

DURHAM UNIVERSITY'S
OSTRAKA
JOURNAL

ISSUE II
2025

PUBLISHED ON BEHALF OF
DURHAM UNIVERSITY'S
CLASSICS SOCIETY

THE OSTRAKA JOURNAL

Ostraka has been part of Durham University's Classics Society since 2018. In 2023, we moved from an online blog to a peer-reviewed journal. We are now accredited by the British Library and accept submissions about Classics and Ancient History from undergraduates all over the world. Our authors have the chance to explore topics of personal interest outside their degrees, and to have their academic and creative work published.

During the Classical era, *ostraka* were sherds of fired clay used to vote in political elections at Athens. The politician with the most votes would be banished ("ostracised") from Athens for ten years. While *The Ostraka Journal* does not banish students forever should their work be rejected during a publication cycle, each publication represents a unique undergraduate voice and argument; each one stands out like an individual Athenian politician, bringing to mind the Classical roots of *Ostraka's* name.

At *The Ostraka Journal*, we define the domain of Classics and Ancient History as anything falling between the Chalcolithic (c. 2500 BCE) to the Fall of the Roman Empire (476 CE), and within the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Near East. However, this is a flexible guideline, and exceptions to these parameters are considered on a case-by-case basis. We appreciate creativity and variety.

ISSN 2977-1773

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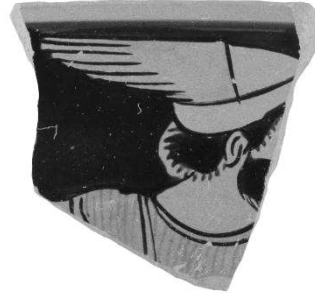
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THE OSTRAKA JOURNAL

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ROSALIND A. WATKIN

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Classics, Ancient History, and all related subjects are invaluable domains of the Arts and Humanities. In an era increasingly defined by the rapid spread of misinformation and the rise of generative Artificial Intelligence, one's ability and desire to interrogate written and visual media have become more crucial than ever. Classics, as a discipline, gives us the opportunity to do just that. Because of its uniquely broad scope, Classics brings together the origins of Western political and philosophical thought, the art of rhetoric, the power of visual media, the transmutation of languages, and the foundations of modern socio-cultural systems; studying these interlocking features — whether under formal tutelage or in one's own time — strengthens our critical thinking abilities, as well as our discussion skills.

The Ostraka Journal is one of many ways individuals can engage with Classics. This year, our authors have produced thoughtful academic and creative pieces, and I am deeply proud of the range of topics included in our second issue. Their hard work and the careful evaluations done by our editorial team of peer-reviewers demonstrate that the domains of Classics and Ancient History remain alive and relevant today. While many of us will not make Classics our career, with a lot of students, including myself, intending to enter the legal field, the civil service, or teaching, I hope that being part of this extracurricular publication has allowed us to engage critically with the Humanities.

I have been part of *The Ostraka Journal* since last year, being both a peer-reviewer and an author (of the paper 'Apo Mēkhanēs Logos: How Machine Learning May Help Scholars Decipher Linear A'). Although last year's paper was time-consuming to write — and I confess that I read a lot of the secondary literature on journeys to and from Florence two weeks before the due date — I enjoyed exploring the relationship between digital humanities and Bronze Age linguistics. My research about the possibility of deciphering Linear A with the help of Artificial Intelligence was a useful starting point for my dissertation this year.

My thanks go to the Classics Society's executive team. You're a fantastic, talented bunch, and I'm proud to have been involved in the running of the Society alongside you; in particular, Ben Daunter, this year's president, has provided a second set of eyes on the *Journal* and was always there to help me run it whenever I needed to focus on my degree, or simply to have a mental break.

Congratulations to everybody involved in this year's issue of *The Ostraka Journal*. I wish the best of luck to next year's Editor-in-Chief, authors, and editorial team.

Durham
June 2025

ACADEMIC PAPERS

WINE, WEALTH, AND WOMEN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DECORATIVE LANGUAGE SEEN IN THE POMPEIIAN *DOMUS* “THE HOUSE OF THE VETTII”

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INTRODUCTION

“cum aedificaret domum in Palatio ... promitteretque ei architectus ita se eam aedificaturum ut liber a conspectu immunisque ab omnibus arbitris esset neque quisquam in eam despicere posset, “Tu vero,” inquit, “si quid in te artis est, ita compone domum meam ut quidquid agam ab omnibus perspicere possit.”

“When he was building his house on the Palatine... and the architect was promising to build it in such a way that he would be free of people’s gaze and safe from all viewers and no one would be able to look into it, he said: “Use all your skill to design my house in such a way that whatever I do can be seen by everyone.”²

This exchange between Drusus and his architect, as recorded by Velleius Paterculus, exemplifies the dual function of the Roman *domus*. Although primarily serving a domiciliary function, there was a continued impression that the *domus* would always be subject to the ‘court of public opinion.’ The nuance of the passage speaks to the complexity of Roman politics, but also of the underlying function of domestic architecture. In her analysis of this passage, Cooper expertly surmises that the Drusus and the architect speak of “ways of using domestic architecture to enhance social dominance,” contrasting how architectural privacy and publicity could be used to improve an individual’s social standing.³ It is this concept of using a seemingly private space to publicly express oneself that forms the base argument of this paper.

Using the House of the Vettii as a case study, I aim to prove that the purpose of this *domus* was to display the economic and social standing of the owners, creating an artistic vocabulary in which their excessive wealth, freedman status, and wine-trade connections can be expressed. The House of the Vettii, found today in Pompeii section VI.15.1, has been chosen for this analysis due to its exemplary decorative condition, but relatively modest architecture. I argue that nearly all of the decoration of the house falls under the category of a ‘Dionysiac paradise,’ where the extravagance of the Vettii’s wealth is celebrated through connections to the wine God. Within this overarching Dionysiac theme, I also argue that there was a gendered (and

¹ Velleius Paterculus, *History*, 14.2.3

² Translation by Woodman, 2025, p. 85

³ Cooper, 2007, p. 10

anti-slave) bias, centring on depictions of exploitation and punishment. I aim to prove through this paper that the assertion of power seen in these depictions was to emphasise the core values of the Vettii. Through scenes of punishment, the Vettii emphasise their role as masters (rather than previous slaves), their patriarchal role in a male dominated society, and the way in which they achieved their power via the wine trade. The reader should be aware that as a part of this analysis, the sexual exploitation of women and the physical punishment of slaves will be discussed, as it is crucial to understanding how the visual language of the household reinforced dominance and control. The reader should also be aware that throughout this paper, imagery has been provided to assist in the understanding of the primary arguments; occasionally, sexually explicit content can also be found. Although the analysis is limited to the House of the Vettii itself, the core argument of this paper speaks of a wider phenomenon of intentional design and architecture to boast of wealth and social standing.

By using the stylistic similarities of the fourth-style artwork found within the house, Clarke dates the remodelling of the house to have occurred between the earthquake of 62 CE and the eventual eruption of 79 CE. Because of this short time frame between the likely redecoration and the preservation, I argue that it was the Vettii themselves who commissioned the redecoration in order to better represent their self-expression and design needs.⁴ As suggested by Ellis, it is likely that there was an earlier, more modest construction on the site, which was expanded upon to create the building which stands today.⁵ This earlier construction will be analysed in this paper; however, the primary focus is on the fourth-style design and what it reveals about the owners and the social landscape of Pompeii.

IDENTITY OF THE OCCUPANTS

In order to determine the more public role of the building, the economic and social status of the owners must first be considered. At the time of the volcanic explosion in 79 CE, it is believed that the *domus* had two primary inhabitants, *Aulus Vettius Restitutus* and *Aulus Vettius Conviva*, evidenced by two bronze seals in the *atrium* and a ring found on site, inscribed “A.V.Co.”⁶ Further evidence that supports the argument that the Vettii were the owners of the *domus* can be seen in the graffiti on the south-east façade, which reads: “*Vetti Conviva, Augustalis, (fac)*” (CIL IV.3509) and “*(A. Vettius) Restitutus rog(at)*” (CIL IV.3522).⁷ The inclusion of the title *Augustalis* is greatly significant to understanding the public role of *Vettius Conviva*, as it is a position described by Clarke as “the highest civil office open to a freedman.”⁸ *Vettius Conviva* also appears as a witness on a wax tablet in the house of the banker Lucius Caecilius, where his position as an *Augustalis* is further confirmed (CIL IV. tablet 96).⁹

Considering that the public office of *Augustalis* was the highest office open to freedmen, alongside the fact that to be appointed as an *Augustalis*, a large financial donation to public works

⁴ Clarke, 1998, p. 164

⁵ Ellis, 2000, p. 3

⁶ Archer, 1981, p. 4

⁷ Inscriptions CIL IV.3509 and CIL IV. 3522 from Castrén, 1975, p. 239-240

⁸ Clarke, 1992, p. 208

⁹ Andreau, 1974, p. 266

was required, Clarke, Ellis, and Archer all conclude that the *Vettii* were likely freedmen who had gained exceptional wealth once they had been released from servitude.¹⁰ These inscriptions are the only epigraphical evidence that mention the *Vettii*, and notably none of them address how they came to their wealth or their relation to each other. Both Clarke and Ellis argue that the *Vettii* were likely brothers, based on their naming conventions.¹¹ However, Kellum aptly notes that this conclusion is unsubstantiated, and argues that “all that their nomenclature reveals is that they were manumitted by the same individual and were therefore a part of the same slave *familia*.”¹² Kellum also notes that the heroic décor of the house centres on mythological individuals who had abandonment as their core foundation yet went on to achieve great things, a motif that Kellum suggests would be relatable to the *Vettii*.¹³ Therefore, I argue that it is equally likely that the *Vettii* were blood relatives or that they had no genetic relation; however, it is clear that they were both slaves from the same original *familias*, who stayed together after they were released from service.

Although there is no epigraphical evidence as to how the *Vettii* gained their wealth, some evidence found within the *domus*, such as the inscriptions of three *amphorae* indicate that the *Vettii* were likely involved in wine trading. The inscriptions are as follows:

XV K(alendas) Ian(uarias) / de (fundo ou vino?) Arriano. (e) dol(io) XV (CIL IV. 5572).

