

Squirm

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“Liquid is the element of the *pharmakon*”

– Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy”

for Ryanna Gacy

The word I chose for a title encapsulates for me, a non-native speaker of English, a certain cloud of words, affects, and ideas: sperm, semen, swimming, squeamish (etc.: screamish, creamish). This cloud of flowing, seed and aversion marks a tension within what I would like to call, in the wake of Derridean deconstruction, philosophemes of masculine self-sameness or ipseity: between the innermost seed and its protective shield, its indemnity. This tension is made manifest in recent discoveries concerning the complex and vexed relationship between semen and the human immune system. I have a few reasons for looking at these discoveries through the lens of Jacques Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy” and his usage of the term “autoimmunity” in his later “Faith and Knowledge: ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone” when making an argument about the queerness of sperm/semen. First, these texts explicitly discuss sperm and the concept of the immune, as Derrida’s treatment of *pharmakon* (in “Plato’s Pharmacy”) and autoimmunity (in “Faith and Knowledge”) show the deconstruction at work in concepts of ipseity (of which one is the “immune”), and I will argue that the deconstruction captured by the term “autoimmunity” in Derrida’s work also unfolds in these immunological discoveries concerning sperm cells. Second, several of Derrida’s texts, “Plato’s Pharmacy” among them, are especially useful for queer theory since they help us see queer figures dispersed in the vast expanse of Western textuality in a way which consistently resists the conventional textual limits naturalizing sexual difference.

“Plato’s Pharmacy” is in general devoted to the Platonic anxiety about writing. In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Socrates refers to writing as *pharmakon*, a word meaning both remedy and poison: The anxiety about writing in part is justified by this ambiguity: when we turn to it as remedy for forgetfulness, we are also

encountering it as poison as it inevitably makes us more forgetful. Throughout the text Derrida traces the ways in which writing for Plato is always suspicious and illegitimate, envisioned as a drug that can bring healing as well as death, an uncontrollably fluid substance infiltrating the body whose internal processes it alters. "Plato's Pharmacy" explicitly connects its key term, the *pharmakon*, to Greek texts where pederasty is devalued because it is a practice of wasting – disseminating – one's seed on unproductive soil. What I propose to do here is to consider the connections between the *pharmakon* of "Plato's Pharmacy," and the subsequent "autoimmunity" of "Faith and Knowledge" (inspired by the medical process of immunosuppression, the term refers to an organism's undoing its own mechanism of self-defence) in the light of recent discoveries in immunology about the "adverse" and complicated relationship between the immune system and sperm; on the one hand, between men's sperm and their own immune system, and on the other, to sperm and the immune system in the uterine environment. I will start by looking at Derrida's discussion of the ancient Greek scapegoating ritual in order to show that our inherited structure of dignified citizenship is based on a figure of masculine virility envisioning an image of the seed being protected by a shield. In order to show that current immunological discoveries trouble this conventional structure in the way Derrida introduced his usage of autoimmunity, I will give a short exposition of that usage and will also show ways in which something like that usage is already at work in "Plato's Pharmacy." After this journey from "Plato's Pharmacy," "Faith and Knowledge," and back, I will turn to the question of our sperm's encounters with the immune system.

It is as part of the general discussion on the semantic field of *pharmakon* in "Plato's Pharmacy" that Derrida pays considerable attention to the function of the scapegoat – the *pharmakos* – in ancient Greek society. While the actual details of the process of scapegoating varied across times and cultures, it was in general a powerful ritual of purifying the community through excommunication culminating in banishing the scapegoat from the city by chasing him (and/or her) outside city limits (Allen, 2000, p. 85).

Since scapegoating targeted marginalized members of society (the poor, the ugly, the criminally marked, and marginalized women) and at the same time, some legal punishments also took the form of excommunication, we should be careful not to simply consider scapegoating as the exemplary ritual

for stripping a citizen of his community membership. However, we can detect a correspondence between the logic of dignified citizenship (and the way that logic was publicly demonstrated) and the public ritual of scapegoating. Let me here briefly refer to the fifth chapter of David Halperin's seminal *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality And Other Essays on Greek Love*, where he outlines this logic very clearly: a citizen is someone who has the obligation to live up to certain standards of trustworthiness and conduct and is protected by physical inviolability (1990, pp. 88-113).¹ For example, a citizen could only assault another citizen if he caught him in adulterous activity with his wife. A citizen could be executed but not flogged. Furthermore, a citizen could be punished with partial or total loss of his citizen status if he did not pay taxes, did not represent his own opinion in public, accepted money for sexual services, or failed to take care of his dependents. The punishment, *atimía* (dishonor), included the loss of the right to participate in political life, what Danielle Allen calls "internal exile" (2000, p. 230), it could include heavy fines, and the *atimos* could also be exiled or executed (Hansen, 1999, p. 99).²

