

**“A Youth with a Beautiful Face that Delighted the Eyes”:
The Function of Antinoan Cults from Ancient to Modern Initiates.**

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Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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Abstract

Many know of Antinous, the infamous boy-love of Roman Emperor Hadrian. Some know of Antinous' mysterious death on the Egyptian Nile in 130 CE, and his deification as one of the last Pagan gods of the Roman empire. Rarely, however, do people know of how and why Antinous was popularly venerated in the second century CE. Rarer still, it is widely unknown that the worship of Antinous has continued well into the twenty-first century, operating as an LGBTQIA+ Neopagan deity. Little attention has been given to the purpose of Antinoan worship and what ancient Antinoan religious communication served, and what modern Antinoan cult practice serves today. This thesis aims to fill in the gaps of this knowledge to gain a clearer understanding of the function of Antinoan cult practices. This thesis marries the historical research methods of 'lived ancient religion' and 'lived religion' to examine the functions of Antinoan cult and Antinoan communication in both antiquity and modernity. Throughout this thesis, it is argued that Antinoan worship and communication has been utilized as a means of personal salvation, self-understanding, self-expression, and sexual reparation, and this complex insight is integral for the expansion and evolution of Antinoan history.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Acknowledgments	i
List of Figures	iv
Abbreviations	v
Introduction	1
- Antinoan Scholarship	3
- The Language of Evidence: Theory and Method	10
- Shortcomings, Problems and Biases	17
- Chapter Summary	22
Chapter I: The Emperor's Antinous	24
- Greek Love or Roman Lust?	25
- Hadrian on the Hunt	31
- Hadrian, Antinous and <i>Paideia</i>	36
- An Achilles to his Patroclus, an Alexander to his Hephaestion	39
- <i>Divus</i> Hadrian	47
- Hadrian and Mystery Cults	52
- Hadrian The God King	55
- The New Dionysuses	61
- Immortality and Plato's Mysteries	66
- The Syncretism of Antinous and Hadrian	70
Chapter II: The People's Antinous	74
- Hero Worship and Local History	74
- Mantinea's Antinous	77
- Ephesus' Antinous	81

- Antinous and Divine and Sexual Identities	90
- The Orphic-Bacchic-Antinoan Mysteries and Becoming Immortal	93
- Is There Such a Thing as Ancient Sexual Identity?	100
- The Sex God Antinous	102
- Antinoopolis and the Tondo of the Two Lovers	110
Chapter III: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous	117
- Mapping the New Antinoan Movement(s)	122
- The Internet and the Modern Antinoan Community	130
- Same-Same but Different: The Belief in Antinous	136
- Home is Where the Heart is: Antinous, Religion and LGBTQIA+ Spirituality	144
- I am Becoming a God: ‘Homotheosis’ and Divine Sexuality	148
Conclusion	154
Appendix I: The Pincio Obelisk	159
Appendix II: Coins	166
Appendix III: Statues and Other	172
Appendix IV: Contemporary Antinoan Survey Questionnaire	179
Bibliography	182

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List of Figures	Page
Fig. 1: <i>Obeliscus olim Veranus modo Barberinus</i>	30
Fig. 2: Tondo of a Boar Hunt.....	34
Fig. 3: Portrait of Alexander as Helios	44
Fig. 4: Colossal bust of Antinous	44
Fig. 5: Bust of Antinous as Osiris	56
Fig. 6: Axonometric reconstruction of the <i>Antinoeion</i>	58
Fig. 7: Bronze coin depicting Antinous as the ‘New Iacchos’	65
Fig. 8: Silver coin depicting Augustus and Hadrian.	67
Fig. 9: Antinous as Dionysus-Echmoun	72
Fig. 10: Bronze coin of Antinous and (or as) Androkles	83
Fig. 11: Bronze coin of Emperor Commodus	87
Fig. 12: Marble statue of Antinous as Androkles	84
Fig. 13: Antinoan Bronze box-mirror	93
Fig. 14: Gold Orphic lamella	97
Fig. 15: Antinous Dionysus (Lerna)	105
Fig. 16: ‘Tondo of the Two Lovers’	112
Fig. 17: Delphic Antinous Statue	118
Fig. 18: Antinous by SUBSET	120
Fig. 19: <i>Temple of Antinous the Gay God</i> blog (2002)	124
Fig. 20: Modern Antinoan Cult Diagram Tree	129
Fig. 21: Torso of Antinous as an Ephebic Athlete	134
Fig. 22: Antinous Mondragone with Lipstick Marks	145
Fig. 23: Statue of Vertumnus Antinous	155

List of Abbreviations:

CIL – *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

HA – *Historia Augusta*

IG – *Inscriptions Graecae*

IGR – *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas pertinentes*

IGUR – *Inscriptions Graecae Urbis Romae*

IvE – *Inschriften von Ephesos*

NRM – New Religious Movement

RIC – Roman Imperial Coinage

RPC – Roman Provincial Coinage

SEG – *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

SIG – *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*

Introduction

In 2019, when I picked up a second-hand copy of Royston Lambert's *Beloved and God* (1984), a book seen as the authority on Roman Emperor Hadrian's beloved boy, Antinous, I was instantly enthralled. I knew of famous same-sex relationships from the ancient world such as Achilles and Patroclus, and Alexander and Hephaestion, and had extensively read the great homoerotic literature of Sappho and Plato, but who was this mysterious Antinous? Why did Hadrian deify his boy-love? What kind of people worshipped Antinous, and why? Lambert's *Beloved and God* (1984) was more than just an introduction to an intriguing story about an emperor and his male lover. Antinous was a 'queer' ancient figure and a 'queer' ancient story, that was otherwise ignored in the mainstream media. The more I researched Antinous, the more I became enamoured with him, and the more I started asking myself contemporary questions: Does the LGBTQIA+ community know about Antinous as much as other prominent queer historical figures? Do the pederastic sexual cultures of antiquity haunt the relationship between Antinous and Hadrian; and more importantly, how has Antinous impacted LGBTQIA+ culture, or, rather, has he?

This thesis aims to answer these questions, and to discover the function of Antinous and Antinoan mystery cults to diverse people in both the ancient past and the modern present. By focusing on the identities and communities that have been built around Antinous in the second century CE, we see his significance not just to the emperor Hadrian, both pre and post-mortem, but to native Greek cities and the initiates of ancient Antinoan mystery cult communities. We will then assess how Antinous functions in the twenty-first century and in the LGBTQIA+ community. Examining the different occurrences of Antinoan communication, past and present, uncovers surprisingly similar desires and patterns of the function of Antinous' image and cult. This thesis illustrates that the centuries long veneration

of Antinous threatens the whole notion of Roman Paganism (particularly in the second century CE) being a dispassionate practice that relied on ‘cynical worship’, honouring the emperor in hopes that they would be rewarded (Vout 2003, pp. 62-63). There is a plethora of evidence to suggest that the ancient Antinoan religion was one that elicited genuine feeling. If Antinoan veneration, or even Graeco-Roman-Egyptian Paganism, was practiced purely for the sake of political gain, it would not warrant practice today. It would serve no political purpose; we have no emperors to please.

The thesis is designed with three goals in mind. First, to refresh the analysis of Antinous and Hadrian by examining what the pederastic relationship contributed to the emperor’s Hellenic and divine identities, as well as exploring ‘why’ and ‘how’ the youth was worshipped in the second century CE. Second, to highlight the function of Antinous’ image and his *cultus* by comparing the impacts of Antinoan cult worship on communities and individuals across two completely different time periods. Thirdly, this thesis aims to bring the historical and deified Antinous of antiquity into the present, by examining the importance of historical ‘queer’ figures (and gods) to members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

This thesis will examine both individuals and communities that have been directly influenced by a figure we know very little about. There are a few, albeit basic, parts of Antinous’ life that are unanimously agreed upon. We know the birthday of Antinous, five days before the Kalends of December, 27 November, c. 112 CE (*CIL* 14.2112; Beard, North & Price 1992, p. 292), and that he was from Asia Minor, specifically, “Bithynium, a city of Bithynia” (Dio. 69.11.2). We also know Antinous had been a favourite of Hadrian, and that he drowned in the Egyptian Nile in 130 CE (Dio. 69.11.2). A city appropriately named ‘Antinoopolis’, Egypt, was then founded on the Nile by Hadrian (Men. *Rhet.* 1.15.24). Upon Antinous’ death, and Hadrian’s grief over his loss, the youth was deified by the emperor, making him the last

panhellenic god of the Mediterranean outside the imperial family.¹ Antinous' untimely end is still disputed by scholars, who debate whether it was a murder, sacrifice, or an accidental drowning (Boer 1955, p. 133; Skinner 2005, p. 269). After his deification, the ancient cult of Antinous spread throughout the Roman empire like wildfire, and the youth was worshipped up until the fourth century CE, promoted popularly as a local hero or a salvific mystery god. Almost two thousand years later, in the twenty-first century, a community of LGBTQIA+ Neopagan's have revived Antinous, with many bestowing him with the mantle of the 'Gay God'.

Antinoan Scholarship

Antinous' biographical material barely extends over a few paragraphs. Antinoan scholarship has predominately examined Antinous and Hadrian's relationship and/or the Bithynian's impact on art in the second century CE onwards. Lambert's *Beloved and God* (1984) outlines who Antinous was and the possible reasons why Hadrian deified the youth by analysing the scarce biographical evidence of Antinous alongside his physical iconography, such as sculpture and coinage. Yet, we should note that *Beloved and God* (1984) is a romantic narrative that binds the historical figure of Antinous to the emperor, and as such, any detailed examination of Antinous' impact on people outside of Hadrian is restricted.

¹ The Senate was the highest state of authority in the recognition or importation of Roman state gods. To become deified was to become a god of the Roman state (Gradel 2004, p. 323), and so it is important to recognise that Antinous was not a part of the imperial cult, as Antinous was never recognised officially by the Senate. Whilst it was not uncommon for imperial family members to become deified, such as the empress Livia (Suet. *Claud.* 11), the deification of Antinous was highly unorthodox. In fact, due to Hadrian's hasty deification of Antinous, who was not part of the imperial family, compared to his sister, Paulina, Dio Cassius chastises Hadrian. The emperor "became the object of some ridicule... because at the death of his sister Paulina he had not immediately paid her any honour" (69.11.4). Antinoan cults instead take the form of mystery and local hero/god cults, located in the Greek parts of the Roman empire. For the deification of Antinous, see also HA, *Hadr.* 13.7; Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 4.43p-44p; *Prudent.* 1.271-282; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.8; Paus. 9.9.8. For the deification epitaph of Antinous on the Pincio Obelisk and discussion, see also Boatwright. M 1987, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, pp. 243-246 and appendix 1.1-1.8.

Most Antinoan scholarship focuses on art and archaeological history. Hugo Meyer's catalogue of Antinous published in 1991 is invaluable for its extensive research on Antinoan art history, such as monuments, numismatic, and epigraphic material.² Though Meyer does examine Antinoan cult worship to some degree, the focus of Meyer's work is predominantly in the area of art history and archaeology. Whilst Caroline Vout's work on Antinous is an analysis of the Bithynian as a prominent figure in art history, much like Meyer, her articles "Antinous, Archaeology and History" (2005) and "Hadrian, Hellenism and the Social History of Art" (2010) break the trend of restricting Antinous' character to that of Hadrian's lover. Vout informs us that the construction of Antinoan iconography should not be limited to the narrow timeline between Antinous and Hadrian's deaths, 130-138 CE, as representation of Antinous far exceeds the images promoted by Hadrian. This thesis follows Vout's method in looking at the purpose of Antinous and Antinoan cults for other individuals and communities. The scholarship of Meyer and Vout has given this thesis a strong foundation from which to better understand the function of the deified Antinous and Antinoan cult. By expanding on the analysis of Antinoan imagery, we can begin to understand its communicative purposes.

Ancient Antinous worship was both wide and varied, popular in Greece, Asia Minor, and the North African coast, as well as to a lesser extent in Italy, Spain, North-western Europe and even Britain and the Danube (Skinner 2005, pp. 270-271). Due to the variety of types of Antinoan worship, this thesis will focus on ancient Antinoan mystery cults and hero worship in local Greek cities, due to the preponderance of evidence in cities such as Mantinea (Arcadia), Lerna (Argos), Ephesus (Ionia), and Antinoopolis (Egypt). There is much debate about mystery cults. Some scholars believe they were precursors and/or rivals of Christian

² See Meyer 1991, *Antinoos: Die archäologischen Denkmäler unter Einbeziehung des numismatischen und epigraphischen Materials sowie der literarischen Nachrichten. Ein Betrag zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der hadrianischen und frühantoninischen Zeit.*

cults that promised salvation. Others believe that mystery cults were variations of the same basic pattern of ancient cult worship, offering optional extras rather than radical alternatives to traditional religious practices (Cumont 1911, p. 26; Alva 2008, p. 26; Rives 2009, p. 259). This thesis supports the hypothesis that mystery cults were religious communities which promoted similar beliefs of accessing salvation and immortality through the worship of a prominent deity. However, it must be noted that ancient religious practices should be studied “with an interdisciplinary methodology that both probes significant similarities among cultures and yet recognises important differences among them as well” (Spaeth 2013, p. 1). In other words, ancient Mediterranean cults, mystery and otherwise, shared similar ideas, rituals, and beliefs, but were not uniform.

Scholarship on Antinoan mystery cult and Antinoan hero worship is limited. Christopher P. Jones dedicates a chapter to the youth in his book *New Heroes in Antiquity: From Achilles to Antinoos* (2010).³ Jones’ examination of the local worship of Antinous is invaluable, noting the unusual geographical spread of the Antinoan hero cult, and his concentration on the city of Mantinea as a strong receiver of the Antinoan *cultus*. Both Sebastian Heath’s article “A Box Mirror Made from Two Antinous Medallions of Smyrna” (2006) and Theodosia Stefanidou-Tiveriou’s article “Antinous and the Lerna Mysteries: A marble statue from the sanctuary of Demeter Prosymna and Dionysos at Lerna/Argolis” (2018), provide in-depth analyses of Antinoan-Dionysian mystery cults. Heath’s article brings to light physical evidence that points to ritual worship of Antinous being similar to that of Dionysian worship. Stefanidou-Tiveriou examines the Antinous cult at Lerna in Argos, assessing the Bithynian’s place in cult worship of the city and what rituals may have been performed. The studies by Jones, Heath and Stefanidou-Tiveriou provide a rich tapestry of Antinoan worship in second

³ There are multiple variations of Antinous’ name, including, but not limited to: ‘Antinous’, ‘Antinoüs’, ‘Antinoos’, ‘Antinoös’, ‘Antinou’ and ‘Antinoo’.

century CE Greece and Asia Minor. When woven together, the Antinoan veneration of Mantinea, Smyrna, and Lerna uncovers the consistencies of the Antinoan *cultus*, which in turn gives us an overarching view of what Antinoan cult practice may have provided for communities and individuals.

Since Antinoan mystery cult scholarship is slight, this thesis has turned to the abundance of scholarship on larger mystery cults (i.e., Isis and Osiris, Dionysus, Eleusis, and Cybele), about which we know slightly more. The scholarship of Yulia Ustinova (2013) and Jan Bremmer (2014) has been vital to the theoretical development of Antinoan cult practice. Not only do these studies highlight the fundamental similarities of ancient mystery cult structure, but acutely explore why ancient individuals involved themselves in the mysteries. Ustinova and Bremmer's approach of examining the emotional, psychological, and spiritual reasons for initiation into mystery cult progresses our understanding of Antinoan mystery cult initiation and Antinoan worship. It reveals not only who may have been initiated, but also the function of the cult for its members.

This thesis also seeks to investigate Antinoan influence on ancient sexual identity via ancient Antinoan religious communication and cult initiation. The subject of ancient sexual identity often divides classicists, particularly the question of whether sexual identities existed in the ancient world or not.⁴ This thesis utilises the theories of multiple scholars to identify the function of eroticism in Antinoan cults. Two juxtaposing scholars referenced in this thesis include David Halperin, particularly his book *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (1990) and Amy Richlin's article "Not before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the *Cinaedus* and the Roman Law against Love between Men" (1993). Halperin argues that sexual identity as we know today is a uniquely modern production (1989, p. 258). Richlin, however, disagrees,

⁴ For an in-depth discussion, see chapter two, pp. 100-102. See also fn. 89.

arguing that a genuine form of sexual identity compatible with modern sexualities existed, evident in the *kinaidos*.⁵

The opinion formulated in this thesis aligns with Ruth Karras and her article “Active/Passive, Acts/Passions: Greek and Roman Sexualities” (2000), in that we cannot confidently state that sexual identities comparable with modern sexual identities existed in the ancient world, yet nor can we claim they did not. Karras argues that instead of viewing ancient sexuality and sexual identity as a creation of nineteenth century medical discourse, we should view the area of ancient sexuality and sexual identity with a less restricted definition (2000, p. 1252). As Karras points out, “the fact that there is more than one way of understanding homosexual behaviour in contemporary culture should remind us that the ancients did not have a unitary view of it, either” (2000, p. 1256).

Whilst Karras discusses textual evidence of ancient sexuality from the active/passive perspective, her method can be applied to this thesis. We must, as historians, understand how the evidence of ancient sexuality and sexual identity is presented to us in order to understand and construct the mental world of the ancient Mediterranean and its contemporaries: who was reading it, communicated it, and how did they understand it? (2000, p. 1257). Using Karras’ method, this thesis argues that the sexual nature of Antinous’ image and cults did affect sexual identities, without claiming what those identities were, thus allowing the use of both Halperin’s and Richlin’s own theories of ancient sexuality. By asking questions as to who, why, and how ancient sexual identity was communicated and perceived, particularly through religious contexts, this thesis investigates why individuals may have been interested in pursuing initiation into Antinoan cult. Furthermore, this method is not used to speculate that the ancient sexual practice of pederasty was an ancient sexual identity. Instead, this thesis

⁵ For a *kinaidos* definition, see chapter one, p. 27. See also Richlin 1993, p. 561.

frames the pederastic relationship between Antinous and Hadrian as an instrument of self-identification for the emperor, as its aristocratic Greek and philosophical associations bolstered his Hellenism and divinity. In the context of religious activity, Antinoan initiates may have viewed the pederastic relationship as an important part of cult practice, as noted by both Stefandiou-Tiveriou (2018), and in Haeckl's article "Brothers or Lovers? A New Reading of the 'Tondo of the Two Brothers'" (2001).

If scholarship on the ancient Antinous is limited, we have far less when it comes to Antinoan reception. The recent focus on Antinous has been the impact of his sculpture on art history and on homosexual culture from the early eighteenth to mid twentieth centuries. Caroline Vout's article "Winckelmann and Antinous" (2006), as well as Sarah Waters' "'The Most Famous Fairy in History': Antinous and the Homosexual Fantasy" (1995), examine the effect of ancient Antinoan iconography on homosexual culture. Both draw conclusions that the portrayal of the youth in art and literature acted as a mirror for homosexual identities and homoerotic desires in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The act of same-sex attracted persons (particularly men) identifying with Antinous traces its origins to the eighteenth century. Specifically, the homosexual German scholar, and inventor of the scientific study of Graeco-Roman sculpture, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. As Antinous became an icon for the early stages of modern homosexual identity, even Winckelmann himself used Antinous' image to compare his own sexuality and sexual identity with the youth (Vout 2006, p. 144).

Scholarship on Antinoan reception of the eighteenth to the twentieth century is essential groundwork for the development of the Bithynian's reception in twenty-first century LGBTQIA+ culture. Studies of classical reception performed by LGBTQIA+ communities and individuals set up a precedent to understand a continued practice of the queer reception of Antinous. Classical reception is the way in which ancient material has been transmitted,

translated, excerpted, interpreted, rewritten, re-imaged and represented (Hardwick & Stray 2008, p. 1). Studies by Richlin (2005) and Sebastian Matzner (2010) develop the understanding of queer classical reception by revealing how members of the LGBTQIA+ community have interpreted, re-imaged and represented the ancient past as reparative history before the twenty-first century. Using a similar framework, this thesis aims to show how the reception of Antinous, and his *cultus*, fits in with common practice of using the past as means of validation and reparation by LGBTQIA+ people today.

Scholarship on modern paganism also falls under the scope of Classical Reception studies. Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America* (2016) is a fundamental resource that this thesis relies upon. Adler's analysis on the trajectory of Neopaganism in the last fifteen years reveals the rapid pace at which it has grown via the reach of the Internet, and how non-orthodox religions and spiritualities have become more and more prevalent in society today. Moreover, Adler's research reveals the shared functions of pagan spirituality between other queer Pagan spaces (i.e the Radical Faeries) and the Antinoan movement, particularly in the instance of solitary and individualised Pagan practices. Christine Kraemer's article *Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Paganism* (2012) unveils the explicit importance of gender and sexuality theology in modern Paganism. By recognising how these elements are integral to the core of modern Paganism, we can then consider the function of a movement specifically and deliberately designed to honour a queer deity.

By using Classical Reception and New Religious Movement scholarship as a basis, this thesis can then analyse Antinous' reception in the twenty-first century. This thesis focuses on the development of the LGBTQIA+ Neopagan and New Religious Movements of Antinous, primarily the online movement *Religio Antinoi* (or *Antinous the Gay God*) and is the focal point of chapter three. Whilst Vout's *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (2007) and

Ferdinand Mount's *Full Circle: How the Classical World Came Back to Us* (2010) briefly touch on the modern religious movement of Antinous, Ethan Doyle White's articles "The New Cultus of Antinous: Hadrian's Deified Lover and Contemporary Queer Paganism" (2015) and "Archaeology, Historicity, and Homosexuality in the New Cultus of Antinous: Perceptions of the Past in a Contemporary Pagan Religion" (2017) are the first published academic studies on the contemporary Antinoan faith.

White has laid the foundation and the timeline of the modern Antinoan *cultus* up until 2017, as well as investigates how the ancient figure of Antinous and ancient cult itself, has influenced LGBTQIA+ identities and wellbeing. White concludes that "classical history is not something [that] just happened in the past and then stayed there, but rather that it continues to affect us to this day, and that both our present and our future will one day be someone else's history" (2015, p. 143). The impact of Antinous and his cult was not just felt in antiquity, and White provides a thorough analysis by highlighting the youth's effect on members of the LGBTQIA+ community via his position as a 'queer' historical figure. This thesis uses a similar framework to examine how Antinous has been interpreted as an LGBTQIA+ deity who makes a positive impact on LGBTQIA+ Antinoan worshippers.

The Language of Evidence: Theory and Method

No shared texts or dogmas exist to explain any orthodox religious traditions of ancient Graeco-Roman-Egyptian Paganism. This thesis relies on textual evidence such as poems, prose, philosophical works, histories, and antiquarian Christian texts – that complement material evidence – statuary, coins, inscriptions, and temple excavations, to understand the function of Antinous and Antinoan cult (Salzman 2013, p. 372). Antinoan evidence falls mainly into the category of physical evidence: relief and freestanding sculptures, busts, cameos, inscriptions, and coinage. Most of them involve Antinous' portrayal as a

melancholic youth or a Mediterranean god with a physique that combines “the athleticism of a Greek *ephebe* [and] a hint of oriental voluptuousness” (Crompton 2003, p. 107).

Throughout chapters one and two, this thesis will use the physical evidence alongside philosophical, poetical, historical, and early Christian literature to examine the function and effect of ancient Antinoan veneration and communication. By collecting this type of Antinoan data we can reconstruct or deconstruct any number of Antinoan cults, as well as gather a well-informed presumption of the function of the deified Antinous and ancient Antinoan cult.

Yet, examining the purpose of Antinous’ image and Antinoan mystery cult requires an unusual approach. Alongside assessing the ancient literature and physical evidence left behind, this thesis relies on a new method of study: ‘lived ancient religion’. This is the study of ancient religious practices, ideas, and institutions of the distant past, applied to phenomena beyond orthodox beliefs (Gasparini et al., 2020, p. 1). It draws upon the contemporary historiographical method of ‘lived religion’: understanding religion as it is practiced, believed, and understood today by using everyday experiences. Methods of ‘lived ancient religion’ focus on the adaptation and use of already existing norms, priorities, personal engagement and services to show meanings created with complex beliefs and interests that correlate to specific situations and the use of material culture to express religious communication and identity (Gasparini et al., 2020, p. 2; Raja & Rüpke 2015, p. 4).⁶ This method examines Antinoan material culture not just as archaeological phenomena, but as ways of religious communication that can tell us much about how Antinoan cult was ‘lived’. It provides a new way to examine the function of such worship for communities and individuals alike. This thesis takes on the tools from anthropology and empirical sociology to

⁶ For more on ‘lived ancient religion’, see Gasparini, et. al., 2020, *Lived Religion in the Ancient Mediterranean World*; Raja & Rüpke 2015, *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World* & Rüpke 2017, *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome*.

investigate what ancient Antinoan worship is constituted of, in accordance with the individual and/or the community in a holistic framework.

Legitimation and identity are the overarching themes of this thesis. Jörg Rüpke argues that religion should not be regarded as the core of one's identity, but a facet of one's character. It should be seen as a "religious identity, which is understood as a collective identity, and to leave open the importance such a collective identity has for processes of individuation and its impact in shaping the ancient human" (Rüpke 2015, pp. 249-250). A paradox ensues, as "a collective identity is part of a process to develop an individual self" (Ashmore et al. 2004, p. 83) yet "the individual seldom acts alone... he or she has the notion of acting as a member of a particular group" (Rüpke 2018, p. 13). To understand the ancient individual, we must understand the ancient community that they relate to, and to understand that community, we must look at the individuals that play their part. Therefore, this thesis will examine the function and effect of the ancient Antinous and Antinoan cult on communal and individual identities.

Except for the access to testimony, this method of examining identity is equally applicable to twenty-first century Antinoans and communities as those of the second century CE. By looking at the identities of Neopagan communities and individuals built around the ancient worship of Antinous and the remains of Antinoan material evidence, we can uncover the reparative nature of modern Antinous belief for LGBTQIA+ people. As White makes clear, researching the modern Antinoan religion encroaches onto the territories of both Pagan studies and queer religion studies (2016, p. 33). This thesis has aimed to maintain a similar breadth of analysis.

To assess the function of Antinous and Antinoan Neopaganism in the twenty-first century, this thesis conducted a two-part survey, asking questions about the ideologies, thoughts, and

feelings of participants in contemporary Antinoan worship. The survey was approved by the La Trobe University Human Ethics board and the ASSC Low Risk Committee on 29 September 2020, under the ethics application number HEC20393. The survey was then conducted online between 13 October 2020 and 15 November 2020. The survey was primarily advertised via Facebook. A post regarding the research project, as well as a direct weblink to the online survey, was uploaded to the Facebook group *Companions of Antinous* on October 13, 2020. Express permission was received by an administrator of the *Companions of Antinous* Facebook group to post and advertise the survey. Additionally, invitations were emailed to select individuals who were either heavily active in the Antinoan online community or who did not have social media.

The survey had nineteen participants in total. Aside from the individuals emailed and invited, the survey participants were recruited from the Facebook group *Companions of Antinous*. The survey attracted highly devout and dedicated Antinoans from the Facebook group. Invited participants were also prolific devotees of Antinous. Due to this, there is weak data pertaining to a more casual and/or generalised type of Antinoan dedication. However, the data received resulted in the discovery of the reparative and positive patterns of Antinoan belief and worship by more dedicated practitioners. Participation was anonymous, and participants have been assigned pseudonyms. Fourteen participants identified as cisgender men. The remaining five participants identified as a cisgender woman, a transgender woman, a nonbinary transmasculine person, an agender individual and a metagender individual. Participants were aged between 18-65. They were concentrated predominantly in North America, with a minority of participants coming from the UK, Europe, and South America. Thirteen out of the fourteen cisgender men sexually identified as homosexual, whilst one identified as pansexual. Other participants identified as heterosexual, queer, bisexual, androsexual and metagender.

Introduction

The survey consisted of ten questions, about: what prompted the participant's worship of Antinous; the participant's relationship with Antinous as a deity, as well as their relationship with the online Antinoan community; the spiritual practices of Antinoan worship; the impact of Antinoan worship on general well-being; what Antinous represents for the participant and the wider LGBTQIA+ community, and the importance of sexuality and gender expression to the Antinoan movement.

The questionnaire was designed to understand the lived experiences of Antinoan venerators.

The survey was split into two parts: Part One and Part Two. Part One asked for the participants demographics, including: age, gender, sexuality, relationship status, children, ethnicity, first language, location, education, and employment status. This was done to determine the factors that may influence a respondent's answers. For example, as 68% of participants sexually identified as homosexual/gay men, this indicated that gay men likely make up the majority of dedicated Antinoan worshippers. Part Two inquired about the personal experiences and beliefs of Antinoan venerators. Questions revolving how individuals began worshipping Antinous and their reasons for honouring Antinous provided evidence that revealed how and why this historical figure has impacted queer individuals emotionally and spiritually. Part Two of the survey also asked participants to explain what they personally think Antinous and Antinoan worship does for the individual as well as the larger LGBTQIA+ community. Collectively, the questions for Part Two were intended to enable the participant to self-reflect on their personal Antinoan veneration. The survey ultimately uncovered continuous patterns that surrounded the questions of why LGBTQIA+ individuals worshipped Antinous, and what the function of such worship was.

These questions were then studied by using a reflexive thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis is "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p. 82). It is a methodology that can address

questions and be used to describe ‘lived experiences’ (Braun et. al., 2019, p.850). Reflexive TA conceptualises meaning-based patterns that result from analytical work by the researcher to explore and develop an understanding of patterned themes across the dataset (Braun et. al., 2019, p. 845). In the case of this thesis, the nineteen survey answers provide the primary dataset, and the phenomenon in question is the continuation, or perhaps evolution, of the ancient Antinous mystery cult that now exists as a modern, mostly queer focused, pagan community. Using a reflexive thematic analysis method to examine the survey responses reveals positive, patterned themes of sexual identity expression and spiritual beliefs, as well as the reparative nature of Antinoan worship for queer individuals. Thus, the survey provides a deeper understanding of what modern Antinoan belief does for LGBTQIA+ communities and individuals. The reflexive thematic analysis method fits alongside the approach of ‘lived ancient religion’ in chapters one and two, as it is used to best analyse the lived experiences and the factors that influence and contextualise the phenomena of the modern Antinoan movement. The similarities between the methods of ‘lived religion’ and ‘lived ancient religion’ allowed the thesis to uncover remarkable similarities between the ancient *cultus* of the second century, and the modern movement of today.

This thesis also relies upon the evidence gathered from social media websites such as Facebook and Blogspot to further examine and analyse modern Antinoan worship, particularly the *Religio Antinoi* movement. The ability of social media to influence opinion and enable history to be ‘rewritten’, regardless of historical accuracy or fact-checking, is undoubtably a worrying and problematic concern for academics today (Frary 2018, p. 71). Due to the lack of academic use of social media as a subject of analysis, it is not surprising that Classical Reception scholars tend to tread lightly, or not at all, in this area. Using social media as primary source material, however, was a novel and integral part of the process when writing this thesis. The use of primary source material from social media and the internet

contributes new material to the field of classical reception studies, particularly in the areas of New Age Religion and modern Paganism. This thesis has relied on social media reception to uncover how Antinous, and the ancient world itself, has been received and reinterpreted by modern Antinoan worshippers.

The internet and social media outlets create many problems for historians, as ultimately, it “gives an unprecedented platform for poor historians peddling post-truth fantasies and conspiracy theories” (Frary 2018, p. 72). Many academics could easily categorise ‘online’ Antinoan worshippers as pseudo-historians, interested only in interpreting Antinoan history to push specific agendas (spiritual, historical, political, or otherwise). Yet, White records that there is a widespread interest in classical scholarship amongst Antinoan practitioners, and such scholarship has provided an entry point into the movement (2017, p. 242). Amongst Antinoans, there is also an awareness and acknowledgement of taking what they know of Antinous historically (via scholarship and archaeology) and incorporating it into the religious practice they are creating (White 2017, p. 243). After all, “invocations of hoary antiquity in the service of self-authorization are not new either” (Burns & Rengar 2019, p. 5). In other words, the reinvention of antiquity is not a new product of identification, and Antinoan worshippers use social media as a platform for this ‘self-authorization’.

Whilst it must be noted that the historical evidence claimed by Antinoan worshippers is reconstructed to fit into a modernised, queer-coded, spiritual paradigm, this does not make the evidence collected from social media less valuable. On the contrary, by taking social media reception seriously, we can analyse, and thus understand, why certain beliefs and opinions are formed based on personal need and identification. The reception of social media is vital to the field of classical reception studies, as it highlights not only how individuals receive the classical world, but how they respond and communicate such interpretations with little academic restraints. Using social media as evidence for modern Antinoan worship not

only supports claims made by survey participants but provides a new horizon for future investigation into the interpretation and adaptation of Antinous as a prominent LGBTQIA+ historical figure and deity. The dynamic use of internet spaces and social media by Neopagans, including modern Antinoan practitioners, indicates that researchers of modern paganism must consider how and why they use online platforms to showcase their beliefs. The internet has created new life for modern Pagan movements, and the use of websites and social media by Neopagans has become so large that it is difficult to both navigate and chart (Adler 2016, p. xi). This thesis expands the limited scholarship on using the internet as a method of analysis by examining how Antinoan worshippers use social media to convey their beliefs. Using websites and social media as primary sources, particularly for Classical Reception Studies, opens the floor to entirely new perspectives of how ancient history can, and is, translated, reinterpreted, modified, and understood today.

Shortcomings, Problems and Biases

The thesis will focus on the most active period of Antinoan worship and Antinoan religious communication, the second century CE, and Antinoan reception in the twenty-first century. Whilst there is evidence of Antinoan cults and worship in the third century CE, Antinoan veneration was strongest in the second century CE. Examination of early Christian attitudes towards Antinous and the rejection of the youth and his cults is beyond the scope of this thesis and is a diversion from the focus on the polytheistic Pagan and the reparative function of Antinoan cult worship. The reception of Antinous in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been covered by multiple scholars.⁷ This thesis moves Antinoan scholarship forward by investigating the youth's place as a relatable ancient 'queer' figure for

⁷ See Waters 1995 "The Most Famous Fairy in History": Antinous and Homosexual Fantasy"; Vout 2006, "Winckelmann and Antinous"; Lusher 2017, "Greek Statues, Roman Cults and European Aristocracy: Examining the Progression of Ancient Sculpture Interpretation" & Burns 2008, 'Sculpting Antinous'.

some LGBTQIA+ people in the twenty-first century via Neopagan worship, thus aligning the religious themes throughout each chapter.

Whilst the cores of chapters one and two revolve around Antinoan worship and communication in the second century CE, most written texts concerning Antinous, and Hadrian, are from the later periods of the third and fourth centuries and are often hostile and problematic. Only Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* (c. second century CE) is relatively neutral, discussing the honours the Bithynian receives in Mantinea (8.9.7-8).⁸ Dio Cassius' *Roman History* (155-c. 235 CE), Aurelius Victor's *De Caesaribus* (fourth century CE) and the *Historia Augusta* (fourth-fifth century CE) likely relies on texts and biographies lost to us now, and all criticise the Emperor Hadrian and his relationship with Antinous. Dio's position is conservative, and the *Roman History* severely criticises emperors (including Hadrian) who adopted a Hellenistic-oriental way of life and indulgence in Greek values rather than uphold Roman traditions (Aalders 1986, p. 284). Aurelius Victor's text is a brief survey of the Roman empire, from Augustus to Constantius, and is notorious for its poor Latin style (Starr 1956, p. 575). Whilst Victor approves of Hadrian's devotion to study and civil matters, his first real criticism of the senatorial class begins with Hadrian busying himself with feasts, statues, and luxury, and how the emperor "burned with passion for the scandalous attentions of Antinous" (*De Caesaribus*, 14.1, 14.6-9; Bird 1978, p. 226, 233). The *HA* is more problematic as it notoriously includes speeches, letters, and laws which are almost certainly fabricated by the author(s), and it also includes "troubling anachronisms [and] mentions of offices and titles that only came into being in the middle of the fourth century, decades after the supposed dates of its composition" (Stover & Kestemont 2016, p. 140). However, these

⁸ Pausanias' text is commonly known as *Descriptions of Greece*. However, this thesis will be using Peter Levi's translated version, titled *Guide to Greece* (1971).

texts are the closest surviving historiographical sources on Hadrian's reign and the only major literary sources discussing the life and death of Antinous.

The imperial sources on mystery cults, which this thesis relies on to establish some of the cult practices and beliefs of Osiris, Isis, and Cybele mystery cults, particularly Book 8 and Book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, are also problematic. The *Metamorphoses* is a satirical novel of sexual, magical, and violent escapades. Whilst it is believed that Book 11 drops the comedic subject in favour of religious conversation, Brigitte B. Libby argues that Book 11 can still be read in a satirical manner through Apuleius subtly but systematically undermining Isis (and Osiris) and her chief priests (2011, pp. 301-302). In Book 8, the initiates of Cybele are highly stereotyped and caricatured individuals. Yet, as Timothy Pettipiece points out, "the fact that devotees of the goddess[es] are subject to literary attack indicates they must have had enough of a public profile to be comprehensible to Apuleius' readership (Pettipiece 2008, p. 47). We can then compare the mystery cults presented in the *Metamorphoses* with physical examples of mystery cult practice and initiates of Isis, Osiris, Cybele and Antinous to gain an understanding of what may have been a part of Antinoan mystery cult beliefs and rituals.

Challenges also arise due to the use of Christian texts when discussing Antinous and mystery cults. Like Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Christian readings on mystery cults, including Antinoan mystery cults, are negative and inflammatory. Throughout late antiquity, the followers of Christ had anxieties about their religion being snuffed out by non-Christian worship. Due to this, Christian textual evidence is critical of Paganism. Often Christian literature condemns Antinous "as a means of attacking the credentials of the whole Pagan pantheon" (Lambert 1984, p. 6). Writing in 190 CE, Clement's *Exhortation to the Greeks* was one of the first to release unabashed sexual criticism of Hadrian and his boy-love by criticising the sexual rituals of Antinoan cult practice (Lambert 1984, p. 95). Just as Pettipiece argues for Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the literary attack on Antinous makes them

useful sources, as the *cultus* and its rituals must have been significant enough to be persecuted so callously.

Noting the influence and importance of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to Antinoan history, this thesis nonetheless takes a historical hiatus between the end of Antinoan worship in antiquity and the modern Antinoan movement in the twenty-first century. This hiatus enables a focused comparison of the periods when Pagan Antinoan practices were strongest: the second century CE and the twenty-first century CE. This thesis is designed to compare two vastly historical time periods in order to analyse the similar and different functions of ancient and modern Antinoan worship. The choice to omit the Antinoan resurgence of the Enlightenment period and nineteenth-century aestheticism is not only because of time and word-length constraints, but also thematically, due to the absence of evidence pertaining to Antinoan spirituality/paganism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Another limitation of this thesis may be the completeness of data concerning the modern Antinoan ritual practices. LGBTQIA+ Neopagan practices are doubly stigmatised, and thus queer pagan movements may be reluctant to share, post or provide insight into their rituals. *Antinoi Religio* appears to be unusual in its openness about public and private ritual practices on social media, using its social media presence (primarily Facebook and Blogspot) to showcase Antinoan altars, ceremonies, vigils, and rituals. Yet, the open and individualised nature of Neopaganism, the limits on data produced through social media and self-reporting mechanisms, mean that it is not possible to know how complete social media representations are of the contemporary Antinoan community or its individual worshippers. Smaller, private Antinoan subgroups likely exist, which may have different rules and regulations than that of *Antinoi Religio*. These problematic issues are not dissimilar to the natures of ancient mystery

cult, and thus it is important to recognise that public knowledge of pagan cult practices, in both antiquity and modernity, is limited to what is publicly accessible, or (for the modern cult) disclosed through survey responses.

This thesis relies on the information published by *Religio Antinoi*, P. Sufenas Virius Lupus, Ethan Doyle White, and the nineteen anonymous survey participants to establish common themes and functions of Antinoan worship. There is by no means a definitive or exact answer, much like the ancient cult of Antinous, to the question of what practitioners believe or how they worship Antinous, or how many practicing Antinoans there are worldwide. Whilst many Neopagan practisers are usually a part of a larger community, it is common for individual and private worship to occur. Some practitioners emphasise a broadly reconstructionist approach, whilst others embrace an eclectic attitude to the veneration of Antinous (White 2016, p. 32). But by assessing the survey data and online media by Antinoan worshippers alongside White's scholarship, this thesis reveals what common function Antinoan veneration has for many contemporary LGBTQIA+ people. Like White, not only am I a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, but also a self-identifying Pagan, (however not a venerator of Antinous), marking me as an inside-outsider to the movement. This made my communication and interactions with the Antinoan community easier.

One final note is that New Age religion is often criticised due to its methods of cultural appropriation. Many New Age religions uphold the idea that all past and present spiritual legacies belong in the public domain and justify appropriating all past and present spiritual legacies for individual benefit, which often harms the existing cultural and spiritual identities of minorities (York 2001, p. 368). Since the 1980s, Australian anthropologists and cultural studies theorists have denounced cultural (mis)appropriation of First Nations spirituality by New Agers. It is argued that the appropriation is an assault on the integrity of personal ties of

kinship, community, and country, and that it is a form of cultural theft and continues the uncritical essentialism and subjugation of colonialism (Waldron & Newton 2012, p. 65). This thesis, however, will not be examining the issues of cultural appropriation in modern Antinoan spirituality, because, as a rule, Western Paganism does not appropriate from living cultures in the same manner as does New Age. Such “sacred truths are no longer claimed as privately owned... when a culture is extinct, there is no ownership—whether private or cultural” (York 2001, p. 369). Antinoan religion does not misappropriate a living culture and its spirituality, but instead crafts a new religious identity that draws from a culture long dead.

Chapter Summary

The first chapter focuses on the relationship between Hadrian and Antinous. The first half of chapter one examines why the pederastic relationship between the emperor and the Bithynian reinforces Hadrian’s Hellenism, and how Antinous fulfills this role. The second half of chapter one discusses the function of Antinous’ deification for the emperor, and how Hadrian’s religious communication and veneration of Antinous as a mystery god enhances his divine identity across the Roman empire.

Chapter two is also split into two sections. The first half of chapter two analyses Antinoan veneration and communication as a local god and/or hero of two local Greek cities: Mantinea and Ephesus. By analysing the two cities, we uncover two different Antinoan communications, and how Antinoan veneration functions to express local and individual civic identities. The second half of chapter two investigates the function of Antinoan mystery cult initiation, ritual, and communication, as a means of establishing divine and sexual identity for initiates.

