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ANTINOUS: FROM THE PEDERASTIC TO THE DIVINE

Introduction

In 1893, a group of excavators working at the ancient sanctuary at Delphi uncovered a large, marble torso¹. This torso was none other than the infamous lover of Hadrian from the second century CE, Antinous. This discovery was hailed as a marvel, a triumph of the ancient world in representing the perfect youth. This was yet another example of the exalted Antinous, the “the last independent creation of Greco-Roman art².” This Antinous would join a large corpus of images, known as the Antinous type, whose identification is highly debated and controversial. Through his art and representation, Antinous became a well-known classical figure though little is known about the young man's life. His death is shrouded in scandal and mystery and throughout it all, his sculptures simply smirk enigmatically. His reception has been ridiculed, accepted, questioned and tolerated by many figures over history. Lately, many preconceived notions of his cult, his imagery and his life have come under increased analysis and much of this information does not live up to scrutiny. In the East, the cult of Antinous was accepted publicly and acclaimed as a

¹ Caroline Vout, *Antinous: the face of the antique* (Hertfordshire, Henry Moore Institute, 2005), 85.

² Caroline Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

new hero. However, in the West, it was ridiculed as a religion, though not completely rejected because of Imperial support. The cult was accepted in the East because there was a longstanding tradition of pederasty. Those who opposed this cult were fighting a process of Hellenization, which was seen as a threat to traditional Roman culture, under a philhellenic Emperor.

Much is still unknown about the details of the relationship between Hadrian and Antinous. There has been no official account given by the Imperial administration and our only contemporary sources are ancient authors who were largely critical of the Emperor. Therefore, much of our “knowledge” of Antinous has been largely reconstructed from physical sources and deduced from literature. The fact that literature about Antinous becomes more plentiful “does not inspire confidence”³ and generally explains the increasing fanatical nature of these explanations. For generations, writers have used Antinous to serve their teleological needs. Early Christian writers have seen Antinous as a sordid, lascivious individual with loose morals who controlled the Emperor through the powers of persuasion. That Antinous may have sacrificed himself in a pagan ritual to prolong the Emperor’s life only strengthens the culpability of this dirty lover boy⁴. Others, such as Victorian classicists, who wish to use Antinous as an example of Hadrian’s philhellenic and philosophical nature, present the pair as an ostentatious yet platonic relationship marked by mutual respect and immense grief at the death of Antinous⁵. Recently, a new revival of the so-called “Cult of Antinous” has lead his followers to

³ Thorsten Oppen, *Hadrian Empire and Conflict* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1996), 170.

⁴ Vout, 53.

⁵ Royston Lambert, *Beloved and God the Story of Hadrian and Antinous* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984), 89.

change their names to proper Latin *nomen* and write hymnals to him in the ancient languages⁶. The general account given by ancient historians is that the cult was mocked as inappropriate mourning for a provincial boy of unquestionable non-Roman origins. Previously, it was believed that the cult became irrelevant immediately following the death of Hadrian in 138 CE. However, due to material remains that were created long past the supposed expiry date of 138 CE, literary sources must be read more carefully and inherent biases must be identified.

Although little is known about the lifetime and events of Antinous, much is known about his representation and subsequent iterations of his worship. His images have been organized into a corpus that takes a scientific approach on mapping his hair, categorizing his features and observing and understanding the features added to him by different regions⁷. There has also been much study on his nomenclature, his status as divine, critical reception and the worship of his cult. All of these studies contribute to the overarching study of the mysterious Antinous.

Antinous, a Fractured Biography

The few details that have come down about Antinous must be reconstructed. Contemporary writers do not care to give details of the provincial, tending to go for either the scandalous rumours of his death or the inappropriate nature of his relationship. What is certain from ancient authors is that he was from the city of Claudopolis in the province of Bithynia. His parents were Greek in origin and the citizens of Claudopolis traced their Arcadian lineage back to Mantinea in Greece⁸.

⁶ Aedicula Antinoi: A Small Shrine to Antinous, Accessed on January 21, 2013, "<http://www.aediculaantinoi.wordpress.com>".

⁷ Vout, 77.

⁸ Lambert, 22.

