

# MYTHO-HISTORICAL HEROES: The Raglan Archetype in Application to Ancient Mediterranean Persons

Kamil Gregor and Chris M. Hansen<sup>1</sup>

## *Introduction*

In 1934, Lord FitzRoy Somerset, Baron of Raglan (henceforth, “Raglan”) published a list of 22 attributes which appear cross-culturally in narratives about lives of mythological and folklore heroes.<sup>2</sup> Since then a plethora of studies have been published utilizing this narrative “archetype” to describe mythologization of various figures, both historical and fictional. Raglan’s approach, as well as specific conclusions, have been criticized and to a large extent abandoned.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the Raglan archetype in no small part due to the works of Richard Carrier, who uses it to estimate a Bayesian prior probability of Jesus’ existence.<sup>4</sup> Carrier assembles a sample of ancient Mediterranean figures who, in his estimation, score more than half (i.e., at least 12) of the “points” out of a modified version of the Raglan’s list of 22 narrative attributes (henceforth “Raglan heroes”)<sup>5</sup> and observes that all the Raglan heroes in this sample are fictional. He then examines two historical candidates (Alexander the Great and Mithridates VI Eupator, king of Pontus) and concludes that they both fail to score at least 12 points and therefore fail to qualify as Raglan heroes. Since Carrier’s sample of Raglan heroes only includes fictional persons and no historical Raglan hero can apparently be found, Carrier treats being a Raglan hero as a strong indicator of mythicism. In Carrier’s estimation, Jesus scores as high as 20 points based on the Gospel of Matthew and can be given the additional two points based on later traditions. From this, Carrier estimates that the prior probability of Jesus’ existence is low.<sup>6</sup>

Crucially, Carrier claims that there are *no* examples of ancient Mediterranean persons who score over 12 points and who existed in history.<sup>7</sup> We have found 33. This article compiles our findings and discusses a number of considerations pertinent to the application of the Raglan archetype to specific persons, both fictional and historical. When historical persons are scored consistently with how Raglan and Carrier score their fictional heroes, even a relatively non-exhaustive survey of ancient Mediterranean literature, particularly of biographies and biographical

---

<sup>1</sup> Kamil Gregor is a PhD Classics student at Charles University in the Czech Republic. Chris Hansen is an MA English student at the University of Nebraska–Kearney in the USA.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Raglan, “The Hero of Tradition,” *Folklore* 45 (1934), 212–31. For this article, we largely rely on Raglan, “The Hero,” in Rober A. Segal (ed.), *In Quest of the Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 137–47. See also, Lord Raglan, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* (New York: Dover, 2003 [reprint]), 175–85.

<sup>3</sup> See extensive discussion in Christopher M. Hansen, “Lord Raglan’s Hero and Jesus: A Rebuttal to Methodologically Dubious Uses of the Raglan Archetype,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 16 (2020): 129–49.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 229–34. An accessible primer on Bayesian reasoning and its applicability to the study of ancient history is Richard Carrier, *Proving History: Bayes’s Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Note that according to Raglan, it is only sufficient for a hero to score “six or seven” points to conclude that the archetype is present. Raglan, “The Hero,” 147.

<sup>6</sup> Note that in a situation like this, subsequent examination of evidence can still overturn this preliminary conclusion if the evidence weighs sufficiently strongly in favor of the hypothesis with a low prior probability. Carrier, however, claims that the evidence actually makes Jesus’ historical existence *even less* probable, not more. Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 596–618.

<sup>7</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 231; Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 144, 146–48.

material in historiographical works, produces *no shortage* of historical Raglan heroes. In light of our findings, the usage of the Raglan archetype as an indicator of hero's mythicism appears dubious.

### *Brief Literature Review*

There is a large volume of literature on the Raglan archetype and its application to both historical and fictional figures. For instance, modern heroes in American folklore and beyond regularly score at least 12 points, a phenomenon pointed out already by Alan Dundes in his own analysis of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Modern figures in Europe and elsewhere have likewise often been found to fit the Raglan archetype in some regard.<sup>9</sup> Studies of early medieval cultures and folklore (as well as fiction based on ancient figures) have shown both historical and fictional figures fitting the Raglan archetype quite well,<sup>10</sup> though with some notable exceptions.<sup>11</sup> Ancient Chinese rulers and teachers notably fit the archetype extremely well.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Francis Lee Utley, *Lincoln Wasn't There or Lord Raglan's Hero* (CEA Chap Book; Washington, DC: College English Association, 1965). Note some have responded that Utley's text is satirical (and it is) and this somehow renders it unusable. To the contrary, the point of the satire is that (in fact) it works for making Lincoln fit the Raglan's list of attributes and that he actually does; the satire is in the implications of Lincoln fitting and Raglan's previous opinion that those who fit the Raglan archetype are ahistorical. Essentially, this satire focuses on Raglan's conclusions. That Abraham Lincoln fits the archetype is utilized to show the absurdity of the conclusions, not the absurdity of Lincoln fitting. Thus, several folklorists (such as Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend," in Wayland D. Hand [ed.], *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971], 21–36 at 28) specifically cite Utley on this and actually *do* utilize Utley's work as we do. In addition to Utley, see Maria N. Todorova, *Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria's National Hero* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 192–93; Alfred Alder, "Billy the Kid: A Case Study in Epic Origins," *Western Folklore* 10, no. 2 (1951): 143–52; Michael Wallis, *Billy the Kid: The Endless Ride* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); Faye Milligan, "Long Live the King: The Elvis Presley Myth," *Mentalities* 10, no. 1 (1995): 1–20; Brian W. Dippe, *Custer's Last Stand: The Anatomy of an American Myth* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1994), 173; Bruce A. Rosenberg, *Custer and the Epic of Defeat* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), 277–80; Guido van Rijn, *Kennedy's Blues: African-American Blues and Gospel Songs on JFK* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 11–17.

<sup>9</sup> Todorova, *Bones of Contention*, 192–93; Daphna Golan, "The Life Story of King Shaka and Gender Tensions in the Zulu State," *History in Africa* 17 (1990): 95–111.

<sup>10</sup> Mehmet Yılmaz, "Battal-Nâme, Sasonlu Tavit Ve Digenis Akritas Destanlarındaki Kahramanların Lord Raglan'ın Geleneksel Kahraman Kalıbına Göre Değerlendirilmesi," *Folklor* 67 (2011): 89–104; Sibel Turhan, "Lord Raglan'ın 'Geleneksel Kahraman Kalıbı' Ndan Hareketle 'Maaday Kara' Destanında Eski Türk Kültüründen İzler," *Folklor Akademi Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2018): 207–19; Stuart H. Blackburn, "The Folk Hero and Class Interests in Tamil Heroic Ballads," *Asian Folklore Studies* 37, no. 1 (1978): 131–49; Korpong Namwat, Warawat Sriyabhaya, Santi Pakdeekam, and Boonyong Ketthet, "A Life Structure of Hero 'Genghis Khan' in Culture from Intertextuality in the 'Genghis Khan' Novel by Contemporary Thai Novelists," *Journal of MCU Humanities Review* 6, no. 2 (2020): 19–35; Heda Jason, "Sīrat 'Antar' as an Oral Epic," *Oriente Moderno* 82, no. 2 (2003): 399–406; Erhan Aktaş, "Lord Raglan'ın Kahraman Kalıbı ve Alp Han Orba," *Siberian Studies* 2, no. 4 (2014): 13–30. Perhaps one of the most entertaining modern examples of a fictional character fitting the Raglan archetype is Thrall from the *WarCraft* video game series, see A. Asbjorn Jon, "Green Jesus of Azeroth: Hero Myths and Fan Based Perceptions of Similarities Between Jesus of Nazareth and the World of Warcraft's 'Thrall'," *Cultural Analysis* 15, no. 2 (2017): 82–106.

<sup>11</sup> The Prophet Muhammad notably does not score that high, see Somaya Abdullah, "The Prophet as a Hero – Myth or Reality? A Comparative Survey of Ibn Ishaq's Biography of the Prophet (Sirah) and the Myth of the Hero," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 23 (2003): 36–56.

<sup>12</sup> Olivia Milburn, "History and Fiction: Tales of the Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn Period from c. 300 BC to AD 220," PhD Diss. (London: University of London, 2003), 185–86 and "The Wicked Queen: Portraying Lady Bao Si in Imperial Era Literature," *Korea Journal of Chinese Language and Literature* 3 (2013): 1–25; Robert G. Hendricks, "The Hero Pattern and the Life of Confucius," *Journal of Chinese Studies* 1 (1984): 241–60.

Historical Raglan heroes appearing commonly outside Mediterranean antiquity do not necessarily pose a challenge to Carrier's conclusions because prior probability estimates are sensitive to cultural context. It is entirely appropriate for Carrier to limit the scope of his sample to only include ancient Mediterranean persons.<sup>13</sup> Even within this framework, however, historical Raglan heroes have been discovered. In a recent article, Hansen has demonstrated that Apollonius of Tyana scores at least 12 points.<sup>14</sup> Carrier has not responded even though he appears to be aware of this article.<sup>15</sup> In his most recent publication, he exhibits a tendency to de-emphasize the importance of this archetype as an indicator of mythicism to the advantage of other narrative attributes,<sup>16</sup> which we address below.

Notably, scoring of Jesus is a matter of controversy, much more so than in the case of other figures.<sup>17</sup> Raglan himself did not offer a scoring of Jesus. The first scholar to do so was Dundes, who granted him 17 points out of 22.<sup>18</sup> Other scholars offered scores as low as four.<sup>19</sup> Richard Horsley, using a large number of sources including infancy gospels, awards Jesus "17+" points. On the basis of only the canonical gospels, Horsley scores Jesus around ten points in total.<sup>20</sup> Robert M. Price scored Jesus at 19,<sup>21</sup> while Carrier has scored Jesus at 14 based on the Gospel of Mark and 20 based on the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>22</sup> Daniel N. Gullotta awards Jesus at between four and five points using Paul's letters, seven to eight using Mark, and eight to nine using Matthew.<sup>23</sup> Hansen awards Jesus 11 points on the basis of Matthew, six points on the basis of Mark, nine on

---

<sup>13</sup> Carrier, *Proving History*, 245. He nevertheless frequently draws comparisons between Jesus and various persons from outside the Mediterranean Antiquity, most frequently king Arthur, Haile Selassie, angel Moroni, Muhammad and other early Islamic figures, Ned Ludd, and various figures from Pacific Cargo Cults (Prince Philip, John Frum, John Navy). Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, pp. 8–11, 18–20, 158–60, 222, 237, 249–50, 350–52, 388, 436, 507.