The final chapter of this thesis departs from the ancient world and enters the twenty-first century, in order to analyse and compare the ancient Antinoan *cultus* to the modern Antinoan

Introduction

Neopagan movement. Examining the modern Antinoan movement uncovers the reparative function of Antinoan veneration for LGBTQIA+ individuals. By comparing Antinoan worship between two vastly different time periods, we not only reveal the similar, positive purposes of Antinoan veneration, but also how it continues to assist in the development of divine and sexual identities for initiates today.

Chapter I

The Emperor's Antinous

The period between the middle of the first century CE and the third century CE, sometimes known by Philostratus' (c.170-250 CE) term, the 'Second Sophistic', bore witness to a new flowering of intellectual, philosophical, and literary culture in the Roman empire (*Lives of the Sophists*, 18.507; Hubbard 2003, p. 443). The 'Second Sophistic' created an interest in attic and classical Greek culture throughout the Roman empire that particularly flourished under the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE). It was this period where in "the upper reaches of society, Greek and Roman identities interpenetrated but were not fused" (Gleason 2010, p. 126). Because of this newfound importance of Hellenism, new culture and new identities started to form, and it was Hadrian who was one of the first influencers and biggest partakers of this cultural development. Hadrian was always a lover of all things Greek, the most well-known instance of his interest was the launch of a vast international Greek institute, the Panhellenion (Morwood 2013, p. 2).⁹ His boy-love, Antinous, also encapsulated Hadrian's Hellenism, as Hadrian emboldened his Greek identity by investing in a pederastic relationship.

The intense pederastic relationship the youth had with Hadrian is what commonly makes Antinous a compelling figure from the ancient world. Pederasty was a key factor in the aristocratic Athenian male lifestyle, which found restored importance in the second and third century CE. However, this thesis aims to dive deeper into how Antinous represented Hadrian's Greek identity and what purpose it served. This is achieved by highlighting the philosophical nature of pederasty shown in such works as Plato's *Symposium*. Traces of Platonic thought in material evidence of Antinous and/or pederasty left by Hadrian can be

⁹ See fn. 60.

recognised, and as such, this thesis argues Platonic philosophy was an influential source of legitimisation for Hadrian's Greek identity. To understand the interest and veneration of Antinous after the youth's death by Hadrian (and the wider empire), we must first examine Antinous' function before his untimely demise.

Greek Love or Roman Lust?

How Antinous was brought into Hadrian's care is uncertain, as no sources state when or where they first met. Lambert suggests the Bithynian youth was most likely taken under the emperor's wing on his visit to Bithynium during the years 123 or 124 CE, at the beginning of his tour of the empire (1984, p. 60).¹⁰ Even if we know very little about the Bithynian, what we do know tells us much about Hadrian's Hellenic identity. One of the most distinct aspects of Emperor Hadrian's character was his desire to establish a Hellenic identity. As noted above, Hadrian was a known Hellenophile, and it is said that from a young age he "grew rather deeply devoted to Greek studies, to which his natural tastes inclined so much that some called him '*Graeculus*'" (HA, *Hadr*, 14.1), but Greek studies were not the only Hellenic interests the emperor had.¹¹

Pederasty was regarded by the Greeks and by non-Greeks alike as a hallmark of Greek culture, but it was "pederasty, not the male homosexual experience as a whole, [that was]

¹⁰ David Magie, Royston Lambert, and Mary Boatwright all mention a disastrous earthquake affecting Nicaea and Nicomedia in Bithynia (1950, p. 614; 1984, p. 24; 2000, p. 121). Due to the long dedications to Hadrian on the north and east city gates of Nicaea, Hadrian is thought to have rebuilt these gates as well as the city walls (*SEG XXVII* 819–21). The rebuilt gates and walls are also mentioned in the *Chronicon Pashale* (*non vidi*, quoted in Boatwright 2000, p. 121). At the same time as the earthquakes, "there were ugly signs of another war with Parthia" (Lambert 1984, p. 24) and "Hadrian checked (Parthia) by personal conference" (HA, *Hadr*. 14.12). The HA also states that "Hadrian travelled by the way of Asia and the islands to Greece" (HA, *Hadr*. 14.13) directly after his stop at Parthia within this period. Based on both the *Historia Augusta* statement of Hadrian's travels and the evidence for Hadrian's construction works in Nicaea and Nicomedia in 124 (Magie 1950, p. 1471), it becomes plausible that Hadrian and Antinous may have met any time from 123 CE onwards. See also the footnoted evidence in Boatwright (2000, pp. 121–123) for a comprehensive discussion and analysis of the Hadrianic wall restorations of Nicaea and Nicomedia.

¹¹ The *Historia Augusta* is notoriously problematic, however, in terms of Antinoan evidence, it does match with other sources (most prominently Dio Cassius' *Roman History*). The nickname *Graecalus* itself was certainly a form of mild mockery, regardless of whether Hadrian was truly called that, or the name was made up as a venomous jab towards the emperor's legacy (Birley 1997, p. 17).

associated with Greece in the Roman sources” (Hdt. 1.135; Lear 2014, p. 106; Williams 1995, p. 518). Pederastic relationships were between a considerably older man, the *erastes*, and a younger boy, the *eromenos*, beginning at the age of thirteen or fourteen and continuing till the *eromenos* was a young adult. The Greek world incorporated pederasty into their education systems and was a staple of aristocratic society in order to lead the *eromenos* into manhood and participate in the *polis* (Percy III 2008, p. 14). Pederasty promoted a sense of honour and masculinity that reflected the ideal self and was an integral part of a young man's upbringing that did not negatively mark him.¹²

For an emperor, or rather any male citizen in Rome, taking part in homoerotic relationships was relatively acceptable in the second century CE, if their male partner was not Roman. Plutarch (46 CE-post 119 CE), a near-contemporary of Hadrian, comments on the Roman attitude towards homoerotic relationships that “it is not disreputable nor disgraceful to love male slaves in the flower of youth, as even now their comedies testify, but they strictly refrained from boys of free birth” (Plut. *Mor.* 101.288). Suitable homoerotic relationships in second century CE Rome were available only to older male Roman citizens, with the place of the freeborn *ephebes* taken by the favourite male slave or non-citizen (Williams 1995, p. 517). This in turn reflected the hierarchies of Roman society.

Homoerotic relationships and an emphasis on the insertive/receptive dichotomy were common to both Roman and Greek ideologies of masculinity, however the Roman tradition had a distinctly macho style (Williams 2010, p. 178). For a Roman, the dominant and ‘active’ partner was to be the Roman citizen, and the submissive and ‘passive’ partner was to be the

¹² For pederasty and homoeroticism in the ancient world, see Crompton 2003, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*; Dover 2016, *Greek Homosexuality*; Halperin 1990, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love*; Hubbard 2003, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents*; Larson 2012, *Greek and Roman Sexualities: A Sourcebook*; Percy III 2008, ‘Reconsiderations About Greek Homosexualities’, pp. 13-61; Skinner 2005, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*; Vout 2007, *Power and Exoticism in Imperial Rome*, Williams 1995, ‘Greek Love at Rome’ pp. 517-539 & Williams 2010, *Roman Homosexuality*.

slave or foreigner - the conqueror and the conquered. Roman social and sexual hierarchies were two interrelated systems that can hardly be understood separately (Richlin 1993, p. 532). This was strikingly different from Greek pederasty, which did not just rely on exchanges of sexual experiences, but encouraged relationships with freeborn boys and citizens, in order “to mentor a boy and enhance his prospects for social and political advancement” (Larson 2012, p. 102).

Various homoerotic Greek and Roman etymology has been used in relation to Antinous. The most fitting for this thesis (and Antinous in general) is *eromenos*. The terms *kinaidos* (Latin: *cinaedus*) alludes to an adult male who is penetrated by another adult male, unusually effeminate and sometimes dressed in feminine clothes (Richlin 1993, p. 561). This is hardly fitting for Antinous, whose age barely falls into the category of a *kinaidos*, and although certainly beautiful, is not presented as overtly feminine or womanly in iconography. The term ‘catamite’ (Latin: *catamitus*) is more believable, but still not accurate. This term stems from the mythological figure Ganymede, who underwent a transformation via Etruscan influence from *Ganymedes* to *Catamitus*, appearing throughout imperial Roman literature as the archetype of the beautiful, sexually desirable male, sometimes in slave or service positions (Williams 2010, p. 81). Since Antinous was not a slave of Hadrian's, nor was he a fully grown, feminine adult, neither *kinaidos* nor *catamite* suit the Bithynian. Rather, Hadrian's interest in having an unapologetic pederastic relationship, and his aversion to linking Antinous to Ganymede, as argued in the second half of this chapter, means that the most appropriate title for Antinous is *eromenos*.¹³

¹³ For a discussion on Antinous and Ganymede, see chapter one, pp. 48-51.

Antinous and Hadrian's relationship was not an anomaly. Roman men, and even other emperors, frequently had relations with younger boys.¹⁴ However, Hadrian would have been all too aware of the sexual cultural differences between the east and the west, and how this would have affected his Roman image. It is important to consider the emperor not just as Antinous' Greek *erastes*, but a Roman *patronus* too. Patronage was commonplace in imperial Rome and was performed by both men and woman. As Marylin Skinner explains:

Patronage relations permeated all levels of societies. Former masters and mistresses automatically became patrons of their freed slaves, who were expected to provide part-time assistance to them and show continued dutifulness. Because the system was based on social advantage rather than [gender], high-ranking woman could have male clients of good, though lower birth. Attention to intricate gradations of social position spilled over into sexual relations and became a controlling factor in the construction of Roman sexuality.

(2005, p. 196)

To a Roman, sexual activity between males possessed little or no educational function. It was a system in which two individuals of unequal statuses traded goods and services on a personal basis and was "typically a transaction between master and slave (or freedman), often focusing unambiguously on sexual activity and dispensing with the aesthetic niceties of Greek pederasty..." (Larson 2012, p. 104; Saller 1982, p. 1).

Yet, for the Greeks, such relationships could not be fruitful if they only existed for physical, financial, or political agendas, rather than education or genuine companionship (Pl. *Symp.*

184a-b). Hadrian was the head of the Roman world, a representative of *virtus* and

Romanitas,¹⁵ but was also a promoter of Greek knowledge (*paideia*) (Karivieri 2019, p. 284).

¹⁴ Dio Cassius comments on Hadrian's adoptive father, Trajan, and his love of wine and boys, but thought the emperor remained within the bounds of Roman decency (68.7.4; Crompton 2003, p. 106). Like Trajan, Hadrian shared his predecessor's taste for young boys, the difference being that Trajan felt no obligation to deify any one of his boy-loves. See also Vout 2007, for additional discussions on the homoerotic relationships between Roman emperors Nero and Sporus and Domitian and Earinus.

¹⁵ The word *Romanitas* is controversial, as the first and only time it is used in antiquity is by the third century Christian Father, Tertullian, who used the term to disapprovingly refer to those of his native Carthage who copied Roman culture (Krammer 1998, p. 81). It is a word that has been adopted neutrally more recently to express "Romanness" or Roman identity, usually through the manifestation of several personal virtues such as courage, dignity, and social decorum, or wearing of certain clothes, undertaking public service, and benefaction

Hadrian represented the start of a new era for the elite, drawing upon the cultural legacy of attic and classical Athens and focused heavily on the acquisition and appreciation of Greek history and education, but ultimately, as the emperor, he had to represent Roman values, too. Therefore, we must consider how Hadrian overcame the different sexual ideas of pederasty and patronage.

Antinous could not have been a slave as that would have not suited the idealised Greek relationship, but neither could he have been a Roman citizen. Instead, Lambert theorises that Antinous came from an affluent family in Bithynium, thus satisfying the Greek structure of pederasty whilst keeping in line with Roman sexual ideologies. The south side of the Pincio Obelisk, an Egyptian monument, which likely served as Antinous' funerary marker (fig. 1),¹⁶ claims that Antinous was 'the first-born of his mother' (Renberg 2010, p. 174; Lambert 1984, p. 20).¹⁷ This may imply that Antinous came from a respectable family, otherwise Hadrian would scarcely have mentioned it (Lambert 1984, p. 20). Whilst the obelisk hints at Antinous being a freeborn Greek, the Christian commentary of Eusebius in his fourth century *Ecclesiastical History* (4.8.2), quotes the Christian writer and contemporary of Hadrian, Hegesippus, and states that Antinous was in fact a slave (Cartlidge & Dungan 1980, p. 198). However, if Antinous had been a slave and later raised to godhood by Hadrian, "this would

(Merrills & Miles 2010 p. 88). For more on *Romanitas*, see Merrills & Miles 2010, pp. 88-89; Krammer 1998, pp. 81-82.

¹⁶ The Pincio Obelisk enacted as a funerary monument, as an inscription from the obelisk states, "[Antinoos] who is there (i.e deceased), and who rests in this place, which is in the field of the lands(?) of the master(?) of... of Rome..." (Boatwright 1987, p. 246). For more on the Pincio Obelisk, see Boatwright 1987, pp. 239-260; Renburg 2010, pp. 181-191; Budge 1990, p. 250; Frischer, Zotti, Mari, Vittozi 2016, pp. 55-79.

¹⁷ Lambert, quoting Erman (1917), believes that the phrase suggests a reference to Antinous' mother, stating "certainly his mother's womb is praised and there seems to have been more about his family and birthplace where the granite is now irretrievably damaged" (Lambert 1984, p. 20). Multiple translations of the Pincio Obelisk exist, most famously Erman's modified translation in 1917 from his 1886 version, and an English translation appears in Parker's *The Twelve Egyptian Obelisks* (1897, pp. 19-20). Boatwright believes that Parker's text is too general and imprecise to be useful. This thesis will be drawing upon the translation of the Pincio obelisk from Mary Boatwright's *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (1987, pp. 243-246), based on Erman (1896, 1917, and 1934) and her discussion of the obelisk with Dr. O. Wintermute of the Department of Religion at Duke University, North Carolina (1987, p. 243).

have constituted a scandal in the social system of the ancient world far more reprehensible than the elevation of even a catamite” (Lambert 1984, p. 21). Moreover, since early Christianity charged Pagan worship with the sexual use of slaves and same-sex desire (Pagels 1985, p. 310), it is unlikely the use of ‘slave’ is accurate, and instead used by Hegesippus and Eusebius as a derogatory title to dismantle the legitimacy of Antinous’ deification. Therefore, Antinous was likely a freeborn boy from the rural Greek east.¹⁸

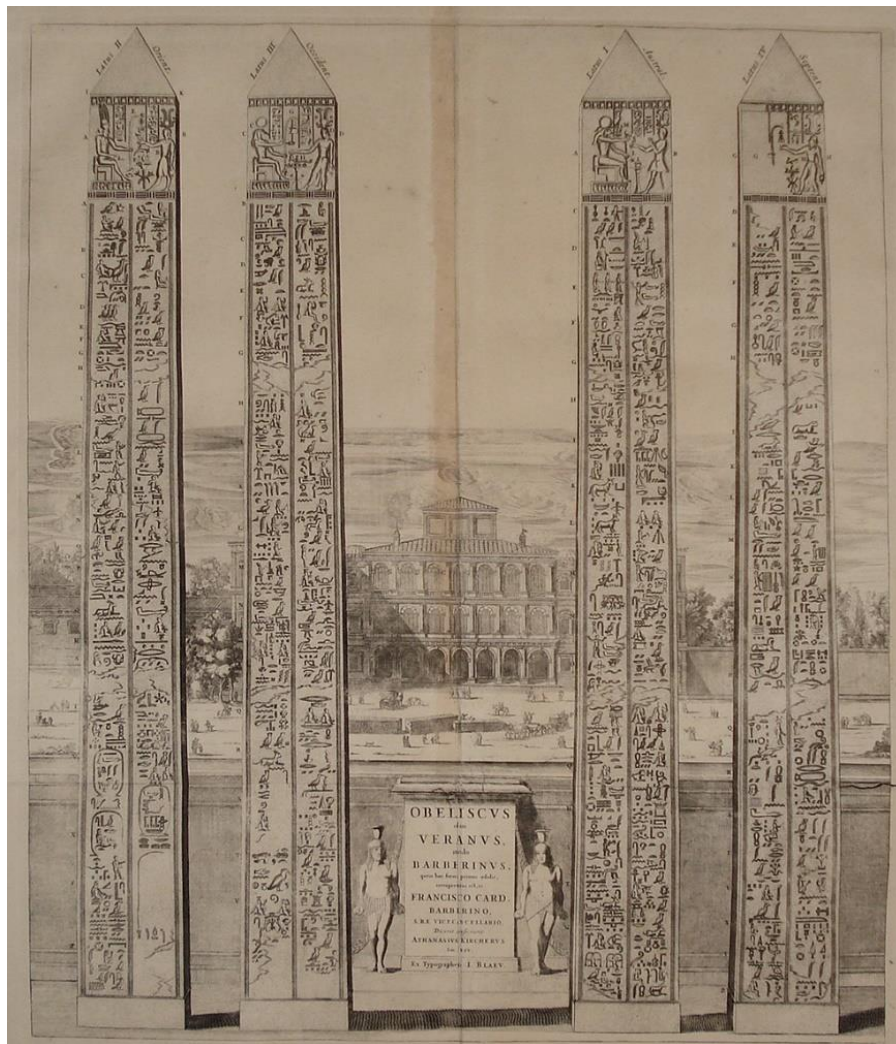


Fig. 1. *Obeliscus olim Veranus modo Barberinus*. Copper engraving of the Pincio obelisk by Joan Blaeu, published by Pierre Mortier, 1633.

Engraving shows all four sides of the Pincio Obelisk.

Image Source: Stampe Antiche Galleria Trincia.

¹⁸ Antinous was a freeborn Greek boy from the countryside of Bithynion-Claudiopolis (Dio. 69.11.2). Xenophon records that Bithynian land produced figs, grapes, and grains of all kinds (*Anab.* 6.4.6), and Strabo tells us Bithynia had “the best pasturage for cattle... and Nicaea, the metropolis of Bithynia... is surrounded by a plain that is large and very fertile” (*Geography*, 12.7).

Antinous' status as a freeborn Greek, then, would not infringe upon the Roman taboo of having a relationship with a freeborn Roman male, and would simultaneously allow Hadrian to engage in Greek pederasty. Moreover, we should not forget Hadrian's marriage to Empress Sabina, as she, too, was honoured on the Pincio Obelisk alongside Hadrian.¹⁹ The honours paid to Sabina, as well as Hadrian's commitment to her, represented the emperor's moral duty to Rome, as the pair symbolised the "marital bliss of the imperial couple and political harmony of the Roman state" (Noreña 2007, p. 311). It is plausible that Hadrian's commitment to Sabina was due to the necessity of representing the Roman values of marriage, juxtaposed by the emperor's relationship with Antinous, which functioned as a representation of the revived aristocratic ideals of classical Greece. Thus, Hadrian was able to be Antinous' *erastes* without neglecting Roman ideals of marriage or patronage, maintaining a careful balance between Roman and Greek sexual principles.

Hadrian on the Hunt

Whilst Hadrian had to maintain a balance between his Greek and Roman identity through his personal relationships, the emperor ultimately leaned towards the pursuit of pederasty. Antinous served to create a perfect 'Greek' relationship for Hadrian. As recorded by Dio Cassius, "by nature [Hadrian] was fond of literary study in both the Greek and Latin languages and has left behind a variety of prose writings as well as compositions in verse" (69.3.1). We see not only Hadrian's interest in Greek prose, but also an interest in pursuing a pederastic relationship through a Greek inscription left by the emperor in Thespieae in c. 125 CE:

Oh archer child of clear-voiced Aphrodite,
dwelling in Heliconian Thespieae
by the blooming garden of Narcissus,
be gracious, and accept what Hadrian offers,

¹⁹ "... the great royal lady beloved by [Hadrian], the queen of both countries, Sabina, who lives, is safe and healthy, Augusta, who lives forever..." (Boatwright 1987, p. 244).

the spoils of his hunt, a bear
which he slew himself with a cast from horseback.
And may you in exchange for this chastely
breathe favour upon him from Heavenly Aphrodite.

(IG 7.1828. trans. Bowie 2002, pp. 180-181)

From the inscription we can deduce that Hadrian desired a pederastic relationship. It is possible that Hadrian had met Antinous by this time, but their relationship would have only been budding.²⁰ Regardless of whether Hadrian and Antinous were beginning their relationship or not, there are some key components to the poem that directly tie into Hadrian's need for a relationship with an *eromenos*.

The inscription is a prayer to Eros (archer child) and Aphrodite, to grant him a youthful lover. Thespieae was the *polis* of Boeotia whose patron deities were Eros and Aphrodite, who ruled the realms of love and sex, and Hadrian did not hesitate to use this to his advantage. The offering of a hunting trophy to the archer child may allude to the hunting activities of Hadrian,²¹ however the metaphor of hunting was also common in love-poetry (Bowie 2002, p. 181).²² Hunting scenes and motifs were particularly expressed as metaphors for the relationship between *eromenoi* and *erastoi*, the hunter and the hunted (Barringer 2002, pp. 86-87). In Plato's *Sophist*, the unnamed leader of the dialog, the Eleatic Stranger, believed that the "hunting art which hunts animals, land animals, tame animals... claims to give education", but the hunt was also a chase "after rich and promising youths" (*Soph.* 223b).

Judith Barringer points out that in the *Sophist*:

read together, both images (human and animal) depict a wild animal being hunted: one is a sexual pursuit, the other a potentially deadly pursuit, and both test a young man's fitness for adulthood... thus deer and boar hunt images appear in close physical proximity with paintings of activities definitive of the Athenian aristocratic male.

(2002, p. 42)

²⁰ See fn. 10.

²¹ For more on pederastic and love motifs in hunting, see Barringer 2002, p. 70-124; Galimberti 2017, p. 103-104.

²² For example, Thgn. 1249-52; Theoc. *Id.* 23.8-9; Callim. Epigr. 33.

Hadrian, then, must have been aware of the 'hunt' as an intrinsic part of Greek homoerotic courtship and the image of Athenian elite.

Since Hadrian is commonly credited as the first emperor to thematise hunting for his self-construction, the art of hunting can be viewed as a key component to Hadrian's Hellenic identity (Manolaraki 2012, p. 179). The emperor went "hunting as often as possible" and was "so skilful in the chase that he once brought down a huge boar with a single blow" (Dio. 69.7.3, 69.10.3). In fact, Hadrian supposedly "was so fond of hunting that he incurred criticism for it" (HA. *Hadr.* 2.1). Barringer states that pederasty, warfare, and hunting claimed central places in the aristocracy of the late attic and early classical periods of Athens (2002, p. 72) and conversely, the interest in hunting shared by Antinous and Hadrian was purely Hellenic in origin (Galimberti 2017, p. 103).

Depictions of Antinous and Hadrian hunting perfectly encapsulate Hadrian's Greekness. This participation in pederastic courtship via hunting was critical to the sense of belonging and masculinity to the elite in late attic and classical Athens, which Hadrian was quick to replicate (Barringer 2002, p. 71). The only sculptural evidence we have depicting both Antinous and Hadrian together is the Hadrianic tondo located on the triumphal arch of Emperor Constantine (fig. 2). This depiction may be of the chase which Dio Cassius refers to, as the tondo shows the emperor and the Bithynian on horseback, hunting the boar. The poet Pancrates also immortalises another expedition between Hadrian and Antinous, the pairs' famous lion hunt in 130 CE, just before Antinous' demise (Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 15.677e-f; Pancrates, *Select Papyri*, 1-25).²³

²³ For more on Pancrates' lion poem, see chapter one, p. 60 and chapter two, p. 82. See also fn. 75.



Fig. 2. Tondo of a boar hunt led by Hadrian in the company of Antinous (c. second century CE).

Located on the Arch of Constantine (315 CE).

Hadrian's face was reworked to depict Emperor Constantine.

Image Source: Jstor (Sites and Photos).

Moreover, coins issued by Mysia depict the profile of a she-bear on the reverse, which was paired with two different obverse types: one depicted Hadrian (appendix 2.1), and the other Antinous (appendix 2.2). The coins allude to two things. Firstly, the beast Hadrian slew during a famous hunt in Mysia, where he established a city named Hadrianoutherae: “Hadrian Hunts” (Dio. 69.10.2; HA, *Hadr.* 20.13; Bowie 2002, p. 181). Secondly, the bear slaughtered in Mysia, represented on Mysian coins, was likely the one dedicated to Aphrodite and Eros in Thespieae (Bowie 2002, p. 181). Hadrian's desire for a Greek identity becomes even more explicit when we combine the Hellenic, aristocratic, pederastic, and Greek philosophical principles of hunting emphasised not only through the inscription, but through Antinous, as the youth effectively worked as a vital component to Hadrian's Hellenism by hunting, or connected to hunting imagery, alongside the emperor.

Hunting is not the only Greek element at play in the inscription, but Hadrian's Hellenism also resides in the evocation of 'Heavenly Aphrodite', which also gives the relationship with Antinous a more philosophical function. The word 'Heavenly' is translated from the original ancient Greek word *Ourania* (Οὐρανία), an honorific of Aphrodite which was common all over the Greek world (Ustinova 1998, p. 210). In Plato's *Symposium*, however, this name refers to something more profound; Pausanias states that there are two kinds of love, thus two kinds of the goddess, since: "Aphrodite is inseparable from Love (*eros*)" (180d). There was the Common Aphrodite, *Pandemos Aphrodite*, who represented love that "inferior people feel... people like this are attracted to women as much as boys, and to bodies rather than minds" (181a). He also notes that then there was *Aphrodite Ourania*, Heavenly Aphrodite, who inspired love towards males, who felt affection for what was naturally more vigorous and intelligent (181c). Similarly, Xenophon's *Symposium* (c. 430-354 BCE) shows Socrates speaking on the two Aphrodites, and states that the rites for 'Heavenly' Aphrodite were purer in nature (8.9-11).

Vout recognises that Platonic readings must have co-existed alongside romantic or idealised readings and outpourings of homoeroticism (2007, p. 68), so it is not surprising to find Heavenly Aphrodite evoked in the Thespian inscription. Hadrian was specifically putting forward the desire for a relationship with a boy that would be worthy of an ideal Greek relationship because he has specifically requested the assistance of *Aphrodite Ourania*, which in turn would have been accentuated by the philosophical and pederastic nature of hunting. In exchange for the slaughtered bear, Hadrian requested a favour from the Heavenly Aphrodite, who governed over philosophical, pederastic relationships. The inscription acts as a multilayered indicator of Hadrian's desire for the ultimate Hellenic identity by incorporating vital elements of Athenian aristocracy (i.e., hunting and philosophy), which was then made real by his pederastic relationship with Antinous.

Hadrian, Antinous and *Paideia*

It is harder to gauge who Antinous was pre-deification, so the focus of Antinous' persona tends to always be in relation to the emperor. Nonetheless, by using the Antinoan evidence produced after the youth's death, such as the Pincio Obelisk, as well as Antinoan iconography in gymnasiums, we can gain a sense of the Bithynian's *paideia*, his education, when alive. Uncovering Antinous' *paideia* highlights Hadrian's own Greek education, which directly influences the emperor's Hellenism. The Pincio Obelisk is perhaps the best piece of evidence we have about Antinous outside of marble statues and elite authored texts. The unassuming statement in crude hieroglyphics on the east side of the obelisk states that, according to Lambert's translation, his "heart was wise, his intelligence was that of a grown man" (1984, p. 64).²⁴ This single line may just refer to Antinous' *paideia*, which is an all-important part of an *eromenos*' upbringing. If Hadrian played a role in composing the obelisk's lengthy text, as he did with his own famous epitaph, the inscription serves to emphasise the authenticity of the emperor's own experiences with Antinous (Renberg 2010, p. 178).²⁵

Small and inconspicuous details framed through official records sheds light onto the nature of Antinous' background and character, and how the emperor's relationship with Antinous functioned to enhance Hadrian's Hellenic identity via Greek *paideia*. A youth's educational

²⁴ Mary Boatwright's translation records Antinous had "strength, with clever heart like one with strong arms" (1987, p. 244). Boatwright's translation is not as clear as Lambert's, but it does maintain a sense of Antinous' intelligence and physical strength suited for a young *ephebe*.

²⁵ Since the *Historia Augusta* tells us that Hadrian composed a short epitaph as he lay dying (*Hadr*, 25.9), it would not be surprising if Hadrian had commissioned the obelisk epitaph. Very few Egyptians – let alone Greeks or Romans – would have been able to read its hieroglyphics, and so must have had minimal impact. This is especially due to the "late and noncanonical hieroglyphics employed by the author or authors, the nature of which has led to the conclusion that the original draft was written in Greek or Latin - quite possibly with Hadrian himself playing an active part - and then translated imperfectly into Egyptian, and also to the related belief that [the obelisk] might have been inscribed in Rome" (Renberg 2010, p. 175, 186). The monument may have been erected to serve as a tool to cement Antinous' Egyptian divinity and to recall where he lost his life, whilst simultaneously acting as a glorification of Hadrian and Antinous' relationship, divinity, and power.

intelligence and philosophical wisdom was significant when a man was trying to find the right 'boyfriend' in ancient Greece. Philosophical pederasty could only be achieved if an *erastes* was "attracted to boys only when they start to have developed intelligence" (Pl. *Symp.* 181c-d). In fact, Xenophon only talks about pederastic relationships because he deems them integral to education, while the sexual elements of these friendships were discouraged (Larson 2012, p. 102). Hunting was one tool for educating *eromenoi*; the educational role of *gymnasia* is also essential to discovering the function of the youth for Hadrian's Hellenism.

The *gymnasia* heralded pederastic culture, as Cicero (106-43 BCE) informs us that "this practice had its origin the Greek *gymnasia* where that kind of love-making was free and permitted" (*Tusc.* 4.70).²⁶ As Hadrian "built public buildings in all places and without number" (HA. *Hadr.* 19.9), it is not surprising that many of these donations were *gymnasia*.²⁷ Yet, *gymnasia* were considered not just the origins of pederasty, but the epitome of Greek *paideia*. Philostratus' work, the *Gymnasticus* (late second-third century CE) exemplifies this point well. As Heather Reid explains, the *Gymnasticus* is directed at Greek elites because *paideia* is a hallmark of that culture, which stems from the Greek gymnasium (2016, p. 78). Philostratus tries to educate his readers by "coaxing them toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of contemporary gymnastic training by embedding it in the glory of the Hellenic past" (Reid 2016, pp. 78-79). It is "a form of wisdom, and one that is inferior to none of the other skills" and has "produced men like... Theseus and Heracles himself" (Philostr.

²⁶ *Gymnasia* was open to all (male) citizens, however, were most popular as sites for elite pastimes, especially pederastic courtship, thus explaining its close associations in Plato and other aristocratic classical Greek authors (Skinner 2005, p. 49). Elite Roman sources on *gymnasia* and pederasty were often negative, but always attributed the practices to the Greeks (e.g. Plut. *Roman Questions*, 274d-e; Cic. *Rep.* 4.3-4.4; Tac. *Ann.* 14.20). As Williams explains, "no ancient source ever claims that indulgence in or approval of male homoerotic desires or activities was learned, borrowed, or imported by Romans from Greece. The only practice that was associated with Greece was the... Hellenic tradition of pederastic relations with free-born youth" (1995, p. 525).

²⁷ For example, Pausanias records that in Athens, "you have Hadrian's gymnasium, which also has a hundred columns, from the quarry in Libya" (1.18.9) and in Smyrna, Philostratus of Athens states that the emperor built "a gymnasium which was the most magnificent of all those in Asia" (*Lives of the Sophists*, 25.531).

Gymnasticus, 1).²⁸ Since seeking knowledge was all important to the Second Sophistic, *gymnasia* functioned as a cultural and social centre whilst simultaneously adding to the original purpose of the Greek gymnasium as the centre of civic education, and in some instances as the seat of ruler worship (Boatwright 2000, p. 157).

Hadrian must have understood the importance of *gymnasia* in Hellenic culture and used this to his advantage by amplifying Antinous', and thus his own *paideia*, in Antinoan iconography. Whilst there is no evidence of Antinous partaking in gymnasiums in his mortal life (though it is highly likely), much of Antinous' post-deification iconography was originally placed in gymnasiums or baths.²⁹ Additionally, multiple ephebic games created by Hadrian, called the *Antinoeia*, were held across the Greek parts of the empire.³⁰ Antinous' relation to *gymnasia* and ephebic games suggests not only a sensual, erotic, and pederastic function, but an intellectual one too.³¹ Antinous' image evoked both beauty and brains, what all *eromenoi* (Antinous) should aspire to be, and what all *erastai* (Hadrian) should look for in a partner.

Returning to the Pincio Obelisk's epitaph, it is impossible to know whether the monument refers to Hadrian's guidance over the years, or if Hadrian had been an admirer of the intelligence Antinous demonstrated upon their first meeting, but the promotion of Antinous' education through his connections with gymnasiums, as well as hunting, is significant. The

²⁸ See Reid 2016, pp. 79-80 for why there is a lack of pederastic discussion in the *Gymnasticus*.

²⁹ "There is a house in the Mantinean training-ground (gymnasium) with statues of Antinous, worth seeing for the stone of its decoration and for its paintings, most of which present Antinous as Dionysos" (Paus. 8.9.8). See also chapter two, p. 78.

³⁰ Ephebic games were athletic festivals exclusively for youthful boys, known as *ephebes*. The first *Antinoeia* was held at Antinoopolis in 131 and were held every year (Lambert 1984, p. 200, 205). The games consisted of artistic and music festivals, athletic events, chariot and equestrian competitions, and rowing races (Lambert 1984, p. 205). The *Antinoeia* was also held in both Athens and Eleusis, and an honorific inscription from the *agonothetis* (an elite figure who presided over the games), refers to the "*Antinoeia* in Argos" (*IG* 6.590; Jones 2010, p. 79; Stefanidou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 91).

³¹ Much like Pausanias' description of the Mantinean gymnasium (see fn. 29), many Antinoan sculptures have been found within gymnasiums and baths, including the Antinous from the Leptis Magna bath house (fig. 9) and the Antinous-Androkles in the gymnasium at Ephesus (fig. 12).

Bithynian must have displayed promise to be the ideal *eromenos* to Hadrian's *erastes*, and to "acquire education and wisdom in general" (Pl. *Symp.* 184d-e). If the beloved, Antinous, retained his physical immaturity, he could offer the lover his body, and the lover, Hadrian, offered him his mind, out of an equal generosity, enacting the mutual exchange required for a Platonic pederastic relationship (Price 2002, p. 172). It is especially here we see Hadrian once again balancing between what is acceptable for the east and the west, not educating Antinous for a life of politics, but rather to satisfy the demands of Greek pederasty and *paideia*. This relationship is emblematic of Hadrian's Hellenism, as ultimately the relationship between them was acceptable by Roman custom, but the roles of the two are established through a classical Greek model of pederasty and *paideia* (Lusher 2017, p. 29). The appropriation of Greek practices such as philosophy, hunting, gymnasiums, pederasty, and Greek *paideia*, through Antinoan communication (i.e., iconography) would reflect the emperor's own *paideia*, too.

An Achilles to his Patroclus, An Alexander to his Hephaestion

We can compare the epitaph on the Pincio Obelisk to Arrian's unusual *Periplus Maris Euxini*, a work written in the 130's CE in the form of a letter to the Emperor Hadrian (Rood 2011, p. 135). There is speculation that the letter alludes to Antinous, who only recently died (Lambert 1984, p. 64; Rood 2011, p. 150). It reads:

I am myself persuaded, that Achilles was a hero, if ever man was, being illustrious by his noble birth, by the beauty of his person, by the strength of his mind and understanding, by his untimely death in the flower of youth, by his being the subject of Homer's poetry, and, lastly, by the force of his love, and constancy of his friendship, insomuch that he would even die for his friends.

(Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 23.4)

Three vital clues come from this passage. Firstly, Arrian tells us that 'Achilles' (Antinous) was of noble birth, which strengthens Lambert's theory of Antinous being born to an affluent

family. Secondly, Arrian adds to the discussion of Antinous' *paideia* when commenting on "the strength of his mind and understanding", enhancing the importance of Antinous' educated background. Thirdly, Achilles' "untimely death in the flower of youth" likely refers to Antinous and his tragic demise. Again, by using the evidence produced after Antinous' drowning, we uncover how Hadrian used the image of, and relationship with, Antinous, to promote his Hellenism, particularly through cultural and literary allusion.

To understand the role of Antinous as Achilles, it is important to observe that Arrian was aware of the erotic and pederastic implications ascribed to Achilles and Patroclus in the Greek literary tradition (Müller 2018, p. 90). From the fifth century BCE, the nature of Achilles and Patroclus' relationship presented in the *Iliad* was a matter for discussion amongst writers and scholars in antiquity: was it a relationship of homoerotic love or was it simply an intense friendship? (Morales & Mariscal 2003, p. 292). By the second century CE, "most ancient writers and commentators assumed Achilles and Patroclus were lovers in every sense of the word" (Clarke 1978, p. 38), including the underlying Platonic meaning for the heroes, as the *Symposium* declares the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus an exceptional version of Greek love (Pl. *Symp.* 179a – 180a). The *Periplus* forcibly cements the image of, not just a pederastic relationship, but the most ideal Greek relationship one could strive for, onto Hadrian and Antinous, because, if Antinous is Achilles, that means Hadrian is none other than Patroclus.

To add weight to this argument, Arrian uses the figures Achilles and Patroclus simultaneously with Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) and Hephæstion (356-324 BCE) alongside the emperor and his boy-love, founding Hadrian's Hellenism through powerful and historical parallels in the *Anabasis of Alexander*, a text on Alexander's campaigns. Alexander the Great remained an important figure in ancient Rome; famously, Caesar, who "saw a statue of Alexander the Great in the Temple of Hercules, and was overheard to sigh

impatiently – vexed, it seems, that at an age when Alexander had already conquered the whole world, he himself had done nothing in the least epoch-making” (Suet. *Divus Julius*, 7). Yet it is in the second century CE that we find imperial interest in fusing Roman power with Hellenism through the Macedonian king.

Hadrian's interest in Greek culture and Hellenic identity falls under the developing interest in Greek politics. By the second century CE, political systems had changed and links to the republican past were becoming redundant, whilst “Greek culture, with its developed vocabulary and rhetoric of monarchical power, was gaining relevance” (Spencer 2002, pp. 35-36). Alexander himself is marked as “the herald of Greek *paideia* itself, the first *pepaideumenos*, one might say, the prototype of the cultivated man, whose learning, taste and refinement were so highly prized in the period of the Second Sophistic, not least as exemplified in the sophists themselves” (Zeitlin 2001, p. 206). Since Arrian and his teacher, Epictetus, were close to the emperor, Arrian's implied portrayal of Hadrian as Achilles and Alexander may have been heavily influenced by his own experience serving under Hadrian and by the emperor's interest in Greek culture. Much like Achilles and Patroclus, Arrian knew about the tradition of presenting Hephaestion as Alexander's lover, as his teacher Epictetus applied the term *eromenos* to Hephaestion (Müller 2018, p. 89). Arrian tells us that “Alexander crowned the tomb of Achilles, while Hephaestion, others say, placed a wreath on Patroclus' tomb” (Arr. *Anab.* 1.12.2). This implies not only that Alexander was a descendant of Achilles and a lover, but aligns the identity of Patroclus, whom Achilles loved, with Hephaestion (Stadter 2017, pp. 38-39). Achilles, through Alexander, suddenly turns from being the *eromenos*, to the *erastes*.

We should note that the very relationship between Achilles and Patroclus could not be agreed upon by the ancients, that is, who was the *erastes* and who was the *eromenos*. In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates believes that Patroclus was the *erastes*, and that:

Aeschylus talks nonsense when he says that Achilles was Patroclus' lover: he was more beautiful than Patroclus (indeed, he was the most beautiful of all the heroes), and was still beardless, as well as much younger than Patroclus, as Homer tells us.

(179e-180a).

In a Hellenistic love poem, the speaker addresses a promiscuous boy and tries to entice the youth by suggesting "we may be friends to each other like Achilles and Patroclus" (Theoc. 29.34) and additionally, in Virgil's *Aeneid* (5.293-296, 5.315-44, 9.176-449), the characters Nisus and Eurlus are modelled on the pederastic relationship of Achilles and Patroclus (Hubbard 2003, p. 345). In both Greek and Roman texts, Achilles and Patroclus are constantly represented as lovers, but never is there a concrete decision on who was the *eromenos* and who was the *erastes*.³² As there is no unanimous agreement, the ambiguity allows for any tension to subside when comparing the same hero to Antinous or Hadrian, as the sexual dynamics of Achilles and Patroclus (and thus, Alexander and Hephaestion) are interchangeable.

Though Achilles seems to represent Antinous in the *Periplus*, the *Anabasis* suggests it is Hadrian who takes up the mantle of the most famous Greek heroes. This is shown when Arrian comments on Alexander's reaction to Hephaestion's death:

The death of Hephaestion had proved a great misfortune to Alexander himself, and Alexander, I believe, would have preferred to have gone first himself rather than experience it during his lifetime, just as I think Achilles would have preferred to die before Patroclus rather than to have been the avenger of his death.

(*Anab.* 7.16.8)

Just as in the *Periplus*, there is a probable allusion to Antinous' untimely death, and Hadrian's own emotions once again: broken-hearted just as Alexander was for his Hephaestion, and Achilles for his Patroclus.

³² See also Strato, *Musa Puerilis*, 12.217.5–6; Aeschin. *In Tim.* 133; Luc. *Amores*, 52.