Hadrian must have met Antinous on one of his tours of Asia Minor and accepted him into his entourage, though the relative dating of this can only be speculative. His birth date was given as a feast day, November 27, by an inscription of a funerary cult from the Latin city of Lanuvium (INS I.1.4.). Although not expressly detailed, it can be assumed based on a combination of other pederastic relationships of the period, depictions and literature what Antinous did whilst in the company of the Emperor. Pederastic members generally followed the Greek model of pederasty and the *eromenos* and *erastes* hunted, trained and followed cultural pursuits, such as poetry.

The biggest matter of controversy concerning Antinous was his death. He drowned in the Nile in 130 CE under suspicious circumstances, as is recounted by the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (QU 3.). The official account was that it was an unfortunate accident. However, according to authors such as Cassius Dio, Antinous sacrificed himself in a pagan ritual that would either prolong the Emperor's life or bless him with success in his endeavours. Many speculate that it is the latter account of his death that corroborates Hadrian's exaggerated response to his death. It is unlikely that Antinous sacrificed himself, as there is no evidence in the only first hand account, the official story, nor is there any physical evidence, in the form of art depiction, to corroborate this claim. It may be argued that obviously his death would not have been depicted on images strictly controlled by the Imperial administration. However, that is under the assumption that Antinous' images ceased to be produced beyond 138 CE, which as later discussed, is not true. If Antinous truly drowned, why would critics of his cult not circulate images of this account as a posthumous *damnatio memoriae* of an already established cult? The truth of this matter can and will never be confirmed but what remains obvious is that even if Antinous did sacrifice

himself for the health and benefit of the Emperor, it clearly did not work. Hadrian lived only another eight years after his death and his relationship with the Senate, one of his biggest critics, never improved⁹.

Art and Representation

The first observation in the study of Antinous' images was that all of his statuary was strikingly similar. Although depicted in a variety of headdresses, styles, clothing and themes, there was an unmistakable air of similarity between the many images. Upon further study, art historians and classical scholars identified a number of characteristics. These features came to define "the Antinous Style" and this became the basis of the corpus of his images¹⁰. These features have been debated and pieces that bear similarity but do not match certain criteria of the identifying features have been eliminated. The corpus is by no means complete or finite and pieces move in and out of the corpus as increasingly, pieces come under intense scrutiny.

The prevailing theory explaining the similarity of the Antinous sculptures states that it was Hadrian's administration that sent out examples portraying the subject to regional workshops¹¹. From there, sculptors and artists could study the images, keep their proportions and recreate them with their own regional characteristics. Artists used instruments such as compasses to map out the relative distance and features with great precision. Antinous was thus recreated in his exact proportions, to scale, in each of his portrayals. The style of his portraiture was left to

⁹ R. Syme, "Hadrian and the Senate," *Athenaeum* 62 (2007): 33.

¹⁰ Vout, 74.

¹¹ Vout, 35.

the interpretation of the artist, whether in Egyptian dress, in Classical Greek Style, or simply as a reproduction of the example. There have been many examples of this Antinous base with provincial dress. These can be seen in Fig. I.3.6, Fig. I.4.1, Fig. I.4.5, Fig. I.5.3, and there were many more examples. There were also no instructed materials to be used and representations are made from a number of locally sourced material. These include local white and black marbles, limestone, terra cotta, alabaster or granite. This aids scholars in locating the original locations of these statues in cases that archival evidence is lacking.

As previously mentioned, the corpus itself is neither finite nor complete, and the identification of certain pieces is often contested. The key features in identifying the Antinous type are the eyes, the eyebrows, the lips, the gaze, the broad chest and the hairstyle. His eyebrows are thin, typically scored, and sit lightly on his brow bone. His lips are generally pursed or slightly puckered, giving him the look of a luscious youth. His smoothed, broad chest begets his identification as a youthful individual, in the prime of his liminal status as a member of society. His downward gaze is a pose with which one often associates him. This gaze, along with his half stare give the impression that he is but a shy young man who is politely avoiding the viewers' gaze out of embarrassment. To a second century CE audience, this position would have the same effect as a person of the twentieth century meeting a demure Diana, Princess of Wales¹². His most famous feature is his hairstyle, referred to as *haupttypus*, or main type, in German. His hair is generally curly, un-parted and heavy. It falls on his forehead and down the back of his neck and extends outwards on both sides. The hair, although falling heavily on his head, is very voluminous and it appears that

¹² Vout, 107.

he has a lot of hair. This effect is achieved first with a drill, in order to drill holes into the hair, to give it depth and dimension. Then, a chisel would be used to finish the rest of the fine detailing on the hair. The definitive piece, positively identified as Antinous by ancient inscription, is a fractured and damaged bust from Syria (Fig. III.1.47), which describes the figure as “ANTNOΩI HPΩI” or Antinous the Hero. From this bust, the pre-defined features commonly associated with him are found. Thus, this piece is essential to the understanding of the fundamental elements of youth in this corpus.