<sup>14</sup> Hansen, "Lord Raglan's Hero and Jesus," 141.

<sup>15</sup> Carrier is aware that David Koresh has been proposed as an example of a historical Raglan hero. Richard Carrier, "Jesus and the Problem of the Fraudulent Reference Class," *Richard Carrier Blogs* (2023) <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/18711>. However, this has only been done so by Hansen in the same article which scores Apollonius.

<sup>16</sup> Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 144–48.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus is far from being the only person to receive varying scores. Adrienne Mayor, *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithradates, Rome's Deadliest Enemy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 371–73 scores Mithridates all 22 points while Carrier scores Mithridates exceptionally low (*On the Historicity of Jesus*, 231–32n193). Varying scores have likewise been given for General Custer, Alexander the Great, and various other figures (whom Carrier has a tendency to downscore, see *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 231, cf. Raglan, "The Hero," 139–47).

<sup>18</sup> Alan Dundes, "The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus," in *Protocol of the 25th Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Cultures* (Berkeley: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Cultures, 1977), 1–32. For further elaborations on the Raglan archetype by Dundes, see *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 223–61 and *Analytic Essays in Folklore* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 151–62.

<sup>19</sup> David Marshall, *Jesus is no Myth! The Fingerprints of God on the Gospels* (Seattle: Kuai Mu, 2016), 28–41; Stephen Bedard, "The Historical Jesus and the Raglan Scale," *Stephen J. Bedard* (2013), <http://www.stephenjbedard.com/2013/05/06/the-historical-jesus-and-the-raglan-scale/>.

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 163.

<sup>21</sup> Robert M. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2000), 259. See also Robert M. Price, "Does the Christ Myth Theory Require an Early Date for the Pauline Epistles?" in Thomas L. Thompson and Thomas S. Verenna (eds.), *'Is This Not the Carpenter?': The Question of the Historicity of the Figure of Jesus* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 95–116 at 109–10 and *idem*, "Jesus at the Vanishing Point," in James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (eds.), *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2009), 55–83 at 77–78.

<sup>22</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 232; Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 145–46.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel N. Gullotta, "On Richard Carrier's Doubts: A Response to Richard Carrier's 'On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt'," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 15 (2017), 310–46 at 343.

the basis of Luke, eight on the basis of John, and five on the basis of the Pauline epistles.<sup>24</sup> This demonstrates a persistent issue of subjectivity in scoring, stemming from, among other factors, considerable vagueness inherent to Raglan's definitions of many of the archetype's narrative attributes and their inconsistent application to figures he scored.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, scholars often variously reword Raglan's attributes so that Jesus scores higher. While this is not inherently problematic, comparing Jesus to other figures becomes flawed unless their scoring is revised to reflect the adjusted wording.

### *Method of Scoring*

Raglan's original research includes his own scoring of 21 persons, mostly from Greek<sup>26</sup> and Roman<sup>27</sup> mythology, but also from the Hebrew Bible,<sup>28</sup> European Medieval mythology and folklore<sup>29</sup> and non-European mythology.<sup>30</sup> Raglan gives these figures varying numbers of points out of his list of 22 narrative attributes, ranging from a nearly-perfect score of 21 out of 22 in the case of Oedipus to nine in the case of Elijah. Crucially, Raglan does not strictly adhere to how the narrative attributes are worded in his list when he scores individual figures. For example, his attribute number 6 is worded as "at birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him."<sup>31</sup> Heroes such as Oedipus or Perseus score this point unambiguously. However, Raglan gives the point even to Joseph on account of the plot of his brothers to kill him, despite Joseph being 17 years old(!).<sup>32</sup> Scholars, unaware of this mismatch between how the attributes are worded and how they are then applied to individual heroes, might score other persons based on the strict wording of the Raglan's list and therefore give this point only to persons with an *infanticide* attempt and not to persons whose lives are attempted on at any point during their early life. Needless to say, when the temporal scope of this attribute is expanded to reflect Raglan's scoring practices, the number of historical persons who gain the point, and therefore come closer to scoring at least 12 points and qualifying as Raglan heroes, is greatly expanded. For example, Aratus of Sicyon was hunted during civil unrest that claimed the life of his father (Plutarch, *Aratus* 2), enemies of Pyrrhus I of Epirus sought to kill him after his father had been exiled (Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 2), Tiberius and his family were on the run during the civil wars and narrowly escaped death (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 6), and Claudius' wife sent assassins to kill Nero (Suetonius, *Nero* 6). In all these cases, this did not happen "at birth" but during the hero's childhood—Aratus was seven years old, Pyrrhus was two, Tiberius was still being breastfed, and Nero was not much older than four.

---

<sup>24</sup> Hansen, "Lord Raglan's Hero and Jesus," 144–45. We might contend that Hansen was particularly too strict on occasion, however.

<sup>25</sup> Morton Smith, "Response," in *Protocol of the 25th Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Cultures* (Berkeley: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Cultures, 1977), 62–63 and Mary P. Coote, "Response," in *Protocol of the 25th Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California and Graduate Theological Union, 1977), 42–44.

<sup>26</sup> Apollo, Asclepius, Bellerophon, Dionysus, Heracles, Jason, Oedipus, Pelops, Perseus, Theseus, Zeus.

<sup>27</sup> Romulus.

<sup>28</sup> Elijah, Joseph son of Jacob, Moses.

<sup>29</sup> King Arthur, Welsh hero Llew Llawgyffes, Robin Hood, Siegfried.

<sup>30</sup> Sudanese hero Nyikang, Indonesian hero Watu Gunung.

<sup>31</sup> Raglan, "Hero," 138. Emphasis ours.

<sup>32</sup> Genesis 37; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 2.17–34.

Carrier largely adopts Raglan's scoring of 13 ancient Mediterranean figures<sup>33</sup> and adds his own scoring of Osiris based on Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*.<sup>34</sup> He claims that he overviewed relevant primary sources for figures scored by Raglan, found his scoring too strained on multiple occasions and thus chose to subtract points from several heroes.<sup>35</sup> Oddly, he claims he can no longer recall which specific points he subtracted and even appears to be confused about which heroes he subtracted points from.<sup>36</sup> Apart from these subtractions, he states that he gives the heroes the same points as Raglan.<sup>37</sup> Carrier modifies the wording of some of the 22 narrative attributes so that Jesus scores a higher point total. For example, he rewords the attribute number 6 (cited above) to "an attempt is made to kill him *when he is a baby*"<sup>38</sup> so that Jesus scores this point on account of Herod's slaughter of children around Bethlehem. Carrier then scores Alexander and Mithridates using his modified list of attributes and reports that they both get only ten points.

Even though Carrier explicitly states that he modified the wording of the attributes so that they "match the actual myths that include them,"<sup>39</sup> his modifications decidedly *do not* remove the considerable discrepancies between how the attributes are worded and how points are then given by Raglan. For example, he modifies the wording of the attribute number 6 from "at birth" to "as a baby" but still adopts Raglan's scoring of Joseph who is only assaulted by his brothers when he is 17 years old. Moreover, Carrier inconsistently refuses to give the same point to Mithridates on the basis of assassination attempts by his guardians<sup>40</sup> because these do not take place "at birth."<sup>41</sup> Only recently, Carrier has acknowledged this inconsistency after it was brought to his attention and agreed that the wording of the attribute should be modified *again* to actually match how Raglan and himself scored Joseph.<sup>42</sup>

There are *numerous* other instances of incongruity between how the narrative attributes are worded by either Raglan or Carrier and how individual heroes are then scored. Before we engage in scoring of historical candidates, it is necessary to overview these incongruities and clarify the rest of the attributes to make them as consistent with the actual scoring practices of Carrier and Raglan as possible.<sup>43</sup> The clarified attributes are as follows:<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Asclepius, Bellerophon, Dionysus, Heracles, Jason, Joseph, Moses, Oedipus, Pelops, Perseus, Romulus, Theseus, Zeus.

<sup>34</sup> Carrier only gives point totals in his academic work, but he has since published a detailed description of Osiris' scoring. Richard Carrier, "My Rank-Raglan Scoring for Osiris," *Richard Carrier Blogs* (2023), <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/23816>.

<sup>35</sup> He subtracts two points from Bellerophon and one point from Jason, Perseus and Theseus. Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 230–31; Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 146.

<sup>36</sup> In one of his blog posts, he claims that he subtracted a point from Oedipus but this is not the case. Carrier, "My Rank-Raglan Scoring for Osiris," contra Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 231, and Raglan, "The Hero," 139. As such, Carrier's scores are, at present, of dubious reliability.

<sup>37</sup> Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 146.

<sup>38</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 229. Emphasis ours.

<sup>39</sup> Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 144.

<sup>40</sup> Justin, *Epitome Historiarum Trogi Pompeii* (henceforth *Epitome*) 37.2.

<sup>41</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 232.

<sup>42</sup> Comments on Carrier, "My Rank-Raglan Scoring for Osiris."

<sup>43</sup> In order to best capture these scoring practices, we consider Raglan's scoring of all heroes, even those not used by Carrier. We also tried to the best of our ability to collect and consider Carrier's various comments on scoring scattered throughout his online publications.

<sup>44</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all citations of Raglan and Carrier in the rest of this section are from Raglan, "The Hero," 138–47, and Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 229–34. In line with Raglan and Carrier, we use male pronouns in this list, although Raglan heroes are of course not limited to males. We use the numbering of the attributes as found in Raglan, "Hero," 138. Carrier re-orders the list, which introduces potential confusion.

(1) *Hero's mother is a virgin, royalty or otherwise of high status.* Raglan formulates this attribute as “a royal virgin” but mother’s virginity is of no practical consequence as it is almost never acknowledged in ancient sources and Raglan sometimes ignores it entirely.<sup>45</sup> We keep virginity in a disjunction with the rest of the definition so that Jesus does not lose this point. Raglan’s and Carrier’s conceptualization of “royalty,” appearing in this and several other attributes, is so broad that it encompasses people of high social status in general. For example, Raglan gives point number 12 worded as “he marries a princess” to Joseph and Moses because Joseph is “married to a lady of high rank” and Moses marries a daughter of a priest. Carrier does not dispute this. These clarifications apply to other attributes featuring royalty and ruling as well (numbers 2, 6, 10, 12–17, 20). As such, a woman merely needs to be descended of a high social station, not of literal royalty or be a literal virgin.

