PLEBEIAN

PLEBEIAN

Journal of the Classics Students' Union
At the University of Toronto

VOLUME VI

———

MMXX

Plebeian Volume VI Editorial Board

Contents

Editor's Note

Writing is a laborious process. Planning, researching, organizing and compiling all your thoughts into a fully formed paper may seem as intricate as the weaving together of the thin threads of fate. Just as Clotho intertwines fibers of soft wool and Atropos cuts the cords with precision, you intertwine nouns with verbs and adjectives. Then you revise, draft after draft, until you finally have your masterpiece. You may not go as far as the authors of ancient verse, who polished their libelli with dry pumice and bound their writings in elegant scrolls, but you too have made your own little work of literature. From there, it's our job at *Plebeian* to polish up, bind with a dark blue covering, and send your little book out to its patron, the reader.

From Roman mosaics and deforestation to drag queens and pubic hair, this edition dares to go where no previous volumes of *Plebeian* have gone before. I would like to thank the authors for submitting their papers as well as my Associate and Copy Editors for their rigorous editing. *Plebeian* is truly at its finest when it has diligent editors and talented authors. Special thanks to Irum and Sydney for their help in preparing this volume, as well as Chiara and Matt for working with the authors prior to the conference. A heartfelt thanks goes to Leah for being the best Deputy Editor-in-Chief I could have asked for. And lastly, I would like to thank the Arts and Science Students' Union and the Department of Classics for their financial support.

I have had the pleasure of working on this journal for the past three years. I began as an Associate Editor learning from those who first started *Plebeian*, and I end as the Editor-in-Chief passing on what I have learned to younger students who have just started their careers in classics. As I complete my final year of undergrad, I can say with confidence that the future of *Plebeian* is in capable hands. Through my work on *Plebeian*, I have not only acquired valuable experience writing and editing papers, but I also gained a community of lifelong friends. And so, dear reader, I hope that this charming little book finds you well, and that Plebeian will bring you as much joy to read as it has brought me to be a part of its creation.

Erica Venturo, Editor-in-Chief

March 2020

A Drag Queen for the People: Pentheus' Drag and Audience Reception in **The Bacchae**

Michias Bahlbi

The art of drag, in so many words, refers to the act of men dressing in women's clothing. One well-known example of this in Greek theatre is Pentheus' transformation in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. The god Dionysus, disguised as a member of his own cult, arrives in the city of Thebes to punish his family for their slander of his mother, Semele, and the outlawing of Dionysiac worship by King Pentheus. As part of his elaborate plan, Dionysus convinces Pentheus to dress in the guise of a maenad, thus dressing him in drag. The tragedy ends with Pentheus being torn apart by the maenads and his own mother, which leads most scholars to take this gender inversion as a sign of his downfall.[1] This reading, however, becomes reductive as it takes drag simply as a signifier of regression and a tragic reversal of fortune. Rather than considering the act itself, these readings ignore the knowledge that Pentheus gains of Dionysiac rituals, which imbues the act with its own, implicit value. These instead favour an emphasis of the ultimate outcome of his drag. His drag inevitably impacts the audience through their identification with him, providing them with an opportunity to broaden their perspective and consider the value of his fluidity in gender. As this play was originally presented at the City Dionysia, an Athenian festival to Dionysus, the audience would have likely been comprised of men, and so it is specifically with this lens that I propose they broaden their horizons.

Pentheus is painted as the reasonable and properly masculine leader, making it easy for the ancient male audience to identify with him. He stands as the voice of reason against the "women leaving home to frisk/in mock ecstasies…in honor of the latest divinity,/a certain Dionysus, whoever he may be!"[2] Pentheus is not only skeptical of the women leaving his domain of power, but he is also skeptical of the god himself. This response, at least to the ancient Athenian audience, seems very shrewd and logical as Pentheus aims to maintain control over the women of his oikos and kingdom as any proper man would at the time. Pentheus also has reason to doubt the divinity of Dionysus due to his belief that Semele was struck for lying about an affair with Zeus, and so his response is again shown to be cautious, as is reflected in the seemingly mocking

---

1 See Kirk Ormand, "Oedipus the Queen: Cross-Gendering without Drag," *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003) and Froma I. Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," *Representations* 1 (1985).

2 Euripides, *The Bacchae*, ed. David Grene, Richard Lattimore, Mark Griffith, Glenn W. Most, trans. William Arrowsmith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 217-220.

tone of disbelief in the latter half of the lines. Kirk Ormand refers to this type of behaviour as "*sophrosyne*", which he translates as temperance, and describes it as a masculine and praiseworthy trait, further supporting why the audience identifies with him.[3] Though his actions could be seen as impious due to Dionysus' uncontested place as an Olympian in Classical Athens, in the context of his mythology, the god is continuously portrayed as a foreign god and thus Pentheus' actions are more reasonable. The audience's identification with Pentheus is important as it allows, or rather, forces them to experience his shifting perspective once he is in drag, and to thus recognize the value of it.

Scholars, such as Ormand and Froma I. Zeitlin, often take Pentheus' drag as emblematic of his fall, a warning to the audience against gender inversion. Both acknowledge Pentheus' overtly masculine traits, which allow the audience to identify with him, but neglect to consider the consequences of this when he is dressed up, due to their negative interpretation. Zeitlin attempts to outline the ways in which tragedy implicitly exhibits feminine aspects through the body, theatrical space, plot, and mimesis, and consistently uses Pentheus as an example in relation to these feminine qualities. When discussing the feminine nature of plot within tragedy, Zeitlin writes, "the costume Pentheus dons therefore matches and visually represents the feminine nature of the strategy he has already chosen. But in the ways of women Pentheus is only an imposter".[4] Through discounting the femininity displayed by Pentheus, she cheapens the experience of the audience going through this transformation alongside him. Within the world of the play, however, he certainly seems to become a woman which is marked by his complete reversal in nature. Dionysus tells him "I commend your change of heart"[5] after Pentheus worries about his appearance and how "to be a real bacchant".[6] These interactions explicitly demonstrate to the audience the extent to which Pentheus' nature also changes once in drag. Not only is Pentheus fully committed to his new role, but Dionysus feels the need to signal and corroborate this for the audience. For all intents and purposes, Pentheus truly does become a woman, but Zeitlin still views Pentheus as an imposter. If this is the case, however, then the impact of his drag becomes lost on the audience. By reducing it to a clumsy imitation and signifier of his downfall, she thus restricts any potential for the audience to learn anything through this transformation. They are unable to perceive any value through this transformation because it essentially is no longer a transformation.

Although Zeitlin fully rejects Pentheus' femininity on the basis

---

3 Ormand, "Oedipus the Queen," 15.
4 Zeitlin, "Playing the Other," 78.
5 Euripides, *Bacchae*, 94.
6 *Bacch.*, 941.

of his biological sex, that is not the only way to interpret his transformation. Queer theorist Judith Butler seeks to demonstrate the inherent instabilities and repetitions that both create and constitute gender and sexuality.[7] One aspect of her theory is the purely performative nature of gender; it "requires a performance that is *repeated*…[and] is at once a re-enactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established"[8]. Due to gender being socially performative rather than an absolute expression, as its naturalization implies, one can alter their performance. In fact, Butler addresses drag as a parody of gender that unravels and exposes the fabrication of gender.[9] She argues that because the biological sex, gender identity, and gender performance of a drag performer does not need to align, it highlights how disjointed these three planes can be, while also mocking the idea of an "original" gender. The audience can see this fluidity in Pentheus' performance once he is in drag saying, "[My hair] must have worked loose/when I was dancing for joy and tossing my head."[10] He begins to actively disregard his previously calm and measured state, interpreted as masculine by the audience, and basks in his joy. Women are often associated with the emotional and uncontrollable in contrast to men, so Pentheus' willing switch reads as a change in his gender performance to the audience.

Furthermore, Pentheus also begins to exhibit another of Zeitlin's feminine categories; that of mimesis. Mimesis is, most broadly, an imitation of reality, but Zeitlin also emphasises the illusion and dramatic irony in tragedy.[11] She identifies it as feminine because women, in the Ancient Greek thought, are mimetic in nature from their foundational myths through Pandora to their role within the illusions and irony of tragedy. Drag itself is mimetic in nature as well, but in first appearing Pentheus immediately says, "How do I look in my getup? Don't I move like Ino?/Or like my mother Agave?"[12] This marks the point at which Pentheus begins to exemplify the many layers of mimesis within the play: his drag mimics the female form, Pentheus himself emulates Ino and Agave, Dionysus disguises himself as a priest to both dress up and encourage Pentheus, and all of this is due to his unwitting involvement in the plot of Dionysus, made ironic by the audience's knowledge of all these layers. *The Bacchae* can be rather complex in its layering of deception and illusion, and Pentheus' drag perfectly encapsulates this mimesis that Zeitlin deems a feminine aspect of tragedy.

---

7 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 163-180.
8 Ibid., 178.
9 Ibid., 175.
10 Eur., *Bacch.*, 929-930.
11 Zeitlin, "Playing the Other," 79.
12 Eur., *Bacch.*, 925-926.

The drag scene exhibits a fluidity in Pentheus' gender performance which Zeitlin acknowledges, but cannot truly appreciate because she does not separate this from his biological sex. In contrast to this, Ormand is able to separate the performative aspect of gender from Pentheus' internal state, yet still arrives at the same conclusion as Zeitlin. In his essay, he seeks to create a framework for gender inversion without necessitating explicitly queer acts like drag. He borrows from Butler to oppose the prevailing readings that link Pentheus' gender performance with a repression of homosexuality, as well as borrowing from Zeitlin, to demonstrate feminine performance in tragic heroes like Ajax and Oedipus.[13] His focus lies with less explicit changes in gender performance, though he does devote some time to Pentheus' drag. He too, however, interprets the act as alienating the audience because it is meant to signal the downfall of Pentheus. This reading is reductive because it disregards the experience of the audience during the scene.

Before the drag scene, the audience is led to identify with Pentheus due to his masculinity. Despite this, scholars do not consider how the audience should interpret the actual scene in which he is first dressed as a woman, instead preferring to go directly to his demise and its effect on the audience. Passing over this scene neglects Euripides' careful efforts in ensuring the audience still identifies with Pentheus from the onset, for example:

> Dionysus: Would you like to see [the women] sitting on the mountains?
> Pentheus: I would pay a lot of gold to see that sight.
> D: What? Are you so passionately curious?…
> P: Yes, very much./I could crouch beneath the fir trees, quietly.
> D: But if you try to hide, they will track you down.
> P: Your point is well taken. I will go openly…
> D: Then you must dress yourself in women's clothes.
> P: Why?/I'm a man. You want me to become a woman?
> D: If they see that you're a man, they'll kill you instantly.
> P: True. You are an old hand at cunning, I see.[14]

The conversation fulfills two purposes: it shows a gradual yielding of Pentheus to the conventionally feminine traits of deception and disguise as well as explicitly bringing the audience along as he succumbs to the coercion. The exchange shows that Pentheus is unwilling to abandon his masculine traits, but agrees to venture further into the feminine to attain his ultimate goal of regaining control. It is only through contin-

---

13 Ormand, "Oedipus the Queen," 1-28.
14 Eur., *Bacch.*, 811-824.

ual prodding with logical reasons, such as "they will track you down" and "they'll kill you instantly", that Pentheus agrees to abandon his rigid masculinity. Further, Euripides chooses to employ the type of dialogue he is well-known for: quick interchanges between characters that simulate a more realistic conversation than the conventionally long speeches of Tragedies. Through this more natural form of dialogue, he invites the audience along and presents drag as a reasonable, rather than outlandish, solution. By choosing this form to introduce the concept, he eases the audience into the fluid performance of Pentheus as opposed to shocking and alienating them from Pentheus.

In addition to easing the audience into the drag scene, Euripides actively invites them to identify with Pentheus throughout the process. While Pentheus delights in his new gender performance, he begins to comment on his own clothing, "I think [my robe is askew]. /At least on my right leg. But on the left the hem/lies straight"[15] When combined with other lines in the scene, it gives the sense that Pentheus is engaging with the audience as much as he is with Dionysus. Pentheus practically teases the audience earlier in the scene as he mimics his mother and aunt, recalling these characters they would have seen on stage. Here, it is almost as though he is looking for a compliment, thus actively drawing the audience into his new gender performance and keeping them fully engaged.

Due to this careful effort to keep the audience engaged with Pentheus, his foray into drag, although brief, becomes a valuable experience by allowing him to gain new knowledge and thus lets the audience consider this value for themselves. Although women are conflated with conventionally negative traits like deception, they also become equated with secrets and knowledge. When Zeitlin discusses theatrical space, she emphasises the role culturally assigned to women as keepers of the home even though, politically, the home belongs to the male. The contest over this space in tragedy is generally waged merely by the woman's presence, but due to these conflicting cultural and political values, she becomes the mediator of the threshold of both the inside and outside, thus privy to knowledge men do not have access to.[16] Similar to Pentheus' inability to control the women of Thebes as a man, he gets in drag to understand what is happening in these realms that exclude him. His motivation while masculine in seeking to regain control, also becomes one of knowledge, and this curiosity is exploited by Dionysus. Through drag, Pentheus begins to straddle these two different worlds and, in the process, gains knowledge he could not learn otherwise.

In addition to what he gains simply by altering his gender per-

---

15 *Bacch.*, 937-939. It is also worth noting that in this edition, the translator has added stage directions such as "coyly primping" to further the feeling of Pentheus engaging with the audience as well as Dionysus.
16 Zeitlin, "Playing the Other," 71-74.

formance, Pentheus inadvertently becomes better acquainted with Dionysiac ritual and rites in the process. At the beginning of Pentheus' drag scene, as his vision blurs and he sees horns sprouting from Dionysus' head, Dionysus replies, "The god/was hostile formerly, but now declares a truce/and goes with us. You now see what you should."[17] The audience can easily read this interaction as Pentheus beginning to recognize the god's true form, especially contrasted with earlier scenes in which Pentheus could not recognize the god,[18] but it is also wrapped up in ritualistic language. Early in the play, as Pentheus questions the disguised Dionysus, he claims to have been initiated by the god himself and, afterwards, learned the rituals and secrets of the cult.[19] This sets up a framework for the later drag scene to act as an initiation of Pentheus, which is reflected by his new knowledge. Furthermore, he begins to use this language of doubles, which is another aspect of Dionysiac rituals.[20] The historian Eric Csapo applies theories of liminality and ritual from the anthropologist Victor Turner, with a focus on the role of the phallus in many rituals, and the phallic processions for the Dionysus. He also briefly turns an eye to *The Bacchae*, and although his engagement with the drag itself is minimal, Csapo discovers a wealth of phallic imagery right before the sacrificial scene in which Pentheus climbs a tree to observe the maenads.[21] Csapo chooses to translate much of the Ancient Greek describing the tree as "erect", in addition to earlier iconography of Dionysus in the form of a tree trunk, which can have forms that are overtly phallic.[22] He ultimately concludes that the scene, though not necessarily a reference to a specific ritual, was likely meant to embody aspects and imagery from Dionysiac rituals. When taken in conjunction with drag acting as Pentheus' initiation, he is able to learn a great deal about the cult, as he had originally hoped. This interpretation also serves to give new meaning to Agave shouting "Unless we take this climbing beast, he will reveal/the secrets of the god,"[23] as Pentheus is not only witnessing the rituals, but in a way, taking part in them.

　　　The audience would likely recognize this ritualistic imagery as well, allowing it to subtly hint at the knowledge gained by Pentheus through his initiation, and ultimately through his drag. The culmination of the knowledge, as is the sole focus of Zeitlin and Ormand, results in Pentheus' demise, which they interpret as positioning the audience against his fluid gender performance. While a valid reading, it reflects an urge to seek reasoning behind extremely non-normative acts, which ultimate-

17 Eur., *Bacch.*, 923-924.
18 *Bacch.*, 499-501.
19 *Bacch.*, 464-473.
20 Eric Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus: Iconology, Ritual, and Gender-Role De/Construction," *Phoenix 51* (1997), 255.
21 Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus," 279-287.
22 Ibid., 258-259.
23 Eur., *Bacch.*, 1108-1109.

ly reflect and reinforce the status quo of the ancient world as we know it. Instead, however, we should take an appropriately queer lens to view this queer act of Pentheus. The queer theorist Lee Edelman draws on the theories of Jacques Lacan and presents queerness as undoing the future of normative society by bringing it closer to the death drive.[24] Edelman uses Lacan's signifiers of the "Symbolic", which is essentially the network of symbols and significations that allow people to comprehend reality, and the "Real", which is a "raw" reality without any symbols to make sense of it, and thus cannot be accessed by people. Edelman argues that queerness is culturally ascribed negativity and stigma, becoming a signifier of the Real within the Symbolic, while also gaining value by accepting this status as a resistance to societal order and representing the inevitability of this resistance within any social order.[25] Queerness, defined as extreme non-normativity, effectively dismantles parts of the Symbolic and brings society ever closer to the death drive thus resulting in no future. Edelman exemplifies this through the concept of reproductive futurism which essentially states that the social order is preserved for the symbolic concept of the Child.[26] All political acts are constrained within this impulse for future preservation, except Queerness itself rejects that anxiety over the future. It becomes emblematic of the present as well as the collapse of the social order through this very rejection of reproductive futurism. In this sense, queerness, as negatively stigmatized non-normativity within any social order, rejects any sort of future, instead figuring the collapse of that social order.

Queerness in the context of having no future opens up a new suite of possibilities to the analysis of queer acts in literature. To consider Pentheus' very queer act of drag within this context, it allows the audience to gain something more than allowed by the conventional reading. It directly works against the heavy emphasis placed on the telos of Pentheus' drag, as its significance should not be contingent on its future. For example, one thing often glanced over by scholars is the importance of the pseudo-initiation of Pentheus into the mystery rites by Dionysus himself. Throughout the play, Dionysus often references his rites as mysteries and inaccessible by the uninitiated.[27] He outright refuses to share them with the uninitiated, yet after dressing up Pentheus, he becomes much more forthright, thus signalling to the audience Pentheus' new position.[28] Yet, strangely enough, this comes about only after he engages in drag. Through this queer act, Pentheus is able to achieve his goals in learning more about the cult and practices, as well as become personally acquainted with them.

24 Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
25 Ibid., 3.
26 Ibid., 2-4.
27 Eur., *Bacch.*, 17-19, 465, 470-491, 500-501.
28 *Bacch.*, 923-924.

For example, during the drag scene, Dionysus teases him with his fate:

> Dionysus: You and you alone will labor for your city. A great
> ordeal awaits you, the one that you're allotted as your fate.
> I shall lead you safely there; someone else shall bring you
> back…
> Pentheus: Yes, my mother.
> D: …conspicuous to all men.
> P: It is for that I go.
> D: You will be carried home…
> P: O luxury!
> D: …cradled in your mother's arms.
> P: You will spoil me!
> D: Yes, in a certain way.
> P: I go to my reward.[29]

Almost as if he is in half a daze, Pentheus understands and plays along with Dionysus, interjecting and complimenting his cryptic words before even the audience is aware. As for Dionysus, he initiated Pentheus with the explicit intent of using him almost as a sacrifice – his "reward". The whole initiation and ritualistic subtext were never necessary for that end, but Dionysus chose to go through the process despite knowing the ultimate outcome. Though Pentheus' "reward" can be seen as his death, I believe it also encompasses everything leading up to it. The ancient audience would have easily been able to recognize much of this imagery, especially as the following scenes resemble both a procession, as Dionysus promises to "lead [him] safely there", and a sacrifice.[30] Even though he knew that there was no future for Pentheus, Dionysus still took that time to personally induct and engage him within the privileged knowledge of his mystery cult, something that would not have been take lightly in the ancient world. The audience is given the space to appreciate the knowledge gained by this act and internally consider the value found in not only drag, but mimicking others.