These features are meticulously replicated in each example of the Antinous sculptures. Details such as scale, length of hair, distance between facial features and other ratios are copied as closely as possible, thus giving credibility to the idea that there was an imperial example given as an original. There are many divergent theories given for the method ancient artists used in order to attain this effect. It is likely that the features were carefully crafted, measured and then replicated using instruments such as compasses and rulers and then those ratios precisely increased to match the scale of the piece being made. The similarity in the front of the hair especially can be seen as evidence for this theory (Fig. III.1.26, Fig. III.I.27, Fig. III.I.34, etc.). In these examples, the finer, softer points of the bangs of the *hauptytus* hairstyle are defined with a sweep towards the right of the face and the same two locks in the middle of his face, fifth from the left, are grouped together in one larger cluster. This specific feature can be seen in most of his depictions, but especially in the busts that are depicted as himself (Fig. III.1.1 – Fig. III.1.47). This specific sweep of hair is drastically different however, in his regional dress, as it was artistically modified to make sense with the headdresses or other regionalisms found on his sculpture.

Antinous takes on many identities as an individual and a hero. As later discussed in *The Many Epithets of Antinous*, his status as a hero gives him the ability to be accepted into multiple local traditions without conflict. His adaptability has led to a number of interesting variations on his image and presents an interesting perspective into the various art forms and deific interpretations of different provincial workshops in the Second Century CE. Specifically found in the provinces, the differences showcase the best of the cultural dress as juxtaposed against a common Classical Greek model. This is an interesting dualistic depiction but does not set the precedent of Greek heroes who have seemingly travelled the world. Herakles is seen in a number of different representations, as he was a Greek hero who went on a voyage to complete his twelve tasks. Similarly, Antinous was a travelling hero, who did not have distinct heroic cycle of journeys and tasks but had a heroic identity nonetheless. Thus, Antinous is seen as Osiris (Fig. I.3.1, I.3.2, Fig. III.3.3, etc.), as an initiate in the Eleusinian Mysteries (Fig. I.5.3), as a priest of Attis (Fig. III.6.1), as a Roman priest (Fig. I.5.5), as Echmoun (Fig. I.4.5), as a Greek athlete (Fig. II.1.1), as Androkles (Fig. I.4.1), as the spirit *Agathodaimon* (Fig. I.5.1), and many others. The example of Osiris bears some interest, as he was mainly matched with the god because of their similar stories. Both drowned in the River Nile and both came back to life, thus Antinous was able to fit into this mythology, as a new Osiris¹³. His matched identities do not stop at lesser known regional people and deities; he is often juxtaposed with the main Olympian gods, setting their features and poses.

¹³ Lambert, 70.

Antinous is typically famous for his syncretism with various gods throughout the ancient world. There were two main categories of gods in which his syncretised identities fall under: the Woodland God and the Bringer of Health¹⁴. These two categories fall thematically directly into his official biography and history as a god. These two categories denote a certain liminal state, which is defined by being in between two defined states. In the case of Antinous, as a youth, he is both between both boyhood and manhood and as a hero, he is between life and death. The woods, as a wild area outside of the city, are typically where Greek youth, or *ephebe*, were sent to live and learn to hunt. They had no defined place within the city, as they were not to be within the dominion of their parents as boys but not yet full right citizens either. This tradition gives rise to Antinous as a Woodland God, as he is often depicted as a youth, typically the divine *ephebe*. Beyond, the typical Antinous as an *ephebe* (Fig. I.1.7 – Fig. I.1.47, Fig. III.1.1 – Fig. III.1.47), sculptures appear of Antinous – Vertumnus (Fig. I.5.6) Antinous – Sylvanus (Fig. V.1.2) and most notably, the Antinous – Dionysus type (Fig. I.2.1 – Fig. I.2.6, Fig. III.2.1 – Fig. III.2.6). The syncretised identity of Dionysus and Antinous is especially poignant because dionysiac rituals often factored in the rite of passage rituals of many Greek cities. The classification of a Bringer of Health also fit neatly within the themes of Antinous' deification, since like other heroes, he had conquered death and thus could now bring the secrets of the underworld back to those who were still living. That he was celebrated in this role cannot be contested, as an inscription from a funerary cult in Lanuvium attests (INS I.1.4.). As the Bringer of Health, Antinous is commonly associated with Hermes (Fig. VII.1.6) and Apollo (Fig. I.4.5, Fig. III.7.4). Hermes

