

Cross-Gendered Romans and Mark's Jesus: Legion Enters the Pigs (Mark 5:1–20)

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This reading engages two important and related dimensions of Mark's scene of Legion entering the pigs. First, is the name Legion to be understood as signifying numbers (Gundry), or as a largely nonintegrated or secondary military detail (Marcus, Collins), or, as will be argued here, a military reference that is, along with other military terms and motifs, central to the scene? Second, how might we understand the demon's unusual request to enter the pigs? Seeking to integrate a military meaning for the name "Legion" with an explanation for the demon's request to enter the pigs, and employing imperial-critical, masculinity, and sociopolitical-narrative approaches, this paper highlights the scene's polyvalent gendered and military-imperial language that has often been neglected since Derrett's brief but undeveloped 1979 reference to it. My argument is that the scene inscribes Jesus's hegemonic masculinity even while it mocks Roman power as an out-of-control, demonic, militaristic, and (self-)destructive masculinity, and fantasizes Rome's defeat as womanly weakness at Jesus's superior, commanding, masculine hands. Attention to the scene's cross-gendering, which draws from imperial-critical and gendered perspectives, has been ignored in previous work.

This article engages two matters of significance for reading Mark's "exorcism-of-Legion" scene (5:1–20). The first concerns the contribution of the nomenclature of "Legion." Is the term about numbers,¹ or a largely nonintegrated or secondary military detail,² or is it a military reference that is, along with others, central to the scene?³ This reading develops the third approach.

¹Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 260.

²Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 351–52; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 269–70. I will contest Marcus's view that Mark has no "anti-Roman sentiments" (pp. 351–52), and Collins's claim that there is "no theme of opposition to Rome in Mark" (p. 269).

³Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 43–48; Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of*

The second matter concerns how we read the unusual request of the demon named Legion to enter into the pigs (Mark 5:12). Earlier twentieth-century interpreters regularly offered theological explanations for this request:⁴ God defeats Satan and Jesus tricks the demons—at least partially though not yet fully; or, much less commonly, the demons trick Jesus; or the drowned pigs display Jesus’s miraculous exorcistic powers. More recent twentieth- and twenty-first-century studies—even those with more historical-critical interests—tend to take the request in their narrative stride, seeing it as a win-win bargaining situation for exorcist and demons, though claims of Jesus’s victory do not seem far away.⁵

This article builds on this narrative turn but finds the frequent spiritualized/theological approaches neglectful of important dimensions of the scene. Seeking to integrate the name “Legion” with an explanation for the demon’s request to enter the pigs, I attend to the scene’s polyvalent gendered and military-imperial language. My argument is that the scene inscribes Jesus’s hegemonic masculinity even while it mocks Roman power as an out-of-control, demonic, militaristic, and (self-) destructive masculinity and fantasizes Rome’s defeat as womanly weakness at Jesus’s superior, commanding, masculine hands. Attention to the scene’s cross-gendering, which draws from imperial-critical and gendered perspectives, has been ignored in previous work.⁶

Important to this reading are the scene’s military language and motifs, which have received little attention in interpretations of the scene. In a sometime-quoted

Mark’s Story of Jesus (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 190–94; Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 140–48; Stephen D. Moore, “‘My Name Is Legion, for We Are Many’: Representing Empire in Mark,” in Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament*, Bible in the Modern World 12 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 24–44; Hans Leander, *Discourses of Empire: The Gospel of Mark from a Postcolonial Perspective*, SemeiaSt 71 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 201–19.

⁴For reviews, see Hermann Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 113–15; H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, NovTSup 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 389–93.

⁵Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 57; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 352; Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 270–71; R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark, SHBC* (Macon GA; Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 168.

⁶Three excellent discussions of masculinity and Mark give the scene minimal attention. Tat-siong Benny Liew, “Re-Mark-able Masculinities: Jesus, the Son of Man, and the (Sad) Sum of Manhood?” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, SemeiaSt 45 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 93–135, esp. 113–14, briefly noting Jesus’s masculinity in relation to foreigners (Romans, Gerasenes); and, in the same volume, Eric Thurman, “Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity,” 137–61, esp. 148, briefly highlighting military dimensions, as does (with a little more detail) Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 94–95, emphasizing Jesus’s strength as a military conqueror. None explores the gendered dimensions of the scene as in the following argument.

but rarely engaged 1979 article, J. Duncan M. Derrett briefly asserted the “military overtones” of several terms,⁷ though they played little part in his analysis, and his support for several items, notably ἀγγέλι (5:11) and ἐπιτρέπειν (5:13), was dubious. Graham Twelftree certainly does not find Derrett convincing, dismissing any military significance for “Legion” and finding Derrett’s other claims “of little consequence for ἀποστέλλω, ἐπιτρέπω, ὀρμάω, and ἀγγέλι have wide varieties of meanings that do not, of themselves, suggest a military motif.”⁸ Twelftree is correct to notice that language has multiple uses, yet, as I will demonstrate, his dismissal of this multivalence seems unsustainable when the scene’s cluster of military motifs and vocabulary is given attention.

Accordingly, this reading employs imperial-military, gender (especially masculinity), and sociopolitical-narrative approaches. Imperial (critical) approaches foreground the interactions of NT texts with the diverse structures, personnel, practices, and ideologies of Roman power; military dimensions are to the fore in this reading. Gender approaches employ interrelated notions of gender, sex, and hegemonic masculinity (explicated in the next section), here with a focus on gender performance that involves the genitals.⁹ A sociopolitical-narrative approach concerns itself with the Gospel’s narrative as “rhetorical in character” involving “discursive or communicative interactions between the author of a text and its readers, both past and present.”¹⁰ It does not claim any representation of an actual event but recognizes that the narrative is embedded in, assumes, and inscribes cultural, ideological, social, and political structures from the world in which it originates.