In conclusion, Pentheus' drag has traditionally been interpreted in such a way that lessened its potential impact on the audience. The Ancient Greeks were certainly no stranger to alterity, often defining their own identity simply by what they were not. All forms of art have always provided a means of reflection and introspection for both creators and consumers, and it is unfair to discount Pentheus' drag from this tradition. His fluid gender performance can easily provide another avenue for the ancient audience to consider themselves and what can be gained

---

29 Eur., *Bacch.*, 963-970.
30 Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus," 281-287.

through this. By examining his queer act in the present tense, in direct opposition of the traditional reading as exemplified here by Ormand and Zeitlin, the knowledge gained by Pentheus of the Dionysiac cult and the women he sought to control can be better appreciated. Ritual and the gods cannot be separated from the broader world in ancient thought, and to see and recognize those undertones within the play would likely have had a much more profound effect than we are able to realize today. We must afford the ancient spectator the agency to recognize these complex inter-actions and thus decide the value of the act and its knowledge despite its ultimate end.

Bibliography

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Csapo, Eric. "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus: Iconology, Ritual, and Gender-Role De/Construction." *Phoenix* 51 (1997): 253-295.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Euripides. *The Bacchae.* Edited by David Grene, Richard Lattimore, Mark Griffith, Glenn W. Most. Translated by William Arrowsmith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Ormand, Kirk. "Oedipus the Queen: Cross-Gendering without Drag." *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003): 1-28.

Zeitlin, Froma. I. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama." *Representations* 1 (1985): 63-94.

A New Conception of Rome and the Roman: Hellenism in the Poetry of the Augustan Poets Vergil and Horace

William Fuller

Tua, Caesar, aetas, "your age, Caesar,"[1] Horace wrote, acknowledging the reign of Augustus as distinct, both from the Republic he claimed to restore, and the Greek world from which he adapts mythology and literature. Augustus styled himself as restorer of the traditions, institutions, and morals of the Republic. Rome's "renaissance" under Augustus, however, saw the infusion of Hellenic influences into the literature of Vergil and Horace. Augustan literary imagery was designed to restore a Roman ideal inherent in Rome's founders, but this imagery as represented in Vergil and Horace introduced a new conception of Rome and the Roman: one whose Greek influences were intentionally emphasized under Augustus' reign. Augustus' vision of an Empire, united by virtue under peace, drew upon the mythological and literary traditions of Alexandrian, Classical, and even Archaic, Greece. Augustus, through Maecenas, influenced Horace and Vergil as they created the legitimizing foundational narrative of Rome and the *gens Iulia*. Greek influences are exhibited in Vergil by overlaps in plot, character, theme, and structure between the *Aeneid* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Influences in Horace include the epinician ode and language of Pindar, as well as stylistic techniques from Alcaeus, Sappho, and Callimachus. Augustus proclaimed the revival of the Golden Age of Rome. However, as seen through its founding poetry, the ideals of the Augustan Age did not restore traditional Rome, but created a new cultural ideal of Rome and the Roman based upon a marriage of Republican virtues and Hellenistic culture.

   The most prominent line of literary criticism regarding Virgil's *Aeneid* denotes the work as a "political poem."[2] However, recent scholarship, notably by Peter White, has partially repudiated this view, which makes an examination of both claims necessary before further argumentation on the significance of Greek elements in the *Aeneid* can take place. The line of literary criticism that labelled the *Aeneid* as a political poem began with Le Bossu in the 17th century. Le Bossu's ideas were adopted in fragments by contemporary English writers, notably Dryden. This line of criticism was picked up and cemented by Henri Patin at the end of the century.[3] <u>White returns to</u> the origin of this line of criticism and makes the claim

1 Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4.15.
2 Peter White, *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 101.
3 Ibid., 106.

that Le Bossu's work was only interpreted in part by the English, and that the *Aeneid* was less the result of coercion on the behalf of Augustus than of moral philosophizing by Vergil himself.[4] White makes the convincing argument that Vergil wrote on themes that Augustus approved and that he wrote with a degree of autonomy, investing his own political and ideological opinions in his work. The degree of the *Aeneid's* politicization lies somewhere between White's thesis and Dryden and Patin's argument. It is undeniable that Augustus exerted influence over Vergil as he admits in the *Georgics* that he was "far from easy commands," which refers to the commands of Maecenas. [5] Further, the lettered correspondence between Augustus and Vergil and the laudatory allusions to Augustus in the *Aeneid* exemplify that Vergil was aware that Augustus was a dominating member of his audience. In light of this, this paper recognizes that the *Aeneid* may not be politicized as completely as previously thought, but retains the traditional view that the *Aeneid* had underlying political motivations that aimed to legitimize Augustus' reign.

As a political poem, it is significant that the *Aeneid* shares so many thematic and narrative similarities with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, since the intentional inclusion of Greek elements in a work designed to place Rome within history suggest that the ideal of the Principate held by Augustus sought to adapt Hellenic culture. Structurally, books I-VI of the *Aeneid* concern the concept of *nostos*, or homecoming by sea, which is central to the *Odyssey*. Odysseus attempts to find home, while Aeneas sought to establish one, and both encounter similar dangers and temptations in their journeys. Books VII-XII of the *Aeneid* are structurally similar to the *Iliad*: they both narrate conquering and warfare. Aeneas shares a similarity to Achilles, as each has a beloved friend who dies (Patroclus and Pallas respectively) and both respond with overwhelming rage. The *Aeneid* borrows symbolism and characters from Homer's works. Both the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* employ the ekphrasis of a shield. Achilles' shield depicts imagery of Greek history and life,[6] while Aeneas' shield depicts the future glories of Rome.[7] In addition, Polyphemus from the *Odyssey* and Cacus from the *Aeneid* mirror each other as characters, while Scylla, Charybdis, and Circe are explicitly mentioned in both works. Aeneas and Odysseus both offend a god (Hera and Poseidon), and must resist the temptations of complacency in the form of Calypso and the Lotus Eaters for Odysseus and Dido for Aeneas. Vergil incorporates Homeric themes and characters, as his work constructed the history of Rome's founding and the origins of the *gens Iulia*, just as Augustus intentionally incorporates Greece into his concep-

4 Ibid., 102.

5 Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 3.41.

6 Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 18.478–608.

7 Vergil, *Aeneid*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Dell, 2004), 8.810-955.

tion of the Roman state.

    As well, the *Aeneid* has the same literary form to the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. Vergil adopts Homer's dactylic hexameter and heroic simile. The use of dactylic hexameter in the *Aeneid* recalls Homer's works to Vergil's readers, even though the *Aeneid* would have been read instead of sung. Vergil's use of the heroic simile, a device repeatedly used by Homer, strengthened the association between Vergil and Homer. For example, Vergil writes, "Like blood-stained Mars himself he rode, when Mars goes headlong by the frozen Hebrus river, Beating out claps of thunder on his shield . . . That was the way of Turnus."[8] This simile is comparable to those used by Homer: "huge Achilles neared. The way a serpent fed on poisonous herbs, coiled at his lair upon a mountainside."[9] Most elites in Roman society were familiar with Homer; thus the *Aeneid*, by its adherence to the form, themes, and characters of Homer, situates itself as a continuation of the Greek canon of literature and myth, seemingly placing Rome as an extension, and a perfection, of Greece.

    Vergil borrows from Homer, but a crucial distinction must be maintained: Vergil adapts the work of Homer more than he adopts it. Vergil critiques characters and elements in Homer's works and shapes them to fit ideals held by the Republic. Vergil compares Aeneas to Odysseus for the purpose of portraying Aeneas, and thereby Rome, as superior to Greece. For example, while Odysseus goes to the underworld and seeks news from his mother, Aeneas seeks the advice of his father (the *paterfamilias*), thereby displaying *pietas*, a traditional Republican virtue. Aeneas' (and thus Roman) virtues are further exhibited by Aeneas' stoicism, piety, and dutifulness, whereas Odysseus lies and cheats. Odysseus spends ten years with Calypso, shirking his duty to his family. In contrast, "Duty-bound, Aeneas, though he struggled with desire . . . took the course heaven gave him and went back to the fleet."[10] Whereas Odysseus promotes the interests of his private life, Aeneas sacrifices for the sake of the public good, which is another important Republican virtue. Aeneas epitomizes the pious Roman's adherence to duty, and the words "duty-bound" recur throughout the poem as a descriptor for him.[11] This duty to the father is also interesting in light of Augustus' title being "father of the fatherland," as Aeneas' fealty and love for his father, displayed throughout the poem, seem to promote obedience to the *pater patriae* of Vergil's age, Augustus. Aeneas is also distinguished from Odysseus by his perseverance in terms of Circe and the Sirens. While Odysseus temporarily succumbs to Circe's charms and listens to the Siren, Aeneas entertains neither, signaling a Republican abhorrence for vice and temptation. Through these

8 *Aen.*, 6.454-463.
9 Hom., *Iliad*, 22.89-91.
10 Verg., *Aen.*, 4.545.
11 *Aen.*, 1.519, 6.13, 6.473.

comparisons, it is evident that Vergil does not adopt the Greek virtues from the Odyssey in their entirety, but rather adapts and shapes them to create something new: a conception of the ideal Roman based upon the merging of Hellenistic and Republican ideals.

A complete examination of all the Greek influences on Horace's poetry is beyond the scope of one paper. This study limits itself to a brief examination of the scholarship concerning Horace's link to Alcaeus, Sappho, and Callimachus, and focuses in greater depth on Horace's link to Pindar. Some modern scholars have emphasized Horace's connection to Callimachus and Alexandrian poetry in particular, notably J. K. Newman in *Augustus and the New Poetry*.[12] A closer investigation of Horace's links to Pindar is merited. As N. T. Kennedy writes, "there is a danger that his [Newman's] emphasis on more recent poets may obscure the 'classical' influence on Horace's poetry."[13] The link between Horace and Alcaeus is shown through Horace's own attestations: "my Greek lyre, sing a Latin song. You were first tuned by a citizen [Alcaeus] of Lesbos."[14] Tenney Frank also writes that Horace "certainly went to Alcaeus for his Sapphic, Alcaic, Greater Asclepiadic, and Ionic meters, and probably for his Lesser Asclepiadics and the Greater Sapphics as well."[15] Horace's link to Sappho is also shown in his own words, "Sappho complaining on her Aeolian strings"[16] Horace's admiration of Greek poetry is seen in his declaration:[17] "if you rank me among the lyric bards of Greece, I shall soar aloft and strike the stars with my head."[18] His debt to Greek poetry is already evident, before any examination of Pindar has taken place. However, comparisons of Horace's and Pindar's poetry reveal specifically which elements of Greek culture were adapted by Horace and therefore approved of by Augustus, elucidating the political intent of Horace's poetry.

Horace adopts Pindar's epinician ode structure in his praises of Augustus, imbuing the constructed image of the Augustan Age and the Romans' understanding of their own history, with themes from Greek mythology. Kennedy calls Horace an "*aemulus*" of Pindar, which is accurate for Horace's appropriation, not only in the structure of Pindar's poems, but also in his language and symbolism.[19] Opening Horace's "In Praise of Gods and Heroes," he writes, "What man or hero do you choose to celebrate with lyre or shrill pipe."[20] This is a clear adaption of the open-

---

12 J. K. Newman, *Augustus and the New Poetry*, (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1967).
13 N. T. Kennedy, "Pindar and Horace," *Acta Classica 18* (1975), 9.
14 Hor., *Odes*, 1.32.
15 Tenney Frank, "How Horace Employed Alcaeus," *Classical Philology* 22 (1927), 291-95.
16 Hor., *Odes*, 2.13.
17 For further reading, notable scholarship comparing Sappho and Horace has been done by Tom Phillips and Morgan Llewelyn.
18 Hor., *Odes*, 1.1.
19 Kennedy, "Pindar and Horace," 10.
20 Hor., *Odes*, 1.12.

ing of Pindar's "Second Olympian," which begins: "Hymns that rule the lyre what god, what hero, and what man shall we celebrate?"[21] Horace twice mentions Pindar directly. Ode 4.2 states that any poet who tries to match Pindar shall fail, and Ode 4.9 ranks Pindar first among a list of other Greek poets. Horace also adopts the Pindaric motif of proclaiming his power to immortalize himself and the object of his poetry through the poet's command over *kleos* (glory, in this context through song). Pindar writes, "I shall win my reward by paying my tribute of song."[22] He then says "mortals are forgetful of whatever does not reach the highest bloom of skillful song."[23] Using a similar motif of *kleos*, Horace writes, "A two-formed poet, I will be borne through the clear sky on wings neither slight nor common, nor will I delay in lands for a long time and greater than envy."[24] Then he writes, "Many a brave man lived before Agamemnon; but all lie buried unwept and unknown in the long night, because they lack a sacred bard."[25] Horace's adoption of Pindar's poetic structures and motifs demonstrates a consciousness of public opinion, both contemporary and forthcoming. Pindar's epinician odes and Horace's odes both celebrate and immortalize a subject, who for Horace was Augustus, which emphasizes Horace's consciousness of public image and suggests that he aimed to manipulate the audience's perception of himself and of Augustus.

Augustus, as the subject of many of Horace's Odes, is legitimized by Horace's poetry in its character, but also in its history. Epinician odes generally adhere to the same structure: praise of the family of the individual being celebrated, the family's city, the heroes the family is descended from, and then the gods who sired the heroes. In this way, to borrow from Johnson, epinician odes create "a genealogy of glory."[26] Horace creates "a genealogy of glory" for Augustus, but does so by situating him within Greek mythology. Horace praises the *gens Iulia*, lauding "leaders who lived their lives like true men, of Troy and Anchises and the offspring of kindly Venus."[27] He reinforces the narrative of the *Aeneid*, recalling "the wars fought beneath sacred Troy."[28] He then writes "let the exiles reign and prosper."[29] He turns "exile" into a title of pride because of the virtue of Augustus' ancestors. Horace reinforces the image of Aeneas as Rome's progenitor, and explicitly connects his ancestral status to Augus-

21 Pindar, *Isthmian, Nemean, Olympian, Pythian Odes,* trans. William H. Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 2.
22 Pind., *Pythian Odes*, 6.
23 Pind., *Isthmian*, 7.
24 Hor., *Odes*, 2.20.
25 *Odes*, 4.9.
26 W.R. Johnson. "Tact in the Drusus Ode: Horace, Odes 4.4," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 2 (1969), 176.
27 Hor., *Odes*, 4.15.
28 *Odes*, 3.17.
29 *Odes*, 3.3.

tus, adding legitimacy to the *princeps*. It is not only Aeneas with whom Horace conflates Augustus, but Greek heroes as well. In Ode 3.3 Horace writes, "Pollux and roving Hercules after a long struggle reached the fiery heights; reclining in their company, Augustus will drink nectar with rosy lips." By equating Augustus with Pollux and Hercules, Horace identifies Augustus as a hero, but a hero within the context of Greek mythology. Horace writes that Augustus "comes home victorious like Hercules from the Spanish shore."[30] The comparison between Augustus and Hercules, and the shifting of geography from Greece to the "Spanish shore" Latinizes Greek mythology. This Latinization results in a paradox: Horace's poetry works in tandem with Vergil's to construct an image of the Roman state and its history. Nevertheless, both poets intentionally infuse their work with Greek elements and by Latinizing Greek mythology, they also partially Hellenize the imagery of the Augustan Age. The elements of Greek mythology that are adopted by Horace and Vergil are given a Roman facade but remain Greek at their core.

Horace, adhering to Pindar's epinician ode structure, praises Venus from whom the *gens Iulia* descended, but also calls upon Jupiter and Saturn to underpin Augustus' Principate with divine legitimacy. In Ode 1.2 Horace refers to both Augustus and Jupiter as "father," and writes, "Father [Jupiter] and protector of the human race, O son of Saturn, you have been entrusted by fate with the care of mighty Caesar; may you have Caesar as vice-regent of your kingdom." By invoking Saturn, Horace recalls Hesiod's conception of the Ages of Man and the initial golden age over which Saturn ruled. Augustus' peace and reign are reminiscent of the mythical golden age, further demonstrating how Augustus' image, and the image he constructed of his empire, was built on pillars adapted from Greece. Horace borrows from Pindar and Greek odes in general once more by copying the technique of invoking the gods and their powers to lend the object of one's poem merit by divine association. Horace writes, "Because Jove thunders in heaven we have always believed that he is king there; Augustus will be deemed a god on earth when the Britons and the deadly Persians have been added to our empire."[31] Horace does not equate Augustus with Jupiter but draws parallels between them. As a god on earth, Augustus is the "father" of the Romans, just as Jupiter is the father of the gods. Augustus' role as divine father figure is indicated again as Horace describes him as, "Descendant of the kindly gods, best guardian of Romulus' folk."[32] Augustus is presented as the human representation of Jupiter on earth. Horace writes, "I shall not be afraid of insurrection or violent death while Caesar is in charge of the world."[33] One

30 *Odes*, 3.14.
31 *Odes*, 3.5.
32 *Odes*, 4.5.
33 *Odes*, 3.14.

would think that it is Jupiter who is in charge of the world, but Horace places Jupiter and Augustus in same role. Pindar, in Nemean 6, claims that "we bear some resemblance to the immortals, either in greatness of mind or in nature." Pindar here is positing that men can ascend to the heights of the gods through virtue, and this is a theme Horace adopts in his praise of Augustus, whom Horace places "among the stars and in the council of Jove."[34]

Beyond his adoption of Pindar's elevated language and the structure of the epinician ode, Horace not only adopts Pindar's themes of virtue and valor but also adds the Republican virtues of piety and manly virtue. Horace, for his ability to espouse an idealized conception of the Roman, owes a debt to Pindar. As Nisbett and Hubbard write, "the range of themes and tones [of "the Greek tradition of lyric song"] answered human experience far more fully than the restricted scope of Roman satire."[35] The Greek tradition of lyric song was necessary for the creation of Augustus' image as it allowed Pindar to elevate Augustus to the heights of heroes and gods and legitimize his position as *princeps*. Greek lyric poetry provided a medium of expression that Horace would otherwise have been without. On the rediscovery of Greek lyric Gabba writes, "This revival was intended as a return to the glorious literary models . . . and to the ideals they represented."[36] Such ideals were, for Pindar, mental and physical excellence (*arete*), toil, and aesthetic beauty (in which the Prima Porta is a physical manifestation of this ideal).[37] In Ode 2.9 Horace writes, "put a stop to these unmanly lamentations, and let us rather sing of Augustus Caesar's latest victories," thereby promoting a conception of masculinity that Augustus embodies. Augustus is also an "incomparable husband," which demonstrates his manly virtue and piousness.[38] On the theme of piety Horace writes, "For every beginning seek their [the gods'] approval; to them attribute its outcome."[39] Lastly, Horace's debt to Pindar is seen in his *Carmen Saeculare*, in which "the panegyric of the Augustan epoch comes even more to the fore."[40] The *Carmen Saeculare* is a performative poem, a sub-genre previously unknown in Rome, but introduced by Horace from Pindar's precedent. Without "the tradition of lyric composition which he appropriated from Greece," and from Pindar in particular, Horace would not have been able to construct the image of Augustus and the Augustan

---

34 *Odes*, 3.25.