Idibus Ian(naris) / De (fundo ou vino?) Asiniano. Racemat(o) / (e) dol(io) I (CIL IV. 5573).

[I]d[i]bus [...] / de (cino) [F]lor[an]iano. (e) dol(io) XXV (CIL IV. 5577).¹⁴

Kellum notes that all three inscriptions “precisely record the storehouse and *dolia*” where the wine originates from, which she uses to conclude that the *Vettii* likely owned vineyards outside of Pompeii.¹⁵ However, Andreau suggests that the *Vettii* could have been acting in a distribution capacity, where they were involved in the trade, but not necessarily vineyard ownership.¹⁶ Although it is difficult to determine the extent of which the *Vettii* were involved within the trade, it is abundantly clear from the inscriptions that wine was a source of great financial benefit to the *Vettii*. This section has presented adequate evidence to conclude that the *Vettii* were freedmen, and that they were likely involved in the wine trade. It is possible that they gained wealth through the trade of other luxury goods such as perfumes and jewellery, based on the analysis of the Room of the Cupids later in this paper. However, this luxury goods trade works to further my

¹⁰ Clarke, 1992, p. 208, Ellis, 2000, p. 1, Archer, 1981, p. 4

¹¹ Clarke, 1992, p. 208, Ellis, 2000, p. 1

¹² Kellum, 2015, p. 205

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Andreau, 1974, p. 266

¹⁵ Kellum, 2015, p. 205

¹⁶ Andreau, 1974, p. 266

overall argument, that the décor of the household is used to mirror the core values of its owners in an attempt to showcase their wealth in both a public and private capacity.

PATRONAGE AND THE DIVISION OF THE HOUSEHOLD SPACE

Vitruvius, arguably the most important source when considering Roman architecture, suggests that design of the *domus* should cater to the needs of the individuals who live there, whilst providing spaces that can facilitate crucial social and business meetings, such as the mid-morning *salutatio* or smaller late-night gatherings. In book six, the private invitation only spaces (such as bedrooms and dining rooms) are contrasted to the openly available “public” areas of the *domus*:

*Communia autem sunt, quibus etiam invocati suo iure de populo possunt venire, id est vestibula, cava aedium, peristylia, quaeque eundem habere possunt usum. Igitur is, qui communi sunt fortuna, non necessaria magnifica vestibula nec tabulina neque atria, quod in aliis officia praestant ambiundo neque ab aliis ambiuntur.*¹⁷

“The common rooms are those into which, though uninvited, persons of the people can come by right, such as vestibules, courtyards, peristyles and other apartments of similar uses. Therefore, magnificent vestibules and alcoves and halls are not necessary to persons of a common fortune, because they pay their respects by visiting among others, and are not visited by others.”¹⁸

From this passage, it becomes explicitly clear that the House of the Vettii was designed with considerations for this semi-public space; almost 40% of the *domus* floorspace is taken up by the large open-air *peristyle* (room M, fig. 1), with the next largest spaces consisting of the *atria* (room C, fig.1) and the assorted *pinacothecae*.¹⁹ Furthermore, it should be noted that while not needing an invitation to frequent these spaces, it is most likely that the visitors to the *domus* would be business associates or friends of the Vettii, and as such orbiting the same social groups. Based on Vitruvius’ explanation, it is the clients of the Vettii, the more “economically humble” of their social circle that would be visiting during business hours. Russell expands upon this, noting that later into the day the occupier would receive friends of a “similar social status” in the *triclinia* and more private spaces. Therefore, the audience of the house décor can be broken down into two categories: those who aspire to be like the Vettii, and those who are socially and economically equal to the Vettii. I argue that it is this ‘jury of peers’ that motivated the extravagant décor of the *domus*, to either emphasise the wealth of the Vettii to prospective clients, or to contribute towards friendly “boasting.”

¹⁷ Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 6.5.1

¹⁸ Translation by Granger, 1937, p. 37

¹⁹ Franker-Shuh, 2022, p. 24

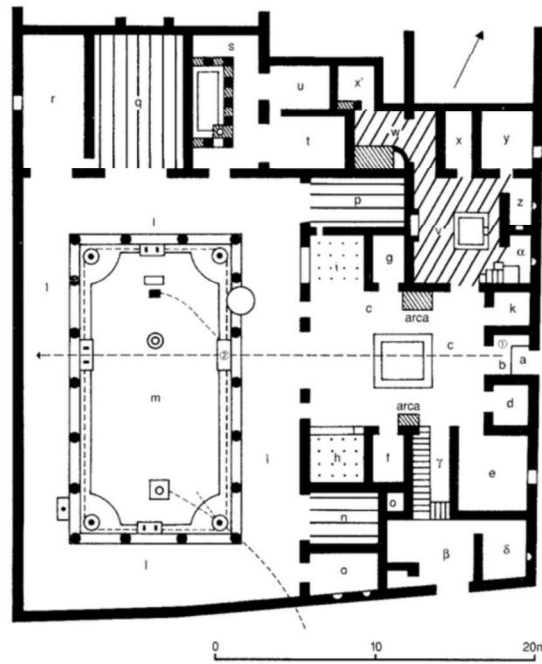


Fig. 1. Floorplan, House of the Vettii, Pompeii. From Clarke, J. "5. Fourth-Style Ensembles, A.D. 45 –79" In *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.- A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992: p. 209.

THE PERISTYLE: A DIONYSIAC PARADISE

As suggested by Simelius, the House of the Vettii offers a glance into a specific intermediate architectural period when the *peristyle* was starting to, but had not fully, replaced the *atrium* as the primary location within the *domus* to conduct business meetings.²⁰ Certain houses, of which the House of the Vettii is an excellent example, include both the *atrium* and the *peristyle*. It is clear why this change occurred, and the *peristyle* became the preferred socialisation spot; it offered a larger space that could accommodate more people whilst also being visible from every publicly accessible room in the house. Specifically in the case of the House of the Vettii, the building was clearly designed with the *peristyle* as the social hub; as noted by Simelius, the orientation of the building ensured optimal lighting and warmth from sunrise to sunset, suggesting that the *peristyle* was suited to the early morning client audience and the late night friends, impressing all forms of visitors to the *domus*.²¹ Therefore, I argue that the decorative theme of the *peristyle* was wholly intentional, as it is clear that the purpose of the *peristyle* was to entertain guests, and that it was designed to represent the wealth and origins of the Vettii through Dionysiac imagery and architectural opulence.

The *peristyle* took the form of an elaborate garden area that was populated with columns, vegetation, statues, and water fountains. Although in some cases, the garden itself occasionally served a more modest and practical function of as kitchen garden, the one found at the House of the Vettii is agreed upon to have always been wholly decorative. The primary architectural focus of the *peristyle* should be on the eighteen columns of the Corinthian order; the House of

²⁰ Simelius, 2022, p. 17

²¹ *ibid.* p. 39

the Vettii is one of only four houses in Pompeii to feature such an elaborate design.²² The Corinthian order was favoured during the early imperial period, as evidenced by Vitruvius' description of them as more "elegant" and "graceful" than other orders such as Ionic, Doric, or Tuscan.²³ Due to the elaborate nature of their design, the Corinthian columns were the most expensive to produce, which can explain their lack of prominence in Pompeii, as few could afford their implementation. Therefore, I argue that by including Corinthian columns, the "class" of the Vettii was emphasised, as they were both conforming to Augustan ideals, and also emphasising to their visitors that they could afford such extravagance.

Although it is debatable if it was the Vettii themselves, or the architect of the house who decided on this design, the economic backing needed to finance the columns, and the clearly public nature of the *peristyle* supports the argument that they were a further expression of the Vettii's wealth. Furthermore, as excellently argued by Trentin, of the four houses in Pompeii that include Corinthian columns, the House of the Vettii was the only one that structurally allows for the view of the *peristyle* from the main street.²⁴ Therefore, the inclusion of the costly imperial design was not just for the benefit of those who may be fortunate enough to visit, but was also a loud display of wealth to anyone who would be able to see the *domus* from the street level. It is clear that the architectural design of the *peristyle* clearly contributes to the argument of this paper, in that the purpose of the House of the Vettii was to facilitate a public display of wealth through extravagant and expensive design choices.



Fig. 2. View of the *Peristyle* from the *Atria*, House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Eber, J. 2023.

²² Trentin, 2014, p. 42

²³ Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 4.1.1-12

²⁴ Trentin, 2014, p. 42

The notable decorative and design elements of the *peristyle* can be broken down into two categories: the painted wall art, and the statuary found within the garden itself. Both design aspects centre around a mythological theme, with depictions of figures and characters associated with Dionysus. Notably, Dionysus is most famous for his role as the God of Wine, and I argue that this thematic choice was intentional, to over emphasis the wealth of the Vettii through imagery associated with how they obtained it through. The ‘Dionysiac Paradise’ created in the *peristyle* is exemplary, from small, nuanced details such as the west wall fresco of “a young satyr with pan pipes and a maenad,” to the larger and more noticeable statuary, that are found across the courtyard.²⁵

The primary statues of the *peristyle* are the bronze water fountains, the herms, and the marble Priapus. Ely’s account of the statues from the initial excavation of the House of the Vettii states that they were a “pair of bronze statuettes representing boys, each holding a goose, from which water followed.”²⁶ The material itself is of great cost and an excessive display of wealth, in addition to the usage of water on decorative elements intended only for aesthetic means. Jones and Robinson argue that the integration of water features like the bronze boys of the *peristyle* (fig. 4), which use piped supplies would have been “integral to the expression of luxury” as the work necessary to facilitate such devices was extensive and arduous.²⁷ Furthering the material analysis, Ely notes that throughout the excavations of Pompeii until this point, there had been little to no marble found, with it either being “counterfeited painted stucco [or] ... removed with other valuables immediately after the desertion of the city.”²⁸ The attempts at faking a “marble” look, alongside the removal of the material at a later date to facilitate other building works supports the argument that the *peristyle* was intended as a display of excessive wealth, through the abundance of “several tables of marble, numerous fountain basins and statuettes,” that were found here.²⁹

Of these marble statues, there were herms of Dionysus and Ariadne, Dionysus and Silenus, a nude satyr, and a seated satyr with a hare. It is clear that the figures, either of the God himself, his romantic affiliations, or associated beings like satyrs that the visual language is one of wine and wealth. Additionally, there is the marble statue of Priapus that was found disassembled in the house which was believed to have been originally located in the *peristyle*, functioning in a similar capacity as the bronze boys as a water fountain. The statue, which Clarke describes as “conspicuous and attention grabbing,” is made of marble, and can currently be found *in situ* in the *peristyle* (visible in fig. 2 of this paper). The statue combines the two previous points about the expression of wealth in the *peristyle*; its marble construction and water fountain function exemplify the opulence and frivolity of the Dionysiac garden paradise. Furthermore, this is not the only depiction of Priapus in the household; there is also the rather striking main *faucis* depiction (fig. 3). Placed in the main doorway to the *domus*, this would be the first element of decoration that any visitor to the household would see.