(2) *His father is a king or a heir of the king.* Carrier’s addition of “or a heir of a king” to Raglan’s original wording allows Jesus to gain this point on account of Joseph being a distant descendent of king David.<sup>46</sup> This means that putative fathers are treated as equivalent to biological fathers. The same clarifications apply to other attributes featuring parenthood (numbers 3, 5, 20). In this case, additionally, the distance of one’s relationship to royalty is irrelevant. Joseph being numerous generations removed and having no legal claims to rule is of no relevance to being an “heir,” and this would then similarly apply elsewhere.

(3) *His parents are (distant) relatives.* Raglan and Carrier give this point to Oedipus because both Laius and Jocasta are descended from Cadmus. Similarly, Carrier claims that Jesus scores this point in later traditions which portray Mary as descended from David.<sup>47</sup> This means that even relatively distant kinship counts. Carrier inconsistently refuses to give the point to Mithridates and claims that “there is no actual evidence his parents were related” even though they are in fact more closely related than the parents of Oedipus, who is given this point by Raglan and Carrier.<sup>48</sup>

(4) *The circumstances of his conception are unusual.* Raglan’s application is not limited to mechanics of conception but also includes prodigious dreams in the case of Watu Gunung. Carrier points out that in the case of Osiris, there is ambiguity as to whether a “magic curse” is placed on Osiris’ mother upon or relevantly soon after (and because of) his conception.<sup>49</sup> This is similar to how in the Gospel of Matthew, the angelic visit of Joseph and the appearance of the star take place only after Jesus’ conception. As a result, signs post-conception count for this point as with Jesus, Watu Gunung, and Osiris.

(5) *He is reputed to be a son of a god.* Carrier and Raglan give this point to Moses on account of being “reputed to be the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”<sup>50</sup> This means that indirect divine

---

<sup>45</sup> For example, Aaron is Moses’ older brother. This presumably means that Raglan gives this point to Moses merely because his mother is of high status and not because she is a virgin. Carrier changes the wording of this attribute to “the hero’s mother is a virgin” but fails to subtract the point from Moses.

<sup>46</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 232.

<sup>47</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 233–34.

<sup>48</sup> Mithridates’ mother Laodice VI was his father’s aunt. Likewise, Moses’ mother Jochebed is his father’s aunt. Additionally, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Mithridates’ maternal grandfather, and Antiochus, Mithridates’ paternal great-grandfather, were brothers. In comparison, Cadmus is only Oedipus’ paternal great-great-grandfather and maternal great-great-great-grandfather making them distant cousins. The problem is only exacerbated by Carrier’s citation of Joseph and Mary in late tradition.

<sup>49</sup> Carrier, “My Rank-Raglan Scoring for Osiris.”

<sup>50</sup> But not to Jason whose maternal great-grandfather was either Hermes or Dionysus, depending on the identity of Jason’s mother, although this might have been Raglan’s oversight.

ancestry counts. On the same grounds, deified human rulers are treated as equivalent to gods (as Moses' divine ancestry stems from Pharaoh).

(6) *Before he becomes ruler, an attempt is made to kill him, or there is a concern about it.* Raglan's original wording is "at birth," which Carrier rewords to "as a baby" because of Jesus. Extending this to "before he becomes ruler" brings it in line with Raglan's and Carrier's scoring of Joseph, as noted above. Raglan gives this point to Theseus even though no actual attempt on Theseus' life is made. King Aegeus merely has pregnant Aethra stay in Troezen because he is concerned that if Theseus was born and raised in Athens, the sons of Pallas might have possibly plotted against him at some point.<sup>51</sup> Raglan also gives the point to Watu Gunung merely because he "incurs his mother's wrath." Notably, in Jesus' case he is described as a "child" when the wisemen come, prior to the threats against him by Herod.<sup>52</sup> Thus, infancy is not strictly required even under Carrier's usage.

(7) *He is spirited away, saved from death or flees.* Contrary to the original laconic wording of "he is spirited away," Raglan gives this point to Watu Gunung because he "flees into the woods" and to Dionysus and Joseph because they are saved from death.

(8) *He is reared by a foster parent or at a distance.* Since Jesus, Moses, Perseus, and Theseus gain the point, only one foster parent is sufficient. Asclepius and Romulus score it on account of being raised "at a distance" as opposed to "a far country," which is Raglan's original wording. Notably, Romulus is raised at the Palatine Hill and educated in Gabii, both locations being less than thirteen miles away from his birthplace of Alba Longa. Because Moses is also given the point by Raglan and Carrier, it is sufficient for a hero to be reared *either* by (one) foster parent *or* at a distance, as opposed to meeting both criteria. Raglan and Carrier inexplicably give the point to Joseph because he is "reared in Egypt," even though he is merely sold as a slave to Potiphar when he is already 17 or older.

(9) *We are told almost nothing of his childhood.* Raglan and Carrier give this point to Moses even though relatively extensive accounts of his childhood are found in ancient sources.<sup>53</sup> Carrier gives this point to Jesus even though some childhood details are provided in the Gospel of Matthew, one of the two sources Carrier uses.<sup>54</sup>

(10) *He returns or goes to his future kingdom.* Contra Raglan's original wording, this does not have to be "on reaching manhood" since Jesus is given the point despite only going to his "kingdom" well into his adulthood (unless we consider the flight from Egypt, which occurred in childhood, not "on reaching manhood"). Similarly, Heracles goes to Calydon after his famous quests, towards the end of his life. Curiously, Raglan and Carrier give the point to Moses for going to Midian and returning to Egypt, neither of which he ever rules. Additionally, this point can occur out of order from other points (as in the case of Moses).

---

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch, *Theseus* 3.5. Cf. Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.15.7.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 2:8–11 (called a child three times παιδίον). The term παιδίον is typically used of a post-infant child including elsewhere in Matthew (14:21; 15:38; 18:3). In Matthew's usage, the term exclusively refers to post-infancy childhood. Luke 1:41–44 later uses it for unborn infants.

<sup>53</sup> Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 2.205–237; Philo of Alexandria, *Vita Mosis* 1.8–24.

<sup>54</sup> The angelic visit of Joseph and the appearance of the star are the basis for giving Jesus points number 1 and 4. Herod's slaughter of the children around Bethlehem is the basis for giving him point number 6. The flight of Jesus's family to Egypt is the basis for giving him points number 7 and 8. The prostration of the Magi before Jesus in Bethlehem and Jesus' family returning to Israel from Egypt and settling in Galilee as opposed to Judea, as prompted by two angelic visits, are not accounted for by other attributes and therefore additional details given about Jesus' childhood. Note that Carrier does not give Jesus point number 10 on the basis of returning from Egypt as a child but on the basis of coming to Jerusalem as an adult. Richard Carrier, "OHJ: The Hallquist Review" *Richard Carrier Blogs* (2014), <https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/5845>.

(11) *He gains victory over an adversary or adversaries.* Raglan's and Carrier's conceptualization of "adversaries" is broad and not limited to "the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beasts," which is Raglan's wording. Raglan gives the point for multiple victories, victories over groups (Zeus, Elijah), a victory over death (Asclepius) and victories outside physical combat or warfare (Joseph is "a victor in a contest of dream-interpretation"; Moses "gains a series of magical victories over Pharaoh"; Elijah is "a victor in a rain-making contest"). Carrier gives the point to Jesus for his victory over Satan's temptations in the wilderness. As such a physical victory over armies, kings, or beasts, or an intellectual or spiritual victory over a foe all qualify.

(12) *He marries a queen or princess.*

(13) *He becomes ruler or is hailed as ruler.* Unlike Raglan's original wording of "he becomes king," this broader formulation allows Jesus to gain the point. "Ruler" does not necessarily mean the sovereign over a territory since Raglan and Carrier give the point to Joseph for administrating Egypt under Pharaoh<sup>55</sup> and to Heracles merely for staying in Calydon under king Oeneus.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, it becomes rather expansive in other uses. Asclepius is a "man of power", Elijah becomes "a sort of dictator", and Robin Hood becomes "ruler of the Forest." In short, any station of authority or repute (regardless of the level of society) can be taken as "king."

(14) *For a time he rules successfully.* Raglan's original wording is "uneventfully." He then gives the point to Dionysus and Joseph for "prosperous" rule, to Theseus for "peaceful" rule and to Zeus for "supreme" rule. Carrier does not reword this attribute, only adds a clarifying note of "i.e., without wars or national catastrophes." He then inconsistently claims that wars occurring during Mithridates' reign disqualify him from scoring the point, even though wars obviously do take place under various Raglan heroes, including wars the heroes personally participate within, but Carrier does not dock the point from them in return.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Carrier's clarifying note of no "national catastrophes" is contradicted by Egypt suffering famine during Joseph's rule.<sup>58</sup> In the case Bellerophon, Pelops, and Perseus, Raglan gives the point on account of a mere silence of ancient sources about their reign.<sup>59</sup> An entirely puzzling attribution is Raglan's and Carrier's scoring of Heracles who gains the point because of his "quiet" stay in Calydon. Heracles was not the ruler of Calydon and he persecuted a war against the Thesprotians during this period,<sup>60</sup> expressly violating Carrier's clarification of no wars. Notably, Jesus' uneventful "reign" only lasts several days, from his entry to Jerusalem to his arrest.<sup>61</sup> This may also be challenged since Jesus engages in violent conflict against the money lenders at the Temple, which immediately prompts a conspiracy to kill him.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Genesis 41:40; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 2.87–90.

<sup>56</sup> Although Heracles securely scores the point on Carrier's rewording because he is at least "hailed as a king" at some point, e.g., Diodorus of Sicily 4.9.4.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Zeus fights in the Gigantomachy. In the case of Theseus, Plutarch describes no less than four separate wars taking place during his reign in Athens – against the Amazons (Plutarch, *Theseus* 27), against the Centaurs (29.3, 30.3–4), against the Thebans (29.4), and against the Tyndaridae as a result of Theseus' abduction of Helen (29.2, 32–34). Other wars are mentioned elsewhere, for example against the Thesprotians (Pausanias, *Description of Grece* 1.17.4). This obviously contradicts even Raglan's original characterization of "peaceful" reign.

