization impossible. The Italian political leadership was aware of the difficulties, but very few measures were taken to overcome the existing framework, perhaps because of the technical and financial obstacles that the government saw linked to the establishment of a Ministry of Health. Hundreds of laws and decrees were issued, which, although important, did not constitute the pieces of an organic and rational project of renewal of the sector, but rather the tiles of an incomplete, disjointed and confused mosaic. The appointment of a considerable number of parliamentary committees responsible for studying certain

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[8]ACIS: "Alto Commissariato per l'Igiene e la Sanità Pubblica" (in English: High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health).

aspects of health did not lead to any concrete results, apart from the drafting of miles of paperwork (reports, draft bills and various proposals) left in the drawers of Parliament's offices.

The 13 years of activity of the High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health show, in essence, a physiognomy of the institution characterized by obvious elements of transience and legal uncertainty, almost as if the sector was waiting, and in fact it was, for a definitive reform. And this reform came in 1958, when the Italian Parliament approved, after years of political discussions and in the medical press, the law that sanctioned the birth of the Ministry of Health. All parties, albeit with different accents, agreed to support the bill presented by two Christian Democrat senators. The basic idea was to provide the health administration with a technical aspect, in the sense of entrusting it to elements with proven specialist skills, and to unify the services belonging to ACIS and other ministries into a central body, while ensuring their sufficient decentralization on the territory. Unfortunately, the measure approved by the Houses was less advanced than the great expectations that had formed in previous months, especially within the medical class, which had fought so hard to achieve such a result. The complex political negotiations linked to the law did not conceal the perplexities and resistance of sectors opposed to change, starting with the ministries which were deprived of competences for the benefit of health. It was a pretty moderate turnaround. The handover with the old management of the High Commission took place gradually, without excessive jolts. There were many constraints imposed on the sphere of activity of the new Ministry, indispensable for an effective action to synthesize and regulate what was related to health care. At the local level, several control functions remained with the prefect, i.e., an official of the Ministry of the Interior.

It was also true that these limits were the consequence of a situation historically determined in our country, with the old charitable institutions never completely replaced by more modern state organizations, and whose responsibilities were blamed on in full to the choices of the past and the current ruling class. Once again, the discourse was linked to the development of a genuine social security system and to the choices made by what was the dominant party on the political scene, the Christian Democracy party. On the subject, in fact, the positions within the Catholic party were never unequivocal. While the members closest to the Church's social doctrine showed courageous tendencies towards universal welfare, the more conservative and major wing of DC persisted in showing reluctance to take an overly aperturist line, in which it saw a danger to the hegemonic role exercised by church institutions in the health and assistance fields.

This is not the only factor, but it is one of the main reasons for the delay in Italy in training a national health service, approved by the Chamber of Deputies in December 1978. This is a very important date for our country, which concludes a long process that began thirty years earlier, capable of involving, but not without difficulty, different knowledge and actors. A boost certainly came from the change, in the 1960s, of the political scenario, with the rapprochement between the Christian Democracy Party and the Socialist Party and the birth of center-left governments, which distinguished themselves for some significant economic and

social reforms. In the field of public health, a marked improvement was introduced by the Mariotti reform of 1968, which transferred the powers of control and supervision of hospitals from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Health, putting a minimum of order in the sector. The national health service was also the result of original experiences realized in a decentralized form in the territory (on all the Experimental Demonstration Center for the health education of the population of Perugia led by Alessandro Seppilli), which contributed to the elaboration of a new welfare model and at the same time to modifying the concept of health.

The establishment of a universal system had the merit of finally sanctioning the practical implementation of Article 32 of the Constitution, which guaranteed the entire community a free health service hitherto reserved for individual categories of workers, with the aforementioned inequalities in the case (Taroni 2011, p. 199). The law assigned important functions to the Regions and created local health units, public, autonomous companies with legal personality, which had the task of providing services on national soil.

If the national health system represented a goal of considerable depth for Italy, considered for many to be one of the most advanced institutions on the international scene, we must not forget the defects that distinguished it, evident from the stage of discussion in Parliament of the bill. On the other hand, its drafting came after a long and laborious compromise between the different political formations. The text found indeterminateness as to the assumption of citizens' participation in health choices and in the management of services, as well as in the way in which the USLs are implemented. Less than a year after it came into force, Massimo Severo Giannini noted that the law was littered with references to future measures by the State and the regions, with the risk, which in fact happened, of creating organizational problems (Giannini 1979). And the situation did not improve in the years to come. On the contrary, the most innovative elements were too often obscured by the malfunctioning of the administrative machinery of the State, by the clientele use made by the parties of the management of the various USL and by the progressive, and perhaps exaggerated, devolution of competences to the Regional authority, a subject, at least for Italy, still very topical (Giorgi and Pavan 2018, pp. 113–116).

Conclusion: Under the Sign of Continuity

This essay offers some firm points about the development of public health institutions in Italy in the last century and of the more general process of building the welfare state. In the latter respect, the idea of a development of social policies characterized by numerous elements of continuity, even in the transition from fascism to the Republic, has gradually developed in national historiography. In this regard, for Michela Minesso "the choice of the republican political ruling class was not to replace fascist institutions of a social nature, but in all possible cases that of conversion, changing men [not always] and above all the ends" (Minesso 2006, p. 310). Minesso's reference is mainly aimed at assistance policies, and even more

specifically at motherhood and children, but it can be without problems extended to the field of public health.

In order to try to better understand the distinctive features of health institutions in twentieth-century Italy, it is therefore necessary to take a step back and examine the legislative measures and administrative structures operating in the second half of the nineteenth century. A decisive impact was provided by Crispine reforms, destined, in their main provisions, to remain in force until late twentieth century. The Directorate of Public Health of the Ministry of the Interior, founded in 1888 and transformed into a "general" in 1902, went through, almost unscathed, the three final decades of the liberal period and the entire chronological arc of the fascist regime. Men and apparatuses remained in many cases the same, managing to adapt to quite different historical situations. And even when, in July 1945, the High Commission for Hygiene and Public Health was created, the institution immediately appeared more of an elevation of rank of the aforementioned Directorate, than a new subject in the bureaucratic and administrative landscape of the Italian State. A similar observation can be made for the Ministry of Health, which in 1958 inherited, to a large part, the configuration of the High Commission, which in the meantime had organized itself in a more similar way to a Ministry.

In the suburbs prefects, mayors and provincial doctors continued to play a leading role in the sector for decades, certified by both the "Testi Unici" on health laws of 1907 and 1934. There were no major differences between the two provisions. This point is more important when one considers the decidedly antithetical contexts from which those norms came from. In addition, the "Testi Unici" show a similar way of understanding health, still linked to a police function and the protection of public order and far from the progress made by science and changed social conditions, as well as by an organizational model that reserved to the health administration the management of all care services and activities competing with the protection of health. Lack of coordination, overlapping of competencies, operational slowness, with a waste of energy and financial resources, became issues on the agenda, dragging themselves well beyond the start of the Republican phase.