²⁵ Clarke, 1992, p. 213

²⁶ Ely, 1897, p. 303

²⁷ Jones, Robinson, 2005, p. 695

²⁸ Ely, 1897, p. 303

²⁹ *ibid.*



Fig. 3. View of the Bronze Water Features, North Facing, House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Jashinsky, S. 1964.



Fig. 4. Priapus weighing his manhood against a bag of money. Looking west from vestibule towards south-west corner of atrium and through to peristyle. House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Colomer, M. 2023.

Not only is Priapus contributing to the Dionysiac associations of the *domus* as suggested by Clarke, but its location in the doorway suggests a multifaceted role as a guarding spirit.³⁰ Kellum offers a unique perspective on the significance of the Priapus fresco, suggesting that it is his abandonment as a child and adoption by shepherds connects the God to the possible origins of the Vettii as slaves who may have been abandoned.³¹ Although this is an interesting argument, due to the lack of evidence to support this origin story. As the *amphorae* support the wine-merchant argument, this author tends to agree with Clarke, in that the role of the Priapus was to reinforce the wine-merchant nature of the Vettii; further supported by the bunch of grapes to the left of the God. The symbology of the weighing scales, grapes, and bags of money in the *fauces* depiction are an obvious link to abundance and wealth, making the overall argument that the décor was connected to the occupation and wealth of the Vettii more likely. It is possible that the

³⁰ Clarke, 1992, p. 213

³¹ Kellum, 2015, p. 205

Priapus depictions are working in a multifaceted capacity, equally symbolising abandonment, wine-associations, and wealth-gaining endeavours. Overall, it is clear that both of the Priapus depictions contribute to the Dionysiac theme, reinforcing the opulent expression of wealth seen throughout the *domus*. It is clear that the role of the *peristyle* in the House of the Vettii was to display immense wealth through the imagery, materials, and stylistic decisions. However, the *peristyle* itself was also connected to three rooms that further contribute to this argument: the Room of the Cupids, the North-East (NE) *pinacotheca*, and the South-East (SE) *pinacotheca*.

THE *PINACOTHECAE*: DENOTING WEALTH THROUGH EXPLOITATION

Besides the *peristyle*, the most decorative aspects of the *domus* are the *pinacothecae*, the highlighted rooms q, p and n, as seen in fig. 1 of this paper. When discussing the needs of a *domus*, Vitruvius argues that the inclusion of a *pinacotheca* is conventionally seen as a feature in the homes of “*nobiles*,” in that those who hold high offices “are obliged to serve the state.”³² Vitruvius expands on his previous definition of the rooms of the *domus* by suggesting that these types of people would also need “libraries, picture galleries (*pinacothecae*), and basilicas, prepared with a splendour consonant with that of great public buildings.”²⁹ Van Buren suggests that the primary function of this passage is that Vitruvius likely had the requirements of Augustus in mind, and is thus equating all *domus* of the upper classes to the *princeps*.³³ However, Van Buren does note that the inclusion of a basilica is likely only expected in the House of Augustus, with his religious role as *pater patriae*, and not in the regular upper classes. Yet the need for libraries and *pinacothecae* would be relatable for all Romans who conduct *salutatio*, needing extra spaces to host guests. The House of the Vettii, lacking in a clearly defined business space such as the *tablinium* fits perfectly within this categorisation, where the *pinacothecae* were likely used in a same capacity as the *peristyle*, to conduct business meetings. Therefore, the wealthy audience of the Vettii’s peers were the primary target of the decoration; of which I argue that the subliminal messaging of the specific depictions reflect the core ideologies of the Vettii themselves.

Severy-Hoven suggests that all of the paintings in the house, including both *pinacotheca* and the Room of the Cupids, were done by the same group of artists, as a part of reconstruction of the *domus* after an earthquake in 62 CE, in the Pompeiian fourth style.³⁴ This argument is convincing, as the general style and colour palette seen in paintings throughout the *domus* is consistent. Furthermore, the availability of pigments and difficulty of colour matching previous work contributes to the argument that the work was carried out within a relatively short time frame. Both *pinacotheca* and the Room of the Cupids feature three primary images, surrounded by smaller details. The rooms have specific colour palettes, with the NE *pinacotheca* heavily featuring red and blue pigments, and the SE *pinacotheca* being primarily yellow (fig. 5; fig. 6).

Unfortunately, the Room of the Cupids has not been as well preserved as the two *pinacothecae*, missing its primary images and only featuring small details. Of what remains are frescos that would be best viewed at a seated level, displaying playful cupids undertaking tasks

³² Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 6.5.2

³³ Van Buren, 1938, p. 79

³⁴ Severy-Hoven, 2013, p. 544

such as gathering and pressing grapes, trading wine *amphorae*, and gathering flowers for garlands. Rostovtzeff argues that these panels are directly related to the occupation of the Vettii, suggesting that the inclusion of flower traders alongside wine merchants provides evidence towards the argument that the Vettii owned the land that their wine came from, alongside their facilitation of its distribution.³⁵ Kellum expands on this suggestion, arguing that the cupids who are partaking in other luxury trades, such as perfumery and goldsmithing are evidence of the Vettii's 'diversified portfolio' of luxury goods trade.³⁶ The panels and their relative location within the room suggest that the primary purpose was for feasting, or at least social drinking. I argue in agreement with Kellum and Rostovtzeff, that the cupids are contributing to the overall visual symbolism of the *domus* to denote the wine-trading wealth of the Vettii to their prominent guests.

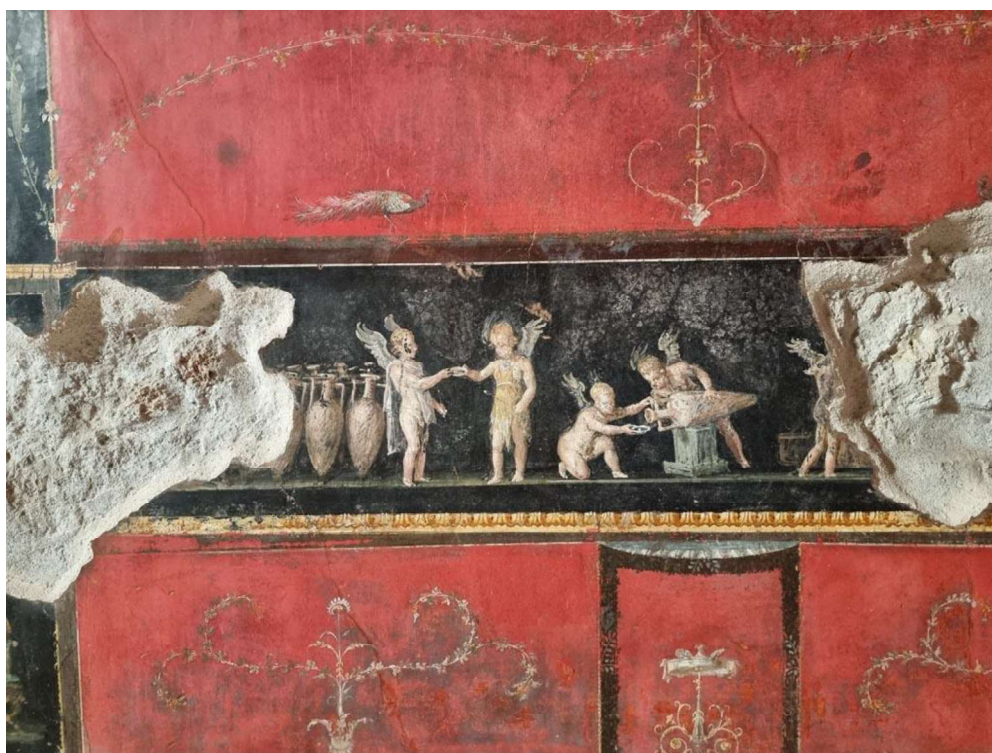


Fig. 5. Detail of wall painting of cupids trading wine. Room of the Cupids, House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Ciaramella, G. 2023.

The better-preserved NE and SE *pinacothecae* both feature three primary images depicting mythological scenes. Additionally, there are “filler images,” predominantly architectural in design, depicting grand colonnades and temple porticos. Both *pinacotheca* also feature smaller nautical imagery like naval battles and sea creatures. What is most significant is the mythological scenes depicted. In the NE *pinacotheca*, from left to right, the images are as follows: Daedalus showing Pasiphae the Wooden Cow, the Punishment of Ixion, and the Exposure of Ariadne to Dionysus. In the SE *pinacotheca* (left to right): there is the depiction of

³⁵ Rostovtzeff, 1957, p. 92

³⁶ Kellum, 2015, p. 204

Heracles strangling the serpents, the Death of Pentheus, and the Punishment of Dirce (fig. 6). As suggested by Clarke and Franker-Shuh, the decoration in the House of the Vettii seems to fit within the Dionysiac theme, the *pinacotheca* included.³⁷ Over half of the main frescos seen in the NE and SE *pinacotheca* have a mythological connection to Dionysus, contributing to my argument that the Vettii were displaying their wine merchant capacities to those whom they would be conducting business with.



Fig. 6 The Punishment of Dirce, South-East *Pinacotheca*, House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Heese, K. 2024.