35 Nisbett and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes, Book I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 16.

36 Emilio Gabba, "Political and Cultural Aspects of the Classicistic Revival in the Augustan Age," *Classical Antiquity 1* (1982), 47.

37 From *Olympian 6*: "excellence without danger is honoured neither among men nor in hollow ships. But many people remember, if a fine thing is done with toil."

38 Hor., *Odes*, 3.14.

39 *Odes*, 3.6.

40 The Oxford Classical Dictionary, "Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)," Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Age that he did. [41]

   Exerting his influence on the poetry of Vergil and Horace, Augustus fostered an ideal of the Principate as a restoration of the Republic. The poetry of Vergil and Horace complemented each other in this aim, as Breed writes, "Ode 4.15 in fact projects the Aeneid, or a sanitized version of it, as the Roman people's everlasting hymn in praise of Augustus and his age."[42] However, by examining Vergil's debt to Homer and Horace's debt to Pindar and other Greek poets, it becomes clear that the *Aeneid* and Horace's *Odes* and *Carmen Saeculare* did not restore the imagery of the Republic, but rather constructed an ideal of Rome and the Roman people: one based upon a marriage of Hellenistic mythology and culture to Republican virtues. The Principate, as seen through Vergil and Horace, marked the emergence of a new conception of what it meant to be Roman. It was a conception that could not have risen without the precedents set by the Greek lyric poets, whose structures, meters, themes, and symbols, were all necessary to the work of Vergil and Horace. Thus, Augustus' claim that he restored the Republic is false for both cultural and political reasons. Vergil and Horace, by Latinizing Hellenistic culture, internalize the Greek culture from which they drew inspiration, imbuing Greek values and history within the era's burgeoning ideal of Rome, the Roman, and Rome's first citizen.

---

41 Nisbett and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes, Book 1*, 21.

42 Brian Breed, "Tua, Caesar, aetas: Horace Ode 4.15 and the Augustan Age," *American Journal of Philology* 125 (2004), 245.

Bibliography

Barchiesi, Alessandro. "Poetry, Praise, and Patronage: Simonides in Book 4 of Horace's '*Odes.*'" *Classical Antiquity* (1996): 5-47.

Beck, Deborah. "Ecphrasis, Interpretation, and Audience in Aeneid 1 and Odyssey 8." *American Journal of Philology* 128 (2007): 533-549.

Bond, Robin. "The Augustan Utopia of Horace and Vergil and the Imperial Dystopia of Petronius and Juvenal." *Studies in Classical Antiquity* vol. 19 (2010): 31-52.

Breed, Brian. "Tua, Caesar, aetas: Horace Ode 4.15 and the Augustan Age." *American Journal of Philology* 125 (2004): 245-253.

Frank, Tenney. "How Horace Employed Alcaeus." *Classical Philology* 22 (1927): 291-95.

Gabba, Emilio. "Political and Cultural Aspects of the Classicistic Revival in the Augustan Age." *Classical Antiquity* 1 (1982): 43-65.

Homer. *Iliad.* Translated by Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Homer. *Odyssey.* Translated by Richmond Lattimore. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2007.

Horace. *Odes and Epodes.* Edited and translated by Niall Rudd. Loeb Classical Library 33. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Jacobson, Howard. "Cacus and the Cyclops." *Mnemosyne* 42 (1989): 101-02.

Johnson, W. R. "Tact in the Drusus Ode: Horace, Odes 4.4." *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 2 (1969): 171-81.

Kennedy, N. T. "Pindar and Horace." In *Acta Classica* 18 (1975): 9.

Kittler, Friedrich. "In the Wake of the *Odyssey*." In *Cultural Politics* 8 (2012): 413-427.

Newman, J. K. *Augustus and the New Poetry.* Bruxelles: Latomus, 1967.

Nisbett and Hubbard. *A Commentary on Horace Odes*, *Book I*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

The Oxford Classical Dictionary. "Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Phillips, Tom. "Between Pindar and Sappho: Horace 4.2.9-12." *Mnemosyne* 67 (2014): 466-474.

Pindar. *Isthmian*, *Nemean*, *Olympian*, *Pythian Odes.* Edited and translated by William H. Race. Loeb Classical Library 56. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Virgil. *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1*-6. Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough. Revised by G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library 63. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916.

Vergil. *Aeneid.* Translated by Allen Mandelbaum. New York: Bantam Dell, 2004.

White, Peter. *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome.* London: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Zanker, Andreas. "Late Horatian Lyric and the Virgilian Golden Age." *American Journal of Philology* 131 (2010): 495-516.

A Case of Overblown Deforestation in Roman Britain

Paul Ionescu

In the *Agricola,* Tacitus inserts a now famous speech into the mouth of the Caledonian chieftain Calgacus, who angrily proclaims that the Romans create desolation and call it peace.[1] He decries Roman imperialism and the supposed talent of the legions for overrunning and destroying everything in their path. While Calgacus may have been right from the perspective of liberty-yearning senators like Tacitus, the actual effects of Roman invasion and colonization on the environment of northern Britain is far more nuanced and complex than the ancient texts would lead their readers to believe. Across the Roman border at Hadrian's Wall and its hinterlands in the Romanized south and quasi-Roman northern areas, deforestation and environmental damage did occur to some degree, but the Roman state cannot be portrayed as a rapacious consumer of environmental products in this area.

In the territories that can be described as completely under the sovereignty of Rome (up to and including Hadrian's wall), palynological records, such as the study of pollen in the geological record, suggest that tree cover decreased for centuries and failed to recover until the Romans left the island in the early fifth century CE.[2] Palynological studies on Northumbria, a region close to Hadrian's Wall, shows the rapid replacement of trees with grasses at the onset of the second century CE with no environmental regeneration occurring, even after the abandonment of Britain.[3] It has been theorized that Northumbria was deforested around the time that Hadrian's Wall was being built due to increased timber demands from construction,[4] but it is hard to definitively link the palynological record to specific events in Roman history.[5] However, it is unquestionable that the construction of Hadrian's Wall (or any large Roman architectural project) did put at least some stress on the local environment. Petra Dark notes that "In many areas there was apparently further clearance in the Roman period, and in the extreme north of England this may have accompanied establishment of the Hadrianic frontier."[6] Clearly this is a viable hypoth-

---

1 Tacitus, *Agricola*, 29-38.
2 Lisa Dumayne-Peaty, "Continuity or Discontinuity? Vegetation Change in the Hadrianic-Antonine Frontier Zone of Northern Britain at the End of the Roman Occupation," *Journal of Biogeography* 26, no. 3 (1999), 662.
3 Lisa Dumayne, "The Effect of the Roman Occupation on the Environment of Hadrian's Wall: A Pollen Diagram from Fozy Moss, Northumbria," *Britannia* 25 (1994), 217-24.
4 Ibid., 222.
5 W. S. Hanson, "Forest Clearance and the Roman Army," *Britannia* 27 (1996), 354-58.
6 Petra Dark, "Pollen Evidence for the Environment of Roman Britain," *Britannia* 30 (1999), 266.

esis, but without more precise palynological records it is hard to say to what degree Hadrian's Wall led to deforestation.

There is also some dubious accessory evidence to widespread deforestation of the Roman borderlands as well. The archeological remains of Romano-British homes around the time of the construction of Hadrian's wall are overwhelmingly made of stone. Some scholars have used this data to point to a lack of available wood in the area, but this is somewhat problematic.[7] Wood is less likely to survive in the archeological record than stone, and stone houses may have been common because of the desire to build more permanent and defensible residences, rather than because of material limitations. This does not mean there was less forest cover among sections of Hadrian's Wall vis-à-vis the south lacking among sections of Hadrian's Wall but without further definitive evidence it is hard to say whether the stone houses are a symptom of a greater problem or just a stylistic choice.

In opposition to purely Roman Britain, Southern Caledonia has a markedly different record in terms of deforestation. Southern Caledonia cannot be defined as an area completely under Rome's thumb as the area frequently switched between Roman and barbarian control. The short-lived campaigns of Agricola and Septimius Severus and the slightly longer-lived establishment of the Antonine Wall frontier all point to a region where Roman power was often exercised but never in a permanent manner. Once the Romans became involved in Caledonia from the late first century CE onwards, palynological evidence shows that the Caledonian forest cover began to grow.[8] Of course, more palynological studies from a wider range of areas in Caledonia would help paint a clearer picture. This is not to say that the Roman rule was a great example of environmental stewardship, but Roman actions in the area directly led to environmental regeneration. Through frequent raiding and intervention in Southern Scotland, the Romans destroyed societal cohesion among the Caledonians and almost certainly caused a drop in population.[9] By stressing the Caledonian tribes to the point of no return for centuries, the Romans caused a decrease in both the amount of land being farmed and the size and number of larger population centers – both of which would have been large consumers of timber otherwise.[10] Calgacus may have been correct in his assertion of *societal* desolation, but the actual natural landscape of Caledonia did quite well under indirect Roman rule.

There are other issues as well with the assumption that the Romans caused large-scale deforestation in the lower parts of Britain. As

---

7 Lisa Dumayne, "The Effect of the Roman Occupation," 223.

8 Graeme Whittington and Kevin J. Edwards, "'Ubi Solitudinem Faciunt Pacem Appellant': The Romans in Scotland, a Palaeoenvironmental Contribution," *Britannia* 24 (1993), 20.

9 Ibid., 23.

10 Ibid., 23-24.

Harris notes, the Romans themselves had intelligent strategies for managing their timber needs in the form of coppicing and the double use of productive trees for both food products and timber (such as fruit trees).[11] These two strategies would have likely ameliorated some of the stress on Romano-British forest cover. Grove and Rackham also single out building projects as the largest consumers of timber in antiquity.[12] While large architectural projects existed in Roman Britain, they were never on the same level as the heavily urbanized east or Italy. Shipbuilding is also included by Grove and Rackham as the largest consumer of timber under the construction category,[13] but it is highly unlikely that large fleets were being constructed in Britain during Roman times. The only hostile forces in the area, the Caledonians, are never described as a seafaring enemy, and the fact that the main Roman fleet was based at Misenum in Italy likely means that shipbuilding in Britain did not consume serious amounts of timber.

Fuel is more challenging to address. The population pressures on Roman Britain are important but those will be discussed later, and instead focus must first be on the other major use of wood as fuel in Roman Britain: mining. Roman Britain had a large number of mines and the high mineral output required large amounts of fuel for both the construction of the mine and the smelting process. However, Harris notes that the actual amount of wood needed for even highly productive mines, like Athens' silver mines at Laurion, was far less than previously assumed.[14] Considering that Laurion is probably among the most productive (certainly one of the most famous) mines in antiquity, it is safe to assume that the demand for timber for smaller-scale mining in Roman Britain was not a principal driver of deforestation as it might have been in areas with richer mineral deposits like Hispania or Dacia.

Next, the population of Roman Britain itself would have been one of the largest consumers of timber as fuel, likely equalling or surpassing the usage from mining. To burn even larger amounts of wood throughout roughly four centuries of imperial colonization (in order to effect catastrophic and continuous deforestation), the Romano-British populace would have had to grow throughout the entire period. This is simply not the case. While it is possible to assume that the population of Roman Britain grew throughout the initial colonization period, helped in part by the establishment of large urban centers like Londinium, past the Antonine period it is difficult to determine whether the population was even just at the same level as before. Diseases like the Antonine plague during the late

---

11 William V. Harris, *The Ancient Mediterranean Environment between Science and History* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 190.
12 A.T Grove and Oliver Rackham, *The Nature of Mediterranean Europe: An Ecological History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 167.
13 Ibid., 167.
14 Ibid., 172.

160's CE likely depressed the population and later warfare with stronger barbarian adversaries, like the Picts, likely caused at least some level of emigration from the island. The emigration was probably both in the form of civilians leaving for security reasons and military men leaving (with their families as well) as they were called back to the European mainland during late antiquity. This culminated in the complete absence of a Roman military presence in Britain by 411 CE, which guaranteed an exodus of thousands of men. Roman Britain became a more dangerous (and perhaps sicklier) place to live as time went on, decreasing the possibility that the population was growing and thus consuming more timber.

It is also problematic to assume that deforestation in Britain was solely caused by the Romans. The palynological evidence points to cycles of deforestation and reforestation beginning as early as the Bronze Age.[15] After the forest cover regenerated from the Bronze Age clearance (which the Romans obviously could not have caused), deforestation started up again under the original Iron Age inhabitants of Britain.[16] Hanson alleges that they were the ones to start this period of serious deforestation and that the Romans merely continued it saying that, "those areas which still retained their woodland cover were probably largely cleared by the end of the Roman period,"[17] signifying a longer process, of which the Romans were only the latter part. Some separate palynological studies also show regeneration of forest cover in three separate parts of Britain before the Romans ever stepped foot on the island.[18] This appears to shift some of the blame away from the Romans and the changes they wrought during the occupation. Hanson then posits that the expansion of both agriculture and settlements throughout the island led to deforestation.[19] The expansion of agriculture and settlements itself, he alleges, have to be caused by the increasing population of Britain during the Iron Age and Roman period.[20] Of course, we have established above that assuming a continually growing population in Roman Britain is rife with issues and many of the same issues would have plagued Iron Age Britain. Inter and intra-tribal warfare meant that violence was likely equally or more common in the Iron Age than in the Roman period, and just because there is no record of any pre-Roman plagues, it does not mean they did not occur. When the population did grow, and it certainly did at points as more settlements appear and more evidence of human habitation shows up in the archeological record, the population did not increase evenly and linearly as the Pre-Ro-

---

15 Alex Brown, "From Iron Age to Early Medieval: Detecting the Ecological Impact of the Romans on the Landscape of South-East Wales," *Britannia* 44 (2013), 252-53.

16 W. S. Hanson, "Forest Clearance and the Roman Army," 357.

17 Ibid., 358.

18 Lisa Dumayne-Peaty, "Continuity or Discontinuity?," 643.

19 W. S. Hanson, "Forest Clearance and the Roman Army," 355.

20 Ibid., 355.

man regeneration of forest cover attests to.[21]

However, it must be noted that the Pre-Roman reforestation, (which in three areas continued into the Roman Period), does not necessarily suggest that the population was contracting. Considering that all other areas surveyed in Romano-British times experienced at least some level of deforestation, it could simply be a sign of large internal migration and/or the establishment of different population centers. [22] Such actions taken before and especially after the Roman invasion seem very plausible as Roman castra spring up and encourage the development of towns around them. Some of the reforestation in other areas began as early as the second century, though according to Dumayne-Peaty this is limited to Northern Britain and Southern Caledonia and is most likely due to the decreased agricultural land cover.[23] Whether this is the result of a smaller population or new and intensive agricultural practices near Hadrian's Wall is unclear and necessitates further research.

Therefore, one may conclude that with the exception of the area directly around Hadrian's Wall, which was heavily and permanently denuded of trees,[24] deforestation was never serious enough to stop widespread reforestation of trees by 411 CE.[25] It is apparent that Roman demands on the environment, through industry, security, and population needs were never high enough so as to greatly reduce the forest cover of Roman Britain. Indeed, major deforestation first occurred in the periods before Roman rule and major regeneration in some areas began before and during the aforementioned era. Thus, a revaluation needs to be made on the assumption that the Roman invasion and subsequent occupation of Britain led to catastrophic degeneration in the natural landscape of the island. Some damage did of course occur, but it was minor enough to recover by the end of antiquity in almost all cases.

It is now far too simplistic to take Calgacus' (and more broadly, Tacitus and other Roman elites') belief that the Romans wrought desolation upon all the lands they invaded at face value, especially when it comes to the environmental integrity of a region. While the Romans might not have been careful stewards of their lands, it is clear that their impact on Britain was neither very serious nor (for the most part) permanent. The Romans may have turned barbarian societies into freedom-less wastelands, but they did not do the same to the barbarians' land.

---

21 Lisa Dumayne-Peaty, "Continuity or Discontinuity?," 643.
22 Ibid., 662.
23 Ibid., 643.
24 Lisa Dumayne, "The Effect of the Roman Occupation," 214-24.
25 Lisa Dumayne-Peaty, "Continuity or Discontinuity?," 662.

Bibliography

Brown, Alex. "From Iron Age to Early Medieval: Detecting the Ecological Impact of the Romans on the Landscape of South-East Wales." *Britannia* 44 (2013): 250-57.

Dark, Petra. "Pollen Evidence for the Environment of Roman Britain." *Britannia* 30 (1999): 247-72.

Dumayne-Peaty, Lisa. "Continuity or Discontinuity? Vegetation Change in the Hadrianic Antonine Frontier Zone of Northern Britain at the End of the Roman Occupation." *Journal of Biogeography* 26, no. 3 (1999): 643-65.

Dumayne, Lisa. "The Effect of the Roman Occupation on the Environment of Hadrian's Wall: A Pollen Diagram from Fozy Moss, Northumbria." *Britannia* 25 (1994): 217-24.

Dumayne-Peaty, L. "Forest Clearance in Northern Britain during Romano-British Times: ReAddressing the Palynological Evidence." *Britannia* 29 (1998): 315-22.

Grove, A. T., & Rackham, Oliver. *The Nature of Mediterranean Europe: An Ecological History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Hanson, W. S. "Forest Clearance and the Roman Army." *Britannia* 27 (1996): 354-58.

Harris, William V. *The Ancient Mediterranean Environment between Science and History*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Tacitus. *Agricola.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Whittington, Graeme, & Edwards, K.J. "'Ubi Solitudinem Faciunt Pacem Appellant': The Romans in Scotland, a Palaeoenvironmental Contribution." *Britannia* 24 (1993): 13-25.

"Turbo-vulcanized": Gender and Pubic Hair Depilation in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusae

Jennifer MacPherson

At the beginning of Kinsman's drag transformation in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides tells him that he means "*[pointing to the Kinsman's beard]* To shave this off, and *[pointing to the Kinsman's lower trunk]* singe you down below."[1] The logic behind this is questionable: why is it necessary to depilate Kinsman's pubic hair if he will be covered by women's clothing? Judith Butler's thoughts on drag and gender can help answer this question. Butler states, "The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance."[2] In Kinsman's drag transformation, the depilation can be seen as an attempt to unify these three gender dimensions, with pubic hair as the nexus between the anatomical and performative, modified in an attempt to access female identity. In doing so, pubic hair comes to represent an anatomical costume, a sexualized beard, and a veil. However, the result is that the dimensions of gender are instead shown to be distinct and unsubstantive, and the male characters' idea of female gender is shown to be a constructed caricature.