<sup>58</sup> Genesis 41:53–57; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 2.93–94. Although this strictly speaking contradicts Carrier, it might be argued that Joseph's rule is still successful since his policies secured Egypt against the famine.

<sup>59</sup> Although he grants an exception in the case of Pelops since we know he banished his sons.

<sup>60</sup> Diodorus of Sicily 4.36.1; Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.7.6.

<sup>61</sup> Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 145–46.

<sup>62</sup> Mark 11:12–25.



(15) *He prescribes laws.* Raglan and Carrier operate with a very loose conceptualization of “laws.” For example, Joseph implements policies in Egypt, Pelops “regulates Olympic games”; Asclepius “prescribes laws of medicine”; Dionysus “of agriculture”; Apollo “of music.”

(16) *He loses favour with the gods or some of his subjects.* What counts as “losing favour” and how widespread this is required to be is applied broadly. Mere complaints of the subjects are sufficient in the case of Nyikang, just like conspiracies (Arthur, Elijah) and assassination attempts (Siegfried). In the case of Llew Llawgyffes, losing favor with his wife also counts. Watu Gunung scores the point merely because the gods refuse him a marriage request. Carrier gives the point to Osiris because of a murderous conspiracy led by Typhon and notes that “the gods do nothing to protect him. He went from blessed to doomed. That scores.”<sup>63</sup> We obviously make no use of this precedent since its consistent application would mean that any hero, historical or fictional, who likewise does not receive divine protection would gain this point. It is effectively a free point with no methodological restriction if this precedent is perpetuated.

(17) *He is driven from the throne or a city, there is an intention to do so, or he leaves of his own accord.* Formulating this attribute as a disjunction (instead of Raglan’s “the throne and city”) assures that Jesus gains the point on account of being driven from Jerusalem during his crucifixion. Raglan and Carrier give it to Heracles for leaving Calydon of his own will even though he was pardoned by king Oeneus.<sup>64</sup> Romulus gains the point because “his deposition has been decided upon,” although he is not actually driven from the throne or the city. Heroes outside Mediterranean antiquity are scored similarly loosely—Arthur merely on account of being abroad (of his own will).

(18) *He meets with mysterious or obscure death.* Obscurity or multiple accounts of death in ancient sources are sufficient to gain the point in the case of Bellerophon, Jason, Perseus, and Theseus. Ascensions to heaven (Elijah, Heracles, Romulus) and disappearances (Nyikang, Moses) count as mysterious deaths.

(19) *He dies at the top of a hill or high place.* A high place can be an elevated location (Robin Hood and Llew Llawgyffes), an actual hill or mountain (Heracles), a cliff (Theseus), etc. Bafflingly, Raglan gives this point to Zeus because “hilltops are particularly sacred to him” and Carrier does not challenge this. We do not make use of this precedent since its consistent application is impossible. Notably, Jesus is not said to die on a hill in any of the canonical scriptures. Instead, Carrier has applied common and traditional imagery and combined it with the canonical Gospels to score Jesus. Other figures also score this point though not in direct relation to their deaths. There is Bellerophon’s “attempted ascent into the sky” and Dionysos “ascends Olympus.” Elijah magically “brought down fire from heaven to a mountain-top.” Sigurd passes through a “ring of fire” on a “hilltop.” However, we have restrained ourselves to the location of death as being an elevated hill, mountain, or high place as this otherwise becomes methodologically incapable of useful application.

(20) *His immediate successor is not his child.* Raglan gives the point to Oedipus who is succeeded by Creon, Oedipus’ uncle, and to Theseus who is succeeded by Menestheus, of no kinship. Despite this, Demophon and Eteocles eventually became kings of Athens and Thebes, respectively. This means that only the immediate successor is in view. The child can come to rule at some later point, but not immediately following the hero.

(21) *His body is not buried or turns up missing.* Combining Raglan’s original wording (“his body is not buried”) with Carrier’s reformulation (“his body turns up missing”) allows Jesus to

---

<sup>63</sup> Carrier, “My Rank-Raglan Scoring for Osiris.”

<sup>64</sup> Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 4.36.2–3, Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.7.6.

gain the point. Mere silence or uncertainty (or conflict) of ancient sources about burial or a burial-place (in the case of Asclepius, Bellerophon, Jason, Oedipus, Perseus, Theseus, and Watu Gunung) also count.

(22) *He has one or more sepulchres or is granted divine honors after death.* Contra Raglan's wording, any form of post-mortem cult, unrelated to the hero's burial location, counts since even heroes with unknown burial locations or entirely without a sepulchre can score the point.

Apart from these clarifications, several other scoring principles are observed. First, a hero does not have to score points in the order listed by Raglan. Both Carrier and Raglan provide numerous examples of scoring out of order.<sup>65</sup> Second, the same narrative attribute can appear repeatedly throughout the hero's life, but this does not raise the point total. For example, Moses is victorious over an adversary twice but only gains one point for this. And third, the scoring of individual points is mutually independent. For example, a hero can experience an infanticide attempt without being spirited away (Heracles), can be driven from the throne without losing favor with his subjects or the gods (Jason), can have holy sepulchres without an unburied body (Pelops, Zeus), etc. Additionally, historical persons must obviously be given points even for non-historical elements in their biographies. If this principle was not observed, treating historical and fictional persons consistently would result in fictional persons always scoring zero points.<sup>66</sup>

To appreciate the consequences of treating ancient sources about historical and fictional persons consistently, consider the Greek recension of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Historia Alexandri Magni*, dated to the third century CE. This is an especially apt source to use for multiple reasons. First, there are several affinities to the canonical Gospels, as recently pointed out by Robyn F. Walsh—it is a subversive biography, not primarily concerned with historical accuracy, and full of fantastical stories.<sup>67</sup> Second, its complicated manuscript tradition demonstrates that, much like the Gospels, it functioned as an “open text,” undergoing extensive revisions and expansions. And third, many of its narrative elements deliberately imitate existing myths about Heracles, another Raglan hero. The kind of (direct or indirect) dependence that Carrier proposes to exist between the canonical Gospels and earlier mythological narratives therefore positively does exist in this case.

Alexander unambiguously scores 14 points based solely on what Pseudo-Callisthenes explicitly states: His mother is Olympias, Macedonian queen (*Historia Alexandri Magni* 1.4), his putative father is Philip, king of Macedon, and his biological father is Nectanebos, king of Egypt (1.7). Circumstances of his conception are unusual since Nectanebos tricks Olympias into thinking he is a god and having intercourse with him (1.4–7). Alexander is also reputed to be the son of Ammon. Philip attempts to kill Alexander in Alexander's early life (1.21). Alexander gains victory over wild Bucephalus, described as a man-eater in reference to one of the labours of Heracles, the basis for Raglan and Carrier giving the same point to Heracles (1.17). Alexander goes to his future kingdom, becomes king, marries Rhoisane, daughter of Darius (*sic!*), his predecessor (2.22), prescribes religious laws of Alexandria at Egypt (1.32–33) and legislates to Persians (2.21). He is poisoned in a conspiracy of his subjects (3.31) and just like Jesus', his death is accompanied by

---

<sup>65</sup> For example, Heracles scores points number 11–12 in the order of 11 – 10 – 12, Jason scores 12 – 10 – 11 – 13, Moses scores 9 – 11 – 10 – 12 – 10 – 11 – 13, Perseus scores 11 – 12 – 10 – 11 – 13, Theseus scores 10 – 11 – 12 – 11 – 13. Chronology is similarly unimportant in Raglan's scoring of non-Mediterranean heroes. Jesus is notably hailed as king already by the Magi, prior to scoring almost any other point. As such, we can dismiss any chronological restrictions.

<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the historical Jesus as reconstructed by modern scholars is obviously not a Raglan hero.

<sup>67</sup> Robyn F. Walsh, *Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 170–85.

prophecies and divine omens (1.33, 3.17, 3.33). Ptolemy makes him a tomb in Alexandria (3.34). The last chapter gives a historically inaccurate summary of Alexander's reign which states that “the other thirty years (*sic!*) he lived in peace, in freedom from care, and in happiness” (3.35).<sup>68</sup> This allows us to give him the point for a period of “uneventful”, “peaceful” or “prosperous” reign. Carrier gives Alexander two other points for dying on top of a hill (in the royal palace in Babylon) and not being succeeded by his child. Moreover, young Alexander was sent to Mieza to be tutored by Aristotle and Alexander’s parents both had their lineage traced to Zeus and were therefore related, similarly to how Oedipus’ parents both descend from Cadmus or how both Joseph and Mary descend from David in apocryphal traditions, acknowledged as sufficient to score by Carrier. This raises the total to 19 points.<sup>69</sup>

As such, the scores we give these figures are fairly secure. To downscore them would also require the downscoring of Jesus and other figures from Raglan’s and Carrier’s lists as well. In what follows, we will now present our scores and the direct applications of the points.

### *Scoring Historical Ancient Mediterranean Raglan Heroes*

This section presents an overview of our scoring, together with explanations and references to primary sources for some of the more obscure points. Points in brackets are debatable – these are instances where there is some ambiguity in the primary sources (explained in footnotes) or where even a comprehensive overview of Raglan’s and Carrier’s scoring practices does not completely remove ambiguity of application. In order to avoid excessive footnoting, let us make several general comments here.

Points number 1–2, 11–13, 15 are usually trivial to verify. We only comment on point number 2 if it is given because of distant royal ancestry, similar to Jesus’. Point number 5 is clear when the hero has a deified (adoptive) parent. Points number 7–8 are given to heroes who are sent away to be educated by known tutors. We do not give these points to heroes who lost their parent in their childhood if the spouse is not known to re-marry and/or to heroes with known tutors or guardians if their education does not take place at a distance. For example, Alcibiades does not gain the point even though his father died when Alcibiades was around three years old, and his tutors and guardians are known. Apollonius, however, gains the points because he is sent away from Tyana to be educated by Euthydemus in Tarsus and Euxenus in Aegeae. It should be noted that this seems much more reasonable than giving the point to Joseph who is merely sold to slavery at the age of 17, which is what Raglan and Carrier do. Point number 9 is given based on how much information is extant about hero’s childhood in comparison to Moses’. Point number 10 is scored as debatable if it cannot be conclusively shown that the hero had been abroad. This is mostly the case with emperors who come or return to Rome after living elsewhere in the empire. Carrier

<sup>68</sup> Τὰ δὲ ἄλλα λ’ ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἀμεριμνίᾳ καὶ εὐφροσύνῃ ἔζησεν. The oldest recension (α) in Guilelmus Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1926), 146.