These frescos have a darker undertone, especially when considered from the perspective of the women and the enslaved inhabitants of the household, who would regularly frequent the rooms as a part of diner services and entertainment. As brilliantly argued by Severy-Hoven, the themes of sexual exploitation and corporal punishment are seen throughout; Deidamia, Ariadne, Pasiphae, and Hermaphroditus are all found in myths related to sexual assault, whilst Dirce, Ixion, and Pentheus find themselves trapped and bound in punishment scenes.³⁸ Throughout these depictions, women are shown to be exploitable, while the masculine figures are bound, imprisoned, and tortured. Although fitting within the overall theme of mythological decoration found in Pompeian houses, the choice to depict such violent scenes cannot be ignored. Fredrick argues that the scenes cater to the “male-gaze” of the wealthy visitors to the house, with scenes that are either “depicting or anticipating sadistic violence.”³⁹ Levin-Richardson complies the

³⁷ Clarke, 1992, p. 213, Franker-Shuh, 2022, p. 35

³⁸ Severy-Hoven, 2013, p. 566

³⁹ Fredrick, 1995, p. 283

arguments of Fredrick and Severy-Hoven to suggest that the purpose of the violent scenes was to demonstrate the Vettii's "role as slaveowners, with the ability to enact corporal punishment on the unfree members of their household."⁴⁰ I would like to expand on this, to suggest that the need to depict such outwardly violent scenes may have arisen from an insecurity of their slave-origins, where there was a desire to outwardly reinforce their new role as the oppressors, rather than the oppressed. Furthermore, I suggest that the connection of the mythological depictions to Dionysus is equally intentional; it is through their wine-related trade that the Vettii came to their new position of power, and they use this connection to reinforce their new status as masters of the house.

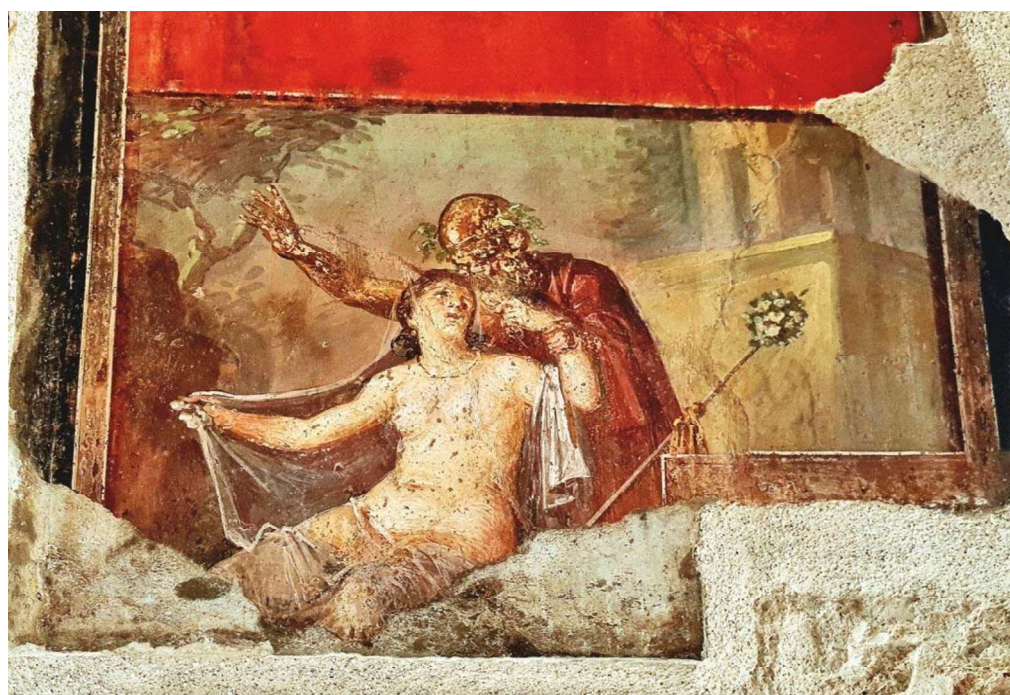


Fig. 7. Wall painting of Silenus and Hermaphroditus. Room of the Cupids, House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Giuseppe Ciaramella, G. 2023.

THE SLAVE QUARTERS: RESPECT AND DOMINANT CONTROL

A continuation of this exploitative artwork can be seen in the slave quarters of the *domus*. Centred around a smaller *atrium* space, this area of the household is significantly more cramped, and houses the kitchen, alongside the *lararium* and slave quarters. The slave quarters were more modestly decorated than the *peristyle* or *pinacotheca*; however, the erotic scenes of room x¹ and the detailed *lararium* are uncommon inclusions to a predominantly slave space, bringing into question the purpose of the space and its decorative programme (fig. 8). Both sides of the scholarship that debates this area of the *domus* connect the decoration to the servile origins of the Vettii; however, they are divided as to why this décor was implemented. Ellis tend towards the more optimistic interpretation, in that the slave quarters were decorated as such because the

⁴⁰ Levin-Richardson, 2023, p. 100

Vettii might have had “some sympathy, remembering their own humble origins,” noting that the standard of living for those who would inhabit these quarters was “better than the poor citizens of Pompeii.”⁴¹ Clarke takes this optimistic perspective further, suggesting that the erotic decoration of room x¹ was a reward for the male slave cook, sharing with him the same objectification of the female form as seen in the *pinacothecae* frescos.⁴² However, in doing so, the female slaves are seeming to suffer two-fold; being sexualised by both their masters and peers.



Fig. 8 Erotic Scene, Room x¹ House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Severy-Hoven, B. “Master Narratives and the Wall Painting of the House of the Vettii, Pompeii.” *Gender History Across Epistemologies*, (2013): p. 563

It is this household group of slave women that Severy-Hoven draws attention to in her counterargument to the optimistic perspective of the slave quarter decoration. She argues that the purpose of the erotic panel and the general exploitative imagery of the *domus* is to reinforce the secondary role of household slaves, to facilitating the sexual desires of their master(s).⁴³ McGinn argues that room x¹ was created by the Vettii in order to mimic a brothel, though not necessarily act as one, citing the excitement of a brothel space was desirable, but the reputation and legality posed an issue to their perceived social standings; an issue that could be mitigated by a private recreation of a “sex club” space.⁴⁴ This is an intriguing suggestion, and is theoretically as plausible of an argument for the room’s purpose as the suggestion of a cook’s room or general servant quarters. However, as noted by Severy-Hoven, if the Vettii desired sexual interaction with their slaves, they would do so, regardless of the location within the house.⁴⁵ This sexual liberty to

⁴¹ Ellis, 2000, p. 4

⁴² Clarke, 1998, p. 174

⁴³ Severy-Hoven, 2013, p. 564

⁴⁴ McGinn, 2004, p. 159

⁴⁵ Severy-Hoven, 2013, p. 564

engage with the slaves in any area of the house supports the previous argument of this paper, in that the exploitative decoration of the *pinacothecae* was to reinforce the power dynamic between the freedmen and wealthy individuals who were being entertained there.

This use of artistic representations to reinforce the new dynamic of the Vettii as slaves-turned-masters can also be seen in the *lararium* (fig. 9) of the servant *atrium*, which I argue was placed here as a form of “an enactment of dominance” through the use of religious imagery.⁴⁶ The *lararium* takes the form of a temple, with religious iconography such as a *bucrania*, *patera*, and sacrificial knife decorating the pediment. Ely identifies the central figure as the togate *Genius*, the divine “twin” of the *pater familias*.⁴⁷ The two figures on either side are suggested to be *Lares*, representative of the benevolent household Gods. The shrine would have been in use year-round, with offerings made by the free inhabitants (the Vettii and their family) alongside the enslaved population of the *domus*. Severy-Hoven argues that the general purpose, and the specific location of this *lararium* was to reinforce the power dynamic between master and slave, forcing the slaves to “express their adoration of his *genius*,” and recognise the power of the Vettii as the masters of the household.⁴⁸



Fig. 9. Household *lararium* on west wall in service area. House of the Vettii, Pompeii. Image from Pompeii in Pictures, courtesy of Eber, J. 2023.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Ely, 1897, p. 306

⁴⁸ Severy-Hoven, 2013, p. 564

Without the visual ambiguity of the decorative elements of the slave *atria*, the overall thematic nature of the household decorative programme could be interpreted wholly as a display of wealth through opulence of design. However, the unique aspects and difference in styling of the slave *atria* recharacterizes the decorative language of the entire house, suggesting that there was a constant, yet subtle reinforcing of the new powers the Vettii held as masters, through their ability to control and dominate their slaves. It is clear that the primary motif of the household is wine and wealth; yet the subtlety of the violent and erotic imagery alludes to an exploitative and sexual power dynamic between the Vettii and the women of the household.

THE NORTHERN SECTION OF THE *DOMUS* AS A *GYNAECEUM*

When evaluating the role of slaves within the *domus*, some speculation towards the purpose of the northern section, labelled s, u, and t on the floorplan (fig. 1), must be carried out. Although there is little scholarship written on this area, with most tending to focus on the more prominent areas like the *peristyle* or *atrium*, Clarke hypothesises that this area functioned as a *gynaeceum*, due to its relative seclusion from the rest of the house and of its miniature *peristyle*.⁴⁹ Room t is structurally similar to the Room of the Cupids and the NE and SE *pinacotheca*. It heavily features a dark colour palette, and unfortunately, like the Room of the Cupids, has sustained significant damage. There are two images that can be discerned: Achilles being discovered on Skyros and a painting of Heracles and Auge. However, neither one of these frescos was restored, and as such are not visible today; yet their content is still greatly significant to developing an understanding of the visual vocabulary of the house of the Vettii. The colour palette and complexity of the images corroborates with the decorative theme intended for the freed inhabitants of the household, as compared to the modest slave quarter decorative theme.