Thus articulated public health ended up contributing decisively to direct the construction of the Italian Welfare system along an axis that differed from the experiences of the main Western countries. Moreover, the maintenance of the mutual system and the weight exerted in the health and welfare field by the ecclesiastical world also pushed in an alternative direction from the path usually traveled by a modern welfare state.

Not that the passing of the years had not seen any improvement in medical knowledge, hospital facilities (think of the Mariotti reform of 1968), welfare benefits, etc., but this progress remained part of a context where aspects of continuity with the past prevailed, and by far.

And then the real moment of breakdown of this structure can be identified in the establishment, in December 1978, of the National Health Service, a fundamental step that gave effective substance to Article 32 of the Constitution, on the protection of health, and completely reorganized the sector in the center and on the periphery. For Saverio Luzzi, despite certain weaknesses and errors of

perspective, it is "one of the most important reforms in the history of republican Italy" (Luzzi 2004, p. 315). Law No. 833 placed Italy on an equal footing with other international countries, such as Great Britain, and made the Welfare system more modern and democratic, providing those elements of universality that were previously lacking. All this advancement came with a paradox. Italy was coming to the meeting with the National Health Service just when in Europe we were beginning to talk about the welfare crisis and the financial sustainability of a system that, in widening public functions in the field of social security, had highlighted considerable problems of bureaucratization and centralization. In fact, between the end of the seventies and the beginning of the following decade, a heated political and academic debate opened on the need to reform and introduce corrective instruments to European Welfare, a dispute destined to heavily influence the application of future social policies and drag on, leaving unresolved several issues, almost to this day.

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Hollywood's Villainous Masculinities: A Study of Hades and Set from *Clash of the Titans* and *Gods of Egypt*

By Jyoti Mishra[*]

Gods, Goddesses, Heroes and other mythical figures from religious mythologies have made continued appearances in Hollywood films since the 20th century, with many of them reflecting the times and era of their production in the guise of depicting the "ancient" world and dealing with "sacred" themes in a secular manner. While a cinematic text invites us to identify with the hero, the antagonist is imbued with qualities that require judgement from the hero. This paper seeks to undertake a character study of the Greek God Hades from Clash of the Titans (2010) and the Egyptian God Set from Gods of Egypt (2016) to understand the ways in which the cinematic imagination constructs them as antagonists and condemns their ways. While the hero and his masculinity is generally propagated as a form of "ideal" masculinity, the villain forms a more complex characterization as he may embody qualities possessed by the hero himself and yet be termed "unheroic". Reading the texts as embodiments of popular culture, and thus, as sites for interrogating contemporary socio-political and cultural concerns, the paper would like to explore the construction of villainous and "non-ideal" masculinities in the figures of Hades and Set. Utilizing a textual reading of the films, the analysis would be supported by theories derived from Masculinity Studies and Film Studies.

Keywords: *Hollywood, mythology, masculinities, heroism and villainy*

Introduction

Clark (2007, p. 9) argues that popular culture sometimes expresses the zeitgeist of an era, "speaking to deep-seated beliefs that are consistent with what we believe are the best qualities of our collective society", and at the same time also reflects the unconscious and sometimes negative (be it racist, classist or sexist) views that we have internalised and "prefer not to admit to ourselves". Thus, sites of popular culture such as film, television, novels etc. are in her words locations in which these "contradictions and negotiations are constantly played out through narrative and representation" (Clark 2007, p. 9). Big-budget popular Hollywood films with their ability to advertise, distribute and attract mass audiences at a global level have the potential to influence a large number of people. This paper therefore, aims to study the depiction of heroism and villainy with reference to the cinematic projection of images and conceptions of "ideal" and "non-ideal" masculinities in two popular big-budget Hollywood mythology-based films, namely *Clash of the Titans* (2010) and *Gods of Egypt* (2016). The paper specially focuses on the depiction of the cinematic villain as the figure of the villain is hypothesised as

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cinematically subverting and/or inducing the audience to interrogate Hollywood's representation of the hero, the currently accepted ideals of heroism in popular culture, and highlighting hegemonic and dominant forms of "heroic" ideal masculinity in post 9/11 cinema.

After the devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001 and the subsequent "War on Terror" led by the United States of America's President George Bush led administration, a plethora of movies across multiple genres were being produced and released by Hollywood which directly or indirectly engaged with the events, its aftermath and its continued influence on the American and global psyche (McSweeney 2017, Boggs and Pollard 2006), be it films directly dealing with the events and aftermath of the 11 September attacks (*United 93* 2006, *World Trade Center* 2006, etc.), the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (*The Hurt Locker* 2008, *Zero Dark Thirty* 2012, etc.) or allegorical films engaging with the geopolitical events and time of their production and expressing the anxieties of the age (for instance science fiction films like *War of the Worlds* 2005, *Children of Men* 2006, etc.). The rise and popularity of the "superhero" film genre, war/counterterrorism centred films, and metaphorical heroic films propagating an idea of American strength, American defence against outside attacks with many having overt/covert "nationalistic" and "American supremacist" themes (for instance the films mentioned above) could be seen as mechanisms in response to the 9/11 attacks. Dodds (2008a, p. 1625) observes in his article that "Films help to sustain social and geopolitical meanings" and are "capable of reflecting but also challenging certain norms, structures and ideologies associated with US foreign and security policies and the ongoing war on terror" (Dodds 2008a, p. 1625). Released in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the mythological films chosen for study respond to a need for heroic films in a post-9/11 and "War on Terror" world and are argued to be a part of the same environment that birthed the other "nationalistic" Hollywood films, as films are understood to have the ability to function as both a "barometer" (McSweeney 2017, p. 8) and a "catalyst of national discourse" (McSweeney 2017, p. 9). Contextualising the texts within this time-frame and concurrent geopolitical events, the paper asserts that the films must be understood as having overt/covert ideological agenda and being a means to propagate American geopolitical supremacy to both a domestic and international audience.

While scholars like Cyrino (2005) have hailed twenty-first century as the return of the "epic film" (generally understood as mythological or historical fantasy films depicting an "ancient" world) with the release of *Gladiator* (dir. Ridley Scott) in 2000, the propagation of heroic films, and the glorification of symbolic "American" heroes necessitates a study of the temporal circumstances of their production. While an all encompassing exploration of multi-genre films is beyond the scope of this limited study, a concerted focus on mythology-based films with their symbolic good versus evil narratives, glorification of heroic figures and condemnation/vanquishing of villain figures offers a parallel alternative to the ubiquitous and similarly constructed post 9/11 "superhero" and "war films". Religio-mythological stories, characters, settings and other fantastical elements have long been utilised by Hollywood as base material for its cinematic