Arrian's depiction of Hadrian as Alexander is not an isolated event, but one that may have been promoted by the emperor himself. We must remember that Alexander too deified Hephaestion, establishing a cult for him and "decreeing that all should sacrifice to Hephaestion as god coadjutor" (Diod. Sic. 17.115).³³ Two centuries prior to Hadrian, Diodorus Siculus (100 BCE-1 CE) claims that Alexander "showed such zeal about [Hephaestion's] funeral that it not only surpassed all those previously celebrated on earth but also left no possibility for anything greater in later ages" (17.114). Yet, the obelisk announces that Antinous' deification (and funeral?) "[had] not earlier been done to this day" (Boatwright 1987, p. 244). The similarity between Diodorus' passage and the Pincio Obelisk indicates that Hadrian was purposefully mirroring Alexander the Great and his relationship with Hephaestion, down to the very action of deifying his male lover, creating strong ties to the Macedonian king. Furthermore, both Hadrian and Alexander display extreme sorrow for their fallen lovers, just as Achilles famously did for Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad* (23.20-258). Hadrian is not only competing with Alexander, but surpassing him in almost every way, from excessive grief, to bestowing divinity onto his lover, and even becoming the next Achilles. Even without Arrian's subtle integration, we can see that Hadrian wanted to be likened to, or deemed greater than, Alexander. If imagery of the Macedonian king was integral not just to Greek culture, but Roman too, we once again see Hadrian forming a Graeco-Roman identity that could represent both sides of his empire, but ultimately a heroic identity that bolsters his Hellenism through his veneration of Antinous.³⁴

³³ Arrian states that Alexander's request to deify Hephaestion as a god was denied, but he could be instead worshipped as a divine hero (*Anab.* 7.14.8, 7.23.6-8). As Antinous was worshipped both as a god and hero, the assimilation of Antinous with Hephaestion is still legitimate. Renberg and Jones also discuss the parallel, noting that deceased mortals for whom hero cults were established were "never lovers", which makes Antinous and Hephaestion exceptions to this pattern (2010, p. 82; 2010, p. 159).

³⁴ Lambert also briefly comments on the parallels of Hadrian, Antinous, Alexander, and Hephaestion. Whilst Lambert's analysis is romanticised, he states that "In [Hadrian's] unbalancing grief, why should he not, as Alexander had done for Hephaestion, commemorate in as colossal and permanent a manner as possible his great love for Antinous?" (1984, p. 139).



Fig. 3. 2nd c. Roman copy of a Portrait of Alexander as Helios. Hellenistic original c. 3rd – 2nd BCE. Accession No. MC 732. Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Image Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, photographed by Jean-Pol Grandmont.

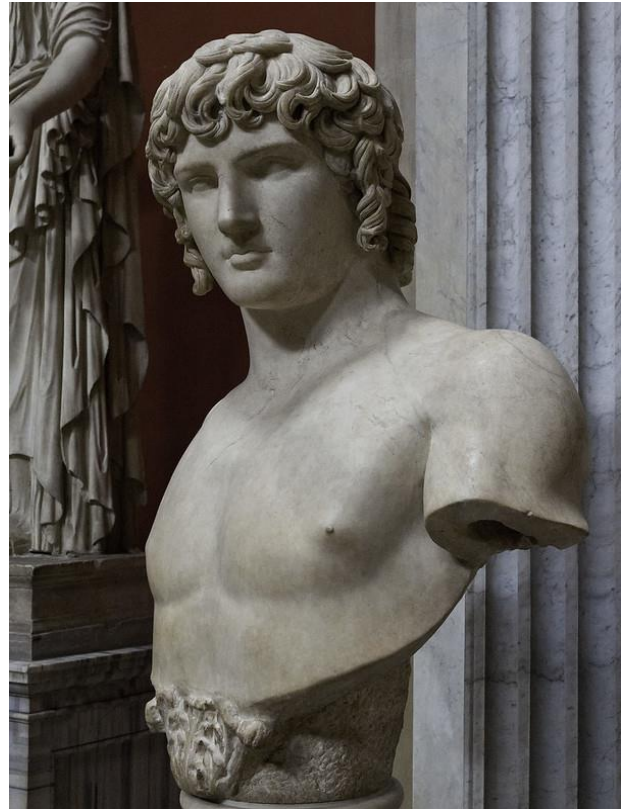


Fig. 4. Colossal bust of Antinous. c. 130 CE. Found in Hadrian's Villa c. 1790. Inv. No. 251. Vatican Museum, Rome.
Image Source: *Flickr*, photographed by Egisto Sani.

Arrian's assimilation of Antinous and Hadrian to Alexander, Hephaestion, Achilles and Patroclus are instances of what David Halperin calls homoerotic 'micropolitics', a structural asymmetry that consists of an unequal distribution of precedence among the members of the relationship (1989, p. 76). In the *Periplus*, Achilles is aligned with Antinous, yet the *Anabasis* refers to Hadrian as Alexander and Achilles, which makes Antinous Hephaestion and Patroclus. Vout suggests that it is Alexander's iconography that influenced the aesthetics of Antinoan imagery, as it reinforced Antinous' statuses as a god and hero; both are carved with totalised quirks (particularly via the hair and facial expressions) and simultaneously, both are divinised, linked to hunting, and die young (2007, p. 85; fig. 3 - fig. 4). Yet it was Hadrian, not Antinous, that had been the first in nearly four hundred and fifty years to rule and travel

across an enormous territorial empire, becoming an obvious western counterpart to the Macedonian king (Birley 1997, p. 131). Hadrian and Antinous completely subvert the asymmetrical hero narrative. We will come across this destabilised dynamic between Hadrian and Antinous far more strongly further on, but for now we must ask: was Antinous supposed to be Achilles and Alexander, or was Hadrian?

Drawing on previous examples, the argument here is that Hadrian had to be the *erastes*, but the ambiguous sexuality and status of Achilles, Patroclus, Alexander and Hephaestion enabled the emperor and his favourite to take on the identities of all four figures at once, cherry-picking elements from each hero to whatever suited the occasion. Anthony Birley disagrees with the Arrian assimilations, admitting that “it is tempting to infer that Arrian intended these remarks as a delicate allusion to the death and consecration of Antinous - although the parallel between the two pairs, Achilles and Patroclus, Hadrian and Antinous, is hardly very close” (1997, p. 264). But what if they were never meant to align perfectly? Antinous was an extension of Hadrian, both in life and death. We have no major sculpture or imagery depicting Antinous and Hadrian together, bar the Hadrianic tondo, but perhaps there was no need for it. If one saw Antinous either alive and well or marbled and still, one would think of Hadrian, and if one saw an image of Achilles or Alexander, they may think of the Bithynian and thus the emperor. For Hadrian, the images of Achilles and Patroclus and Alexander and Hephaestion, projected onto himself and his boy-love, lead into an exploration of ideas of self-definition and mythologisation (Spencer 2002, p. 123).

Moreover, pederasty was not as straight forward as the hunter and the hunted, like the Roman conqueror and conquered. As Barringer notes, pederasty was more “complex and ambiguous, involving a vacillating exchange of power between the older *erastes*, who holds social status, and the *eromenos*, who, by virtue of the desire that he inspires in the *erastes*, possesses

power” (2002, p. 71). In this way, Antinous and Hadrian could both be Achilles or Alexander, represented by the different aspects of the heroes, sexual or otherwise. Hadrian could be the greatest leader of the known world as much as Antinous could be the tragic and handsome youth, because of the unagreed-upon sexual statuses of the heroes and the ever-exchanging power dynamics of pederasty.

Hadrian connected himself to mythology and history to produce his Hellenic identity through other famous Hellenic identities. Jonathan Friedman explains that the personal use of mythology and history was a way of “producing identity insofar as it [produced] a relation between which supposedly occurred in the past and the present state of affairs” (1992, p. 838). In this context, the present being the injection of Greek appreciation and leadership through monarchical structure. Hadrian’s “love for Antinous is understood in Arrian’s words on Achilles and Patroclus and Alexander and Hephaestion” (Müller 2018, p. 90). In this way, love for Antinous allowed Hadrian to overlap the identities of Greece’s greatest heroes with Rome’s imperial emperor, which therefor generated image of historically-validated Hellenism.

Considering Hadrian’s use of pederasty, *paideia*, philosophy, and the mythological and historical parallels through Antinoan imagery, we see how Hadrian shaped and justified his Greek identity. As Ryan Fowler observes, if “one takes the work we have from the Second Sophistic as a whole, Plato is used to invoke Hellenic culture more often than any author other than Homer, both in the frequency of allusions and variety of contexts in which the allusions occur” (2011, p. 106), and Froma Zeitlin maintains that “Alexander presented a cultural canvas which could be applied in any situation” (2001, pp. 205-206). Analysis has demonstrated that Hadrian recreated the perfect Greek relationship through these precedents in particular: Platonic hints through pederasty and hunting, the emphasis on Antinous

paideia, and the connections between the emperor and the Bithynian with Homer's Achilles and Patroclus and history's Alexander and Hephaestion. The relationship between Antinous and Hadrian and its pederastic, aristocratic, philosophical, and historical connections functioned to promote and showcase the emperor's Hellenism. This next section will look at the emperor's veneration of Antinous as a means for Hadrian to obtain a divine identity.

Divus Hadrian

When Antinous died in 130 CE, "either by falling into the Nile, as Hadrian writes, or, as the truth is, by being offered in sacrifice" (Dio. 69.11.2),³⁵ he was quickly deified by the emperor. Antinous' deification was not only to promote Hadrian's Hellenism *per se*, but to establish his divinity. Emperors often took on the roles of heroes or gods, often in a manner which underlined their supreme power and authority (Newby 2011, p. 261). For example, Augustus associated himself with Apollo (Suet. *Aug.* 70), Domitian considered Minerva his special protectress whom he worshipped with superstitious veneration (Suet. *Dom.* 15.3; Hekster 2010, pp. 605-606) and Commodus directly associated himself with the god Hercules, adding the god's name to his official titles, while a "vast number of statues were erected representing himself in the garb of Hercules" (Dio. 72.15.1-6; HA. *Comm.* 8.1-9).

³⁵ Dio's passage continues by explaining that Antinous' sacrifice was due to Hadrian being "always very curious and employed divinations and incantations of all kinds. Accordingly, he honoured Antinous, either because of his love for him or because the youth had voluntarily undertaken to die (it being necessary that a life should be surrendered freely for the accomplishment of the ends Hadrian had in view)" (69.11.3). What Dio suggests here, is that "Hadrian, induced by bizarre superstitious beliefs, either persuaded or forced Antinous to take his life in order to prolong his own" (Morwood 2013, p. 78). Aurelius Victor also states that Antinous' death and sacrifice "were acts of piety and religious scruple because when Hadrian wanted to prolong his life and magicians had demanded a volunteer in his place, they report that although everyone else refused, Antinous offered himself" (*De Caesaribus*, 14.8). Lambert suggests Antinous sacrificed himself willingly, rather than being forced, for the good of Hadrian's health. The ancients believed that the voluntary death of one person could save or restore the life of another, and there are implications that Hadrian had been ill until at least 128 CE (Dio. 69.17.1-18.4; HA. *Hadr.* 23.1-25.11; Lambert 1984, pp. 134-135). This self-sacrifice may be what Arrian subtly hints at when stating that Achilles would "insomuch die for his friends" (*Peripl. M. Eux.* 23.4). Moreover, Antinous' self-sacrifice (and deification soon after) parallels closely with that of Jesus Christ likely added to the anxieties of early Christians. It has also been proposed that Antinous committed suicide due to his increasing maturity and ineligibility to maintain a pederastic relationship with Hadrian after the age of eighteen (Morwood 2013, p. 79; Lambert 1984, p. 41).

Many emperors shared divinity with deities, as “association with the gods could also be seen in the form of the protection or favour that a politician might claim from an individual deity” (Beard, North & Price 1997, p. 147). The shared divinity between Hadrian and Antinous, as we shall see, afforded the emperor a powerful, divine identity.

It is well known that Hadrian deliberately assimilated himself with Theseus, Romulus, Dionysus, Zeus, and, as this thesis has argued, Achilles and Alexander the Great, merging his identity with ancient kings and gods of immeasurable divine power.³⁶ Inspiration for Caesar's deification, which was indicated by a comet shining for seven days straight and believed to be his soul rising to heaven, may well have been drawn from Alexander's birth, which is associated in Roman texts with the appearance of a comet (Suet. *Caes.* 87; Spencer 2002, p. 178). So too was Antinous' death marked by a cosmic event, where Hadrian supposedly:

declared that he had seen a star which he took to be that of Antinous, and gladly lent an ear to the fictitious tales woven by his associates to the effect that the star had really come into being from the spirit of Antinous and had then appeared for the first time.

(Dio. 69.11.4)

The conscious decision of Hadrian to align his and Antinous' image with Alexander the Great has already been made clear, but Antinous as a god allowed Hadrian to create an intense religious relationship with Antinous, further cementing his divine identity across the entire Roman empire.

Before we begin to explore how Antinoan worship and iconography communicated Hadrian's divine identity, it is important to bring attention to the lack of iconography of Antinous as Ganymede, the homoerotic cupbearer of Zeus. The parallel of Antinous and Hadrian with Ganymede and Zeus seems obvious, especially if we rely on Halperin's theory of homoerotic micropolitics, and the renewed interest in Ganymede in imperial Roman

³⁶ For more on Hadrian's divine and hero identities, see Haley 2005, pp. 969-980 & Karivieri 2002, pp. 40-51.

literature. Antinous was in many regards “a real-life Ganymede, added, like the mythical Trojan prince, to the company of the gods while in the bloom of his youth” (Williams 2010, p. 86). Yet, Ganymede was not a god nor connected to mystery cults, but a minor mythological character, unlike other figures syncretised with Antinous.³⁷

Most of the evidence we have of Antinous' assimilation with Ganymede in antiquity is from early Christian sources, which criticised the Bithynian through the assimilation of Antinous and Ganymede. Hadrian supposedly “consecrated Antinous in the same way that Zeus consecrated Ganymede” (Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 4.43), and in an even more scathing remark, Prudentius tells us:

Antinous too, set in a heavenly home, he who was the darling of an emperor now deified in the imperial embrace was robbed of his manhood, the god Hadrian's Ganymede, not handing cups to the gods, but reclining with Jupiter on the middle couch and quaffing the sacred liquor of ambrosial nectar, and listening to prayers in the temples with his husband!

(Prudent. 270- 282)

Prudentius' passage criticises Antinous' divinity by highlighting the fact that the youth is not acting as a cupbearer or servant as he should, but as a slave unjustly enjoying the life of luxury with Hadrian. The only other possible literary allusion to Antinous as Ganymede is Ptolemy's *Almagest*, the only surviving comprehensive ancient treatise on astronomy, firmly dated to the reign of the Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's successor (Toomer 1984, p. 1). The *Almagest* records that there are “stars around Aquila, to which the name ‘Antinous’ is given” (7.16.H76). Toomer speculates that Ptolemy may have inspired the identification of Antinous' star in Dio Cassius' *Roman History* (1984, p. 357), but Ptolemy does not mention the constellation Ganymede in

³⁷ Religious syncretism is an important element of ancient Antinoan communication. Syncretism is a word used to describe the mixing and combination of religious ritual and deities, especially in Greek and Near Eastern religions (Koester 1995, p. 157). Syncretism was not caused purely through the mixture and merging of populations, but rather, the causes were spiritual and psychological. Ancient concepts would become separated from their original local traditions and reinterpreted due to philosophy, the general mobility of populations and the constant evolution of culture (Koester 1995, pp. 157-159). Most Antinoan communication was a case of religious syncretisation, shown predominantly through physical evidence such as sculpture and coinage.

relation to Antinous at all. This could either mean that Antinous has taken the place of the cupbearer or, more likely, Ptolemy has credited Antinous with his own constellation.

Although it is argued by John Barentine and Bernard Frischer et. al. that the Antinoan constellation was merged with Ganymede, the lack of syncretic iconography of the Trojan prince with Antinous leads us to question whether the comparison was on purpose.³⁸ Perhaps it was something that Hadrian wanted to play upon subtly; the parallel is nothing short of exact, but there is an abundance of Antinoan iconography as deities such as Dionysus, Osiris, or Hermes originally compared to the minute pool of Antinous-Ganymede evidence. Antinous' star was not merged with Zeus' cupbearer, but a completely new constellation separated from the Trojan prince. It is more likely that the comparison between Hadrian and Antinous and Jupiter/J Zeus and Ganymede in later sources echoes Antinous' place in the imperial court. Whilst Antinous was not of original slave status, this does not emancipate Antinous from having a servile role under Hadrian. The comparisons between Antinous and Ganymede are likely there to recognise the power imbalance of Hadrian and Antinous' relationship, especially when we consider Dio's use of the word *paidika* in reference to the Bithynian, which could be translated as 'darling', 'favourite', or 'minion' (*Roman History*, 69.11.3).

Moreover, Antinous' subservient role is also shown through the comparison of Julius Caesar's infamous encounter with Bithynia's king, Nicomedes IV. According to Suetonius:

The only charge ever brought against [Julius Caesar] regarding his sexual tastes was that he had been King Nicomedes' bedmate (*pedicator*)- always a dark stain on his reputation, and frequently quoted by his enemies.

Suet. *Jul.* 49.

Julius Caesar was chided for his supposed sexual relations with the King of Bithynia in his early twenties, and the act became a slight on his manhood. Suetonius also records multiple

³⁸ For more on the constellation of Antinous and Ganymede, see Barentine 2015, pp. 47-64; Frischer et. al. 2016, pp. 55-79.

notable men scrutinising Julius Caesar's encounter with Nicomedes IV. His colleague in the consulship, Bibulus, described him as 'The Queen of Bithynia'; Cicero supposedly wrote in several letters that 'this descendant of Venus lost his virginity in Bithynia'; and Gaius Memmius intended to charged Caesar with having joined a group of Nicomedes' toy boys at a banquet, where he acted as the royal cupbearer (Suet. *Jul.* 49). It has been argued, however, that due to the unverifiable nature of the relationship between Julius Caesar and Nicomedes IV, the scathing remarks towards Julius Caesar and his affairs in Bithynia were likely to challenge Julius Caesar's *pudicitia*, his sexual virtue. *Pudicitia* was an important characteristic of the ideal man in Rome, and doubt was not infrequently cast on the *pudicitia* of one's opponent (Osgood 2008, p. 688). Therefore, if Hadrian's marriage to Sabina was to satisfy the Roman ideals of *pudicitia*, the role reversal of Julius Caesar and the King of Bithynia via his relationship with Antinous could be interpreted as a restoration of imperial power, and the emperor's own *pudicitia*. Antinous' place as a 'mortal Ganymede' subtly restores the socially acceptable statuses, sexual or otherwise, between Rome and Bithynia.

It is undeniable that the identification of Antinous with, or as, Ganymede not only strongly associates Hadrian with the king of gods, but strengthens Rome's control over Bithynia, as well as the emperor's *pudicitia*; however, post-deification, staying clear of this mythical comparison seems to be a deliberate choice by the emperor. Even Antinous' assimilation with heroes such as Achilles and Alexander make a grander claim to divinity than Ganymede. Thus, upon deification, Antinous was not meant to be someone of lesser status than Hadrian or Zeus/Jupiter, but a god in his own right.³⁹

³⁹ An Antinous statue was restored by Italian sculptor Giovanni Pierantoni in the late eighteenth century, portraying the youth as Ganymede, and thus cannot be included in the evidence towards 'Antinous-Ganymede' depictions (Hughes 2011, p. 4; appendix 3.2). Furthermore, two marble heads of Antinous have been discovered wearing the Phrygian cap, typical of Ganymede imagery, located in the Cabinet des Médailles and the Vatican Museum, respectively (appendix 3.3 – 3.4). However, one of these heads is attributed to the mystery deity Attis (Attis child, 2021). Since multiple heroes and deities are known to wear the Phrygian cap (e.g., Orpheus, Attis),

Hadrian and Mystery Cults

For Hadrian to promote Antinous' divinity, and thus his own divine identity, the emperor drew from mystery cults. Augustus himself had begun an era of imperial support for Greek mystery cults which reached its climax under Hadrian due to the importance placed on religions that offered individual experiences and personal connections with the gods (Koester 1995, p. 161). The mysteries were a religious practice that focused on salvation through soteriological myths and deities, usually represented by images of vegetation, water, death and rebirth. The very word mystery (*mysterion* in Greek) derives from the Greek verb “*myein*”, “to close,” referring to the closing of the lips or the eyes, as it was vital to never disclose the inner workings or rites of these mystery cults (Meyer 1987, p. 4). It is thought that the Eleusinian mysteries, devoted to the salvific rituals of Demeter and Persephone, deeply influenced many other mystery cults through the impact of Hellenism and the cult's popularity and status.⁴⁰

Hadrian's involvement with mystery cults and his dispersal of the Antinoan cult all over his empire provided the emperor with three things: connections to the first *princeps*, a

we cannot accurately identify the busts as syncretic with Ganymede. For more on Giovanni Pierantoni's restoration, see Hughes 2011, pp. 1-28.

⁴⁰ The oldest and most popular of the Greek mystery cults was that of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, which took place as early as the eighth century BCE (Koester 1995, p. 190). The oldest literary document pertaining to the Eleusinian mysteries is a Homeric hymn from the seventh century BCE (*To Demeter*, 2.1-485). The hymn tells us that they were established by Demeter herself as she wandered around the earth in search of her daughter, Persephone (Kore), who had been abducted by Hades (Meyer 1987, pp. 20-21). The Eleusinian mysteries were open to all Greeks, and eventually to all other ethnic groups. Though the rites of the Eleusinian mysteries are in large part a secret, the lesser mysteries began in February, near Athens, as a preparation for the greater mysteries. In September/October, the greater mysteries began with a truce between all warring parties, followed by a procession from Athens to Eleusis along the 'sacred way', before initiation into the secret mysteries of Eleusis (Denova 2019, p. 188). The greater mysteries took place over nine days, the length of time Demeter was said to search for Persephone (Keller 1988, p. 50). It is likely that the Eleusinian cult started off as a celebration of agriculture and the renewal of the seasons. The mystery rites of Eleusis gave initiates two things: a celebration of the fruits of the field, and participation in a cult which makes initiates look with joyful hope upon the end of life and existence (Otto 1955, pp. 14-15). The interest in personal spiritual gain became a characteristic phenomenon of the Roman imperial period and as such the Eleusinian mysteries were vastly popular throughout the Roman empire (Koester 1995, p. 190). For more on the Eleusinian mysteries, see Denova 2019, pp. 187-198; Kelly 1988, pp. 27-54; Koester 1995, pp. 181-194; Meyer 1987, pp. 15-45; Otto 1955, pp. 14-31.

panhellenic scheme in the guise of a mystery cult, and most importantly, divinity. Firstly, Birley observes that Hadrian began to portray himself as the second Augustus, especially as Augustus was the first emperor to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries (Dio. 54.9.10; Suet. *Divus Aug.* 93). Secondly, establishing a cult that uses a mystery cult formula allowed for easier circulation of the Antinoan cult. Since Hadrian “devoted his attention to maintaining peace throughout the world” (HA, *Hadr.* 14.5), it makes sense that he deified his Greek favourite to promote peaceful panhellenism. In contrast to Trajan's attempt to achieve fame and control by military victories, Hadrian's policy was to weld the Roman empire together (Magie 1950, p. 628). Hadrian's desire for unification meant that geographical distances did not matter, as the unity of an empire meant a unity of people (Boer 1955, p. 128). Since the image of the Bithynian represented vast interculturalism via Antinous' connections to Rome, Greece, Asia Minor and Egypt, alongside the fact that mystery cult communities already maintained a shared religious quality of salvation, and were popular all over the empire, Antinous was the perfect tool for Hadrian's political agenda of the complete unification of his empire. Lastly, and from here on out, this thesis shall argue Antinous' new incarnation as a mystery cult deity, and Hadrian's veneration of the youth, functioned as a means for the emperor to obtain divinity and immortality.

The mystery *cultus* of Antinous was not formally endorsed by the Senate (however there were signs of worship of Antinous in Rome),⁴¹ but it found its popularity in the wider empire and in its Greek populace. Since mystery cults never replaced traditional cults, as one could become an initiate without having to cease activity in other religious activity, they became exceedingly widespread and popular (Denova 2019, p. 202). Mystery cults were

⁴¹ An inscription from Lanuvium tells us that a religious and funeral *collegium* dedicated to Antinous, and the goddess Diana, was erected in either 133 or 136 CE (*CIL* 14.2112; Bendlin 2011, p. 216). The inscription also tells us of a temple of Antinous in Ostia, and the dating of the youth's birthday on November 27 (Bendlin p. 213). For more on the *collegium* of Diana and Antinous, see Bendlin 2011, pp. 207-296 & Bruun 2016, pp. 361-380. See also chapter three, p. 133 & fn. 41 & 78.

particularly popular in the second century CE,⁴² and as such Hadrian drew from this popularity to ground Antinous' legitimacy as a god. Post-deification, the image of Antinous was syncretised with several gods, from the highest of the Olympians to the native and communal, some of which shall be discussed in chapter two, but none more so than Osiris and Dionysus.⁴³ Thus, it cannot be ruled out that "Hadrian wanted to imbue the cult of Antinous with mystical-soteriological qualities" (Galimberti 2017, p. 107).

It seems likely that Antinoan cults began by being systematically merged with preestablished and popular mystery cults that interested Hadrian. As Rüpke remarks: "originality might be a conspicuous way to make [religious communication] plausible, but repeating methods that had proven successful in the past, in other words, falling back on shared cultural knowledge, on traditions, would surely be even better" (2015, p. 2). Antinoan iconography was syncretised with most deities that were a part (in both major and minor forms) of the mysteries, some of the most powerful and widely popular religious groups, which allowed for images of Antinous (and thus Hadrian) to permeate the entire Mediterranean through three major mystery cults – those of Isis and Osiris, the Dionysian, and the Eleusinian. The

⁴² Religion in the Mediterranean was always evolving and changing, and new cults were conceived regularly. Whilst the veneration of Antinous was a phenomenon, the continuation, creation and/or revival of many salvation cults were not. The Andanian Mysteries in Andania were interrupted in 369 BCE by warfare, but reinstated yet again in 92/91 BCE, some fifty-five years after the Romans took control of the region and continued well into the second century CE (Meyer 1987, p. 49). These mysteries included the worship of Apollo, Hagne (either a water nymph or another title of Kore), and Demeter (Paus. 4.33.4). Pausanias again records that the Phliasians of Keleai celebrate Demeter's mysteries, but "the mystery itself (was) an imitation of the Eleusinian mystery" and they "[admitted] themselves that they [imitated] the celebration at Eleusis" (Paus. 2.14.1). The most interesting example of a new mystery cult is recorded by Lucian of Samosata (ca 120-190 CE). Lucian tells us about the career of the infamous self-acclaimed prophet, Alexander of Abonoteichos. Alexander "established a celebration of mysteries, with torchlight ceremonies and priestly offices, which was to be held annually" (*Alexander the False Prophet*, 38) for his creation of the god Glykon, a new deity derived from Asclepius, and it was a religion of considerable fame in the second century CE (Meyer 1987, p. 42).

⁴³ Deities and heroes not examined in this thesis (with the exception of footnotes and references) syncretised with Antinous, include: Hermes, Apollo, Pan, Silvanus, Adonis, Eros, Aristaios, Men, Attis, Agathos Daimon, Apis/Serapis, the river god Alpheios, the heroes Herakles, Narcissus, Hylas, Hyacinthus, and Krocus. For the identification of Antinous syncretised with other divinities see Meyer 1991, pp. 163-73. See also chapter two, pp 74-90 for Antinous' syncretisation with local Greek heroes.

popularity of these religious movements legitimised Antinous' and the emperor's divine states of being.

Hadrian the God King

Antinous was first worshipped as a god, via the worship of Osiris and the Nile (Boer 1955, p. 141), and it is through the Egyptian god that we see how Hadrian first used the imagery of Antinous as a metaphorical megaphone to the wider empire to exemplify his divinity. The Egyptianised cult statuary of Antinous as Osiris dominated Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, depicting the youth with the regal *nemes* headdress and on occasion the divine *uraeus* (Mari & Sgalambro 2007, p. 98; fig. 5).⁴⁴ It is well known that Antinous had conspicuously died at the end of October, coinciding with the date of Osiris' death and the festival of Isis, and, when a person died upon the Nile, it was Egyptian custom to deify them (Vout 2007, p. 58; Boer 1955, p. 137). This practice was known by Herodotus and mentioned again by the Christian Tertullian⁴⁵ over six hundred years later, and something that Hadrian must have known to further justify Antinous' deification in Egypt.⁴⁶ The Pincio Obelisk makes it clear that Hadrian ordered Antinous to be worshipped as an Egyptian god (Budge 1990, p. 251), the south side of the obelisk proclaiming in hieroglyphics "Osirantinoos, the justified... All the uses of the hours [rituals] of Osiris were repeated in [Antinous], including all his work as a mystery" (Boatwright 1987, p. 244). Antinous was not just deified but was deified instantaneously as the mystery god Osiris.

⁴⁴ The *nemes* is a striped headcloth worn by the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. The *uraeus* is the stylized form of an Egyptian cobra, symbolising sovereignty, royalty, deity, and divine authority.

⁴⁵ *non vidi*, quoted by Sorek 2010, p. 91.

⁴⁶ Herodotus records: "if anyone, either an Egyptian or a foreigner, is found drowned in the river or killed by a crocodile, there is the strongest obligation upon the people of the nearest town to have the body embalmed in the most elaborate manner and buried in a consecrated burial-place; no one is allowed to touch it except the priests of the Nile – not even relatives or friends; the priests alone prepare it for burial with their own hands and place it in a tomb, as if it were something more sacred than the body of a man" (2.90). Hadrian could have very well continued this practice when Antinous drowned, as it gave legitimacy to the Greek youth being accepted as something sacred and holy.

It is not until the reign of Hadrian that we come across a text discussing the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, yet it is no longer Egyptian, but rather Egyptianised (Assman & Lorton 2011, p. 205). By the second century CE, Egyptian cults were thoroughly Hellenised, relying on myths of the distant past of Egypt whilst pulling their salvific influence mostly from the Eleusinian mysteries. In Apuleius' second century CE novel, the *Metamorphoses*, the protagonist Lucius claims, "I had been steeped in the mysteries of the goddess, but I had not yet been enlightened by the mysteries of the great god and supreme parent of the gods, Osiris the unconquered" (11.27). The rites of Osiris were deemed level with or even higher than Isis, as "although the nature of his deity and cult was connected, even unified, with that of Isis, there was still a very great distinction in the rites of initiation" (Apul. *Met.* 11.27).



Fig. 5. Bust of Antinous as Osiris wearing the royal *nemes* and *uraeus*, 131-138 CE. The nose, mouth, left part of the face and a major part of the bust are modern restorations.

Inv. No. 433 (MR 16). Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli.

Located in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Image Source: J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Some versions of Antinoan mystery cults likely resembled the mysteries of Isis and Osiris. In the early empire especially, the cult of Isis seems to have become more and more Osirian (Brenk 2009, p. 217). Like all mystery cults, we do not know much about the rites of Osiris, but the rituals were related to Osiris' death. It is the death and rebirth of Osiris that Diodorus designates as *aporrhetos*, a mystery not to be spoken of (1.5-8; Assmann & Lorton 2011, p. 190). The lack of information we have on Antinous' death, aside from the statements of the *Historia Augusta* (*Hadr.* 13.5) and the *Roman History* (Dio. 69.11.9), may be because of this specific rite of the Osirian mysteries.⁴⁷

Though the goddess is not present on the Pincio Obelisk, a red marble bust of Antinous as a priest of Isis was uncovered from Hadrian's Villa, depicted in the most intensive form of membership by special clothing and a shaved head (Rüpke 2018, p. 268; appendix 3.1).

Antinous as an initiate of the mysteries of Isis and Osiris suggests the importance of the cult of Osiris and of Isis to Hadrian. Hadrian's Villa is also home to further evidence indicating the emperor's alignment with Isis and Osiris through the *Antinoeion*, a temple complex dedicated to Antinous erected at Hadrian's Villa between c. 130 and 134 CE (fig. 6).⁴⁸

In 2016, the archaeological site of the *Antinoeion* was used as a testbed for studying the utility of simulation environments for archaeoastronomical research. In the study of the celestial alignments in the *Antinoeion*, Bernard Frischer et. al. points out that the sightline over the top of Temple B, when seen from the central platform (which may have contained original placement of the Pincio Obelisk),⁴⁹ happens to match the altitude of Sirius from

⁴⁷ The mysteries of Isis and Osiris discussed in this thesis are predominately Graeco-Roman. Though the Egyptian cults of Isis and Osiris arose in ancient Egypt, they spread dramatically in the Hellenistic Age after the conquests of Alexander the Great (Denova 2019, p. 198). Much like other mystery cults, the rites of Isis and Osiris were not only secretive but were based on ideas of rebirth and immortality (Meyer 1987, pp. 157-159). For more on the mystery cults of Isis and Osiris, see Delia 1992, pp. 181-190; Denova 2019, pp. 189-202; Koester 1995, pp. 176-186; Meyer 1987, pp. 155-196.

⁴⁸ See Frischer et. al. p. 56, 58 & Mari & Sgalambro 2007, pp. 97-99 for the dating of the *Antinoeion*.

⁴⁹ It cannot be said if the Pincio Obelisk was one of a pair originally from Antinoopolis or Hadrian's Villa, nor whether it was a rudimentary copy of the original (Budge 1990, p. 250). Gil H. Renberg has done the extensive work of summarising the many theories of the obelisk, and thus Antinous', final resting place, in the appendix of

February to September (Frischer et. al. 2016, p. 68). The constellation Sirius was an important representation of Isis and Osiris. The *Isaeum Campense*⁵⁰ had a pedimented sculpture showing Isis riding a dog, the same iconography which is seen on a Vespasianic *denarius* of 71 CE (appendix 2.4). Plutarch records that “the soul of Isis is called by the Greeks the Dog-star [Sirius], but by the Egyptians Sothis” and is a “special star of Isis” (*Mor.* 359d, 376a). Yet Plutarch also mentions the connections of specifically Osiris and Sirius, as Sirius was supposedly another name for Osiris (*Mor.* 372e-f).

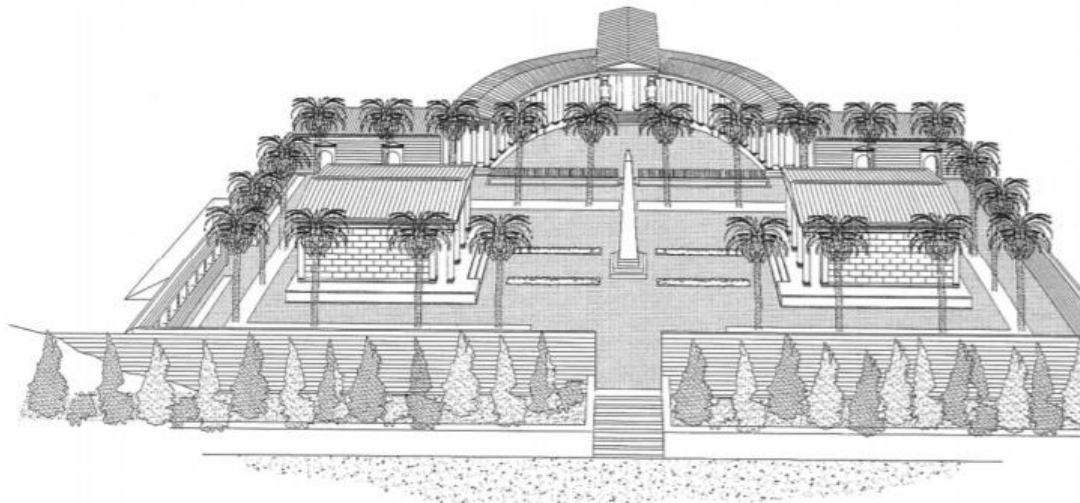


Fig. 6. Drawing with axonometric view of reconstruction of the *Antinoeion* in Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, Courtesy Z. Mari.

Image Source: Frischer et. al. 2016, p. 62.

his paper. The original placement of the Pincio Obelisk include: Antinoopolis, Hadrian's Villa, and even the site of Hadrian's Mausoleum (Renberg 2010, pp. 181-182). Frischer, Zotti, Mari & Vittozi surmount a strong argument for the obelisk's original placement to be in the *Antinoeia* of Hadrina's Villa in Tivoli, using virtual simulation (2016, pp. 55-79). See also Boatright 1987, pp. 258-260.

⁵⁰ The temple of Isis in the Campus Martius and the temple of Antinous at Tivoli share similar archaeological and architectural aspects. The *Antinoeia*'s “facades which were probably tetrastyle prostyle with a staircase between the flanks of a projecting podium, recall that of the temple of Isis” (Mari & Sgalambro 2007, p. 95), which we see depicted on the Vespasianic coin (appendix 3.4). Maintaining the theory that the obelisk originated at Tivoli, Mari and Sgalambro point out that the obelisk in the Campus Martius had four privileged points of view: “(1) toward the entrance from the street, (2) toward the porch at the back of the exedra, and (3-4) toward the staircases of the two temples. It is impossible to know how the inscriptions were oriented on the obelisk, but it is probable that the principal one, which praised Hadrian, faced the entrance” (2007, p. 95). It is worth pointing out that Hadrian also “added a monumental portal leading to the precinct of Isis and Serapis” (Boatwright 1987, p. 33). Hadrian may have gained inspiration for the *Antinoeian* from the *Isaeum Campense* to subtly maintain a familiarity with a prominent Roman temple, as well as further institute Antinous' connection with Isis, Osiris, and their mystery cults.

Aligning Temple B so that Sirius appeared at the very top of the pediment literalised the iconographic motif of Antinous-Osiris and associated the youth with the goddess Isis (Frischer et. al. 2016, p. 68). Both Mary Boatwright and Anne Rouillet point out that Antinous was worshipped in and around the *Isaeum Campense*, with two inscriptions declaring that the youth was “ruling jointly with the gods in Egypt” (1987, pp. 254-255; 1972, p. 3).⁵¹ Simultaneously, an altar inscription confirms the presence of the Egyptian cult of Antinous at the *Antinoeion* (Mari & Sgalambro 2007, p. 96). The bust of Antinous as an initiate of Isis and other Egyptianised cult statues in Hadrian's villa, the connections between the constellation Sirius, the *Antinoeion* and the *Isaeum Campense* in Rome, and the very circumstances of Antinous death, tells us that Hadrian must have wanted Antinous to be connected to Isis and her mysteries to truly establish Antinous as Osiris, which in turn subtly connects the emperor with the cult and its leading gods.

Turning back to Antinous and Osiris specifically, the portrayal of the Bithynian as Osiris ultimately allowed for Hadrian to identify himself with the god Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, as shown on the funerary obelisk (Boer 1955, p. 140). This was for Hadrian to be perceived as truly divine. The north side of the obelisk states a prayer to Hadrian, “the king of Upper and Lower Egypt (Pharaoh)... the beloved of the Nile and the Gods, the Lord of Diadems who lives, is safe and healthy, who lives forever [just like the Sun]” (Boatwright 1987, p. 244). Here, Hadrian cements his rule over Egypt and reinstates that he is the eternal and godlike pharaoh, Horus. The Egyptian gods Horus and Osiris were in equilibrium with each other and reflected the status Hadrian wanted to instate for himself and Antinous. According to Egyptian myth, Osiris was the first king of Egypt and the god of the underworld, the “just judge who welcomed the virtuous dead to paradise” (Baines & Pinch 1993, p. 42). Horus, on the other hand, was the king of the sky and living realm, to the point

⁵¹ *IG* 14.961 = *IGUR* 1.98 = *SIG* 383; and *IG* 14.960 = *IGRR* 1.31.

where pharaohs were considered incarnations of Horus and were simply called "Horus", the oldest name amongst the traditional titles of the Kings (Levi 1948, p. 35). The Egyptian kings, therefore, identified themselves with Horus in life and Osiris in death.

The elevation of Hadrian and Antinous as the most powerful Egyptian gods gave Hadrian the divine identity he desired. According to the Pincio Obelisk, the emperor was the king of the living world, "the ruler of every country... while the great ones of Egypt and the nine bends (Libya) lie under his sandals united... lord of both lands" (Boatwright 1987, p. 244) and Antinous was the ruler of the afterlife, who "takes his seat in the hall of the just... in the land of Hades" (Boatwright 1987, p. 245). Hadrian could therefore identify himself with Horus, the living king, and with Antinous-Osiris, the dead king, as was the Egyptian tradition. This parallel can also be found in Pancrates' lion poem, where the lion, in all its ferociousness, "went against the glorious God (Hadrian) and Antinous like Typhoeus of old against Zeus the Giant-Killer" (*Select Papyri*, 128.25). Much like Arrian's literary allusions, Pancrates' poem transfers Horus' identity onto Hadrian, along with the mythical victory over Horus' arch-enemy Seth, slayer of Osiris, and Typhon's Egyptian equivalent (Hörschele 2019, p. 228).⁵² In addition, Hadrian is deemed "the son of the Sun"⁵³ on the north side of the obelisk, and twice appears as a falcon with the double crown of Egypt on a stele in the Berlin Museum, further cementing Hadrian's connection to Horus (Levi 1948, p. 36).⁵⁴

Although the ages and hierarchical statuses have been reversed in this Egyptian equation, ignoring the dynamics of Halperin's micropolitics to the point where a homoerotic status is entirely non-existent, the Hadrian-Horus and Antinous-Osiris dynamic is an excellent

⁵² For more on Pancrates, Horus and Hadrian, see Hörschele 2019 pp. 227-229.

⁵³ Both Osiris and Horus are solar deities.

⁵⁴ *non vidi*, quoted in Levi 1984, p. 36. Levi also explains that Hadrian standing with a crocodile underneath his feet in numismatic imagery most likely alludes to Hadrian as the falcon god. Horus was considered the vanquisher of all noxious animals, the crocodile included, which represented the powers of evil.

indication of the different types of syncretisation and appropriation the emperor created for himself and the Bithynian. The emperor completely disregards their respective ages and relationship status to fit with the Egyptian divinities. If Hadrian were Horus, the son of Osiris (Antinous), that would also make him the son of Isis, the universal mother, and would make the emperor the divine offspring of two of the most popular and influential deities of the Mediterranean. Using stories of divine birth, emperors could claim that their authority was derived from heaven (Peltonen 2019, p. 140). Horus, who was the rightful heir to Egypt, born of Isis and Osiris, the restorer of the cosmic and social order of Egypt after Set's unrighteous reign and was also the completer of the resurrection of Osiris.⁵⁵ Hadrian paralleled Horus: he was the rightful ruler of the world, maintained peace and order throughout his empire, and resurrected the new Osiris, Antinous. The emperor was undertaking a metaphysical rebirth to become Horus, using the composition of Isis and Osiris mystery cults for his Antinoan veneration, in order to find grounds for his new rebirth and supreme divinity.