Before turning to the depilation specifically, the general logic that Kinsman and Euripides employ in the drag transformation should be considered. It follows Agathon's theory of performative gender, which he outlines as follows: "My clothing always matches my thoughts. To be a poet, a man must suit his fashions to the requirements of his plays. If, say, he's writing plays about women, his body must partake of women's ways."[3] This both is and is not Butlerian. He acknowledges her three gender dimensions—Agathon uses both body (anatomy), and clothing and "women's ways" (performance) to access the mindset of women (identity), which apparently allows him to convincingly write plays about them. Yet he takes the three dimensions as unified rather than distinct, jumping from clothing to body to "woman's ways" as if these are the same thing. Kinsman and Euripides also see the gender dimensions as unified. For example, in Kinsman's first encounter with Agathon, he asks "are you being raised male? Then where's your dick? Your suit? Your Spartan shoes?

---

1 Aristophanes, "Women at the Thesmophoria," in *Three plays by Aristophanes: Staging Women, Second Edition*, trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 234-5.
2 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, Routledge, 1990), 175.
3 Ar., *Thesm.*, 167-9.

Alright, say you're a woman. Then where are your tits?"[4] He too conflates anatomical sex markers ("dicks" and "tits") with performative costumes (suits and shoes). It is not only a performance of a woman that Kinsman is trying to access, but an inner female identity too. Just as Agathon claims to access the female mindset by transforming his body and performance for the purpose of his poetry, Kinsman is trying to access the inner secrets of women, here literalized as the exclusively female Thesmophoria festival. Based on this idea that anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance are unified, then, the drag becomes more than just a disguise; it is truly an attempt to transform Kinsman's gender.

Pubic hair plays a major role in Kinsman and Euripides' understanding of the dimensions of gender as unified, chiefly because it acts as a nexus between anatomy and performance, as an anatomical costume. Here, I draw on Molly Levine's study of Mediterranean hair and gender, in which she contends:

> Hair serves as an especially congenial locus for the significa-
> tion of this dialectic between nature and culture, again because
> of its peculiar physical properties. Hair is, first and foremost,
> eminently natural: it grows of itself and is part of our physical
> selves. Yet hair can exist independently of the body as a cultur-
> al product… hairstyles and customs usually require that we be
> conscious simultaneously of both the hair itself (nature) and the
> style of its treatment (culture). In other words, hair can be seen
> equally as body (nature) and as costume or cosmetic (culture).[5]

Hair can be seen as a sort of bodily clothing, anatomical but able to be styled by culture, or—to use Butlerian terms—by gender performance. For example, in the clothing step of the transformation following the pubic hair depilation, Kinsman also dons a wig;[6] wigs clearly show how hair can fall into the category of costume, rather than anatomy. Pubic hair and the practice of its depilation likewise straddle the categories of anatomy and costume. The act of shaping pubic hair according to cultural/performative customs—an ostensibly feminine practice—is quite literally inscribing performative ideas of gender on the body through body modification. In comedy, the costume element of pubic hair is even more obvious, as fake pubic hair was part of the comic costume phallus worn by actors.[7]

In *Thesmophoriazusae*, Kinsman and Euripides use this connection between anatomy and performance to enact their theory of unified

---

4 Ar., *Thesm.*, 161-3.

5 Molly Myerowitz Levine, "4: The Gendered Grammar of Ancient Mediterranean Hair," in *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, eds. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 88.

6 Ar., *Thesm.*, 294.

7 Eva Stehle, "The Body and Its Representations in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazousai: Where Does the Costume End?," *The American Journal of Philology* 123, no. 3 (2002): 372.

dimensions of gender, believing that the depilation of pubic hair, affecting both anatomy and performance, must result in a change of gender identity too. Short of castration, pubic hair removal is the closest they can come to actually modifying Kinsman's genitals, and at the same time follows a feminine cosmetic custom. In the structural sequence of the transformation scene, the depilation links two other steps: shaving Kinsman's beard (which, despite the performative implications of hair styling noted above, can be seen as a more anatomically-inclined marker, as will be argued below) and dressing Kinsman in women's clothes (clearly performance). Thus, the pubic depilation goes a step beyond drag; it tries to merge physical body and performative costume.

The link between beard removal and pubic hair removal is interesting when considering the gender implications of Kinsman's drag. Not only are these scenes back-to-back, but the structure of each is parallel: the beard removal begins with Euripides ordering Kinsman to "Sit down," then he removes half the beard, Kinsman protests, the other half is removed, and Kinsman protests again;[8] in the pubic hair removal, Euripides orders "bend over" and removes the hair, Kinsman protests, then another sort of removal is referenced (this time not hair but the soot from singeing), and Kinsman protests again.[9] This strong association between the two steps suggests that beard and pubic hair are meant to be equated. However, though structurally parallel, the pubic hair removal is more overtly sexual, not only due to its proximity to the sex organs, but also by its allusions to passive sexual acts. "Bend over" is a more sexual version of "sit down," and when Euripides orders "Somebody bring out a torch or a lamp!"[10] for singeing, most translators' stage directions suggest that a torch is selected. Eva Stehle eloquently notes the overt suggestion of sexual passivity here: "Euripides, singeing away with torch, is standing behind him jabbing a long, swelling, red-tipped object at his rear."[11] The pubic hair thus seems to represent a sexualized version of the beard.

The Greek's ideological connection between beards, masculinity, and sex is well known; beards distinguished adult males, active sexual participants, from beardless others (women and boys) who were meant to be passive.[12] Though the association of beards with gender is a cultural/performative one, there is also a biological element involved (as men naturally grow beards and women generally do not), thus conflating performance and anatomy again. *If* beards and pubic hair are meant to be equat-

8 Ar., *Thesm.*, 243-62.

9 *Thesm.*, 268-83.

10 *Thesm.*, 270-1.

11 Stehle, "The Body and Its Representations," 386. For the argument as to why it was likely a torch rather than a lamp, see Stehle, "The Body and Its Representations," 386, note 52.

12 Mireille M. Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 76.

ed, this sets up a binary idea in which men have pubic hair and women do not. With beardless men considered effeminate, Euripides and Kinsman conclude that pube-less men are likewise effeminate, which is the goal of the transformation. Aside from the aforementioned passivity references, we also see implications of effeminacy when Kinsman exclaims "I'm going to be a roast pig!"[13] This not only refers to the singeing process, but alludes to the Greek euphemism of 'pig', meaning female genitalia.[14] Due to his unified gender understanding, Kinsman fears that depilation, though a performative act, will transform his anatomy into female genitals. He also complains "How am I supposed to be brave when I'm being turbo-vulcanized?"[15] Bravery is a typically male gender performance, suggesting that depilation not only 'turbo-vulcanizes' his male anatomy, but his male gender performance. Thus, the apparent equation of beards and pubic hair is another way in which the depilation scene attempts to unify the gender dimensions.

Yet, this equation of pubic hair and beards, and the binary of men having pubic hair and women not, is false, and this begins to disintegrate the unification of anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. Beards are better anatomical markers of sex, since men naturally tend to have them and women do not; both males and females, on the other hand, *naturally* have pubic hair. Thus, pubic hair may be a more overtly sexual symbol, but it is also more ambiguously gendered. Kilmer suggests that pubic hair, like beards, may have acted as an age indicator, but for boys *and* girls. Referring to a passage from *Acharnians*, he states: "The metaphor of blooming, which we are conditioned to expect in the context of down on young men's cheeks and, less properly, of boys' pubic hair, is here unashamedly applied to the adolescent girl."[16] Indeed, Bassi even suggests that pubic hair could be considered a sort of female beard.[17] Thus, a gender binary based on pubic hair cannot be established.

Nor can the performative practice of pubic hair depilation establish this binary that Kinsman and Euripides desire. Kilmer, aiming to disprove the theory of genital phobia—which posits that pubic hair was the cause of a Greek fear of female genitals and thus required depilation[18]—has convincingly shown that female pubic hair was not *entirely* depilated, but was only reduced and made neat.[19] He also argues that the *presence* of female pubic hair may actually have been considered erotic in some cases.[20] Thus,

13 Ar., *Thesm.*, 269.
14 Stehle, "The Body and Its Representations," 386.
15 Ar., *Thesm.*, 277.
16 Martin Kilmer, "Genital Phobia and Depilation," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982): 107.
17 Karen Bassi, *Acting Like Men: Gender, Drama, and Nostalgia in Ancient Greece* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 137.
18 Kilmer, "Genital Phobia and Depilation," 104.
19 Ibid., 106-7,111.
20 Ibid., 108.

the presence of pubic hair on women would not be considered unfeminine. Vase paintings may even indicate that men also shaped their pubic hair.[21] Pubic hair, and the performative practice of its depilation, are therefore not clearly (binarily) gendered, which complicates the idea that removing Kinsman's pubic hair will affect his gender performance, anatomy, or identity.

In *Thesmophoriazusae*, we can see this unclear gendering of pubic hair when Mika threatens Kinsman with depilation: "we ourselves, with our slave-girls, will get a hot coal somewhere and singe the hair off this woman's pussy—that'll teach her never again to badmouth her fellow women!"[22] Here, the singeing of pubic hair is posed as a threat to a 'fellow woman.' Why would this be a threat, if pubic hair depilation is normal female performance? Mika in fact is presuming that the 'female' Kinsman's pubic hair is present, thus disrupting Kinsman's idea of binary gendered pubic hair. I would suggest instead that here, the women have also taken up pubic hair as a form of drag: a drag performance not of masculinity but of the 'male' agency they have adopted in their mock-assembly.[23] Perhaps pubic hair, then, is not so much an innate indicator of gender (either anatomically or performatively), but rather of power: specifically, the power to construct gender—what Butler would call an "effect" of the discourse.[24] As will be shown below, pubic hair has the further function of acting as the veil which arbitrates the gender-constructing gaze.

The idea of pubic hair as a veil draws on broader ideas of nudity and the exposure threat. Much like pubic hair, as I have suggested, Berger considers nudity a "form of dress,"[25] a nexus between anatomy and performance. He argues that when women are nude and looked upon, their bodies become passive objects upon which male onlookers construct *their* ideas—their costume—of feminine gender.[26] This is exactly what occurs in the transformation scene, which begins with Euripides saying, "You've signed yourself over to me, so take off your clothes."[27] Nude and the object of gaze (not only the gaze of Euripides, but also of the theatrical spectators), Kinsman's body is then constructed into feminine gender by Euripides. Bassi expands on this idea with her concept of the exposure threat, in which exposing the nude body and genitals is threatening because it removes the safe ambiguity of clothing, which allowed a man to be imagined as the male ideal; exposure threatens to reveal that he does not to live

---

21 Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity*, 81.
22 Ar., *Thesm.*, 527-9.
23 *Thesm.*, 393.
24 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 7.
25 John Berger et al., "Chapter 3," in *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), 54.
26 Ibid., 47.
27 Ar., *Thesm.*, 230-1.

up to it.[28] When Mika later orders, "strip him,"[29] this exposure threat is enacted at multiple levels: on the surface, the threat is that Kinsman's female ruse will be exposed by revealing his male genitals, but at another level, exposing his depilated costume phallus threatens to show that anatomical sex, as a marker of gender, is false—just a performative costume.

When this exposure threat is enacted, Kinsman's anatomical sex is separated from gender identity and devalued as a gender symbol. His phallus isn't immediately visible. "Where are you hiding your cock down there?"[30] asks Kleisthenes, as Kinsman pulls it from front to back, hiding it from the gaze of the man who will literally determine his gender. But this suspends him in a state of unintelligible gender, realizing the anxiety of the exposure threat. According to Bassi, the threat is not just that the man may be exposed as female or unideal male, but that the genitals themselves will be exposed as ambiguous markers of gender.[31] Exposing the genitals disconnects them from their symbolic meaning. Kinsman's phallus is thus revealed to simply be an organ, part of anatomy but separate from gender performance and identity. Stehle argues a similar idea in relation to *Thesmophoriazusae*: "Theatricality itself is implicated, for Aristophanes makes his point by decoupling the phallus altogether from masculine identity and showing it up as meaningless. Limp, mobile, disavowed, redefined—costume, in short—it loses its naturalized power to represent the male."[32] This is precisely what Butler argues to be true: "this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender;" sex is not natural "substance," but rather "an abiding and foundational illusion of a masculinist discourse."[33] Through nudity and the exposure threat, anatomical sex is separated from (rather than unified with) gender performance and identity, and its symbolic value is shown to be a construct, thus devaluing it as a gender dimension.

Most scholars have ignored the role of pubic hair in this separation and devaluation, but pubic hair depilation can be seen as a variant of the exposure threat: a depilation threat. While Stehle also questions the logic of the depilation scene, she ultimately bypasses pubic hair's relevance and does not offer a satisfactory answer. Instead, she focuses on the phallus. Referring to Euripides line "Now watch out for the tip of your dick,"[34] she states, "Euripides tells him to hold the phallus out of the way, as though it is irrelevant to the effort to eradicate signs of masculinity on [Kinsman's] body[…][Kinsman's] phallus is in danger of losing its gen-

28 Bassi, *Acting Like Men*, 136-138.
29 Ar., *Thesm.*, 647.
30 *Thesm.*, 656.
31 Bassi, *Acting Like Men*, 136.
32 Stehle, "The Body and Its Representations," 377.
33 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 7, 10.
34 Ar., *Thesm.*, 272.

der-specific meaning."[35] But to what is the phallus losing this meaning? Not to the anus as she suggests,[36] but to pubic hair. The phallus is devalued, and the supposed 'sign of masculinity' that must be "eradicated" is the pubic hair. But, as shown above, pubic hair is not a clear binary gender marker. By investing the symbolic power of gender in pubic hair more than in the sex organ, it not only devalues the organ as a gender marker, but also attaches gender to a much more performatively constructed symbol. Depilation of this gender symbol thus threatens that symbolic power and unveils the devalued gender marker beneath. As Kilmer notes: "any depilation would tend to make the vulva more visible, while a heavier growth of hair would tend to hide it."[37] The same is true for male pubic hair; depilation further exposes his devalued phallus.

Pubic hair thus acts as a veil which conceals the genitals from the determining gaze and thereby allows them to retain their symbolic gender meaning. Endres, writing on pubic hair aesthetics, briefly considers pubic hair as a veil: "the depilatory argument resembles something like a call for an unveiling of the female mystery."[38] This is exactly what Kinsman and Euripides are trying to do by depilating Kinsman: access inner female gender identity, and the mysteries of the Thesmophoria. But I would attach the veil instead to the exposure/depilation threat; depilation does not threaten to unveil the female mystery (some 'real' identity), but to unveil the gender mystery, exposing anatomical sex as unsubstantive and separate from gender identity. As already referenced above, *Thesmophoriazusae* features an explicit depilation threat, when Mika threatens to singe Kinsman's "pussy" with coals.[39] A second explicit threat occurs shortly thereafter, when Mika says "I'll pluck out your short and curlies with my own hands!"[40] In both cases, as in the actual depilation scene, the threat is not only the exposure of Kinsman's ruse, but the disunification of his three gender dimensions, and the removal of the veil which allowed him to construct his own gender identity, exposing him to an external gaze which will define his gender. We later see a literal unveiling when Kinsman pretends to be Helen: Euripides removes Kinsman's veil and says "Who art thou, lady?"[41] When Kinsman is veiled his gender is ambiguous, and when he is revealed Euripides attempts to define his gender as female by labelling him a 'lady,' but Kritylla does not buy this performance.[42] What is revealed is not some 'true' gender identity, but a performative construc-

35 Stehle, "The Body and Its Representations," 385.
36 Ibid., 377.
37 Kilmer, "Genital Phobia and Depilation," 104.
38 Johannes Endres, "Diderot, Hogarth, and the Aesthetics of Depilation," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 21.
39 Ar., *Thesm.*, 527-9.
40 *Thesm.*, 562-3.
41 *Thesm.*, 914.
42 *Thesm.*, 929-31.

tion. Likewise, the pubic hair depilation is a flawed idea, an attempt at feminization and thus unification, which instead reveals that the gender dimensions are disconnected and constructed.

To conclude, we can return to Agathon's unified gender theory: "If one writes of manly matters, that element of the body is at hand. But qualities we do not have must be sought by mimicry."[43] As I have shown, the pubic hair depilation led to a distinction and devaluing of "that element of the body" (anatomical sex), and thus gender is revealed to be performative mimicry. Butler states "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the *appearance* of substance, of a natural sort of being."[44] In other words, all three aspects of gender—anatomical sex, gender performance, and gender identity—are naturalized so as to appear to be 'real' substance, but are actually only constructs of masculinist discourse. Since the depilation undermines Kinsman and Euripides' unified idea of gender, it is unsuccessful in allowing Kinsman to access a 'real' female identity, just as his drag is ultimately unsuccessful at the Thesmophoria. Instead, Kinsman is only able to access a false, discursively constructed identity: a female caricature of the male imagination. This relates to the play's larger plot: the women believe that Euripides' dramatic portrayals of women do not accurately reflect their gender identity. They are instead female caricatures— "lover-bangers, nymphos, wine-oglers, disloyal, chattery, unwholesome, the bane of men's lives"[45]—constructed by the poet. Like the women's theatre-going husbands, Kinsman adopts Euripides' constructed idea of women, through being transformed into a woman *by Euripides* (which includes pubic hair depilation). Just as removing pubic hair does not make an actual vagina but a version of anatomical sex which the men conceive of as feminine, the play never actually depicts 'real' women (indeed, all the actor would be male) or the 'real' secrets of the Thesmophoria, but instead substitutes in the masculine realm of the assembly. Female identity is constructed from the male perspective; the play removes the veil but does not actually expose any 'real' identity, just a false construct. As Butler shows, this is because there is no 'real' gender identity: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result."[46] Thus, in trying to portray the three dimensions of gender as unified, Kinsman and Euripides try to pass off their constructed idea of female gender as truth. But, through the bizarre pubic hair depilation scene, *Thesmophoriazusae* actually shows these dimensions <u>to be distinct and</u> shows gender to be a construct.

43 *Thesm.*, 171-2.
44 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 33.
45 Ar., *Thesm.*, 410-1.
46 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 25.

Bibliography

Aristophanes. "Women at the Thesmophoria." In *Three plays by Aristo-phanes: Staging Women, Second Edition*. Translated by Jeffrey Henderson. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.

Bassi, Karen. *Acting Like Men: Gender, Drama, and Nostalgia in Ancient Greece*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Berger, John et al. "Chapter 3." In *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge, 1990.

Endres, Johannes. "Diderot, Hogarth, and the Aesthetics of Depilation." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 17-38.

Kilmer, Martin. "Genital Phobia and Depilation." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 (1982): 104–12.

Lee, Mireille M. *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Levine, Molly Myerowitz. "4: The Gendered Grammar of Ancient Mediterranean Hair." In *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. Edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Stehle, Eva. "The Body and Its Representations in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazousai: Where Does the Costume End?" *The American Journal of Philology* 123, no. 3 (2002): 369-406.