¹⁴ Lambert, 178.

was responsible for leading the dead to the underworld and thus was constantly travelling back and forth from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Apollo was the god responsible for disease and could bring or alleviate plague. Antinous, with his liminal identity was able to transcend the customs of the cities and provinces he visited and was able to be accepted by locals without conflict because although he did not truly belong to a city, he dealt primarily with stages that affected the people of the Empire, youth and death.

A perfect example of this acceptance into local tradition was the example of Antinous-Echmoun/Liber Pater (Fig. I.4.5)¹⁵. This piece is from the North African city Leptis Magna that would later be the hometown of the Emperor Septimius Severus. The entire sculpture is a composite of pieces, first the tripod was a freestanding statue of symbols, then a statue of Apollo was added and then the head was replaced with Antinous. The head of Antinous is wreathed in an ivy crown, just as the wine god is generically depicted but his pose and stand oppose this identification. The pose in which he is leaning and a hand is casually slumped atop his head points towards a Fourth Century BCE example of the Lycian Apollo by Praxiteles. The round object on a tripod, a symbol of Apollo, is also the famous *omphalos*, or the navel of the world that Cronus swallowed instead of Zeus, that was kept at the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. The snake intertwined between the legs of the tripod is an animal related to both his cult and his oracle, as Apollo was said to have shot and killed the Python moments after his birth. At first glance, the imagery depicted within this statue seems to be a contradiction of gods, perhaps a provincial mishap of Dionysus and Apollo. However, upon closer examination, Antinous

¹⁵ Vout, 109.

represents an older African deity named Echmoun, which the Romans named Liber Pater. Echmoun was a local deity that dated to before the Roman occupation of the area and had qualities that could be syncretised with both Apollo and Dionysus – Apollo because he was frequently depicted with twin snakes and Dionysus because he was a youthful god who had travelled around. When rumours abounded about Hadrian's potential visit to Africa, there was an uproar in Leptis Magna. The city did not have an image of the Emperor's favourite and needed one of high quality in a short amount of time¹⁶. Thus the head of this Lycian Apollo was replaced for the sake of both time and money. Marble of this quality was expensive and the practice of simply replacing the heads of the statues of emperors was common practice. This statue was then placed in Hadrian's Thermal Baths where it remained until its discovery in 1925¹⁷.

The Many Epithets of Antinous

Antinous' name is represented on a variety of his images, including reliefs, votive plaques, coins, *tesserae*, medallions and, most fortunately, a bust. However, in each instance, his name is given with an epithet that links him to certain gods or personified traits. Antinous was a prevalent character whose cult could be adapted to any number of areas and named as a guardian spirit. Thus, Antinous becomes Antinous Belenus, Antinous Epiphanes, Antinous Eros and many more. This

¹⁶ Vout, 100.

¹⁷ Tripoli, Libya, Accessed November 2012, "<http://www.antinoos.info/antin5a.htm>".

continues with the tradition that Antinous was often syncretised with various local deities and could share the identities of many heroes as well. However, his syncretised epithets generally still generally fell under the category of liminal spaces and related to the woods or the youth. It is interesting to note that unlike his interpretation in art, he is not typically inscribed as a Bringer of Health. With the exception of two, longer inscriptions that ask for his protection over a deceased family member (INS 1.2.7.), he is not invoked to bring health, contrary to what his statues as Apollo would suggest. It seems that in the known descriptions through epigraphical evidence, Antinous is renowned for his beauty and his youth moreso than his healing qualities.