The New Dionysuses

Another important syncretisation for Antinous is Dionysus. At Rome we find, especially from the Hadrianic to the early Severan period (117-200 CE), a widely differentiated mythical vocabulary to convey the horrors of untimely death and the survivor's pain at the sudden loss through depictions of Dionysus. In this period, Dionysian narratives

⁵⁵ The Egyptians believed that it was Osiris' wisdom and industry that led the god to become the divine king of Egypt, spreading civilisation and education across the land. His envious brother, Set, who was jealous of the love and respect given to Osiris, became vengeful towards Osiris' wife, Isis, who was given power to rule Egypt when her husband was away. Determined to rid the universe of Osiris, Set tricked Osiris and locked him away in an elaborate coffin before throwing him into the Nile, where Osiris drowned. The coffin was eventually found by the determined Isis and the goddess took care of the body. Enraged by this news, Set tore Osiris' body into thirteen pieces, and yet again, Isis went looking for these pieces one by one, and found all but one eye. With the help of Isis' sister Nephthys, the two goddesses joined the body together and mummified it, and whilst this occurred Isis became pregnant with Horus (Chambers 2019, p. 77). When Horus finally attained manhood, he avenged the murder of his father and through this secured the throne of Egypt for himself (Delia 1992, p. 182). Interestingly, Horus' relationship to Osiris and Isis may also been that of an older brother or their son (Chambers 2019, p. 126). This would therefore create a stronger alignment of parallels between Antinous-Osiris and Hadrian-Horus, however, Osiris, Isis and Horus' most common depiction were as husband, wife and son.

added meaning to an otherwise meaningless or inexplicable fate, offering consolation by placing death in the perspective of a symbolic world order (Ewald 2008, p. 239). Dionysus was portrayed on many sarcophagi in the Graeco-Roman world in the second century CE as a god who suffers and is reborn.⁵⁶ Dionysus was popularly connected to the idea of rebirth and immortality, particularly through the religious rites of Orphism and narratives of Dionysus' *katabasis*, the god's descent and return from Hades. When the *Historia Augusta* tells us that when Antinous died, Hadrian "wept like a woman" (HA. *Hadr.* 13.5), it becomes entirely possible that most Antinous-Dionysus statues, or any iconography of Antinous produced by Hadrian, is a response to genuine heartbreak and mourning. Yet, iconography of Antinous as Dionysus does not just suggest an example of funeral imagery, but as a connection to Dionysian and Eleusinian mystery cults, furthering Hadrian's divinity.

Hadrian's interest in mystery cults was established well before Antinous' death. The emperor was "himself initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries" and, by 128 CE, "was admitted to the highest grade" (HA. *Hadr.* 13.1; Dio. 69.11.1).⁵⁷ In 125 CE Hadrian "presided at the Dionysia, first assuming the highest office among the Athenians, and arrayed in the local costume, carried it through brilliantly" (Dio. 69.16.13).⁵⁸ The Greater Dionysia was an important part of Athenian civic religious practice as well as the Dionysian mysteries,⁵⁹ and

⁵⁶ This element of Dionysus is expanded on in chapter two, pp. 83-93.

⁵⁷ See also Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*, 14.4. For the lesser and greater mysteries of Eleusis, see fn. 40.

⁵⁸ For more on Hadrian, the Dionysia, and the Eleusinian mysteries, see Birley 1997, pp. 175-177, 215-217, 221-222; Clinton 1989, pp. 55-68; Mylonas 1961.

⁵⁹ The Greater Dionysia was a festival held in March in honour of Dionysus and was integral to the civic ideology of Athens, as the ceremonies were concerned with the relations of an individual to the city (Goldhill 1987, p. 75). It is an ancient dramatic festival in which tragedy, comedy and satyric drama originated. In the days leading up to the festival, the statue of Dionysus Eleuthereus was taken to a temple on the road to Eleutheria, and second century CE inscriptions indicate that the leading part in this procession was taken by the *ephebes* (SEG XV 104; Goldhill 1987, p. 59). It is plausible Antinous may have partaken in this procession when Hadrian presided over the festival in 128 CE.

the emperor took part in the Eleusinian mysteries more often than any other Roman emperor, as Hadrian's Panhellenic League was involved in the cult of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis.⁶⁰

Hadrian's involvement in the Dionysia and the Eleusinian mysteries legitimised Hadrian's role in the East as a divine ruler of all the Greeks (Karivieri 2019, p. 287). This thesis argues that the Eleusinian and Dionysian cults held high significance for Hadrian, both before, but especially after, Antinous' death. Antinous was commonly assimilated with the term IAKXOC ANTINOOC (*Iacchos Antinous*), particularly on coinage. In one case, the obverse of such a coin from Mysia shows a seated Eleusinian Demeter, and *Iacchos Antinous* on the reverse (appendix 2.3). Although *Iacchos* is a distinct god from Dionysus, his name was nevertheless often used as a synonym for Dionysus, and, from the fifth century BCE, was a term closely related to the rites of Eleusis and Dionysus (Hdt. 8.65; Stefanidou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 96). We should also recall here the Athenian ephebic festival, the *Antinoeia*, regularly held in honour of Antinous in Eleusis, and whose statue as Zagreus-Dionysus was also erected in the Eleusinian sanctuary (Mylonas 1961, p. 155; appendix 3.5).⁶¹ In fact, Orphic performances were likely held at Eleusis since the fifth century BCE at least (Watson 2014, p. 49). Whether in 132 CE Hadrian again presided at the Dionysia is not recorded, but with the strong presence of Antinous in Eleusis and his promotion as Dionysus elsewhere, it seems likely, perhaps with added Antinoan cult accents.

Like the Alexander and Achilles assimilations, Dionysian elements of Antinous distinguished the emperor's divinity through the appropriation of dual identities. The image of Antinous

⁶⁰ The Panhellenion had a particularly religious focus, as it administered a cult of Hadrian Panhellenius, and was intricately linked with Eleusis in the later Antonine period (Spawforth & Walker 1985, p. 83). For more on Eleusis and the Panhellenic League, see Spawforth & Walker 1985, pp. 78-104; Spawforth 2011, pp. 246-252; Romeo 2002, pp. 21-40.

⁶¹ The statue of Antinous in Eleusis is commonly thought of as either Asclepius or Dionysus. Relatively little iconography on the statue confirms which deity the youth is supposed to be represented as (if at all). Lambert believes that the statue is Dionysus Zagreus (1984; p. 181), whereas Clinton believes that it represents Asclepius, the divine initiate who was worshipped on the third day of the mysteries, the day which was set aside for latecomers of the festival (1989, p. 58). For Zagreus see also chapter two, pp. 94 & 96.

depended to a large extent on his image's membership of a larger visual category: that of divine, beautiful, young males, who hunted like him, and died young and beautiful (Vout 2005, p. 90). Dionysus was no exception, as Antinous' tragic death, followed by his youthful complexion, encapsulated this version of the god, as shown in one Antinous-Dionysian bust found in Hadrian's Villa, crowned with luscious ivy, and carved with soft features (appendix 3.6). The effeminacy of Dionysus and his tragic and salvific myths reflected Antinous' characteristics both pre and post-mortem, but on the other hand, Dionysus could also be the divine creator of the world, as for example in Asia Minor, Dionysus was worshipped as the official god and divine creator of the Attalid kingdom (Koester 1995, p. 175). Dionysus could also be represented as a full-bearded, fully grown but still youthful male, which was a common depiction of the god since the fifth century BCE (Jameson 2003, p. 321; appendix 3.7). Dionysus was a god of dual identities, from tragic youth to powerful universal creator, and it is Antinous and Hadrian that captured these variations of Bacchus.

We gain a sense of these dual identities portrayed by both the emperor and the Bithynian from two instances. From Emperor Trajan onwards, the ecumenical guild of Dionysiac artists in Athens became stronger, and in Hadrian's day the guild's full title was the "Sacred Thymelic Hadriana Synod of Those Who Compete Together for the Sake of Imperator Caesar Trianus Hadrianus Augustus, the New Dionysus" (*IGRR*. 1.17; Boatwright 1987, p. 210).⁶² Hadrian did not just connect himself with Dionysus, he was Dionysus, specifically the New Dionysus. Yet so was Antinous, in fact, Antinous was recorded as *Neos Iacchos*, the New

⁶² Lambert states that Hadrian encouraged the Dionysian artists (artists, poets and musicians), after their initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries to set up their own cult of Antinous-Dionysus, and Geagan confirms that Hadrian stressed a connection between the Eleusinian mysteries and Antinous, particularly through the scheme of tribal and *deme* names at Antinoopolis (Lambert 1984, p. 165; Geagan 1972 p. 148) The cult in Athens is confirmed by a chair belonging to an Antinoan priest, located in the theatre of Dionysus (Lambert 1984, fig. 39). For Antinoopolis *deme* names see fn. 96.

Iacchos, on a coin from Tarsus (Amandry 2014, p. 94; Jones 2010, p. 80; fig. 7). Both Hadrian and Antinous were hailed as a new Dionysus.

The second instance comes from a frieze, again located in Athens. Arja Karivieri argues that the Dionysian theatre in Athens is no different from those architectural settings which were created in the eastern provinces for the purpose of imperial propaganda. Thus, Karivieri contends that the *scaenae frons* shows “ideological content associating Dionysus and the Roman emperor as the New Dionysus” (2002, p. 43). Yet, the frieze has also been interpreted as “a scene representing Antinous assimilated to Dionysus and the Eleusinian divinities” (Geagan 1972, p. 148). As Hadrian and Antinous are both claimed to be the ‘New Dionysus’, it does not matter if the relief shows either Hadrian or Antinous, because even if it is Antinous, Hadrian is still linked with Bacchus via the youth’s connection to Hadrian. Antinous’ identity as Antinous should not be put aside, as it is precisely Antinous’ assimilation with Dionysus that functioned to enhance Hadrian’s divine identity. Antinous, in a sense, acted as the youthful, tragic Dionysus to Hadrian’s older, powerful Bacchus.



Fig. 7. Bronze coin from Tarsus depicting Antinous as the ‘New Iacchos’

Obverse inscription: ANTINOOC HPΩC

Obverse design: Head of Antinous wreathed with ivy.

Reverse inscription:

ΑΔΡΙΑ ΤΑΡΧΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙ ΝΕΟΚΟΡΟΥ

Reverse design:

in ex. ΝΕΩ ΙΑΚΧΩ; tetrastyle temple with amphora on circular basis in centre.

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online. *RPC* III, 3288

Immortality and Plato's Mysteries

Overall, Hadrian's participation and merging of cults ultimately had one thing in common – the idea of immortality, salvation, and rebirth. Antinous' assimilation with Dionysus and Osiris, along with Hadrian's interest and involvement with mystery cults, suggests immortality and death was something the emperor was genuinely concerned with. As Jan Assman and David Lorton so beautifully put it, “[humanity] cannot live without fantasies of immortality, or at least of a certain continuation beyond the all too narrow horizon of our existence on earth” (2011, p. 7). As an example, the cult of Isis and Osiris was a cult that not only focused on rebirth after death, but also on a renewed and revitalised mortal life. As Koester explains:

[the cult of Isis and Osiris] symbolised not just death, but the heavenly journey of the soul... The one who has thus undergone, as it were, "voluntary death" (Apul. *Met.* 11.21) and was reborn is set on a new course of life and salvation... [implying] neither immortality nor resurrection from the dead, but a dying to one's former life and the possibility of a new life in the service of the goddess.

(Koester 1995, p. 182)

Moreover, Plutarch notes the similarity of the Greek verbs “*teleutan*” (to die) and “*teleisthai*” (to be initiated), observing that people who die and people who are initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries go through comparable transformations (*Mor.* 178; Meyer 1987, p. 8).

Mystery cult practice was to be connected to an immortal deity, which in turn allowed for the initiate to feel a sense of immortality themselves, and this includes Hadrian. This thesis previously touched on Hadrian's desire to be ‘reborn’ as Horus, and we see this idea of rebirth clearly demonstrated on a *cistophorus* struck in Asian Minor in c. 128 CE. The coin shows Hadrian “standing with a corn-sheaf in his right hand, with the legend '*Hadrianus Aug[ustus] p[ater] p[atriciae]*’, followed by the letters *ren*. This can only mean '*renatus*’,

'reborn'; the ears of corn denote the Mysteries of Demeter'' (Birley 1997, p. 215).⁶³ The rebirth link does not just refer to the rejuvenation experienced in the Mysteries, but to Hadrian's rebirth into godhood. In this case, it is a new life as the young god Ploutus, represented by the stalks of grain on the coin (fig. 8), common in many Eleusinian scenes (Clinton 1989, p. 58). Hadrian establishes himself as a divine child once again, as Ploutus is the child of Hades and Persephone, and "Plouton (Hades) is none other than Sarapis (Osiris) and that Persephone is Isis" (Plut. *Mor.* 361.27e). Additionally, Hadrian's allusion to immortality is also presented on the Pincio Obelisk, where Hadrian "lives forever [just like the Sun] [in] a fresh, beautiful youthful age" (Boatwright 1987, p. 244). Hadrian's intense connection with the mystery cults and deities, and the concepts of immortality and rebirth communicated through cult imagery of Antinous, makes it plausible to think that the emperor was extremely concerned with his life after death.



Fig. 8. Silver *cistophorus* depicting Augustus and Hadrian.
Obverse inscription: IMP CAESAR AVGVSTVS
Obverse design: Bare head of Augustus
Reverse inscription:
HADRIANVS AVG P P REN
Reverse design: Hadrian in toga holding ears of corn.
Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online. *RPC* III, 1441.

⁶³ Like Augustus, Hadrian also reiterated the symbolic link between the imperial role and Eleusis (Spawforth 2011, p. 236). The depiction of Augustus on the obverse and Hadrian on the reverse holding the corn ears of Demeter and Kore, does suggest Hadrian used the Eleusinian cult to burnish an image himself as the bringer of plenty, supported by the fact that he, like Augustus, distributed grain to Athens (Spawforth 2011, p. 246).

In fact, we could strip Antinous of all his godly titles, and even then, he would still promote a sense of divinity and immortality for Hadrian in terms of philosophical belief. Whilst this theory goes beyond the scope of this thesis, Hadrian's interest in Platonism, alongside his initiation into mystery cults, should at least be addressed. According to Plato, pederasty was a pathway to the divine, and a man who is at once an *erastes* of boys and philosophy is promised a rapid return to the Platonic heaven (*Phd.* 249a; Price 2002 p. 175). Plato's *Symposium* also presented philosophical homoerotic *eros* in the context of the Greater and Lesser mysteries (Pl. *Symp.* 209e-212e). It is believed that Platonism was modelled on the experience of the Eleusinian mysteries, and, in later times, the mysteries of Isis and Orphic myths served as the models for philosophy (Plut. *Mor.* 68; Uždavinys 2008, p. 67).⁶⁴

One of the ways to achieve immortality was through an *erastes* to appreciate the beauty of both the mind and the body. Guilherme Da Motta explains that the priestess Diotima, in the *Symposium*, establishes that *eros*, "in virtue of being a desire to possess the good, is always a desire for immortality, thus opening the way for the contention that the way lovers seek to attain immortality is to engender and beget in the beautiful, whether by means of the body or the means of soul" (Pl. 206a-b; 2019, p. 153). If immortality was achieved by engaging in a relationship with a beautiful boy who had the potential for a beautiful soul, Antinous was the key for that immortality.

A particularly moving passage from Plato's *Phaedo* is worth quoting here:

but he who is newly initiated, who beheld many of those realities, when he sees a godlike face or form which is a good image of beauty, shudders at first, and something of the old awe comes over him, then, as he gazes, he reveres the beautiful one as a god, and if he did not fear to be thought stark mad, he would offer sacrifice to his beloved as to an idol or god.

(251a-252b).

⁶⁴ For more on the mysteries and philosophy, see Da Motta 2019; Watson 2014 & Uždavinys 2008.

Socrates' explanation of the mysteries echoes the future of Hadrian and his deification of Antinous, especially if both the emperor and his favourite had been previously initiated, as it has been suggested.⁶⁵ Hadrian turned his beloved into an idol and god, and the creation of a mystery cult dedicated to Antinous, which not only took inspiration from Eleusinian, Dionysian, Isis, and Osirian cults, but sometimes fused with them, fed into Hadrian's Platonic thought.

To take part in mystery cults meant embarking on a journey of salvation and immortality. Socrates tells us that "whoever arrives in Hades without initiation and enlightenment will wallow in the mud, while he who arrives cleansed and initiated will dwell among the gods" (*Phaedo*, 69c), and thus the philosophical side of the mysteries suggests a deeper divine identity for Hadrian. Antinous, for Hadrian, operated as another way to develop a Hellenic and a divine identity via philosophy. Partaking in a pederastic relationship whilst simultaneously observing the beauty and intellect of Antinous refers to the two sides of Platonic philosophy, appreciating both the physical and intellectual beauty of a boy. In fact, the Pincio Obelisk joins Antinous' beauty and intelligence in the epitaph previously examined,⁶⁶ stating that he was "a youth with a beautiful face that delighted the eyes... [who had?] strength, with clever heart..." (Boatwright 1987, p. 244). Cultic practices were rooted in the ineffable power of the gods, such as invocations, sacrifices, statues, and philosophic education (*paideia*) (Uždavinys 2008, p. 69). The combination of cultic practices through participation of the mysteries, the deification of Antinous and the creation of a 'new' mystery cult that ultimately relied on preestablished salvific mystery cults, in amalgamation with Hadrian's *paideia* and pederasty, responds deeply to Platonic and philosophical theories of immortality and divinity, all communicated through the image of Antinous.

⁶⁵ See Birley 1997, p. 215; Lambert 1984, pp. 102-104.

⁶⁶ See chapter one, p. 36.

The Syncretism of Antinous and Hadrian

Hadrian's participation and relationship, both before and after Antinous' death, to the three major mystery cults, cannot be considered a coincidence. From what we have seen, Hadrian understood the syncretic nature of these three cults very well, as even before Hadrian's time it was believed that "rites of Osiris are the same as that of Dionysus and that of Isis are very similar to that of Demeter, the names alone having been interchanged" (Dio. Sic. 1.96). Not all parallels between Hadrian, Antinous and the mystery gods make perfect sense, of course. Osiris was technically superior to Horus, and there was not just technically one New Dionysus, but two, considering both Hadrian and Antinous held those titles. Syncretism, however, was a response to the encounter of two opposing forces: first, the constraints that arise from inherited traditions, dignified by a long history; and second, the need to enter conversation with a new culture and its spirit (Koester 1995, p. 158). Hadrian was drawing from the Greek past that now held so much value in the eyes of the so-called 'Second Sophistic', and by doing so entered the age-old conversations of cult worship and religious communication. By using preestablished mystery cults, Hadrian not only used them to legitimise Antinous' divinity, but also took advantage of their panhellenic natures, establishing his divine identity throughout his empire. The promotion of Antinous as a god was a promotion of Hadrian as a god.

Throughout the Roman empire there was a culture of display (in processions, building programmes, games, personal appearances, and statues) which constantly linked imperial power and spectacle (Goldhill 2001, p. 159). In this chapter we have seen Antinous' religious communication through all kinds of media, such as coins, sculpture, and architecture. As Rüpke explains:

media precede and survive specific communicative sequences, act as further stimuli, and enlarge any dyadic perspective of human-divine communication implied in classical

communication theory, thus making it accessible to secondary addressees, audiences, witnesses, connoisseurs, and tourists.

(2015, pp. 356-357)

In other words, using physical media to portray Antinous served to shape and reshape Hadrian's identity beyond oral decrees or festivals promoted to firsthand audiences. A beautiful statue of the Bithynian as Dionysus dripping with grapes and vines may have been presented with unapologetic celebration by Hadrian, but there would be a secondary impact in the years beyond. Regardless of how someone, say a Roman elite or Christian Father, read the statue of Antinous, as a god or lover or even a sexual deviant, the thought of Hadrian via the image of Antinous would not be so far behind.

Vout's discussion of the statue of Antinous from Leptis Magna in Libya especially comes to mind regarding the physical impact of Antinous' imagery. An immaculately preserved statue of Antinous was found in the Hadrianic baths of Leptis Magna, once belonging to the likeness of Apollo, was quickly shaped to become Dionysus-Antinous (fig. 9). As Vout jests, "Hadrian was in Egypt and might stop off in Leptis on the way home. How embarrassing if there were no memorial to the boy he loved" (2007, p. 96). Hadrian had not visited Leptis Magna, yet the image of Antinous was quickly produced because of the youth's connection with the emperor. The Leptis Magna statue was not inherently a cult statue, but the same theory can apply to the Antinoan aspects that were a part of mystery cults. Many cult statues of Antinous were likely erected because of his link with the emperor on the off chance he was to visit and pay his respects, but over time the image was incorporated into the cult itself, embedding both the youth and the emperor into the narratives of mystery cults all over the Roman empire. Regardless of whether the statues or cults were implemented by Hadrian's own decree, it is clear the emperor understood the syncretic nature of both the gods and mystery religions throughout the Mediterranean and how to use them as tools to promote his and Antinous' divinity.

Through Antinoan imagery, the religious syncretisation process reached an intense climax. The iconography of Antinous as Osiris or Dionysus meant that “old and new forces of religious [experiences] briefly met... an infusion of warm oriental energy, mysticism and transcendence into a cult which vividly reembodyed the most ancient and profound myths of Graeco-Egyptian religion” (Lambert 1984, p. 183). How could Hadrian not take advantage of the popularity and intensity of mystery cults throughout the Roman empire? How could the Mediterranean not adopt the youth who was “no fanciful personification of an abstraction, no variable embodiment of a creature of myth” (Lambert 1984, p. 177), but a man who had achieved the unachievable – immortality?

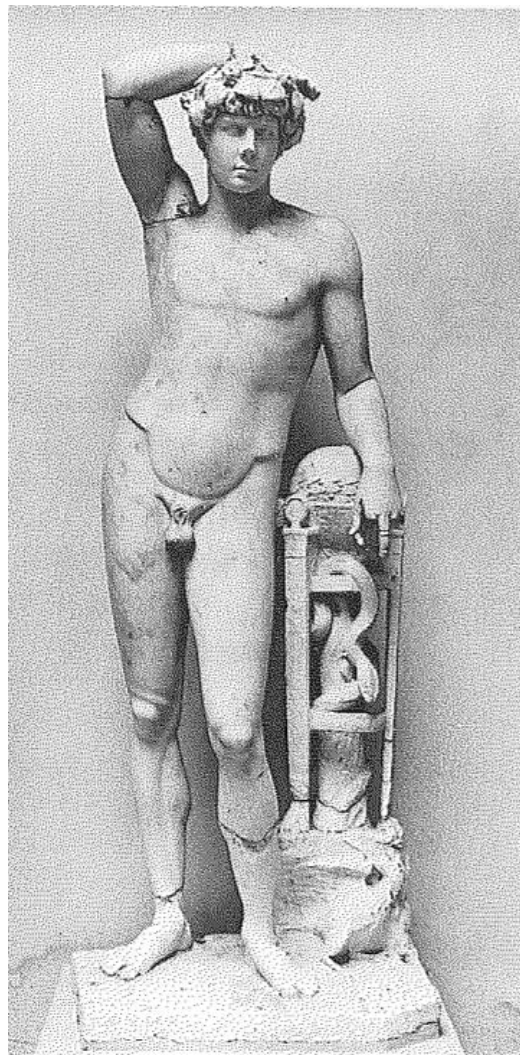


Fig. 9. Antinous as Dionysus-Echmoun, Leptis Magna, c. second century CE.
Image Source: Vout 2007, p. 97-98.

To Richlin, “the case of Antinous is too well-known; his was only an elaborate version of an ordinary passion” (1992, p. 223). Vout challenges this opinion, in that she “is right to stress that there was nothing unusual about a Roman man taking a young male lover (as long as according to the standard line that lover was not a fellow citizen), but woefully understates the scale and impact of Antinous’ commemoration”, as “it is not Hadrian’s [pederastic relationship] that is important so much as his decision to flaunt it publicly” (2007, p. 53). The initial function of Antinous’ veneration by the emperor was ultimately to promote Hadrian’s divinity without Hadrian’s image physically being there; the subconscious connection was enough. A citizen could pray at the statue of Antinous, but also invoke a plea to the emperor too, just as much as someone could request assistance from Isis but give thanks to Persephone or Demeter. Still today, almost two thousand years on, we look at Antinous and cannot help to remember him as the lover and companion of Emperor Hadrian.

Chapter II

The People's Antinous

The veneration of Antinous was not only the result of imperial pressure, but often local and spontaneous (Jones 2010, p. 79). Rather than understanding the Bithynian in relation to Hadrian, this chapter proposes a different approach. We shall divorce Antinous from Hadrian and examine the function of Antinous and Antinoan *cultus* for collective and individual Greek identities in provincial cities. This will be observed through the agency of local elites, mystery cult communities, and individual worshippers of Antinous responding to Antinoan images and Antinoan cult practice. We shall first assess how Antinous has been interwoven with local myths to promote local heroes and gods that established specific Greek identities for the community and the elite alike, before moving on to how Antinoan worship possibly promoted a sense of divinity and sexuality for mystery cult initiates. Antinous' popularity in the eastern part of the Roman empire was not solely Hadrian's promotion of the youth; rather Antinous proved a vital tool in the advancement of identity and well-being for many in the second century CE. Recognising the hero worship and religious communication of Antinous through different communities (and thus individuals) expands our understanding of why Antinous' image spread throughout the empire and the function it served. The method of 'lived ancient religion' is especially required when examining the veneration of Antinous in local Greek cities. By evaluating the material and textual remains of Antinoan worship with the existing norms, beliefs, and priorities of Greek cities, we can uncover local Antinoan religious communication and identity in the second century CE.

Hero Worship and Local History

Antinous' image was often syncretised with, or claimed as, a city's divine hero, as religious ritual and hero worship were overwhelmingly the most common way in which civic

identity was expressed (Howgego 2005, p. 2). Antinous was commonly called 'hero' on coinage and in inscriptions (Jones 2010, p. 81), or was partnered with the local god or hero of the city and/or area, particularly on coins and medallions which began representing Antinous in 134 CE.⁶⁷ Greek aristocracy in the Roman empire, as Jones observes, "called the old heroes to new life, and added to the roll of new heroes by public commemoration, often of young males snatched away by premature death" (Jones 2010, p. 66). Thus, it is not surprising that at least thirty cities or leagues of the eastern empire, and, in a much smaller capacity, the Greek cities of Arcadia, Mantinea, Argos, Corinth, Delphi and Nicopolis, honoured Antinous on their coinage as a local hero and god (Jones 2010, p. 79). In nine cases, the names of the issuers also appeared on the coinage, including: Hostilius Marcellus, priest of Antinous at Corinth (appendix 2.5-6), T. Flavius Aristotimos, priest of Apollo at Delphi (appendix 2.7), Claudius Candidus Iulianus at Stratoniceus (appendix 2.8), the sophist Polemon at Smyrna (appendix 2.9), and Iulius Saturninus, *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of Galatia (appendix 2.10).⁶⁸

The pairing of the name of the issuer with that of Antinous in civil numismatic context would have associated any elite individual with the imperial regime, especially in the east, where local gods were used to incorporate external power or to respond to political change (Howgego 2005, p. 3). Yet, Antinous was not a local god for most of these cities – instead, he was made one. "Myths, heroes, and their genealogies were a flexible and venerable medium

⁶⁷ Roman bronze medallions differed from ordinary coinage, usually given as presentation pieces, and differed from normal currency in both size and weight, but still could act in the form of 'gift money' (Rowan 2014, pp. 109-110). The production of presentation medallions reached its peak under Hadrian, becoming an important medium to display close relationships to the emperor, and were markers of social and political status (Rowan 2014, p. 111). Toynbee argues that the more glamorous and stylised Antinous pieces may have been issued at festivals, struck for the festivals of Antinous, and the superb high relief portraits on the medallions suggests that they were the product not of local talent, but of imperial medallists from Rome, commissioned by the Greek cities (Toynbee 1944, p. 66). Whilst this goes against the main argument of local embracement, the Antinoan coins examined in this half of chapter two were minted as currency, not medallions, by their respective cities, thus highlighting Antinoan appropriation by local authorities. For more on Antinous medallions and Roman medallions, see Toynbee, J. M. C 1944, pp. 65-73; Rowan, C 2014, pp. 109-125.

⁶⁸ Coin identification and translation from Amandry 2015, p. 99.

for rooting the identity of a community in a complex network of relationships” (Yildirim 2008, p. 31). Heroes could change and evolve depending on the situation that called for them. On a psychological basis, hero worship fulfilled important cognitive and emotional needs, embodying wisdom, meaning, hope, inspiration, and growth, much like mystery cults (Allison & Goethals 2015, p. 189). Mythological narrative was also used to gain a sense of identity for the elite, but hero narratives were also vital to rural cities to give a sense of collective heritage and values. As a result of this popular medium, appropriating Antinous as a local hero, and not just a mystery god, meant that elites could create new or modified historic identities for entire communities.

As the imperial government rested on an amalgam of autonomous cities across the empire, the elite began their communication by the creation of religious constructs defined by each city in relation to its specific history and the political dialogue it established with Rome (Andringa 2007, p. 121). Local histories and mythologies were being linked to Roman ideals whilst simultaneously never straying too far from their own Greek identity, as “Greek myths always retained their local roots: down to Pausanias in the second century [CE] and beyond, Greek myth was mostly concerned with local identity” (Graf 2011, p. 212). Local myths sought to express ideological messages in narrative form, deriving their authority and legitimacy from symbolic resources, namely heroes (Hall 2007, pp. 332-333).

Above all, it was genealogy which played a central role in creating and maintaining a sense of identity in preliterate societies, connecting the Greek present with its past (Griffiths 2011, p. 199). Connecting an individual or a community's past to the greatness of a hero raised status and legitimacy and claims of descent from heroes took on a new urgency in the reign of Hadrian (Jones 2010, p. 68). In the Hadrianic period especially, there was an innate desire to connect mythological and historical relevance to garner prestige, identity, and a connection to ancestors. During the second century CE, it was particularly desirable to link one's own

practice of Greekness with the past and to claim that one's use of attic and classical Hellenism was in some way natural, upholding a traditional connection to the ancients (Kemezis 2014, p. 394).

The identities that came from foundation and hero narratives connected communities to the virtues and values common to the Greek world, but simultaneously, boasted their own individual local antiquity and traditions.⁶⁹ Antinous was such a figure that enabled local cities to connect the present with the collective Greek past as well as a city's own individual heritage. Here was a Greek male who died young, who was recently elevated to the status of a hero-god, and who could easily represent the ideal Greek through his own flexible and syncretic nature. In this way, Antinous was used as an agent to promote a city's identity, offering up a way to renew and reinvigorate community history, both on a local and panhellenic level. To understand this, we shall focus on two cities in particular: the Arcadian city Mantinea, and the Ionian city, Ephesus, two regional cities which adopted Antinous into their local history and mythology to promote their communal identities.

Mantinea's Antinous

"Antinous was from Bithynium, a city of Bithynia, which we also call Claudiopolis" (Dio. 69.11.2), and it was a city that heavily incorporated Antinous into its provincial identity. It is not surprising that the birth city of Antinous was quick to appropriate the youth into its local identity, as shown in the various Bithynium coins that depict Antinous (appendix 2.11 – 2.12). For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is not Bithynium, but the Arcadian city Mantinea, that will be the vital jumping off point in order to understand the

⁶⁹ Bahadır Yildirim examines the city of Aphrodisias in the second century CE and its similar use of the mythological hero Bellerophon. The use of heroic foundation narratives in the cultural production and self-representation of the city was most common in Asia Minor (2008, pp. 23-25). For more see Yildirim 2008, pp. 23-52.

function of Antinoan hero veneration in local cities. The plethora of evidence from Mantinea makes the city a primary locus for Antinoan hero worship, as Mantinea's Antinoan communication highlights the spread of Antinous' image to convey individualised local identity.⁷⁰ As Mantinea displays strong evidence for hero veneration and mystery cult worship simultaneously, it provides a rich source for multiple variations of Antinoan worship from one city alone.⁷¹

Pausanias gives us a lively account of the impact of both Hadrian and the youth in the city, where:

[The Mantineans] accepted Antinous as a god: his shrine is the newest in Mantinea... He has formal honours elsewhere as well as at Mantinea... He received his honours at Mantinea in the following way: Antinous was born at [Bithynium] above the Sangarios river, and by ancestry the Bithynians are Arkadians and in fact Mantineans. So, the king [Hadrian] instituted a cult to him in Mantinea as well, with a sacrifice to him every year, and games in his honour every four years. There is a house in the Mantinean training-ground with statues of Antinous, worth seeing for the stone of its decoration and for its paintings, most of which present Antinous as Dionysus, even apart from the statues.

(8.9.7-8)

Mantinea was the historical mother-city of Bithynium, which resulted in Mantinea embracing Antinous. In fact, Antinous came from a small community in the territory of Bithynium called Mantinium (Birley 1997, pp. 178-180). Here, the Mantinean elite of Arcadia were connecting themselves, and thus the city, to the birthplace of Antinous, as any city able to articulate their religious identity by reference to a distant location had an advantage in formulating a clear-cut identity (Rüpke 2018, p. 362). Referentiality created authentication and legitimisation, with events and experiences being perceived as distinctly different from the traditional religious rituals, which in turn produced a highly individualised civic identity (Rüpke 2018, p. 361). Antinous received honours in Mantinea in a way only Mantinea could bestow on the youth, because of the shared history between the city and

⁷⁰ For more on Antinous worship in Bithynium, see Lambert's (1984) detailed discussion; pp. 148-152, 185-187.

⁷¹ For mystery cult practice in Mantinea, see chapter two, pp. 97-99.

Bithynium. Mantinea specifically drew its genealogy from Bithynium and from Antinous, who was 'originally' from Arcadia. This lineage formulated an 'authentic' divine, and Hellenic identity which suited the ideals of connecting one's genealogy to great heroes and gods.

Politically speaking, taking advantage of the connection between Antinous, one's city, and the emperor was a wise decision. As Boatwright points out, Mantinea profited from Hadrian by attaching its legacy to the birthplace of his beloved Antinous (2000, p. 135). Mantinea was bestowed many benefactions by Hadrian, including a temple of Poseidon (Paus. 8.10.2). Yet, in the context of the 'Second Sophistic', it also enhanced the appreciation and glory of the past. Hadrian himself restored the name 'Mantinea' to the city, where previously it had been known as 'Antigonia' for ten generations, and "the restoration of the name Mantinea matches the desire of the local elite for continuity with the Mantinean past" (Paus. 8.8.12; Roy 2016, p. 121). This certainly reflected Hadrian's own Hellenism and his mission to revive the ancient glory of Greece and its cities, but by honouring Antinous and tying itself to Bithynium, Mantinea was using the youth to promote its own history. Local elites were most likely to engage in a manipulation of history because they had the greatest stake in the reputation and survival of their city: wealthy families financed festivals, renovations, and monuments, controlling the main media for public display and preservation of local traditions, which in turn meant that they could select projects that supported their preferred version of the past (Pretzler 2005, p. 28). Antinous presented a renewed history for Mantinea, strengthening their own history and colonial ties with the installation of the hero from Bithynium.

In addition to Pausanias' evidence, we see another instance of Antinous' establishment as a local deity in Mantinea. An inscription from the city shows that a Spartan aristocrat, Gaius Julius Eurycles Herculanius, left money in his will to donate a *stoa* in honour

of Mantinea “and of the local god (*epichôrios theos*) Antinoos” (Jones 2010, p. 79).⁷² We should note that the assertion of Antinous as a local god in general is interesting, as this was the youth known throughout most of Hadrian's empire; there was nothing ‘local’ about him. Yet, the Mantinean's reclaimed Antinous' link to Bithynium, which emphasised Antinous' ‘locality’. In fact, the name of Antinous as a local hero seems to recall another Mantinean legend:

Antinoe took away the people by the command of an oracle, and brought them to this place [Mantineia], guided by a snake, though what kind of snake is not recorded. Because of this the river that flows past the modern city is called the Snake. If one can draw conclusions from Homeric poetry, I am sure this snake was a dragon: when Homer writes of Philoktetes in the list of ships that the Greeks deserted him in Lemnos suffering from the snake-bite, he does not give the water-serpent the title of snake, but he does call the dragon the eagle dropped on the Trojans a snake: and so the probabilities are that Antinoe was guided by a dragon.

(Paus. 8.8.4).

Antinous' name, in the eyes of a Mantinean, might just be the masculine version of Antinoe, the Mantinean foundress. Roy comments that “since the myth of Antinoe does not appear to have been widely known outside Mantinea, this coincidence is unlikely to have been the main reason for supposing that the Mantinean's were [Bithynium's] ancestors” (2016, p. 126). But Antinoe was not supposed to connect Mantinea to Bithynium nor Bithynium to Mantinea; the heroine attached a totally unique, divine, and historical past to the city, and Antinous is no different in this respect. In fact, the use of Antinous as a local god enhances this historical past, because he possibly functioned as a link to the foundress through his name alone, reinforcing his relationship to the people of Mantinea, and encouraging a deeper, richer history for the city.

The connection between Antinous and Antinoe may be coincidental at best, but the link was likely used by Mantinea. Local tradition was passed on because it was in some way

⁷² IG. 5.2, 281

significant, as part of a community's history, or as an important feature of local culture or less tangible aspects of local identity (Pretzler 2005, p. 23). It seems doubtful that the Mantinean elite would not have used the Antinous-Antinoe connection to thrust their local tradition and identity onto the image of the Bithynian. Of course, Antinous as a 'local' god could mean any number of things, be it the Bithynium-Mantinean birthright, the link between the city's original founder, or something completely different that we have no record of. Whatever the case may be, this new past allowed Mantinea to maintain an important local history whilst also recalling their larger, prestigious Hellenic identity. The numerous paintings, sculptures, and dedications to Antinous that Pausanias relates, along with multiple foundation narratives and a place for Antinous amongst the local heroes and gods, are a testament to this manipulation of history to reinvigorate Mantinea's past, offering a rare glimpse of a community's attempt to re-invent significant parts of its history for the present (Pretzler 2005, p. 31).

Ephesus' Antinous

Mantineia was not the only city to weave Antinous into its cultural fabric. At Ephesus we find a link between the city's foundation myth and Antinous via the hero Androkles.⁷³ Ephesus had various foundation myths, but Androkles is mentioned as the *ktistes*, the founder, of Ephesus on several Hellenistic and Roman inscriptions found in the city, including the frieze located in the Temple of Hadrian (Rogers 2014, p. 125).⁷⁴ The parallels

⁷³ The Androkles referenced throughout this thesis is specifically the foundation hero of Ephesus. Whilst Androkles can be spelt numerous ways (i.e., Androcles, Androclus, Androklos, Androklos), this thesis will only refer to Ephesus' foundation hero as Androkles. Furthermore, the Androkles of Ephesus is a different hero from the Androclus, the protagonist of a common folktale about a slave befriendng a lion, the earliest surviving account being from Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights* (5.14.11-30) in the second century CE.

⁷⁴ Strabo in the early first century CE tells us that Androkles was the legitimate founder of Ephesus (*Geog.* 14.1.3). Another major foundation myth of Ephesus is retold by Athenaeus of Naucratis (c. second century CE), citing Creophylus' *Annals of Ephesians*: "The people who were trying to find Ephesus had a great deal of trouble, because they were unable to locate a site. Finally, they sent to the god's oracle (Delphi) and asked where they should put their city, and he prophesied to them that they should found a city in a place a fish would show them and to which a wild boar would lead the way. The story goes, then, that some fishermen were having lunch in the spot where the so-called Hypelaeus spring and the sacred lake are located today, and that one of their fish jumped out of the fire with an ember struck to it and fell into some dry brush. This set fire to a thicket

between Ephesus' Androkles and Antinous are remarkably strong: both die young and tragically, one drowning in the Nile, the other killed in a battle against the Samians (Paus. 7.2.5-6). But this thesis argues that the most compelling similarity resides in the fact they were both were youthful and skilled hunters.

Hunting was particularly important for Ephesus, and depictions of their participation in the sport are common for both Antinous and Androkles. Androkles is shown slaying a boar on the frieze in the Temple of Hadrian, and we can recall here the tondo of Antinous and Hadrian hunting the boar. Furthermore, the boar hunting tondo resides with two other hunting tondi, commemorating Hadrian's (and Antinous') lion hunt of 130 in Alexandria: with one tondo showing five men behind a lion's corpse and another depicting men making offerings to Hercules, whose killing of the Nemean lion parallels Hadrian's heroic deed (Hörschele 2019, p. 218; appendix 3.8). In addition to the Hadrianic/Antinoan tondi, the lion hunt poem by Pancrates represents the event as if it were a Homeric epic, and focuses heavily on the greatness of the hunt itself.⁷⁵ Moreover, Ephesus' patron deity was Artemis, goddess of the hunt, who stood as a central symbol for the city, the people, and their self-understanding (LiDonicci 1992, pp. 395-396).⁷⁶ Hunting motifs were integral to Ephesian identity, and since Antinous' character was strongly identified with the huntsman, Antinous fed into Androkles'

in which a wild boar happened to be, it was thrown into a panic by the fire and ran for a long distance along the mountain, which is known as Trecheia. After it was hit by a javelin, it collapsed in the spot where the temple of Athena is now located. The Ephesians crossed over from the island where they had been living for 20 years, and settled Trecheia and the area around Coressus for a second time..." (*The Learned Banqueters*, 8.361d-e). Though Androkles was not mentioned in Athenaeus' iteration, the boar was most likely slain by Androkles in the original foundation myth, as the city founder would be shown bringing down the boar with his javelin until the fourth century CE (Rogers 2014, p. 108).

⁷⁵ Regina Hörschele's paper 'Two Lovers and a Lion: Pankrates' poem on Hadrian's Royal Hunt' (2019) analysed the poem brilliantly and explores the Homeric, hunting and iconographic nature of the poem regarding Antinous and Hadrian.

⁷⁶ For more on Artemis, Ephesus and identity see Lidonnici 1992, 'The Images of Artemis Ephesia and Greco-Roman Worship: A Reconsideration' & Frayer-Griggs 2013, 'The Beasts at Ephesus and the Cult of Artemis'.

identity, and thus the city's identity, functioning as an easy syncretisation for Ephesus to leverage.

Greek descent was symbolised on the coinage most of all by the rise in the depiction of founding heroes and foundation myths (Howgego 2005, p. 6). One Ephesian coin shows Antinous and the inscription *hêrôs Antinooc* (Antinous the Hero) on the reverse, with the obverse revealing a naked Androkles or Antinous-Androkles advancing with a spear over his left shoulder and leading a sacrificial boar with his right hand (fig. 10).⁷⁷ The naked Androkles is particularly important, as standing nude heroes was a format used on the coinage of cities particularly in Asia Minor in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods to depict local founders (Yildirim 2008, p. 30). Yet, once again, Antinous is given the title of hero, and Gustave Blum too believes the assimilation was no accident, as places such as Delphi and Arcadia (as we have seen) had also identified Antinous with their local heroes (Blum 1914, p. 41). Ephesus had minted one coin with two local heroes; it seems Ephesus was trying to incorporate both figures into their history, one with Athenian Greek roots, and the other with local ties.