The frescos of the *gynaeceum* depict the most violent of the female-centred sexual exploitation, with both events resulting in forcible sexual acts between those depicted. The similarity in style and palette to the rest of the household, alongside the feminine-focused yet masculine dominated subjects support Clarke's argument of the functionality of the space as a women's quarters. However, if this is the case, then the male-domination of the entire household becomes clear. As Clarke aptly notes, in all areas of the household women are commodified; for the slaves, it is blatant objectification, and for the wealthy women, the decorative language is telling them that their virtue comes from their ability to produce children (whether consensual or not).⁵⁰ Much like the eroticism of the Cook's room, the punishment of women in the *pinacotheca*, and even the overt Priapean imagery of the *peristyle*, there is an emphasis that the role of women within the House of the Vettii was one of sexual servitude.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, I have aimed to prove that the purpose of the architectural and artistic decoration of the House of the Vettii was to express the desires and ideologies of its primary

⁴⁹ Clarke, 1992, p. 221

⁵⁰ Clarke, 1992, p. 208

inhabitants. It has been made clear that the increase of the Vettii's financial and economic capabilities resulted in a boost to their social standing, which required clients and friends of a similar wealth and class as the Vettii to frequent the household. I have argued that it is this wider audience who are the primary targets of the extravagant decoration, with the opulence of the designs facilitating an outward display of the wealth of the Vettii. This is reinforced through connections to the God Dionysus, supporting my argument that the Vettii's wealth likely arose from owning vineyards and wine trading.

However, where the decorative language of the House of the Vettii shouts of wine and wealth, it also whispers of exploitation and suffering. Through a close analysis of the nature of the violent *pinacothecae* frescos, the gender-based designs of the *gynaecum*, and the uniquely religious yet erotic slave quarters, I have aimed to showcase that there is a darker undertone to the decorative vocabulary of the *domus*. It is clear that there was a bias towards masculinity, with the feminine depictions centring on myths of sexual exploitation. However, that is not to say that the male slaves did not suffer a similar fate; the focus of captivity and physical punishment infers that a culture of exploitation and sadistic violence is likely have been commonplace within the *domus*. Although difficult to prove, the undertones of these frescos cannot be ignored. Those who suffered, whether through servitude, physical punishment, or sexual exploitation, were also members of the House of the Vettii. Therefore, an acknowledgement of their lives and the things they had to endure must be recognised. These themes can be unsettling for modern audiences; however, the attitudes displayed in the violent and sexual depictions are an equal part of the wider historical picture as the more palatable beautiful gardens and cupid frescos.

The Vettii themselves, unlike the slaves and women of the household, have been awarded the gift of their names being remembered; however, little remains to tell us what *Aulus Vettius Conviva* and *Aulus Vettius Restitutus* were really like. Therefore, I argue that their choice of decoration is the only way to discern a lasting impression of their primary drives and core ideologies. I argue that the Vettii's intentionally designed their Pompeiian 'paradise' to surround themselves in decoration that would be both pleasing to themselves and their associates, to display their sophistication and financial capabilities. To conclude, I believe it is clear that the core elements of the Vettii lifestyle can be broken down into three main drives: wine, wealth, and women.

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PUBLIC SPACES AND PRIVATE AMBITIONS: EUMACHIA'S ARCHITECTURAL SUBVERSION OF POMPEII'S GENDERED LANDSCAPE

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Image: *Statue of Eumachia*.
Alison Cooley, *Plan of Eumachia's Building*, in *Pompeii:
A Sourcebook* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 34.

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have witnessed immense strides in the treatment of women within the historiography of Pompeii. Initially relegated to the margins of the public sphere, scholars have increasingly begun to examine the influence of women in shaping the economic and religious

landscape of Pompeii.¹ This shift in focus has also extended to studies of Pompeii's built environment, with historians beginning to grant precedence to female patronage and benefactions within Pompeiian narratives.² However, while this growing interest appears optimistic, a closer investigation into female representation reveals a lack of agency afforded to these examined women. Although their presence has been increasingly documented, their reconstructed motivations and desires continue to perpetuate traditional gendered roles. Their voices, although now heard, remain ancillary to androcentric constructions of Pompeii's public life.

This myopia is most evident in the Building of Eumachia. Despite its immense stature, prominent location, and monumental architecture, Eumachia's building remains one of the most obscure public buildings. Located in the southwest corner of the Forum of Pompeii (Fig 1), Eumachia's building measured approximately 60 by 40 meters, making it only second in size to the Basilica across the Forum.³ Yet, the precise function of this structure remains the subject of intense scholarly debate, with historians disputing over an economic,⁴ judicial,⁵ or religious function.⁶ In contrast, Eumachia's background can be more clearly defined: she was not only the public priestess of Pompeii's patron goddess, Venus Pompeiana; but also a benefactor of the guild of fullers, heiress to her father's brick-manufacturing fortune; and wife and mother to aspiring local political elites. It becomes clear that the academic confusion behind the function of the building originates from the biased and gendered approach taken by earlier scholars. This investigation subsequently aims to combat these prejudices and uncover the original motivations behind Eumachia's building.

Modern scholarship on Roman female benefactresses conveniently excluded women from entering political dialogues, suggesting that their motivations behind any architectural contributions were either limited to social or civic pursuits, or merely served to advance their family's political campaigns.⁷ Classicists like Marleen Flory contend that a woman's subversion into the masculine sphere of urban benefaction was primarily driven as an extension of their traditional domestic and gendered virtues, continuing to bind and limit them to notions of femininity, fecundity, and motherhood.⁸ However, this paper presents Eumachia's building as a counter to these conventional readings, demonstrating that female munificence enabled the execution of a woman's own political aspirations and allowed them to serve as advisors to the sons they propelled into the spotlight. While Roman women may not have been able to occupy formal seats of power, they could nonetheless exert subtle forms of influence, and thus their motives should not be dismissed as simply a product of maternal selflessness.

¹Allison, 2007; Cenerini, 2013; Cooley, 2013; Flory, 1993; Hemelrijk, 2013; Longfellow, 2014/2015; MacMullen, 1980.

²d'Ambra, 2012; Kleiner, 1996; Moeller, 1972; Petersen, 2021; Will, 1979

³Will, 1979, 34-43.

⁴Breton, 1869; Moeller, 1972; Will, 1979.

⁵Overbeck, 1884.

⁶Longfellow, 2014/2015; Richardson, 1988.

⁷Cooley, 2013, 23; d'Ambra, 2012, 400; Meyers, 2012, 145; van Bremen, 1996, 96; Dixon, 2008, 57.

⁸Flory, 1993, 304-6.

METHODOLOGY

Before delving into the investigation, the parameters and scholarly context of this paper must be addressed. This paper adopts an early Tiberian dating for the construction of Eumachia's building. This chronological choice is based on the building's architectural similarities and metaphorical parallels with Livia's Portico—as identified by Classicists like Allison Cooley and Archaeologists such as John Dobbins alike—which was dedicated in 7 BC.⁹ Eumachia appears to have sought to invoke and emulate Livia's narrative on a local scale, promoting herself as a key figure in her son's political ascension, much like Livia did for her son, Tiberius. Consequently, Eumachia's building must have been constructed after the completion of Livia's Portico and Tiberius' rise to power. In addition, this investigation focuses solely on the original construction of Eumachia's building, and not its renovation in 62 AD following an earthquake which collapsed portions of its structure. The aim of this paper is to uncover the original motivations behind Eumachia's building, rather than tracing the evolution of its architecture and decoration.

Moving forward, this investigation acknowledges the heterogeneity of women's experiences, and thereby does not supplant political agency onto all Roman women. Nevertheless, it does seek to establish Eumachia's building as a precedent for future investigations, aiding the development of a broader pattern within a select group of female patrons whose architectural contributions should not remain overlooked in academic legacy. In the absence of a wide corpus of primary evidence available for the reconstruction of Pompeian women's experiences, a comparative analysis of literary and material sources proves crucial for understanding the experiences of a silenced group who remains marginalised in both lived experiences and the historical archive. While written evidence provides sparse direct information about local women like Eumachia and her building, by cross-examining literary references to Imperial women like Livia and comparing it to the built evidence left by Pompeian women, only then does a divergent path about Eumachia's building and its significance start to materialise. Eumachia's building stands as a testament to a woman's indirect political power, rather than a reinforcement of their domestic restrictions.

LITERARY CONTEXT

To situate Eumachia's building and its architectural and decorative elements within the Imperial period, an exploration into literary evidence must first be conducted to demonstrate the broad feasibility of a woman's ability to influence politics. This potential will lay the groundwork for understanding Eumachia's intentions and political designs. Within this context, where Augustus' moral and marriage legislations granted women more freedom and authority over their property,¹⁰ an ambivalent treatment of women in ancient literature emerged.

On the one hand, Cassius Dio and Suetonius showcased the political prowess Imperial women like Livia held, where she was quoted: "I also have my part in reigning",¹¹ where the

⁹ Cooley, 2013, 33; Dobbins, 1994, 689.

¹⁰ Cooley, 2013, 27; Cassius Dio 49.38.1.

¹¹ Cassius Dio 55.16.1-2.

senate lauded as “mother of the country”,¹² and where her influence as both her husband and son’s political advisor was demonstrated.¹³ On the other hand, Livy and Tacitus interpreted a woman’s intrusion into the public space as evidence of a corrupt and immoral society. But in their attempts to oppress and vilify women, their accounts inadvertently highlighted Livia and Agripina the Younger’s ability to control political leaders and manipulate the transfer of power from husband to son.¹⁴ Thus, unlike what both modern and ancient scholarship attests, women could possess an indirect degree of political influence, thereby validating the possibility of Eumachia’s political purpose in her benefaction of the building.