Perfect Propaganda: An Analysis of the Portrayal of Livia and Julia in Augustan Literature

Hannah McCarthy

Rome, as led by Augustus, was meant to be a place of outstanding moral and religious values. Augustus instated several laws that encouraged and enforced his moral values onto the Roman people. He was careful in the presentation of himself and his family to show that they not only possessed these values but were also examples to be followed. Much of the writing produced during the Augustan period refers to his family's example, particularly the example of his wife, Livia. However, Julia, his only child, did not possess Augustan values. Instead, she appeared to deliberately act against them. It is highly suspect that the two women closest to Augustus were such blatant examples of how "good" Roman women should and should not act. Augustus was so careful to curate his image in a way that reflected him well. Livia followed his rules, and so was placed into the role of an exceptional woman, while Julia did not, and was subsequently punished for it. Although these women perhaps possessed some of the qualities they are reported to have had, the two extremes in which they are portrayed were encouraged by Augustus and his supporters to promote the image he so desired.

Augustus' third wife Livia was a perfect example of what a Roman woman should aspire to be. She was beautiful, but not vain; clever, but modest; and influential, although she knew enough to not blatantly display the political power she held. She was conservative in how she presented herself, aligning perfectly with the Augustan image of how a woman should act. Livia was a weaver, which was an uncommon activity for elite women, but it was another way for her to show her chastity and obedience through domestic labour. Augustus even decided to only wear clothing made by Livia, exemplifying his appreciation for his wife's devotion.[1]

In 18 BCE, Augustus introduced several new laws to Rome, including the *Lex de maritandis ordinibus* and the *Lex de adulteriis*.[2] The first law promised privileges to those who married and produced children, specifically three or more. The second law was harsher and stated that those found guilty of adultery would be forced into divorcing their spouse, and could face property confiscation, exile, or execution. These laws showed that Augustus was serious in his hopes of trying to restore the old Republican morals that he valued so highly. The laws encouraged

---

1 Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Women of the Caesars* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1993), 45.
2 Dio Cassius, *Roman History,* Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 56.

faithfulness and fertility, no doubt helpful in terms of stabilization and population growth for a state that had suffered from turmoil and civil wars for so long. The laws introduced in 18 BCE confirmed that Augustus was maintaining his values, but they would later affect his family in a negative way.

Augustus declared Livia and his sister Octavia sacrosanct in 35 BCE, a right previously meant for tribunes.[3] Through this declaration, Livia and Octavia were given the power to be seen in public, and in important places, something extremely uncommon for elite Roman women. Livia was something Augustus could present as if she were an accomplishment on his part. She was the figure he wanted the rest of the women of Rome to aspire to be. By declaring her sacrosanct he was showing that he wanted her to be engaged with the public and in politics, because of how well her accomplishments reflected upon him.

The historian Livy wrote his *Ab Urbe Condita* under Augustus's reign. While writing of the last days of the kings of Rome, Livy tells the story of Lucretia. Lucretia was a chaste elite woman who was raped by Sextus Tarquinius, the son of the king. Tarquinius threatened to kill her if she did not have sex with him, but she showed no fear at the prospect of death. She did not cease her struggle until he threatened to manipulate the scene after he had killed her to make it appear as if she had been having an affair with a slave. Although neither her father nor her husband placed any blame for the rape on Lucretia, she killed herself so that women would not be able to use her name to excuse infidelity, saying to them "… for my own part, though I acquit myself of the sin, I do not absolve myself from punishment; nor in time to come shall ever unchaste woman live through the example of Lucretia."[4] It is easy to draw immediate comparisons between Livia and Lucretia. Livy even notes that Lucretia was a skilled weaver, like Livia. Lucretia would rather die than be seen committing adultery, especially with a slave. [5] The implication here is that this is sacrifice is something that a woman like Livia would also make. The women of Rome should look to Lucretia for inspiration, and to Livia for embodying values held hundreds of years before. It is highly suspicious that Livy, writing under Augustus, would write a woman who was so similar in character to Livia. He would have wanted to please the *princeps*, and there would have been little that would please Augustus more than to have his wife be compared to Rome's oldest example of the perfect married woman.

Livia was a useful tool in showing that Augustus' ideal image for

---

3 Purcell, Nicholas, "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 212, no. 32 (1986): 85.

4 Livy, *History of Rome Volume 1, Books 1-2*, trans. B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library 114 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 1.58.

5 *History of Rome*, 1.58.

women was possible. Through Livia, Augustus was able to project the idea of the perfect Roman *matrona*. However, his daughter, Julia, personified the type of woman that Augustus vehemently disliked. Julia was raised to be just like her step-mother—dutiful and well-behaved. She was highly educated, and taught to weave, as Livia did, but had limited contact with the outside world, and she was meant to keep quiet when around other people.[6] This is a massive dissonance from Livia's privileges, which actively encourage her to be in the public eye. Augustus used his daughter as a pawn, marrying her first to her cousin Marcellus, then to Agrippa, and finally to her step-brother, Tiberius. Tiberius and Julia disliked each other greatly, and were rarely together, a relationship that was very different from the alleged devotion shared by Augustus and Livia.[7]

Julia rebelled from the life that she had been born into. She engaged in extramarital relationships when pregnant, to conceal her affairs, and enjoyed drinking and staying out late. She was a dangerous threat to Augustus' carefully crafted presentation. Her affairs and hard-partying came to an end in 2 BCE when Augustus had had enough of her behaviour and banished her to the small island of Pandateria, accompanied by her mother Scribonia, where she was made to follow very strict rules and was forbidden from consuming alcohol. All visitors were harshly scrutinized by her father.[8] Dio Cassius writes that Augustus "had surmised even before this time that she was not leading a straight life, but refused to believe it" but then went into "a rage so violent," and reported Julia's misconduct to the Senate itself.[9] Augustus was not merciful and Julia's accused lovers were all exiled or executed.[10] But the timing of Julia's banishment is strange. Had Augustus had suspicions about Julia's behaviour, he could have sent her away quietly, under some sort of guise. But to sit with that knowledge for a long time, only to banish her in an extraordinarily public fashion seems highly performative. By banishing Julia, he made it clear that he did not tolerate such deviant behaviour, even by his own blood, as publicly as any speech he might have made. Julia was "guilty of every form of vice," which could be used in his favour as much as her marriages were.[11] The dichotomy between Livia and Julia was likely the topic of conversation amongst the people of Rome.

Livia's relationship with Augustus was not as wholesome as sources liked to portray it. Augustus divorced Scribonia in favour of Livia in 39 BCE, almost immediately after Julia's birth. Livia was pregnant at

---

6 Suetonius, "The Deified Augustus," in *Lives of the Caesars, Volume 1: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius. Caligula.*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 64.

7 Dio Cass., *Roman History,* 55.

8 *Roman History,* 55.

9 *Roman History,* 55.

10 *Roman History,* 55.

11 Suet., *Aug.,* 65.

the time, with her former husband's son.[12] This hasty marriage, especially after Augustus' wife had just given him a child, heavily suggests that there was some sort of relationship, perhaps an affair, before their marriage. Writers contemporary to Augustus conveniently avoid dwelling on this topic, for it would surely taint the propagandist way in which Livia was presented. Livia also never gave birth to any of Augustus' living children, although he granted her the right of three children in 9 BCE, after the death of her son Drusus. [13] Livia actually deviated from some Augustus' honoured values, but she was not punished for this, perhaps because it would take away from her established persona as the idealized woman.

An unusual portrayal of Livia can be found in the work of Tacitus, who has no praise to bestow upon her. Tacitus believes that the marriage of Augustus and Livia was absurd, and that Livia was in fact "detrimental to the house of the Caesars."[14] Whereas most people were quite fine with the political influence Livia had, Tacitus accuses her of holding too much power,[15] which he believes made Augustus look weak. He believes that she had a similar influence over Tiberius after Augustus' death, and that it was she who held the true power and he writes bitterly of "her female capriciousness."[16] He goes so far as to suggest that Livia may have killed Augustus to put Tiberius in power.[17] Tacitus was writing in a much later period, and so is less affected by the Augustan bias. This portrayal is extremely negative, to the point of absurdity, and like the sources that heavily praise Livia, it surely cannot be completely accurate. But a portrayal of Livia after she is long dead that differs so greatly from the ones contemporary to her is telling. Tacitus has no reason to engage with the propaganda that surrounded Augustus' family. In writing such a negative portrayal, Tacitus reveals that not everyone believed in the version of Livia that was projected, which infers that the sources that bestow extraordinary praise upon Livia are as suspect as his own.

It is clear that very high expectations were placed upon women in Augustan Rome. Juvenal, although he wrote after Augustus, was famous for his disdain towards women. Juvenal portrays women in *Satire 6* as sex-crazed and too weak to control their desires, which coincides with Augustus' perception of women like Julia.[18] The divide between Livia and Julia's respective characters is too dramatic to be truly found in Augustus' family. This does not dispute all of their reported individual deeds, but in-

12 Ferrero, *The Women of the Caesars,* 53.

13 Purcell, 1986, 85.

14 Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. Clifford H. Moore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 1.0.

15 *Ann.*, 1.3.

16 *Ann.*, 1.4.

17 *Ann.*, 1.5.

18 Juvenal, "The Satires of Juvenal," in *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and trans. by Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library 91 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 6.

stead raises questions on the way these deeds were recorded. It is impossible to claim who Livia and Julia truly were, since no personal accounts written by these women survive. However, it is no coincident that the way in which these women are perceived is coincides directly with Augustus' system of beliefs. It is not surprising that Livia was elevated to be presented as Augustus' ideal woman, while Julia was cast aside as the antithesis of an exemplary woman according to Augustan values. This depiction of each woman exemplifies little about the character of these women, but rather reveals Augustus' own expectations for them, and by extension, his own morals and values.

Bibliography

Barrett, Anthony A. Livia: *First Lady of Imperial Rome.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Dio Cassius. Roman History, Volume VI: Books 51-55. Translated by Earnest Cary, Herbert B. Foster. Loeb Classical Library 83. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917.

Frank, Richard I. "Augustus' Legislation on Marriage and Children." *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 8 (1975): 41-52.

Ferrero, Guglielmo. *The Women of the Caesars*. New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1993.

Juvenal, Persius. Juvenal and Persius. Edited and translated by Susanna Morton Braund. Loeb Classical Library 91. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Livy. History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2. Translated by B. O. Foster. Loeb Classical Library 114. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919.

Purcell, Nicholas. "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, no. 32 (1986): 78-105.

Suetonius. Lives of the Caesars, *Volume I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius. Caligula.* Translated by J. C. Rolfe. Introduction by K. R. Bradley. Loeb Classical Library 31. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Tacitus. Histories: Books 1-3. Translated by Clifford H. Moore. Loeb Classical Library 249. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.

Hadrian: Plotina's Protégé

Lora Miki

I. Introduction

In recent discussions of the Roman empress Pompeia Plotina, the wife of Trajan, a controversial issue has been the exact nature of her relationship with her adopted son Hadrian. On the one hand, some argue that Plotina's favouritism for Hadrian and her political maneuvering to secure his succession as emperor was nothing less than manipulative. From this perspective, Plotina is perceived as a controlling mother reminiscent of previous Roman empresses such as Agrippina the Younger, the sister of Caligula and mother of Nero. However, this argument is less popular with modern historians due to the surviving evidence in favour of Plotina's true well-intentioned character. This leads to the more supported alternative, in which modern historians argue that despite this alleged indiscretion, Plotina's actions were for the betterment of the Roman Empire. In other words, her reputation as a "paragon of moral rectitude and a benevolent force for justice and mercy," set the new standards of behaviour for future Roman empresses of the second century.[1] According to this popular view, Plotina seems to have had a much greater impact on the life and reign of Hadrian, perhaps even more so than her husband. In sum then, the issue becomes a matter of whether Hadrian was the protégé of Plotina or of Trajan.

It is evident that Plotina's role as Hadrian's adoptive mother played a more crucial part in the success of Hadrian's reign than previous arguments suggest. While it is true that emperor Trajan undoubtedly shaped a large part of Hadrian's character as a strong-minded and calculating leader capable of military and administrative reform, it is undeniable that Plotina's love of culture, philosophy, religion, and empathy ultimately molded Hadrian's world view.

This essay aims to tease apart the relationship between Plotina and Hadrian to comprehend the depth of Plotina's influence. Through a detailed analysis of marble busts, numismatics, and literary sources, this essay will argue that Plotina was indeed the primary source of Hadrian's success as one of the most intelligent and well-rounded emperors in Roman history. The argument of this essay is three-fold and is based on Plotina's intellectual precedent and strong personal qualities. By analyzing the profile image of Plotina on a silver Roman *denarius* minted from the reign of Trajan and a marble bust from the Baths of Neptune, one may begin to comprehend the appearance and personality of the empress. Secondly, through a close examination of the literary sources from this period such

1 Jaspar Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome: Mothers and Wives of Caesars* (Routledge 2007), 119.

as Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, Pliny the Younger's, *Letters* and *Panegyri-cus*, and the Historia Augusta, *Life of Hadrian*, the descriptive qualities and character of Plotina emerge with her reputation being closely linked to her role as a *sanctissima femina* ('most virtuous woman'). Thirdly, a discussion of the young Hadrian's upbringing will indicate that it was indeed Ploti-na's great interest in the prince that shaped the face of the Roman empire during the second century.

II. Plotina's Image

Constructing an image of Plotina, like many images from antiquity, is a challenging endeavour. According to Jasper Burns, many of the surviving portraits of Plotina were created when she was in her forties or older and only eleven sculptures are known in addition to the limited variety of rare portrait coins.[2] Despite these limitations, the high quality and preserva-tion of these representations allow for a fairly accurate idea of what Ploti-na's appearance was like. A marble bust of Plotina dating to roughly ca. 110-120 CE was retrieved from the *frigidarium* of the Baths of Neptune in Ostia. This *Head of Plotina* presents Plotina as having a long face, a tightly combed-back yet simple hairstyle, a long nose, a rather thin neck, a reced-ing chin, and very expressive eyes. Mary Boatwright argues that Plotina wears a sweet and "slightly suffering expression" here and notes that the sensual undertones that accompany the location of the bust within the Roman baths run counter to the retiring and chaste characters of Plotina.[3] In addition to the bust of Plotina, a silver Roman *denarius* depicting her profile presents another variation of the empress.[4] Dating from ca. 112-117 CE and minted in Rome, this coin presents an austere image of moral rec-titude. It is known from the obverse inscriptions on the coin ('*PLOTINA AVG IMP TRAIANI*')[5] that these images were produced as early as the reign of her husband emperor Trajan. Taken together, these portraits of Plotina give the impression of a calm and gentle woman who had a great deal of common sense and modesty. Some critics like Balsdon have looked at Plotina's portraits and described her as "dull."[6] From this, it becomes clear that Plotina prioritized an individual's character over glamourous looks. Since both of these impressions construct an idealized image of the empress, it is worth noting that the female statues in Roman art histo-ry often fulfilled dynastic purposes. According to Boatwright, "emperors employed statuary of their family, representing females as well as males,

2 Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome*, 108.

3 "No wonder the Plotina from the Baths of Neptune looks distressed!," Mary Boatwright, "Just Window Dressing? Imperial Woman as Architectural Sculpture," in Diana E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson, *I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society* (University of Texas Press, 2000), 68-69.

4 Refer to figure 2 in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.'

5 *PLOTINA AVG IMP TRAIANI* (*Plotina Augusta Imperatoris Traiani*); Engish Translation: "Plotina Augusta Wife of Emperor Trajan".

6 J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Bodley Head, 1962), 133.

to 'legitimize' themselves."[7] With this in mind, it becomes apparent that any attempts at reconstructing images based on imperial propagandistic intentions must also be considered with the appropriate literary accounts from this time to achieve a fully fleshed idea.

III. *Sanctissima Femina* in Literature

Senator Pliny the Younger first describes Plotina as "*sanctissima femina*", which generally refers to "a woman who exemplifies virtue," which she embodies.[8] Pliny praises Plotina for her modest, unassuming demeanor in public, her simple dress, and the moderate number of her attendants in his *Panegyricus*. He explains that her role as a mother in one of great importance to her.[9]

> But your own wife contributes to your honour and glory, as a supreme model of the ancient virtues; the Chief Pontiff himself, had he to take a wife, would choose her, or one like her—if one exists. From your position she claims nothing for herself but the pleasure it gives her, unswerving in her devotion not to your power but to yourself. You are just the same to each other as you have always been, and your mutual appreciation is unchanged; success has brought you nothing but a new understanding of your joint ability to live in its shadow. How modest she is in her attire, how moderate the number of her attendants, how unassuming when she walks abroad! This is the work of her husband who has fashioned and formed her habits; there is glory enough for a wife in obedience. When she sees her husband unaccompanied by pomp and intimidation, she also goes about in silence, and as far as her sex permits, she follows his example of walking on foot. This would win her praise even if you did the opposite, but with a husband so moderate in his habits, how much respect she owes him as his wife, and herself as a woman![10]

> From this account, Plotina truly embraces the role of the obedient wife whose devotion to her husband and her ability to live in his shadow suggests high levels of self-awareness. This can be applied to her beliefs on motherhood and various other aspects of her life. Upon entering the imperial palace for the first time, Plotina allegedly said, "I hope that, when the time comes to leave this building, I shall be the same woman that I am today."[11] Indeed, scholarship agrees that her remark speaks volumes about her personal values, inner confidence, and her preference for a simple, unpretentious way of life. Cassius Dio assures that Plotina cer-

---

7 Boatwright, "Just Window Dressing?," 62.

8 Pliny the Younger, *Letters, Volume 2: Books 8-10. Panegyricus,* trans. Betty Radice, Loeb Classical Library 59 (Cambrdige, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 9.28.

9 Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome,* 110.

10 Pliny, *Letters,* 9.83.

11 Dio Cassius, *Roman History,* trans. by Coceianus et al., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 9.68.

tainly lived up to her words as he describes her in his *Roman Histories* as "conducting herself throughout her husband's reign in a manner that was above reproach."[12] Modern scholarship agrees that Plotina's ambitions for her role as empress left a lasting impression on Roman society. Although her initial claim was to leave the palace as the same woman who entered it, she miraculously managed to become even more accomplished and respected regardless of her modest intentions.

Plotina's reputation as '*sanctissima femina*' garners considerable attention, so much so that she is often regarded as Livia's only "rival in greatness."[13] This "return to the example set by Livia" is a comparison that many scholars have readily employed.[14] However, one of the primary duties of being a virtuous Roman woman was child-rearing. This customary requirement greatly applies to Plotina whose concern for Hadrian may well have stemmed from the fact that her marriage with Trajan was childless. The *alimenta* system, which was introduced by Nerva and then improved by Trajan, indicates the couple's trepidation towards disadvantaged and maltreated children. It seems that both Trajan and Plotina were aware of the importance of securing future generations for the posterity of the empire, yet for personal reasons, Plotina benefited from the fulfillment of raising a child through the process of adoption.