I

My starting point is to observe the presentation of Jesus in the chapters preceding 5:1–20. I employ R. W. Connell’s notion of “hegemonic masculinity” to identify what forms the basis for Jesus’s gendered roles in this scene. Connell, drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class relations in terms of social dominance, defines hegemonic masculinity as a “pattern of masculinity” comprising “configurations of practice generated in particular situations and in a changing structure of relationships” that guarantee “the dominant position of men and the subordination

⁷J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Contributions to the Study of the Gerasene Demoniac,” *JSNT* 3 (1979): 2–17, esp. 5–6.

⁸Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2/54 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 76–77.

⁹Gender concerns “the performative aspect of being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman,’ the cultural role models one adopts to act as one or the other.” Sex refers “to the physical aspects of being identified as ‘male’ or ‘female.’” So Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking beyond Thecla* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 4.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

of women.”¹¹ This societal and gendered domination is both a societally and “historically mobile relation” that can be contested and destabilized by both women and men in changing cultural patterns. Connell notes a paradox within hegemonic masculinity involving both complicity and marginalizing subordination. While dominance is achievable by only some men, is agonistic, and needs to be maintained through constant performance, other men are complicit in benefitting from it without assuming the risk of dominance. This means that societal dominance is exerted not only over women but also over men who do not necessarily seek or actively support dominance. And given these gender hierarchies, not only are some men excluded from the ranks of the culturally dominant, some are disadvantaged and marginalized by dominant males in contexts, for example, of imperial structures, where a very small percentage of elite males exert power at the expense of others. Male identity is therefore polyvalent and contested. Connell recognizes that gender dynamics are not isolated from other structures such as class and race.

Jesus enters ch. 5 with his hegemonic masculinity well in place. In Mark 1–4, Jesus’s imperially imitative and contestive masculine identity as “God’s son”¹² (1:1, 11) is expressed in dominant practices of gendered power authorized by God. He continually achieves and maintains masculinity through the performance of public rhetoric, providing teaching and instruction (1:15, 35–39; 4:3–9), as well as competing with and besting the male leaders through challenge and riposte interactions that separate the men from the boys and the men from the women (2:1–12).¹³ He exercises authority over other men’s lives in summoning them to follow him; they sustain his power by submitting to him (1:16–20, 2:14, 3:13–19). He exercises power over the lives of men and women by ridding them of diseases, physical impediments, and demons (1:21–28, 29–34, 39; 2:1–12; 3:1–6, 10–12). He challenges the ruling power of male, Galilean, imperially allied officials¹⁴ in asserting control over matters such as access to God’s forgiveness (2:1–12), Sabbath observance (2:1–12, 23–28), meal companions (2:15–17), and the legitimacy of his authority (3:22–30). He claims and demonstrates power over land (4:3–9, 13–20, 26–29) and sea (4:35–41), asserting God’s sovereignty (Ps 24:1, Gen 1:6–10), imitating yet contesting the imperial sovereignty over “land and sea” associated with

¹¹On hegemonic masculinity and notions of subordination, complicity, and marginalization, see Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 76–81; for discussion, see Toby Miller, “Masculinity,” in *A Companion to Gender Studies*, ed. Philomena Essed, David Theo Goldberg, and Aubrey Kobayashi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 114–31, esp. 116–18.

¹²Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus*, LNTS 340 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 89–97; Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹³Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Conway, *Behold the Man*, 30–34.

¹⁴Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (1988; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 35–49, 144–73.

elite males and Roman emperors.¹⁵ In all of these activities, Jesus demonstrates the repertoire of masculine characteristics or virtues that Colleen Conway highlights as constituting Roman manliness: piety toward God, self-control and control over others, public moderation, courage, wisdom, and justice. One virtue, though, is missing, that of military dominance.¹⁶

This manly man, Jesus, comes into "the country of the Gerasenes" (5:1).¹⁷ Of what significance is the location? Commonly, interpreters emphasize that the region is inhabited by gentiles, especially interpreters who read the story in terms of the transformations of a demon-possessed wild man into an apostle to the gentiles.¹⁸ Adela Yarbro Collins, however, argues correctly that "the gentile character of Gerasa ... should not be overemphasized" with "Jewish remains from the Roman period ... well known from Gerasa."¹⁹ Josephus also presents (somewhat irenic) interactions between gentiles and Jews in Gerasa (*J.W.* 2.480). A reading centered on ethnicity is not adequate.

With other scholars, Stephen Moore highlights the exorcism by arguing that the Hebrew root of the name Gerasa (*grš*) means "banish," "drive out," "cast out." The name thereby signifies "the land in need of exorcism" and indicates Jesus's arrival in a place whose very name "constitutes a preexisting appeal to ... his (now) manifest destiny to drive out the powers that possess them."²⁰ Moore's reading of the scene draws together demon possession, exorcism, and Roman occupation.²¹

Hans Leander helpfully develops the suggestion made by several interpreters concerning military-imperial associations with Gerasa.²² He points to a scene

¹⁵ For example, the Seleucid Antiochus IV Epiphanes (2 Macc 9:8), and the Roman emperors Augustus (Philo, *Flacc.* 1.104; *Legat.* 1.309), Tiberius (Philo, *Legat.* 1.141), Gaius Caligula (*Legat.* 1.44; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.81), Vespasian (Josephus, *J.W.* 3.401–402), Titus (*J.W.* 6.43), Domitian (Juvenal, *Sat* 4.83; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.3), and Trajan (Pliny, *Pan.* 4.4). See Rick Strelan, "A Greater than Caesar: Storm Stories in Lucan and Mark," *ZNW* 91 (2000): 166–79, esp. 167–76.