From the above we can distill that a citizen – a privileged member of the adult male population – is distinguished by a sense of "internal" honor which is protected by a legal immunity from physical violence. This internal honor is the very kernel of citizenship; and it is an honor that the person can betray or relinquish at the price of losing protection in the form of *atimía*. Honor was both a public and a moral concept. The right and responsibility to speak one's own mind in public (especially at the agora) is intimately bound up with the honor of the citizen. Indeed, prostituting oneself entailed *atimía* as the person in question could not be considered trustworthy, or loyal to his own will since he was ready to sexually relinquish the loyalty towards his masculine-dignified self for financial benefits. This readiness suggested that he is likely to do the same politically: to speak for another citizen in public, or be hired by another to say something as if it were in his own name. In other words, the stigma of prostitution could be used to disqualify people politically. As John Heath cites from a lost comedy of Nicostratus: "Surely you know that freedom of speech (*parrhêsia*) is a weapon (*hoplon*) against poverty? If someone should lose it, he will have thrown away the shield (*aspida*) of life" (2005, p. 180).³ Freedom of speech is the guarantee of dignity that equalizes citizens by allowing and compelling them to speak their own mind; advancing their own will. This dignity, which springs forth from within the citizen's body, deserves a shield – a shield of life. At the same time the quotation above intimates that

this shield is required for survival and that stripping a man of this shield ends his political life (which could extend to murder).

Masculine dignity, then, is erected by the combination of the image of an internal substance ready for authoritative emission protected by an encasing shield. It is the same structure that orients our conventional ways of conceptualizing sperm and the immune system. The sperm, the internal kernel of masculinity, ready for a similarly authoritative emission (in the same way as a man's opinion is emitted in the form of speech) is encased in the human body protected by the "shield of life." Sperm appears in Derrida's discussion of the *pharmakos* as a part of the public performance of the loss of this shield:

In general, the *pharmakoi* were put to death. But that, it seems, was not the essential end of the operation. Death occurred most often as a secondary effect of an energetic fustigation. Aimed first at the genital organs. Once the *pharmakoi* were cut off from the space of the city, the blows were designed to chase away or draw out the evil from their bodies. (1981, pp. 131-2)

While the logic of the rite described is not quite the same as the logic of *atimía* (the latter only concerned citizens), there is a connection between excommunication and public assault outside of the limits of the space of belonging. It is significant that the locus of exorcism is the genitals: the evil is imagined here as corrupting the *pharmakos'* body exactly in the center of his virility. Scapegoating and *atimía* are practices in which belonging is suspended or severed in reference to a crisis of virility. A similar motif of beating the *pharmakos* on the genitals occurs in Allen's discussion of the ritual (2000, p. 160). These references, however, all point to one fragment from the poet Hipponax which reads: "They set the victim in an appropriate place, put cheese, barley cake and dried figs in his hand, flogged him seven times on his penis with squills, wild fig branches and other wild plants, and finally burned him on wood from wild trees and scattered his ashes in the sea and winds in order to purify the city of its ills" (Gerber (trans. & ed.), 1999, p. 359). Since this is the only textual trace of this motif, Jan Bremmer has raised some doubts about its empirical reliability; and complicated the question further by suggesting that if this is a case of poetic license, we cannot even be sure whether it comes from Hipponax or Tzetzes, the 11th century poet who relayed the fragment to us (Bremmer, 1983, p. 300-

301). What I think is significant here, however, is that modern readers of this passage – including Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (Derrida's source), Derrida, and Allen – seem to want to trust it as an accurate description of the ritual (whose codes, as Bremmer shows, varied quite a bit across cultures). Somehow, beating the scapegoat on the genitals after having chased him outside the city limits sits well with the whole idea of the *pharmakos*. Perhaps because we (including Tzetzes) have since Hipponax' times inherited the Greek cultural codes of citizenship which revolved around masculine figures of virility: the seed (the voice) and the shield. Stripping the scapegoat of the symbolic shield outside the space of belonging allows for the figure of beating on the genitals to act as an especially powerful cultural image.⁴ As I will argue next, it is this figurative structure of double virility of seed and shield which is troubled by Derrida's use of the term "autoimmunity," as well as contemporary biology's results concerning the (sometimes autoimmune) relationship between sperm and the immune system.