narratives, thereby creating a grand spectacle for entertainment and attracting audiences due to its familiar content. Biblical or Christianity related themes and topics were utilised ever since the inception of the mode of cinema by the early practitioners mostly based in Europe while Hollywood with its greater financial and production capabilities soon overshadowed them in terms of the quantity and quality of films. Non-Christian mythology was another rich source of stories for the American film makers and 20th century saw the utilisation of primarily Graeco-Roman mythology for making several mythology-based "epic" fantasy films. "Epic" films, both in Hollywood and world cinema were variously set in an "ancient" world derived from mythological, historical or text-based sources while not claiming authenticity for cinematic purposes, and were many times ahistorical and temporally unspecified. Jon Solomon uses the term "ancient" cinema in his book *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (2001) to denote films depicting mythological, Biblical, historical and/or texts/plays based "ancient" world setting. Elliott in his "Introduction" to *The Return of the Epic Film* (2015) notes that following the failure of several big-budget "epic" films like *Cleopatra* (1963) *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) and *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), films of this genre were discontinued being made in America post the 1960's, though TV series and low-budget made to-TV films etc. were being produced, while in rest of the world the "ancient" "epic" film survived in various forms like the Italian Peplum films. Fuelled by the success of "ancient" world set Television shows, there was however a "renascence" of these "ancient" films in America in the late 1970's and early 1980's for a brief period (Solomon 2001, pp. 17–18). The 21st century however saw a revival of this genre with various "historical" and religio-mythological "epics" being produced and released in the first two decades of the 21st century. This renewal in interest could be observed across popular culture with the release of several mythology based novels and video games which substantiate the terming of this wider cultural interest in mythology based texts as a "trend". The publication of several mythology based popular fiction books and book series and their popularity across demographics increased the wider visibility and renewed interest in the area. Popular fantasy fiction texts like Rick Riordan's Ancient Graeco-Roman mythology based *Percy Jackson* series and its sequels (2005-2014) which spawned a less popular *Percy Jackson* movie series (2010-2013), ancient Egyptian mythology based *The Kane Chronicles* trilogy (2010-2012), ancient Norse mythology based *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard* trilogy (2015-2017); Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2001) which is being produced as a TV show (2017-); James Lovegrove's *Pantheon* series (2009-2019) which re-imagines figures from multiple mythologies into a modern setting and led to the invention of the term "Godpunk" fiction (a sub-genre of Speculative Fiction where ancient Gods/Goddesses and mythological figures are re-invented in a modern contemporary setting); are just some of the few popular ancient mythology based fantasy fiction texts which have renewed and maintained our interest in ancient mythologies. They thus, formed an environment conducive to enthusiastically producing and receiving films re-imagining ancient mythological divine and heroic figures.

Identifying the release of mythology based films as a "trend" within Hollywood, this study focuses on two mythology based films, one based on ancient Greek mythology and the other on ancient Egyptian mythology, as a means of understanding popular and contemporary attitudes on masculinities, American nationalist aspirations, fears and anxieties as constructed and propagated in the cultural imagination of the world through Hollywood films. It also highlights current manifestations of American Exceptionalist agenda where in America sees itself as "the savior nation…of the world" (Flesher and Torry 2007, p. 6). The main body of the paper would be divided into three sections, with the first section offering a critical background on areas relevant to the study of mythology based Hollywood films and post 9/11 Hollywood cinema in order to contextualize the study of the primary texts. The second section would focus on the theoretical framework and methodology utilised to study the texts. Theories derived from Film studies, Masculinity studies with a perspective based on critical writings from the field of Popular Geopolitics would be utilised in the reading of the texts. The third section of the paper would be critically analysing the two primary texts followed by the Conclusion.

Reading the texts as embodiments of popular culture, and thus, as sites for interrogating contemporary socio-political and cultural concerns, this paper seeks to undertake a textual character study and explore the construction of villainous and "non-ideal" masculinities in the figures of the Greek God Hades from *Clash of the Titans* (2010) and the Egyptian God Set from *Gods of Egypt* (2016). It aims to understand the ways in which the cinematic imagination constructs them as antagonists and condemns their ways. The paper hypothesises that while the hero and his masculinity is generally propagated as a form of "ideal" masculinity, the villain forms a more complex characterization as he may embody qualities possessed by the hero himself and yet be termed "unheroic". If the Hero is represented as an "ideal" masculine figure possessing qualities that serve to establish him as a Dominant and Hegemonic form of masculinity, the paper explores the question of what makes a villain. Is the villain "unheroic"? Is the villain presented as a "non-ideal" form of masculinity? Does the villain subvert accepted forms of heroic (hence "ideal") masculinity? The subsequent sections of the paper attempts to study and answer these questions in the larger backdrop of contemporary geopolitics.

Gods, Heroes and America: Contextualizing Post 9/11 Mythology Based Hollywood Films

Solomon (2001) opines that the ancient world has had such an immense appeal for cinema due to its content which provided an opportunity for grand spectacle, the "ancient" characters depicted were familiar and considered impressive, the fantastical settings of the ancient myths allowed for cinematic escapism, while the ancient world continued to assert a visible and continued influence on modern Western civilization (Solomon 2001, pp. 1–3). However, there were more Biblical/

Christian and Graeco-Roman mythology-based films produced in comparison to any other ancient mythologies.

Hollywood and the "Epic" Film Genre

Mythology based "ancient" world films were produced as "epic" films in the twentieth century. The term "epic" film presents a host of difficulty in theorising as critics and scholars constantly debate on the terminology and the means to categorise films as "epic". Generally speaking "spectacular films set in the ancient and medieval past" (Burgoyne 2011, p. 1), are termed as epic films. One of the earliest scholars writing on the epic film is Derek Elley who identifies the 20th century epic film as not "spectacular films, inordinately long films, heroic films, war films or costume films" (Elley 1984), which 20th century studios and advertisers term as "epics", but rather films which utilise the "epic form" derived from epics of Classical Greek and Latin antiquity, specifically films showcasing events up to the end of the Dark ages. He says that the film epic has utilised one of the most ancient art-forms and "propelled it into the present day covered in twentieth century ambitions, anxieties, hopes and fantasies. The chief feature of the historical epic film is not imitation but *reinterpretation*" (Elley 1984). Deleuze (1997), while discussing the American epic film and its "historical" components, for instance in the films of D.W. Griffiths (*Intolerance* 1916) and Cecil B. DeMille (*The Ten Commandments* [1923, 1956], *Samson and Delilah* 1949), notes that the genre favours "the analogies or parallels between the one civilization and another: great moments of humanity, however distant they are, are supposed to communicate via the peaks, and form a 'collection of effects in themselves' which can be more easily compared and act all the more strongly on the mind of the modern spectator" (Deleuze 1997, p. 149).

Focussing on contemporary epic films, Burgoyne (2011, pp. 1–2) says,

> Traditionally framed as an expression of national emergence and national consciousness, and strongly associated with the category of national cinemas, the contemporary epic, with its complex array of nested and overlapping production and distribution arrangements, has become the very exemplar of transnational and global modes of film production and reception.

The Return of the Epic Film: Genre, Aesthetics, and History in the Twenty-First Century (2015), edited by Andrew B.R. Elliott focuses on the return of the epic film genre in Hollywood after a generation of absence since the commercial flops of films like *Cleopatra* (1963) etc. with Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000). He along with other essayists discuss this phenomena, and posit that a generation gap refreshed interest in the genre while the use of CGI and special effects cut the massive production costs and therefore facilitated their return. They reiterate that the epic film set in the past is an effective way of critiquing the present. Similarly, Martin Winkler notes that "Retellings of classical stories on film may show that filmmakers have used the ancient material consciously in order to comment on their own times or that they unconsciously reflect cultural trends" (Winkler 2009, p. 3). They act as a kind of "cultural seismograph" (Winkler 2009, p. 8), a concept

which B.R. Elliott notes reconciles the idea of "ancient" or "historical" films as a vehicle for studying the present through the past while also not negating the film's earnest attempts to retell historical events (Elliot 2015).