Fig. 10. Bronze coin depicting Antinous and (or as) Androkles

Obverse inscription: HPΩC ANTINOOC

Obverse design: Bare-headed draped bust of Antinous

Reverse inscription: ΕΦΕCΙΩΝ ΑΝΔΡΟΚΛΑΟC

Reverse design: Androkles (Antinous?) walking naked with chlamys over shoulders, leading sacrificial boar with r. hand, holding spear over shoulder in l. hand; behind him, a tree.

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online. *RPC* III, 2084

⁷⁷ See also Blum. G 1914, 'Numismatique d'Antinoos', pp. 33-70; Rogers 2014, p. 125.

Through Androkles, Ephesus made an implicit link back to Athens, drawing a genealogy and history from the Athenian past in keeping with the display of a foundation hero to promote their Hellenic identity. Herodotus, when cynically discussing the Ionians who settled Ephesus, links the city with the “Council House in Athens” (1.146) and Strabo specifically tells us that “Androkles, legitimate son of Codrus the king of Athens, was the leader of the Ionian colonisation, which was later than the Aeolian, and that he became the founder of Ephesus” (*Geography*, 14.3). However, fusing Antinous with images of Androkles may have created a sense of local pride, creating a multilayered identity for the city. Antinous was Greek, but also from the neighbouring province, Bithynia. Incorporating Antinous into the local identity of Ephesus specifically through Androkles subtly strengthened these multiple identities. Androkles recalled Ephesus' Athenian ancestry and traditional roots, but Antinous concurrently served to invite a prominent local identity into the community.

In conjunction with the Antinous-Androkles coin type, a large statue of Androkles (fig. 12) was found in the Vedius Bath and Gymnasium Complex at Ephesus, the head of which depicts Antinous. This statue solidifies the argument of Ephesus using Antinous not only as a tool for imperial discourse, but also as a figure of genuine local importance. To Philostratus, “Hadrian, at any rate, had hitherto favoured Ephesus” (*Lives of the Sophists*, 1.25), but there is no solid evidence to suggest that Hadrian visited Ephesus after Antinous' death. It is possible the elite of Ephesus commemorated Antinous on the premise that they would then receive impressive benefits from the emperor, much like Mantinea. The difference for Ephesus, however, is that it was not Hadrian whose attention the city was hoping to gain, but the succeeding emperor Antoninus Pius. It is vital to remember that “images which we now call ‘imperial’ were commonly erected by local artists and at local expense” (Vout 2010, p. 60). In no way does a statue of Antinous automatically mean Hadrian had a hand in its construction.



Fig. 12. Marble statue of Antinous as Androkles. Tree base shows the remains of a hunting dog, common to Androkles' iconography (c. 138-160 CE.)

Located in the Izmir Archaeological Museum, Turkey.

Image Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, photographed by Carole Raddato.

The bath-gymnasium where the Antinous-Androkles statue was found was dedicated by Publius Veditius Antoninus to “Ephesian Artemis and to Imperator Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrian Antoninus Pius Augustus and his house” (*IvE* 438; Burrell 2006, p. 441). Thus, the statue is dated to 138-160 CE.⁷⁸ The Ephesian Antinous-Androkles statue can be compared to the Antinoan statue in Leptis Magna— a statue that not only depicted a deified Antinous but was also connected to the city's own foundation mythos, displaying Antinous as the local Phoenician demi-god and hero Echmoun simultaneously with Dionysus (Vout 2007, pp. 109-110). The Leptis Magna Antinous, much like Ephesus, was able to communicate multiple identities and thus multiple narratives. The difference between the statues, however, is that whilst Leptis Magna's Antinous was likely for the eyes of Hadrian, Ephesus' Antinous was not.

Recent explorations of the gymnasium reveal that not only were there more than three hundred sculptural fragments found, but, where identifiable, they also represented figures of mythology, not emperors, and no imperial statues have been found whatsoever (Burrell 2006, pp. 446-447). The Antinous-Androkles statue, then, was most likely not a political monument. So, here lies the question: did the Ephesian Antinous statue participate in imperial discourse, or a figure that simply represented mythological and historical identity of Ephesus itself? The Antinoan coins from Bithynium, minted with emperors Commodus and Caracalla on the reverse, may answer this question (Blum 1914, p. 44-5; fig. 11). Later emperors continued to identify themselves with Antinous, because they understood his place as a localised deity. C. J. Howgego points out that on coinage at least, imperial imagery on the obverse and local image on the reverse was the norm, and “such iconography served to locate

⁷⁸ This is not the only time Antoninus Pius is associated with Antinous. Christer Bruun has argued that Antoninus (as well as future ruler Marcus Aurelius) was enrolled in the *collegium* of Antinous and Diana in Lanuvium (2016, pp. 362-364). See also fn. 41.

the community in relation to both Roman power and local tradition” (2005, p. 15). Depicting the youth on the reverse of a coin signalled Antinous as a ‘local’ image.

It is possible that Commodus and Caracalla were acknowledging Antinous’ important connections to local mythology, and as such his image acted less as a tool for political conversation, and more as recognition of the identities of rural cities. For Ephesus especially, Antinous’ parallels to Androkles’ accumulated into a revived image of the founder, and thus a renewed image for the city, understood by later emperors. The purpose of the Antinous of Ephesus was to re-establish Androkles’, and thus the city’s, local identity. The further away from Hadrian’s involvement with Antinous, the more we come to realise that the image of the Bithynian still held agency, just in different ways.



Fig. 11. Bithynian bronze coin of Emperor Commodus c. 182-184
Obverse inscription: AVT K M AVP KOMMOΔOC ANTΩNINOC
Obverse design: Laureate head of Commodus
Reverse inscription: BIΘΥΝΙΕΩΝ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΩΝ
Reverse design: Draped bust of Antinous.
Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online. *RPC* IV.1, 4743

Returning to the Ephesian statue of Antinous, although the statue’s identification is contested, the heavy Antinoan characteristics of the Androkles statue cannot be dismissed, adding weight to the appropriation of Antinous by Ephesus. On statues, the dress, posture, and features all worked together to communicate a message to the viewer (Borg 2008, p. 157). In a mostly illiterate society, visual works were key to convey specific messages and identities. The statue is presented as Androkles with an ephebic, chiselled body, half nude with a billowing hunting cloak, advancing forward with determination. A fragment of a dog’s

paw grasping a stiff hair from a boar was also found alongside the statue (Raddato, 2015).

Yet the erotic nature of the statue (including its placement in a gymnasium), the soft features of the face, and trademark mop of 'J'-shaped curls of hair (Vout 2005, p. 85), tells us that this is Antinous, or at least Antinous inspired.

Since portrait images had an almost exclusively public function and enhanced the public importance of the person represented (Hölscher 2018, p. 158), the statue of Antinous as Androkles represented the significance of both hero-gods simultaneously. Vout's argument that Alexander the Great's iconography and physical aesthetics bolstered Antinous' own divine imagery can be applied once again here. Furthermore, Vout also argues that it was Antinous that inspired the portraiture of the second century CE sophist Herodes Atticus' favourite youth Polydeukion, actively encouraging a subtle assimilation between the two youths in order for Herodes Atticus to be seen as an imperial imitator (2007, pp. 84-87; appendix 3.9).⁷⁹ The Androkles statue with Antinoan elements may just be a continuation of this trend: inspired by Antinous and his features, manipulating and blurring the lines between Antinous and Androkles to fit Ephesus' multiple public narratives.

Like so many cities of the empire, the Ephesians used Antinous' sacred status to reclaim their history, and to gain a sense of their own identities by merging the present with the past.

Robinson comments that the depiction of the sponsor Aristion as Androkles in the third century CE superbly illustrates Guy Roger's statement that the Ephesians "did not merely pretend that the past was the present. The past, in certain ways, was the present" (Robinson 2017, p. 202; Rogers 2014, p. 2). The same can be said for the statue of Antinous-Androkles, which reminded the city of its proud history and Greek heritage whilst simultaneously being relevant to the present. To represent the past had a double advantage: it could be specific to a

⁷⁹ For more on Herodes Atticus and Polydeuces, see Vout 2005, pp. 91-93; Vout 2007, pp. 85-87; Rife 2008, pp. 96-98.

locality and at the same time serve to locate the place within universal myth and history (Howgego 2005, p. 5). After 130 CE, with the help of Hadrian, Antinous was universal myth and history. His iconography in the many cities of Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor and Rome proves that.

Antinous' generalised popularity across the empire, and simultaneously the individualised nature of Antinous' image in local cities, caused places such as Ephesus or Mantinea to adopt the youth to revitalise their local narratives whilst tapping into the collective consciousness of the Roman empire's newest god. Everyone would be expected to understand what was presented on the respective coins or sculpture, to recognise who and what was meant by it, without it being explained (Weiß 2008, p. 192). Antinous' image was on all types of media in all kinds of places. One could see his face on the statues that decorated baths, gymnasiums, and temples; on bronze balsamaria for an athlete's ointments and oils (appendix 3.11-3.12), or even when one fished change out of a heavy coin purse. Local mythologies are rarely visible, and consequentially were absorbed in bits and pieces or lost to the ages (Graf 2011, p. 222), but the permanent forms of Antinoan media are statements to the importance of such local communication of identity, as these forms helped to repeatedly shape and reshape religious agency and identity (Rüpke 2015, p. 357).

A visitor may not know the local myths of a city, but there was a likely chance they would know Antinous. Friedman asserts that "constructing the past is an act of self-identification and the existential relation between subjects and the constitution of a meaningful world" (1992, p. 856). Links were made to a well-known heroic and divine figure, strengthening cities like Mantinea's or Ephesus' own identity within the Roman empire, whilst also subtly highlighting their own provincial and Greek stories through the parallels of their myths and deities with the Bithynian. Antinous did not allow local mythologies to become frozen or forgotten but instead sparked new histories for cities that suited the present, post-Antinous

state of the world. The youth functioned to emphasise civic individualism in a way that would be understood by almost everyone. Antinous, through the syncretisation of local, divinised heroes, was an important and highly popular way in which the Bithynian influenced the collective identities of the Mediterranean.

Antinous and Divine and Sexual Identities

Understanding the religious identity of an ancient individual or community is key to recognising the function of Antinoan veneration. Religious identity is “forged from a felt emotional connection and dependence... and its importance rests in the degree to which membership is embedded in everyday practice and characterises personal behaviour” (Rüpke 2018, p. 14). For certain cities, Antinoan veneration operated as a vital part of civic identity, and the identity of the elites, enacting their own values via different Antinoan appropriations. The second half of this chapter will move away from collective civic identities and mainly focus on the function of Antinoan mystery cult communities and the identities of initiates. The cult of Antinous far exceeds the cult of other heroes of the imperial period, and as Jones exclaims, “whether private or civic, both in geographical spread and in degree of elaboration... no other such hero has mysteries attached to him, or contests in his name, and no other is thought to answer prayers or cure diseases” (2010, p. 81). To explore every aspect of Antinous' place in the religious sphere of the ancient world is, once again, beyond the scope of this thesis. It is important to note that we do not know every intricacy of how Antinous was worshipped, but this thesis aims to draw from the evidence we do have, alongside broader knowledge of mystery cults in general, to understand how he may have been worshipped, and through this worship, how Antinous helped establish the divine and sexual identities of his initiates.

To begin looking at Antinoan cult function, and the youth's own place as a mystery deity, we need to ask why mystery initiations were so attractive for many people, especially when the social status of the initiated did not rise (Ustinova 2013, p. 105). The mass of support for mystery cults must have come from those who made up the vast bulk of 'ordinary' inhabitants – freeborn citizens, slaves, and ex-slaves (Beard, North & Price 1997, p. 294). Anyone could take part in a mystery cult: men, women, emperors, or slaves. The Andanian mysteries, which Pausanias would not speak of, for he had judged "their awful holiness to be second only to the Eleusinians" (4.3.4), is a particularly good example to show how the mysteries involved people of all ages and social classes, including women, children, and slaves. The Andanian mysteries instruct initiated women "to wear neither transparent clothes nor stripes on their himations more than half a *daktylos* wide", and their daughters to wear "a *kalasiris* or a *sindonites* and a himation worth in total no more than one *emine*" (Gawlinski 2011, p. 69). The sanctuary of the Andanian mysteries itself acted as a refuge for slaves (Gawlinski 2011, p. 81).⁸⁰ Mystery cults, for the most part, were made up of all levels of society. Hadrian and other elites could implement and manage Antinoan cults, but it was the 'ordinary' people that would have maintained its popularity. People, no matter their gender or class, desired an answer to their anxieties over life and death, and Antinoan cult worship provided this.

In the words of Royston Lambert, "one factor in Antinous' impact as a god on the people of the second century and beyond is obvious. He had been a man like them and was never to forfeit in his divinity his human form and personality" (1984, p. 177). Antinous had become a god and set a precedent for others to become just that, as the youth was proof that man can become immortal. Antinous' rebirth into divinity was likely enhanced by the appeal of the

⁸⁰ For more on the Andanian mysteries, see Gawlinski 2011, *The Sacred Law of Andania: A New Text with Commentary*. See also fn. 42.

gods he was syncretised with, as they already promoted rebirth and salvation. Concepts growing out of the general Hellenistic religious experience largely invaded religious rituals of the second century CE, with an emphasis on the salvation of the individual human being (Koester 1995, p. 158). Inwardness and privacy of worship within closed groups was highly desired, proven by the countless number of initiates who joined an association (mystery cults) of people united in their quest for personal salvation (Meyer 1987, p. 4). Initiates of Antinoan cult must have done so not solely out of imperial pressure or civic requirement, but to be a part of a community with common ideals.

The mysteries were a highly syncretic form of religion, and it is only possible to plot the distribution of these cults across the empire because there is a degree of uniformity in their material remains (Beard, North & Price 1997, p. 302).⁸¹ Since Antinous was chiefly syncretised with Dionysus throughout the Roman empire, this thesis proposes that Antinous'

⁸¹ Although we have already established Antinous' connection with the mysteries of Dionysus, Eleusis and Isis and Osiris, and will further investigate the relationship between Antinous and the Dionysian mysteries, it is important to note that these were not all the mystery cults we find Antinoan connection. A hymn possibly by the lyric poet Mesomedes (second century CE) was publicly inscribed in the city of Courion, the first two lines stating: "we praise Adonis, who is dwelling under the earth, the dead, whom we formerly called Antinous" (Lebek 1973, p. 130). Plutarch comments that "people hold Adonis to be none other than Dionysus, a belief supported by many of the rights at the festivals of both" (Plut. *Mor.* 4.671b). Pöhlmann also notes that Adonis was strongly identified with Osiris, and that "there was a centre of worship of Adonis/Osiris in Amathous, 20 km east of Courion" (2019, p. 131). The river Sangarios mentioned by Pausanias is closely related to the myth of Attis and the Great Mother Cybele (Vout 2007, p. 110), and even more puzzling is a head from Ostia, "found in the field of Magna Mater... crowned with a diadem on the front of which are two medallions with male busts" (Meiggs 1973, p. 379). This statue is commonly classified as Antinous as a priest of Attis (appendix 3.4). We can also recall the Antinoan statue head from the National Library of France depicting the youth as a child wearing the Phrygian cap and usually identified as Attis, an integral figure to the mystery cult of Cybele (appendix 3.12). Moreover, the Antinoan coin from Ancyra, dated 138 to 161 CE, presents Antinous on the obverse, and the god Men on the reverse (appendix 2.6). Men was a lesser god who was prominent in Asia Minor and closely tied to Sabazios, a Phrygian (and Thracian) deity of vegetation, to which there were also established mystery cults in his name (Koester 1995, p. 189).⁸¹ In fact, Men later appeared in Italy in the entourage of Attis, who together were worshipped as a universal god of heaven (Koester 1995, p. 189). The Asian Adonis and Dionysus, the Anatolian Attis and Men, and the Egyptian Osiris similarly were gods who had died and who were linked to the life cycle of vegetation, and the rebirth of fertility in the world of nature (Meyer 1987, p. 5). These syncretisations of Antinous as various mystery gods does not only act as an overarching statement to the similarities between the mysteries, but also suggests a sense of real agency and innovation from different religious communities incorporating Antinous into the worship of preestablished cults dedicated to salvific ideologies across the empire.

main worship was similar to, or a subsection of, the Dionysian mysteries.⁸² Unfortunately, the most complicated mysteries are those of Dionysus, as there is no single authoritative format for them and each city must have had its own ritual, though there was a certain family resemblance between them (Bremmer 2014, p. 100). Because of this, it is almost certain that many different iterations of Antinoan-Dionysian worship existed in antiquity, depending on the type of people and communities that performed such rites. Nonetheless, because of his place within Dionysian mystery cults, this chapter will mainly explore how Antinous functioned as a god who could bestow divinity and sexual bliss, much like Dionysus himself.

The Orphic-Bacchic-Antinoan Mysteries, and Becoming Immortal

In chapter one, we saw how Antinous' syncretisation with Dionysus emphasised his own salvific and divine identity, and how this in turn helped Hadrian obtain a similar self-image. Similarly, initiates of Antinoan cult also apprehended a divine identity, as the deified Antinous played on Dionysus' pre-existing function as a god of immortality and salvation. In 2005, the American Numismatic Society purchased a box mirror made from two modified specimens of medallion type coins from Smyrna depicting Antinous (Heath 2006, plate 5.1.a-e). Multiple versions of these makeshift mirrors have come to light, including another from Smyrna, and one featuring Hermes from Arcadia (Heath 2006, plate 6.2). The two mirrors from Smyrna both depict Antinous on one side, and a female panther on the other, an explicit icon of Dionysus (fig. 13). When opened, a reflective surface of polished silver is revealed. Heath points out not only the work and care that was taken in modifying the medallions, but

⁸² It is believed that the Dionysian mysteries may have originated in Thrace, though the cult has connections with Phrygia and possibly even Crete (Meyer 1987, p. 63). Between the last centuries BC and the first century CE, there was a convergence between the female-only maenadic rituals and the mixed or male-only Bacchic mysteries of earlier centuries (Bremmer 2014, p. 100). This merging of rituals and initiates is important, as this thesis will discuss the Orphic-Bacchic-Antinoan mysteries as a cult that offers initiation for both men and women. For more on Orphic-Bacchic mystery cults, see Bremmer 2014, pp. 100-109; Meyer 1987, pp. 63-109; Hearnshaw 1999, pp. 43-50, Henrichs 2011, pp. 61-66, Edmonds III, 2013.

that this mirror could have enacted as a ritual item for worshipping Dionysus, or more likely, Antinous-Dionysus, via Orphism (2006, p. 69-70).

The Orphic mysteries, which are linked to Dionysus (now increasingly called the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries), gives us a clue on one way in which Antinous was worshipped and how this cult instilled a sense of divinity in his initiates. Since Antinous and Dionysus were claimed as salvific gods, and, being that Orphism was the most significant of the mystery cults in the second century CE (Thompson 2015, p. 119), in conjunction with the Smyrna mirror-coins, we can assume that the Antinoan *cultus* had an Orphic nature. The very name of the Orphic mysteries centres around Orpheus,⁸³ but Dionysus plays a vital role. Dionysus-Zagreus (known simply as Zagreus in the myth) was the son of Zeus and Persephone, and where “by the fierce resentment of implacable Hera, the Titans cunningly smeared their round faces with disguising chalk, and while he contemplated his changeling countenance reflected in a mirror, they destroyed him with an infernal knife” (Nonnus. *Dion.* 6.169a).

A precedent for the role of mirrors in the worship of Dionysus in the imperial period is found in the frescos of the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii, with a young female initiate either beginning or ending her ritual in the presence of a mirror held by either Cupid or Psyche

⁸³ The people of the ancient Graeco-Roman world would attribute Orpheus to several poems in the dactylic hexameter and poetic language most familiar to Homeric poetry, as well as crediting him with the foundation of several rituals, most notably bringing the rituals of Osiris back to Greece and performing them in the honour of Dionysus (Edmonds III 2013, p. 4). There are two stories that Orphism draws upon. Firstly, the *Orphic Theogony*, with the first explicit verse dated between 340 and 320 BCE, consisting of the gruesome story of Zagreus-Dionysus, but also includes the story of Orpheus as the explanation model to teach humans the lesson of individual sorrow, death, and resurrection through his love and loss of the nymph Eurydice (Kotwick 2014, p. 76; Prusac-Lindhagen 2018, p. 35). The second myth was *The Legend of Orpheus*, recorded by Ovid in the first century CE (*Met.* 10.1-85). This was the story of Orpheus and his attempt to rescue his beloved Eurydice back from the underworld, which the *Orphic Theogony* formed the background for (Prusac-Lindhagen 2018, p. 35). Both stories become interlocked in the episode where Orpheus met with Hades and negotiated over the soul of Eurydice. The core value of the Orphic mysteries was the soul - its resurrection and its rebirth. For more on Orpheus and Orphism, see Bremmer 2014, pp. 55-80; Edmonds III 2013, *Redefining Ancient Orphism: A Study in Greek Religion*; Prusac-Lindhagen 2018, pp. 33-56; Watson 2014, pp. 47-71.

(Heath 2006, p. 70).⁸⁴ In addition, another scene shows a Silenus (an old spirit of the wild) and a satyr holding a bowl and a Silenus mask respectively, so that another satyr, who is looking for his reflection in the bowl, will instead see the likeness of a Silenus (Meyer 1987, p. 64). The mirror and reflection play an integral part to some Dionysian cults, and with the Antinoan-Dionysian mirrors from Smyrna, we can expect that they too were used for an Antinoan-Orphic-Bacchic cult.



Fig. 13. Bronze box-mirror depicting Antinous and Dionysian Panther.

Obverse inscription: [ANTINOOC] HRWC

Obverse design: Bare-headed bust of Antinous

Reverse inscription: POLEMWN ANEQHKE CMVPNAIOIC

Reverse design: Female panther l. grasping a filleted thyrsus

Source: Ancient Coin Search, Triton V, 11 January 2005, lot. 727.

<https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=206579>

The Orphic mysteries were a chance to obtain a glorious, divine identity through achieving deification in the afterlife, promising to purify the initiates' souls to their great benefit and to possibly confer immortality and communion with Dionysus (Thompson 2015, p. 119).

According to the Orphic mysteries, humans “are composed of a Titanic nature (the fleshly

⁸⁴ The frescoes from the Villa of Mysteries are also interpreted by some scholars as a young woman undergoing the rights of marriage, commonly associated with Dionysus. For more on this analysis, see Hearnshaw 1999, pp. 43-50.

body) and a Dionysian nature (the immortal soul)... although the Dionysian soul is imprisoned in the Titanic body (the *soma*, or body, is termed a *sema*, or tomb, by the Orphics), the soul may be delivered from its shackles by means of a life devoted to purity and realise its true Dionysian destiny” (Meyer 1987, p. 65). This is in reference to the belief that Dionysus came back to life after his dismemberment by the Titans, when his limbs were reassembled and his wounds healed by Rhea (Henrichs 2011, p. 64), or that Zagreus was reborn as Dionysus through Semele via Zeus.⁸⁵ Sarah Watson, referring to Massimo Di Marco (1993), points out that Orpheus, the very founder of the Dionysian mysteries, suffers a tragic dismemberment, like the god, at the end of his life (2014, p. 57).⁸⁶ Of course, Antinous did not go through a physical dismemberment like Dionysus (or Osiris), but he was, as the obelisk itself states, “reborn” (Boatwright 1987, p. 243).

The belief in a divine state of being is particularly notable in the Orphic gold sheets, or *lamellae*, discovered in burials in Crete, southern Italy, Rome, and Thessaly, given to the deceased to aid them in their journey into the afterlife (Meyer 1987, p. 101). One *lamella*, (fig. 14), is dated to the mid fourth century BCE. This gold tablet is inscribed with a conversation of the initiate with the spring of the underworld, which Meyer presumes to be the spring of Mnemosnye, or Memory (1987, p. 101):

Initiate: I am parched with thirst and perishing.

Spring: But drink of me, the ever-flowing spring on the right, [where] there is a fair cypress. Who are you? Where are you from?

⁸⁵ It is worth mentioning that the parallels between Antinous, Hadrian, Dionysus and Zeus are strong. Dionysus and Antinous were both associated with Greece and foreign exoticism and both were depicted as effeminate youths. Dionysus was known as being ‘twice born’ (Ov. *Met.* 3.317), his mother Semele having been slain by his father, Zeus, and “still in the foetal stage, [Dionysus] was ripped from [Semele’s] womb, and, strange as it seems, survived to complete his mother’s term stitched up in his father’s thigh” (Ov. *Met.* 3.310-13). In a similar sense, Antinous had also been ‘twice born’, once on the mortal earth and then once again because of his deification via Hadrian’s decree.

⁸⁶ Ovid recounts the gory death of Orpheus, ripped apart by Bacchantes, the female followers of Dionysus, in their ecstasy and in their displeasure at the poet for giving up the love of women, turning only to men (*Met.* 11.1-66). Orpheus’ invention of the mysteries and his death is also recorded in Apollodorus’ *Library*, in the first or second century CE: “Orpheus also invented the mysteries of Dionysus and having been torn to pieces by the Maenads he is buried in Pieria” (1.3.2-3).

Chapter II: The People's Antinous

Initiate: I am a child of Earth and of starry Heaven, but my race is of Heaven [alone].

(trans. Meyer 1987, p. 101)

Another gold tablet, this time dated to 260 CE from Rome, states that the deceased woman, Caecilia Secundina, had “legitimately transformed into a goddess” on her ascension into the afterlife, formalising her divinisation (Bernabé 2007, et al., pp. 133-135). We can see here, in both tablets, that the Orphic belief of becoming immortal barely changed over time.

Regarding the *lamellae*, Ustinova explains that “the destiny of the *mystes* (initiate) underwent so dramatic a transformation that it could be perceived as an apotheosis... thus, through initiation rites, mortals could hope to attain renewal and rebirth as immortals – but after their bodily demise” (2013, p. 108).



Fig. 14. Gold Orphic lamella. 4th century BCE. Greece. Object number 75.AM.19. Located in the J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
Image Source: J Paul Getty Museum.

The Orphic-Bacchic mysteries show how individuals could strive for a higher existence after their death through Dionysus, and we find a similar desire in an inscription evocating Antinous. A grieving father, Doxa, established a personal inscription carved on a column-base probably belonging to Antinous' temple of Mantinea. The verse-text declares the

dedicatee as Doxa's son, Isochrysus, whom "Antinous the god himself, loving him, raised up to sit with the immortals" (Jones 2010, p. 79).⁸⁷ One's identity was often proclaimed in death via mortuary inscriptions, decorations on tombs, or in catacomb art (Stratton 2013, p. 220), and this small fragment perfectly exemplifies not just a genuine belief in Antinous' salvific powers, but a religious Antinoan identity.

Radcliffe Edmonds III, in his pursuit to redefine ancient Orphism, convincingly argues that there is no single feature, be it the name of Orpheus or some doctrine of the soul, that makes something Orphic. Rather, "if something – person, text, or ritual – boasted of extraordinary purity or sanctity, made a claim to special divine connection or extreme antiquity, or was marked by extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature, then that thing *might* be labelled Orphic" (2013, p. 7). Edmonds has also explained Orphism in relation to the contemporary term 'New Age', "which is associated, not specifically with particular religious ideas or organisations, but more vaguely with a set of ideas loosely defined by their distance from mainstream religious activity, especially by claims to extra-ordinary purity, sanctity or divine authority" (2013, p. 5).⁸⁸

Not all Orphic-Bacchic mysteries may have required the use of gold tablets, and not all - Antinoan-Orphic-Bacchic cults may have needed repurposed Antinoan coin mirrors. Since we know, thanks to Pausanias, that Mantinea held mystery rites for Antinous, and that most depictions were of him as Dionysus (8.9.8), it is plausible that Doxa's inscription invokes an Orphic-Bacchic meaning. Antinous may well be regarded as proof that the core belief of the Orphic mysteries is true. He had been a child of earth and was now of starry heaven. As Hadrian himself desired immortality and divinity, it may not be so farfetched to believe that Antinous' place in the Bacchic cults had an Orphic flavour, which then resonated with

⁸⁷ *IG* 5.2, 312.

⁸⁸ For New Age religion, see chapter three, pp. 149-150.

countless of people across the empire. The inscription by Doxa ascribing an extraordinary divine identity for his son presents us with a strong possibility that both may have been involved with Orphic-Bacchic-Antinoan mysteries. In defining a god through dedication, one reflects upon their own identity (Rüpke 2017, pp. 62-63). If Herculaneus could define Antinous as the local god of Mantinea for his own political identity through the stoa inscription, Doxa could distinguish his own religious identity by linking himself through his son's funeral inscription. Perhaps when Doxa eventually passed on, a loved one bestowed a similar immortal identity onto him through Antinous, too.

Mystery cult gods and practices tended to be detached from family and state; they were more individualised. There were different levels of initiation and access to the rites, they were not necessarily proprietary and made no demands for any special way of life unless you wanted to become a fully devoted initiate (Fleiner 2020, pp. 233-234). Unlike civic identities, which were generally elite narratives to showcase a city's Hellenic, divine and political identity (and the identities of the elite), identities within Antinoan mystery cults were varied. Wellman points out that even for the profoundly private *teletai*, the "mysteries" or "initiatory rites", of Dionysus, with the initiate identifying themselves with the divine god, it is the membership in the group that matters, not individuality as such (2005, p. 323).

Yet, there is a great deal of variation of how Antinoan-Dionysian identity manifested, even if the identity came from the initial membership to the cult. We see this expressed through the physical items left behind. Some, like Doxa, evoked divinity through a funerary inscription for his son and himself. Alternatively, the hand-made coin mirrors show members wanting to take part in the acquisition of divinity through a completely different method, showing that Antinous' veneration functioned as a means for mortals to achieve blissful immortality. Antinoan-Dionysian mystery cults provided a sense of spirituality and divinity for many of its non-elite members, emphasised due to Antinous' mortal and non-elite beginnings, but how

this was transferred was up to the interpretation and communication of the member themselves.

Is There Such a Thing as Ancient Sexual Identity?

Antinous did not just function to confer immortality on his worshippers, but also, as this thesis will argue, for some, a homoerotic or sexual 'identity'. Unlike modern ideas of sexual identities, ancient sexuality was apparently not fundamental to a person's identity, and yet, ultimately, "sexuality generates sexual identity: it endows each of us with an individual sexual nature" (Halperin 1990, p. 25). Sandra Boebinger and Stefano Caciagli maintain that "Greeks did not 'self-identify' as pederasts in the way we can say today that someone 'self-identifies as lesbian'... people engaged in such relationships occupied roles and functions in particular contexts, but they did not think of themselves as having a specific identity" (2015, p. 34). However, Amy Richlin has argued that homoerotic communities did exist in the Roman empire as subcultures, mentioning that social gatherings as well as clothing are signs of these homoerotic cultural systems (1993, p. 548). Whilst neither claim is demonstrably false, we cannot force our modern sexual identities and sensibilities onto the past any more than we can deny that ancient sexual identities did, in fact, exist.

Karras is correct to state that "it would be a mistake to assume that because our contemporaries tend to identify themselves by their sexualities, the Romans did, too; but equally it would be a mistake to assume that the Romans could not have" (2000, p. 1261). This statement nestles snugly between the arguments of Halperin, Boebinger, Caciagli and Richlin. The ancients did not have the modern sexual identities we know today, but they may have had a variation of sexual identities, including non-heterosexual ones, that we simply do not know of. Though chapter one has discussed ancient Greek and Roman sexuality in the guise of Hadrian and Antinous' relationship, we must remember that it was a relationship

influenced by an elite and philosophical view of Greek pederasty, and pederasty itself is not an ancient sexual identity, but rather an important part of the sociocultural sphere of aristocratic ancient Greece.

Bruce Thornton in his work *Eros: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality* relies only on the documents and texts of the elite discussing sexuality and sexual identity, and entirely dismisses the idea of recovering ancient sexual identities through the 'history from below' perspective. Thornton claims that the use of so-called nonprivileged data, i.e., curse-tablets, dream-books, archaeological remnants, graffiti, or vase paintings that are supposed to be more representative of the everyday life of the "average" non-elite Greek is a futile expedition, because the beliefs and attitudes of the "average" person are simply too fluid and amorphous to be recovered without an abundance of evidence (1997, p. xii). Yet, elite views are not fixed either, and it is nonprivileged data that has informed us of how Antinoan worship may have been conducted and how the youth had various and fluid functions for local cities, let alone for individual elite and non-elites. If ancient religious identity, and ancient religious practice in general, can be understood through the experiences and communication of the everyday individual, so too can ancient sexual identity.

This thesis is not going to discuss the pragmatics of ancient sexuality and ancient sexual identity as a whole, for it is a subject too large for the scope of this thesis and one which has already been discussed and contested at length by many scholars.⁸⁹ The rest of this chapter, however, should be read with an understanding that whilst sexual identity as a creation of nineteenth-century medical discourse would not be a concept in which the Greeks or Romans would understand, sexual identity is an open question, and the ancient world may or may not

⁸⁹ For example: Dover 1978, *Greek Homosexuality*; Halperin 1989, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love*; Karras 2000, "Active/Passive, Acts/Passions: Greek and Roman Sexualities"; Lewis 1983, "The Brothers of Ganymede"; Richlin 1993, 'Not before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the Cinaedus and the Roman Law against Love between Men'; Skinner 2005, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* & Vout 2007 *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome*.

have had something that could also be called sexual identity (Karras 2000, p. 1252). The next section of this chapter argues that Antinoan cults and veneration may have influenced, by our modern standards, ancient, 'non-heterosexual' sexual identities of those who worshipped him.

The Sex God Antinous

Antinous, both before and after his death, had an inherent homoerotic identity,⁹⁰ which must have attracted many of those who followed the youth, and it was common for those to seek out mystery cults in order express or create identities. The initiates of the Phrygian mystery goddess Cybele, for example, were highly sexualised and effeminate, insofar that the initiated *galli* (castrated eunuchs) threaten the very idea of Roman masculinity, supposedly gowning themselves "in all the colours under the sun... their faces were ruddied with cosmetics... [they] wore little turbans; their linen was saffron-hued; and they were surplised with silk" (Apul. *Met.* 8.27; Latham 2012, p. 121). If the cult of Cybele could function as a community that could impact such a stark identity for the initiates, certainly Antinous' *cultus* could have followed in the Great Mother's footsteps, particularly through the sexual nature of Dionysian rites.

⁹⁰ It is not unusual for the male gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon to partake in homoerotic (pederastic) relationships. It does strike up curiosity, however, that almost all of Antinous' divine syncretisms had homoerotic tendencies. Antinous' most prominent syncretisations, such as Dionysus, Apollo, and Hermes, all have homoerotic myths. Hermes and Apollo had their lovers Krokus and Hyacinthus, both killed by a discus match (Ov. *Met.* 10.162-219); Apollo and Dionysus (and Hercules) were besotted with Adonis (Plut. *Mor.* 4.671B-C), and Dionysus had relations with the young man Prosymnus (see chapter two, p. 104-106). Furthermore, not only have we discussed Antinous' comparison with the homoeroticisms of Achilles, Patroclus, Alexander and Hephaestion, but he is also associated with the tragic, youthful heroes such as Krokus, Hylas, Adonis, Narcissus, and Hyacinthus. These assimilations come from two poems dated to the second and third century CE (*non vidi*, quoted in Thompson 2013, pp. 161-163). Antinous is compared to powerful gods who fell for beautiful boys, and simultaneously, with the youthful boys such gods loved. This, again, subverts the rigidity of Halperin's erotic micropolitics, as Antinous can be both a powerful god and/or tragic youth. What this suggests, is that regardless of Antinous depiction, there is always a degree of homoeroticism to the ancient perception and communication of Antinous. For the third century Antinoan poem selected for examination in this thesis, see chapter two, p. 108. See also fn. 77 for the Courion inscription syncretising Antinous with Adonis.

Chapter II: The People's Antinous

We should remember that Dionysus was not just a god of rebirth and immortality, but lorded over the areas of ecstasy and sexuality, and these elements were assimilated with Antinous. In the second century CE, Clement of Alexandria discusses Antinous' deification with abhorrence, stating that:

lust is not easily restrained, when it has no fear; and today men observe the sacred nights of Antinous, which were really shameful, as the lover who kept them with him well knew. Why, I ask, do you reckon as a god one who is honoured by fornication?

(Exhortation to the Greeks, 4.43p)

Of course, this is likely an exaggeration of the Antinoan cult, as Clement and other Christian authors grouped together the Greek mysteries to blur the distinctions, treating them as a single phenomenon that encompassed murders and perversions (Edmonds III 2013, p. 31); however, Bacchic cults were already known for their nocturnal and sexual nature before Christian persecution. The earliest mention of Bacchic mysteries (without Orphic influence) occurs in a fragment of Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 500 BCE), in which he threatens specific groups of people, the 'night-wanderers', and a chance expression in a Latin inscription informs us that the (Dionysian) mysteries were celebrated at night (*CIL* 6.30966; Bremmer 2014, p. 70, 98).

The word *orgia* itself meant ritual actions and was used especially in the cult of Dionysus, and it was Orpheus who was not only the first to perform the Dionysian mysteries, but supposedly also "started the practice among the Thracian tribes of turning for love to immature males" (Ov. *Met.* 10.83-85; Koester 1995, p. 168). Orpheus was one of the first to reveal male love among the Thracians, and Orpheus' oldest associations are with all-male groups (Watson 2014, p. 47). The Antinoan rites were likely sexual and had erotic rituals performed at night, following the Bacchic tradition. The erotic and "sacred nights of Antinous" may well be similar to the "secret (Dionysian) cult that operated at night", where there were more sexual rites practiced between men than men and women, recorded in Livy's

account of the Bacchanalia (39.9, 39.13).⁹¹ Homoerotic sexual rituals were not a minor component of the Orphic-Bacchic mysteries, but played a fundamental part in its narratives and structure.

In the Peloponnesian city of Lerna, we gain a genuine sense of how homoerotic themes played into Antinoan-Dionysian cult. A statue of Antinous was found on the grounds of the Lerna sanctuary belonging to Dionysus and Demeter Prosymna, with a thyrsus in one hand, a torch in the other, and an ivy wreath on its head, depicting the new god as Dionysus, or more specifically, Dionysus of the Mysteries, as shown above (Stefanidou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 96; fig. 15). As far as we can tell, rural Dionysian cults involved the participation of the entire community, and the addition of the Bithynian's cult in Lerna strongly supports the idea that it gained significant popularity among local communities (Kraemer 1979, p. 57; Stefanidou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 96). Pausanias tells us that Lerna also performed nightly rites for Dionysus:

I saw a spring of Amphiaraos and the Alkyonian lake, through which the Argives say that Dionysus went to Hades to bring back Semele and Polymnos showed him the way down. The depth of the Alkyonian lake is limitless... it would be sacrilegious if I publicly reported the night celebration to Dionysus that takes place every year at this lake.

(2.37.5)

Stefanidou-Tiveriou points out that the story of the pederastic relationship between Prosymnus (Polymnos) and Dionysus, like many other homoerotic mythological pairings, might have been seen through the prism of the relationship between Antinous and Hadrian, and may have played a role in the theology of the new cult (2018, p. 94).

⁹¹ Livy recounts the events of 186 BCE in his *History of Rome* (39.8-19), where the Roman senate had met the official worship of Dionysus with increasing suspicion. The Bacchanalia was an event joined by men and women who supposedly embarked in all sorts of criminal and immoral behaviour under the cover of darkness, and due to this, the Senate decreed for the destruction of Bacchic shrines and strict control of Bacchic worship in Italy (Meyer 1987, p. 81).



Fig. 15. Antinous as Dionysus. c. 130 – 138 CE.
Front, left, right and back sides. Lerna, Argos. Argos Archaeological Museum.
Image Source: Theodosia Stefandiou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 101.

The myth of Dionysus and Prosymnus not only shows the pair being responsible for the origin consecration of the *phalloi*, which does suggest that male lust and virility was an integral part of the Dionysiac world (Bremmer 2014, p. 108), but Stefanidou-Tiveriou's theory is made clear through an excerpt from Clement of Alexander:

Dionysus was anxious to descend into Hades but did not know the way. Thereupon a certain man, Prosymnus by name, promises to tell him, though not without reward. The reward was not a seemly one, though to Dionysus it was seemly enough. It was a favour of lust, this reward which Dionysus asked for (penetration of Dionysus by Prosymnus). The god is willing to grant the request; and so, he promises, in the event of his return, to fulfil the wish of Prosymnus, confirming the promise with an oath. Having learnt the way, he set out and came back again. He does not find Prosymnus, for he was dead. In fulfilment of the vow to his lover Dionysus hastens to the tomb and indulges his unnatural lust. Cutting off a branch from a fig-tree which was at hand, he shaped it into the likeness of a phallos, and then made a show of fulfilling his promise to the dead man. As a mystic memorial for this passion phalloi are set up to Dionysus in cities.

(Exhortation to the Greeks, 2.29p-30p).

The sacredness of the phallus, its connection with a homoerotic story and its parallels towards Hadrian and Antinous' relationship likely had a prominent place in the Antinous-Dionysus cult at Lerna. Note that it is Clement who discusses Dionysus, Prosymnus and Antinous, their

respective sexual natures, and their orgiastic mysteries rites within the same text (*Exhortation to the Greeks*, 2.11p-12p). Although we cannot completely trust Clement, whose sole mission is to discredit ancient Paganism, his proximity to the deification of Antinous (writing only sixty years later), and the sexual elements of the Dionysian and Antinoan cults recorded by the Christian Father, should be interpreted as a potential homoerotic foundation for Antinous-Dionysus cult practices.

To add weight to this argument, Bernard Sergent points out two more homoerotic qualities to the Lernaean mysteries. The first, being that Pausanias reports how the mysteries of Demeter Lernaia were founded by Philammon (2.37.3) the father of Thamyras, who in turn was the original lover of Hyacinthus and another inventor of pederasty (Apollod. *Library*, 3.3).