Derrida introduced autoimmunity, a term some scholars consider especially successful at conveying the meaning of deconstruction (Naas, 2006, p. 18; Bennington, 2010, p. 27-8), in his "Faith and Knowledge: Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone." He provides an explanatory footnote, which I will quote it in its entirety:

The "immune" (*immunis*) is freed or exempted from the charges, the service, the taxes, the obligations (*munus*, root of the common of community). This freedom of this exemption was subsequently transported into the domains of constitutional or international law (parliamentary or diplomatic immunity), but is also belongs to the history of the Christian Church and to canon law; the immunity of temples also involved the inviolability if the asylum that could be found there (Voltaire indignantly attacked this "immunity of temples" as a "revolting example" of "contempt for the laws" and of "ecclesiastical ambition"); Urban VIII created a congregation of ecclesiastical immunity: against police searches, etc. it is especially in the domain of biology that the lexical resources of immunity have developed their authority. The immunitary reaction protects the "indemnity" of the body proper in producing antibodies against foreign antigens. As for the process of auto-immunization, which interests us particularly here, it consists for

a living organism, as is well known and in short, of protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system. As the phenomenon of these antibodies is extended to a broader zone of pathology and as one resorts increasingly to the positive virtues of immuno-depressants destined to limit the mechanisms of rejection and to facilitate the tolerance of certain organ transplants, we feel ourselves authorized to speak of a sort of general logic of auto-immunization. It seems indispensable to us today for thinking the relations between faith and knowledge, religion and science, as well as the duplicity of sources in general. (Derrida, 2002, p. 80)

Derrida traces the history of the usage of the “immune” in order to arrive at and focus on the medical practice of immunosuppression employed in organ transplantation. Immunosuppression, the act of weakening the patient’s immune system, is necessary so that the newly transplanted organ can be accepted by the host body. The partial deactivation of the body’s system of self-defense in these cases serves the purpose of ensuring the patient’s chances to stay alive longer – it is in the interest of the survival of the organism that the organism’s self defenses must be suppressed. In giving an exposition of the heritage of the political concept of immunity selected for the contemporary biomedical construct of the immune system, Derrida not only traces the biological use of an older political model, but in the process, and most importantly, shows the unfolding of deconstruction. Being consistently vigilant about terms of ipseity throughout his oeuvre, Derrida tends to mention a series of terms together in “Faith and Knowledge” time after time: the unscathed, the *heilig*, the holy—and the *immunis* is added to the series as a term for bounding or limiting – a seclusion from that which is posited as external – a “shield of life,” as it were. The internal is made private through this gesture of exemption from the common. Indeed, the immune system figures in conventional medical discourse as a protective shield, part of the organism but separate from it as a whole—it is what protects and guarantees the body’s wholeness against the external world, which always already threatens to intrude. Derrida is interested in the lexical developments provided by medical advances as the medical community’s need to communicate and name new technologies forces it to inflect the lexical heritage of immunity. Both this heritage and the inflection in question are of special significance for deconstruction as they highlight a link between the philosopheme of ipseity and the idea of exemption (which Derrida always finds worthy of critique).⁵ The inflection Derrida points out in the

footnote makes explicit within this language of immunity a necessary corollary to the discourse of defense: that the ongoing survival of any system or organism depends on a radical openness to its outside, indeed to the fact that that in some ways the absolute limit is untenable – it can and has to break down.

In Derrida's usage here, auto-immunization renders the *autos* immune to its own immune system, or, more precisely, auto-immunization makes the immune system lose its immunity and succumb to the violence of the *autos*. Autoimmunity here, then, is not identified in the way medical science discusses autoimmunity, i.e. as a process in which an overly active immune system attacks the cells belonging to its own organism, but rather as its very opposite: a process in which the immune system is rendered weak and unable to carry on its defensive work.⁶ In introducing the term of auto-immunization, the lexicon of biology reflects on and inflects the discourse of immunity, which posits threat as always coming from the outside, against which self-sameness or ipseity should be protected by a never-ceasing policing which itself threatens the organism's survival. Perfect immunity is perfectly fatal.