The main epithet that is used to describe Antinous is “Hero” and can be found in almost all forms of representation for the Favourite. Although Antinous does not fit the proper heroic cycle, he had supposedly conquered death, thus giving him the knowledge of immortality. Antinous’ description as a hero is essential in his ability to be accepted in local tradition. Traditionally, heroes travelled great distances to overcome tasks to prove they were worthy of their divine ancestry. Again, Antinous does not come from divine parentage, his parents were most likely of Greek, Arcadian descent¹⁸. However, he did travel, though not to overcome tasks such as the Nemean Lion or gather the Apples of Hesperides. He travelled in the retinue of the Emperor as his companion and favourite and after his death, he travelled even further, at the request of the Emperor¹⁹. Hadrian was relentless in his circumnavigation of his Empire and was consistently voyaging from one end of his

¹⁸ Lambert, 22.

¹⁹ Vout, 121.

territory to the other. Everywhere he went, honourific statues of the Emperor were erected and in the East, often a companion Antinous piece was raised as well. Unlike the Emperor, Antinous could be depicted in a variety of dress, especially local, and be raised without a conflict of gods. He was a hero who, unlike other heroes, could acculturate into the local sphere. Ultimately, it is his status as a hero, and not typically a god, that leads to the success of his cult through successive generations. After the initial request of the foundation of his cult, Antinous reached into the psyche of the native populations and stayed as an immortal member of the community. Although having a status as an immortal, Antinous was rarely called a god or a divinity as an epithet. In his inscriptions, he is not referred to as *deus*, the Latin word for god or *divus*, a deified member of the Imperial Family²⁰. Additionally, he is not considered a part of the Imperial Family despite the placement of certain busts of his in modern exhibits. This picture is also presented as a lesser member or perhaps a substitute child in the Obelisk on the Pincian Hill. In one instance, he is referred to by the moniker “ΘΕΟΝ” by a votive plaque in Aquileia, which is discussed later in **Critical Reception**.

Due to his nature as a hero, he had a special role in the civic life of various cities. Like Herakles, he was known to have travelled the world during his life in the retinue of the Emperor²¹. Based on the various representations in regional dress depicted on Antinous, his cult was widely accepted into the sphere of the cities he had come into contact with. The iterations of heroes were never identical and cities often gave heroes a regional flare. What is interesting about Antinous is the cross-

²⁰ Vout, 116.

²¹ Lambert, 178.

cultural nature of his imagery. He is depicted simultaneously as the Egyptian god Osiris (Fig. I.3.1, I.3.2, etc.) and as Echmoun (Fig. I.4.5) yet the populations do not see a contradiction between these two roles. If the theory of an imperial copy allowed to be changed with the characteristics of the region is true, then it would seem that imperial administration and Hadrian were not only aware of this cross-cultural quality, but indeed actively encouraged it.

Critical Reception

The general conception of Antinous' cult and reception was that its existence largely depended on the *imperium* of Hadrian. As long as the Emperor was alive, the cult was used as a way for provincial populations and others to gain favour²². After his death, it was largely accepted that this process would have stopped, especially since no one actually believed or had a connection to this cult. This understanding was so widespread that Antinous' images were considered a dating find in archaeology, its timeline more or less confined from 130 to 138 CE²³. The previous success of his cult was certainly impacted by the death of Hadrian and the rate of production for his images was reduced significantly following this event, but Antinous' cult did not simply disappear. In many areas of the Greek World, large edifices and impressive monuments had been built to celebrate this new cult and it would be foolish to believe that these buildings were simply torn down or repurposed immediately. The successor of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, was an ardent

²² Lambert, 179.

²³ Vout, 65.

supporter of the deification of the controversial emperor and it is his devotion to his adopted father that earned him the name “Pius” or devoted²⁴.