<sup>69</sup> Alexander might arguably be given one additional point since he reportedly contemplated throwing himself into the Euphrates to make his body disappear and thus cement his status as a divine being (Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.27.3). While this was not carried off, it is a clear instance of the well-documented ancient Mediterranean trope of bodily disappearance indicating divinity. In many cases, this is specifically disappearance into a river. Richard C. Miller, “Mark’s Empty Tomb and Other Translation Fables in Classical Antiquity,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 4 (2010): 759–76 and *idem*, *Resurrection and Reception in Early Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2014), 39–66.

refuses to give Mithridates the point because Mithridates was not “raised in a foreign land”<sup>70</sup> but we nevertheless do give this point, albeit as debatable, since its application is very loose elsewhere (e.g., Heracles and Moses do not go to their “kingdoms” at all as they have no kingdoms). Point number 14 is entirely unclear, and we always score it as debatable unless the primary sources are very explicit one way or the other.<sup>71</sup> Point number 22 is given as debatable to heroes who have a tomb but do not receive divine honors. There are grounds for unambiguous scoring since both Raglan and Carrier give it to Moses merely for tomb veneration and Carrier originally gave it to Mithridates who was buried but not worshipped.<sup>72</sup> We give points number 21–22 to Roman emperors who received the imperial funeral since it was a staged apotheosis, as acknowledged in numerous ancient sources.<sup>73</sup> The scores are as follows:

Agathocles of Syracuse: 4,<sup>74</sup> 6–8,<sup>75</sup> 9–11,<sup>76</sup> 12–13, (14), 15–18,<sup>77</sup> 20–21.<sup>78</sup> Score: 15–16 points. Sources: Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 19–21; Justin, *Epitome* 22.

Ahab son of Omri: 2, 5,<sup>79</sup> 9, 12–13, (14), 15–19,<sup>80</sup> (22). Score: 10–12 points. Sources: 1 Kings 16:29–22:40; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.316–9.26.

---

<sup>70</sup> Notably, Justin (*Epitome* 37.2), the only extant source on Mithridates’ early life, does not specify that Mithridates’ self-imposed exile was limited to Pontus, although this is likely. If Jesus’ “kingdom” is to be understood as a Davidic kingdom, Jesus does briefly travel abroad when he visits Sidon and Tyre.

<sup>71</sup> For example, Plutarch (*Pyrrhus* 13.1) states that after Pyrrhus was driven from Macedonia, he had an opportunity to reign peacefully but he was unable to do so.

<sup>72</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 231–32. It appears that Carrier has since changed his position on this. Carrier, “My Rank-Raglan Scoring for Osiris.”

<sup>73</sup> The most detailed extant descriptions are provided by Cassius Dio (*Roman History* 75.4–5) and Herodian (*History* 4.2). A wax model of emperor’s dead body was burned on the funeral pyre instead of the actual corpse. Modern interpreters, mostly following Elias Bickermann, linked the apotheosis of Roman emperors to apotheoses of Heracles and Romulus and postulated that the wax model was used because it melted completely, leaving behind no physical remains and thus conjuring the image of fire burning away the physical body and allowing the purified soul to escape to heaven, in the form of (or carried by) an eagle released during the cremation (cf. e.g. Plutarch, *Romulus* 28.3–8; Diodorus of Sicily 4.38.5; Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 1.5–6, 13.6–7, 25.4). See Elias Bickermann, *Die Römische Kaiserapotheose* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1929). This interpretation has been challenged, e.g., by Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 283–86. Gradel claims that the wax model was used merely out of practical necessity—by the time the funeral was arranged, the actual body was already too decomposed to be used in the ceremony. This, however, does not account for the ritual identification of the wax model with the emperor. After the emperor died, the model was treated as a living person for seven days, e.g., regularly examined by physicians (Herodian, *History* 4.2.4) and fanned to keep the flies away, “as though it were really a person sleeping” (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 75.4.3). Only then was the emperor pronounced dead and the funeral organized. Gradel’s own commentary on this aspect of the funeral is brief, unconvincing and largely irrelevant for the purposes of scoring.

<sup>74</sup> Before Agathocles was born, his future was prophesied by an oracle (Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 19.2).

<sup>75</sup> Agathocles’ father Carcinus exposed infant Agathocles because of the inauspicious oracle. His mother saved him and left him in the household of his uncle Heracleides, where he was raised until the age of seven (Diodorus of Sicily 19.2).

<sup>76</sup> Agathocles was twice forced out of Syracuse. After his eventual return, he killed or exiled his oligarchic opponents (Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 19.4–8).

<sup>77</sup> Agathocles was reportedly poisoned by Menon and by his own grandson Archagathus. Diodorus of Sicily (*Library of History* 20.101, 21.16) frames his death as a consequence of his impiety towards the gods.

<sup>78</sup> Agathocles was burned alive (Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 21.16).

<sup>79</sup> Kings of Israel we considered to be sons of God.

<sup>80</sup> Ahab lost favor with God because of his sins. His death was prophesied. He died at Ramoth-Gilead, identified with various hills.

Alcibiades: 1–2,<sup>81</sup> 10–13, 15–20,<sup>82</sup> 22.<sup>83</sup> Score: 13 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Alcibiades*; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 574f; Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* 578b; Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations* 6.6.

Alexander the Great: 1–8, 10–16, 18–20, 22. 19 points. Arrian, *Anabasis*; Plutarch, *Alexander*; Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni*.

Apollonius of Tyana: 2, 4–6,<sup>84</sup> 7–8, (10), 15,<sup>85</sup> 18–22.<sup>86</sup> Score: 12–13 points. Sources: Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*.

Aratus of Sicyon: 2, 4–5,<sup>87</sup> 6–11,<sup>88</sup> 13, 15–18,<sup>89</sup> 20, 22.<sup>90</sup> Score: 16 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Aratus*.

Aristotle: 1–3,<sup>91</sup> 8–10,<sup>92</sup> 12–13,<sup>93</sup> (14), 15, (16),<sup>94</sup> 17, 20, 22.<sup>95</sup> Score: 12–14 points. Sources: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives* 5.1; *Vita Aristotelis Marciana*.

---

<sup>81</sup> Alcibiades' father Cleinias had his lineage traced to Aias son of Telemon (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 1.1).

<sup>82</sup> Alcibiades lost favor with the Athenians several times. There are multiple accounts of his death, which was accompanied by divine omens (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 39) and depicted as divine punishment (Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations* 6.6). He reportedly died on a mountain (Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* 578b).

<sup>83</sup> Cult was established at the site of Alcibiades' death in Phrygia (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 574f).

<sup>84</sup> When Apollonius was still studying at Aegeae, a ruler of Cilicia threatened to kill him (Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.12).

<sup>85</sup> Apollonius reportedly descended into a sacred cave in Lebadea and ascended in Aulis with a book of the doctrines of Pythagoras (Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 8.19). This appears to be the motif of a Pythagorean teacher bringing teachings from the Underworld, cf. Pythagoras (Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives* 8.1.41) and Zalmoxis, Pythagoras' supposed slave (Herodotus, *Histories* 4.95–96). Disciples of Pythagoras treated Pythagorean doctrines as law (Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.1).

<sup>86</sup> There are multiple accounts of Apollonius' death. In one account, Apollonius disappeared from the temple of Athena at the acropolis of Lindus (Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 8.30).

<sup>87</sup> Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 2.10.3, 4.14.8) identifies Aratus as a son of Aristodama and Asclepius.

<sup>88</sup> When Aratus was seven years old, Abantidas took power, killed Aratus' father Cleinias and was seeking to kill Aratus as well. Aratus was taken to Argos where he was raised. He later returned and overthrew tyrant Nicocles (Plutarch, *Aratus* 2, 6).

<sup>89</sup> Aratus lost favor with the Achaeans after his army was defeated in a battle against Cleomenes of Sparta. He was also driven from Corinth after he lost favor with the Corinthians, who even conspired to capture or kill him. He was rumored to be poisoned by Philip V, who was, according to Plutarch, punished for this by Zeus (Plutarch, *Aratus* 38–42, 52–54).

<sup>90</sup> Aratus was granted divine honors in Sicyon (Plutarch, *Aratus* 53).

<sup>91</sup> Aristotle's parents both had their lineage traced to Machaon, son of Asclepius (*Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 1).

<sup>92</sup> Aristotle was raised by Proxenus of Atarneus. At the age of 17, he received an oracle instructing him to go to Athens to study philosophy (*Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 3–5).

<sup>93</sup> Aristotle founded and headed his philosophical school at Lyceum.

<sup>94</sup> Aristotle lost popularity with the Athenians and withdrew to Chalcis (*Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 41).

<sup>95</sup> After Aristotle died, the Stageirites set up an altar at his tomb (*Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 18).

Caesar Augustus: 1–3,<sup>96</sup> 4–5,<sup>97</sup> 6,<sup>98</sup> 8–9, (10), 11–13, 14,<sup>99</sup> 15–16, 18,<sup>100</sup> 21–22. Score: 17–18 points. Sources: Augustus, *Res Gestae*; Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*.

Caligula: 1–3,<sup>101</sup> 5–7,<sup>102</sup> 8–9, (10), 11–13, (14), 15–16, 18–19,<sup>103</sup> 20, (22). Score: 16–19 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula*.

Claudius: 1–3,<sup>104</sup> 5–6,<sup>105</sup> 8, 12–13, (14), 15–16, 18–19,<sup>106</sup> 21–22. Score: 14–15 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Divus Claudius*; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 60.

Cleopatra VII: 1–3,<sup>107</sup> 5–10,<sup>108</sup> 12–13, (14), 15–18,<sup>109</sup> (22). Score: 15–17 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Antonius, Caesar*; Appian, *Bella Civilia*; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 42, 51.