¹⁶ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 22–30.

¹⁷ The textual traditions locate the scene variously in the district or country of the Gerasenes, of the Gergesenes, or of the Gadarenes. The first option, "Gerasenes" (5:1), has the best manuscript attestation in Alexandrian (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) and Western (Bezae) manuscript traditions. It is also the most difficult reading because the town of Gerasa is today some thirty-five or so miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, a rather lengthy run for the pigs (5:13). See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (3d ed.)* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 23–24, 84; Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 263–64.

¹⁸ John F. Craghan, "The Gerasene Demoniac," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 522–36, esp. 524, 534.

¹⁹ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 267, quoting Eric Meyers, "Jesus and His Galilean Context," in *Archaeology and the Galilee: Texts and Contexts in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Periods*, ed. Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough, *SFSHJ* 143 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 57–66, esp. 62.

²⁰ Moore, "My Name Is Legion," 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²² Leander, *Discourses of Empire*, 212–15.

narrated by Josephus in which, during the 66–70 war, General Vespasian sends a force of cavalry and infantry under Lucius Annius to attack Gerasa (*J.W.* 4.487–489). According to Josephus, the military force displayed its overwhelming power in killing a thousand young men, taking their families captive, plundering the town, burning houses, and attacking surrounding villages. Leander recognizes that scholars have raised questions about the historical accuracy, motivation, and placement of Josephus's report in his account. What matters more, Leander rightly argues, are the “painful poetics of Gerasa” that associate Gerasa with a vicious and murderous assertion of Rome's military power at the instigation of the now emperor Vespasian. In gender terms, these military actions performed Rome's hegemonic masculinity in Gerasa to devastating effect. Jesus's interactions in this place with forces designated by a military term *Legion* create an important contestive and imitative intertextuality with Roman military and masculine power.

II

In Mark's narrative, Roman power dominates the area not only by these “painful poetics” but also by means of the man possessed by a demon named Legion. This domination is established through the inability to bind the man with chains (5:3–4a), by the numerous futile attempts to do so (πολλάκις), and by the absence of anyone to match—let alone exceed—his strength (5:4b). The narrative accounts for this power in terms of an unclean spirit whose name is Legion (5:2, 9).

There has been much debate as to whether the name should be read with military dimensions.²³ As is well known, the name Legion refers to the central unit of the Roman army comprising in the late first century around fifty-four hundred troops divided into ten cohorts. There were twenty-eight legions at the end of the first century CE.²⁴ Is this military structure of any relevance here? Those who resist the link point to the explanation in 5:9b, “for we are many,” to claim that the name signifies numerical, not military, power.²⁵ But the antithesis is a false one. The attention in 5:9b to numerical power in no way obliterates the military source and nature of this power. High numbers of military resources are not antithetical to, but expressions of, military might. And as I detail below, this name occurs in a passage that employs a significant number of terms capable of military interpretation. Reading “Legion,” then, as a term denoting military power involves recognizing both the importance of numbers and the common cultural knowledge of Rome's military effectiveness. Significantly, the use of the name Legion immediately links

²³For a summary and convincing argument concerning its military referent, see Joshua Garroway, “The Invasion of a Mustard Seed: A Reading of Mark 5:1–20,” *JSNT* 32 (2009): 57–75, esp. 60–66. Garroway's analogy with Marines in Iraq is helpful.

²⁴John Campbell, “Legion,” *OCD* (3rd ed.), 839–42.

²⁵See nn. 1 and 8 above.

the demon possession of this man with a central technique of Roman imperial control of local subjects, namely, its military might, both actual and threatened. As Conway demonstrates, military success constitutes a primary component of Roman (hegemonic) masculinity.²⁶

By linking the man with the name Legion, the narrative constructs him as an embodiment of Roman power. But what sort of embodiment? Moore argues that we should read allegorically, following Jesus's example of 4:13–20, whereby “literary representations of individual colonial subjects stand in allegorically for the histories and destinies of entire colonized peoples.”²⁷ Allegorically, then, the deranged man depicts a person subjected to Roman power. Maud Gleason similarly speaks of “images of the body as synecdoche for society” in which human bodies function as “metaphors of the body politic” and bodily actions—body language—communicate something about the constructions and experiences of a society's power structures.²⁸ In these terms, the man as metaphor for society subdued and dominated by militarily based Roman dominance communicates in vv. 2–5 the experience of that power in terms of death (among the tombs), social alienation, overwhelming power, lack of control, self-destruction, demonic control, and antithesis to God's empire/rule manifested by the manly man Jesus (1:15). This is a scathing indictment of Roman power, but we must not miss its important gendered texture. Integral to the characterization of the man in these terms in vv. 2–5 is the lack of self-control. A lack of self-control “calls into question one's masculinity” and creates a process of “sliding down the scale from man to unman.”²⁹ Lack of self-control was womanish. The presentation of this unruly unman in vv. 2–5 constructs Roman power as effeminately out-of-control.

Accordingly, the confrontation between Jesus and the out-of-control unman/demon in vv. 6–13 positions Jesus on top. The unman/demon immediately yields to Jesus's authority in v. 6 (running to Jesus, bowing down) while simultaneously, as often happens in contexts of assertions of power, contesting Jesus's authority. The unman/demon attempts to ward off Jesus first by crying out a question (“what have you to do with me?”), then, ironically, by using an exorcist's formula for casting out a demon (“I adjure you by God”; cf. Acts 19:13). The demon ironically invokes God's authority in an attempt to circumscribe Jesus's power, which comes from God! The demon further protests that Jesus is “torment(ing) me,” a verb associated with eschatological judgment, including of the devil in Rev 20:10. While contending with Jesus, the unman/demon names Jesus's identity as “son of the Most High”

²⁶ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 23–24, 29–30, 39–47.