Taking my point from a subsequent text where Derrida refers to *pharmakon* as an "old name" for what he calls the "autoimmunitary logic" (2004, p. 124), I will at this point go back to "Plato's Pharmacy" in search for immunity and the inflected autoimmunity. I would also like to show that the logic of autoimmunity at work there makes itself felt in queer terms shared by contemporary immunology. Simply put, the immune appears as allergy in "Plato's Pharmacy", which is identified as the very essence of illness: "The natural illness of the living is defined in its essence as an allergy, a reaction to the aggression of an alien element" (1981, p. 101). A little later he adds: "The immortality and perfection of a living being would consist in its having no relation at all with any outside. That is the case with God... God has no allergies" (1981, p. 101).

Illness understood as allergy refers to the urgency of the body's own mechanism responding to elements it considers threatening. Allergies demonstrate that it is not the actual danger brought on by pathogens that trigger the body's defense mechanism: the actual trigger is the decision to treat something as a pathogen: as a harbinger of threat. Technically speaking, allergy is not quite an autoimmune phenomenon – but it is very close to it. From a medical point of view, allergy and

autoimmunity are both effects of immune activity endangering or weakening the organism. In the case of an allergy, something decidedly unharmful is treated by the immune system as a threat; in fact, the danger for the organism as a whole lies in the stubborn, and often very taxing reaction against this “false” threat. In cases of autoimmune disorders, the immune system attacks host cells.

Derrida’s insight that allergy is the essence of illness reflects the fact that immune activity is always part of illness, and so the danger necessarily stems from immune activity taxing the organism. While there are cases where medicine identifies “justified” immune reactions (in the presence of foreign bodies capable of obstructing the organism’s survival), these are triggered by antigens – and in the case of allergy and autoimmune disorders, illness can emerge without threatening external invasion. Immune activity, or violent defense, is necessarily threatening. To the extent that allergy is indeed very similar to autoimmune processes, Derrida here articulates the dominant medical meaning of autoimmunity which he reverses into immunosuppression in “Faith and Knowledge.”

If the political stakes of what is grasped in the *immunis* in “Faith and Knowledge” corresponds to allergy in “Plato’s Pharmacy,” autoimmunity in the later texts corresponds to the *pharmakon*. Like autoimmunity, the *pharmakon* resonates most conventionally in the registers of illness, health and medicine as a threat posed by the confusion of the internal and the external, or an irreducible openness to the external, the necessary intrusion of which modulates immunity or the logic of life (i.e. allergy): “if the *pharmakon* is pernicious, it is because... it doesn’t come from around here. It comes from afar, it is external, or alien: to the living, which is the right-here of the inside, the *logos* as the *zōon* it claims to assist or relieve” (1981, p. 103). As a “supplementary parasite” (1981, p. 103), the *pharmakon* is also necessarily more than an intruding, life-sapping force: it is a foundational ambivalence. This ambivalence seems to foreshadow “Faith and Knowledge” where autoimmunity can come to mean something close to allergy in “Plato’s Pharmacy” as well as immunosuppression:

If the *pharmakon* is “ambivalent,” it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). it is on the basis of this play

or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped... The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. It is the difference of difference. It holds in reserve, in its undecided shadow and vigil, the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out. (Derrida, 1981, p. 101).

“Plato’s Pharmacy” focuses on writing – writing as *pharmakon* (ambivalently both poison and remedy): it is writing that is shown to be queer through and through. It is as writing that the *pharmakon* is linked to sperm and allergies. Good writing is close to the source of life; a good son, and bad writing is orphaned, bastard writing; a traitor, responsible for its father’s death. To the extent that it is associated with *pharmakon* (with all kinds of potent fluids), makeup, dye, sorcery and sperm is then inherently suspect, failing to represent its true self. Sperm, as seed, not only wants to go into the same sex, and fall on lesser feminine lands – it is also connected to immature play, and thrives at festivals where it can uncontrollably flow. Perfume, masks, makeup and color all cloak sperm in a frivolous costume, rendering it effeminate, masquerading and unruly (Derrida, 1981, pp. 149-152). In one word, in several of its currently circulating meanings, queer: sperm as *pharmakon* fails to demonstrate orderly heteronormativity; its tendency to flow in a bastardly manner disrespects and relinquishes legitimacy; its insistence on puerile joys shows a quasi-pathological weakness unworthy of the privilege of dignity.