This political function is further exemplified through an analysis of the limited epigraphic literature available on the Eumachia building—the pair of almost identical inscriptions located on the front and side of the building. The inscription reads: “Eumachia, daughter of Lucius, public priestess, built at her own expense in her name and in the name of her son, Marcus Numistrius Fronto, a chalcidicum, a crypta, and a porticus for Concordia Augusta and Pietas and dedicated it” (Fig 2).¹⁵ Firstly, Eumachia invokes parallels to Livia and her political activity in the inscriptions: through her invocation of Concordia Augusta, a goddess of “harmony” associated with the Imperial cult of Livia;¹⁶ as well as through the naming of her son in the dedication, a gesture performed by Livia in her own Portico.¹⁷ Instead of merely promoting her son, Marcus, to follow in his father’s footsteps and become the next *duumvir*,¹⁸ Eumachia was promoting herself as worthy to engage with political affairs through an expansion of the categorisation of motherhood. This architectural narrative was not anomalous to only Imperial or Pompeiian women, as Mineia in Paestum in 15 BC, wife to a *quaestor*, also dedicated the rebuilding of a Basilica to her son.¹⁹

If Eumachia merely sought to advance her son’s political career, as many historians suggest, her choice to prominently feature her own name on the inscriptions becomes contradictory. Through a comparison with the inscriptions found on the Temple of Isis in Pompeii, Eumachia’s impetus centred towards self-promotion becomes more pronounced. The primary inscription found on the Temple of Isis attributes the reconstruction of the temple to Numerius, a six-year-old, whose actual involvement in this matter remains questionable given his age. And yet, neither parent was mentioned. Cornelia Celsa, mother to Numerius and a public priestess herself, instead confined her own inscription to a less prominent location on the floor within a room in the temple.²⁰ Thus, this contrasts Eumachia, who not only named herself in both inscriptions, but also propagated a distinct hierarchy by positioning her name and background before her son.

Secondly, the inscriptions set the stage for Eumachia’s architectural narrative of political aggrandisement. The inscriptions purposefully divide Eumachia’s building into three sections: the chalcidicum, the porticus, and the crypta (Fig 3). However, this only accounts for half of the

¹² Cassius Dio 57.12.3-4.

¹³ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 50.2.

¹⁴ Livy 34.11; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3-1.5, 12.6-69, 5.3, 14.13

¹⁵ CIL 10, 810-811.

¹⁶ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.637-640.

¹⁷ Longfellow, 2014/15, 81-101.

¹⁸ CIL 10 892.

¹⁹ Cooley, 2013, 38; Paestum 85.

²⁰ Petersen, 2021, 11.

building's total layout, with no mention given to the open-courtyard which dominates the centre of the structure, or the guardhouses. It will therefore be argued that the focus pinpointed onto these three sections was intended to fabricate a continuous narrative, integrating the built environment, decoration, and function to invoke a united spatial experience. To further substantiate this, the formal aspects of the design and decoration of these three named sections will be examined.

CHALCIDICUM

Positioned at the front of Eumachia's building, the chalcidicum was the first structural segment that greeted a visitor or bypasser. Thus, it was reasonably the starting point for Eumachia's architectural and spatial narrative. Displayed proudly, the primary inscription was carved into a single 20-meter row into the travertine architrave of the chalcidicum, drawing the eyes of everyone nearby (Fig 2).²¹ The chalcidicum consisted of a front roofed porch that faced the Forum through a row of sixteen Doric columns constructed of white limestone, while on the inside of each column, unpreserved statue pedestals were arranged in alternating semicircular and rectilinear niches. More notably, the northern niches contained a large, indented platform accessed by a short flight of stairs, leading art historian and archaeologist Margaret Woodhull to advance the chalcidicum's function as a site for public oratory or auctioneering.²²

Alongside the chalcidicum's architectural components, its differentiated orientation to the rest of Eumachia's building bears significance. While the rest of the building was oriented to the Via dell'Abbondanza, the chalcidicum alone remained parallel to the geographical landscape of the Forum (Fig 3). Although scholars like Richardson and Opdenhoff acknowledge this irregularity in the plan which leads to spatial discontinuity, they do not propose any specific rationale for it.²³ Instead, this investigation argues that the peculiar layout was employed as an intended appropriation of the Forum's symbolic connotations, drawing on motifs such as a sense of publicness, a site of leisure, and the ceremonial attributes of a civic space. Additionally, the religiosity of the chalcidicum is further corroborated by: Eumachia's position as a public priestess of Venus; the inscriptions dedicating the building to the Roman goddess of harmony and peace (Concordia and Pietas); as well as its strategic location within the Forum, situated next to the recently commissioned Temple of Vespasian, another sanctuary sponsored by a female public priestess, Mamia (Fig 4).²⁴

Despite the clarity surrounding the infrastructure and layout of the chalcidicum, its function is more contested. In 1972, historian Walter Moeller documented the original architectural debate surrounding the use of the chalcidicum and its platforms, recording that: Ernest Breton first proposed the site as a venue for wool auctions due to the dedicatory inscription by *fullones* (laundry workers) found on the statue of Eumachia in the crypta;²⁵ while Johannes Overbeck suggested a more judicial or administrative role, positioning the chalcidicum

²¹ Opdenhoff, 2022, 3.

²² Woodhull, 1999, 49-57.

²³ Opdenhoff, 2022, 1; Richardson, 1988.

²⁴ CIL 10 816, 998.

²⁵ Breton, 1869, 124-131, quoted in Moeller, 1972, 323-327.

as a site for announcements or case hearings.²⁶ After reviewing these nineteenth-century propositions, Moeller ultimately aligned with Breton's reconstruction of the chalcidicum as an economic site, due to the chalcidicum's similarities with the platform found in Pompeii's main produce market—the Macellum.²⁷ Subsequently, Breton extrapolates the chalcidicum's potential function as a site for cloth retailing to the entire structure. However, one dedication does not amount to a full picture, as it is certain that numerous statues and their dedicatory inscriptions are now lost to modern audiences. Nevertheless, the importance of the *fullones* must not be understated, as they held the prime honour of dedicating a statue of the patron herself. Similarly, Overbeck's hypothesis for a primary judicial function is also problematic, considering that the Forum already boasted an adjacent Basilica with its own chalcidicum.

Taking these views into account, this investigation presents a multifunctional purpose for the entire structure, allowing for distinct and diverging spatial experiences across its chalcidicum, porticus, and crypta based on its respective functions. But ultimately, Eumachia's public building arose out of her private and political ambitions. The chalcidicum likely performed as a public lure, a civic space which attracted crowds walking through the Forum with either its economic or administrative announcements depending on the day. Thus, it is possible that the chalcidicum of Eumachia's building was modelled on that of the adjacent Basilica, but it had a more diluted and broader purpose. The impressive gallery of statues surrounding the chalcidicum would then entice the public to enter the rest of the building, where, once again, depending on the day, they could either browse through economic wares or stroll around the courtyard for leisure.

This eye-catching function becomes more evident through a comparison with the chalcidicum attached to the Curia Julia in the Roman Forum. Completed in 29 BC by Augustus, the Curia Julia operated as a Senate House and featured a statue of the goddess Minerva, mirroring the religious role of Eumachia's chalcidicum. The collonaded porch of the Curia Julia was also covered with white marble, replicated by Eumachia with a cheaper but visually similar alternative—white limestone. While the interior of the Senate House was restricted to political elites, the porch functioned as a public space where public notices and meeting proceedings were announced.²⁸ Thus, like the architecture, Eumachia's chalcidicum may have also echoed its function, bridging public and private spheres through political dialogues. Due to the political limits placed upon women, Eumachia's building could not have stood principally as a Senate House; however, this does not disregard the possibility of political notices or speeches taking place on the chalcidicum's platform. With the chalcidicum functioning as both an economic auction site and public political meeting space, Eumachia thereby attempted to bridge her civic influence gained through her religious office and economic prosperity, with indirect political legitimacy.

As such, Eumachia constructed the chalcidicum as a civic space, propelling herself into the public domain of politics. However, she understood her precarious position, and subsequently utilised the chalcidicum's decoration to legitimise her intrusion into the public eye through a religious and subvertedly gendered framework. As the priestess of the Roman goddess

²⁶ Overbeck, 1884, 131-136, quoted in Moeller, 1972, 323-327.

²⁷ Moeller, 1972, 326.

²⁸ RE III.2039; Cassius Dio 51.22.

of fertility, Eumachia remained brutally aware of the constraints of her balloted position.²⁹ Thus, she weaponised iconographies of fecundity and abundance to safeguard her social influence, while also vying for further indirect forms of political power through the promotion of her son. Although her son would be in the office by name, the support Eumachia gained through her building would remain hers, and her son would merely function as a vessel for her own aspirations. Instead of limiting her endeavours to feminine spheres of motherhood, she expanded the dimensions of matronhood through allusions to religion and Rome. This can be seen with statues of Aeneas and Romulus in the chalcidicum,³⁰ two legendary heroes with ties to Venus. Aeneas was hailed as the son of Venus, while Romulus the descendent of Aeneas through his mother. These deified ancestors of the reigning Julian clan in Rome were attributed to the mythological foundation of Rome.³¹ The public, in observing the hierarchy between mother and child presented on the building's primary inscription, would naturally extend this trend onto the statuary: where Venus emerges as the true founder of Rome through her embodiment of fecundity.

This interplay between religion, motherhood and power was further corroborated by the Third-Style painting of a woman found on the east wall of the chalcidicum. Acknowledging the symbolic knotted violet shawl and chiton, Woodhull identified the woman as the Egyptian goddess, Isis. However, this investigation suggests that in a similar fashion to how the statue of Eumachia in the crypta invoked associations with Venus (discussed below), this painting depicts a portrait of Cleopatra, who subsequently invoked associations with Isis. Isis was the Egyptian goddess of fertility and maternity, an Egyptian counterpart to the Roman Venus, but was also recognised as a vessel of unrivalled magic and re-birth abilities.³² Cleopatra, following the birth of her and Julius Caesar's son, began to integrate her own image with Isis, especially on coinage. Furthermore, Cleopatra's own political prowess becomes apparent when she allied with Antony after Caesar's death to safeguard her son's political future, while also administrating Egypt.³³

However, instead of lapsing into a display of motherhood, Venus' and Isis' ability to rear influential children becomes a testament to their own powers, where Venus was integral to Aeneas' successes in the *Aeneid*,³⁴ and Isis to her son Horus' protection and subsequent ascension to the throne.³⁵ Through these depictions, Rome becomes dependent on women, and the building's decoration thereby promotes the influence and importance of women who operated behind the scenes. The contemporary visitor's interpretations of this imagery would have also been exacerbated by the literary representations of Livia examined above, where she was seen as the orchestrator to Tiberius' rise to power. Thus, the imagery of Cleopatra and Isis mirrors the narrative of Livia and Venus, where they were pivotal players in the ascension of their sons. The accompaniment and pairing of politically-charged elite women with powerful divine figures solidifies the influence of women in both physical and spiritual realms. A woman's role

²⁹ Bernstein, 2007, 533.