IV. Hadrian's Childhood Education

It seems that Hadrian was thus the product of a well-rounded, virtuous, and cultured woman rather than man. By gathering accounts from the *HA* and Cassius Dio, we know that Publius Aelius Hadrianus was born on 24 January of the year 76 in Rome.[15] His father was the senator and ex-praetor Hadrianus Afer, who died when Hadrian was only te.[16] The link between Hadrian and Trajan is resolved in the *HA* which describes Hadrianus Afer as M. Ulpius Traianus' cousin (*consobrinus*) which by default makes Hadrian the grandnephew of Trajan.[17] Anthony Birley speculates that as a child, Hadrian's earliest memories of growing up in Flavian Rome explain his deep-rooted attraction to all things Greek.[18] Since Greek culture had been heightened by Nero's eccentric reign and Hadrian presumably accompanied his parents on their travels to the provinces of East Asia, it is clear that these childhood impressions had already been made by the time Hadrian was embraced by the care of Trajan and Plotina.

Following the death of Hadrian's father, it has been assumed that

---

12 *Roman History*, 68.
13 Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 134.
14 Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome*, 119.
15 "Hadrian," in *Historia Augusta Volume 1,* Loeb Classical Library 139 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1.2-3.
16 Dio Cass., *Roman History*, 69.3.1; HA, *Hadr*. 11.4.
17 HA, *Hadr*. 1.2.
18 Anthony Birley, *Hadrian: A Restless Emperor* (Routledge, 1997), 14-15.

Trajan played the part of a substitute parent as he was by now both emperor and married to Plotina. While this may be common belief, Birley mentions that in 87 or 88 CE, Hadrian would have been old enough for secondary education with a *grammaticus* ('grammarian') either at school or with a private teacher.[19] The greatest grammarian at this time was none other than the renowned Quintus Terentius Scaurus whose seminal works *Ars Grammatica* and *De Orthographia* were the staples of a Roman elite education at this time.[20] Despite scholarly debates over whether or not he was Hadrian's personal teacher, Scaurus would have undoubtedly had an impact over Hadrian's education either directly or indirectly. Birley boldly takes this argument further and suggests that Plotina herself may have been instrumental in securing Scaurus as Hadrian's private teacher since she (like Scaurus) came from Nemausus.[21] If this is indeed the case, then this proves first hand that Plotina is responsible for securing the greatest education for young Hadrian and not Trajan. Although the likeliness of this act remains undetermined, it does align with our understanding of Plotina's character and intentions for supporting Hadrian's well-being.

V. Trajan vs. Hadrian

Perhaps the greatest differences between Trajan and Hadrian are the most telling indicators of early mentorship and influence. As indicated previously, Hadrian was nothing like his adoptive father and it was no secret that Trajan saw qualities in Hadrian that he distrusted. Hadrian was a scholar and long-time enthusiast of Greek culture, while Trajan was a military man and as Burns describes, "no scholar and, indeed, no great friend of culture."[22] Burns also states that Trajan was supposedly skeptical of Hadrian's marriage to his great-niece Sabina, yet he succumbed to the persuasion of Plotina, who was determined to secure Hadrian's succession.

The adoption of Hadrian is one of the great disputes amongst scholars and is thus an unavoidable topic when investigating the relationship between Hadrian and Plotina. In the accounts of Cassius Dio, the empress supposedly forged Trajan's signature of approval that declared and cemented Hadrian's succession.[23] Because Trajan had neglected to appoint an adopted successor in his failing health (as was the customary practice for emperors), Plotina is often accused of taking advantage of her husband's weakening health to manipulate Hadrian's adoption. Regardless of the alleged forgery, scholars like Balsdon reassert that no matter how skeptical the emperor was with Hadrian, "if Trajan's successor was to come from

---

19 Birley, *Hadrian*, 16.
20 Robert A. Kaster, "Grammar, Grammarians, Latin," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2005).
21 Birley, *Hadrian*, 16.
22 Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome*, 137.
23 Dio Cass., *Roman History*.

within the family, he [Hadrian] was the only possible choice" since Trajan had not groomed anyone else.[24]

Following the death of emperor Trajan, one of the first notable decisions of Hadrian's reign was his abandonment of Trajan's military conquests and expansion of the empire to focus on strengthening internal military reform in the provinces.[25] While this aroused many hostile reactions and suspicions, Hadrian maintained his course with self-assurance and level-headed confidence in a way that was not unlike his adopted mother. As a result, these new policies and reforms ended up benefitting the prosperity of the empire in the long run and ultimately allowed for Roman culture to flourish.

VI. Raising a Cultured Prince

Plotina's support for the Greek philosophy of Epicureanism presents an interesting foundation for her relationship with Hadrian because his seemingly favourable response to her religious interests pairs with affection and respect for his adopted mother. Balsdon states that "besides possessing a strong will, she was a clever woman, interested in religion and philosophy, with a particular attachment to Epicureanism."[26] From a fragmentary letter written by Plotina, we can also deduce that she was successfully able to persuade Hadrian to loosen the rule that strictly prevented non-Roman citizens from achieving leadership positions from the Epicurean school in Athens:

> How much I am interested in the sect of Epicurus, you know very well, domine. Your help is needed in the matter of its succession; for in view of the ineligibility of all but Roman citizens as successors, the range of choice is narrow. I ask therefore in the name of Popillius Theotimus, the present successor at Athens, to allow him to write in Greek that part of his disposition which deals with regulating the succession and grant him the power of filling his place by a successor of peregrine status, should personal considerations make it advisable; and let the future successors of the sect of Epicurus henceforth enjoy the same right as you grant to Theotimus; all the more since the practice is that each time the testator has made a mistake in the choice of his successor, the disciples of the above sect after a general deliberation put in his place the best man, a result that will be more easily attained if he is selected from a larger group. [27]

---

24 Balsdon, *Roman Women* 134-135.
25 Birley, *Hadrian*, 1.
26 Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 135.
27 Dessau, *ILS* 7784; *SIG* 834. For text and discussion of Hadrian's two letters to the Epicureans in Athens, written in A.D. 125 and fragmentarily preserved, see Paul J. Alexander, "Letters and Speeches of the Emperor Hadrian," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (1938), 160-161.

Hadrian, who respected Plotina's judgment responded by granting Plotina's requests and later said: "she often made requests of me, and I never refused her anything."[28] Their warm relationship continued until Plotina's death in 123 CE. Following this, Hadrian proceeded to deify his adoptive mother through dedications.

VII. Conclusion

In summary, Hadrian's upbringing within the imperial family greatly shaped the nature and widespread success of his rule. Plotina's interest in religion and empathy encouraged Hadrian and distinguished his reign as being a period of great peace, prosperity, and cultural integration. By reconstructing an image of Plotina from marble busts, silver coins, literary accounts, and modern scholarship, this paper reveals Plotina's reputation as a modest, level-headed empress whose character as '*sanctissima femina*' elevated her as one of the most well-respected empresses of the second century. Despite her life being cast in the shadow of her husband's great reign, it is her determination and strong-minded actions that ultimately cement the continued success of the Roman empire. Plotina's great concern for the education of young Hadrian and her unwavering support in guaranteeing his succession proved highly beneficial in the long run. Above all, Plotina demonstrates the critical yet subtle roles of imperial women that often go overlooked.

---

28 Dio Cass., *Roman History*, 69.10.

Bibliography of Material Culture

Figure 1. *Head of Plotina*, marble, from the *frigidarium* of Ostia's Baths of Neptune, ca. 110-120 CE. Photography by Archivio Fotografico della Soprintendenza Archeologica de Ostia.

Figure 2. *Early Roman denarius of Pompeia Plotina*, silver, ca. 112-117 CE. Rome. Photography by Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Bibliography

Alexander, Paul J. "Letters and Speeches of the Emperor Hadrian." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 49 (1938): 141-77.

Balsdon, J. P. V. D. *Roman Women: Their History and Habits*. London: Bodley Head, 1962.

Bennett, Julian. *Trajan: Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Birley, Anthony Richard. *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor*. Routledge, 1997.

Boatwright, Mary. "Just Window Dressing? Imperial Woman as Architectural Sculpture." In *I, Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*, edited by Diana E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson. University of Texas Press, 2000.

Burns, Jasper. *Great Women of Imperial Rome: Mothers and Wives of Caesars.* London: Routledge 2007.

Dio Cassius. *Roman History*, vol. 9. Translation by Cocceianus et al. Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

"Hadrian." In *Historia Augusta, Volume I: Hadrian. Aelius. Antoninus Pius. Marcus Aurelius. L. Verus. Avidius Cassius. Commodus. Pertinax. Didius Julianus. Septimius Severus. Pescennius Niger. Clodius Albinus.* Translated by David Magie. Loeb Classical Library 139. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Kaster, Robert A. "Grammar, Grammarians, Latin," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Kleiner, Diana E. E. *Roman Sculpture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Kleiner, Diana E. E., and Susan B. Matheson. *I, Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.

Pliny The Younger. *Letters, Volume II: Books 8-10. Panegyricus.* Translated by Betty Radice, Loeb Classical Library 59, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Travelling with the Gods: Provincial Religious Practices in the Roman Empire

Beatrice Perusse

Religion was a public affair in the Roman Empire. Religious practices were part of the public persona, and public religious functions formed the backbone of the divine cult that tied the empire together. One of the reasons Christianity was seen as a threat to the empire was the refusal of Christians to make public sacrifices. This was seen as a threat to the public and political ties between the Roman empire, imperial cult, and the gods. While Roman religion was strict in its role in public life, it was flexible as to who or what could be considered a god; the imperial cult meant that de-ification of known humans was more accessible than ever. This religious flexibility saw various gods revered by ethnic groups or cultural regions conquered by Rome come to enjoy popularity not just within their native religions, but in other parts of the empire as well. This process was influ-enced by the advanced networks of travel and trade in the empire that allowed for the movement of people, goods, and ideas across the empire's massive geographical spread. Through this spread, cultures that had been colonized by Rome were able to survive through their gods.

As gods from conquered territories arrived in foreign lands and travelled far away from their homes, just like their worshippers, they kept the religious and cultural identity of their people alive. Along the trade routes of Rome, a slave who was born and raised in Carthage could end up travelling through the empire from Anatolia to Britannia, bringing his or her religious practices along, and sharing those practices with others. By doing case studies of several gods, this paper will demonstrate how the Roman adoption of foreign gods and religion was crucial for the survival of colonized cultures under Roman rule. From Greece, this paper will dis-cuss Antinous and the role of Hellenistic (cultural, not temporal) hero cult practice, and how, through royal iconography and local cult, Antinous became a new, distinct cultural figure for Greeks in the Roman world. In the Near East, the figure of the Black Stone cult that eventually fed into the imperially sponsored cult of Elagabal lead to Near Eastern religion gaining prominence in Rome, but to the political detriment of the Severan dynasty. In the ever-contested mass of land that was Gaul, Rome put a special emphasis on eliminating the "barbaric" cultural practices of Gallic people. This was clearly unsuccessful, and the survival of Gallic culture is seen in the development of Gallic Mercury. It is also clear in the spread of a goddess like Epona among the Roman military, with whom she travelled across the northern border and gained more worshippers than she had

ever had before.

The most widespread Gallo-Roman god was Mercury; often called Gallic Mercury, this hybrid god was likely a form of the god Lug or Cernunnos.[1] The Romans equated both these, and other gods, with Mercury. Multiple regional versions of a Celtic divine patriarch were combined by Romans into forms of Mercury and Mars, despite figures like the Lenus Mars at Trier seemingly being gods of healing who would be more closely matched with a figure such as Apollo.[2] Gallic Mercury appears to have been popular largely due to the role he and his Roman wife, Rosmerta, played as fertility gods.[3]

While Gallic Mercury can be argued to have as much to do with Roman religion as Gallic religion, the goddess Epona was a truly Celtic deity. She was the goddess of horses, a figure who survived into Celtic medieval tradition as Rhiannon, a derivative of the Celtic name Rigatona, meaning "the great Queen."[4] She is depicted in reliefs as riding side saddle,[5] often holding fruit or a cornucopia. These items are often seen as related to fertility cults, which may have been as aspect of her religious role.[6] Given the importance of the cavalry to Roman military power, it is easy to understand how a horse related deity would come to enjoy popularity among the Roman troops. Epona's cult appears to have gained popularity with Gallic troops, with whom she made her way across the northern frontier. Epigraphic evidence of her presence among Romans in Britain can be found along both Hadrian's and Antonine's walls in an altar dedicated by a member of the Coh II Dalmatorum unit, which consisted partly of cavalry. Another can be found along the Antonine wall dedicated by a centurion named M. Cocceius Firmus who erected four altars in the name of his unit, where Epona's altar was accompanied by altars for Campestres (the goddess of parade grounds), Hercules, and Mercury.[7] She also had shrines in stables in Pompeii and central Greece.[8] Epona's presence at a site dedicated to major figures like Mercury and Hercules lends credence to the suggestion that she came to have a major role within the Roman world. As the goddess of horses, she would have had a clear path to popularity in a world that relied on horses for travel, trade, and military conquest. As Rome made its way across the Celtic world, it took pieces of the conquered with it, and Epona rode with the soldiers who had conquered her people:

The influence of Roman religious stimuli on the Celtic world took

1 More commonly known as the "Horned God", a patriarch of the Celtic pantheon with many roles.

2 Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (Totowa, Barnes and Noble Books, 1986), 36.

3 Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 37.

4 Graham Webster, *The British Celts and Their Gods Under Rome* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1986), 70.

5 Epona Kleidouchos, late 1st-3rd century CE.

6 Webster, *The British Celts*, 70.

7 Ibid., 71.

8 James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 78.

the form both of physical expression, iconography and epigraphy, and of thought-processes applied to the rigidly functional and universal character of Roman gods as exported to Celtic lands. The interaction between the shadowy, multi-functional and more localised gods of the Celts and the more formal Roman pantheon produced a hybrid of religious culture which is as fascinating as it is full of problems of interpretation.[9]

While it is easy to think of Roman Gaul as containing only two groups, the strictly Celtic natives and the strictly Roman invaders, gods such as Epona demonstrate the more complex nature of the long-term Roman occupation of Gaul. An ethnically Italian centurion could be born and raised in France, and an ethnically Gallic slave could be born and raised in Rome; the two would have little in common, perhaps, except for the gods who had crossed the boundaries between their cultures.

On the opposite side of the empire, another god was gaining popularity, but for very different reasons and with a very different history. Instead of an old god becoming a part of a new regime, a new god was being born. The young Greek Antinous came to know great fame after his death, but little is known about his life. He hailed from Bithynia, lived from roughly 110 to 130 CE, and was a favorite of emperor Hadrian, accompanied him as a member of his court, and died around the age of 20. After Antinous' death he was officially deified by Hadrian. Within the structure of the Roman empire, deification of royalty after death was standard. Even though particularly influential or popular military leaders could enjoy some cult fame, this privilege did not generally extend to non-royals, especially to the extent that it did with Antinous. He would have been deified in Egypt regardless of Hadrian's desires, as he was guaranteed divine status by drowning in the Nile. Due to association with Osiris's death and revival in the Nile, it was standard practice in Egypt for anyone who drowned in the Nile to be deified, no matter their rank or social standing.[10] Antinous' body was likely mummified in the city that Hadrian came to name Antinopolis, preserving him for revival as per Egyptian custom.[11]

Hadrian included Antinous in his royal portraiture after his death, which is seen on his cuirassed torso from the Agora in Athens (circa 130-150 CE). Here Antinous is displayed on the armor over Hadrian's right hip, just below depictions of Athena, Romulus, and Remus.[12] Whether or not Hadrian's new religion was desired by the politicians of Rome, it was made a public spectacle. Antinous enjoyed particular popularity in art and sculpture, where we can see his more local divine affiliations. He was especially associated with Osiris, a god who also died in the Nile but

9 Green, *The Gods of the Celts,* 36.

10 Royston Lambert, *Beloved and God: The Story of Hadrian and Antinous* (Madison: Carol Publishing Group, 1992), 145.

11 Ibid., 145.

12 Cuirassed statue of Hadrian, in the Agora, c. 130-150 CE.

was revived. Several busts of Antinous wearing the typical headdress of pharaohs and gods have been found, showing that he enjoyed great popularity in Egypt.[13] In a full body sculpture dating to 138, he can be seen in the characteristically stiff stance of Egyptian figures, but with the sculpted realism of his Greek forbearers,[14] bringing to life a tradition of eastern inspired art that the Greek world had not seen for a long time.

Antinous' cult was spread by Hadrian during the emperor's lifetime and enjoyed the popularity that one would expect of a royally sanctioned cult. However, Antinous continued to be a popular deity even after Hadrian's death, when the late emperor's unpopularity made most practices associated with him undesirable. As stated by Jamshidi, "Whatever Hadrian's plans may have been in deifying Antinous, the cult itself thrived, even without his sponsorship."[15] The spread of his cult appears to have occurred primarily in the eastern parts of the empire, where the majority of material evidence and textual records of his worship exist.[16] Antinous' popularity seems to be attributable to the sense of unrest that was growing in the Greek and previously Hellenistic world. There was a desire for a symbol and identity, which Antinous provided:

The Greeks, though generally content with their partnership with Rome, were aware of their differences and aware of their superiority. The war of Trajan against Parthia had kindled memories of a noble, stirring antiquity and revived a pound identity in being Greek… In the days of Antinous there was a yearning for new symbols, refashioned political means by which to focus and animate this heady consciousness of a common heritage and a shared renewal… there was, for the first time in centuries among the fractious peoples of Hellas, a feeling of unity and a desire to embody it.[17]

In death, Antinous became a symbol for Greeks. He was a "New Dionysus,"[18] a commoner who not only rose in rank to the side of the emperor, but like Dionysus, had proved himself worthy of divinity in a world where the Olympians had become Roman. He can be seen dressed in traditional Bacchic garb of a laurel crown, thyrsus and long robe.[19] Like Dionysus, he returned to Greece after his death and revival, transforming the culture as he went. Coins found at Tarsus and Tion name Antinous as "New Bacchus", but also occasionally as a "New Apollo," and "New Hermes."[20]

---

13 Bust of Antinous as Osiris (Antinoüs en Osiris), c. 130 CE.
14 Antinous in Egyptian dress and posture, c. 130-138 CE.
15 Niayesh Jamshidi, *Building a God: The Cult of Antinous and Identity in the Eastern Roman Empire* (University of Oregon, Ann Arbor, 2018), 5.
16 Ibid., 26.
17 Lambert, *Beloved and God*, 29.
18 Ibid., 29.
19 Portrait statue of Antinous, 130-138 AD.
20 Jamshidi, *Building a God*, 21.

Antinous enjoyed popularity across the eastern empire. In Socanica, modern Yugoslavia, a mining settlement made an official request for a temple to Antinous to be provided by the Empire, the request was granted by the regional government.[21] In Egypt the form of his death and subsequent cult granted him the title "Osiris-Antinous the Holy," a name attested on the Obelisk of Antinous. The Obelisk also described him as being assisted by the god Thoth in his few divine duties.[22] He was invoked in tombs at Luxor, his guidance to the afterlife requested in place of Anubis or Mercury. In Greek and Roman tombs his name was also invoked; it was Antinous whom people were asking to guide them in death.[23] The appeal of invoking a new heroic god is clear; Antinous died like a mortal. He had died, and could thus help you die as well.