Another important role played by "epic" films was its use as a vehicle to propagate dominant and hegemonic ideological agenda, emphasising Comolli and Narboni's (2009) assertion in "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism", that every film is political because it is the product of an ideological system. Films may therefore aid in maintaining the cultural hegemony of the dominant and the powerful. American "epic" films were likewise used to propagate an America centric and American supremacist world view. Flesher and Torry (2007) observe how Cecil B. DeMille's blockbuster Biblical epic *The Ten Commandments* (1956) which was based on the Biblical story of Moses and the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, responded to the anti-communist Cold war era by conflating Communist Russia with the Egyptians and tyranny, while the audience was supposed to identify with Moses as an American hero and a "type" of Christ, championing freedom and democratic ideals emblematic of popular American cultural and political values (Flesher and Torry 2007, pp. 71–96). America thus, takes centre stage in the staging and production of these films with the oppressed masses fighting the tyrant and espousing ideals of freedom, equality and justice being conflated with America and American values while the villain/tyrant in the "epic" film becomes a symbolic metaphor for America's current enemies. This same interpretive method has been adopted to view the current texts for study wherein it is postulated that the mythological heroes and God-heroes represent a "type" of American hero and represents America while the body of the "villain" becomes an interesting battle ground of contemporary fears and anxieties projected by America's mediascape as a danger to America, its values, its security and from a non-American hegemonic view, a challenge to its geopolitical supremacy. This dominant and highly ideological binary division constructed through post 9/11 cinema for a multi-national, muti-cultural, multi-ethnic domestic and international audience therefore necessitates a critique of popular films to identify strands of conforming or subversive textual codes in relation to this dominant position.

Mythological Heroes and Villains: Archetypes from Myth to Cinema

The images of the hero and the villain seen in any imaginative art conform to or are variations of archetypal images found in world myths. The theory of archetypes was given by Jung who considered myths to be an expression of a collective unconscious. He says that there "exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes" (Jung 1968, p. 109). Heroes and Villains are a necessary part of every story for fuelling the narrative and providing the necessary identification and emotive markers, while being designed to offer the audience, models of virtue and wickedness for emulation or condemnation. Alsford (2006, p. 2) notes that, "What a culture considers heroic and what it considers villainous says a lot about that culture's underlying attitudes – attitudes

that many of us may be unaware that we have, and which represent cultural currents that we may be equally unaware of being caught up in". The concept of the hero has been embedded in the myths, legends and stories of every culture. LoCicero (2007) notes that "The mythic hero is also an amalgamation of a number of archetypal images, and as such is a part of our species' psychic inheritance, a universal constant that transcends culture and time". Western mythology has long been revolving around "the figure of an individual, usually male and often of godlike proportions, who is on a quest of some kind" (Byrne 2000, p. 3). In regards to most heroes in these early myths being male, Byrne (2000, p. 3) suggests that instead of viewing this immediately as a patriarchal conspiracy, one should understand that an exploration of the masculinity of the traditional hero will be able to provide insights about European and Western cultures and especially their "mythologizing of masculinity".

Campbell's (2004) concept of the monomyth and his observations on the journey of the archetypal hero across myths in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is a useful narrative schematic to approach the heroic quests depicted in contemporary films, and indeed the similarity of the heroic quest structure displays the enduring influence of ancient mythic patterns and the universality of the archetypal hero in "his" manifold −culturally, geographically and temporally varied− manifestations. He claims that there is a similarity in the fundamental structure of myths across the world, and that the journey of the archetypal hero goes through three basic phases of "*separation—initiation—return",* which forms a "monomyth". He observes that in a typical heroic quest myth, the hero goes on a journey wherein he is separated from his everyday common world and encounters the "supernatural", he has to fight "fabulous forces" and then triumphs over them. The hero finally returns back from his adventure with the "power to bestow boons" to his people (Campbell 2004, p. 28). A hero can be anyone who displays qualities that are considered admirable by society, and need not be only associated with myths of masculinity-glorifying warfare, battle prowess and physical strength. The heroic figure is an intrinsic part of the cultural heritage of any culture and community, and they maybe a mythical supernatural figure, a legendary figure or a real historical figure. But the common thread that binds them is that they have always accomplished exemplary feats, or have possessed noble qualities and done noble admirable deeds. The hero figure there is in some sense aspirational, inspirational, and due to their rootedness in a particular cultural set-up, ideological. As Alford (2006, pp. 39–40) observes,

> The hero confronts the otherness of the world and seeks to overcome it, often via a willingness to set aside their unique powers thus rendering themselves vulnerable. By contrast, the villain revels in the power to control, to manipulate and ultimately to create a world in their own image…. The villain coerces, imposes and seeks to destroy anything that it cannot bend to its will. The hero takes the more dangerous path, the one that always runs the risk of self-destruction as a consequence of self-sacrifice and abandonment to the world.

The ultimate moral framework that defines a person or an action as heroic or unheroic is according to Alsford defined by the utilisation of power. He says that

"each one of us can be said to possess power by virtue of our very existence, it is what we do with it, or choose not to do with it, that renders us either heroic or villainous". Significantly, it must also be understood that as Christopher Vogler notes, from the villain's point of view, he "is the hero of his own myth, and the audience's hero is his villain" (Vogler 2007). In the cinematic text, the hero and the villain is sometimes clearly defined for the audience, however ambiguity and complexity in characterisation makes the depiction more powerful and nuanced, rising above caricatured two-dimensional hero/villain-good/evil dichotomies, and renders them more "real". The villain figure is required in the narrative to perform several functions, either to initiate the hero's journey, provide a character for the hero's required triumph for narrative satisfaction, and within Jungian studies, symbolises the dark energies of the self that needs to be vanquished for the triumph of the self (hero as the self). It can sometimes be a seductive figure, blurring the boundaries of socio-cultural morality and propriety, and serve as a study of human psyche in relation to the desire and consequence of unchecked power. Within the field of popular geopolitics, the figure of the "villain" however can be studied as representative of the dominant ideological formation of the "other", be it racial, ideological, religious or geographical "other", reflective of the state of contemporary geopolitics and concurrent national fears and anxieties. While concomitantly, the hero becomes a representative of the nation's collective consciousness and a receptacle of the nation's cultural imaginations with regards to national security, a symbol of its strength, hopes and aspirations.