In what follows I will suggest that the same constellation of queerness emerges around sperm in recent studies in immunology; and the resulting multi-faceted and often adverse relationship between the immune system and sperm, mediated by processes of writing and reading, effectively disturbs the conventional figure of masculine ipseity, with its double composition of seed/emission and its protective shield. The relationship between immune system and sperm features all of the senses in which Derrida uses the term autoimmunity in “Plato’s Pharmacy” (as allergy) and in “Faith and Knowledge (as immunosuppression), producing opportunities for hacking and grafting.

Sperm is immunogenic as it develops in the body after the immune system has established itself. Partly because of this time lag, the immune system does not recognize sperm cells as host cells Fijak and Meinhardt (2006, p. 66.). Indeed, when sperm gets into the bloodstream, due to some trauma breaking

the blood-testis boundary, certain immune cells attack them causing an autoimmune inflammation. In the last 7-8 years there is an increasing number of studies offering surprising findings pertaining to the problem of protecting sperm from the immune system. While what we can claim to know about these things seems to change rapidly for the purpose of this article I will rely on three texts reporting on the relationship between the immune system and sperm.

Fijak and Meinhardt (2006) describe several ways in which sperm is protected from the immune system. In the testis of the host body, the normal patrolling and general activities of immune cells are suppressed and/or modified and the number of certain type of immune cells are radically lower. Moreover, immunosuppression seems to be carried out in part by immune activity: through the expression of anti-inflammatory cytokines and by testicular dendritic cells, which suppress antigen-specific immunity. In addition, immune cells within the testis are involved in the production of androgens such as testosterone (in other words, they have a modified function). As a result, the blood-testis barrier seems to delineate the testis as a domain of immune privilege. The testis is immune from the immune system.

Pang et. al. (2007) describe the way sperm enjoys a different sort of immunity from the immune system in the uterine environment by bearing a special glycoprotein. The category of the host cell is established in the ongoing communication between immune cells and the cells they encounter. Host cells will be recognized by immune cells as such, if their surface feature major histocompatibility class I (MHC-I) molecules. Conversely, cells that lack MHC-I will not be recognized as host cells. Sperm lacks the MHC-I complex: it appears that "sperm precursors down-modulate their MHC class I molecules" (2007, p. 36593) However, other markers can also trigger immuno-tolerance. Apart from the protection of the environment of the testis, sperm is protected through a specific glycoprotein marker, which allows it to by-pass most immune cells, with the exception of mast cells. In environments other than the uterus, mast cells attack sperm, as may be seen even in the host body. The uterus, however, is an environment where, just as in the testis, the number of mast cells is very low, which ensures the relatively high survival of incoming sperm cells. The glycoprotein carried by sperm cells is equipped with a so-called Lewis sequence which gives the cells immunity against the immune cells they are likely to encounter in the uterine environment. The fact that most uterine environments do not contain

sperm antibodies (although some do!) is the outcome of the combination of specific local immunological mixes, made up mostly of immune cells that decode the Lewis sequence as a passport of sorts – recognizing the cells as foreign but refraining from attacking them.

These two studies show that the immune system attacks sperm everywhere except in the testis and (in most cases) the uterus. Protection in the testis is established by the multiple process of immune privilege; in the uterus it is guaranteed by the appearance of the Lewis sequence on sperm marking it “foreign but OK.” It is important that the Lewis sequence allows entry into a body different from that of the testis where the sperm was generated. Exhibiting the Lewis sequence on the cell surface (instead of the MHC-I complex) means that the uterine immunity of the female body will not harm sperm cells even though they clearly lack the female body’s MHC-I complexes.

This in turn means that the Lewis sequence, which cannot be unique to specific bodies but needs to be consistently legible across different ones, necessarily acts as a kind of *carte blanche* of antigens, a general passport valid in all bodies. In fact, several other formations use the Lewis sequence to enjoy similar privileges: some aggressive cancer cells, the HIV virus, and even some parasites use this passport to go unharmed by most immune cells. In other words, the need for the sperm to cross through bodies in order to fulfill their reproductive function creates the possibility for rendering some maladies immunologically irresistible (University of Missouri-Columbia, 2007).