It was not only new fusion gods and fallen heroes who gained influence in the empire. A cult with earlier beginnings also became influential within the imperial cult. The cult centred around a black stone or cube, which was believed at various points to house different gods and goddesses, the later iteration of which was Elagabal.[24] This black stone worship continues well into the imperial period and was influential in the Severan dynasty. Throughout the empire several influential women, including Sabina, Faustina the Elder, and Lucilla,[25] were all followers of the Syrian branch of the black stone cult, which was associated closely with their imperial iconography.

The emphasis that the Severan women placed on their Syrian identity during their family's reign is notable, and it is especially prominent in the religious sphere. In the case of the Severans, cultural religious practice took on a role that it could not for other provincials. There was an attempt to institute the cult of Elagabal on an imperial scale, demonstrated by the coinage of various Augusta of the period. Julia Soaemias, mother of the emperor Elagabalus, encouraged her son's promotion of the Syrian god.[26] Associations with the gods became an important part of her iconography; in a single coin hoard, Clare Roman found that ninety-seven percent of the coins depicting Julia Soaemias show Venus Caelestis on the reverse side of the coin.[27] This was most likely a Romanized depiction of the Carthaginian and Mesopotamian goddess Ourania, who was officially married to the god Elagabal during Elagabalus' reign. It may also be a reference

---

21 Lambert, *Beloved and God,* 5.
22 Jamshidi, *Building a God,* 20.
23 Lambert, *Beloved and God,* 5.
24 Robert Turcan. *The Cults of the Roman Empire,* trans. by Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 29.
25 Respectively, the wife of Hadrian, the wife of Antoninus Pius, and the daughter of Marcus Aurelius.
26 Colleen Melone, "Pushing the Limit: An Analysis of the Women of the Severan Dynasty," *Honors Projects* 5, 2015: 42.
27 Melone, "Pushing the Limit," 42.

to the North African goddess Tanit,[28] though Ourania seems more likely given her association with the Severan imperial cult. In this case, associations with Syrian religion and cultural identity were meant to serve as a method of strengthening the ties of Severan women to imperial power. Unfortunately for the Severans, the emphasis on Syrian cultural practices that were successful for Julia Domna (wife of Septimius Severus) did not remain so for long. Elagabalus' devotion to Elagabal proved to be one of the factors that made him unpopular within the Roman government. He was more concerned with his religious vocation than he was with political affairs, and his aunt, Julia Maesa, would use this to her advantage by convincing him to name her son Alexander his successor, and having him cede Alexander a large amount of power. One interpretation of the fall of the Severan dynasty has been that Elagabalus did irreversible damage to the house by prioritizing his priestly duties over his political ones. While perhaps an overstatement, it does appear true that Elagabal's newfound place in the imperial cult hindered Severan attempts at maintaining power.

The massive scale of the Roman Empire meant the collision of an array of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. The nature of ancient polytheistic religion meant that when this contact occurred, gods and goddesses were able to find new homes in different cultures, even when the cultures to which they belonged were beginning to be homogenized under Roman rule. Epona found a natural home within the cavalry centred Roman military, and as she moved with them, it is reasonable to infer that she acted as agent of Celtic expansion that would not have occurred without Roman influence. Antinous made the transformation from Bithynian commoner to Hellenic god, as he became an icon of cultural revolution and identity across the Greek world and the eastern provinces. Elagabal moved in an opposite direction, from posessing common popularity across the empire to becoming so tangled in political conflict and mismanaged rule that his cult would eventually contribute to the fall of the Severan dynasty. Regardless of their political outcomes, it was through the spread of their gods that provincial peoples within the Roman Empire were able to keep their cultures alive within an increasingly colonizing force.

---

28 Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire,* 72.

Bibliography of Material Culture

Antinous in Egyptian dress and posture, c. 130-138 AD, Artstor.

Bust of Antinous as Osiris (Antinoüs en Osiris), c. 130 CE, Artstor.

Bronze statue of Mercury, France, c. 120-140 CE. British Museum, BM.

Cuirassed statue of Hadrian, in the Agora, c. 130-150 CE, Artstor.

Epona Kleidouchos, late 1st-3rd century CE. Artstor.

Portrait statue of Antinous, 130-138 AD, Artstor.

Bibliography

Caesar, Julius. *Gallic Wars.* Translated by H.J. Edwards. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917.

Jamshidi, Niayesh. *Building a God: The Cult of Antinous and Identity in the Eastern Roman Empire.* Ann Arbor: University of Oregon, 2018.

Lambert, Royston. *Beloved and God: The Story of Hadrian and Antinous*. Madison: Carol Publishing Group, 1992.

Melone, Colleen. "Pushing the Limit: An Analysis of the Women of the Severan Dynasty." *Honors Projects* 5, 2015.

Rüpke, Jörg. *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion*. Translated by David M. B. Richardson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Rives, James B. *Religion in the Roman Empire*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Turcan, Robert. *The Cults of the Roman Empire*. Translated by Antonia Nevill. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Webster, Graham. *The British Celts and Their Gods Under Rome.* London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1986.

The Spectacle of Spectacle in Roman Art: Mosaics at Villa Romana del Casale

Erica Venturo

The ancient Romans are praised for their amazing accomplishments in government, architecture, technology, and art. However, there is one area in which the Romans stand out amongst all others: spectacle. The ancient Romans are remembered as the ultimate entertainers, who procured and staged fantastical games. Roman spectacles were so central to ancient Roman society that a variety of them were preserved in public and private art in the forms of marble reliefs, frescoes, and especially mosaics. One such example of the preservation of spectacle through art is found at Villa Romana del Casale, near the town of Piazza Armerina in Sicily, which dates to the fourth century CE. Scholars believe that this villa belonged to an elite connected to the imperial court or to a member of the tetrarchy.[1] Regardless of the recent scholarly debate on the specific ownership of this villa, Villa Romana is world renowned for its large array of beautifully preserved mosaics. One of the most impressive mosaics in this villa is found in the room called the Ambulatory of the Big Game Hunt, which features a 66-metre-long mosaic that depicts the capture and delivery of a variety of exotic animals to be brought to Rome for a game hunt, or *venatio*.[2] The Ambulatory of the Big Game Hunt is also connected to an extensive peristyle which features a floor mosaic that showcases illustrations of local and exotic animals featured in spectacle games.[3] The peristyle also connects to a room known as the Diaeta of the Small Game Hunt, whose mosaic depicts a band of men hunting down a boar and giving thanks to Diana, the goddess of the hunt.[4] The connectedness of these three mosaics creates a cohesive narrative that highlights the excitement and preparation for game hunts.

It is evident from the narrative continuity of the animals' capture for game hunts that these mosaics exemplify the ways in which both the mediums and subject matter of mosaics not only depict Roman spectacle, but also become a spectacle in and of themselves, through their creation and the way in which an audience perceives the mosaics. When guests entered the villa and walked through the peristyle, passed the Diaeta, and eventually walked into the Ambulatory, the lines between guest, spectator, and participant in *venationes* became blurred. As guests entered the

---

1 Enzo Cammarata, *The Roman Villa of Casale Historical Facts and Curiosities* (Tipographica Lussographica: Caltanissetta, 2017), 7.
2 Refer to Mosaic 1 in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.'
3 Refer to Mosaic 2 in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.'
4 Refer to Mosaic 3 in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.'

Peristyle, they began to observe the exotic animals used in game hunts, a sight which led to the Diaeta, and culminated in   the capture of the animals for public *venationes*, showcased in the Ambulatory. In this instance, there was an implicit duality between the guest as a viewer of these mosaics and the guest as a viewer of the actual spectacle of game hunts as they followed the narrative weaved through these three rooms. Furthermore, these mosaics manipulated the liminality between guest and actor in beast hunts due to their grand scale and immersive nature. As guests walked over the mosaics, they became immersed in the narrative of the collection of these exotic animals and began to associate themselves with the men in this mosaic who were collecting the animals. Moreover, based on analysis of archaeobotanical and archaeological data from the villa as well as other villas located in Sicily and North Africa from a similar time period, it is clear that villa owners, such as the owner of Villa Romana, paid to make their private spheres of living into a stage for public spectacles, in which the public spectacle was the art itself. Thus, the guest became a spectator and the villa owner, as the commissioner of the decorations in the villa, became a successful *editor* who paid for the most skilled artists to create the best spectacle through art.

The duality between guest and audience member to spectacle in Villa Romana began with the peristyle. The peristyle mosaic exemplifies the role of house guests as spectators because the mosaic establishes the artistic narrative that would be continued throughout the other rooms in the villa. Specifically, the peristyle was a spacious rectangular court with four porticoes that enclosed a large garden of laurel trees, plane trees, box bushes and a central basin with a statue of Cupid on an octagonal pedestal.[5] Aside from the purpose of framing the central statue of Cupid in the garden, the peristyle served as one of the first instances to showcase the intricate detail and high-quality workmanship that went into the construction of the villa, as exemplified by the elaborate mosaic that covered the floor. The floor featured a series of 160 panels bordered with illustrations of various species of birds and ivy leaves.[6] Inside each panel, there was a *promata* (head) of either a domestic or wild animal crowned with laurels.[7] The laurel crowns not only tied the peristyle to the laurel trees in the garden connected these animals to the world of Roman spectacle, because the laurel crown was most often seen as a symbol of victory given to victors in Greek athletics and to conquering generals in a triumph. Thus, this detail in the peristyle mosaic creates a duality between the spectacle of houseguests both viewing the art itself and immersing themselves into the world of spectacle by invoking iconography associated with Roman spectacle.

5 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa*, 30.
6 Refer to Mosaic 2 in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.
7 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa*, 30.

As well, the 160 *promatae* of domestic and foreign animals were strategically arranged to place male and female animals diagonally and were oriented differently to create two different pathways to walk through the villa.[8] These pathways began in front of the lararium; the pathway to the left was the private route through the house, while the right pathway was the public route.[9] Regardless of which route a guest followed, both paths inevitably ended at the Ambulatory. This architectural choice established a narrative through the succession and direction of the rooms, and the ways in which the peristyle mosaic itself guided guests through the house to follow the narrative. This inevitable conclusion in the Ambulatory highlights the centrality of Roman spectacle, both in its depiction in art through the reliefs on these mosaics, and through the creation of a spectacle through the art of the mosaics themselves. Houseguests became audience members to the show that the villa owner created through the interactive narrative created by the layout of these mosaics. The story began in the peristyle with an introduction to a variety of domestic and wild animals, some of whom would have inevitably been part of *venationes*. Guests would then follow the public path of the peristyle as dictated by the layout of the *promatae* until they reached the Ambulatory, which served as the climax to this narrative. The Ambulatory served as the climax because this was the room where the animals originally introduced in the peristyle would meet their end, as they were captured by soldiers and shipped off to the *venationes* in Rome.

In the peristyle, guests were invited to observe the hyper realistic depictions of the domestic and wild animals in Sicily, such as bears, jaguars, boars, tigers, bulls, antelope, horses, and many other species that would be featured in game hunts in Roman spectacle.[10] Houseguests went through a voyeuristic experience because the lifelike depictions of these animals seemed to create an environment where houseguests had a firsthand experience to see these animals in their natural habitat. As such, the progression of the narrative created by following the path established by the mosaic further immersed these guests in the wild until they were abruptly disrupted by the mosaic in the Ambulatory, in which the *venatores* in this mosaic captured many of the animals previously seen in the peristyle and shipped them off to Rome for the *venationes*, as shown in the centerpiece of the Ambulatory. Therefore, it is evident from the different pathways created by the arrangement of these 160 *promatae* in the peristyle and from the direct connection to the Ambulatory that the mosaics not only displayed Roman spectacle in art, but also became a spectacle as the narrative established by these mosaics immersed houseguests from the

8 Ibid., 30.
9 Ibid., 30.
10 J. Donald Hughes, "Europe as Consumer of Exotic Biodiversity: Greek and Roman Times," *Landscape Research* 28 (2003), 26.

wild into the world of capturing animals for *venationes*.

Furthermore, the interactive nature of the mosaic of the Diaeta of the Small Game Hunt exemplifies the blurring of the lines between the depiction of Roman spectacle in art and the spectacle of Roman spectacle art. This was a winter living room and the use of Ionic capitals and a curtain instead of a door indicates that this room was of particular importance.[11] This mosaic provides a visual account of a day's hunt; the hunt begins in the Northwest corner of the room, and the narrative continues in a north-south direction.[12] The scene begins with two hunters accompanied by Cyrenaic hounds, who make a sacrifice to Diana to help them capture rich and plentiful game (which is the second scene depicted in this mosaic).[13] This room's mosaics highlight the interactive and immersive nature of the spectacle of Roman spectacle in art even more than the peristyle. The viewer of this mosaic is first introduced to the hunters, and as they observe the scenes in chronological order, the viewer immerses them-self in the narrative and *becomes* a part of the hunting troupe as they follow the two hunters on their day. As the viewer walks over the scenes depicted in this mosaic, they become actively engaged in the narrative unfolding under their feet.[14]

Hence, the more a viewer looks at the story of the spectacle of hunting, the more they *become* hunters themselves. The viewer accompanies the two hunters as they carry a boar that they have successfully captured and looks on as a soldier on horseback is about to kill a hare who unsuccessfully tried to escape by hiding in the shrubs. The viewer both observes this story from a third-party perspective and lives the experience with the hunters as they feast under a red awning and slaves serve them wine and take meat from their game-bag. While this scene depicts a private game hunt rather than a public *venatio*, this game hunt also includes many of the features of a *venatio*, including the dedication to the god for a successful day of hunting, the capture and killing of the animal, and a feast afterwards with the meat of the dead animal. The viewer becomes both physically invested in the story as they walk over the mosaic scenes that create the narrative, and figuratively involved because they begin to associate themself with the two hunters in the mosaic and subsequently take part in the story of the spectacle. In sum, the intricate detail and established direction of the narrative of this mosaic not only depicts the spectacle of the game hunt, but also immerses the viewer *into* the actual spectacle. Therefore, this mosaic not only exemplifies the importance of Roman spectacle in public and private life, but also elucidates that the in-

---

11 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa*, 47.
12 Ibid., 47.
13 Refer to 'Mosaic 3' in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.'
14 Rebecca Molholt, "Roman Labyrinth Mosaics and the Experience of Motion," *The Art Bulletin* 93 (2011), 288.

teractive and immersive nature of the medium of mosaics creates a duality which depicts Roman spectacle and becomes a spectacle in and of itself as the audience perceives the mosaic and becomes a part of its narrative.

While the peristyle emphasizes the duality between houseguest and spectator, and the Diaeta emphasizes the interplay between viewer and actor in the spectacle of spectacle in Roman mosaics, these two perspectives culminate in the Ambulatory of the Big Game Hunt.[15] The Ambulatory serves as the climax of the spatial and visual narrative established in the peristyle and reinforced in the Diaeta. The peristyle introduced houseguests to the animals one would encounter in *venationes*, and the Diaeta immersed viewers in the practices of capturing animals for game hunts in a private setting, but it is the Ambulatory which combines the animals and the hunting practices in one magnificent mosaic. The Ambulatory features a 66-meter-long (200 Roman feet long) continuous mosaic which connected the dominus' living quarters to the basilica and the domina's apartments found in the south-east corner.[16] This room not only spatially connects the private and public spheres of the villa, but also visually ties the private and public aspects of Roman spectacle together. The narrative of this mosaic essentially depicts scenes of the capture of big game that would be sent to Rome for *venationes*, on a backdrop of what would have been a map of the Roman world as it was known at that time.[17] The left side of the room shows the personification of Africa, with the inclusion of its five provinces—Mauritania, Numidia, Proconsular Africa, Triptolitania, and Byzacena—and the right displays the personification of India.[18] The center of the room highlights Italy, and each section of the mosaic showcases the capture of animals indigenous to those regions. This spatially established narrative incites the viewer to immerse themselves in the narrative created by the art. As Roman scholar Walter Benjamin explained, "floor mosaic[s] want to be regarded horizontally, not vertically. The meaning of the Roman floor mosaic was inseparable from its experience as a tangible surface, one typically appreciated by an ambulatory viewer situated in and aware of the specific architectural setting."[19] In this context, the Ambulatory's name itself challenges the liminality of its mosaic because the room was meant for guests to walk through, and so it encourages in its own name, the act of walking over and thereby indirectly walking *into* the story created by the mosaic floor art.

In Rebecca Molholt's analysis of floor mosaics in the baths of a Roman villa in Tunisia, she argued that it was important "to examine [floor mosaics] kinaesthetically, as [floor mosaics are] experiences that are by

---

15 Refer to Mosaic 1 in 'Bibliography of Material Culture.'
16 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa,* 52.
17 Ibid., 52.
18 Ibid., 52.
19 Molholt, "Roman Labyrinth Mosaics," 287.

no means purely visual. Footsteps can define a place—even an imaginary place."[20] This framework should also be applied to the mosaics in the Villa Romana, and especially to the Ambulatory mosaic, whose name alone incites this kinesthetic interaction and interpretation of the art. Guests in the Ambulatory were encouraged to walk through the Roman Empire in a sense, because the spatial design and the physical contact with the mosaic blurred the lines between guest and spectator. This experience prompted the viewer to constantly acknowledge their personal involvement in the mosaic's narrative of the animals' capture from different parts of the Roman Empire. The verticality, expressed through the act of looking down and observing the mosaic, and the horizontality of physically walking over the mosaic to follow the storyline depicted on the mosaic, created a duality between the guest as a spectator to the preparation for *venationes*, and the guest as an actor in spectacle themselves in the act of walking through and physically embracing the narrative. Molholt describes this process as "a sort of phenomenological vision, prompting a larger cognitive, perceptual, retinal, and epistemological effort toward understanding."[21] The mosaic incites immediate involvement as they immerse themself in the narrative while walking over the life-sized depictions of men engaged in the capture of these animals.

Due to the dual vertical and horizontal perception of the Ambulatory, houseguests had to walk through the entire room to experience the full story. As Molholt explains, mosaics "illustrate a journey, rely[ing] also on the physical movement of the beholder; while the realm of the mosaic begins at the entrance of the room [in the case of the Ambulatory, the entrance nearest the dominus' quarters], only an oblique view of the entire composition is available from that vantage point. The narrative will not culminate until one steps into and then through the room."[22] This logic can be applied not only to the Ambulatory, but also to the continuous narrative created throughout the series of floor mosaics, starting from the peristyle and culminating in the climax of the Ambulatory. While Molholt found in her mosaics that the viewer's movements across labyrinth mosaics provided narrative links to combat between hero and monster in the labyrinth's innermost chamber, the viewer's movements across Piazza Armerina's mosaics provided narrative links between participation in the capture of animals for *venationes*.[23] The peristyle introduces guests to the theme of the art, which was animals and beast hunts. In order to understand the full narrative and the fate of the animals introduced in the *promatae* in the peristyle, guests must continue to walk through the <u>villa, further im</u>mersing themselves into the natural world   , as shown

20 Ibid., 287.
21 Ibid., 288.
22 Ibid., 289.
23 Ibid., 289.

through the narrative of a day's hunt in the Diaeta. These mosaics prepare houseguests for the climax of this story, which was the capture of these animals for Roman peoples' enjoyment of the *venationes* in the Ambulatory. While the Diaeta is only one small divergence in the continuous narrative of the life and death of these wild animals at the hands of the Romans, houseguests, as viewers of these mosaics, must walk through these rooms to fully experience the entire narrative and feel the full emotional effect of the end of these animals. Hence, the physical and horizontal viewing experience of these mosaics blurs the lines between viewer and participant. It is clear that mosaics were multisensory experiences, and this process of understanding the Piazza Armerina mosaics blurred the divide between houseguests who observed these beautiful mosaics, spectators and voyeurs to the Roman spectacle of *venationes*, and participants in Roman spectacle, through the transient and interactive nature of the medium of mosaic art.