Post 9/11 Cinema and the "Villains" of America

Scholars in the last few decades have increasingly focused on the use of mass media including films, television, radio, video games, YouTube content etc. for propagation of certain ideological agendas which benefit the United States of America and attempt to overtly/covertly garner support for their political and military actions. Lissovoy et al. (2016) talk about the ideological use of popular screen based cultural artefacts which are aimed at youth consumption like the first-person role playing game *Call of Duty* (2003) [video game]; *World War Z* (2013)*, Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), and *The Hunger Games* series (2012-2015) [film]; and the YouTube channel of Swedish gaming-vlogger PewDiePie (online interactive media). According to them these artefacts are strategically brought into the arena of global politics in the age of "war on terror", in order to influence young people into identifying with the rhetoric of this conflict, including the aggressive policies and actions employed by the US government and providing ideological support with regards to their role in ongoing global conflicts. Dodds (2008b, p. 227) discusses the role of Hollywood films in "making and circulating images of terrorism" and directs his attention at the "military–industrial–media–entertainment complex" (Dodds 2008b, p. 232), and its production and dissemination of content (especially Hollywood films directly dealing with political and military matters with US involvement) which are state-centric and positive of the military (many times because of the support provided by the State and the Military in the production of these "war films"). Post 9/11 and the "War on

Terror", the "terrorist" in Hollywood films and other media was increasingly imagined as a homogenized Islamic/Middle-Eastern "other" (Nayak 2006, Khalid 2011, Lissovoy et al. 2016). Boggs and Pollard (2006) discusses the construction and representation of the "terrorist" (the villain figure) in Hollywood films wherein the villain/villains change based on contemporary geopolitical concerns and have variously been depicted as Nazis, Orientals, Serbs, generic Communists while in current climates they are overwhelmingly Arabs and Muslims who need to "be identified, fought, and destroyed, usually by (white) male heroes armed with maximum force" (Boggs and Pollard 2006, p. 346). These studies focusing on contemporary multi-media content analyses the depiction of the figure of the "terrorist" who is identified as a danger to the "West", to USA and also to the world, and the ways in which the threat is mitigated, variously normalizing war, images of violence and torture, and military conflict initiated by USA. The "terrorist" figure as the villain is embedded with meanings designed to serve the dominant hegemonic ideological formations propagated by the American state while texts critical of this construction also focus on the villain figure to provide alternative narratives to the one dominant in American visual culture.

Post 9/11 fantasy cinema as allegorical texts, have greater freedom to engage with the socio-political and cultural milieu of the times and are able to provide multiple ways of representing the anxieties, the fears and pre-occupations of the people in the shadow of 9/11 and the "War on Terror". As McSweeney (2017, p. 6) notes:

> Given the cultural resonance of the 'War on Terror', it comes as no surprise that many allegorical films were able to bear witness to this fractious period, mirroring the events of the decade in the form of alien invasions, zombie outbreaks, superhero films, disaster films or even 'torture porn', each projecting their narratives through the prism of 9/11 and the 'War on Terror'.

With the purported "return of the epic film" in the twenty-first century and the traditional connection of the "epic" film with national imaginary and national consciousness, mythological "epic" films too maybe seen as allegorical fantasy texts based on mythological sources produced in the same environment as superhero films, zombie films, disaster films etc. and justifies the current paper's interest in viewing the primary texts as ideological products responding in various ways to the pre-occupations of the era.

The post 9/11 resurgence of the superhero film and its unprecedented box-office success has made the first decade of the twenty-first century known, according to Gray II and Kaklamanidou (2011, p. 1) as the "superhero decade". They note that the superhero film was a highly successful and lucrative means to fulfil the need for heroic figures during times of great upheaval post 9/11 (Gray II and Kaklamanidou 2011, p. 3). Significantly, the resurgence of the superhero film with its elements of renewed patriotism and nationalism evident in the plot and characterization of the film, specifically in the figures of the superhero and the villainous "other", also invokes the parallel return of the mythology based "epic" film in the twenty-first century with its "superheroic" heroes and authoritarian/ dictatorial villains (reminiscent of the dictators/authoritarian regimes of the US

designated "Axis of Evil" countries namely Iraq, Iran and North Korea). This need for heroes and concurrently "evil" villain figures to be vanquished as popular culture's attempts to negotiate contemporary geo-political events, and the fears, desires and anxieties of a nation is an important strand of thought pervading the study.

Analytical Framework: Popular Geopolitics and Films

Geopolitics, geopolitical power and geopolitical imagination are some of the terms prevalent in both academic and non-academic (for instance news media) circles and have been extensively used in this paper. As Dittmer and Dodds (2008, p. 441) note, geopolitics can be seen as "a discourse and a practice engaging in the creation of geographical relationships and orders so that global space becomes divided into simplistic categories such as good/evil, threatening/safe and civilised/ barbaric" with popular geopolitics referring to "various manifestations [of political and geographical world ordering] to be found within the visual media, news magazines, radio, novels and the Internet". Dittmer (2005), deriving from the work of G. OʹTuathail, S. Dalby, and J. Sharp succinctly summarises popular geopolitics as "the construction of scripts that mold common perceptions of political events" (Dittmer 2005, p. 626). Dodds (2008a, p. 1622) discussing the field of popular geopolitics, as "a sub-set of critical geopolitics" focusing on popular culture, looks at "how film might be used to consider not only the representational politics of depicting spaces, power and identities but also to investigate their creation, articulation, negotiation and contestation" (Dodds (2008a, p. 1623). Utilising insights from popular geopolitics, Dittmer (2013, pp. 2–3) studies the nationalist superhero sub-genre and seeks to

> ...reposition the role of superheroes within popular understandings of geopolitics and international relations from being understood as a "reflection" of preexisting and seemingly innate American values to being recognized as a discourse *through which* the world becomes understandable. In this view, the pop-cultural dimensions of politics (e.g., superheroes) are neither the result of political meta-beliefs (such as American exceptionalism) nor the condensation of economic ideology. Rather, superheroes are *co-constitutive* elements of both American identity and the U.S. government's foreign policy practices.

The above illustration of the application of insights from popular geopolitics onto superhero films reveals how popular culture artefacts are not only reflections and representations of various contemporary nationalist, geopolitical and socio-cultural concerns but also "co-constitutive" elements for the production of identity and in various ways legitimating/contesting/reworking state policies. This understanding underscores one of the primary research questions of the paper as the study attempts to explore the ways in which contemporary mythology based "epic" films can be read in a post 9/11 and "War on Terror" world either as a means of propagating and legitimating an idea of American supremacy or contesting/subverting the same and providing alternate models of conduct.

Theoretically drawing on the critical worldview derived from popular geopolitics, an analytical framework is received to study the primary texts.

Theorizing Masculinities: Constructing Masculine Images for Consumption

Connell (1987), divides masculinities into four types based on their positions in relation to one another. They are hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginalized. The relations among the four positions are hierarchical with hegemonic masculinity occupying the dominant position. It has also been noted by Connell that men occupying hegemonic masculine positions are statistically low in number but they are definitely the norm. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 832) embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men". They claim that "at a society-wide level...there is a circulation of models of admired masculine conduct, which may be exalted by churches, narrated by mass media, or celebrated by the state. Such models refer to, but also in various ways distort, the everyday realities of social practice" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 838). This conception is significant because it establishes the position of films, as mass media, in disseminating dominant forms of masculinity and also influencing everyday social practices. Jeffords (1994) says that Hollywood films played a major role in providing images of ideal masculinities for the audience and specifically discussing the Reagan era, states that the masculine characters in the most popular films of the time provided narratives against which American men and women could "test, revise, affirm, or negate images of their own conception of masculinity" (Kindle).