²⁷ Moore, “My Name Is Legion,” 27, 29.

²⁸ Maud Gleason, “Mutilated Messengers: Body Language in Josephus,” in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 50–85, esp. 52.

²⁹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 21–25. On “masculinity and self-control,” see Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151–56.

(5:7). The demon's designation of God as "Most High," can refer to both Zeus and Israel's God (Deut 32:8, Isa 14:14); the latter use is particularly associated with gentiles in diaspora contexts (Dan 3:26, 4:2, 2 Macc 3:31, 3 Macc 7:9, Acts 16:17).

More especially, the demon's use of the term "Most High God" identifies God (whom Jesus represents) as the most powerful—hegemonic—being in the scene. The title in the Hebrew Bible presents God as exercising power over the whole earth (Deut 32:8, Dan 4:17) and as the one who allocates the guardianship of other nations to lower gods while Israel was "the Lord's own portion" (Deut 32:7–9). God exercises this power as the all-conquering warrior God who subdues nations and enemies (Pss 9:3–5, 47:1–9), especially in battle with Israel's enemies (Ps 83:1–18). By addressing Jesus in relation to the "Most High God," the unman/demon links Jesus and him/itself with this larger narrative of God the warrior, victorious over the nations, empires, and their armies, whether Egyptian (Exod 14–15), Babylonian-Persian (Isa 40–55; e.g., 44:28–45:1), or Greek (Dan 7:2–28). By evoking this warrior tradition of God as "Most High," the unman/demon, as the embodiment of Rome's power, positions Rome as the next in line to experience God's (hegemonic) subduing warrior power. In so doing, the demon continues the destructive behavior of vv. 3–5, ironically threatening his own imperial embodiment of Rome and the emperor's assertion of mastery over land and sea.

In this context, how are we to make sense of the exchange between the unman/demon and Jesus as the demon requests first not to be expelled from the country and then to enter into some nearby pigs (5:10–12)? Clearly the request positions the unman/demon as the inferior and Jesus as the superior in this deployment of power. But beyond this, what else is in play? Attention to the military and gender dimensions of imperial power opens up an interesting and frequently ignored vista.

Jesus embodies the threat and power of the Most High, all-conquering, warrior God who, like Rome's rulers, claims sovereignty over the earth and nations. In the face of this claim and true to its name Legion, the occupying demon tries in v. 10 to maintain its imperial grip over land that is not its own but that it has claimed through invasion. We might think of Rome's fresh taking of land in Galilee (Josephus, *J. W.* 4.120) and Judea, parts of which Vespasian gives as gifts to allies such as Josephus (*Life* 1.425). In begging Jesus "not to send them out of the country" (5:10; cf. 12:7), the demon continues to locate himself in a subordinate position to Jesus even while it tries to control and limit Jesus's power and defend its occupied land. Legion employs the verb "send" (ἀποστέλλει) in the request to Jesus. The verb appears in military contexts with meanings such as "dispatch" as when a commanding officer dispatches military spies (Josh 2:1, 6:24) or military forces (Josh 8:3, 9; Judg 4:6; 2 Kgs 6:14; Isa 20:1), or when God wages war in "sending out arrows" (2 Sam 22:15). Josephus similarly uses the verb for the exercise of imperial and military authority: the Syrian governor Cestius (*J. W.* 2.510), the emperor Vespasian (*J. W.* 3.8, 4.658), and his son the future emperor Titus (*J. W.* 7:18, 117) "send" troops into battle. The use of this verb with such meanings thus contributes to a scene in

which the demon Legion addresses Jesus as a superior military officer and urges him to use his imperial-military authority, even while it presents itself as subject to Jesus's command and seeks to secure its own interests, power, and territory (χώρα).

We need look no further than Herod's efforts to secure his land and rule over Judea as he switches allegiances from Cassius, then to Antony, then to Octavian (Josephus, *J. W.* 1.242–244, 386–400; *Ant.* 14.301–303; 15.187–201, 217), or Josephus's change of allegiance during the war against Rome (*J. W.* 3.137–408) to understand the subordinate demon's self-interested negotiation of a superior commander as he seeks to secure his own position and interests.

III

The demon continues to construct the manly man Jesus as a military commander. Jesus does not respond to the demon's initial begging to stay in the land (5:10–11). The demon tries again with a double request, "Send us into the pigs, let us enter them" (5:12, πέμψον ἡμᾶς εἰς τοὺς χοίρους, ἵνα εἰς αὐτοὺς εἰσέλθωμεν). Legion's request is expressed in an aorist imperative using not ἀποστέλλω, as in 5:10, but πέμπω. This latter verb repeats the dynamics of ἀποστέλλω in expressing both imperial authority, as when emperors send or dispatch governors to Judea,³⁰ and military commands, as when a commander such as the governor of Syria Varrus (Josephus, *J. W.* 2.68, 75), the emperor Gaius (*J. W.* 2.185), the governor of Judea Felix (*J. W.* 2.260, 270), the emperor Vespasian (*J. W.* 3.446, 486; 4.57, 419, 487), and the general and later emperor Titus (*J. W.* 5.96–97, 446; 6.135–136) send or dispatch troops into battle. The demon's language places Jesus in such company, continuing to construct him as an imperial and/or military commander.