Secondly, in the mystery festivities of Lerna, the tale of Glaucus, who may have represented the *eromenos* of the primordial older sea god, Nereus, was retold. Glaucus, like Dionysus, underwent a rebirth from the waters of Lake Alcyonian, and returned to life (Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 7.296f; Sergent 1986, pp. 185-189). The motif of death followed by a watery rebirth, typical of initiations, figured in the ritual of Lerna, and, as Sergent points out, since Glaucus is associated with Dionysus through his place “as a hero of initiation who dies and is born again” (1986, p. 190), the rebirth of Glaucus must have been a component of the Dionysiac mysteries of Lerna (Sergent 1986, p. 184).⁹² Antinous' place in Lerna then becomes obvious, as another god wrought with homoerotic implications would have easily

⁹² On the second day of the Eleusinian mysteries, the *mystai* were sent to the sea to bathe and purify themselves (Keller 1988, p. 51). Stefandiou-Tiveriou mentions that the cult of Demeter Prosymna was considered the Eleusis of Argos (2018, p. 95). In addition, Plutarch stresses that Dionysus emerges out of the Alkyonian lake as a bull, referring to Egyptian activities associating Osiris with Dionysus (Plut. *Mor*, 364F; Stefandiou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 93). Water was particularly important to the mysteries of Eleusis and Lerna, and equally important to the narratives of Dionysus, Osiris and Antinous, as it represents the resurrection and rebirth of the gods, and thus the initiate. Since the Lernaean mysteries were that of the Eleusinian, and the Dionysian rituals performed on the Alkyonian lake, we can assume that the Lernaean mysteries were a combination of both the Eleusinian and the Dionysian, which would have been transferred over to the Antinoan mysteries. See also Sergent 1986, pp. 184-189.

translated into the local religious sphere. Like Glaucus and Dionysus, Antinous also entered a body of water, engaged in a homoerotic relationship, and re-emerged divine. Homoeroticism, sexuality, rebirth, and immortality seems to be the crux of the Lernaean mysteries, and it is likely these components were shared or merged with the Antinoan mysteries, as the youth would have been able to integrate with these pre-existing elements seamlessly.

Homoeroticism, then, was a large part of the Lernaean mysteries, and thus a component of the function of Antinoan cult in Lerna at the very least. The homoerotic elements, however, did not mean mystery cults were restricted to men. Although this thesis has discussed the male homoerotic elements of the cults of Antinous, this does not mean the cult was exclusively male. A base for a different Antinoan statue from Lerna records: "A father set me up as a model of beauty; A mother dedicated me to keep my memory alive for ever" (*SEG.* 42.286; Stefanidou-Tiveriou 2018, p. 91). As Stefanidou-Tiveriou indicates, it was likely not the birth parents of Antinous that dedicated the statue, but that 'the father' was the head of some religious association, and the title of 'the mother' is attested for women who held high office within such associations (2018, p. 91). From this inscription, we can assume that the Lerna cult of Antinous, like most mysteries, was open to women and men, and it is important to realise that women likely participated in Antinoan cult.

Whilst our knowledge of women's homoeroticism in the ancient world is less satisfactory than we might wish,⁹³ we should not dismiss the female rites of Dionysus and the inclusion of women in Antinoan mystery cults for sexual purposes, be it between men and women or women and women. We cannot forget that Dionysus' chief amorous attachment is to Ariadne and, in rituals for women, the initiate was sometimes dressed and prepared as Dionysus' divine bride (Denova 2019, p. 190; Jameson 2003, p. 325). On the other hand, an attic pottery

⁹³ For more on female homoeroticism in ancient Greece and Rome, see Boehringer 2014, pp. 154-168; Hallett 1989, pp. 209-227; Rupp 2009, pp. 25-41.

scene depicts two women embracing and offering a hare to Dionysus, suggesting that the release of inhibitions offered by the celebration of the Bacchic mysteries might be a context for possible female homoeroticism (Hubbard 2003, p. 17). There is also allusion to potential female sexual rituals performed by the *maenads* in Euripides' *Bacchae*, with protagonist Pentheus learning that the *orgia* rites are practiced at night and can be seen "[hunting] their Aphrodite through the woods" (Eur. *Bacch.* 687; Kraemer 2003, p. 60; Jameson 2003, p. 325). Whilst these are earlier examples, undoubtably, women were part of Orphic-Bacchic cults not just for the gain of immortality, but for sexual experiences, too. Thus, we should not dismiss the possibility that the Antinoan-Dionysian cult may have been a place for the expression of female divinity and sexual identity, signalled through Antinous-Dionysus' homoeroticism.

We can then take the idea of female sexuality and sexual identity one step further through Vout's understanding of female attraction towards Antinous, his homoeroticism, and ancient eroticism itself. She argues that the ancient eroticisms of boys and girls were interchangeable, as in the stories of Hylas and Hermaphroditus, it is female nymphs that desire the youthful males (2007, pp. 103-104). We see Antinous mentioned in the interchangeability of erotic youths through a poetry fragment from the second or third century CE:

Neither was the Athenian narcissus, nor the Lacedaemonian hyacinth, nor the crocus a flower in the beginning; Hylas was not a child in Thrace, the cypress was not a tree in Crete, and Daphne was not a plant in the beginning. Rather, Crocus was a Cilician lad, Hylas was a beautiful Thracian boy, and Cyparissus was a beautiful boy. Daphne was a young virgin (daughter of the river), Narcissus was a beautiful Boetian boy, and Hyacinthus was a youthful Spartan *ephebe*. Herakles used to have Hylas; Dionysus fell in love with [him]. Crocus joined Dionysus in Bacchic revelry. Nymphs sought Narcissus, and Apollo fell in love with Hyacinthus and Daphne. Nymphs killed Crocus; nymphs seized Hylas. Cyparissus threw himself down from rocks, and the earth received Daphne while fleeing. Narcissus – prompted by arrogance, killed himself as if (killing) another. Most important is the flower of Antinoos, more pleasant than all...

(trans. Thompson 2013, p. 162)⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *non vidi*, quoted in Thompson 2013, pp. 162-163. For Greek text and commentary see also Delgado & Pordomingo 2008, "PMilVogl I 20: bocetos de "progymnasmata", pp. 167-192.

Not only is Antinous ranked highest of all the eponymous flowers, but Daphne's story is just as compelling as the other tragic and beloved male youths; their erotic identities are completely transposable regardless of gender. Even Dionysus himself embodies the form of both genders simultaneously: an essentially androgynous figure, appealing to both the feminine and masculine and paradoxically existing as "the effeminate god of the phallus [and] the phallic god of women" (Jameson, 2003 p. 320; Kraemer 1979, p. 68). In the first chapter, we saw Hadrian and Antinous embodying a variation of this: the masculine (Hadrian) and effeminate (Antinous) versions of Bacchus.⁹⁵ Antinous' homoeroticism, embellished by Dionysus, could be no less attractive to a man than a woman, existing as a promising deity of sexuality for all.

Therefore, due to the inclusivity of mystery cults, mixed with the interconnectedness of homoeroticism to general eroticism, and the feminine and the masculine, we see how sexuality was likely a vital component to Antinoan cults, and could have attracted both female and male initiates. This in turn allows for the potential function of Antinoan cult to influence the sexual identity for all initiates. As Meyer describes, those in the presence of the Dionysus might feel his power variously: in ecstasy, in inebriation, in sexuality, in spiritual bliss, and as the mysteries focused on love and sexuality, these aspects are presented as the culminating experience of Dionysian power (1987, p. 63). Likewise, the Antinous-Dionysus, of Lerna or otherwise, represented the mysteries of love, sexuality, and the hope of immortality all at once, proving that homoeroticism, divinity, and sexuality were ever-popular values, and furthermore, identities, for Antinoan initiates, regardless of gender.

⁹⁵ See chapter one, pp. 61-65.

Antinoopolis and the Tondo of the Two Lovers

Whilst Lerna provides promising evidence of homoerotic practices via Antinoan cults, Antinoopolis is where we see the Antinoan mystery cult function as the strongest and most explicit homoerotic cult, which may have influenced ancient sexual identity. Steering away from solely Orphic-Bacchic mysteries, we move onto the mysteries of Antinoopolis, the city built on the spot of the youth's death and subsequently named after him (Dio. 69.11.3).⁹⁶ This thesis proposes that these mysteries were a mix of both Dionysian and Osirian ideals. As, after all, Diodorus records that "[Orpheus] transferred the birth of the ancient Osiris to more recent times... instituted a new initiation, in the ritual of which the initiates were given the account that Dionysus had been born of Semelê and Zeus" (1.23.7). Whether the Dionysian mysteries in general were Egyptianised or not we do not know, but an Egyptian papyrus of the third century BCE describes an initiation into the Orphic-Bacchic rites (Nilsson 1953, p. 176). Moreover, Assman and Lorton discuss the similarity between the Orphic and Dionysian mysteries with that of Osiris when comparing the preparation of death via topographical knowledge and the parallels between the 'Lake of Memory' and the 'Field of Reeds' (2011, p. 206-207). It is more than likely that both the Osirian and Dionysian mysteries influenced the mysteries of Antinous in Antinoopolis.

⁹⁶ Antinoopolis became a holy city to which pilgrims flocked to be cured or hear oracles, as Antinous was especially worshipped in Egypt (Skinner 2005, p. 270). Antinoopolis was designed to be a Greek *polis* at the behest of Hadrian. Due to Antinoopolis being a Hellenised city, finding evidence for homoerotic relationships, is not surprising. Antinoan worship and communication "may have been meaningful because it bestowed religious endorsement on the practice of a traditional Greek civic lifestyle" (Skinner 2005, p. 270). Moreover, citizens of Antinoopolis were organised in *phylai* and *demes* and possessed a council - the only one securely attested in Egypt apart from that of Ptolemais (Malouta 2009, p. 82). The ten tribes were called after Hadrian and his family members, "including *Nerouanii*, *Traianii*, *Ailiei*, *Hadrianeii*, *Paulinii*, *Matidii*, *Sabinii*, *Sebasteii*, *Oseirantinoeii*, and *Athenaiei*" (Karivieri 2019, p. 295). Each tribe received allegorical names, and the Eleusinian connection is particularly stressed in the *deme* names at Antinoopolis. There are references to the cult through the allegorical name *Harmonieus*, belonging to the Sabinian tribe, which alluded to Sabina as Kore, as well as the Athenaiei *deme* name *Eleusinos* (Bell 1940, p. 141; Geagan 1972, p. 148; Karivieri 2019, p. 295). The *Oseirantinoeii* cements Antinous' primary place in his city as Osiris. The Antinoan mysteries of Antinoopolis may have been an amalgamation of the mysteries Osiris, Dionysus, and Eleusis, as the cults were not only interconnected with each other, but the Egyptian city itself. For more on Antinoopolis, see Karivieri 2019, pp. 294-296; Malouta 2009, pp. 81-96; Bell 1940, pp. 133-147; Haeckl 2001, pp. 63-78.

In fact, we should note Clement's discussion of Antinous comes just after his paragraph on Osiris-Sarapis and states that much like Sarapis, Antinous was "another fresh divinity... created in Egypt" (*Exhortation to the Greeks*, 4.33p). Again, this may be simple coincidence, yet Clement's statement of Antinous being a (fresh) Egyptian god, and his Dionysian description of the youth's mysteries, suggests that the cult of Antinous at Antinoopolis was more Dionysian in nature than first thought. A single temple may offer space for multiple deities (Rüpke 2017, p. 7), and if 1,344 statues and busts of Antinous lined the city of Antinoopolis alone,⁹⁷ we should not assume that every depiction was Osiris, but rather multiple gods, heroes or otherwise, including Osiris' Greek counterpart, Dionysus.⁹⁸

The portrait tondo discovered in 1898/99 in Antinoopolis firmly illustrates the homoerotic function of Antinous' cult. Though known as 'The Tondo of the Two Brothers', the portrait could arguably be renamed 'The Tondo of the Two Lovers'. The tondo is an unusual life-sized double funeral portrait of two young men, one significantly older than the other (Haeckle 2001, pp. 63; fig. 16). The clothing identifies the two men as members of the Hellenised metropolitan elite of Antinoopolis (Haeckle 2001, p. 68), yet the privileged status of the figures does not take away from the fact that the portrait is potentially a physical manifestation of homoerotic identity influenced by the cult and their god Antinous.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ The statues of Antinous from Antinoopolis were recorded by Edme-Francois Jomard in 1798 but were destroyed in the nineteenth century for cement works (Crompton 2003, p. 108).

⁹⁸ The longstanding syncretisation of Osiris and Dionysus was ultimately transferred onto Antinous. Vout explains that "Dionysus and Osiris were almost regional variants of one another: the stories and representations of them all overlap" (2005, p. 90). Stefandiou-Tiveriou's analysis of the Lernaean mysteries, which were laden with Osirian/Serapis/Apis rituals and imagery should also be noted here (2018, p. 93-94). Additionally, a single, bi-frontal statue found in Hadrian's Villa, depicts Antinous-Osiris on one side, and the bull Apis on the other (Musei Vaticani, 2021). Taking this into account, it is likely that Antinoan mystery cults were a combination of the Dionysian and Osirian-Serapis mysteries. For more on Serapis see Ellis 1993, pp. 29-32; Koester 1995, p. 179. See also fn. 92.

⁹⁹ The male on the left is dressed in the uniform of an *ephebe*, whilst the male on the right is dressed in a toga, a symbol of manhood and citizenship (Haeckl 2001, p. 66, 77).



Fig. 16. 'Tondo of the Two Lovers' (also known as 'Tondo of Two Brothers'), Antinoopolis, second quarter of the 2nd century CE. Antinous-Osiris l., Hermanubis r. Diameter 61 cm. Inscription in Greek at left: 'Pachon 15'. Located in Cairo, Egyptian Museum.
Image Source: Doxiadis, E 1995.

Portrait painters had an extremely limited amount of space to convey much important information about their subjects, to the extent of the head and shoulders, and were required to create a likeness that would define the position of the deceased and ensure his vitality for rebirth and life in the next world (Montserrat 1991, p. 216). Anne Haeckle leads the discussion surrounding the portrait, explicitly stating that the tondo does not portray two brothers, but “evoked its subjects' circumstances of life rather than death; that, within its historical and cultural context, the Antinoopolis tondo can plausibly be read as a portrait of two male lovers” (2001, p. 67). Haeckle points out that the portrait depicts them as an *erastes* and *eromenos*; “the youth on the left wears a purplish-red chlamys that indicates his status as an *ephebe*, while the deeply tanned man on the right wears the white toga-like mantle of manhood” (2001, p. 66; Montserrat 1991, p. 221). The lighter complexion of the adolescent, dress and positioning to the left is also reminiscent of the way in which wives were depicted in Roman-Egyptian portraiture (Haeckl 2001, pp. 67-86, 70-76; Skinner 2005, pp. 271).

More importantly however, the portrait depicts two gods on the left and right shoulders of the men. From the first century CE, depictions on Egyptian funerary portraits are usually of “the deceased in the bloom of youth, in the clothing of the living, [their] unusually lively, portrait-like face represented frontally, looking straight at the viewer, between Anubis on the right and Osiris on the left” (Assman & Lorton 2011, p. 207). The depictions of Osiris and Anubis on the Lovers tondo have been identified as the syncretic Osirantinos and Hermanubis (Montserrat 1993, p. 221). Not only does this tondo portray the only existing painting of Antinous (as Osiris), but there is also dual divine and homoerotic identity at play here.

Previously, depictions of Osiris on the left have been interpreted as the deceased ‘becoming Osiris’, where the deceased is supposedly represented twice: once in their individual form as a living person, and once as an Osirian mummy, with Anubis symbolising the embalming process and the transformation of the deceased into Osiris. Yet these representations have

also been interpreted as the deceased being led by Anubis into the presence of Osiris, and so the figure on the left does not represent the deceased as Osiris, but rather, the god to whom Anubis as psychopomp conducts the deceased (Assman & Lorton 2011, pp. 207-208).¹⁰⁰

The two interpretations are two sides of a single coin. 'Conducting into the presence of' and 'becoming' Osiris are two aspects of initiation into the mysteries of Osiris of which the Egyptians and Greeks of the imperial Roman period might easily have assented to both interpretations (Assman & Lorton 2011, pp. 207-208). The portrayal of Osiriantinoos (and Hermanubis) in the tondo is far from a simple happenstance, as the two figures could represent the lover's ascension into deification or salvation by Osiriantinoos. Yet, if Roman-Egyptian funerary portraits usually depicted the dead as they were once in life, the most prominent part of their mortal lives must have been their relationship, homoerotic or otherwise. Could this mean, given the considerable context clues, that the two men were worshippers and initiates of the divine and sexual mysteries of Osiriantinoos?

Ancient religious identity hinges on variables such as the choice of gods to worship, whether one revered a particular sacred place, the holidays, and festivals one chose to celebrate, as well as daily practices governed by divine prescription, such as prayer, eating, and sexual relations (Stratton 2013, p. 220). Of course, we cannot rightly prove that the depictions on the tondo were lovers, nor whether it truly was a funeral portrait, but the evidence is compelling

¹⁰⁰ Another strong divine assimilation Antinous had, besides Osiris and Dionysus, was Hermes. The portrait of the Antinoopolis shows Antinous as Osiris, not Hermes, but the addition of Hermes-Anubis does promote a slight connection between the two. The youth was popularly depicted alongside, or as, the messenger god on coinage, and described as Hermes in literature. The Pancrates poem calls Antinous the "son of the slayer of Argus" (*Select Papyri*, 128.10), which to say is the son of Hermes, and a papyrus text records the sale of acacia trees, dated to 225 CE, to Aurelia Eudaemonis, the daughter "of Antinous, also called Hermes, of Antinoopolis" (*Select Papyri*, 35). Here we see that Antinous was likely a common name for the inhabitants of Antinoopolis but was also a name synonymous with Hermes. Hermes was a god that guides the deceased from life to death and was integral god to many mystery cult rituals. Lambert explains that Hermes was closely linked to Dionysus, whom he had twice rescued from perils before handing him over to Demeter, and, through the interconnections of Dionysus, Eleusis, and Hermes, and their narratives of suffering, death, resurrection, and their command over Hades, Antinous' own divinity was cemented (1984, p. 181).

enough to suggest that the expression of a divine and homoerotic identity was expressed through an Antinoan religious sphere. The tondo is a vital window into some of the multifaceted identities that manifested from Antinoan mystery cults. What we can take from the homoerotic nature of the mysteries of Antinous, especially considering the Antinoopolis lovers and the Lerna mysteries, is that there was degree of erotism and/or homoerotism to them, and it is not unfathomable to believe that many participated in the mysteries of Antinous because of these erotic and/or homoerotic aspects, which in turn helped initiates to develop a sense of their individual sexual identities.

The theoretical position that sexuality and sexual identity is socially constructed has become dogma in the field of classical studies. Yet, “social construction does not imply that individuals choose their own identities – it is the discourses of the broader culture, for example, medical, legal, or religious systems, that construct systems of sexual identities” (Karras 2000, p. 1252). Religious communities and mystery cults functioned as social gatherings, which left a deep influence on people's everyday lives. If initiates were a part of Antinoan cults, which were most likely spiritual and sexual, it follows that this must have influenced their divine and sexual identities. To use the Lovers of Antinoopolis as an example of this, the subtle pederastic hints through the clothing and Osiriantinoos iconography highlights the exact points by Richlin and Karras – partaking in social discourses through their clothing and religious systems to possibly define their sexual identities and relationship status. The Lovers of Antinoopolis may not have self-identified as ‘pederasts’, but their homoerotic relationship, pederastic, married, or otherwise, must have been important for them both to be depicted on the funeral tondo. Therefore many, like the Two Lovers, may have taken part in a homoerotic relationship and been initiated into Antinoan mystery cult, which functioned to establish their sexual identity and relationship in a ritualistic context.

When we combine the visual identification of clothing and the presence of Antinous in the portrait painting, the lover's sexual identity seems obvious, but to classify the Antinoopolis lovers as 'gay' or 'homosexual' would be inaccurate, as they themselves would not identify as such. However, the presence of Antinous and the clear homoerotic subtext suggests the strong possibility of an ancient homoerotic identity bound up in the religious communication of Antinous. If individuals combine and syncretise gods to suit their situational or role-specific needs (Rüpke 2016, p. 7), Antinous was syncretised with the mystery gods Osiris and Dionysus to promote divinity and salvation and ultimately worshipped as a god of rebirth, whilst simultaneously functioning as a figure who may have helped shape someone's sexuality and sexual identity.

In this discussion of Antinoan mystery cults, we have been able to see how the youth and his cult not only functioned as a means for initiates to strive for immortality, but also how the erotic aspects of Antinous ultimately allowed initiates to communicate some type of ancient sexual identity, even if it is in a religious context. Rüpke tells us that a historian of religion must inquire how people learn to communicate religiously and how this knowledge is then used in specific situations to understand ancient identities (2015, p. 352). If Antinous and Antinoan mystery cults functioned as individual and communal communications of divinity and sexuality, we can gather that these were elements of identity that people desired. This second half of chapter two is not designed to argue the ancient world had rigid labels for sexual identity, but rather that Antinoan cults may have been a way to evoke sexual identity for initiates through Antinous' (homo)eroticism. All in all, Antinous functioned as a divinity who was called upon to whisk away the deceased in hopes of a life reborn; he was a deity one might share a night of ecstasy and eroticism, or even the god sitting upon one's shoulder, waiting for their very own soul become unto Antinous - unto a god.

Chapter III

The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

One of the most notable discoveries of an Antinous statue was in 1894 at the ruins of Delphi. A photo taken at the time of discovery shows French archaeologists and local workers crowding around the marble artwork, which stands upright amongst the rubble (fig. 17). The statue of Antinous was found covered with layers of dirt, arms missing from the elbow down, but otherwise, near-perfectly preserved. Luscious locks still covered his head, his familiar downward gaze stared at the softened ground, as if too shy to look up at the light after almost a millennium of dormant rest. The early Christian Fathers had denounced the youth, believing, as St. Athanasius expressed in c. 350 CE, that Antinous provided a proof that “all idolatry was invented by men for no other reason than the passion of those who contrived it”.¹⁰¹ In the Roman empire, Christianity began to dominate after the edict of Constantinople, decreed by Theodosius in 362 CE, which banned any form of private Pagan worship (Bittarello 2010, p. 70). The Pagan gods were represented as promoting deviance, sexual or otherwise, and were nothing but “useless images or unclean spirits and pernicious demons, or at best only created beings and not the Creator” (Aug. *City of God*, 6. Preface). By condemning Antinous, the Christians used him as a means of attacking the credentials of the whole Pagan pantheon (Lambert 1984, p. 6), and by the fourth century CE, Pagan gods had no place in the Roman Empire, least of all Antinous.¹⁰²

Yet, despite the ban, the Delphic Antinous, like so many other Antinoan statues and busts, had not been destroyed but hidden, buried carefully and quietly, awaiting rediscovery centuries later. Once rediscovered, he was not condemned for his beauty or eroticism, but

¹⁰¹ *Non vidi*, quoted in Meijering 1984, *Athanasius, Contra Gentes: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, p. 45.

¹⁰² For more on Antinous and the early Christians, see Callon 2019, pp. 149-155; Lambert 1984, pp. 6-7, 192-194; Thompson 2013, pp. 143-172.

admired for it. While Antinous had already begun to re-enter the gaze of the public as early as the sixteenth century, when his iconography was known and widely reproduced (Vout 2005, p. 83), at the turn of the twenty-first century, the youth was transformed into a celebrated queer figure bursting with sexual pride. Although traits from classical history and the ancient Greek type of love still linger, his identity has been rapidly shaped to fit modern values.

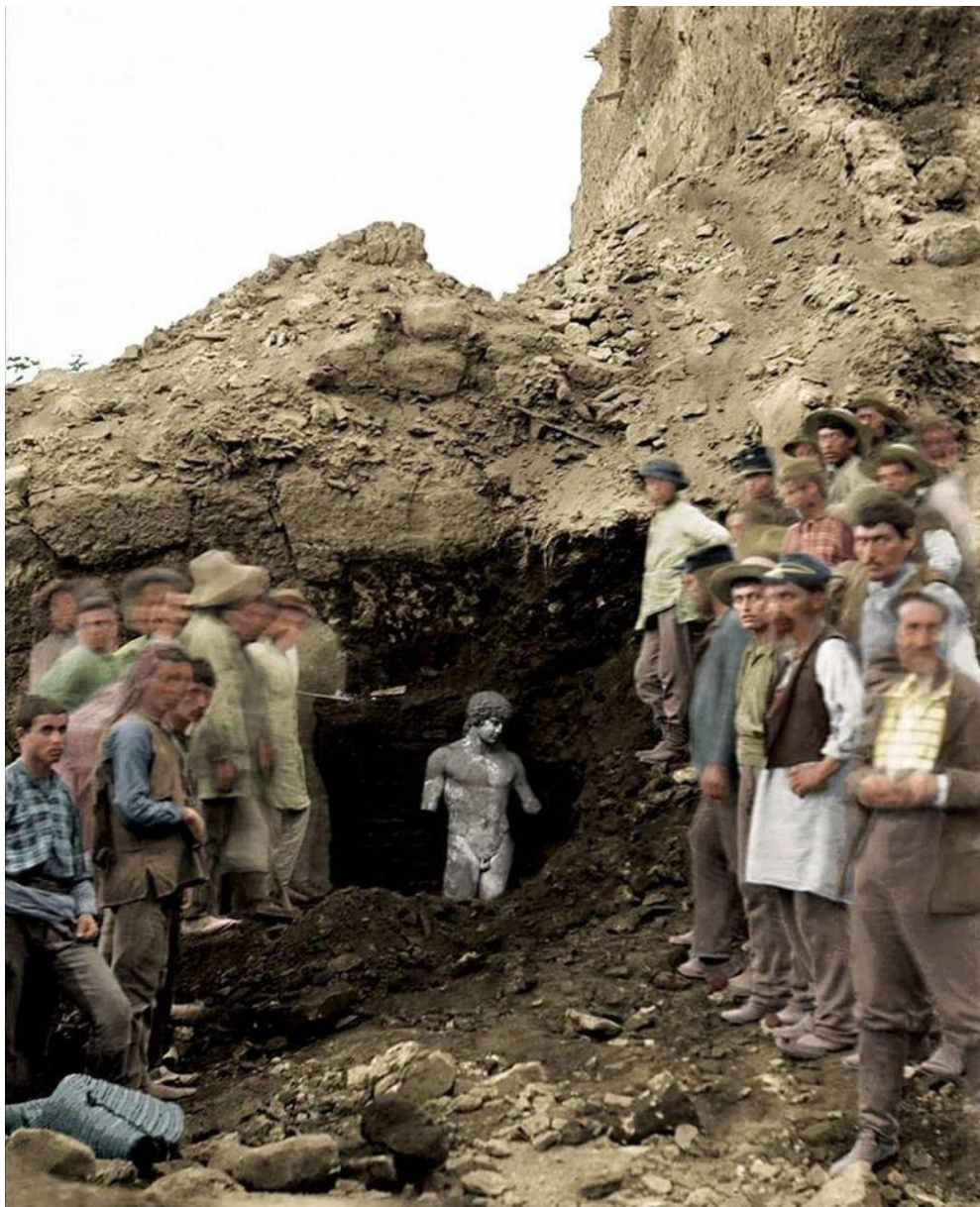


Fig. 17. Archaeologists pose in front of a statue of Antinous, unearthed near the temple of Apollo in the sanctuary of Delphi (colourised).

Image Source: Greece High Definition

<<https://www.greecehighdefinition.com/blog/statue-of-antinous-the-story-behind-the-discovery-delphi-sculpture-delfi>>

Antinous' existence in the past has strengthened queer belonging today in a way that allows LGBTQIA+ individuals to see themselves as a part of history. The iconography and aesthetics produced through Antinous are popularly used in LGBTQIA+ contexts. A copied bronze statue of Belvedere Antinous, attributed to Pietro Tacca, stood in the opening gallery of the 2019 MET Gala, which was the year its theme was 'camp' (Friedman & Smith 2019; appendix 3.13-3.14). British celebrity Simon Cowell made headlines with tabloids declaring that his new fifteen-million-pound manor was "haunted by the ghost of Antinous – the gay lover of Roman Emperor Hadrian" (Bullock 2019). The Dublin art collective, Subset, which was sponsored by Intel for LGBTQIA+ Pride Month, created street art depicting the bust of Antinous painted with the colours of the rainbow spectrum, signifying the gay pride flag, and capturing "the 2000-year-old relationship between Roman Emperor Hadrian and Antinous and brings to life the spirit of love, joy, and acceptance" (Intel 2019; fig. 18). There was even an opera dedicated to the pair. *Hadrian*, commissioned by the Canadian Opera Company, tells the romantic story of Hadrian's love and grief over Antinous. The opera's premier in 2018 subsequently received a standing ovation, as "many in the audience were elated to see a large-scale opera unashamedly focus on a gay love story" (Hoile 2018). The opera was performed for a second time in 2020. Hadrian and Antinous are undoubtedly at the forefront of ancient LGBTQIA+ representation in the eyes of the public today.

Classical antiquity can provide a rare opportunity for a shared framework and point of reference for homoerotic desire on a collective level, creating an identity by identifying with others (Matzner 2010, p. 68). Throughout chapters one and two, this thesis has established the groundwork for a similar phenomenon by highlighting how ancient communities and individuals constructed their identities (though not always homoerotic) through identification with Antinous. These chapters provide a survey of Antinous' function in the ancient world through divinity, homoeroticism, and Hellenism. Chapter three will not debate the historicity

of the categories of ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ when applied to Antinous and Antinoan veneration, but rather ask why the Bithynian is given those identities today. Whilst Antinous is promoted as a ‘gay’ figure in popular media, the focus of this question will concentrate on the youth’s place as the central deity of a visibly LGBTQIA+ Neopagan New Religious Movement (NRM). Through exploring Antinous as an LGBTQIA+ god, we gain glimpses of shared beliefs between the ancient and modern worshippers of Antinous, and ultimately dissect how queer interpretations of Antinous from the past help cast a new, reparative Antinous of the present.



Fig. 18. Mural by Dublin art collective SUBSET, depicting the Braschi Antinous. Commissioned by INTEL for pride month, 2019.

Source: @IntelANZ, Facebook.

<<https://www.facebook.com/IntelIreland/photos/a.308407492535490/2442489872460564/>>

Neopaganism is an umbrella term for several New Religious Movements (NRM) that strive to revive, reinterpret, and experiment with pre-Christian polytheistic religions (Magliocco 2012, p. 150). Many of these movements are not as ‘new’ as NRM implies, but rather draw heavily on old religion; “antiquity serves for [Neopaganism] as an historical point of reference in the face of the challenges of the present” (Burns & Renger 2019, p. 5).¹⁰³

Modern Paganist movements, as Sabina Magliocco explains:

search for a direct, personal, individualised experience of the sacred, an emphasis on spirituality as a path to personal development and self-realisation, a distrust of religious hierarchy and dogma, and a tendency to borrow elements from a variety of different cultural and religious sources in their quest to construct a spirituality that is personally meaningful.

(2021, p. 155)

Neopagan movements thus define aspects of present identity through interpreting ancient spiritual practice. They frequently depart from mainstream religion in favour of more esoteric and diverse religions that explore feminism, environmentalism, sexuality, and gender expression. The latter two themes are especially prominent in the Antinoan movement.

This chapter will provide an overview of the history of the modern Antinoan cult and analyse current participants’ reports of their devotional practice. The history of the modern cult is drawn primarily from notable cult websites and social media pages, literature published by members of the movement, and Antinoan scholarship by Ethan Doyle White (2016; 2017). Survey data from participants in the current movement reveals how the veneration of Antinous has impacted and influenced the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The survey entailed ten questions asking the participants about their involvement with Antinoan worship, their practices and belief in the youth, as well as personal feelings and opinions about

¹⁰³ Neopaganism is also known as modern Paganism or simply Paganism.

Antinous and the broader Antinoan community. Each participant was given a pseudonym. It was conducted online between 13 October 2020 and 15 November 2020.

Whilst this survey was open to both Antinoan practisers and non-practisers alike, eighteen out of the nineteen completed surveys were finished by current practising Antinous worshippers. One was completed by an individual no longer active in the Antinoan community, who still maintained strong feelings for Antinous. This chapter will explore how Antinous has been adopted as a god into a sizable Neopagan NRM that functions to promote affirming LGBTQIA+ experiences and identities in a religious sphere by pulling their evidence from the past and interpreting it through a modern lens. It should be noted again here that the evidence presented is not indicative of every iteration of modern Antinoan worship. This thesis relies on limited Antinoan data, accessed from public Antinoan social media pages, websites, academic articles and the nineteen survey participants. However, through the data that has been provided, this chapter ultimately aims to understand the active emotions, agendas, and belief systems of Antinoan worshippers to gain a sense and understanding of their use of Antinous in the construction and maintenance of LGBTQIA+ identities in the twenty-first century.

Mapping the New Antinoan Movement(s)

Modern Antinoan cults and worship was first only seen in isolated instances. Starting in the eighteenth century, there was supposedly an artistic and homosocial Antinoan cult created by the homosexual father of the scientific study of Greek sculpture, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and his patron Cardinal Albani (Rousseau 1991, p. 191).¹⁰⁴ It was then kept alive, by men, and perhaps women, for whom homoerotic scholarship and homosexual practice were intimately related (Waters 1995, 206). In the twentieth century, English

¹⁰⁴ For more on Winckelmann and Antinous, see Vout 2006, pp. 139-162; Waters 1995, pp. 194-230.

novelist T.H. White (1906-1964) performed a rite of dedication to a bust of Hadrian and the constellation of Antinous. An American named William E. Livingston, who, whilst embracing Paganism, was inspired by Royston Lambert's *Beloved and God* (1984), began venerating the youth in privacy (White 2016, p. 38). Yet it was the turning of the twenty-first century that led the Antinoan faith to blossom and become more organised due to the wider potential and use of internet spaces.

The internet has allowed individuals, especially LGBTQIA+ people, to seek community in online forums and discussion groups by finding friends who shared their experiences from around the world (Pullen & Cooper 2010, p. 279). This is precisely how the modern Antinoan faith was formed, bonding and sharing a desire for a uniquely 'queer' deity. In 2021, the most prominent Antinoan movement is maintained through its presence on social media, particularly *Antinous the Gay God*, on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The first online Antinoan religious movement, the *Ecclesia Antinoi*, (Church of Antinous) was officially established on 30 October 2002 – the anniversary on which ancient Antinoopolis was founded (White 2016, p. 39). The *Ecclesia Antinoi* was created by three LGBTQIA+ Americans: Antonius Subia, Hiram Crespo and P. Sufenas Virius Lupus (White 2016, pp. 39-41). It was maintained primarily as a forum on Yahoo! Groups for discussion and communication about Antinous, as well as to encourage new devotees, and was “the first group of believers to re-institute the religion and cult of Antinous in the modern world” (*Temple of Antinous the Gay God*, 2021).

Before the *Ecclesia Antinoi*, another website (antinopolis.org/Temple of Antinous the Gay God) was established on 3 March 2002 by Subia, devoted to proclaiming the religion of Antinous (fig. 19). Subia explains on the website that he took it upon himself to declare himself a priest of the religion of Antinous and made a solemn promise to do everything he could to re-establish the ancient lost religion of Antinous in the modern world (*Temple of*

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

Antinous the Gay God, 2021). Lupus had also created a similar website, the *Aedicula Antinoi* (shrine of Antinous), in 2003 (White 2016, p. 41). The Yahoo! group *Ecclesia Antinoi* was relatively small and was maintained exclusively online, and it was not until a few years on that two significant individuals joined the Antinoan movement – Hernestus (Earnest) Gill and Uendi Quinn. Gill and Quinn both became priests of Antinous through Subia, and Quinn in 2007 became the first (and only) woman to become a priest of the modern religion of Antinous (*Temple of Antinous the Gay God*, 2021).

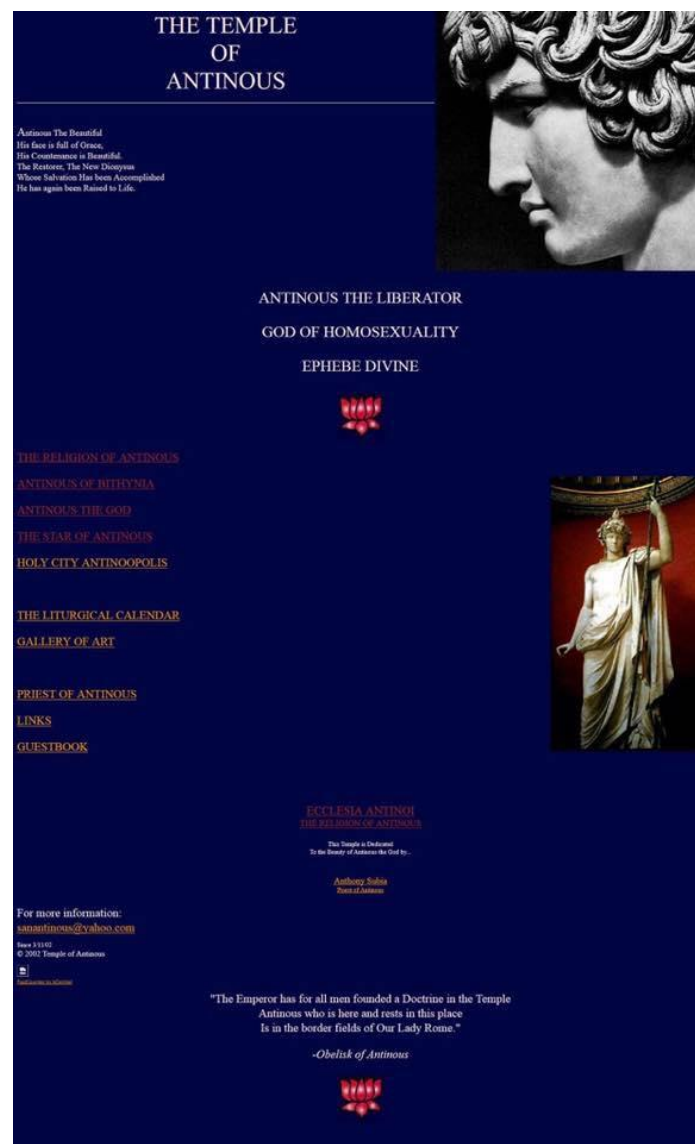


Fig. 19. Original version of the *Temple of Antinous the Gay God* blog from March 11, 2002.

Source: *Antinous the Gay God* (2021)

<https://antinougaygod.blogspot.com/search?q=2002>

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

Out of the nineteen surveys completed in 2020, only two worshippers identified as women, with one identifying herself further as a transgender woman. *Antinous the Gay God* (antinopolis.org) stresses that whilst the modern faith of Antinous is a ‘gay’ religion, it is “open to any and all interpretation, and is open to any person regardless of belief, gender, race, nationality, or sexual identification” (*Temple of Antinous the Gay God*, 2021). Today, Antinoan religion’s strongest appeal seems to be with gay and men-loving-men. This is acknowledged by *Antinous the Gay God* declaring:

the name and beauty of Antinous fascinated people, throughout history, especially gay men. And now the beautiful mystery of Antinous has been given to us, to the Modern Gay Community... it is therefore our duty... in the answer to the request of Hadrian, for the world, for gay men, to remember Antinous, to perpetuate his name, and to love him for all eternity, as Hadrian loved him.

(2021)

Religio Antinoi acknowledges the variations of Antinoan worship, but there is an importance thrust onto Antinous to be seen as a ‘gay’ man and a ‘gay’ god. Whilst *Antinous the Gay God* does not exclude heterosexual or other LGBTQIA+ individuals, the cult privileges gay men and addresses the gay community specifically.

Thirteen of the nineteen participants identified as gay men. In their answers to question nine: “in what ways are LGBTQIA+ expressions of gender and sexuality important to the Antinoan movement”, many responded the expressions are vital, but mostly for cisgender gay men. South American participant, Noah, believes that “Gay men are naturally more inclined to find and follow Antinous, but we welcome all the LGBTQIA+ spectrum.” Philip, from Bulgaria, writes that Antinous “is a gay god, mainly worshipped by gay men. I doubt any lesbian or transgender person would feel the connection with him, although he is open to all LGTBQIA+ people.” Participant and ex-worshipper Ezra, who identified as agender, noticed the heavy emphasis on the ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual’ aspects of *Antinous the Gay God*, and it is partially for this reason, as well as becoming an atheist, that they departed the practice. Ezra’s

response to question nine challenges the cult's orientation towards gay men and the idea of Antinous as a 'gay' god: "what I've seen in the Antinous movement has primarily been cisgender gay men. I wonder what would happen if he and his faith broke beyond that. Or can it?" The modern cult does not turn away non-gay individuals, in fact, it embraces the entire LGBTQIA+ community, but simultaneously, *Antinous the Gay God* primarily addresses cisgender, gay men.

P. Sufenas Virius Lupus, identifying as metagender and uses the nongendered pronouns e/eir/eim/eimself, states in eir self-published book *The Antinoan Mysteries: The Founding, Fate, Failure, Fall, and Finish of a Modern Mystery Cult*, that in mid-June of 2007, another Antinoan community was formed after a schism from the *Ecclesia Antinoi*, prompted because of "irreconcilable theological, procedural, political, and personal factors" (2016, p. 9). Lupus, along with a small number of people within the original Yahoo! Group, left the *Ecclesia Antinoi* to establish the similarly named *Ekklesia Antinoou*, while others-maintained membership within both groups.¹⁰⁵ Lupus' departure was due to differing views on whether Antinous can be identified as a modern 'gay' deity, rather than a god who can be more broadly defined as 'queer'.

This organisational diversity is typical of Pagan ecclesiology. Modern Paganism acts similarly to ancient Paganism in that it has no dogma, the difference being that the only source of authority lies solely within the individual, rather than communally or culturally driven (Gallagher 1994, p. 853). For ancient polytheists, in the words of Rüpke, "all might perform the religious act that was fundamental to ancient Mediterranean culture: all might pray" (2018, p. 196). This general inclusivity can also be seen in modern Paganism. What

¹⁰⁵ Both group names use Latin and Greek forms to embellish their ancient roots. *Ekklesia Antinoou*'s use of '-ou', however, may be a subtle claim of greater historical validation, due to ancient Antinoan cults primarily being Greek, not Roman.

Neopagan worship might entail is up to individual agency, but all may pray to their deity, and do so with respect. This is a key component of all Neopagan practices, as it allows for a diverse range of beliefs and opinions that do not contradict nor undermine any one person of a particular faith. As ancient cults of Antinous were different to one another, so too are the religious groups of Antinous in the twenty-first century.