The Ambulatory also provides a clear space where the viewer would be fully immersed in the expansive narrative of this room. Specifically, as the guest enters the room, they begin the narrative of the collection of these wild animals from different parts of the Roman Empire. The scenes depicted in this mosaic feature life-sized illustrations of hunters who capture and ship these animals to Rome for public spectacles. The viewer is first immersed in the capture of animals from Mauritania, with the procurement of panthers that have been tricked into a trap with a disembowelled goat as bait. As the viewer walks further through the room, they experience the illustrations as a viewer as well as an actor in these hunting scenes. The guest both *watches* these soldiers capture the animals and *takes on* the role of soldier. The viewer aides a soldier as he captures a lion from Proconsular Africa; becomes witness and supervisor to the transport of a captured boar; acts as a voyeur and a worker for the soldiers who are capturing a rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and aurochs in the Nile Delta region; observes and participates in the loading of two ostriches onto a ship from Carthage headed to Ostia. Thus, as the guest walks further through the room, these scenes immerse the viewer into this narrative not only because of the life-sized depiction of the soldiers, but also through the intricate detail and nearly lifelike rendition of the animals and the soldiers which leads the viewer to associate themselves with the soldiers in these scenes.

In fact, the mobile depiction of these soldiers further draws the viewer into the narrative. As a soldier holds his shield to a lion, so too does the viewer recoil from the imminent danger of an attack; as the centurion whips his hand up about to strike a slave, the viewer is compelled to also turn away from the imminent threat of pain. The physical and visual viewing experience encourages the viewer to not only experience the Am-

bulatory mosaic as viewer to the art and a spectator to the preparation of the *venationes* in Rome, but also incites them viewer to become a part of the mosaic narrative. The viewer either associates themself with the animals and experience firsthand the moment of their capture to the moment they are brought to Rome for public spectacle, or more likely to associate themselves with the soldiers who caught these animals and make the Roman spectacle possible. As Molholt explains in her analysis of labyrinth mosaics, "because the observer is situated within the setting of the labyrinth, he gains the status of a character in the drama underfoot, traveling within and along the course that must be experienced and apprehended."[24] By this same logic, since houseguests are situated in the midst of the capture and transport of these animals, they too gain the status of characters in the narrative below them and they too are tasked with the job to unload African, Egyptian, and Indonesian animals. As the viewer makes their way across the mosaic, the mosaic and the viewer see each other: the more the viewer observes the mosaic, the more the mosaic embeds the spectator into the narrative.

The inclusion of soldiers throughout this mosaic is especially interesting because there is very little textual evidence that explains the actual process of the capture and transport of animals for public spectacles. Scholars must rely on scant epigraphic and papyrological evidence for the role of the Roman imperial army in Roman public spectacles.[25] As a result, the depictions of the soldiers in the Ambulatory provides essential information on the logistics of the preparation and establishment of the games. Aside from mosaics like the one in the Ambulatory, there are only a few inscriptions that explain that the *custodes vivarii* of the Praetorian Guard of Rome formed a group of centurions responsible for the capture of animals for *venationes*.[26] As a result, the Ambulatory reinforces the scant archaeological evidence and the conclusions that centurions were considered ideal officers to supervise the small bands of soldiers involved in hunting expeditions (as shown through the depiction of two or three soldiers corralling each animal in the Ambulatory mosaic).[27] This further highlights the importance of Roman spectacle in public and private as well as in entertainment and in military realms, as this mosaic provides insight into the *venatores* and *vestigiatores* assigned to capture beasts.[28]

Another impressive feature of the Ambulatory is that the narrative proceeds both from one end of the room to the other, and from the periphery to the center of the room. The central portion of the Ambulatory mosaic shows a ship on the waves, which mimics the experience of the

24 Ibid., 295.
25 Christopher Epplett, "The Capture of Animals by the Roman Military," *Greece and Rome* 48 (2001), 210.
26 Ibid., 219.
27 Ibid., 219.
28 Ibid., 220.

captured animals travelling over the sea to Ostia, where these exotic ani-
mals would be unloaded and transported to Rome for the *venationes*. The
right side of the room (the section closest to the domina's quarters) paral-
lels the layout of the left side of the room, but instead features the capture
of animals indigenous to India.[29] This portion of the room depicts two
soldiers about to strike a lioness eating a deer, the capture of tiger cubs by
a soldier on horseback,[30] and ends with a personification of India on the
far end of the room.[31] While this side of the room also encourages an im-
mersive experience with the narrative of the mosaic, the narrative perhaps
works best when viewed from periphery to center because it emphasizes
the centrality of Rome for Roman spectacle and highlights the purpose of
the collection of these wild animals, which was for the entertainment of
the Roman audience in Roman spectacle. Consequently, the act of walking
from the edge of the room towards the center of the mosaic physically
implores the viewer to be drawn to Rome and recognize the power of the
Roman Empire to bring the edges of the world, from Mauritania to India,
under Rome's power.

Moreover, the sequence of mosaics from the peristyle, Diaeta,
and Ambulatory truly immersed houseguests who viewed them in their
narrative because even though the "stage is set for narrative, the main
characters were unseen, or at least unseen in the art."[32] The peristyle only
features depictions of domestic and wild animals, which establishes the
theme of the mosaic, but fails to provide a lead character for this story.
Further, while there are two main hunters in the Diaeta mosaic, they both
lack names and fail to be distinguished from each other in rank and dress.
Thus, this mosaic provides supporting characters to the continuous nar-
rative, but fails to provide a protagonist. Finally, in the Ambulatory, the
soldiers and centurions lack any distinguishing names or dress aside from
the specific clothes associated with their jobs, such as Pannonian caps for
animal transporters. Therefore, due to the lack of any outstanding sol-
diers, the viewer immerses themselves in the narrative and becomes the
main character: the soldier tasked with the capture and transport of these
animals to the port in Ostia, who would eventually go to Rome for impe-
rial spectacles of the *venationes*. Molholt describes this transition from pas-
sive viewer to essential actor and protagonist in a mosaic narrative as "the
permanent exchange of different levels of perception [which was] central
to the function of many floor mosaics."[33] Therefore, it is evident that the
lines between guest, spectator and actor become blurred. The viewer con-

---

29 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa*, 56.
30 Nigel B. Crowther, "Boys, Girls, Youths and Age Categories in Roman Sports and Spectacles," *The International Journal of the History of Sport 26* (2009), 353.
31 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa*, 56.
32 Molholt, "Roman Labyrinth Mosaics," 296.
33 Ibid., 297.

stantly shifted between admirer of the lifelike details of these mosaics, and participant in the narrative as they crossed over these mosaics and past the threshold between voyeur and actor, thereby filling the vacant role of protagonist and becoming the unseen main character of the narrative. It is clear that these mosaics not only showcase Roman spectacle in the subject matter of their art, but also *become* a spectacle through their interactive and immersive nature of the medium of the art itself.

Now that the dynamic between viewer, spectator, and actor has been established, it is important to understand the role of the villa owner in this spectacle. Throughout the narrative created by the transition through these three successive mosaics, there is only one possible illustration of the villa owner. In the Ambulatory, at the center of the mosaic, there is a man dressed in extravagant clothing flanked by soldiers with large shields.[34] This well-dressed figure has been interpreted to be Emperor Maximian Heraclius, whom scholars believe was the villa owner, although there has been recent scholarship that may suggest the villa owner was someone well-connected to the Imperial Court.[35] In addition to the man in the center of the mosaic, the depiction of elephants between the two ships was meant to symbolize the imperial triumph and apotheosis and by extension the munificence of the villa owner, who offered games in the amphitheatre.[36] The monogram MA next to the elephants could be a reference to the name of the villa owner.[37] These details further blur the lines between houseguest and spectator because guests viewing the mosaic in the Ambulatory would be reminded of the games held by the villa owner in which they were spectators. Hence, the Villa Romana mosaics serve as a spectacle themselves, as they remind the viewer of their role as spectator in the imperial games by the villa owner and highlight the political importance of holding successful public games.

Furthermore, if the medium and subject matter of the Villa Romana mosaics caused guests to take on the role of spectator as they observed and became invested in the mosaic narrative, then the detail and craftsmanship that went into the   mosaics caused the villa owner to take on the role of *editor*. In fact, archaeological data analyzed from the stone and glass tesserae from the bath floor mosaics in the Villa Romana found that only the highest quality materials were used in the construction and design of these mosaics.[38] Most importantly, this archaeological research found that the mosaics throughout Villa Romana were made by North-Af-

---

34 Cammarata, *The Roman Villa*, 56.
35 Ibid., 56.
36 Ibid., 56.
37 Ibid., 56.
38 Marco Verita et al., "Villa del Casale: Stone and Glass tesserae in the bath floor mosaics," *Archaeology, Anthropology, Science Journal* (2019), 385.

rican craftsmen, who were considered the best mosaicists of that time.[39] To reinforce the quality of North-African mosaic craftwork, R. J. A Wilson analysed mosaics from the Late Roman villa of Caddeddi, near Noto in south-east Sicily, in comparison to the Villa Romana mosaics. He concluded that the mosaics at the Villa of Caddeddi were also likely to be the work of North African mosaicists commissioned by the Roman elite villa owner.[40] Aside from the villa of the Caddeddi, Molholt's research on the Labyrinth mosaics in North African Roman villas provides further evidence that North-African mosaicists were the best at their craft. Thus, it is clear that the owner of Villa Romana, much like the owner of Villa of the Caddeddi, spent a large amount of money to ensure he had the best quality mosaics. This comparison in the quality of the workmanship at the villa of Caddeddi and Villa Romana shows that this phenomenon of the spectacularization of art was not an anomaly in Villa Romana, but that villa owners across the Roman Empire paid to transform their living quarters into a stage for public spectacles, with the art itself acting as the spectacle.

Further research on archaeobotanical data from the surrounding area of Piazza Armerina found that Villa Romana emerged "not only as a Roman residence with public spaces, but also as a political and economic center of administration playing a strategic role for the agrarian hinterland."[41] By nature of its strategic position and analysis of archaeobotanical and archaeological data from the area, Piazza Armerina was already a stage for public spectacle, since the neighbouring farmers saw Villa Romana as the focal point for economic and political administration in the area. Consequently, it was the responsibility of the owner of Villa Romana to make his public spectacle the best and most memorable, and so he paid exorbitant amounts of money for the best quality materials and the best workers to create the most beautiful spectacle possible and prove himself to be a successful *editor* of the games of his own imperial court, in which the spectacle was the mosaics themselves. Thus, the guest became a spectator who admired the mosaics and followed the narrative while the villa owner, as the commissioner of the decorations in the villa, became a successful *editor*.

Overall, it is evident that the medium and subject matter of mosaics in Villa Romana not only depicted Roman spectacle, but also became a spectacle itself through the interactive and immersive multisensory viewing experience of this art. As a guest, the viewer of these mosaics constantly shifted their role from houseguest who admired the detail and quality of the mosaics, to spectator who followed the story of the capture and transport of animals for *venationes*, to finally become an active member in

39 Ibid., 373.

40 R.J.A. Wilson, *Caddeddi on the Tellaro: a Late Roman Villa in Sicily and its Mosaics* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2016), 219.

41 Maria Montecchi, "When palynology meets classical archaeology," 745.

the mosaic narrative by associating themselves with the hunters depicted in the Diaeta and Ambulatory and taking on the role of protagonist. Individually, the peristyle exemplifies the voyeuristic and spectator aspect of the houseguests who immersed themselves in the ambience of nature and observed the animals showcased in the *promatae*, while the Diaeta introduced the immersive and interactive aspect of these mosaics by encouraging the viewer to follow the scenes in chronological order and thereby follow the two hunters on their day catching game. Finally, the passive visual and active physical aspects of the mosaic narrative reach their climax in the Ambulatory, which was the capture and transport of these domestic and wild animals from across the Roman Empire to Ostia, where they would eventually be showcased in *venationes* in Rome. The cohesive narrative created by these three rooms, and the vertical and horizontal viewing experience of these mosaics turned the mosaics into a spectacle themselves, in which viewers of this story became embedded in the plot and became actors in the spectacle, associating and sympathizing with the soldiers in the scene. At last, this dual viewing experience as passive spectator and incited actor was only possible because the villa owner was able to stage the best possible narrative that enamoured viewers and caused guests who saw and walked over these mosaics to become invested in the story. In this way, it was the owner of the villa who ensured the success of the depiction of Roman spectacle in art by procuring the best workers with the best resources. Whether someone was a guest to Piazza Armerina or owned the villa and commissioned these mosaics, it is clear that spectacle was a central part of Romans' lives beyond the public stage. Spectacle dominated the private sphere as well, and Roman elites made any setting, even mosaic reliefs, an opportunity to exert their munificence and become the ultimate victor in the public spectacle of politics.

Bibliography of Material Culture

Mosaic 1. Ambulatory of the Big Game Hunt. 320-350 CE. Dimensions: 66 x 5 m. Location and mosaic number: Villa Romana del Casale, 28. Piazza Armerina. Photograph by editor Enzo Cammarata 2017.

Mosaic 2. Peristyle. 320-350 CE. Location and mosaic number: Villa Romana del Casale, 13. Piazza Armerina. Photograph by editor Enzo Cammarata 2017.

Mosaic 3. Diaeta of the Small Game Hunt. 320-350 CE. Location and Mosaic Number: Villa Romana del Casale, 25. Piazza Armerina. Photograph by editor Enzo Cammarata 2017.

Bibliography

Cammarata, Enzo. *The Roman Villa of Casale Historical Facts and Curiosities*. Tipographica Lussographica: Caltanissetta, 2017.

Crowther, Nigel B. "Observations on Boys, Girls, Youths and Age Categories in Roman Sports and Spectacles." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (2009): 343-364.

Epplett, Christopher. "The Capture of Animals by the Roman Military." *Greece and Rome* 48 (2001): 210-222.

Hughes, J. Donald. "Europe as Consumer of Exotic Biodiversity: Greek and Roman Times." *Landscape Research* 28 (2003): 21-31.

Molholt, Rebecca. "Roman Labyrinth Mosaics and the Experience of Motion." *The Art Bulletin* 93 (2011): 287-303.

Montecchi, M.C. & Mercuri, A.M. "When Palynology meets classical archaeology: the Roman and Medieval landscapes at the *Villa del Casale di Piazza Armerina*, UNESCO site in Sicily." *Archaeology, Anthropology, Science Journal* 10 (2018): 743-757.

Verità, M., Lazzarini, L., Tesser, E. et al. "Villa del Casale (Piazza Armerina, Sicily): stone and glass tesserae in the baths floor mosaics." *Archaeology, Anthropology, Science Journal* 11 (2019): 373-385.

Wilson, R. J. A. 2016. *Caddeddi on the Tellaro: In a Late Roman Villa in Sicily and its Mosaics*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2016.

About Our Contributors

Michias Bahlbi is a Fifth Year New College student working towards a double major in Cellular & Molecular Biology and Immunology with a minor in Classical Civilizations. His primary interests in Classics revolve around the complex layering of Greek mythology and drama and how that could have been understood by an ancient audience to bring forth new meanings. He, for some reason, has learned some ancient Greek out of interest which caused him to question his status as a staunch Hellenist. He also likes to bake sometimes.

William Fuller is a Fourth Year Trinity College student majoring in English with a double minor in Classics and History. Next year he will complete a Literature MA with the Department of English at UofT. His research interests include masculinity and war trauma, the social role of violence, and narrative in online communities. Outside of academia, William is nearing completion on a novel in which he uses the fantasy genre as a mode for exploring cultural issues. In his free time, William is an avid hiker and traveler.

Paul Ionescu is currently a Fourth Year Victoria College student with a double major in Classics and Classical Civilizations and a particular interest in Roman identity and colonization in the Antonine dynasty and Late Antiquity. He is also about to embark on a master's degree at the University of Toronto in the Classical History stream with the eventual goal of one day being a professor and historian of Roman history.

Jennifer MacPherson is a Fourth Year Victoria College student studying Classics, with a minor in English. Her main areas of interest are ancient sexuality and drama, especially the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus and the tragedies of Seneca. She seeks to study ancient literature through the lens of feminist and queer theories. When not busy translating, Jennifer can be found ice skating, watching Survivor, or promoting Judith Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure.*

Hannah McCarthy is a Fourth Year New College student pursuing a double major in Classical Civilizations and English. Her primary academic interests include Greek tragedy, the politics of the late Roman Republic, and the Julio-Claudian Empire. When not adamantly insisting Clytemnestra did nothing wrong, Hannah can be found talking about Alien and Star Wars to anyone who will listen, curled up with a murder mystery, or at your local pop culture convention.

Lora Miki is a Fourth Year Woodsworth College student deeply entrenched within her studies of Classical Civilizations and Art History. Within the Classics, her main areas of interest center around Roman Imperial art, material culture, and women in antiquity. It is also worth noting that Lora has a side-hustle as a rookie graphic designer, which has sparked a passionate interest in the Digital Humanities. Her recent exploration is focused on the intersection at which the study of Ancient History collides with the Digital Age of technology and design. Beyond academia, Lora enjoys consuming art history memes, lurking in art galleries and museums, and occasionally rock climbing.

Beatrice Perusse is a Third Year St. Michael's College student. She is obtaining her Bachelor's Degree in Classical Civilizations, Mediaeval Studies, and Digital Humanities. She is interested in ancient religion, women's cultic practice, cultural exchange in the ancient world, and the transmission of ancient texts to modern media. Her strengths include being able to find lost library books for your overdue essay, and an extensive knowledge of Alexander the Great trivia.

Erica Venturo is a Fifth Year St. Michael's College student with a major in Classical Civilizations and a double minor in History and Political Science. In the fall, she will be starting an MA in Ancient History at the University of Toronto. Her main interests center on Middle Roman Imperial history and working on archaeological projects, with experience on the Western Argolid Regional Project and the Villa of the Antonines excavation in Rome. In her free time, Erica enjoys working on 2000-piece jigsaw puzzles and watching Adam West's Batman.

Acknowledgements

Why *Plebeian*?
Undergraduate students are often seen as an anonymous crowd, a mass of bodies, numbers on an administrator's computer screen, and are thus frequently overlooked when it comes to original ideas and research. Like the plebs of Ancient Rome and *hoi polloi* of Greece, we are many; nevertheless, we remain a vibrant community of explorers, thinkers, pioneers. This journal is so named in an attempt to reclaim this word of disdain for our own. Here, we proudly display our undergraduate research to those who might otherwise let it pass by, unnoticed.