This fact contradicts the common association between his cult status as an immortal and perhaps a god. In most cases, he is simply a hero, and his cult is a hero cult that is closely modelled on that of the Greek Hero cults that pervaded Ancient Greece²⁵. Although a hero, he is not largely celebrated for his virility and strength. There are, of course, examples of his depiction as a hunter or an athlete, such as the Antinous Androkles (Fig. I.4.1) and the Antinous Astros (Fig. II.1.1), but generally, he is associated with luscious youth and being an *ephebe*. Having said this, however, one puzzling instance defines Antinous as “ΘΕΩΝ” or god. On the back of a terracotta votive plaque from Aquileia (Fig. VI.1.3), it states “Η ΠΑΤΡΙΣ ΑΝΤΙΝΟΟΝ ΘΕΩΝ“, or “The Fatherland [worships] Antinous the god”. This piece brings up many questions regarding its existence, placement and commentary. Why is it referring to Antinous as a god? Where is the fatherland? Why is the text written in Greek, whilst being found in a predominantly Latin speaking area (Aquileia is in Italy)? This plaque is a souvenir that one may have brought from a visit to the Greek Temples. Antinous was already known to be associated with the local Aquileian god Belenus and was therefore seen more as a deity than a hero, unlike other regions in the Western Mediterranean. The plaque was most likely from his main sanctuary in Mantinea. Pausanias, in his *Description of Greece*, refers to the sanctuary in Arcadia, which was the ancestral homeland of Claudopolis and so Antinous as well (QU. 1). Mantinea is the “fatherland” from which he is a

²⁴ Lambert, 176.

²⁵ Vout, 113.

descendant. Thus, the fact that this plaque was considered relevant enough to be brought back to Italy and displayed represents the fact that Antinous himself had at least a minor following back in Italy.

Due to his philhellenic nature, Hadrian was considered an effeminate and powerless emperor. Starkly juxtaposed against the *virtus* of the great Trajan and his imperial expansion, it appeared that Hadrian's policy of consolidation was disrespectful to the power of Rome. Thus, Antinous was yet another example of how the Emperor was inappropriately displaying his affections amongst a lesser people, the Greeks. This anti-hellenistic sentiment was neither unknown nor novel. During the first phases of Roman territorial expansion, culture in the city had found new and exotic cultures and religions flooding the Republican social structure. Amongst conservative Romans, this was to be feared and many disapproved greatly of this process. A notable example of this was Marcus Porcius Cato in the Second Century BCE²⁶. He was a first-generation Senator who had moved up the class system during his lifetime²⁷. As an ardent defender of Roman customs, he chose to raise his son in the legitimate Roman fashion²⁸. This included teaching his child to farm, to read and to write and bringing him to the Senate to teach him about the ways of government²⁹. This greatly contradicted a growing trend in Rome, that of the Greek slave teaching Roman children philosophy, politics, rhetoric and other literary pursuits. Although city-states in Greece, such as Athens, had long been hailed as the

²⁶ Plutarch, *The Life of Cato the Elder*, 20.8.

²⁷ Plutarch, 20.4.

²⁸ Plutarch, 20.6.

²⁹ Plutarch, 20.5.

cultural apex of the Mediterranean, some Romans still found their choice of leisure and philosophical pursuits effeminate against Roman brute force.

The antagonism towards Hadrian's boy-lover can be viewed as three pronged. Cassius Dio recounts all of these things in his account of the Roman Emperor (QU. 2). Firstly, he was seen as an effeminate philhellene that did not have the proper *gravitas* and respect for Roman customs. Cassius mentions that he was simply taken by the beauty and lusted for the boy. This was considered a weakness and that the Emperor revelled in this beautiful boy is evidence of a weak and feeble Emperor, incapable of containing even the most basic urges. In his account, Cassius Dio takes pains to mention that Hadrian "wept for him in a womanish fashion". Secondly, in celebrating his new cult and publicly weeping for Antinous, Hadrian was also blurring the line between his public and private persona. It was considered inappropriate of him to use his *imperium* in order to coerce the populations of the Empire to worship his own private lover. In the aforementioned quotation, Cassius Dio specifically attests to the fact that the Greeks were given verses in the worship of Antinous written by the Emperor himself and instigated by him. Finally, he was not fulfilling his duties as a private citizen by devoting such attention to this new cult. According Cassius Dio, his sister Paulina, had also died, but he paid her no posthumous honours. By ignoring his sister in favour of his lover, Hadrian was not doing his duty as a family man and thus attacking the basic foundation of Roman Society; the family.