With the schism came a split in belief systems, online communities, and members. Crespo had departed from the *Ecclesia Antinoi*, feeling that much of it had been a waste of time, instead embracing atheism and humanism, and founded, though still based on an ancient system, the Society of Friends of Epicurus in February 2013 (White 2016, p. 42).¹⁰⁶ Lupus had fully developed the *Ekklesia Antinoi*, a “queer, Graeco-Roman-Egyptian syncretist reconstructionist polytheist group devoted to Antinous” (White 2016, p. 42). Lupus also re-launched the *Aedicula Antinoi* website in 2010 after taking it down as a result from the split, however e stopped blogging on the site after November 27 2016 (*P. Sufenas Virius Lupus*, 2021). A statement from Lupus’ Wordpress blog (p.sufenasviriuslupus.wordpress.com) indicates whilst e was one of the original founders of both major modern Antinoan spirituality groups (the *Ecclesia Antinoi* and the *Ekklesia Antinoou*), Lupus is no longer affiliated with either of these communities (2021). Lupus now runs eir internet presence purely through eir Wordpress blog, which includes the *Academia Antinoi*, involving online academic courses on Antinoan Spirituality and other Pagan subjects.

Subia, on the other hand, branched out into different pursuits. Subia pushed for the Priesthood of Antinoopolis, noting that while it is perfectly fine to remain devoted to Antinous without becoming a priest, it is the option that some followers take (White 2016, p.

¹⁰⁶ Epicurus (341-270 BCE) was an ancient Greek philosopher who founded Epicureanism, an influential school of philosophy which highly valued friendship (*philia*). Epicurus believed that “friendship dances through the world bidding us all to awaken to recognitions of happiness” (VS. 52). To Epicureans, humans desire the peace and blessedness of the gods, which can be achieved through friendship and alleviates the problems of other men’s hostility (Rist 1980, pp. 121-122).

42). The priesthood represents leadership for *Antinous the Gay God*, requiring “particular devotion to Antinous above and beyond all other gods, beyond all other notions of divinity” (*Temple of Antinous the Gay God*, 2021). The priesthood is not a representation of the entire community or ‘membership’ of the Antinoan faith, but simply an indication of a greater commitment to the deity. This is not unlike ancient mystery cult practices, where mystery worship made no demands unless the individual wanted to become fully devoted. Whilst a physical temple was attempted in Hollywood at Subia’s home, but failed due to the lack of interest, far greater support was found online (White 2016, p. 42). Due to this, Subia took advantage of developments in social media and, in January 2011, founded an “Antinous the Gay God” Facebook page, the first Facebook page fully devoted to Antinous. White records that by 12 February 2015, the page had 4,374 likes (2016, p. 43). By 3 March 2021, interest had skyrocketed to 18,700 likes (*Antinous the Gay God*, 2021). The *Antinous the Gay God* religious movement also maintains a presence on Twitter and Instagram. Their Twitter page (@antinousgaygod) had 3,204 followers, and the Instagram page running under the same handle had 1,278 followers as of 3 March 2021. Subia also continued to run the *Ecclesia Antinoi* as a largely online resource for people to discuss Antinous, with Priest Hernestus serving as the group moderator, or *epistrategos* of Antinoopolis, since 2007 (*Antinous the Gay God*, 2021).¹⁰⁷ On 15 December 2020, Yahoo! shut down Yahoo! Groups, and thus information from *Ecclesia Antinoi* is no longer accessible.

As of 2021, neither the *Ecclesia Antinoi* nor the *Ekklesia Antinoou* exist, with the latter reformed under the name *Naos Antinoou* (sanctuary of Antinous) in 2017. The history of the groups has been recorded in depth by White, Lupus and Subia. Today, the primary source of Antinoan worship, religious information and accessibility resides in Subia’s

¹⁰⁷ The *Temple of Antinous the Gay God* states that “the official head of the *Ecclesia Antinoi* is the group moderator known as the *Epistrategos* of Antinoopolis, which was the title conferred by Hadrian upon the original “Mayor of Antinoopolis”” (2021).

Antinous the Gay God Facebook page, his blogs *antinoopolis.org* and *antinousgaygod.blogspot.com* and Lupus' Wordpress blog and academic courses. Subia's websites and social media pages now serves as the hub of the 'official' Antinoan faith, *Antinous the Gay God*, "now known as *Religio Antinoi*, but [formerly] known as *Ecclesia Antinoi*" (*Temple of Antinous the Gay God*, 2021).

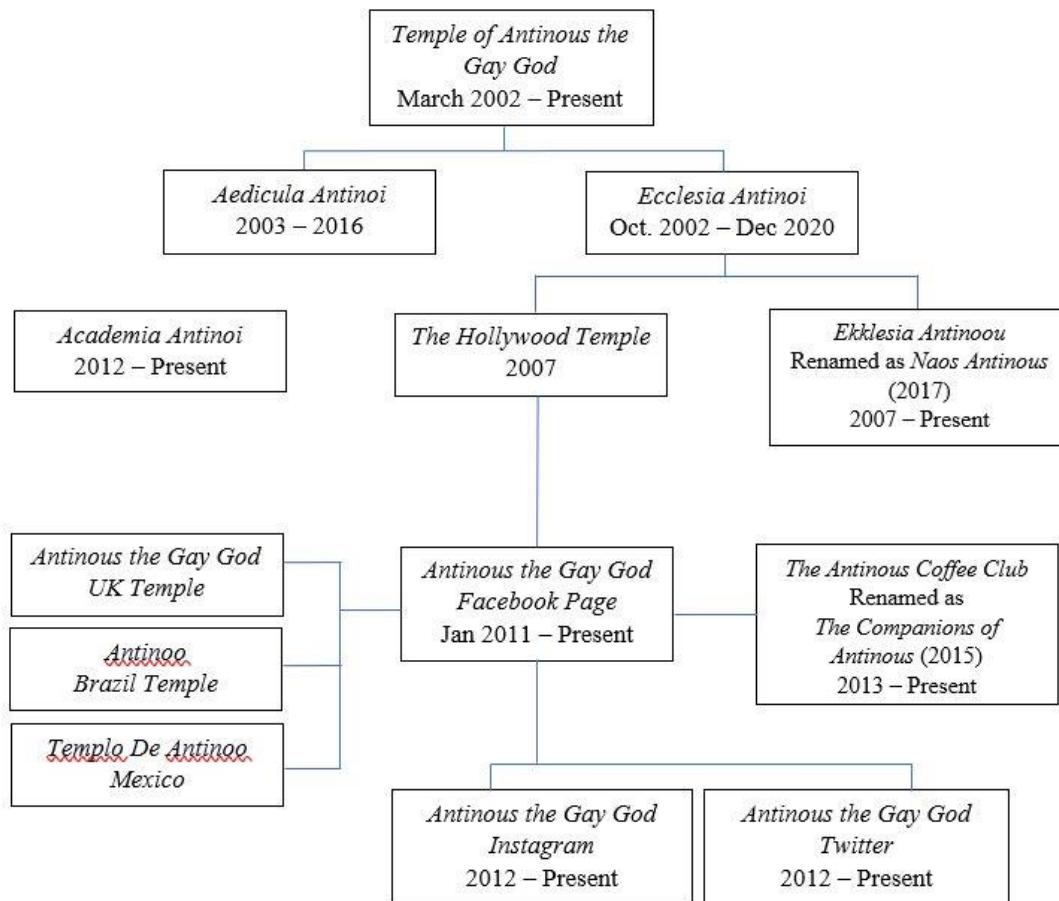


Fig. 20. Diagram tree of the various major iterations and communities of the Antinoan movement.

As of March 2021, Subia's *Religio Antinoi* is the largest and most 'unified' variation of the Antinoan Neopagan movement. Most survey participants expressed being part of *Religio Antinoi* or holding similar ideas to the movements core beliefs. This thesis recognises both the modern deification of Antinous as an LGBTQIA+ god, and not a purely gay god, but will ultimately focus on *Religio Antinoi* and members of Subia's *Antinous the Gay God* religion. The focus on *Religio Antinoi* is for methodological and practical reasons and should not be

read as diminishing the significance of Lupus' contribution to the history and beginnings of *Religio Antinoi*. Eir own religious practices and beliefs are acknowledged as vital components to the history of the movement and Lupus' interpretation, beliefs and practices are an important branch of the Antinoan religion itself.

The Internet and the Modern Antinoan Community.

A pivotal part of the roadmap of Antinoan worship is the Facebook group *Companions of Antinous*, previously known as *The Antinous Coffee Club*, established in 2013. White mentions one practitioner, Cam L-V, who launched the group in hopes of creating a private space where Antinous worshippers could discuss their faith, with a total of 69 members in 2014 (White 2016, pp. 44-45). In 2015 the group was rebranded as the *Companions of Antinous* and is monitored by the *Antinous the Gay God* Facebook page as “the official meeting place for seekers and members of *Religio Antinoi*” (*Companions of Antinous*, 2021). White speculated that the specialized and closed nature of *The Antinous Coffee Club* meant it was likely that the majority of those there are practicing Antinoans (2016, p. 44). A statement from Subia in the *Companions of Antinous* on 11 May 2015 confirms this, as:

initially the Antinous Coffee Club was created merely as a place to discuss Antinous among interested people...but slowly it seems to have evolved into an invitation group for those who have interest beyond mere curiosity and want to take part more in the devotional aspect of Antinous belief. I feel that we have outgrown the name “coffee group” and that this has become the main group on Facebook for those who are serious about learning more about Antinous religion and devotion.

(*Companions of Antinous*, 2015)

This shows that by 2015, there had already been a significant and steady growth in the level of interest and genuine worship of Antinous, and, as of March 2021, the *Companions of Antinous* had over 1,900 members.

The most significant strategy of the Antinoan faith is its use of and development over the internet. Antinous' reach in 2021 is worldwide, and the offshoots of *Antinous the Gay God* on

social media encompass this phenomenon. ‘*Antinous the Gay God UK Temple*’, ‘*Antinoo Brazil Temple*’ and sister group ‘*Templo De Antinoo Mexico*’ are all Facebook pages with ties to Subia’s original *Temple of Antinous the Gay God*. According to James, a worshipper of Antinous from the United Kingdom, there are seven current official priests across North and South America and Europe, with more in development, including one in South Africa. Twelve participants identified themselves living in North America, whilst six were situated across Europe, one in Canada and another in South America. This global network of Antinoan religion has been facilitated by the technology of the internet.

The websites and social media pages created by Subia and Lupus are to help those interested in Antinous and Antinoan veneration. Online Neopagan resources are ultimately “designed to guide the uninitiated who are surfing for information on the strange religion they heard about in the news or elsewhere” (Pike 2004, p. 18). Transgender believer, Charlotte, informs us that:

I discovered Antinous before my transition, when I was a gay teenager boy in the early 2000s. I discovered him through [the] internet while living in a very small town where I suffered from homophobia for years. Antinous was a comfort to me.

Multiple participants expressed how they discovered Antinous whilst coming across websites for Antinous’ veneration. German participant, Oscar, explains that “while researching on the religions of the ancient Mediterranean I came across a website about the reconstruction of the cult of Antinous. As a decidedly queer religion it spoke to me instantly”. Similarly, North American Antinoan, Jorden, declares that he “stumbled on a website dedicated to the worship of Antinous and was fascinated and enthralled by what I learnt.” Individuals who are marginalised in their own communities can capitalise on the ability to transcend geographical boundaries through the internet (Fox & Ralston 2016, p. 636), and as such the internet is paramount for promoting Antinous as a god and showcasing a space for worshippers. Using

the internet, Antinous' 'sacred' images are once again spread, in Dio Cassius' words, "practically all over the world" (69.11.4).

Although the movement relies on the internet as a tool for the promotion of Antinous, half of the survey participants admitted that they did not feel or want to be a part of the online Antinoan community. Having said that, many of those who stated they did not want to get involved or lurked on the sidelines also admitted that regardless of their involvement, the idea that there was a community made them feel happy. Another North American participant, Simon, mentions that "knowing that people from all over the world are discovering Antinous and feeling moved to worship and connect with him as a queer divinity is incredibly moving and inspiring." A change to Neopagan practice, especially queer Neopagan practice, is the growing acceptability of solitary practice. Margot Adler, quoting Michael Lloyd from the queer Pagan worship group the *Green Faerie Grove*, explains that:

we are in the era of pop-influenced Paganism; a time characterised by fluid and rapid growth and multiplicity and diversity of ideas. There are arguably more solitary practitioners than members of formal groups at this point in time. No one holds the keys to the kingdom; or, rather, everyone does.

(2006, p. 367)

Lloyd's explanation highlights the inner workings of the Antinoan movement. The Antinoan priesthood acts as leaders and guides to the religion, but ultimately the religion itself is of both formal and informal participation. As Subia states, "we don't really even have a published doctrine or dogma or system of belief, we are mostly preoccupied with trying to encourage people to worship Antinous however they see fit and let others do the same" (White 2016, p. 45). Antinous worshippers may be a part of the inner community or not, as the presence of an Antinoan community exists as positive experience to help inform and guide new initiates, but it is not vital to the practice.

Ancient worshippers of Antinous in mystery cults were most likely drawn in not only by Antinous as a deity, but by the community that surrounded him. While the mystery cult was largely communal, there is also evidence of individual veneration of Antinous in the ancient Mediterranean.¹⁰⁸ The most recent statue of Antinous was uncovered in 1996 in a private villa in Eva (Arcadia) that belonged to Herodes Atticus in 1996, alongside baths and a *heroon* dedicated to the youth (Vout 2005, p. 86; Rogers 2021, p. 100; fig. 21). What is distinctive about ancient mystery cults compared to the modern Antinoan cult is that in the ancient world there was a drive towards strictly controlled rules of behaviour and community to maintain religious identity. Although ancient Paganism had no doctrines or texts, this does not necessarily mean there were no community regulations. Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price show this example specifically through the *collegium* of Diana and Antinous, where the association “met six times a year for sacrifice and dinner and ensured that members had a decent burial” (1997, p. 287), and we can also recall the strict clothing regulations of the Andanian mysteries.¹⁰⁹ Whether the ancient Antinoan mysteries had certain rules or regulations we do not know; regardless, the modern *cultus* does not require them.

The emphasis on individualism in modern Antinoan worship is explicitly confirmed by *The Temple of Antinous the Gay God*. Quoting directly from the website itself, *Religio Antinoi* explains:

the modern religion has no direct contact with the glorious past and is without sure and verifiable direction in which to follow, so it is generally believed that there is no way to completely conform to the beliefs and traditions of the ancient cult of Antinous. Most evidence of what the ancients believed has vanished, leaving only fragmentary traces. What this means is that based upon the evidence, one who loves and worships Antinous is free to worship him however they wish, in whatever form they choose.

(2021)

¹⁰⁸ See also chapter two, pp. 98-99.

¹⁰⁹ For the *collegium* of Antinous and Diana, see fn. 41. For the Andanian mysteries, see chapter one, p. 54, chapter two, p. 86 & fn. 42.

As most of the movement revolves around online participation and singular worship is becoming more prominent in modern Paganism, the process of strict rules is almost non-existent. The identity formed from membership into mystery cult communities mattered for ancient initiates (Wellman 2005, p. 324), but for the modern Antinoan movement, there is less requirement to be identified as a member of the Antinoan community than as a venerator of Antinous himself.



Fig. 21. Torso of Antinous as an ephebic athlete. Excavated in Eva.

Located in the Astros Museum, Greece.

Image Source: Virtual Museum: Antinous Portraits (2009).

<https://www.antinoos.info/antin2a.htm>

The Antinoan movement, particularly *Religio Antinoi*, differs, then, to other forms of contemporary queer Paganism. White notices this difference between the Antinoan movement and other forms of queer Paganism, in that the worshippers of Antinous were all attracted to Antinous as soon as they discovered his existence, in both image and story (White 2016, p. 44). This is unlike other queer Neopagan NRM such as the *Radical Faeries* or *Minoan Brotherhood*, which lack central deified figures and instead focus on the provision of gay-centred spaces (White 2016, p. 45). Modern queer narratives of Antinous are strongest in online resources, especially through the social media pages and websites of *Antinoi Religio*, thus the youth is presented as an LGBTQIA+ figure who facilitates identity development. Hence, it is the deity Antinous that upholds the attraction to the religious movement as an LGBTQIA+ icon, not the safe space the movement affords its followers.

The attractiveness of *Antinoi Religio* resides in the belief in a wholly homosexual/queer deity, This is particularly shown through Subia and many of his fellow *Antinous the Gay God* associates, believing that “Antinous affected the course of human history in that he became the first historical person to be declared a god because of his beauty and homosexuality”, and that he is “the Spirit of Homosexuality... the only person who was ever consecrated as a god for being a gay man” (*Temple of Antinous the Gay God*, 2021). Multiple survey participants share Subia’s belief of viewing Antinous as the personification of queerness. Henri, a French worshipper of Antinous, exclaims that Antinous was not just a hero, or a human-turned-god, but an allegory of gay love. David states that Antinous “represents the fact that the universe includes same-sex relationships as a valid and integral reality”. Even Heath, who identifies as homosexual, but not as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, acknowledges that “there is something special that [homosexuals] can find in Antinous.” It is the gay/queer sexual identity that has been bestowed onto the youth, that Antinoan worshippers find both affirming and integral to their spiritual and personal well-being.

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

It is not unusual for some Neopagan religions to be monotheistic or have a centralised deity, which is usually in the form of a feminine Great Mother Goddess or sometimes a pre-Christian image of a masculine horned god (Jorgensen & Russell 1999, p. 327). This is not unique to the ancient mystery cults, either, as many mystery cults proclaimed superiority of one single supreme deity (Beard, North & Price 1997, p. 286). From a superficial perspective, *Religio Antinoi* and Antinoan spirituality is no different to other polytheistic and Pagan movements from the past or present. What is different about the modern Antinoan cult, however, is not the veneration of one god above all, or the significance of individual and private worship compared to community worship, but the specific and personal identification with Antinous, who functions to establish specifically LGBTQIA+ spirituality.

Same-Same but Different: The Belief in Antinous

Modern worship of Antinous is inherently diverse due to the nature of Neopaganism, yet the core belief in Antinoans is revealed to be the veneration of LGBTQIA+ nature and sexuality through the image and identification of Antinous. Every anonymous participant, regardless of how they worship the youth, admitted to the fact that their devotion to Antinous was a way in which to honour queerness. To the early Christian Father, Athanasius, “the deification of Antinous is further proof that idolatry is *inter alia*, the deification of pleasure and desire” (Meijering 1984, p. 46). Sex and sexuality to early Christianity, and to many variations of modern orthodox religions, is commonly regarded negatively. Yet modern Paganism practices reclamation and reparation, revaluing and recasting discarded or devalued traditions for the purpose of creating a new identity (Magliocco 2012, p. 151).

The deification of pleasure and desire is a vital part of Neopagan culture. As leading Neopagan spokesperson Starhawk informs us, the erotic heals the split between flesh and spirit, and LGBTQIA+ movements and sexual attraction “challenges the idea that the only

valid purpose of sex is reproduction; it means that sexuality is valued for its own sake, for pleasure, not as a means to an end” (1990, p. 141). Antinoan spirituality reassures practitioners that their sexual attractions, experiences, and identities are sacred, rather than sinful. The cult’s veneration of Antinous is a means to repair the dissonance between the self and their sexuality. To Simon, Plato’s *Symposium*, as well as homoerotic mythologies such as Apollo and Hyacinthus were very inspiring, but it was Antinous that “helped bring that divine queer sexuality into even more focus for me”. Moreover, Ezra highlights the very physical reclamation of the queer sexual experience, as for them, “it was all about that seeing of my sexuality as itself sacred. That lust and desire can be a path into the divine”. Ben reiterates this pattern well, as to him, Antinous and Antinoan worship:

gives us in the LGBTQ+ community the common points of reference to form shared identities, not just socially, but spiritually as well. Antinous is God for all of us who do not find a place in the heteronormative paradigm.

Whilst the previous chapters focused on the erotic nature of Antinoan cults, we must always remember that the Bithynian’s homoeroticism was a component, but not core, to ancient Antinoan cults. Despite this, it is the sexuality and sensual nature of the youth, and the acceptance of such sexuality within the spiritual practice, that draws modern Pagan worshippers into the Antinoan fold.

Matters of gender and sexuality are often pertinent to Neopagan NRMs. Central theological issues for many contemporary Pagans involve gender expression and sexual identity, with many coming to Neopagan and New Age movements due to issues with gender or sexuality (Kraemer 2012, p. 391). The appeal of Antinous to his initiates resides largely in his ‘queer’ identity, but also his mortal-turned-immortal one. As Antinoan worshipper Aiden, tells us:

straight folk have plenty of gods that look like them. Queer folks have a number of gods that look like them, but not many that lived a life like theirs first. I think being able to relate to Antinous on a level of his lived experience is the backbone of the Antinoan movement.

In the responses from the survey and White's interviews (2016, p. 45), almost every worshipper mentioned the fact that Antinous had been real. Through the relatability and identification of Antinous living a homoerotic life, members of *Religio Antinoi* can come to understand their own queer identities.

As in antiquity, Antinous' initial mortality is a key component to his worship, second only to his innate homoeroticism in modernity. Queer Pagan movements are frequently established to counter orthodox religions as they are looking for a more inclusive image of the divine, or for a religion that celebrates sexuality in all forms (Aburrow 2009, p. 147). The Antinoan cult takes this Neopagan desire to new heights; Antinous is presented as an inclusive god who not only represents LGBTQIA+ qualities, but 'understands' on a personal level what it is to live an LGBTQIA+ life. The deities of modern polytheism appearing to 'care' for human beings and their well-being, which was not necessarily their primary concern in ancient polytheisms, is standard (Bittarello 2010, p. 94). Yvonne Aburrow mentions that deities such as Adonis, Bacchus, Medusa, Orpheus, Ganymede, and Diana are popular amongst queer Pagans because of their LGBTQIA+ coded narratives (2009, p. 151), but for the modern Antinoan cult, there is a personability through their god that is not present with otherworldly polytheistic gods, because their god truly lived a 'queer' life.

The notion that Antinous was mortal and existed is what sets apart the Antinoan movement from almost every other Neopagan NRM, and perhaps what set apart the Antinous cults in antiquity, too. "For me, the difference between Antinous and other polytheistic deities is that he existed (exists) as a human, not as a construct explaining part of the physical world. Poseidon/Neptune may be god of the seas, but he was never a man", says Daniel. As Sebastian Matzner makes clear:

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

individual emancipation, or ‘coming out to oneself’, is also often linked to practices of classical reception. The formation of the homosexual self is often closely linked with, almost emerges out of a reception practice that recognises the individual, personal homoerotic desire in the ancient writings and therefore enables the development of a gay identity; it is the fabrication of one’s own identity by identifying with someone else’s desire.

(2010, p. 67)

This reception involves the production of affirmative LGBTQIA+ sexual identities through the interpretation of ancient mythological and historical figures as LGBTQIA+. Even as early as the 1860’s, the homosexual artist Simeon Solomon hung pictures of Sappho and Antinous in his college room, which suggests that queer individuals had started to provide classical figures such as Sappho and Antinous with the roles of the homoerotic ‘patron saints’ since the nineteenth century at least (DeJean 1989, p. 225). For modern Antinoan initiates, it is the recognition of Antinous as an embodiment of homoerotic desire and ancient queer existence that is the core of the Antinoan movement. It is the participation in the sanctification of a homoerotic deity, upheld by the cult’s modern LGBTQIA+ perception of Antinous, that develops or influences the identity of an Antinoan worshipper. Whilst Matzner is discussing the theory of homosexual identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this process is no different to how many ancient ‘queer’ mythological or historical figures have been interpreted by modern Pagans today, including Antinous. The Antinoan movement is not a new phenomenon of using the youth as an amplifier for LGBTQIA+ identity – it is simply a new variant of an age-old identity mechanism.

Robert Aldrich states that by the 1970s the model of gay identity being promoted was to represent the present rather than the past; the need for justification through classical representations started to die, and the Mediterranean model of homosexuality quickly began to dissolve (1993, pp. 218-219). Yet, Aldrich did not consider that Neopaganism was rising in popularity amongst LGBTQIA+ people in the 1970s. Many queer Pagan movements in the 1970s were linking modern homosexual identities with ancient, alternative religious practices

and by the 2000s, “queer-identified strands of Paganism began to make their voices heard more widely” (Urban 2006, p. 189; Stover III 2008, p. 33).¹¹⁰ Using the ancient Mediterranean as an inspiration for queer identity may have lost its place in mainstream culture, but it has been feverishly accepted and promoted in queer Paganism.

The importance of Antinous in LGBTQIA+ history dwells within the validation such a historical figure brings to the LGBTQIA+ community, manifesting for some through the theology of Antinous as a divine being. “Antinous represents, for me, a connection between the LGBTQIA+ community and their historical roots. He is proof that we have always been here”, reveals Oliver. Where other Neopagan religions seek their sexual and gender validation mainly through the communities surrounding their polytheistic gods, *Religio Antinoi* see Antinous as a deity who is single handily responsible for representing homosexual and queer existence because he existed as the ‘lover-turned-deity’ of Emperor Hadrian. To Noah, Antinous is the symbol of the LGBTQIA+ community and existence. The relationship provided “an example of a time when you could be gay and emperor and *pontifex* and pharaoh – and love a young man” and because of this, “Antinous made it possible and for centuries his example rang true for many, many people. He is the embodiment of the ‘Yes We Can’ motto, directed to LGBT people.” *Religio Antinoi* see their god, Antinous, and the relationship formed with Hadrian, as an inclusive representation of LGBTQIA+ existence. Antinous’ relationship with Hadrian becomes highly personal to Antinoan initiates, as they recognised their own homoerotic desires in the ancient relationship, which is then strengthened by Antinous’ deification as a homosexual god. In their worship of Antinous, a non-heteronormative deity, initiates validate their own queer lives.

¹¹⁰ e.g., the *Radical Faeries*, the *Minoan Brotherhood*, the *Minoan Sisterhood*, and some branches of the *Dianic Wicca* were popular and specific LGTBQIA+ inclusive NRMs established in the 1970s. For a discussion on the beginnings of queer Neopagan movements, see Adler 2006, pp. 365-371.

For modern Antinoans, the positives of Antinous outweigh the problematic features of the youth and his relationship with Hadrian. Whilst this thesis does not have the space to provide a deeper analysis of paedophilia and fetishisation of youth in male gay culture, it is nonetheless important to note that the ancient Mediterranean practice of pederasty is incompatible with modern western law and community standards. Erotic attachments and fetishization between male adults and adolescents, even when viewed from a historical distance, are a sensitive issue. They can create intense feelings and sit uncomfortably with current understandings of child sexual abuse (Skinner 2005, p. 10). Due to this, pederasty is often consigned to the past and severed from futurity by many in the LGBTQIA+ community, appearing irrelevant to both the present and the future of contemporary queer cultural politics (Amin 2017, p. 33). However, the purposeful interpretation of Antinous as a purely 'gay' or modern 'queer' figure might seem negligent towards Antinous and Hadrian's historical pederastic relationship and its parallels to contemporary paedophilia.

Lupus, on eir blog, recognises these complex issues of the veneration of Antinous and Hadrian's relationship:

what I find the most troubling is that this God that I love and appreciate and whose historical context and original attestations are so important to me is, fundamentally, in the position that he ultimately was due to something that I recognise is entirely inappropriate and even illegal and abusive from a modern perspective, i.e., the context of the Greek *erastes/eromenos* relationships amounting to paradigmatic pederasty... While the historical situation then was much different than it is now... I cannot condone this remotely, and it is something that I greatly fear might end up undermining the modern *cultus* of Antinous.

(Lupus 2021)

Lupus acknowledges the historical background of the pederastic relationship as both historical and problematic. Lupus condemns the historical relationship in order to protect eir contemporary worship from paedophilic associations.

Religio Antinoi distance themselves from the pederastic elements of Antinous and Hadrian's relationship not by explicit disavowal, but through strategies of silence and historical interpretation. There is no explicit public acknowledgement of the proximity between Hadrian and Antinous' pederastic relationship and contemporary paedophilia. Rather, the cult identifies Antinous and Hadrian as gay men in a gay partnership. As *Religio Antinoi* explain:

gay has always been and always will be... Antinous was gay in the way gays were in Roman times, which is different from how gays were in the 1950s, which is different from how gays are now... Antinous represents the divine essence that we all hold in common, so yes, I believe that in his own way and for his time, Antinous was gay just like we are now.

(Hernestus 2015, *Antinous the Gay God*)

For the modern cult, Antinous was gay, just not in the way we understand it today. Antinous and Hadrian do not reflect pederasty, because, to *Religio Antinoi*, they do not represent that ancient sexual dynamic. The interpretation of Antinous and Hadrian's relationship as universally 'gay', side-steps questions about age and consent. White has also explored this assessment, explaining that "as modern human beings, we inevitably approach and interpret the past through the prism of our own contemporary understandings, which are constructed by our own contemporary classifications and terminology" (2017, p. 251). *Religio Antinoi* and its members recognise Antinous, and other 'queer' historical figures, through the prism of universalising LGBTQIA+ identities and estrange themselves from associations with paedophilia through silence.

The recollection of Graeco-Roman myths and histories depicting male-male desire was the major and popular form in which same-sex relationships were portrayed in the past (Aldrich 1993, p. 36). Ancient 'queer' relationships have long been intrinsic to non-heterosexual representations, and the appreciation of Antinous' relationship with Hadrian is equivalent to this trend. The difference of the ancient Mediterranean past and its sexual culture can be acknowledged and managed through interpretation of historical sexual and

gender identities to suit modern understandings. Richlin notes that in the 1955 March issue of homoerotic magazine *ONE*, which focused on Plato's *Symposium*, "some minor liberties [had] been taken with the translator's text, so as to de-emphasise the age differential, and to bring the Greek conception into greater consistence with modern conditions" (2008, p. 435). The reinterpretation or downplaying of pederasty is not a twenty-first century strategy, nor unique to *Religio Antinoi*, but rather a longstanding mechanism used by LGBTQIA+ individuals to see themselves unproblematically in the classical past. Richlin also comments on the homosexual reception of the classical age in the 1950s and 60s, quoting a lead article by Randy Lloyd on same-sex marriage, which states that "we are not living in the days of ancient Greece, our movement does not stem from those days, and it is not based on the homosexual ethics of those days" (2008, p. 428). Interpreting homoerotic and queer-coded narratives from the past is not a justification of some ancient sexual practices, nor becoming 'tone-deaf' to 'historical accuracy', but rather a strategic use of the past to provide explanations for LGBTQIA+ identities of the present.

Whilst two participants, Heath and Ari, stress that seeing Antinous as a 'gay' god or a historically 'gay' figure is inaccurate, as the term 'gay' did not exist in the ancient world, most respondents emphasised Antinous' modern 'gayness' or 'queerness' as a pivotal part of Antinous' identity and worship. Neopaganism and LGBTQIA+ reception allow these differing understandings of Antinous' sexual identity to co-exist in relative harmony. The core of modern Antinoan belief is the worship and interpretation of Antinous as an LGBTQIA+ god, and the silence on Antinous and Hadrian's pederastic relationship comes from the desire to frame the youth as a modern LGBTQIA+ deity, rather than a 'victim' of ancient pederasty. Like many Neopagan NRMs, the modern Antinoan cult prioritises Antinous' symbolic and reparative potential rather than historical accuracy (Urban 2015, p. 165). The historical figure of Antinous cannot be understood as 'gay' in contemporary terms,

but the current god is ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ by virtue of being worshipped as such. Antinoan worshippers identify key LGBTQIA+ characteristics in their god, which in turn help to support their identities in the world today.

Home is Where the Heart is: Antinous, Religion and LGBTQIA+ Spirituality

Many survey participants stated that their first discovery of Antinous was through either gathering knowledge from history books or falling in love with the youth during museum visits, where his dazzling busts and statues are displayed. Henri describes an emotional discovery of Antinous at seventeen years of age when travelling to Delphi for a school trip. Upon seeing a statue of the Delphic Antinous, the participant cried and knelt on the floor, as if they had lost someone important and had found them once again. Vout, in her article *Hadrian, Hellenism and the Social History of Art* (2010), makes note of the discovery of lip-stick marks on the cheek of the breathtaking Mondragone Antinous: “someone had played at being Pygmalion (or Hadrian) and kissed it. And who could blame them? Up on a pedestal, centre stage, the effect of its beauty was jaw-dropping” (2010 p. 63; fig. 23; appendix 3.15). Antinous’ image is completely intoxicating, moving people to hyper-emotional states by either dropping to their knees in prayer, or placing a kiss on his marble cheek.

Undoubtably, the very physical form of Antinous has created strong emotional reactions, especially to his worshippers, both ancient and modern. One inscription, which would have most likely accompanied a statue, asks “if Antinous and Belenus are alike in age and beauty, why should Antinous also not be what Belenus is?” (Boatwright 1987, p. 257).¹¹¹ As Vout observes, Antinous’ beauty and attractiveness is fundamental to his status and divinity to modern worshippers (2007, p. 113). The physical and visual form of Antinous is vital to his

¹¹¹ *CIL* 14.3535. Belenus was a Celtic god synonymous with Apollo.

aesthetic, but in terms of *Religio Antinoi*, it is the LGBTQIA+ spiritual inclusivity, encapsulated and heightened by Antinous' attractive form, that has moved some Antinoan members to tears.



Fig. 22. Close up of the Mondragone Antinous Head with lipstick marks.
Image source: Vout 2010, fig. 9.

Many queer Neopagans have previously been disillusioned about religion and felt there was no place for them, describing finding Neopagan communities as coming 'home' and discovering 'family' (Pike 2004, p. 117). This feeling of 'home' and acceptance manifests for many Antinoan worshippers not through community but by interpreting the youth as a deity that welcomed their non-heteronormative sexuality and gender. For some Antinoan worshippers, rather than finding their deity, their deity 'found them'. Paul, a North American participant, when visiting the Berlin-Dahlem Museum Centre, home to numerous statues of Antinous, recalls he was always drawn to Antinous, and that:

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

I feel [Antinous] was calling to me. I have always been a very religious person and I feel Antinous made himself known in 2002 when I discovered the blog *Antinous the Gay God*. I knew that he was the one I saw in Berlin and that in my heart he called me to worship him and be a follower.

Similar feelings were repeated by multiple other survey participants, with Henri stating that his discovery was not so much a discovery as a “call for Antinous when I was 17”, and James exclaims that “it was in Rome that I found Antinous – or did he find me?!” Three participants, James, Heath, and Ari even disclosed that Antinous had come to them via dreams and meditations, perhaps reminiscent of Antinous’ abilities stated on the epitaph from the Pincio Obelisk, where “he heals the needy ill by sending them a dream” (Boatwright 1987, p. 245).

Often, new Neopagans feel an overwhelming sense of relief, excitement and awe when discovering new communities or deities that confirm their beliefs. As Adler muses, many Pagans first found their new beliefs in libraries or used bookstores, perhaps expressing “I never knew there was anyone else in the world who felt what I feel or believed what I always believed. I never knew my religion had a name” (2006, p. 14). Adler’s rumination is exactly what happened to Subia in 1997. Subia had a personal and passionate experience when discovering Antinous in a book on art history; one that was enough to make him “fall inexorably in love with Antinous and to know that at long last I had found a god who represented everything I had been searching for in my life. I was deeply struck by him” (White 2016, 39). Simon shares a similar experience, in that:

what little I knew of the dominant religious paradigm left me cold, especially as I came to know and understand my sexuality, which Christianity called a sin... I wanted something deeper, and found that in Paganism, and the mythologies and religions of the ancient world... when Antinous came into my life, he helped bring that divine queer sexuality into even more focus for me.

LGBTQIA+ people may be harmed emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, in non-LGBTQIA+ affirming religious organisations. They can either remain in a non-affirming

space, or choose (or forced) to leave, which often leads to a struggle with “confusion, low self-esteem, guilt, shame, isolation, hopelessness, depression, anxiety, fear of damnation, feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy” (Beagan & Hattie 2015, p. 94). Neopaganism, and specifically Antinoan belief, on the other hand, allows for an alternative spirituality that welcomes LGBTQIA+ individuals usually (although not always) without judgement, healing the rift between their sexual identity and spirituality.

Antinoan worship is one of many Neopagan movements that use its deities and rites to heal the damage done to LGBTQIA+ individuals. In addition to honouring and celebrating queer relationships, positive sexual and identity experiences, whether personal or communal, are ways in which Neopagan NRMs try to realise their hopes and beliefs (Pike 2008, p. 128). Multiple participants had orthodox religious backgrounds, particularly Christianity. Oscar explains that “having grown up Christian and believing for many years I would go to hell for my ‘unnatural desires’, it was very wonderful to find a religion that not only embraces but celebrates queerness.” Antinous’ ancient role as a healing and salvific god is fully realised in modernity, acting once again as a psychopomp – spiritual guide – for his many believers to be their true, authentic selves. Oscar also recognises that “Antinous helps me let go of shame, to be proud of who I am, to seek beauty in life.” Henri recalls a similar feeling, where Antinous “helped me to come out and feel myself... [to] accept myself as a gay person.” The deified youth has helped many Antinoans to come to terms with and accept their sexual identity through his relatability as a mortal LGBTQIA+ figure and as an immortal queer spiritual guide.

Many Neopagans look for male images of the divine that offer alternatives to the Christian and Jewish god (Pike 2008, pp. 134-135). Since the majority of Antinoan worshippers identify as male-loving-males, the faith fulfills this desire, and as James describes:

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

at university I began to feel a ‘lacking in me’ – a void. I had a couple of born-again Christian fellow students and saw how ‘full’ they seemed. But I also heard how vicious they were about my sexuality. So I looked at other faiths and was drawn to British Paganism. It is centred, however, around the blessed connection of male energy to female. [British Paganism] doesn’t reject or judge me, but it is hard to connect to when your energy is male to male... so finding Antinous was wonderful, a blessing and an enormous relief – I’d found my spiritual ‘home’.

Belief in Antinous helps individuals find personal solace for their own sexual identities, feeling welcomed and accepted for who they are whilst also fulfilling the desires for a religious lifestyle. Even to ex-Antinoan Ezra, who states that they are not involved with the religion anymore, Antinous “continues to represent the holiness of homoerotic desire. The fleshy sacredness of queer faith.” The Bithynian youth, as someone who has fallen out of the religion relates, still maintains a strong and divine power for the LGBTQIA+ community.

I am Becoming a God: ‘Homotheosis’ and Divine Sexuality

Antinoan worshippers not only identify with the Bithynian on a mortal level. The youth also functions as a means for venerators to acquire a sense of divinity. The history of Antinous as an example and provider of divinity is an ingrained part of both his ancient and modern cultus. “I am becoming a god”, says Oliver, when considering what the deity does for him. The emphasis on finding the queer in the divine seems to be integral to queer spirituality, the urge to perceive the divine in one’s own image is widespread amongst LGBTQIA+ Neopagans (Aburrow 2009, p. 152). Christine Kraemer explains that whilst diversity is the nature of Neopaganism, there are certain attitudes and beliefs that are common to most Neopagan communities and worshippers, including that the divine is immanent in the world and in nature, and that the body and human sexuality are divine and sacred (2012, p. 391). Noah states that in his spiritual practice, he celebrates Antinous “when I wake up, when I eat, when I drink, when I have sex, when I’m thankful for something, when I go to sleep.” The modern cult does not just find relatability in Antinous, but the god is a fundamental part of every action one takes.

The act of Antinous and initiate ‘becoming one’ is especially emphasised by the belief that each Antinoan venerator is divine and immortal, and “is the mystery which Flamen Antinoalis Antonius Subia calls Homotheosis” (*Temple of the Gay God Antinous*, 2020). Homotheosis, as explained by the *Temple of the Gay God Antinous*, is “the process of becoming so much like Antinous as one possibly can, of seeking to cultivate an Antinous-growth within one’s own heart”, and it is “the sacredness of being gay... it is Gay consciousness... the realisation of transcendence and bliss, the power and beauty of homosexual fire, spread everywhere, throughout the cosmos” (2021). For many Antinoans, they do not just find acceptance through the worship of Antinous, they become Antinous. Homotheosis is the connection between the mortal and immortal. It is “Man-Godliness-Becoming-One” (*Temple of the Gay God Antinous*, 2020) and a “sacred state after death, a gay immortality which Antinous alone can offer, with the divinity thus offering salvation to the faithful” (White 2016, p. 46). What this seems to be echoing is ancient Orphism.

Recalling Edmonds’ argument from chapter two, New Age and Neopagan religion aligns with ancient Orphism, with their similar claims to extra-ordinary sanctity and divine authority in an eclectic manner.¹¹² This is particularly visible when we compare the possible ancient Antinoan-Orphic cults with the modern Antinoan cult’s practice of Homotheosis. For *Religio Antinoi*, Antinous still holds ancient Dionysian elements, reflecting divine potential through different, individualised methods. Simon sums up this idea of the divine queer promoted by his god:

Antinous represents divine human potential – for everybody. He wasn’t an offspring of the gods like Herakles or Perseus, who became divine heroes and achieved apotheosis. No, Antinous was a commoner who caught the attention of an emperor, who became his lover and beloved, and through tragic fate stumbled into godhood as he fell into [the Nile]. Granted, I [do not] recommend drowning to achieve apotheosis. There [are] things we can do in this life to fulfill our divine potential, and devotion to Antinous is one of those things. If Antinous can become a god, why not the rest of us? If Antinous’s love was divine, why not our love?

¹¹² See chapter two, p. 98.

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

Indeed, if Antinous became a god through his homoerotic relationship with Hadrian, what is stopping other LGBTQIA+ individuals and Antinoan believers from becoming god-like through their sexuality and sexual identity, too?

The ‘deification of the self’ is an ideal that belongs to the realm of both New Age religion and Neopaganism. Neopagans generally believe that the divine is immanent in the world and nature. The body, and “human sexuality is believed to be sacred through the practice of honouring multiple deities, sometimes as separate beings, and sometimes as archetypes or aspects of a Goddess and/or a God” (Kraemer 2012, p. 391). In contrast, practitioners of New Age Religion, who tend to look towards the future rather than the past, believe that the self is divine, but incomplete and in need of help (Tucker 2012, p. 47). The modern Antinoan movement seems to merge these two ideas with ancient Orphism.

The modern cult of Antinous holds the Bithynian in a position where their god represents LGBTQIA+ qualities outwardly. Simultaneously, initiates believe that Antinous is part of them, allowing worshippers to become god-like, inwardly. A blog post from *Antinous the Gay God* rationalises that:

Hadrian had recognised that Antinous had always been Divine – a fact which is a tenet of The Orphic Mysteries. He decided to establish a religion which would enable the followers of Antinous to become aware of their own Divine Nature and to become one with Antinous the Gay God.