³⁰ Spinazzola, 1953, 1.150-55.

³¹ Livy 1.4.

³² Shaw, 2014, 79.

³³ Bianchi, 2023.

³⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid* Books 1, 4.

³⁵ Willis, 1993, 43.

therefore extends beyond their role as childbearers, expanding the dimension and responsibilities of motherhood to encompass political strategy.

Eumachia's chalcidicum thereby asserts that the political machinery of Rome, extending into the mythologised past and to Egyptian influences, is reliant on women—a position Eumachia intended to subsume in Pompeii. While these women were mothers, their sons were vessels which allowed them to advance their own individualistic aspirations, with Cleopatra even ruling Egypt alongside her three-year-old son.³⁶ Themes of motherhood and fertility were secondary, just like how Eumachia's son was secondary in the inscription. Thus, the chalcidicum presents a public, civic space which combined Eumachia's economic and religious roles and encouraged a transition towards indirect politics.

PORTICUS

As visitors passed through the chalcidicum, they would be met by the porticus—a covered tufa Doric colonnade encircling a larger rectangular open-courtyard,³⁷ guarded by a lattice-work gate.³⁸ The entrance to the porticus was also attached to a small guard's lodge, a space formed by the misalignment between the chalcidicum, which was oriented towards the Forum, and the rest of the building aligned with the Via dell'Abbondanza. The presence of both the gate and guard suggests that the porticus and crypta beyond were designed as less public or accessible areas. Furthermore, the porticus' intentional orientation towards the Via dell'Abbondanza indicates a desire to appropriate the road's symbolic associations to trade and commerce. While the Forum also boasted shops, the Via dell'Abbondanza was more distinctly geared towards commercial activities, emphasising the specialised economic dimension of the porticus. Underscoring this economic function is the presence of a ramp attached to the secondary entrance into the crypta, allowing for the discreet transportation of wares.³⁹ In addition, the site on which the building was constructed upon was previously occupied by shops,⁴⁰ reinforcing the porticus as a strategic environment conducive for economic exchange. Eumachia's desire to erect a semi-public site for mercantile activities suggests an intent to demonstrate the prosperity she would bring to Pompeii by facilitating trade, allowing her to boost her support among the local populace.

However, Moeller challenges this, claiming that the porticus could not function as a marketplace as it lacked features commonly ascribed to Roman markets, such as a large service entrance or the presence of booths.⁴¹ Restricting the economic activity to the chalcidicum, he contends that the existing secondary entrance was too narrow to facilitate the movement of extensive and frequently replenished wares that a daily market would require. Nevertheless, Moeller overlooks the possibility for a weekly market, where temporary booths could be erected on specific days. It is also likely that whatever booths located in the porticus were removed following the earthquake in 62 AD to facilitate repairs or as a result of an evolution of function.

³⁶ Roller, 2010, 70-73.

³⁷ Dobbins, 1994, 660.

³⁸ Mau, 1902, 114.

³⁹ Mau, 1902, 112; Overbeck, 1884, 131-136.

⁴⁰ Cooley, 2004, 98-99.

⁴¹ Moeller, 1972, 325.

In accepting the premise of a weekly market, the gate and the guardhouses would take on a practical security function, deterring thefts and closing off the porticus during days on which the market was not being held. Alternatively, on the days without a market, the civic functions of the chalcidicum could flow into the porticus, where the public were free to roam and consume the imperial imagery adorning the space, much like Livia's portico.

While it could be argued that a lack of definitive archaeological evidence renders this interpretation as speculative at best, the prevalence of *nundinae* (periodic markets) in late Republican Pompeii elevates the feasibility for a weekly market in the porticus. Ancient Roman sociologist Claire Holleran also goes one step further, establishing a link between *nundinae* and auctions through a study of the archives of Caecilius Jucundus, a banker.⁴² Thus, the association between auctions held in the chalcidicum and the *nundinae* held in the porticus bolsters this interpretation. In addition, the periodic markets would only require low-frequency volumes of goods, thereby negating the presence of a large service entrance which Moeller demands.

Aligning with the porticus' economic function, Eumachia also employs decorative elements to further promote her role in facilitating economic prosperity. She invokes this through narrow allusions to Roman rulers Augustus and Livia. Instead of reminiscing a mythologised past through depictions of Venus in the chalcidicum, the porticus displays direct and contemporary testaments to a woman's political importance. Notably, Eumachia's porticus drew direct parallels to Livia's portico, which featured a central shrine to Concordia.⁴³ As attested above, numerous scholars such as Cooley, Dobbins, and Lawrence Richardson also emphasise the architectural similarities between the two porticoes.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Eumachia's porticus boasted a statue of Concordia Augusta situated along the building's central axis. Although the statue's head is now lost, the relief found on the fountain of Concordia adjacent to the building suggests it was crafted in Livia's likeness.⁴⁵ The statue was also flanked by two smaller apses, which likely displayed either Concord and Piety, or Livia's sons, Tiberius and Drusus.⁴⁶

Art historian Eve d'Ambra claims that the statue of Concordia Augusta was depicted "in the guise of a symbol of feminine virtue, her reputation enhanced by her two sons who served the empire".⁴⁷ However, this investigation seeks to reframe this interpretation, where although the statues in the chalcidicum and porticus offer different imagery, they still worked together to amalgamate portrayals of women as the starting point; that they were the ones integral to the foreground of success in Roman past and present. While Livia was promoted through her feminine virtue, it was used as justification for her usurpation of masculine power rather than the final depiction. Motherhood was employed as a means to secure preliminary entry into the public sphere and subvert patriarchal customs, much like how Eumachia utilised her son's name in the primary inscription to justify the existence of her building. After this was established, Eumachia weaponised architectural designs and decorations to promote her economic precedence and legitimise her claims to indirect political power. Classicist Kristina Milnor postulates that

⁴² Holleran, 2012, 182.

⁴³ Cassius Dio 54.23.6; Cooley, 2004, 33.

⁴⁴ Cooley, 2013, 33; Dobbins, 1994, 689; Richardson, 1978, 260-272.

⁴⁵ Woodhull, 1999, 49-57.

⁴⁶ Bernstein, 2007, 531; Kleiner, 1996, 33; Zanker, 1988, 322.

⁴⁷ d'Ambra, 2012, 403.

porticoes were only suitable for sponsorship by women due to their perceived lack of political function;⁴⁸ however, she overlooks the existence of Octavia's porticus, which was reported to host Senate meetings.⁴⁹ Livia guided the political machinations of her son, Tiberius, and granted him his rise to power. This was a narrative Eumachia sought to claim for herself through her architectural allusions.

In addition to manufacturing parallels with Livia through the porticus' decoration, Eumachia also sought to demonstrate her affiliation to Augustus. Visitors to Eumachia's porticus would have been bombarded with Augustan imagery as soon as they entered, as the front doors were adorned with marble acanthus leaves, animals, insects, and plants. This design loosely echoed the frieze patterns found on both Livia's portico and Augustus' Ara Pacis.⁵⁰ Thus, Eumachia promoted herself through a propagation of Augustan ideology, advancing his ideals of peace and embodying his supposed proclamation: "I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble".⁵¹ Eumachia replicates the luxuriousness and opulence that arose out of Augustus' rule, linking it to her own ability to generate wealth, through her use of marble. Significantly, Eumachia's father was a brick-manufacturer, which could be claimed as a large source of Eumachia's own wealth. As such, her insistence on a marble doorway represents her transition from brick heritage to marble acquisition. This underscored her economic capability, despite being female, to carry out the political designs of Augustus, a male ruler, for peace and prosperity. In doing so, she invokes the credibility and authority of Augustus, who was also responsible for increasing women's leniency in the public sphere, further validating her own indirect political power. Thus, the porticus was an economic site which utilised the decoration of Augustan prosperity and Livia's political prominence to demonstrate the beneficence and power that Eumachia held, rather than a mere promotion of her son.

CRYPTA

Moving onward, the porticus was surrounded by a covered corridor along the north, east, and south outer ring of the courtyard—known as the crypta. The walls separating the crypta and porticus were adorned with evenly-spaced windows.⁵² Attached to the crypta's southern wall was the ramped side entrance. Like the porticus, the crypta was also oriented towards the Via dell'Abbondanza, and therefore appropriated similar connotations of trade and commerce. However, in contrast to the open ceiling courtyard in the porticus, the crypta was more enclosed and private, suggesting that it may have functioned as a venue for Eumachia's private economic transactions. Eumachia, as a result of her gender, was traditionally confined to the domestic as her principal site. Thus, it could be posited that Eumachia attempted to replicate the architectural features of a *domus* (house) within her crypta, to enable or further justify her transgression into the public sphere. While Eumachia's personal residence is unknown, it is evident that she did

⁴⁸ Milnor, 2005, 59-60.

⁴⁹ Cassius Dio 55.8.1.

⁵⁰ Cooley, 2013, 23-46.

⁵¹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 29.

⁵² Woodhull, 1999, 49-57.

not reside in the building, given that Pompeii's Forum was primarily a public site for commercial, political, and religious pursuits.