Although criticized heavily in the West, Antinous was accepted in the East by many Greek cities. On account of his Arcadian ancestry, Antinous was considered one of their own, he fit well into local tradition as a hero and there was already a long

standing tradition of pederasty in Greece. In some city states, the education system differed greatly from the Roman customs. Pederasty was incorporated as a legitimate means in which boys on the cusp of manhood could learn about society. It is only fitting that Hadrian, a highly popular figure in Greece and a philhellene, would embrace such a tradition and that the Greeks, in turn, would embrace this new cult. The concentration of archaeological evidence indicating worship for Antinous is heaviest in the Peloponnese, especially around Athens. In this city, Hadrian had great influence and the frequency of his boy favourite's images only corroborate the textual accounts given of the Emperor's Hellenic popularity. Like with all archaeological evidence, a margin of error must be identified, that being the fact that not every piece has survived nor have modern scholars found or correctly identified many other items. The current frequency of findings, however, do fit with the literary evidence given by ancient sources such as Cassius Dio and Pausanias of Antinous' cult places.

Legacy

As previously discussed, the traditional theory that Antinous finds could really only be dated between 130 – 138 CE is problematic because of the continuation of his cult. One of the biggest problems with this theory is the difference between the creation date and the last use of the item in circulation. Based on the small finds and remains that depict him, it is clear that Antinous was meant to appeal to both the rich and the poor. The materials range from precious metals such as orichalcum (Fig. VII.1.7, VII.1.9, etc.) to common bronze (Fig. VII.1.8, etc.). It is clear that these items were in circulation everyday from the time they were created

until they were either lost or replaced in function. It is difficult to precisely date the expiry date of these items because each item was obviously individually phased out, replaced or lost. That the pieces were not ritually destroyed is also a testament to the fact that his cult was not discouraged. An example of an item that was used ritually and slowly replaced are the balsamaria that bear his image. A balsamarium is a vessel that was used to carry incense or perfume and a few have survived nearly intact and take their place in both museums and private collections internationally (Fig. VI.2.1 – Fig. VI.2.11)³⁰. These items, although made of bronze, were semi-precious items and were clearly intrinsically linked to ritual. The balsamaria were not everyday items, and used in very specific instances and thus had a long life in circulation. Other items also linked his image to festivals and celebrations, specifically the lead *tesserae* from Alexandria (Fig. VII.2.1, VII.2.2). These small lead tokens were used as an entry ticket to certain dramatic performances and games given in the city.

Documented cases of his worship space come in the form of sanctuaries in Egypt³¹, the Temple dedicated to him in Mantinea³², a funerary cult area in Lanuvium³³, a temple possibly in Carnutum³⁴ and a dedicatory temple in Dardania (modern Kosovo)³⁵. Although scarce excavations have been done at his city in Bithynia, it can only be assumed that there was at least one cult area for Antinous in Antinoopolis. It has also commonly been debated about the possibility of an

³⁰ Marjeta Sasel Kos, *Antinous in Upper Moesia – The Introduction of a New Cult*, 177.

³¹ Kos, 177.

³² Kos, 177.

³³ Kos, 177.

³⁴ Kos, 183.

³⁵ Kos, 178.

Antinoo or hero shrine at the Villa Adriana. Remains around the *Canopus* area have been interpreted in a variety of ways, some which also name this area as his grave³⁶.

Beyond mere physical remains, the greatest legacy left by Antinous' representation was the influence in artistic style. Often called the last great subject of Classical Greek Art, his image captured the imagination of all those who beheld him and is typically his first identifying feature. However, this classical ideal of beauty was duplicated time and time again for other *eromenos*. A prime example of this is the resemblance between the image of Polydeuces at the Villa of Herodes Atticus to the boy sculpture of Antinous at Olympia (Fig. I.7.1)³⁷. Their similarities lie in the position of their gaze, the ethereal facial expression, the carving of the eyes and there is a clear influence in the direction and style of the hair. As the ideal youth, he is the model for Classical beauty at the inception of the genre. In a portrait of Johann Wincklemann, he chose to be portrayed holding a sketch of the Antinous Albani Relief³⁸.

Even the belief that Antinous' image being discontinued following the death of Hadrian is discredited by physical data. A contorniate medallion, dating from the Fourth Century CE, was created with a new image of Antinous on it (Fig. VII.1.18). The relative dating of this item cannot be disputed because these medallions, with the thicker rim, began production under the Emperor Constantine³⁹. This medallion is irrefutable evidence that Antinous' image was still being produced late into the

³⁶ Marina Sapelli Ragni, *Antinoo: il fascino della bellezza*, (Lazio: Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio, 2011), 82.