Cyrus the Great: 1–2, 4,<sup>110</sup> (5),<sup>111</sup> 6–9,<sup>112</sup> 11–13, (14), 15–16,<sup>113</sup> 18,<sup>114</sup> (21–22).<sup>115</sup> Score: 13–17 points. Sources: Herodotus, *Histories* 1.107–214; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*.

---

<sup>96</sup> Augustus' adoptive father Julius Caesar was great-uncle of Augustus' mother Atia Balba.

<sup>97</sup> Augustus' mother Atia Balba reportedly had intercourse with a god in the form of a snake (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 94). His adoptive father Julius Caesar was deified.

<sup>98</sup> Before Augustus was born, the senate decreed that no child born that year should be reared because of an inauspicious omen (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 94).

<sup>99</sup> Augustus' own account of his reign suppresses failures (e.g., the battle of the Teutoburg Forest) and emphasizes him establishing *pax Romana* (e.g., the temple of Janus Quirinus was closed, *Res Gestae* 13).

<sup>100</sup> Augustus was rumored to be poisoned by Livia. His death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 97–100).

<sup>101</sup> Caligula's parents were both great-grandchildren of Gaius Octavius, father of Augustus.

<sup>102</sup> Soldiers in the camp where young Caligula was raised threatened mutiny and were only appeased when they saw that Caligula was being spirited away to safety (Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 9).

<sup>103</sup> Caligula was killed by his subjects on the Palatine Hill. His death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 57–59).

<sup>104</sup> Claudius was rumored to be a grandson of Augustus (Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 1). Claudius' mother Antonia the Younger was niece of Augustus.

<sup>105</sup> Young Claudius faked intellectual disability to avoid assassination (e.g., Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 60.2). Moreover, he was “in peril of his life” when he was once sent to Caligula. After Caligula died, Claudius hid from the conspirators in fear (Suetonius, *Claudius* 9–10).

<sup>106</sup> Claudius was rumored to be poisoned by his wife Agrippina the Younger. His death was accompanied by divine omens. He died on the Capitoline Hill (Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 44–46).

<sup>107</sup> Identity of Cleopatra's mother is in dispute but in either case her parents were both royal and related. Her mother was most likely Cleopatra V, sister-wife of Ptolemy XII Auletes.

<sup>108</sup> Young Cleopatra and her father were driven from Egypt and forced to live in exile but eventually returned.

<sup>109</sup> Cleopatra was driven from Egypt by her brother Ptolemy XIII and later retook the throne with Roman assistance. She ended her life deserted by her friends (Plutarch, *Antonius* 72). There are multiple accounts of her death (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 51.14.1).

<sup>110</sup> Before Cyrus was born, his future was prophesied by dream (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.107–108).

<sup>111</sup> Cyrus was reportedly considered “more than a mortal” (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.204).

<sup>112</sup> Cyrus' grandfather Astyages ordered infant Cyrus to be killed because of inauspicious dream. Cyrus was saved and raised by foster parents (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.108–114).

<sup>113</sup> Cyrus lost favor with his subjects when Pactyes led the Lydians in revolt against him (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.154).

<sup>114</sup> Herodotus (*Histories* 1.214) states that there were multiple accounts of Cyrus' death. Cyrus also received a prophetic dream about Darius' future rule shortly before he died (*Histories* 1.209).

<sup>115</sup> Herodotus (*Histories* 1.214) makes no mention of Cyrus' burial. Given that his corpse is seized and mutilated by the Massagetae, Herodotus might be implying that in the version of events he chooses to narrate, Cyrus remains unburied. This would be in line with Herodotus' depiction of Cyrus as a ruler who tragically succumbs to hubris. See e.g., H. C. Avery, “Herodotus' picture of Cyrus,” *The American Journal of Philology* 93, no. 4 (1972): 529–46.

Demetrius I Poliorcetes: 1–2, 5,<sup>116</sup> 8–13, (14), 15–17, 20, (22).<sup>117</sup> Score: 13–15 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Demetrius*; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 253c.

Domitian: 1–2, 5,<sup>118</sup> 6,<sup>119</sup> 9, (10), 12–13, (14), 15–16, 18–20,<sup>120</sup> 22.<sup>121</sup> Score: 13–15 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Domitianus*; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 7–8.

Galba: 1–3,<sup>122</sup> 4,<sup>123</sup> 6,<sup>124</sup> 8–9, (10), 11–13, 15–16, (17),<sup>125</sup> 18,<sup>126</sup> 20, (22). Score: 14–17 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Galba*; Suetonius, *Galba*.

Hadrian: 1–2, 5, 8–9, (10), 11–13, (14), 15–16,<sup>127</sup> 18,<sup>128</sup> 22. Score: 12–14 points. Sources: *Historia Augusta*, *Hadrianus*; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 69.

Hiero II: 2, 6, 8,<sup>129</sup> 9, 11–14,<sup>130</sup> 15–16, 18,<sup>131</sup> 20. Score: 12 points. Sources: Justin, *Epitome* 23.4; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 6.12.4; Plutarch, *Marcellus* 14; Polybius, *Histories* 1.9.

Julius Caesar: 1–2,<sup>132</sup> 6–7,<sup>133</sup> 9–13, (14), 15–16, 18,<sup>134</sup> 21–22. Score: 14–15 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Divus Iulius*, Plutarch, *Brutus*, *Caesar*; Livy, *History of Rome* 1.3.

---

<sup>116</sup> Demetrius was hailed as a son of Poseidon and Aphrodite by the Athenians (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 253c).

<sup>117</sup> Demetrius was granted divine honors at Sicyon but it is unclear whether his cult continued after his death (Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 20.102.3).

<sup>118</sup> Domitian's father Vespasian was divinized. Also, Domitian was reported to self-stylize as a son of Athena (*sic!* Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 7.24).

<sup>119</sup> During the civil war of 69 CE, young Domitian was pursued by enemies and narrowly escaped death (Suetonius, *Domitianus* 1).

<sup>120</sup> Domitian was assassinated by a conspiracy of his subjects in the Flavian palace atop the Palatine Hill. His death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Domitianus* 14–15, 23). Philostratus (*Vita Apollonii* 8.25) depicts it as divine punishment.

<sup>121</sup> After his death, Domitian was considered divine by the army (Suetonius, *Domitianus* 23).

<sup>122</sup> Galba's father Gaius Sulpicius had his lineage traced to Jupiter. Galba's mother Mummia Achaica had her lineage traced to Pasiphaë, wife of king Minos and daughter of Helios (Suetonius, *Galba* 2).

<sup>123</sup> Galba's future is prophesied by a divine omen (Suetonius, *Galba* 4).

<sup>124</sup> When Galba was governing in Hispania, he feigned "sloth and inaction, not to give Nero any cause for jealousy." Before taking the throne, he intercepted letters from Nero ordering his death (Suetonius, *Galba* 9).

<sup>125</sup> Galba was lured from the palace and killed (Plutarch, *Galba* 26).

<sup>126</sup> Galba's death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Galba* 18; Plutarch, *Galba* 24).

<sup>127</sup> Hadrian's rule was beset by conspiracies, assassination attempts and general unpopularity (*Historia Augusta*, *Hadrianus* 5, 7, 9, 24.6–7).

<sup>128</sup> Hadrian reportedly predicted his own death, which was also prophesied by various divine omens (*Historia Augusta*, *Hadrianus* 16.7, 25, 26.6–10).

<sup>129</sup> Hiero's father Hierocles exposed infant Hiero, who was miraculously nurtured by bees (Justin, *Epitome* 23.4).

<sup>130</sup> Plutarch (*Marcellus* 14.9) explicitly says that Hiero ruled most of his life peacefully.

<sup>131</sup> Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 6.12.4) claims that Hiero was killed by a Syracusan named Deinomenes.

<sup>132</sup> Caesar traced had his lineage traced to Julius, son of Aeneas (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 6; Livy, *History of Rome* 1.3).

<sup>133</sup> Young Caesar was forced to go into hiding after opposing Sulla (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 1).

<sup>134</sup> Caesar was assassinated by his subjects. His death was famously accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 81, 88).

Mark Antony: 1–3,<sup>135</sup> 5,<sup>136</sup> 6–7,<sup>137</sup> 8–9, (10), 11–13, (14), 16, (17), 20, (22). Score: 13–17 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Antonius*.

Mithridates VI Eupator: 1–4,<sup>138</sup> 5,<sup>139</sup> 6–7,<sup>140</sup> 9, (10), 11–13,<sup>141</sup> (14), 15–17, 19, (22). Score: 15–18 points. Sources: Justin, *Epitome* 37.2; Appian, *Mithridatica* 10, 112–113; Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* 37.6; Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales* 624a.

Nero: 1–3,<sup>142</sup> 4,<sup>143</sup> 5–6, 8, 12–13, (14), 15–18,<sup>144</sup> 20, 22.<sup>145</sup> Score: 15–16 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Nero*.

Otho: 1–2, 6–7,<sup>146</sup> 9, (10), 11–13, 15–18,<sup>147</sup> 20–21, (22). Score: 14–16 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Galba*, *Otho*; Suetonius, *Otho*.

Pericles: 1–2, 4,<sup>148</sup> (5),<sup>149</sup> 9, 11–13, 15–17,<sup>150</sup> 18,<sup>151</sup> 20, (22). Score: 12–14 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Pericles*; Thucydides, *History* 2.

---

<sup>135</sup> Mark Antony's father Marcus Antonius Creticus had his lineage traced to Zeus through Heracles (Plutarch, *Antonius* 4, 36, 60). Julius Caesar, third cousin of Mark Antony's mother Julia, had his lineage traced to Zeus through Aeneas (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 6).

<sup>136</sup> Mark Antony self-stylized as Dionysus, mirroring Cleopatra's self-stylization as Isis (Plutarch, *Antonius* 54.6, 60.3).

<sup>137</sup> Young Mark Antony left Rome because of the enemies of Clodius (Plutarch, *Antonius* 2).

<sup>138</sup> Mithridates' birth was accompanied by an appearance of a comet (Justin, *Epitome* 37.2). He was also struck but unharmed by thunderbolt as a baby (Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales* 624a).

<sup>139</sup> Mithridates self-stylized as Dionysus (Appian, *Mithridatica* 10, 113; Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* 37.6; Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales* 624a). Moreover, his grandfather Antiochus IV Epiphanes was hailed as an epiphany of Zeus.

