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Heroes Don't Cry  
Physical Pain and Moral Anguish in Greek and Roman Art

Like most elemental concepts in human life, pain is a cultural construct. As such, it has been variously interpreted in art. This paper proposes to look at images of pain in Greek and Roman antiquity, including late antiquity and early Christian art. How did ancient Greeks and Romans view and interpret pain? Throughout almost 1000 years, classical aesthetics of restraint and balance had limited the expression of graphic, explicit emotionalism to specific categories of subject-matter, such as representations of the defeated enemy and ambivalent mythological heroes such as Laocoön or Marsyas. Expression of pain was thus tied to a particular typological imagery, which continued to dominate both public and private monuments in the Roman Empire. Did this approach change once classical tradition started to lose its hold on visual arts in late antiquity? After all, 'moral anguish' – separating physical and mental pain – has been proposed as one of its manifest expressions in art (Bianchi-Bandinelli). We would expect to see an equivalent to Edward Munch's *Skrik*, but there is nothing similar, no Crucifixion and no Passion; early Christian art continues to "deny" the beholder his/her share of *miseratio*, and this despite the fact that the Church was being built on the tortured flesh and scattered bones of martyrs dying in the arena.