While the "demonstrative departure of the demon" is a feature of exorcism scenes, the specific request to be sent into a herd of pigs is most unusual.³¹ How might we make sense of it? Most discussions of the scene do little with the detail except to conclude (erroneously) for a setting in gentile territory.³² Eric Thurman suggests that it reenacts Pharaoh's defeat.³³ More aptly, Conway highlights a witty dimension—the "comic demise" of Rome's army—but without elaborating (as I will

³⁰ E.g., Josephus, *J. W.* 2.169 (Tiberius sent Pilate); 2.220 (Claudius sent Fadus); *Ant.* 20.137 (Claudius sent Felix); 20.182 (Nero sent Festus); 20.197 (Nero sent Albinus); 20.252 (Nero sent Florus). For sending an official or embassy, see Philo, *Flacc.* 109; *Legat.* 239, 369.

³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 74–76, 86; the technique is absent from Theissen's summary, *Miracle Stories*, 85–90. See also nn. 4–5 above.

³² E.g., Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark*, ICC (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1905), 91; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (Richmond: John Knox, 1970), 112;

³³ Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 148.

do below) the wit.³⁴ Attention to numerous imperial-military-gender dimensions of the scene provides some elaboration and offers compelling alternative explanations.

For instance, Legion's request to be sent into the pigs expresses his submission to Jesus and imminent defeat even as it seeks to maintain domination not only over land but over what the land supports and what belongs to local inhabitants (5:11–12). Along with control of the land, the demon has, with impeccable imperial logic, sought to preserve control over the land's production, particularly animals. Rome exercised such control in various ways, the most obvious of which was through payment of taxes and tribute, paid often in kind. Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller argue that every province, whether willingly or by requisition, contributed wheat to feed Rome, supplies for the army, and money-taxes for army pay.³⁵ Tacitus, for example, offers a glimpse of this control of production in noting the revolt of the Frisii, a nation beyond the Rhine, over the imposition of an annual levy of ox hides for Roman military use. Tacitus comments, "First it was their herds, next their lands, last, the persons of their wives and children, which they gave up to bondage" (Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.72).

The display and subjugation of wild and exotic animals in the arena communicated the same message of Rome's control over land and living creatures. Even the procurement of beasts for the arena demonstrated Rome's military control and subjugation of the natural world. Christopher Epplett collects epigraphic and papyrological evidence to argue that capturing and supervising wild animals for *venationes* or wild beast hunts in arenas "formed an important part of a soldier's duty."³⁶ The arena, according to Thomas Wiedemann, confronted the chaos of nature (wild beasts), people (criminals), and death (both) with "the ordered world, the cosmos; it was the place where the civilised [Roman imperial] world confronted lawless nature."³⁷ So in his poems "On the Spectacles" concerning the games that marked the opening of the Colosseum in 80 CE, Martial celebrates Rome's sovereignty over people and over the many wild beasts of the subjugated nations, sovereignty

³⁴ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 94.

³⁵ Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 95–97. E.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.71 (supplies of weapons, horses, and gold offered); *Ann.* 2.5 (horses from Gaul); Josephus, *J.W.* 2.528 (wheat seized from local farms to feed an army). See *Feeding the Roman Army: The Archaeology of Production and Supply in NW Europe*, ed. Sue Stallibrass and Richard Thomas (Oxford: Oxbow, 2008), 4–5: pig bones were prominent at many military sites and pigs were important in soldiers' diets.

³⁶ Christopher Epplett, "The Capture of Animals by the Roman Military," *GR* 48 (2001): 210–22; Roger Dunkle, "A Brief History of the Arena Hunt," in idem, *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2008), 207–44; Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas* (London: Routledge, 2006), 31–35.

³⁷ Thomas Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London: Routledge, 1992), 180.

exercised justly and mercifully by the emperor Titus (poems 23 and 31).³⁸ Three poems concern the death of a pregnant sow, “pierced” by a spear, enacting the spectacle of death and rebirth (14–16). A *bestiarius* kills a boar, a bear, a lion, and a leopard exemplifying Roman control over wild beasts (17). J. P. Sullivan comments that “over 50,000 [animals] by some accounts, often of exotic provenance fell to the weapons.”³⁹ The spectacle of subjugated animals contributed to normative Roman identity as conquerors of the world, the triumph of the civilized over the barbaric other.⁴⁰ The request of the demon Legion that Jesus “send us into the pigs,” I am suggesting, similarly enacts this imperial control over the animals and the land that sustains them.

IV

But such generic imperializing practice can contextualize, but must not divert attention from, the specific involvement of pigs. The languaging of Legion's request in terms of “enter(ing) into” (εἰσερχομαι) the pigs adds military and gender dimensions to the scene.

First, this verb, “enter into,” is commonly used to denote imperial-military scenarios of entering, occupying, and defeating an enemy space and military force in battle.⁴¹ Such “entering into” expresses military power exercised by male commanders and troops. Legion's use of the verb in Mark 5:12 constructs Jesus as a military commander authorizing an invasion. Conquest is what a legion does, on command.

³⁸I follow the numbering in “On the Spectacles,” in D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Martial: Epigrams*, vol. 1, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

³⁹J. P. Sullivan, *Martial, the Unexpected Classic: A Literary and Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7–9. Through Martial's eyes, a rhinoceros displays great power (p. 11). A “treacherous lion” is justly killed for “harming his master with his ingrate mouth, daring to violate the hands he knew so well,” the slaughtered lion embodying the potential fate of all “ingrate” subjugated people (p. 12). A tigress gains power by being “among us” (p. 21), while a bull is killed (p. 22). A suppliant elephant (p. 20) and a mercy-seeking hind (p. 33) yield directly to the emperor Titus, who presides with courage, justice, clemency, and piety over all proceedings (pp. 23, 31).