³⁷ Vout, 86.

³⁸ Vout, 36.

³⁹ *Dictionary of Roman Coins*. Norwich: Norfolk Chronicle Company, 1889. "Contorniate Coins".

Fourth Century CE and did not cease production in 138 CE as is widely believed. Another indication that Antinous' cult continued into even the Early Christian Period. Through the vehemently critical text of writers such as Tertullian and Origen, it is clear that the cult posed a challenge to Christianity. If this cult had indeed disappeared in its entirety, why would an author be attacking it many years after the death of the Emperor? The text by Origen (QU. 7) was a response to an initial attack by a Roman critic, and known as the *Contra Celsum*. The author, Celsus, had drawn parallels between Antinous and Jesus, especially as the youth who had died, come back to life and brought secrets of the afterlife to the living. Why would an unknown cult factor in the considerations of a pagan critic if the cult of Antinous had not continued to exist across the Mediterranean?

Even his Christian critics attest to his beauty and lustful features. The farthest-reaching argument against the nature of Antinous' divinity was the arbitrary nature of his deification. Beauty, they argue, is neither a lofty ideal nor an attainable trait. Using physical beauty to attract attention and seduce favours was heavily discouraged and it appeared that Hadrian had been coerced. Unlike initial critics of the cult, the Christian critics of Antinous focused on the divinity at the centre rather than the instigator and progenitor Emperor. Antinous had clearly grown in status beyond being simply an area in which individuals could criticize the Emperor and become a concentration of critique himself.

Conclusion

It is often difficult to discern fact from fiction in the legend behind ancient personages. This fact is greatly heightened if the individual is of questionable character and malleable in his legacy. Antinous' greatest feature, that he could adapt

to the hearts and minds of the people who worshipped him, proved to be a point of abuse to his memory, as successive individuals who studied his cult and life used him as an end to their teleological needs. His given personalities range from lascivious seducer to innocent child. His level of complicity, his agency and his intentions have all been called into question throughout these studies. Although the areas of contention have been discussed *ad nauseam*, his physical legacy had been largely ignored and the large corpus of images were simply known for their similarities and enigmatic facial features.

Through textual data, it is clear that upper class Roman citizens of the Second Century CE or Early Christian Critics did not accept Antinous. Through writers such as Cassius Dio and the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, many are lead to believe that Antinous' cult was founded under inappropriate means and lasted only as long as the Emperor was alive. Christian Critics despised his supposed use of beauty to bewitch Hadrian and the fact that he not only added no moral value to society, but in fact was a direct celebration of homosexual love and loss. Even in an ancient context, Antinous was simply a means to an end, not because they feared the existence of yet another cult in the colourful pagan religious spectrum, but because they feared the implications of this cult for their moral, civic and political lives.

Antinous' proven popularity is rarely accounted in written sources. Although Pausanias mentions his sanctuary at Mantinea and relates the connection between the Bithynian and his Arcadian homeland (QU. 1), little information is provided about the actual worship rituals. The unfortunate reality of data in this field is limited to epigraphic remnants, textual analysis and hypotheses regarding archaeological data.

However, this data, like all research, is never complete. Findings about his cult and interpretations of data are constantly challenged and reinterpreted. Perhaps in the future, the mystery of Antinous and his cultic rituals may be revealed through a new literary source or more archaeological data. Even from an in-depth analysis of the literary accounts against the physical remains, it is clear that what has been written by contemporary writers must be questioned. It is cases like Antinous that validate the examination of ancient historiography.

Regardless of interpretation, it is evident that Antinous was a popular cult that survived far past the expiry date given to him by the sources. His cults continued to thrive, his images were produced even into the Fourth Century CE and he did not simply disappear. Beyond his ancient iteration, Antinous has become a sumptuous muse since his supposed *apotheosis* and scores of people throughout the ages have looked to him for the ideal of male beauty. Mysteries surrounding his death secured him in the rounds of gossip and wonder. His enigmatic smirk leaves a lasting impression on all of his viewers; both modern and ancient. It is a combination of all of these elements that have made his cult successful and has kept his mystery alive. Antinous will always be a figure of beauty, mystery and wonder for all that behold him.

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