It has been noted by Connell (2000, p. 84) that "To say that a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes the gender order as a whole. To be culturally exalted, the pattern of masculinity must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes". Complicit masculinity is understood as a form of masculinity which is complicit with the hegemonic project without having to necessarily enact it and overall benefits from the patriarchal dividend. Subordinate masculinities in contemporary European/American society may refer to gay men whose homosexuality is easily assimilated to femininity. Heterosexual men who blur this line too may be considered in a subordinate position. The interplay of gender with other structures like class and race may bring other masculinities, termed marginalized masculinities which can be used to categorize non-White or disabled masculinities (Connell 2005, pp. 78–81). She emphasises that these terms are "not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships" (Connell 2005, p. 81).

Shamir and Travis (2002, p. 1) note that "we tend to cling hard to some of the most well-entrenched truisms about masculinity: that it connotes total control of emotions, that it mandates emotional inexpressivity, that it entraps in emotional isolation, that boys, in short, don't cry". Heroic male characters generally subscribe to traditional stereotypes of dominant masculinity with their emphasis on

physical strength, battle prowess, sexual virility and display of courage and bravery, while display of emotions and vulnerability is traditionally considered a sign of weakness. In this continued effort to construct ideal masculinity, men's lack of a language to articulate emotion and constant show of strength and invulnerability become significant points of enquiry in order to reveal whether the male heroic characters depicted in the films subvert or conform to traditional masculine stereotypes. Seidler (2006) emphatically notes that, "When we think about power and difference, we are not only thinking about relationships between men and women; we also have to think about different sexualities and the complex relationships that separate diverse masculinities. We cannot forget about issues of class, culture, 'race' and ethnicities and how these set up relationships of power and entitlement between different masculinities" (Seidler 2006, p. xiii). This paper following Seidler seeks to engage in an inclusive non-reductionist and intersectional study of masculinities in the primary texts to understand contemporary and popular notions of ideal and non-ideal men and masculinities, and cultural imaginations of contemporary American manhood.

Methodology

This study attempts a textual reading of the films selected for study while contextualising them within the significant socio-political and cultural events of the era. The analysis targets the specific genre conventions of the "epic" film and its' contemporary transnational evolution, the symbolic and ideological codes embedded in the text and the representations of masculinities within a heroic-ideal/villainous-non-ideal characterisation spectrum.

Case Study

The selected films deviate from the original myths in several ways; however, this study would eschew an attempt to assess the level of authenticity of the cinematic texts. The study understands that the cinematic characters were derived from the original Ancient Greek and Egyptian mythological figures and re-invented for contemporary audiences. This re-invention hence, becomes a domain of particular interest as it can shed light on prevalent notions of ideal and non-ideal masculinities and the ideological construction of the villain figure.

Hades: Revengeful Usurper or Zeus' Victim?

The film begins with a voice-over narrating the war between the Titans and their offspring the Olympian Gods, and the eventual victory of the Gods. The "earthly" realms are divided between the Gods with Zeus becoming the "King of the Heavens", Poseidon "King of the Seas" and Hades "tricked by Zeus, was left to rule the underworld in darkness and in misery". Hades being tricked into residing and ruling the underworld is identified as the source of his rebellion

against the status quo and desiring more power than Zeus, the ruler of the Olympian Gods. The tale begins with Spyros, a fisherman finding a casket adrift in the sea, which when opened, revealed the film's hero Perseus as a baby along with his dead mother's body. He adopts the baby and raises him with his wife Marmara. He is the one who sets up the first ideological and ethical tussle between tyranny and benevolent justice by uttering in despair after a series of divine mandated community-level and personal misfortunes that, "One day somebody's gonna have to make a stand. One day somebody's gonna have to say "Enough". He hopes for the arrival of a hero who will fight against the tyranny of the Gods who give human beings a hard life, disease, "scraps" in his words, as unjustified punishment (specifically hitting the poor and the weak the hardest) for defiance of divine authority by powerful others (generally the powerful earthly rulers). He rails against the Gods' continued desire that humans "love" them which the narrative exposition reveals to be the source of the power of the Gods. Justice, benevolent governance and equitable distribution of resources are set up as desirable qualities for the ruler (here divine rulers) against abuse of power and disproportionate use of coercive force on the largely innocent populace. The hero is therefore established as the saviour and his actions against a tyrannical ruler as a necessary moral imperative. His victory over the designated villain and the oppressive system will ideally lead to the establishment of a society better than before. The hero brings forth justice and fights for the oppressed and his actions are considered as justified. This justification for the use of violence and the vanquishing of the villain or the villain's henchmen/monster as a fight against tyrannical practices is a similar trope seen in contemporary Hollywood comic book superhero films. As the American superhero fights to save America and the world, Perseus too can be seen as a "type" of American hero produced from the mythology re-inventing factories of Hollywood. The ideological and moral justification for his fight is created by the cinematic construction of tyrannical practices, oppressive systems, unjust authoritarian figures, power hungry villainous figures, collectively leading to the persecution of the innocent. This depiction of the tyrannical environment and the fight of the hero of justice and freedom--- Perseus, symbolically resonates with the political rhetoric created by the American government and the American mediascape around the American soldier fighting to defend America and world against the international forces of terrorism/tyranny within the highly propagandized "War on Terror" or "Global War on Terror" narrative. Perseus at the beginning of the film is a simple fisherman's boy but according to his adopted father Spyros, because the Gods chose to save him for a reason from certain death, he will one day be going on a great journey. This foreshadows his eventual heroic quest and establishes his greater destiny within the games of Gods and mortals than a simple fisherman's boy. Perseus begins his quest when there is a great upheaval in his normal life with his family's demise as collateral damage of divine punishment (meted out by Hades to the soldiers of Argos for destroying the statue of Zeus), and hence, following the Campbellian pattern, he goes on a heroic journey, vanquishes the villain and returns as a powerful individual. He is pictured as strong, brave, with impressive physical musculature. However he is not completely emotionally stoic or lacking in a language to express emotions, as he

expresses affection for his father and has a healthy bond with him. He breaks into cries of anguish at the death of his loved ones, subverting the trope of the "boys don't cry". However his emotional vulnerability is not dwelled on for long and displayed only for dramatic fulfilment frequently sandwiched between important plot expositions or action sequences. It also continues the trend in action films where the larger than life hero is only allowed to express vulnerability and "feminine" emotions at times of extreme grief.

The villain figure however is kept nebulous at the beginning with the "Gods" as a broad tyrannical and hence, villainous force. Without sympathy and compassion for the mortals who in the cosmological universe of the film are the source of the Gods' strength and immortality through their belief, worship and veneration of divinity, the Gods seem a powerful tyrannical force. But the levels of villainy differ as the film proceeds.