⁴⁰This perspective has affinity with the argument of Erik Gunderson, “Ideology of the Arena,” *CLAnt* 15 (1996): 113–51, arguing against Carlin A. Barton, “The Scandal of the Arena,” *Representations* 27 (1989): 1–36.

⁴¹Babylon invaded or entered into Jerusalem's sanctuary (Lam 1:10); Antiochus Epiphanes “enters into” or invades Egypt (1 Macc 1:17); Ptolemy tries to enter Jerusalem (Josephus, *J.W.* 1.55); Vespasian sends troops to enter Joppa (*J.W.* 3.417); Titus enters Taricheae (*J.W.* 3.497); Roman troops enter Jerusalem (*J.W.* 5.336). See also Judg 9:5; 18:9; 1 Sam 26:6; 30:1–2; 2 Sam 5:6–9; 10:14; 1 Kgs 12:21; 22:30; 2 Kgs 3:24; 7:4, 10, 12; 10:17, 25; Isa 20:1; 37:33; Jer 4:5; 8:14; Lam 1:10; Dan 11:9, 10, 40; 1 Macc 1:17; 12:48; 2 Macc 9:2; 11:5; Josephus, *J.W.* 1.55; 4.70, 575; *Ant.* 5.28; etc.

Yet, second, with the military language come gender and sexual dimensions. The demon's request to be sent into the pigs reads literally: "so that we might enter into them" (5:12 [my translation]: ἵνα εἰς αὐτοὺς εἰσέλθωμεν). The language of "enter into" employs, as Joel Marcus notes, though without elaboration, a sexual innuendo for sexual intercourse.⁴² While Derrett reads this innuendo in terms of bestiality,⁴³ rape seems the more appropriate category, given a conventionally close connection between language of military power, sexual violence, and imperial claims.

The sexual overtones of the verb "enter into" (along with its previously discussed military meanings) cannot be contested. Liddell and Scott define the non-prefixed verb ἔρχομαι as "sexual intercourse ... go in to her, to him" referencing Herodotus 2.11.5 and 6.68.⁴⁴ The prefixed form εἰσέρχομαι commonly references sexual intercourse in the LXX.⁴⁵ More significant, the verb εἰσέρχομαι appears in contexts of forcible sexual penetration, situations that contemporary readers would identify as "rape" in which a woman's consent is absent.⁴⁶ Forcible penetration (rape) is, of course, a long-practiced tactic of occupying armies in humiliating woman and subjugating an enemy.⁴⁷

Language of sexual violence, military actions, and imperial claims frequently intersect in constructing scenes of victory. In discussing Rome's sacking of cities, the *urbs direpta*, Adam Ziolkowski argues that central to this act of *direptio* is the loss of all control in "the soldiers' freedom to slaughter, rape, and plunder."⁴⁸ Ziolkowski's analysis brings together motifs of military action, taking property, taking life, and sexual violence, all of which are evident in this scene involving Legion's entering the pigs. Josephus mentions rape in the contexts of military campaigns (J.W. 4.560), though he denies any such activity himself (*Vita* 80, 259). The Hebrew Bible instructs warriors to "take as your booty the women, the children, the livestock" of a conquered town and "enjoy these spoils" (Deut 20:14 NRSV). Attentive only to male desires and knowing only a male gaze, it sanctions—not

⁴²Marcus, *Mark*, 345, 352 referencing J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Spirit-Possession and the Gerasene Demoniac," *Man* NS 14 (1979): 286–93, esp. 290.

⁴³Derrett, "Spirit Possession," 290.

⁴⁴LSJ, 695, s.v. ἔρχομαι, no. 7; italics original.

⁴⁵Jacob's intercourse with Leah (Gen 29:23; 30:16), Rachel (Gen 29:21, 30), Bilhah (Gen 30:3–4), Zilpah (Gen 30:9), Shua (Gen 38:2); Onan's intercourse with his brother Er's widow Tamar (Gen 38:8–9); Judah's intercourse with Tamar (Gen 38:16, 18); Samson with a prostitute (Judg 16:1); David with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:24); a brother with the wife of a husband who has died in levirate marriage (Deut 25:5).

⁴⁶Hagar (Gen 16:2, 4), Rizpah (2 Sam 3:7), and David's concubines or mistresses (2 Sam 16:21–22).

⁴⁷The classic discussion is Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 31–113.

⁴⁸Adam Ziolkowski, "Urbs Direpta, or How the Romans Sacked Cities," in *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. John Rich and Graham Shipley, Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society 5 (London: Routledge, 1993), 69–91, esp. 86; Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 112–16.

forbids—a male warrior “entering into” (εἰσελεύσῃ πρὸς αὐτήν; Deut 21:13) a foreign “beautiful” woman taken captive in battle, though after one month has passed to allow her to mourn the loss of her family (Deut 21:10–14)!⁴⁹ Her rape is appallingly re-languaged as marriage. Also from the perspective of a male gaze, the Hebrew Bible presents scenarios of cities overrun in battle as the rape of a woman.⁵⁰ Several such passages use the sexual language of “enter into” or “go into” to image military action against cities as rape (Isa 47:1–4, εἰσελθε; Lam 1:8–10, εἰσελθόντα εἰς).

Third, gender and sexual overtones pervade the request's multivalent language of Legion's desire to enter into the pigs. The term “pig” has well-established sexual associations with female genitalia. Liddell and Scott in their entry (!) on χοῖρος identify its first meaning as “pig” as a synonym for ὤς in referring to the literal animal. Their second definition does not include an English translation, employing only the Latin phrase *pudenda muliebria*. While the phrase remains untranslated and without English synonyms, they offer an explanation, “frequently in Comedy Poets who are always punning on the word and its compounds.”⁵¹ The untranslated phrase means literally “shameful womanly things” and refers to female genitalia; perhaps modesty prevents the editors from translating χοῖρος as “vulva.”