<sup>140</sup> Young Mithridates avoided assassination attempts by his guardians by hiding in the forest and avoiding buildings (Justin, *Epitome* 37.2).

<sup>141</sup> Mithridates reportedly killed his mother, the previous ruler of Pontus (Appian, *Mithridatica* 112).

<sup>142</sup> Nero's mother Agrippina the Younger and Nero's father Gnaeus Ahenobarbus were first cousins once removed.

<sup>143</sup> Nero's future was prophesied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Nero* 6).

<sup>144</sup> Nero's death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Nero* 40, 48).

<sup>145</sup> Nero was worshipped at his tomb (Suetonius, *Nero* 57).

<sup>146</sup> Young Otho seduced Nero's mistress Poppaea Sabina and refused to release her to Nero. Otho reportedly once left Nero himself standing before his door, "mingling threats and entreaties" (Suetonius, *Otho* 3). According to Plutarch (*Galba* 19), this brought Otho "into peril of his life." Nero banished him to Lusitania under the pretense of making him governor.

<sup>147</sup> Otho's death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Otho* 7–8).

<sup>148</sup> Pericles' future greatness was prophesied by a dream (Plutarch, *Pericles* 3).

<sup>149</sup> Comic poet Cratinus called Pericles a son of Eris (Strife) and Cronus (Plutarch, *Pericles* 3.3). We score this as debatable because it is clearly satirical, and yet comparable to the centurion calling Jesus a son of God in Mark 15:39. (Although Jesus is of course also called God's son elsewhere in Mark.)

<sup>150</sup> After Pericles became unpopular, he was stripped of his command and punished with a fine (Plutarch, *Pericles* 35).

<sup>151</sup> The plague of Athens was believed to be divinely caused (Thucydides, *History* 2.54).



Plato: 1–3,<sup>152</sup> 4–6, 8,<sup>153</sup> 9–11, 13,<sup>154</sup> (14), 15–16,<sup>155</sup> 17–18,<sup>156</sup> 20, (22). Score: 16–18 points. Sources: Apuleius, *De Platone et Dogmate Eius* 1; Diogenes Laërtius 3; Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem Commentarii* 2; *Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 9, 25.

Ptolemy I Soter: 1–3,<sup>157</sup> 5,<sup>158</sup> 6, 8,<sup>159</sup> 9–13, (14), 15–17,<sup>160</sup> 22. Score: 15–16 points. Sources: Apsines, *Ars Rhetorica* 1.9; Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 18; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.6; Satyrus, *FGrH* 631 F2; Suda, *Lambda* 25 = Aelian fr. 285 (Hercher).

Pyrrhus I of Epirus: 1–2, 6–9,<sup>161</sup> 10–13, 15–18,<sup>162</sup> 21, (22).<sup>163</sup> Score: 15–16 points. Sources: Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.13.8.

Pythagoras: 1–3,<sup>164</sup> 4–5,<sup>165</sup> 9–10, 13,<sup>166</sup> (14), 15, (16), 17–18,<sup>167</sup> 22. Score: 12–14 points. Sources: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives* 8.1; Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*; Porphyry, *De Vita Pythagorae*; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.1.

Solon: 1–3,<sup>168</sup> 9–11, 13, (14), 15–17, 20–21.<sup>169</sup> Score: 12–13 points. Sources: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives* 1.2; Plutarch, *Solon*.

---

<sup>152</sup> Plato's father and mother both had their lineage traced to Poseidon, through king Codrus and Solon, respectively (Diogenes Laërtius 3.1).

<sup>153</sup> Plato was reputed to be a son of Apollo (Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives* 3.2). Plato's parents reportedly took infant Plato to sacrifice him to the gods. He was spared when bees appeared and nurtured him (Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem Commentarii* 2.20–28).

<sup>154</sup> Plato founded and headed the Academy.

<sup>155</sup> Plato was reportedly deserted by his student Aristotle who set up his rival school during Plato's life (*Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 9, 25).

<sup>156</sup> When Plato was about to die, he had a prophetic dream about how his philosophy will be interpreted after his death (Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem Commentarii* 2.155–164).

<sup>157</sup> Ptolemy's parents both descended from Arrhidaeus, father of Amyntas III.

<sup>158</sup> Ptolemy was rumored to be a son of Philip II (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.6.2) who was called the thirteenth Olympian (Apsines, *Ars Rhetorica* 1.9).

<sup>159</sup> Ptolemy's father Lagus exposed infant Ptolemy, who was saved and nurtured by an eagle (Suda, *Lambda* 25 = Aelian fr. 285 [Hercher]).

<sup>160</sup> Ptolemy faced various revolts and lost territories, e.g., in Cyprus or Cyrenaica.

<sup>161</sup> After Pyrrhus' father Aeacides was exiled, his enemies sought to kill baby Pyrrhus. He was saved and eventually raised by the queen of Illyria (Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 2–3).

<sup>162</sup> Pyrrhus was reportedly killed by Demeter in disguise (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.13.8).

<sup>163</sup> Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 1.13.8) claims that Pyrrhus was buried where he died and a sanctuary of Demeter was built in that location.

<sup>164</sup> Pythagoras' parents both had their lineage traced to Ancaeus, son of Zeus and founder of Samos (Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* 2; Porphyry, *De Vita Pythagorae* 2).

<sup>165</sup> Pythagoras was reputed to be a son of Apollo and his future was prophesied by an oracle (Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 2; Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae* 2).

<sup>166</sup> Pythagoras founded and headed his philosophical school in Croton.

<sup>167</sup> There are multiple accounts of Pythagoras' death. In one account, he is driven from Croton, where he prescribed laws, and chooses to die rather than stepping into a field of beans. Diogenes Laërtius (*Lives* 8.1.40) also gives what appears to be a rationalized account of his ascent from Hades, similar to Zalmoxis' (Herodotus, *Histories* 4.95–96).

<sup>168</sup> Solon's father and mother both had their lineage traced to Neleus, through king Codrus and Peisistratus, respectively (Plutarch, *Solon* 1).

<sup>169</sup> Solon was cremated and his ashes were scattered on the island of Salamis (Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives* 1.2.62).

Tiberius: 1–3,<sup>170</sup> 4,<sup>171</sup> 5–13, (14), 15–18,<sup>172</sup> 20–21, (22). Score: 19–21 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula*, *Tiberius*.

Titus: 1–2, 5, 9, (10), 11–13, (14), 15–16,<sup>173</sup> 18,<sup>174</sup> 20–22. Score: 13–15 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Divus Titus*.

Trajan: 1–2, 5, 9, (10), 11–13, (14), 15–16,<sup>175</sup> 18, 21–22. Score: 12–14 points. Sources: Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 68; *Historia Augusta*, *Hadrianus*.

Vespasian: 1–2, 4,<sup>176</sup> 8–9, (10), 11, 13, (14), 15–16,<sup>177</sup> 18,<sup>178</sup> 21–22. Score: 12–14 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus*.

Vitellius: 1–2, 4,<sup>179</sup> 7–8,<sup>180</sup> (10), 11–13, 15–18,<sup>181</sup> 19,<sup>182</sup> 20–21.<sup>183</sup> Score: 15–16 points. Sources: Suetonius, *Vitellius*.

### *Results and Ramifications*

It should be noted that our survey of relevant ancient literature is not exhaustive and that its expansion would likely produce additional historical Raglan heroes. We primarily surveyed Greco-Roman and Biblical literature about lives of rulers, lawgivers and religious experts, focusing on those with accounts of infant exposure or attempted infanticide (relevant for points number 6–8), divine ancestry or direct divine parentage (points number 4–5), prophecies, divine omens and other signs accompanying their conception or birth (point number 4) or impending death (points number 16, 18), and accounts of divine translation, i.e. their continuing existence as divine beings after death or disappearance (points number 18, 21–22). Needless to say, these narrative attributes do not appear independently but have a tendency to cluster. For example, ancient biographies often feature various prophecies, signs and omens appearing not just around hero's birth *or* death but *both* birth *and* death, as well as other key events, such as ascension to the throne. While these narrative attributes are abundant in the lives of mythological figures, they appear in ancient biographies of historical persons as well with high frequency.

Moreover, “fantastical” narrative attributes regularly appear in biographies of historical persons who score many additional “mundane” points merely because they were royal figures

---

<sup>170</sup> Tiberius' parents were both members of the Claudii family, thus, cousins.

<sup>171</sup> Tiberius' future was prophesied by a divine omen (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 14).

<sup>172</sup> Tiberius became very unpopular later in his life and chose to withdraw from Rome to Capri. His death, which is multiply reported, was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 74).

<sup>173</sup> Titus was forced to deal with various conspirators, including his brother Domitian (Suetonius, *Divus Titus* 9).

<sup>174</sup> Titus' death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Divus Titus* 10).

<sup>175</sup> Trajan faced rebellions of subjects, e.g., the Kitos War. He was suspected to be poisoned (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 68.33.2).

<sup>176</sup> Vespasian's future was prophesied by a divine omen (Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus* 5).

<sup>177</sup> Vespasian was forced to deal with “constant conspiracies” later in his life (Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus* 25).

<sup>178</sup> Vespasian's death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus* 23).

<sup>179</sup> Vitellius' future was prophesied by his portentous horoscope (Suetonius, *Vitellius* 3).

<sup>180</sup> Young Vitellius was taken to Capri where he was raised “among the wantons of Tiberius” (Suetonius, *Vitellius* 3).

<sup>181</sup> Vitellius' death was accompanied by divine omens (Suetonius, *Vitellius* 14, 18).

<sup>182</sup> Vitellius died on the Gemonian Stairs, the slope of the Capitoline Hill (Suetonius, *Vitellius* 17).

<sup>183</sup> Vitellius' body was thrown into the Tiber river (Suetonius, *Vitellius* 17).

living in turbulent times. Consider members of Roman or Eastern Mediterranean ruling dynasties. They often had royal parentage (points number 1–2), their parents had a high chance of being related (point number 3) and frequently re-married (point number 8). The heroes were routinely in danger of being assassinated in their early lives (point number 6)<sup>184</sup> and in their adulthood, they often won victories in wars (point number 11), married other royal figures (point number 12) and went on to become rulers (point number 13) and prescribe laws (point number 15). In many cases, they became unpopular with their subjects, were deposed or targeted by conspiracies (points number 16–17), often successful (point number 18). They were regularly not succeeded by their children (point number 20). When historical figures are scored consistently with how Raglan and Carrier score fictional figures, it is *no wonder* that not just a few but *many* historical Raglan heroes are found in abundance.