I started this article suggesting that the Greek logic of masculinity figures as an internal seed or voice ready for emission encased in a shield of life where the former constructs self-sameness or ipseity as the basis for the privilege of dignity and autonomy. Following Derrida’s consistent tendency to not separate political language from the language of life or biology, and to look to biology as a domain where political concepts can be and are deconstructed, I see these immunological results similarly: these studies, in inflecting the discourse of immunity, effectively queer both the sperm and the immune system. They tell a story in which the very seed of masculine ipseity, the sperm, is also the queerest cell in the environments it inhabits and visits. As a bearer of the Lewis sequence, it manifests in a way which the unfolding lexicon of biology shows to be the autoimmunitary logic of the *pharmakon*: it belongs nowhere, it always comes from a conceptual outside and is marked as exterior

while at the same time it is allowed to flow to multiple terrains. The sperm has no proper home – it is either internally or externally exiled. Both Derridean meanings of autoimmunity apply to sperm. Outside the uterus and the testis, it provokes the immune system into attack, causing autoimmune symptoms. At the same time, for its protection within the testis, it compels the immune system to suppress its patrolling activity and transform itself into a practice of nurturance. The hard ipseity of the shield loses its status as essence and gives way to a yielding readiness to self-corrupt its masculinity in a self-imposed process of immunosuppression. Outside the male body, in the uterus, it is the agent of corruption which allows, or indeed invites ills: it facilitates the introduction of the internal and external enemies considered most threatening and emaciating – cancer, HIV and parasites. Here, as in the testis, sperm also queers what it encounters: as a reader of the Lewis sequence, the immune system ceases to appear as a solid shield; instead it figures as weakened or failed discernment. Sperm, then, also demonstrates the corrupting power conventionally appropriated to perversion: queerness is so dangerous because it spreads by contagion. Sperm is never indigenous – wherever it is found, it is the *pharmakon*: “the *pharmakon* always penetrates like a liquid; it is absorbed, drunk, introduced into the inside, which it first marks with the hardness of the type, soon to invade it and inundate it with its medicine, its brew, its drink, its potion, its poison” (Derrida, 1981, p. 152).

There is, then, a strong consonance between Derrida’s writings, as exemplified by his discussions of the tropes of illness, allergy, *pharmakon* and autoimmunity, and contemporary immunology. Immunology is a domain where the force of the conventional shield-like image of immunity is effectively critiqued and inflected in a way that shows the *pharmakon*-like quality of immune function: immunity is always autoimmunity: the “allergy” of “Plato’s Pharmacy” and “immunosuppression” of “Faith and Knowledge” both constitute the protection of survival. To the extent that these results, showing queer figures at the heart of the communicative logic of reproduction, are similar in the way they inflect inherited tropes of virility to the inflection introduced by the immunosuppression in organ transplants, they could be, perhaps, understood as an illustration of the opening of “Plato’s Pharmacy”: “The dissimulation of the woven texture can in any case take centuries to undo its web” (Derrida, 1981, p. 63).

Notes

- ¹ My brief summary of *atimía* and its applications was also informed by Danielle S. Allen's *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens* (Allen, 2000) and Mogens Herman Hansen's *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles, and Ideology* (Hansen, 1999).
- ² Scapegoating was an ancient religious custom (Allen, 2000, p. 85). The practice of ostracism (not discussed by Derrida) was similar to it in form: every year one citizen was voted to be sent into a ten-year exile. However, this was not a religious practice anymore, and usually people of considerable social power were excommunicated so as to prevent their rise to tyranny (Hansen, 1999, p. 35). *Atimía*, in contrast was a punitive outcome of a regular court case (Hansen, 1999, p.99).
- ³ Based on Halperin's analysis as well as Hansen's detailed explanations of practices and regulations throughout his book, it is clear that the ideology of *parrhêsia* strengthened the position of the more well off at the expense of the poor among the citizen body, and the accusation of prior prostitution was a powerful weapon of deligitimizing motions set forth by poorer citizens (who may or may not have been hired to put forth the motion—as it was indeed a very common practice at the agora). The quote shows the irony of all this in the ambiguous meaning of "weapon against poverty."
- ⁴ Another figurative thread of virile citizenship which can support the viability and cultural transmission of the beating image is the Roman motif of swearing, giving testimony, by touching one's genitals. Here the voice is explicitly authenticated by a tactile reference to the seed. While exploring this thread, Joshua T. Katz traces the Indo-European etymology of Latin *testis* to testimony (Katz, 1998).
- ⁵ For instance, prior to turning to the language of immunity, in between the composition of "Plato's Pharmacy" and "Faith and Knowledge," in *The Post Card*, he repeatedly refers to tax exemption as paralysis.
- ⁶ For discussions of Derrida's use of autoimmunity in this footnote, see Alice Andrews' and Samir Haddad's work (Andrews, 2011; Haddad, 2004). I have also written on this elsewhere (Timar, 2013).

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