

How to Save Western Civilization (for Men): White Supremacy and the New *Kyrieia*

In late 2015, Daryush “Roosh V” Valizadeh – a pickup artist-turned-reactionary theorist of masculinity – published a blog post on his personal website with the title “Women Must Have Their Behavior and Decisions Controlled By Men.” In that post he argues that, because men are more rational and less emotional than women, men necessarily have better decision-making skills. He writes, “I propose two different options for protecting women from their obviously deficient decision making. The first is to have a designated male guardian give approval on all decisions that affect her well-being. Such a guardian should be her father by default, but in the case a father is absent, another male relative can be appointed... Once the woman is married, her husband will gradually take over guardian duties, and strictly monitor his wife’s behavior...” He concludes, “Unless we take action soon to reconsider the freedoms that women now have, the very survival of Western civilization is at stake.” Valizadeh justifies his solution historically: “For the bulk of human history, their behavior was significantly controlled or subject to approval through mechanisms of tribe, family, church, law, or stiff cultural precepts.” As he suggests, his idea is a very old one, with striking similarities to the Athenian custom of *kyrieia* and Roman *tutela*.

Although controversial for its time, in the two and a half years since its publication this argument has gained widespread acceptance in far-right internet circles, particularly in the so-called “alt-right” and “manosphere.” Many writers for these sites argue that the health of our civilization depends upon enacting a sexual politics that they call either “White Sharia” or simply “patriarchy,” but which closely resembles the sexual politics and marriage laws of classical Athens and Rome under the late Republic and early Empire.

In this paper, I will explore the appropriation of ancient sexual politics at the intersection

of online white supremacy and online misogyny on popular far-right websites such as *Return of Kings* and *The Daily Stormer* and blogs such as *Chateau Heartiste* and *Vox Popoli*. The famous “fourteen words” that neo-Nazis have adopted as their slogan – “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children” – necessarily require control over white female reproduction, so the white supremacist and antifeminist ideologies are closely entwined. And both communities use ancient literature to justify the idea that it is natural and right for men to have total control over female behavior.

Writers for these websites elide the immense differences between our society and classical antiquity to attempt to prove the incontestable value of patriarchy and white supremacy – and to argue for the reinstatement of those oppressive systems of power today. Their analyses of ancient texts such as Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* are often shallow and misleading, but in fact, such articles should not be read as “analyses” at all. Their interpretations of the Classics should be approached not as readings of the ancient world, but rather as aspirational representations of the world that they wish we inhabited. White supremacists online idealize a model for gendered behavior that erases much of the social progress we have achieved in the last two thousand years, and they use ancient literature to justify their reactionary ideas.

Bibliography

Valizadeh, R. (2015) “Women Must Have Their Behavior and Decisions Controlled By Men.”

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