We can gauge just how common historical Raglan heroes might be among certain types of ancient Mediterranean persons by overviewing sections of Greco-Roman and Biblical literature which we did survey systematically. For example, there are 13 Raglan heroes among the first 14 Roman emperors (Augustus to Hadrian). This frequency likely drops as the practice of imperial deification fades and ruling family members become less likely to score points number 5 and 21–22. All 12 rulers covered by Suetonius are Raglan heroes, in no small part due to his tendency to report divine ancestry, prophecies and omens and because of two civil wars on top of the usual court intrigue. The 48 extant biographies in Plutarch’s *Vitae Parallelae* yield 13 Raglan heroes, and a number of persons who come close to scoring 12 points (e.g. Cicero, Cimon). Raglan heroes are comparably sparser among other types of persons, e.g., philosophers or literary authors, although this might be partly because their biographies tend to be short.<sup>185</sup> Raglan heroes also appear to be rare among Biblical figures. This seems to align with an observation made by Victor Cook about specifically Greco-Roman figures being more likely to score high.<sup>186</sup>

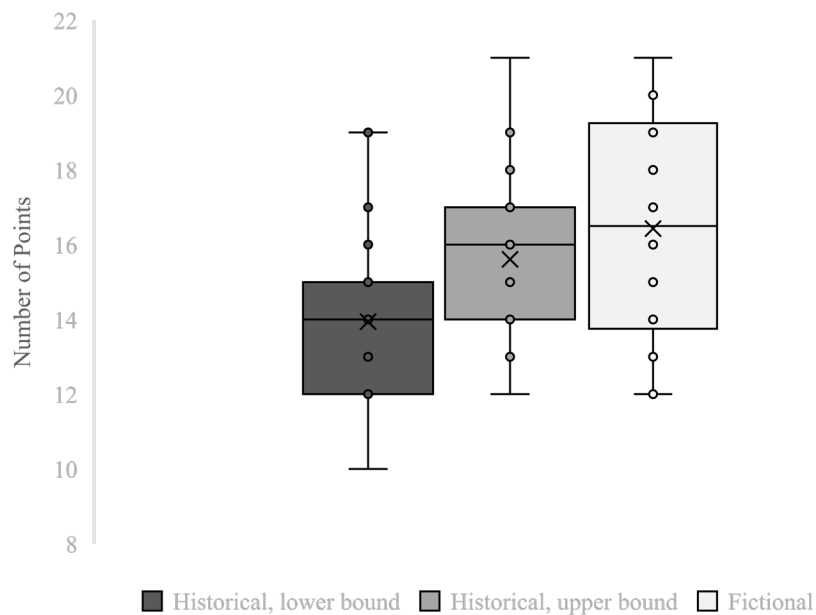
Figure 1 shows distributions of scores among the 33 historical Raglan heroes presented in this article and the 14 fictional heroes utilized by Carrier. The average score among historical heroes is 14–16 points, which is comparable to the average score of 16 points among the fictional heroes. Interestingly, scores of fictional heroes exhibit a greater degree of variation around the average ( $\sigma = 3$ ) compared to both the lower and the upper bound of the scores of historical persons (in both cases,  $\sigma = 2$ ). Results of various dimension reduction methods (not shown here) suggest that there are no underlying patterns in scoring and that the heroes do not cluster depending on which points they score. We do not see, for example, any sharp distinctions between historical and fictional heroes, between Greek, Roman and other heroes, between rulers and other heroes, between heroes who score more “mundane” points compared to more “fantastical” ones, etc. This is likely because the archetype is not well “calibrated” to capture more subtle nuances, but it might also be explained by the presence of common structures of biographical narratives and literary tropes which permeated both Greek and Latin literature around the turn of the common era.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Assassination attempts were apparently so common in Hellenistic royal families that Plutarch (*Demetrius* 3.3–4) felt the need to explicitly point out that the household of Antigonus I Monophthalmus was exceptionally harmonious.

<sup>185</sup> See e.g., Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives*; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Antiquis Oratoribus*; Philostratus, *Vitae Sophistarum*.

<sup>186</sup> Victor Cook, “Lord Raglan’s Hero—A Cross Cultural Critique,” *The Florida Anthropologist* 18 (1965): 147–54. See similarly, M. David Litwa, *How the Gospels Became History: Jesus and Mediterranean Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 36.

<sup>187</sup> Notably, most of the major sources used to score historical Raglan heroes are roughly contemporary with the canonical Gospels, mainly Diodorus of Sicily, Josephus, Pausanias, Plutarch, Pompeius Trogus *apud* Justin, and Suetonius. Cassius Dio, Diogenes Laërtius, and Philostratus are the most important outliers and are all later.



**Figure 1.** A box plot of historical and fictional Raglan heroes’ scores. Scores of historical persons are taken from the previous section of this article. Scores of fictional persons are taken from Carrier (excluding Jesus).<sup>188</sup>

It is clear from our results that Raglan’s archetype is not a strong indicator of mythicism. It might prove useful to substantially modify it, for example to better disambiguate between “mundane” and “fantastical” narrative elements which Raglan often treats as instances of the same attribute. For example, Greek mythical heroes regularly combat not just any adversary but specifically a monster or a person with monstrous features.<sup>189</sup> Historical persons not so much. This modification might, however, face two issues. First, it might result in “downscoring” various fictional figures so much that they would no longer be considered Raglan heroes and, more importantly, it might disproportionately impact heroes from specific cultural backgrounds, depending on how the attributes are “calibrated.” This would be an unfavorable result because shrinking the sample size of Raglan heroes means losing representativity. And second, we often appear to only have “rationalized” accounts of heroes’ lives preserved. These accounts offer “mundane” interpretations of “fantastical” narrative elements.<sup>190</sup> For example, we have noted that both Heracles and Theseus persecute a war against the Thesprotians during their supposedly “peaceful rule.” The reason why specifically the Thesprotians are the target is because the region of Thesprotis harbors the famous oracle Necromanteion, surrounded by geographical features with names lifted from Homer’s description of Hades<sup>191</sup> (e.g. Acheron, Cocytus). The hero’s campaign against Thesprotis thus serves as a “rationalized” account of the frequent motif of descent into Hades. In the case of Heracles and Theseus, we of course have “fantastical” versions of the

<sup>188</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 231.

<sup>189</sup> Moreover, as e.g., Kerényi argues, Heracles’ foes often represent death (or Death), as is apparent from their personal names. Karl Kerényi, *Die Mythologie der Griechen. Die Heroen der Griechen* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1958), 144–91.

<sup>190</sup> On various practices of myth “rationalization” in Mediterranean antiquity, see e.g., Greta Hawes, *Rationalizing Myth in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>191</sup> Or vice versa.

narrative preserved as well but this is not always so. Consider two examples. First, Herodotus (*Histories* 1.110) explains that the name of Cyrus' foster mother means "dog" in Greek ("Cyno") and in Median ("Spako"). Herodotus engages in myth "rationalization" on numerous occasions but here, he does not explicitly state that there was a myth about baby Cyrus being nursed by a dog. This is, however, likely given that it is a common trope, as our own scoring of historical Raglan heroes shows. Second, Theseus reportedly either fell or was thrown off a cliff (Plutarch, *Theseus* 35.4). This might be a "rationalized" account of Theseus' divine translation, as there are extant translation myths involving bodily disappearance which were "rationalized" in similar ways, e.g. Socrates famously discusses whether Oreithyia, believed to have been taken by Boreas to become his divine consort, might have instead fallen from rocks because of a gust of wind (Plato, *Phaedrus* 229c–d). A list of attributes which differentiates between "fantastical" and "mundane" accounts might run into a risk of "downscoring" heroes with only "rationalized" accounts preserved.<sup>192</sup>

Another possible move is to append the Raglan list with other attributes which better differentiate between historical and fictional heroes. Carrier already suggested three additional attributes in his first publication on Jesus mythicism:

Many of the heroes who fulfill this type [i.e., the Raglan archetype] also either (a) performed miracles (in life or as a deity after death) or were (b) preexistent beings who became incarnated as men or (c) subsequently worshipped as savior gods, any one of which homestly should be counted as a twenty-third attribute.<sup>193</sup>

As noted above, in his most recent publication, he appears to pivot even further away from the Raglan archetype in favor of a whole slew of additional attributes supposedly indicating mythicism:

Count up everyone in history who from their earliest record is all at once a worshiped savior-lord, a dying-and-rising demigod, a culture hero and heavenly founder, a conveniently named godman, a miracle-working sage, a preexistent incarnated being, a revelatory space alien, appearing only in sacred literature, who dies and rises from the dead, and whose life improbably fulfills numerous prophecies, and whose only biographies build him out of prior religious heroes he is meant to supersede, and are rife with fabulous and improbable events; whose biographies name no sources, discuss no sources, and have no known sources; and who becomes *that mythologized* in under forty years time [...] and who actually existed.<sup>194</sup>

Carrier himself does not present any scoring of any persons, historical or fictional, based on these additional attributes. Even a cursory look into the primary sources suggests that historical persons routinely score many of these additional points as well. This list, however, is a welcomed contribution to the ongoing debate of whether there is some combination of narrative features

---

<sup>192</sup> It should be noted that there appears to be an opposite tendency to insert "fantastical" elements into biographies of historical persons, especially when the hero accomplished a great feat, perceived to be impossible without the divine being involved in some capacity. For example, Polybius (*History* 3.47) criticizes unnamed historians who depicted "some god or hero" meeting Hannibal and guiding his army through the Alps.

<sup>193</sup> Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 230.

<sup>194</sup> Emphasis original, see Carrier, *Jesus from Outer Space*, 147.

which might serve as a strong indicator of mythicism. There is certainly an opportunity to continue the research presented in this article by overviewing the heroes presented by Carrier and by us to see whether and how many of these additional attributes they score.

However, this essay has firmly demonstrated that the initial 22-point Raglan-Carrier archetype (taking into full account the ways in which each point is utilized) does, in fact, fit numerous historical figures on a fairly regular basis, especially among Greco-Roman historical figures in particular. All future research attempting to utilize the archetype should account for this, and more research should be done to more exhaustively expand these findings.