An analysis of the text reveals actions harmful towards innocents being perpetrated by both Zeus and Hades. Zeus is shown to have impregnated Danae by impersonating her husband King Acrisius, as punishment for his defiance of the Gods and his assault on Mount Olympus, the seat of their power. He also turns Acrisius into a monstrous being known as Calibos who eventually aids Hades' efforts to impede Perseus' journey. He further directs Hades to punish those who defy the gods, in this instance the Kingdom of Argos, due to which many innocent people are injured and killed. He does not have to face any consequences for his own immoral and cruel actions due to his position of power as the Chief of the Gods. Hades while punishing the mortals under Zeus' orders has another agenda of his own, as he seeks to undermine Zeus and replace him as revenge for Zeus tricking him to rule the Underworld and being confined there. His method is to eliminate mortals as Zeus and the other Gods derive their power from the mortals' worship while Hades does not need their veneration anymore as his power is fuelled by the fear of mortals. He threatens to unleash the Kraken on the Kingdom of Argos, unless Princess Andromeda, the daughter of King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeia of Argos is sacrificed, revealing his cruel and apathetic side. Hades is eventually forced back to the Underworld and his plans are foiled by the hero Perseus, but nevertheless as a god, he escapes divine justice for his crimes. The narrative establishes Hades as the major villain, as he challenges the status-quo of Zeus' rule over the mortals, threatens large scale destruction of human lives by unleashing the monstrous deep-sea giant squid like creature, the Kraken. He is needlessly cruel, abuses his power, has no compassion or kindness for living creatures and is merely focussed on his revenge, by destroying Zeus and assuming the power for himself.

Hades seeks to attain power through two means- one is through fear and intimidation and the second military coercion with the goal being to destabilize the world order where Gods are worshipped and thereby gain power. When he threatens the destruction of Argos unless Princess Andromeda is sacrificed, thereby, fomenting anarchy, fear and rebellion in the state through the doomsday prophet and the leader of the Cult of Hades-Prokopion, his aim is to break the bond between the mortals and the Gods so that the mortals do not love or worship the Gods anymore. He uses tactics of military coercion when he unleashes the

Kraken and his own massive divine powers against the mortals to break their resistance and create instead feelings of fear for Hades, which in turn increases his power. His manipulation of Calibos, Prokopion, and Zeus reveals his cunning while also being a testament to his intelligence and brilliance in military style strategic manoeuvres utilising both overt displays of his might as well as covert means of destabilizing the order to gain power. Even though he is pictured as a middle aged man, he is in his prime and the actor playing Hades, the English actor Ralph Fiennes ably manages to harness Hades' lean, power-hungry demeanour, cruel angry eyes and his hulking stance. As he is a divine figure, he does not need to have sword fights or display his body musculature, instead using his supernatural powers to fight. He is shown as a man with a thick black beard and a receding hairline with wild voluminous hair, clad in dark, shadowy robes while the other Gods wear shining white and golden armour and clothes. A darker lighting and shadow effects are used when he appears on the screen to contrast him with the supposedly benevolent God Zeus, whose beard and hair are trimmed, while bright lighting is used during his appearances. The visual depiction of a divine patriarch in most religious inspired art is that of a bearded long haired aged man, be it Zeus, Odin, the Norse God or Yahweh, the Judeo-Christian God. This visual suggestion of Hades as a similar powerful divine patriarch but twisted and villainous is achieved through the manipulation of the popular iconography of the divine patriarch figure. His power is established in this way. His might, cunning and his deified status present a character that could be a hero and an ideal form of aged but powerful masculinity. His motives to overturn Zeus' rule also seem justified as Zeus had wronged him by dishonestly making him the King of the Underworld, in essence condemning him to rule and reside in a terrible place. He also was following Zeus' orders when he was punishing the mortals, thereby making his actions legal even though cruel. It was Zeus who gave him permission to "turn them on each other" so that the mortals return to the "arms" of the Gods. In this way he subverts the idea of a one-dimensional male villain figure, who is almost a caricature of twisted masculinity. His character challenges the idea of Zeus as the "good" God, as Zeus constantly abuses his power, be it the horrific act of raping Danae or ordering the use of undue force on mortals as punishment for their defiance, all in an effort to maintain his own power and rule. Zeus' moral ambiguity in the text makes him a softer villainous figure, whose goal of maintaining power is proposed in the narrative as justified while Hades is presented as the unjustified cruel usurper with his reliance on fear as divine fuel. Hades' cruelty and use of undue force and his apathetic manipulation of mortals however makes him irredeemably villainous. His authoritarian style, use of undue force on innocents, thirst for power, reliance on fear, and motivations of revenge however make him a twisted cinematic fantasy of a real-life dictatorial figure or even a terrorist figure like Osama bin Laden. American propaganda has relentlessly over the years peddled the idea of a dominant America being infinitely more preferable to other nations or regimes even though there might be several problematic actions executed over the years by the American state, be it manipulation of weaker states, proxy-wars, regime-changes etc. These other nation-states, organisations, communities or figures could be whoever the American

media, the American State, and/or mediums of popular culture like films, TV shows, comic books etc. designate as the villains of the world. Zeus then with his pre-occupation with maintaining the power status-quo and focussing on the mortal's continued "love" and veneration for the Gods easily fits into the popular perception of America itself, both in the eyes of non-Americans and the constructed image marketed by the American propaganda machinery. He says that the mortals' "insolence has a price" and "like children they need to be reminded of the order of things". This evokes the persistence in popular culture of texts glorifying America and the silencing of their detractors as a way of maintaining their geopolitical supremacy. Perseus and his heroic quest to save mortals from a dictatorial cruel villainous figure like Hades, is then established as a hero, and therefore an ideal form of masculinity. However it is unclear how Perseus challenged the tyrannical rule of the Gods as he was actively fighting to defeat Hades and the Kraken, and not the rule of the Gods. It is left unresolved if the Gods and their rule changed for the better at the end of the film. Hence, foregrounding him as the hero of justice who will finally say "Enough" to the Gods, remains hollow. Zeus and his morally ambiguous characterisation is left unresolved at the end, as the audience only sees him as not being angry at mortals anymore and offering immortality to Perseus, his son. His abuse of his filial duties by asking Perseus to go on a dangerous quest, offering immortality only when Perseus is successful in saving Zeus' rule, having no qualms in punishing mortals for questioning the Gods even if he does not want their complete annihilation or oppression like Hades, does not make him a "good" heroic character and therefore not an ideal form of masculinity. It can therefore be suggested that both Hades and Zeus complicate the idea of good and evil, of hero and villain and of "ideal" and "non-ideal" masculinities despite their status as powerful Gods. Indeed their amoral/immoral actions prove them as non-heroic and therefore falling into the spectrum of "non-ideal" masculinities.

Set: Usurper, Saviour, Harbinger of Change

Set in *Gods of Egypt* ushers in change in the ancient God-ruled kingdom of Egypt and is a catalyst to pave the way for a more compassionate and egalitarian set of deity-rulers. Prior to his rebellion against Osiris, the Egyptian Gods and especially the protagonist Horus is depicted as indolent, hedonistic, selfish, apathetic to his mortal subjects and secure in his privilege as the next heir to the throne. The tale follows the growth of Horus when his previous power and privilege is challenged and decimated by Set's rebellion and murder of Osiris, whereupon he seeks the help of a mortal thief named Bek to regain his lost power.