(Hernestus, 2020)

Ancient Orphism has undoubtedly inspired the modern *cultus*. The assimilation of ancient Antinoan worship with ancient Orphism allows the modern movement to achieve a sense of historically-grounded divinity. This is also reflected by Oscar, believing that: “I think [Antinous] gives us a divine being we can really [identify with] and see ourselves in... to have a god who is queer, who tells me without a doubt that I am divine and perfect and worthy of love as I am, means a lot.” The ‘becoming of Antinous’ reflects the process of

acceptance of the self, in sexuality, gender and general wellbeing in the guise of the sacred and the divine self.

The Antinoan cults of antiquity and Antinoan movements of modernity have impacted the sexual and divine identities of their initiates. Both versions of Antinoan worship hold similar beliefs, despite their almost two-thousand-year difference. Cicero claimed that from the mysteries “we have learned ... the beginning of life and have gained the power not only to live happily, but also die with a better hope” (*Leg.* 2.14.36). Will Durant further pictured that “in this ecstasy of revelation, we are assured, [ancient initiates] felt the unity of [their gods], the oneness of [their gods] and the soul; they were lifted up out of the delusion of individuality and knew the peace of absorption into deity” (1980, p. 189). Ancient mystery cult initiates were often described as ‘happy and blessed’ (Ustinova 2013, pp. 107-108), and these feelings were as common in antiquity as they are today.

Rapid ‘converts’ to Neopaganism often feel immediately overwhelmed and transformed. William James observes that “often amid tremendous emotional excitement or perturbation of the senses, a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new” (1958, p. 177; Gallagher 1994, p. 853). Simon divulges his experience in an Antinoan ritual, explaining that:

simply put, I fell in love. [The] first ritual I attended was one of the most beautiful I had ever been to. It was in a humble environment, the basement of an occult shop, but there was such earnest care and devotion and humour in putting the ritual together, I was just incredibly moved. I felt seen by the god.

Much like ancient mystery cult members, modern Antinoan initiates, like Simon, can be emotionally and spiritually moved, feeling a unity with their god. Through this chapter, we have seen the ancient cult of Antinous reflected through the modern Antinoan movement. Mystery cults, ancient and modern, are interpersonal, undergoing metaphorical rebirths into different states of thinking for the benefit of the self. Homoeroticism, sexuality,

overwhelming happiness, and the merging of mortal and immortal all tie into both ancient and modern Antinoan worship. We should remember, too, that the Antinoan cults of antiquity were not created from ‘nothing’ but drew their rituals and beliefs from a long line of centuries-old mystery cults, as well as community and cultural ideals, just as the modern cult has done. Though contemporary worshippers have changed certain aspects of Antinous’ divinity and emphasise the youth’s homoeroticism, the reactions, emotions, and beliefs of modern Antinoan worshippers could be more reminiscent of ancient believers than we first realise.

Today, the function of Antinous lies primarily in being a symbol of LGBTQIA+ history, community and spirituality, and, as the primary god of a Neopagan movement, his modern worship encompasses these areas. Antinous’ place as a queer-coded historical and spiritual figure provides representation for LGBTQIA+ people and allows queer individuals to see their identities not as a ‘new’ or ‘modern’ creation, but something that has existed for many centuries. The interpretation of Antinous as a ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ figure may be presented as problematic and ahistorical by some, but it fulfills a much-needed queer narrative for individuals wanting to ground their identities (and spirituality) through historical narratives.

The goal of the Antinoan cult is not to continue the ancient worship as accurately as possible, but to create a religion based on the needs of a small group of LGBTQIA+ people. The movement exists, as James puts, “for the [LGBTQIA+] folk who need a spiritual connection; who are lost; who are suffering; who are lonely; who are in need of just a bit of positive attention.” To the modern movement, the Bithynian exists in the historical past and the spiritual present to validate sexual and gender identities, once again being pulled apart and pieced back together to satisfy the demands of LGBTQIA+ visibility. Just as Hadrian, the elite of Mantinea and Ephesus, and even the ancient Antinoan worshippers, could shape and restructure Antinous’ identity to pursue their own agendas, so can the followers of Antinous

Chapter Three: The LGBTQIA+ Antinous

today. Antinous has always been a flexible figure from the very moment he was deified, and now, whether he sits as the poster boy of Pride Month for the public, or lounges on a personal shrine, venerated for his homoeroticism, the Bithynian's white marble has been extensively and permanently slathered with rainbow paint.

Conclusion

The Antinous examined in this thesis, for the most part, has not been the ‘historical’ or ‘biographical’ Antinous. Who the Bithynian was historically is a question unlikely to be answered. Instead, each chapter has analysed a variation of Hadrian’s favourite, discovering what the functions of Antinous were to the respective individual and/or community. To conclude, this thesis shall end with one more analysis of an Antinoan statue. In 1798, a marble statue of Antinous as Vertumnus was discovered in the Baths of Porta Marina, Ostia, now located in the Vatican Museum, carrying in the folds of his tunic flowers and fruits of the fields (Meiggs 1973, p. 379; fig. 24).¹¹³ Vertumnus, whose name means ‘turning’, was a god of seasons and change, and had the ability to constantly transform in shape.

Rüpke’s analysis of the god Vertumnus in Propertius 4.2 (54/47 BCE – before 2 CE) brings to light that “the identity of [a] god is the identity of a subject who is able to remember and narrate change as change encountered by himself” (2017, p. 49).¹¹⁴ In other words, a god shall change and adapt, because they can and always will, change. Whilst this thesis has argued that Antinous’ most important syncretisations are Osiris and Dionysus, perhaps the god that suits the Bithynian best, is, in fact, Vertumnus. Antinous, like the seasonal god, “takes on every(?) form which his heart [desires(?)]...” (Boatwright 1987, p. 245). The youth is constantly adjusted in image and identity, and different adaptations of Antinous inevitably voice different meanings.

¹¹³ In addition, an identical Antinous-Vertumnus statue sits in front of the Matsuoka Tamurachō Building, Toyko. Not much is known about this Antinous Vertumnus, however, from 1974 to 2000 the building was home to the privately-owned Matsuoka Museum of Art on its top floor, until it’s relocation to Shirokanedai (*Atlas Obscura*, 2021).

¹¹⁴ Vertumnus was also a god with an erotic mythos, who transformed himself into an old crone to seduce Pomona, the goddess of the fruits (Ov. *Met.* 14.621-771). The syncretism of Vertumnus and Antinous align with other deities and heroes syncretised with Antinous also known for their erotic narratives (Dionysus, Apollo, Hermes, Achilles, ect.). For more on Rüpke’s analysis of Propertius’ poem, see Rüpke 2017, pp. 43-62. For Antinous’ erotic syncretisms, see also fn. 90.



Fig. 23. Antinous as 'Vertumnus', c. 130 – 138. Vatican Museum, Rome.
Image Source: *Flicker*, photographed by Kevin Norman, 2018.

Conclusion

Of course, it has been argued that the ‘Antinous head’ on the ‘Vertumnus body’ was probably a restorative measure, like that of Antinous-Echmoun¹¹⁵ or even the more recent Giovanni Pierantoni’s Antinous-Ganymede,¹¹⁶ yet, Antinous-Vertumnus (and any rendition of Antinous) elicits a new exchange of ideas through a different representation, thus proving Rüpke’s argument. The very metamorphosis of Antinous’ image and cult, from Hadrian’s beloved *eromenos*, to a LGBTQIA+ god, emphasises that the ever-changing communication of a deity is fundamental to their survival. It reveals how people can take a deity, like Antinous, to create new functions and ideas through their own agency. Rüpke’s theory extends outside of the ancient world, as the change of Antinoan communication (i.e., Antinoan veneration and Antinoan imagery) to fit LGBTQIA+ centric narratives is the sole reason why Antinous is still a recognisable and worshipped figure today. Antinous, like Vertumnus, “is young and he’s blessed by nature with wonderful looks; / he can change into any form that he likes to suit the occasion / He’ll be whatever you tell him to be, no matter how strange” (Ov. *Met.* 14.684-686).

This, then, brings us to the ultimate question: why Antinous? If ‘lived ancient religion’ demands that historians focus on the practitioners and not the deity, why should the favourite of Emperor Hadrian be given the spotlight? Scholars such as Bernd-Christian Otto (2011), as Rüpke points out, argue that there is an overemphasis on deities as stable elements in ancient religious study (2015, p. 349). This thesis has argued that ancient deities are indeed unstable and are constantly evolving, yet, paradoxically, whilst the type of Antinoan veneration and Antinoan communication has continuously changed, Antinous remains the unshakeable heart of his cult. The obscurity and progressive fragmentation of Antinous’ human life, even in antiquity, is what makes the youth such an alluring figure to reinterpret.

¹¹⁵ See fig. 9.

¹¹⁶ See fn. 39.

Conclusion

The reception of Antinous as a deity relies on four elements: deification, syncretisation (particularly with mystery and local gods), connections to a Greek colony in Bithynium (a facet that is primarily for Antinous' ancient reception), and a homoerotic relationship between youth and emperor. Everything else about Antinous is altered because there is an inherent malleability with the young god. Antinous functions as a metaphorical 'blank canvas' to convey any narrative one desires through religious communication.

A striking and surprising discovery in this research is the shared emotional depth of Antinous' mystery cult worship between the second century CE and the twenty-first century. Regardless of how Antinous is venerated, the youth supports various displays of identity expression and well-being, functioning in the twenty-first century as a means of reparative history for LGBTQIA+ people. A lived religion methodology has revealed how, since its initial creation in 130 CE, the cult of Antinous has been a diverse space that has catered for those who uphold collective principles (be it striving for immortality or sexual emancipation). The emotional power of Antinous' image and the Antinoan *cultus*, both past and present, not only bridges the unusual revival of Antinoan veneration, but highlights its shared function of healing and positive expressions of the self between antiquity and modernity.

This thesis has explored the function of Antinous' image and cult, yet what has been presented has barely scratched the surface of Antinous' role in the ancient and modern world. Other popular methods of Antinoan worship in the second century CE include the youth as an oracular god, syncretised with Apollo, with a strong presence in Delphi. This stresses another important way in which the people of the past tried to ease their anxieties through Antinoan worship.¹¹⁷ An examination of early Christian Antinoan reception would unearth another function of Antinous in antiquity, as a stratagem for persecuting Paganism. Modern Christian

¹¹⁷ For more on Antinous, Apollo and oracles, see Renburg 2010, pp. 159-198.

Conclusion

interpretations of Antinous in the nineteenth century strive to desexualise the youth, weaponizing ancient homoeroticism by turning Antinous into a victim of Pagan corruption and Hadrian's homoeroticism (Waters 1995, pp. 213-217). Whilst there has already been some previous scholarship on the role of Antinous as an early LGBTQIA+ icon in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this area deserves further analysis, particularly in queer classical reception and Christian reception. Most importantly, additional discussion and examination of *Antinoi Religio* and modern Antinoan veneration should be pursued. The analysis of modern Antinoan cult activity, such as online ceremonies and spiritual practices (i.e., personal shrines, rituals, and prayer) would provide vital insight into how Antinous is physically worshipped today, potentially underlining another parallel between the past and the present.

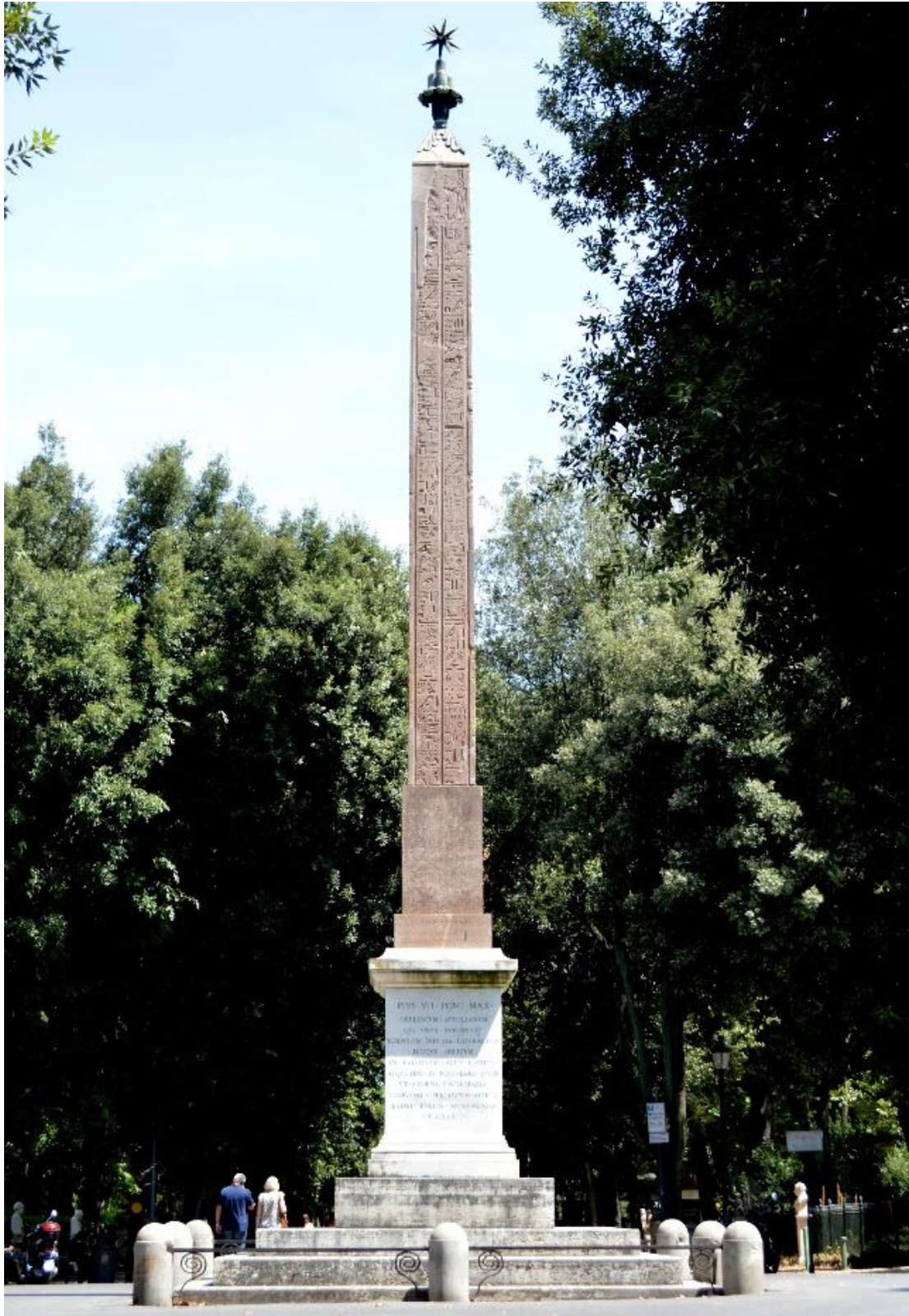
Antinous' ultimate function as a god of the mysteries is undeniably fitting. The events of his life and death are shrouded in ambiguity, and we can only know so much about the ancient cults of Antinous, as much as this thesis has tried to unveil their secrets. To be a mystery deity is to be reborn, time and time again. Through the variations of Antinoan communication, the Bithynian is constantly rejuvenated and transformed. Although first the mortal darling of the emperor, Antinous' deification led to his image being reborn once as Osiris, then as the 'twice-born' Dionysus, thirdly as a local deified hero, and in our time, as an LGBTQIA+ god. The goal of this thesis has been to understand the function of Antinous and Antinoan cult in the second and twenty-first centuries CE. The surprising parallels discovered both expand Antinoan scholarship and breathe life into the overlooked parts of the youth's history. As the Pincio Obelisk states, "all gods and goddesses give [Antinous] the breath of life, and he breathes as one rejuvenated" (Boatwright 1987, p. 246).



1.1. South Side of the Pincio Obelisk. c. second century CE. Rome.
Image Source: *Obelisks.org*. Photographed by Hiroyuki Nagase.
<<http://www.obelisks.org/en/pincio.htm>>



1.2. East Side of the Pincio Obelisk. c. second century CE. Rome.
Image Source: *Obelisks.org*. Photographed by Hiroyuki Nagase.
<<http://www.obelisks.org/en/pincio.htm>>



1.3. West Side of the Pincio Obelisk. c. second century CE. Rome.

Image Source: *Obelisks.org*. Photographed by Hiroyuki Nagase.

<<http://www.obelisks.org/en/pincio.htm>>



1.4. North Side of the Pincio Obelisk. c. second century CE. Rome.

Image Source: *Obelisks.org*. Photographed by Hiroyuki Nagase.

<http://www.obelisks.org/en/pincio.htm>

1.5-8 Pincio Obelisk Inscriptions:

The Pincio Obelisk inscriptions are based off the translations of Egyptologist A. Erman (1896, 1917 & 1934) and O. Wintermute in Boatwright's *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (1987, pp. 243-246).

1.5 North Side Inscriptions:

“Har-achte (Ra) I give you prosperity...”

“The son of the Sun, the lord of the Diadems, Hadrian the ever-living, says, ‘[Take] you your daughter (Truth), whom your heart loves.’”

“How desirable(?) is the praise, which is made to(?) Osirantinoos, the justified. His heart rejoices greatly when he has recognised his own form, when he was reborn and saw his father Har-[achte]. He [praises him?] and says: Praise to you, Har-achte, the highest of the Gods! You who listen to the prayers of Gods, of men, of the transfigured ones and of the dead. Hear (also) the entreaties that I entrust(?) to you. Give(?) recompense for that which your beloved son has done for me, your son (Hadrian) the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, who founded(?) a doctrine in the temples with which the Gods, the Lord of Diadems who lives, is safe and healthy, who lives forever [just like the Sun] [in] a fresh, beautiful, youthful age, while he is a possessor of fortune(?), the ruler of every country, while the great ones of Egypt and the nine bends (Libya) lie under his sandals united, likewise among them he is the lord of both lands. They are daily subject to his orders(?), while his power reaches all the way to each border of this land on its four sides. Bulls and their cows join together happily (and) they produce much, which they bear for him, in order to gladden his heart and that of the great royal lady beloved by him, the queen of both countries, Sabina, who lives, is safe and healthy, Augustus, who lives forever... and the (Nile), the father of the Gods, impregnates the fields for them, and makes for them a great ocean at its time in order to flood both lands.”

1.6 East Side Inscriptions:

“I give to you that your heart give daily...”

“Osirantinoos, the justified – he became a youth with a beautiful face that delighted the eyes, ... strength, with clever(?) heart like one with strong arms – he received an order of the Gods at the time of his passing. All uses of the hours of Osiris were repeated in him, including all his work as a mystery; his writings circulated, while the whole land was in... and ... and ... Such a thing has not earlier been done to this day – and similarly his altars, his temples, and his titles, and he breathed the breath of life. His respects came out in the hearts of men. The lord of Heropolis, lord of holy writings, who rejuvenates his soul like that [of]... in their time, by night and day, in every time, in every second- while there is love for him in the hearts of his servants, and fear [for him] [in] everyone... and his praise among all men, while they praise him. He takes his seat in the hall of the just, the transfigured ones, the excellent ones who are in the court of Osiris... in the land of Hades, while... the lord of eternity(?) makes him justified. They set up his words on earth because(?) their heart is delighted by him. He goes whenever he wants. The doorkeepers of the regions of Hades say to him, Praise to you; they loose their bolts, they open their doors before him in endless many years, while his life span is that of the [sun(?)] [never] going away [forever].

1.7 South Side Inscription:

“Antinous, who is there (i.e, deceased)... a festival place(?) has been made in his city in Egypt, which is named for him, for the strong (youths) who are in this land, and for the rowing crews and for the... of the whole country and likewise for all the persons who are(?) with (?) the God Thoth, while there are prizes for them and crowns of flowers for their heads; they reward with every good thing. They place on his altars, they bring... daily which as daily(?) offerings(?). Praise is spoken to him by the artisans of Thoth according to the breadth

of his excellence. He goes from his city to many temples in the whole country and he hears the requests of those who pray to him, and he heals the needy ill by sending them a dream. He completes his work amongst the living. He takes on every(?) form which his heart [desires(?)]... the true seed of the God is in his limbs... body healthy... of his mother; he was lifted up at the place of his birth by...”

1.8 West Side Inscription:

[Antinoos] who is there (i.e, deceased), and who rests in this place, which is in the fields of the lands(?) of the master(?) of... of Rome, has been recognised as(?) a God in the divine places of Egypt. Temples have been founded for him, he has been adored as a god by the prophets and priests of Upper and Lower Egypt, and by the inhabitants of Egypt, all of them as they are. A city is named after his name, and the troops of Greeks that belong to it and the... of the inhabitants of the temples of Egypt who come [from] their cities; fields are given to them so that with them(?) they might make their lives very(?) good. A temple of this god, who is there called Osirantinoos the blessed, is found in it and is built of good white stone, with sphinxes around it, and statues and numerous columns, such as were made earlier by the ancestors (Egyptians), and such as were made by the Greeks. All gods and goddesses give him the breath of life, and he breathes as one rejuvenated.

Appendix II - Coins

2.1. Mysia – *RPC III*, 1629



Bronze coin depicting a portrait of Emperor Hadrian

Obverse inscription: ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟC ΑΥΤΟΥCΤΟC

Obverse design: Bare head of Hadrian

Reverse inscription: ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΘΗΡΗΤΩΝ

Reverse design: Head of a female bear

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.2. Mysia – *RPC III*, 1631



Bronze coin depicting a portrait of Antinous

Obverse inscription:

ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟC ΗΡΩC ΑΓΑΘΟC

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous with drapery on his l. shoulder.

Reverse inscription: ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥΘΗΡΗΤΩΝ

Reverse design: Head of a female bear

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.3. Mysia – *RPC III*, 1677



Bronze coin depicting Antinous as ‘Antinous-Iacchos’
Obverse inscription: ANTINOOC IAKXOC
Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous
Reverse inscription: ΓΕCIOC ANEΘΗΚΕ ΑΔΡΑΜΥΘΗΝΟΙC
Reverse design: Eleusinian Demeter, veiled with chiton and himation, seated, holding poppy-head in r. hand and sceptre in l.
Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.4. Rome – *RIC II Part I* (second edition) Vespasian 117



Bronze coin of Emperor Vespasian
Obverse inscription: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG P M T P P COS III
Obverse design: Bust of Vespasian with laureate and aegis.
Reverse inscription: S C
Reverse design: Temple of Isis with statue of Isis riding the dog Sirius on pediment
Source: Roman Imperial Coinage

2.5. Corinth – RPC III, 260



Bronze coin of Antinous

Obverse inscription: OCTIAIOC MAPKEAAOC O IEPEYC TOY ANTINOY

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous, draped.

Reverse inscription: KOPINΘIOIC ANEΘHKE

Reverse design: Antinous as Bellephoron, naked with chlamys on left arm, holding the bridle of Pegasus in r. hand, l. hand holding shield

Magistrate: Marcellus (*heireus* of Antinous)

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.6. Corinth – RPC III, 262



Bronze coin of Antinous

Obverse inscription: OCTIAIOC MAPKEAAOC O IEPEYC TOY ANTINOY

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous, draped.

Reverse inscription: KOPINΘIOIC ANEΘHKE

Reverse design: Antinous as Helios radiate, naked, holding whip in r. hand, driving biga.

Magistrate: Marcellus (*heireus* of Antinous)

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.7. Delphi – RPC III, 444



Bronze coin of Antinous

Obverse inscription: ANTINOON HPΩA ΠPOΠ AMΦIKTYONEC

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous

Reverse inscription: O IEPEYC APICTOTIMOC ANEΘHKE

Reverse design: Tripod on stand.

Magistrate: Aristotimos (*hierus*)

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.8. Stratonicea-Hadrianopolis RPC III, 1786



Bronze coin of Antinous

Obverse inscription ANTINOOC HPΩC

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous

Reverse inscription: AΔPIANOΠOΛITΩN CTP EΠI CT KANΔIAOY B

Reverse design: Bull

Magistrate: Candidus (*strategos* for the second time)

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.9. Smyrna – RPC III, 1978



Bronze coin of Antinous
Obverse inscription: ANTINOOC HPΩC
Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous
Reverse inscription: ΠΟΛΕΜΩΝ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ CMYPNAIOIC
Reverse design: Female panther, right paw on thyrsus.
Magistrate: M. Antonius Polemon (*strategos*)
Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.10. Ancrya – RPC III, 2836



Bronze coin of Antinous
Obverse inscription: ΘΕOC ANTINOOC
Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous, draped.
Reverse inscription: ΙΟΥΛΙΟC CATOPNINOC ANKYPAHOIC
Reverse design: Mên standing front, wearing Phygian cap, crescent moon on shoulders, holding anchor in r. hand and sceptre in l. hand.
Magistrate: Ulius Saturninus (*legatus Augusti*)
Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.11. Bithynium-Claudiopolis – RPC III. 1112



Bronze coin of Antinous

Obverse inscription: H ΠΑΤΡΙC ANTIΝΟΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous, draped.

Reverse inscription: ΒΕΙΘΥΝΙΕΩΝ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΩΝ

Reverse design: Antinous as Hermes Nomios with short chiton and chlamys walking. Looking r., seizing a reed with his r. hand and holding pedum in his l.; behind him, ox grazing to left.; in l. field, star (star of Antinous?)

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online

2.12. Bithynium-Claudiopolis – RPC III. 1112



Bronze coin of Antinous

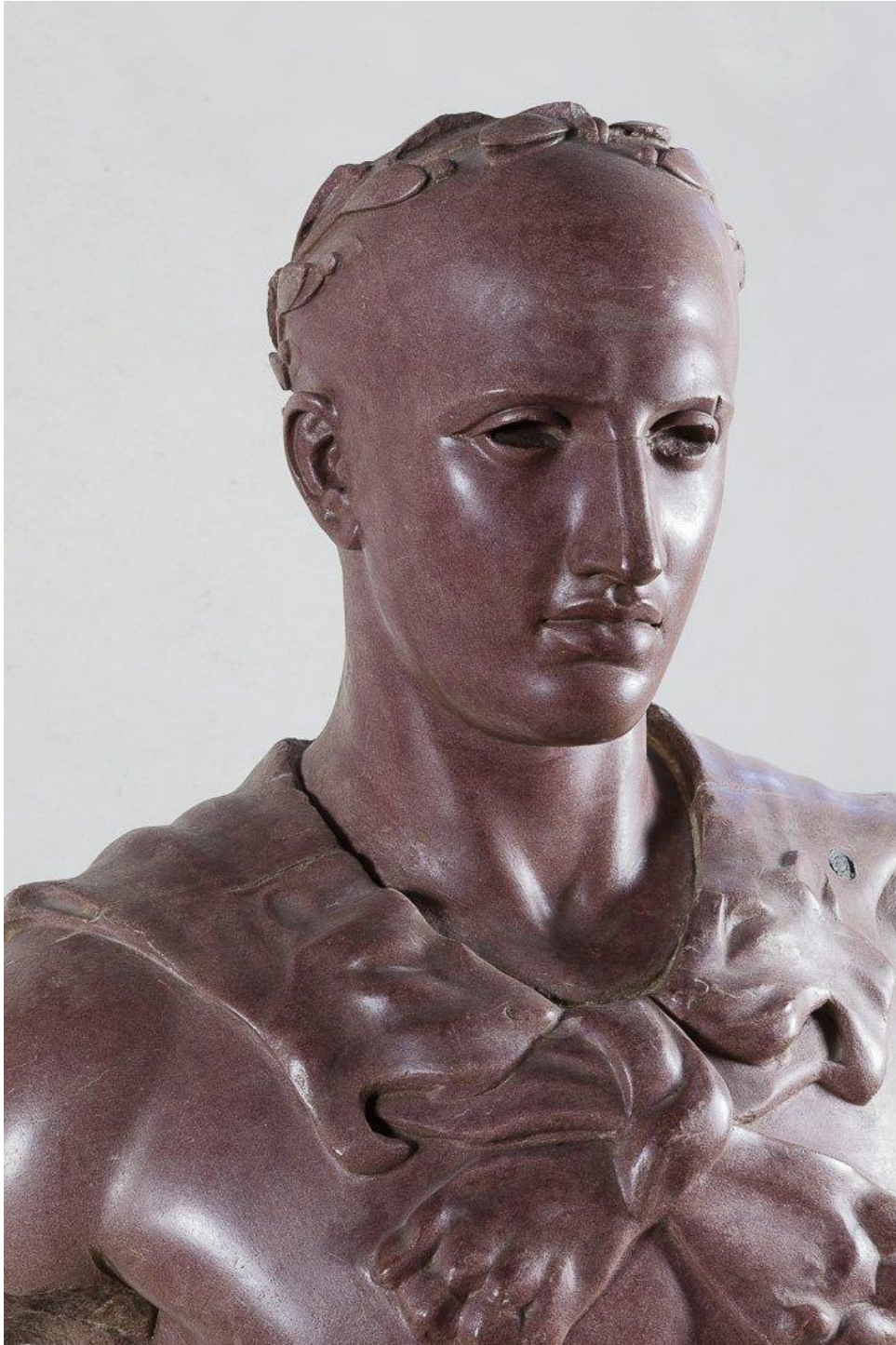
Obverse inscription: H ΠΑΤΡΙC ANTIΝΟΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ

Obverse design: Bare head of Antinous, draped.

Reverse inscription: ΒΕΙΘΥΝΙΕΩΝ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΩΝ

Reverse design: Bust of Dionysus, crowned with ears of corn and ivy, draped.

Source: Roman Provincial Coinage Online



3.1 Portrait of Antinous as a priest of Isis from Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, c. second century CE. Museum of Palazzo Grimani, Venice. Inv. N. 117. Red marble, 60cm.
Image Source: Museum of Palazzo Grimani.



3.2. Antinous restored as Ganymede by Giovanni Pierantoni in c. 1795. Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

Image Source: *Flicker*, photographed by Carole Raddato.



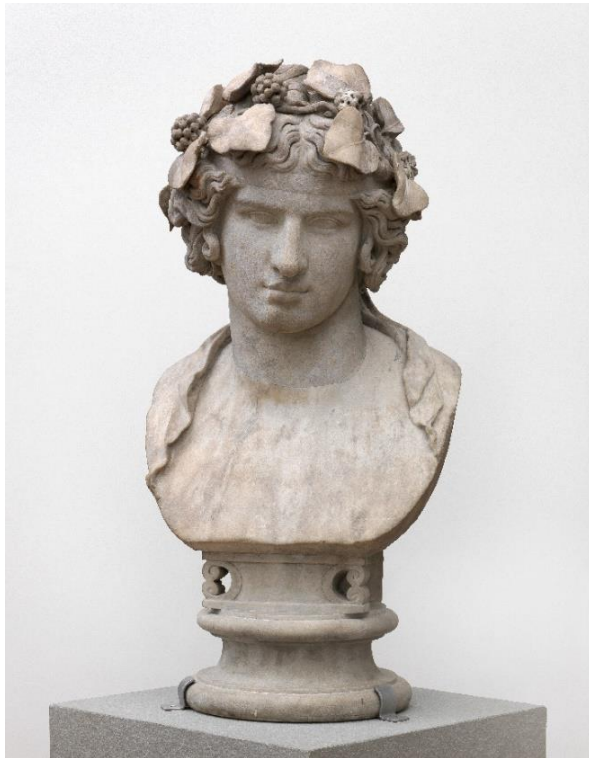
3.3. Bust of Antinous wearing the Phrygian cap. c. 130-138 CE. Vatican Museum, Rome.
Image Source: Meyer 1991, plate 75.



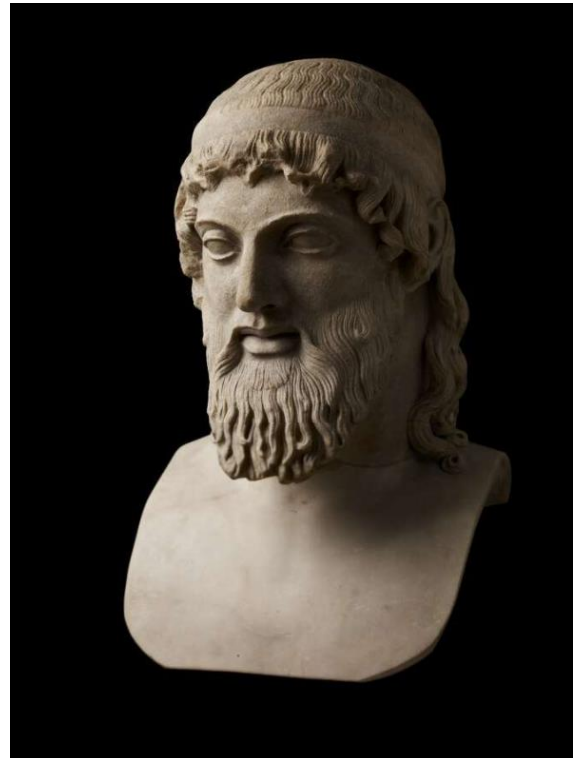
3.4. Bust of Antinous wearing the Phrygian Cap (as Attis?). c. 130-138 CE. National Library of France.
Image Source: Médailles et Antiques.



3.5 Antinous as Dionysus/Zagreus, c. 130-138 CE. Excavated from Eleusis, Greece. Eleusis Archaeological Museum.
Image Source: Ancient-Greece.org.
<<https://ancient-greece.org/images/museums/elefsina-museum/elefsina-museum.html>>



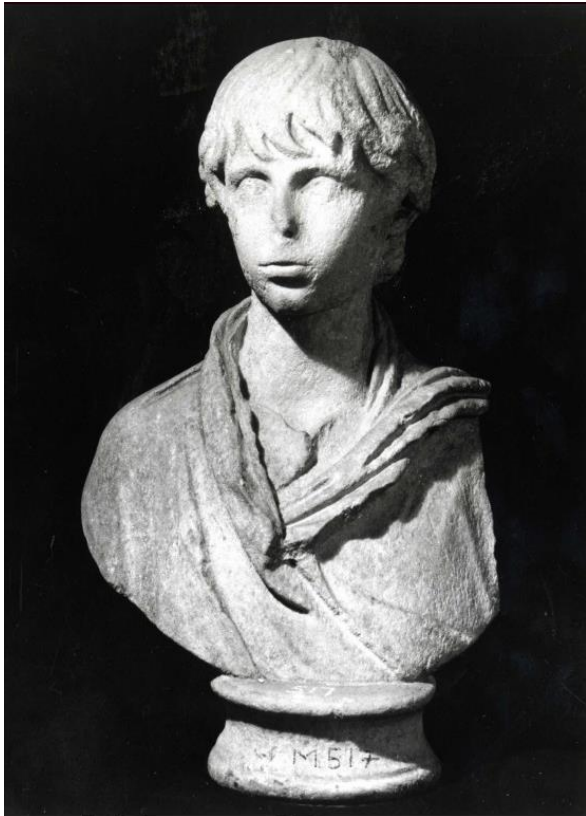
3.6 Bust of Antinous with wreath of ivy and grapes, c. 130 – 138 CE. Excavated 18th century from Hadrian's Villa. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Image Source: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



3.7 Bust of bearded Dionysus, c. 117-118 CE. Mounted on a modern bust. Excavated from Hadrian's Villa. The British Museum, London.
Image Source: The British Museum, London.



3.8. Hadrianic Tondi from the arch of Constantine, northern side, right lateral. c. 2nd century CE. Rome.
Left: Lion hunt.
Right: Sacrifice to Hercules.
Image Source: *Following Hadrian*, photographed by Carole Raddato.



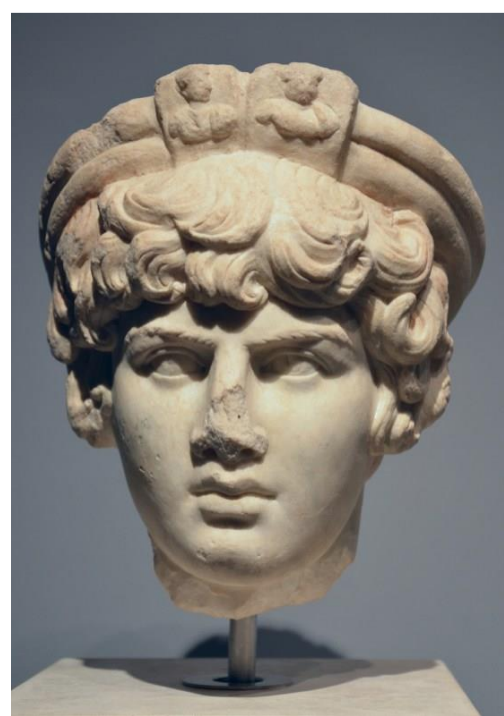
3.9. Bust of Polydeuces, favourite of Herodes Atticus. c. 138 – 192 CE. Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Museums no. M517.
Image Source: Sir John Soane's Museum.



3.10. Roman Bronze Balsamarium of Nude Antinous Portrait. c. 130 – 140 CE. Ex-Austrian private collection.
Image Source: Royal-Athena Galleries, p. 35.



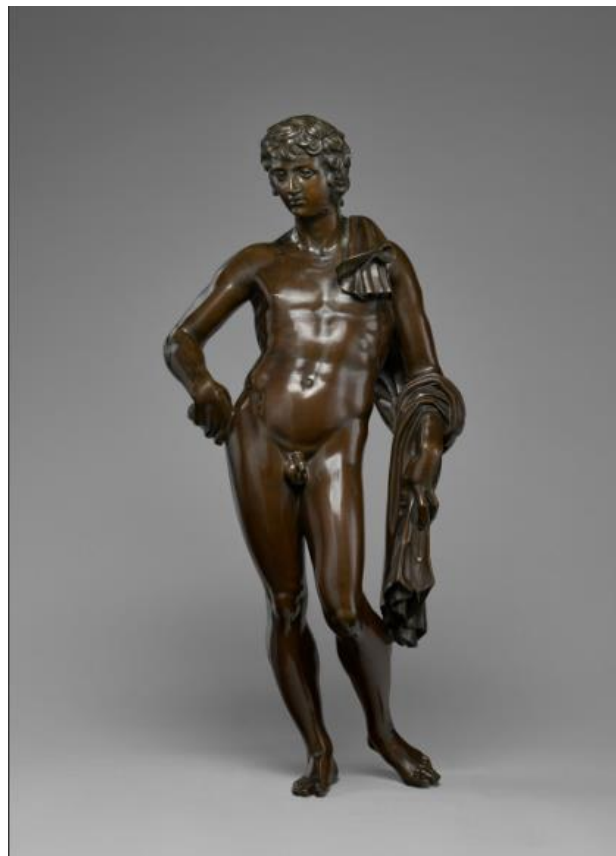
3.11. Unusually large Roman bronze balsamarium depicting Antinous. C. 130 – 140 CE. Ex-German collection.
Image Source: Royal-Athena Galleries, p. 34.



3.12. Head of Antinous likely as a priest of Attis. Found Campus of Magna Mater, Ostia, 1869. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome.
Image Source: *Following Hadrian*, photographed by Carole Raddato



3.13. A copy of the bronze statue of Pietro Tacca's Belvedere Antinous in the opening gallery for the MET Gala. 2019. New York.
Image Source: Dolly Faibyshev, 2019.



3.14. Bronze Belvedere Antinous. Pietro Tacca (1577 – 1640). c. 1630. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
Image Source: Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



3.15. Colossal head of Antinous, also known as the Antinous Mondragone. c. second century CE.
Louvre Museum, Paris.

Image Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, photographed by Marie-Lan Nguyen (2011).

Appendix IV – Contemporary Antinoan Survey Questionnaire

Antinoan Religion Project: Survey

This survey asks about the connections, thoughts, and opinions of participants in contemporary Antinoan religion.

Part One asks about your demographics.

Part Two asks what Antinous means to you. Questions include themes revolving around the Antinoan religion (and other religions), history, the LGBTQIA+ community and identity, as well as the participant's personal relationship with Antinous. The participant is welcome to leave some questions unanswered if unable to respond for personal or comfort reasons.

A text box will also be located at the bottom of this survey for any added questions or comments the participant would like to address.

This data will be collected and used to further the knowledge of Antinous as well as the under-researched area of LGBTQIA+ religion and the Antinoan movement of the 21st century for a thesis that will in 2021. This data may also be used as evidence for any further research on the Antinoan movement or New Age religion in the future.

PART ONE: Your demographics

1. What is your age?

18-25

25-35

35-45

45-55

55-65

65-75

75+

2. What is your gender?
 - a. Open text box
 - b. Tick box: prefer not to say

3. What is your Sexuality?
 - a. Open text box
 - b. Tick box: prefer not to say

4. What is your relationship status?

5. Do you have children/dependents? Please describe.

6. What is your race/ethnicity?

7. What was your first language?

8. What language do you speak at home?

9. Where is your home located?

- A. North America
- B. Central America
- C. South America
- D. Europe
- E. Africa
- F. Asia
- G. Australia/New Zealand
- H. Pacific Islands
- I. Other: _____
- J. Prefer not to say

10. What is your Highest Educational Attainment?

- a. Primary
- b. Secondary
- c. University/college
- d. Vocational education
- e. Higher degree

11. What is your current Employment status?:

PART TWO: What Antinous means to you

1. How and when did you come to discover Antinous? Who is Antinous to you?

2. Before discovering Antinous, did you already have a background or interest in ancient history or mythology?

- If so, please elaborate on what drew you to being interested in ancient history and/or mythology. Did/does this interest connect with the interest you have with Antinous?
- If you have no background with ancient history or mythology prior to discovering Antinous, has Antinous created an interest for you?

3. Do you worship Antinous as a god?

- If no, how would you describe your relationship to Antinous and Antinoan religion?
- If yes, what prompted you to follow and/or worship Antinous as a god?
- Can you tell us what your spiritual practice with Antinous looks like and what it involves? (eg. How frequent is it? How significant is it in your life? What does it do for you?)

4. What was your religious background before you started to engage with Antinous?

5. How would you describe your current religious involvements? What religious or spiritual groups are you involved in?

Appendix IV – Contemporary Antinoan Survey Questionnaire

- 6. How does being involved in the Antinous online community make you feel?**
- 7. What do you think Antinous represents or does:**
 - a. for you?**
 - b. for the LGBTQIA+ community?**
- 8. Do you, or do you know of others who strive to revive the Antinoan religion from antiquity?**
- 9. How, or in what ways, are the historical details of Antinous' life and religion important to your involvement with him today?**
- 10. In what ways are LGBTQIA+ expressions of gender and sexuality important to the Antinoan movement?**

Comments and Questions:

On behalf of the researchers, we thank you for your participation in this survey!

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