Modesty, though, does not seem to have influenced Aristophanes's use of χοῖρος. In his play *Acharnians* (lines 765–815), the main character Dicaeopolis, who opposes Athens's involvement in the Peloponnesian War with Sparta and its allies, sets up a rural market in which only Athens's enemies (Spartans, Megarians, Boiotians) might trade. A hungry Megarian brings his two young starving daughters to sell for food. Throughout the exchange with Dicaeopolis, the father refers to them as “piggies” and has them make pig noises. The movement between food and sex, animal and female genitalia through a series of double entendres directed to a (mainly?) male audience is constant. For example, lines 781–796:⁵²

⁴⁹ Carolyn Pressler, *The View of Women Found in the Deuteronomic Family Laws*, BZAW 216 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 9–15.

⁵⁰ Pamela Gordon and Harold Washington, “Rape as a Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, ed. Athalya Brenner, *Feminist Companion to the Bible* 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 308–25, identifying Lam 1–2, Micah 4:11, Jer 6:1–4 (in which the attackers “go into her”; 6:3), Jer 13:20–27 (all referring to Jerusalem); Isa 47:1–3 (Babylon); and Nahum 3:5–6 (Nineveh).

⁵¹ LSJ, 1996, s.v. χοῖρος.

⁵² Jeffrey Henderson, *Aristophanes: Acharnians, Knights*, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 153–55. Various editions note the link in this passage between χοῖρος (pig) and female genitalia. So Alan H. Sommerstein (*Acharnians* [Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1980], 194–95) notes that the term means both “young pig” and “vulva”; Henderson (*The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975]) observes that “χοῖρος, piggy, is the land animal to which the cunt is more frequently compared in double entendres; this word seems to have been a most popular slang expression.... [It] indicates the pink, hairless cunt of young girls as opposed to that of mature women” though “a pink hairless state

MEGARIAN. Is that a piggy?
 DICAEOPOLIS. It looks like a piggy now but all grown up it'll be a pussy!
 MEGARIAN. Rest assured, in five years she'll be just like her mother.
 DICAEOPOLIS. But this one isn't even suitable for sacrifice.
 MEGARIAN. Indeed? In what way unsuitable for sacrifice?
 DICAEOPOLIS. It's got no tail! [glossed as, "Also a slang term for penis"]
 MEGARIAN. She's still young but when she's grown to sowhood she'll get a big fat pink one....
 DICAEOPOLIS, *looking at the other girl*. Why, this one's pussy is the twin of the other one's!
 MEGARIAN. Sure, she's got the same mother and father. If she fills out and gets downy with hair, she'll be a very fine piggy to sacrifice to Aphrodite [glossed as "Goddess of sexual enjoyment"].... What's more, the meat of these piggies is absolutely delicious when it's skewered on a spit.⁵³

This exchange in *Acharnians* is but one example of the double entendre involving "pig" as a euphemism for "female genitalia" in Aristophanes and in other examples from Old Comedy.⁵⁴ Aristophanes's use of "obscene language" is extensive, as Henderson's 115-page cataloging of words for male and female sexual organs, intercourse, and scatological humor demonstrates.⁵⁵ Within this range, Henderson notes that "animals ... often symbolize strong and unrestrained passion" and commonly "indicate the genitalia of both sexes." The penis is imaged by a horse, a ram, a bull, and a dog, while female genitalia are imaged by a pig, a dog, a bull, and perhaps a horse. The link between genitalia and animal is made, he argues, because generally "these metaphors emphasize the power and passion of animals rather than their physical resemblance to the organs themselves," though he recognizes "some degree of physical comparison" in some of the metaphors "as in the case of 'piggy' which emphasizes the warm, pink hairless member of a young girl" or of an older physically mature but depilated female.⁵⁶

could, however, also be achieved even for grown-up cunts by depilation" (p. 131). The term is used for depilated slave girls; a derivative *χοιροπῶλαι* refers to prostitutes, while a man using prostitutes is a *χοιρόθλιψ*, which Henderson translates as "piggy-squeezer" (p. 132). Compare the translation of Michael Ewans, which uses "pussy" not "piggies" (*Aristophanes: Acharnians, Knights, and Peace* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012]). Ewans explains that "Aristophanes embarks on an extended sequence of puns (Greek *choiros* = both 'pig' and 'cunt').... I believe the only effective choice in English is to change the animal" (p. 69). For analysis of the scene, see Kenneth James Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 63–65.

⁵³The spit refers to a male penis, and meat being eaten refers to female genitalia; so Henderson, *Maculate Muse*, 123, 144.

⁵⁴E.g., Aristophanes, *Thesm.* 538: "Singe the hair off this woman's pussy; that'll teach her never again to badmouth her fellow women."

⁵⁵Henderson, *Maculate Muse*, 108–222.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 48, 131.

Henderson notes that Aristophanes did not invent the association between "pig" and female genitalia but employs popular slang.⁵⁷ And certainly the association continued for centuries long after Aristophanes, including through the performance of his plays.⁵⁸ James Adams notes in his study of Latin sexual vocabulary that the term *porcus* ("pig") is "a nursery word used by women, especially nurses, of the pudenda of girls," listing Varro, *Rust.* 2.4.10.⁵⁹

I have argued that Legion's double request, "Send us into the pigs so that we might enter into them" (Mark 5:12 [my translation]) employs multivalent language embracing imperial, military, gender, and sexual dimensions. The request seeks to maintain imperial control over land and its production. The verb "enter into" denotes military violence and occupation, as well as sexual intercourse, particularly the weapon of war, rape. The noun *pig* denotes both literal animals and female genitalia. The request to enter the pigs made by the demon Legion draws together these various dimensions of gendered, imperial, military violence.