The film begins with the narrator, an older Bek providing the background of the Egyptian Gods and their place in Egyptian society as both divine figures and earthly rulers. Egypt is understood as the birthplace of all civilization, and a paradise worthy enough for the Gods to reside along with their "lesser creation"-man. The Egyptian Gods looked like humans but were taller with gold running in their veins, more powerful with superhuman abilities, and possessing the ability to transform into "all manner of terrifying beasts". Egypt was divided between two

brothers by their father Ra, the God of Light who ferried the sun across the sky and kept the demon of Chaos, Apophis at bay. The narrator says that among the two "mighty" brothers, Osiris, the God of Life was "the beloved King of all the lands made bountiful by the Nile", while his brother Set, ruled the far barren desert finding both strength and *bitterness* in his isolation" (Emphasis Added). Set challenges Osiris during the planned coronation of his heir, his son Horus, the God of Air. This stems from Set's unhappiness at being relegated to the barren desert while he believes Osiris got the better end of the deal in his far more comfortable existence. Set is moreover denied children by his father Ra. It is later revealed that it was a test set by Ra for Osiris and Set, Osiris to rule but not cling on to his power, while the isolated and harsh desert would have hardened and toughened Set for his eventual destiny of fighting Apophis in the place of Ra. Ra believed not granting him children was a kindness as Ra in his solitary fight constantly missed his own children. Set however refuses the path set by his father and gropes for earthly power by defeating Osiris, Horus and other Gods and becoming the King while also attempting to gain immortality by destroying the Afterlife itself. He is dissatisfied by what is given to him and constantly aims for more. In his ambition and greed he seeks immortality instead of mere long life, to be the supreme God and King of all Egypt and not simply the God of the desert, to be the most powerful God by incorporating into himself the powers of the Gods he defeated and murdered. He does not hesitate to kill his brother Osiris for the throne, stops killing his nephew Horus only because Hathor, the lover of Horus and the Goddess of Love, begs for his life, murders his wife Nepthys for rebelling against his usurpation and does not hesitate to kill any God who does not bow to him. His tyrannical rule begins by his overturning of Osiris' proclamation that all mortals would be welcome to eternal life in the Afterlife, and instead demands payment in riches and treasure from the dead souls for entry. This system is designed to cow the masses into submission as the mortal populace is harnessed into penniless slavery to build grand monuments, and can therefore never rebel as they would then never have any wealth to pay for entry into the Afterlife. He grabs the throne of Egypt through the use of force, bringing in his army to quell any rebellion, sneakily knifing Osiris after Osiris refuses his demand of a hand-to-hand fight for the throne. He threatens the other Gods that they could either bow before him or die while the mortals must either worship him or be enslaved. He believes that Osiris had accomplished nothing in his thousand years of peaceful rule, merely "a land of people who dream of nothing more", and hence claims that it is his turn to rule now. He does not even hesitate to kill his non-divine loyal followers for their failure in capturing a far more powerful entity, a major God like Horus. The giant obelisk touching the sky that he commissioned to be built as a tribute to his father Ra was a giant phallic symbol of his megalomaniac self, desiring his father's attention and validation of his strength and power. He is ultimately defeated by Horus in the final battle after Horus goes through his own heroic journey of growth and self-realisation and recovers his lost powers. It is only after his defeat that he begs for mercy which Horus denies, recognising Set's treacherous nature. Set's pre-destined path set by his father Ra and his justified anger and bitterness begs the question that had he been given a better lot in life or at least an

explanation for his travails by Ra, he could have been a heroic character and not the villain of the narrative.

Visually, Set whose character is played by Gerard Butler, is a worthy foe for Horus as he is similarly well muscled, has a tall strong physique, possesses impressive battle skills where he single-handedly manages to defeat Horus in one-on-one combat and subdues every other rebellious God in battle. He is extremely cunning and intelligent, is witty and humorous, with a strong libido and sexual vigour despite his impotency, is an astute tactician and military leader and for most of the film narrative, superior in power to the hero/protagonist Horus. Even though he is Osiris' brother and Horus's uncle, he looks more of a contemporary of Horus in terms of looks. Osiris is shown as older and physically weaker than Set. While Set wears muscle baring leather outfits showing his muscled hands and legs, Osiris wears garments which are longer, covering his weaker body. Set and Horus mirror each other instead both in terms of their battle outfits, physical looks, deep masculine voices, fearless attitude and combat skills. Set could have been the hero of the film if he had not engaged in tyrannical and villainous activities as Horus at the beginning of the film was more concerned with pleasure and revelry, in displays of machismo and hedonism, for instance celebrating his success in a hunt the day before his coronation by indulging in wine and women the whole night. He is hence not responsible and had become indolent in a time of peace. He also considered mortals beneath him and did not consider their lives and desires important. Hence, he did not have any moral qualms in deceiving Bek by promising to bring back his dead lover Zaya in exchange for his help in retrieving his other eye which was taken away by Set. Compared to the earlier version of Horus, Set proved that he was a better fighter and tactician and hence blurs the line between the hero and the villain. His actions however cast him as villainous. The megalomaniac tyrant, authoritarian and undemocratic in his rule, subjugating his political opponents and his citizens, permitting unlawful and unjustified use of force and threatening physical violence and enslavement to anyone who dissents---sets him up as a parallel of the tyrannical dictator figure seen in popular culture. The framework of this figure which abounds in Hollywood films appeals to the national consciousness of America wherein freedom and democratic ideals are celebrated in the public sphere and in popular culture. The hyper-masculine God-hero representing America, who fights this villainous hyper-masculine dictator, is symbolic of a strong masculine America fighting the forces of tyranny and evil. This symbolic imagery is especially relevant in times when America as a nation was involved in several "anti-terror" international campaigns in the Middle East and had been peddling the spectre of the "Islamic Terrorist" to legitimate its controversial military actions in the global arena. Designed to be watched by audiences both domestic and international, it constantly foregrounded America as the "good guys" and "global saviours" in the war against authoritarianism and tyranny.

Conclusion

Hades and Set from the primary texts served as ideal deity-villain figures for study as they both exhibited similar power hungry, megalomaniac, treacherous and cruel behaviours along with superior cunning and supernatural powers. Their actions stemmed from a deep dissatisfaction with the power, station and status accorded to them fomenting thoughts of rebellion against the established seat of power. A desire to change their current status, overturn the self-perceived injustice perpetrated on them and an ambition to gain more power gave them the impetus to embark on their respective journeys. Framed along the mould of a powerful heroic figure, these villainous masculinities challenged the conception of "ideal" and "non-ideal" masculinities as they possess qualities generally attributed to the "ideal" hyper-masculine male hero. The themes of these films serve similar interests of establishing and emphasising the triumph of the symbolic "American" hero championing ideals of freedom and the rights of the common masses against the powerful deity-villain. These deity-villains are constructed as an amalgamation of various "enemies" of USA as projected in the public sphere, who are perceived as challenging/harming the land, geopolitical power and global economic/political/military interests of the nation. The return of these mythology based epic films hence serve to propagate a "hyperreal" image of America rooted in American Exceptionalist ideologies where in America is seen as the "saviour" nation in the world, thereby culturally validating and "normalising" their geopolitical supremacy and use of military power in the international arena.

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