V

But to what end? Identifying this mix is quite predictable once we identify the cluster of imperial context and military language that pervades the scene. Yet there is a witty surprise involving the pigs. A further link between pigs and empire, I suggest, stages Jesus as a masculine military commander and Rome's conquered army as unmanned, womanly, boarish and/or piggy.

Some commentators have noted that one of the emblems of a Roman legion, the Tenth Fretensis legion, was the boar. Given that wild boars were one of the animals used in the arena to attack human victims, the boar probably symbolized ferocity and lethal attack,⁶⁰ along of course with male power and aggression. The Tenth Fretensis legion played a leading role in the capture of besieged Jerusalem in 70 and occupied the city after the war, when Mark was written (Josephus, *J.W.* 3.8, 64–65; 5.69–70, 135; 7.5, 17).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁸ Sommerstein (*Acharnians*, 16–17, 28–29) indicates that Aristophanes's plays, along with other representatives of Old Comedy such as Cratrinus and Eupolis, were well known through "the first three centuries of the Christian era." The late-first-century CE authors Horace (*Sat.* 1.4.1) and Quintilian (10.1.65–66) mention Aristophanes.

⁵⁹ James N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 82. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (ed. P. G. W. Glare [Oxford: Clarendon, 1977], 1405) similarly shares Liddell and Scott's preference for circumlocution, listing three meanings for *porcus* and providing English definitions for the first and third. For the second, they quote Varro in Latin without any English explanation or translation.

⁶⁰ Dunkle, *Gladiators*, 84–85, 225, 238, 242.

The demon Legion's entering into the pigs allies demons and pigs. They become one. If the pigs evoke the emblem of the Tenth legion, the link between demons and Roman power established by naming the demon as Legion in 5:9 continues as the demon enters the pig.

This link, of course, is not neutral. Most obviously, it constructs Roman power as demonic; the legion is controlled by Legion. Further, it evokes the depiction of Rome's out-of-control and (self-)destructive power in 5:2–8 in the unman's behavior. And it subjects the demonic power Legion to the command of the commander Jesus. Moreover, and with considerable wit, Legion entering into pigs crosses genders. If the pigs are read as boars (masculine, τοὺς χοίρους), the emblem of the Tenth legion, Legion "enters into" or penetrates other males, shaming Rome's finest fighting force, the boarish and now unmanned/effeminate, and dominated Tenth legion.⁶¹ If, with the Tenth legion's emblem in mind, the pigs are read in terms of female genitalia, Legion "enters into" or penetrates females, an act that frames Rome's military might, the piggy Tenth legion, as womanly. The multivalent language requires no decision between the options. Either way, this fantasy scene cross-genders Rome and its military might, mocked and shamed by male humor that trades in imperial-military, gendered, and sexual innuendo.

Military and gender language, therefore, frames this exorcistic exchange in vv. 9–13, presenting the scene in masculine terms and military perspective. Jesus emerges as a military commander dispatching and commanding⁶² the subordinate demon Legion into the pigs. The demons "enter into" the herd of some two thousand pigs (the strength of less than half a legion⁶³) and "ride" them (another sexual image⁶⁴) into the sea as into battle (5:13b). The verb "rushed" (δρμάω) is commonly associated with military action and troops rushing into battle.⁶⁵ And, as other commentators have noted, the drowning evokes Pharaoh's armies similarly destroyed in the sea (Exod 15:1–21), layering Egyptian and Roman forces.⁶⁶ Demons and pigs, Legion and the Tenth legion, are united in the destruction they bring upon themselves, depicting Rome's military power as self-destructive. Jesus's military victory is emphasized in that not only is the demon "dispatched out of the country" contrary to its wishes but, in entering the pigs as it requests, it disappears into the sea, over which—including its stormy demons—Jesus has demonstrated his

⁶¹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 17–19, 112–16, esp. 114, 137–76.

⁶² The verb ἐπιτρέπω, usually translated in v. 13 "so he gave them permission," is better rendered as "so he commanded them" (Esth 9:14; 1 Clem. 1.3).

⁶³ Varro (*Rust.* 2.4.22) says that 150 sows constitute a large herd.

⁶⁴ Henderson, *Maculate Muse*, 155, 165.

⁶⁵ Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.8.25; Thucydides 7.34.4 (a naval battle); 2 Macc 12:32; and very commonly in Josephus, *Ant* 12.270, etc.; *J.W.* 1.23, 32, 39, 62; 2.296, 345; 3.9, 61, 111; 4.518, etc.

⁶⁶ Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men," 148. Henderson (*Maculate Muse*, 166) notes that nautical terminology (sailing, oars, swimming, and so on) is common for intercourse. Drowning is the ultimate negation.

command in the preceding scene (4:35–41). The manly Jesus has accomplished a military victory.⁶⁷

Such a fantasy of destruction of course co-opts and reinscribes imperial values of overwhelming power and destruction of the enemy. The scene constructs Jesus as the victorious military commander, his now-enhanced hegemonic masculinity imitative of, yet established at the expense of, unmanned boarish/piggy Rome. Any victory celebration, though, would be precipitous. The empire always strikes back. Ten chapters later, in crucifixion, as an “emasculated victim,” Jesus will be defeated, weak, womanly.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 94.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 100–106.

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