Classicist Lawrence Richardson contends that the crypta's location behind the porticus demonstrates its function as a marketplace during poor weather.⁵³ However, this hypothesis is unconvincing. Instead, it is more compelling to view the crypta as an extension of the *domus* and utilised as a business centre or meeting space. This is corroborated by the architectural similarities that the crypta shares with the *tablinum* (office) of a *domus*. In the context of an elite Roman house, the *paterfamilias* (male head-of-house) would often meet with clientele in his public office space during days of business.⁵⁴ The *tablinum* was usually situated on the opposite side of the *domus*' primary entrance, mirroring the position of the eastern portion of the crypta. Furthermore, the *tablinum* was usually attached to the *atrium* (open central court), similar to the adjacent layout the crypta held to the open courtyard in the porticus. Clientele would primarily access the *tablinum* via the *fauces*, a narrow and guarded entrance which connected to the street.⁵⁵ This once again echoes Eumachia's crypta, which boasted a guardhouse and a side entrance onto the Via dell'Abbondanza. Lastly, the precedent which Livia set, in which she held meetings in her home on the Palatine Hill,⁵⁶ further supports the potential for a woman's intrusion into the business and political space of a *domus*. Thus, Eumachia constructed a site for private economic activity outside her home, while also demonstrating to her potential clientele the prominence, wealth, and status her image presented. The need to construct an external *domus* may have arisen out of Eumachia's status as a widow and heir, where she attempts to assume the role of the *paterfamilias* in the public's eyes.⁵⁷

To clarify the logistics of utilising the crypta as a private business club, it could be ascertained that private economic transactions would occur on days that the market in the porticus was not in operation. Much like how the *nundinae* operated on specific days, clients were usually received in the *tablinum* on days of business. This would thereby free up the secondary side entrance for their arrival. Thus, the reason behind the differences between the two inscriptions on the primary and secondary entrances of Eumachia's building starts to become clear. While the contents of both inscriptions were more or less identical, the design was not. The secondary inscription was smaller in size, carved into a marble slab measuring 275 cm by 31 cm and broken into 3 lines. The first line, which contains Eumachia's name, stands out from the latter lines in size.⁵⁸ In contrast to the primary inscription, which would have been viewed by the unfiltered public strolling through the Forum, the secondary inscription was reserved for elite business clientele or traders transporting goods. These diverging patterns of movement allowed Eumachia to specialise her communication to different groups, where she was able to further promote her hierarchised standing against her son to a more mercantile audience.

Whilst a woman's intrusion into the political sphere was more proscribed, they had greater freedom to integrate into the economic sphere, as demonstrated by Eumachia's status as

⁵³ Richardson, 1988, 197.

⁵⁴ McManus, February 2007.

⁵⁵ McManus, February 2007.

⁵⁶ Reiner, 1870, pl. XIV.

⁵⁷ Will, 1979, 34-43.

⁵⁸ Opdenhoff, 2022, 3.

heir to her father's fortune. This is further corroborated by the volume of women engaged in commerce throughout the Roman Empire. Within Pompeii, elite women like Julia Flex leased out numerous properties;⁵⁹ while Roman working-class women worked in textiles,⁶⁰ or as jewellers,⁶¹ doctors,⁶² and barbers.⁶³ Thus, Eumachia relied on her son to justify the construction of her building to the public as a political and civic site, but was able to enter the economic sphere on her own accord. As a result, the difference in the display of these two inscriptions reflects her specialised representation to respective demographics. The differences between the two inscriptions also extends to their materials. The secondary inscription, intended for economic clientele, was constructed of marble, allowing Eumachia to promote her wealth and higher economic status. Meanwhile, the primary inscription was made of the less expensive but visually similar travertine, presenting a hint of modesty while still retaining Augustan ideals of prosperity.

Furthermore, Eumachia's prioritisation of her individual economic prominence was employed in the decoration of the crypta, which once again diverged from the *chalcidicum* and *porticus*. Like the *tablinum*—where portraits of family members would be displayed—the crypta boasted a statue of Eumachia in the middle of the rear wall (Fig 5). Instead of alluding to ideologies of grandeur, Eumachia promoted herself through the dedication of an economic group which displayed their support: the *fullones*. The statue was positioned on the same central axis as the statue of Concordia which lay in the *porticus* beyond the wall, actualising the parallel between Eumachia and Livia. Eumachia's statue was adorned with a *palla* over a tunic and *stola*, mirroring the attire of Concordia Augusta and appropriating the priestly and matronly garb.

Furthermore, weaving and wool also contained allusions to domestic virtue and wifely devotion during the imperial era.⁶⁴ Thus, the dedication of her statue by the *fullones* who operated in the wool trade could have been advanced for the facilitation of this connection, rather than as evidence that the building operated as a guild for fullers only. The statue of Eumachia's hairstyle also imitates that of Venus', with parted wavy hair drawn away from a face which bears resonances with the classical style of Livia's imperial portraits.

Within the crypta which operated as a *tablinum* or private business space, Eumachia presented herself as a model of domestic virtue and matronhood. By espousing this portrayal to the economic elites who visited the crypta, Eumachia solidified her incursions into the androcentric public sphere by proving her preservation of exemplary female characteristics. Her economic prominence or political prowess did not translate to poor womanhood. Instead, economic prosperity could lend itself to political influence, as displayed by Asellina, a woman who patronised a *Thermopolium* on the Via dell'Abbondanza and influenced local political candidacies and elections through signages decorated on the walls of her tavern.⁶⁵ Eumachia's building therefore stood for the promotion of Eumachia over her son, justifying her existence (although indirect) within Pompeian politics. The crypta therefore holds a dual purpose: firstly

⁵⁹ CIL 4, 1136.

⁶⁰ CIL 6, 33920; 9891.

⁶¹ CIL 6, 9435.

⁶² CIL 8, 24679; 9723.

⁶³ CIL 6, 37811.

⁶⁴ Livy 1.57.8-10; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 73.

⁶⁵ CIL 4, 7873.

by utilising the architecture and invoking parallels with a *tablinum* to subvert Eumachia's domestic constraints and enable her to enter the public sphere; before utilising the decoration to enhance her position within said sphere.

CONCLUSION

Eumachia's building functioned as a civic and economic site, promoting Eumachia's indirect political influence through constructs of religion, virtue, and fertility. She weaved a narratively charged spatial experience through her architecture and decorative elements. The chalcidicum was oriented to the Forum, a civic space where the public was transported to the mythologised past, painting women as the progenitors of Rome through divine depictions of Venus and Isis, paired with contemporary women like Livia and Cleopatra. This allowed Eumachia to enter the political sphere by subverting traditional responsibilities of motherhood to incorporate political strategy. Following that, the porticus was oriented to the Via dell'Abbondanza, an economic marketplace where the public was brought back to the Imperial present through allusions to Livia and the Augustan machinery. This allowed Eumachia to bridge her economic prosperity to indirect political influence. Lastly, the crypta functioned as an extension of the *tablinum* of a *domus*, a private business club where economic elites were presented with a localised future, where Eumachia integrated representations of the divine Venus and Imperial Livia to her own depiction. Within the more private crypta, Eumachia catered her messages to a more privileged and elite audience, further promoting and enhancing her presence in Pompeii's public sphere while still preserving her womanly virtues.

The inclusion of her son in the dedication of Eumachia's building was a safeguard, where she could utilise him as a vessel to map out her own designs. He remained secondary in inscription and non-existent in preserved statuary. While the possibility of a statue of Numerius remains lost to time, the statue was undoubtedly not located in the premium locations occupied by the statues of Eumachia and Concordia Augusta. As recorded by Cassius Dio, Livia herself had declared that women also had their part in reigning. Therefore, a woman's presence in the political sphere should not be marginalised.

APPENDIX

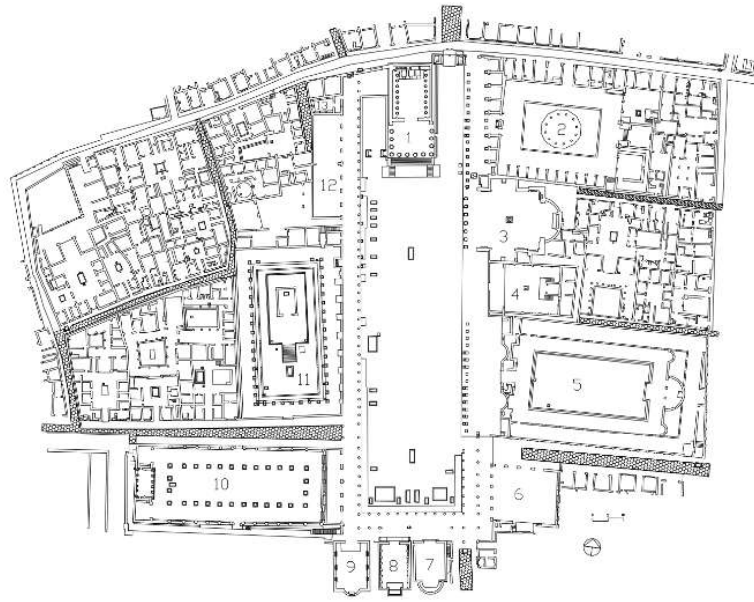


Figure 1: John Dobbins, *Plan of Pompeii forum*, in *The World of Pompeii* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), 151.
Of note: 2. Macellum; 4. Temple of Vespasian; 5. Eumachia Building; 10. Basilica



Figure 2: John Dobbins, *Epigraphic image of Primary Inscription* (Pompeii Forum Project, 1997),
<http://pompeii.virginia.edu/images/b-w/levin/small/levin.html>.

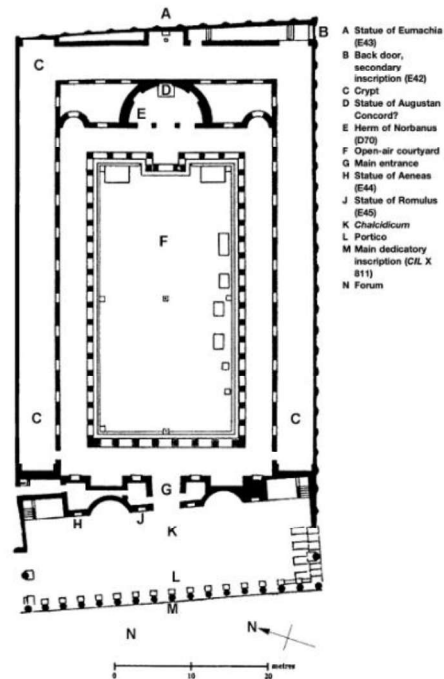


Figure 3: Alison Cooley, *Plan of Eumachia's Building*, in *Pompeii: A Sourcebook* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 99.



Figure 4: John Dobbins, *Ballon View of Pompeii Forum*, in *The World of Pompeii* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), 152.



Figure 5: Alison Cooley, *Plan of Eumachia's Building*, in *Pompeii: A Sourcebook* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 34.

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PRESERVATIONS OF THE LOST AND FOUND HISTORY OF ALEXANDRIA

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The history of Alexandria is an ever-growing study, preserved by digging through records and palace remnants, examining a culture that has only half been documented; as Forster phrases, “Alexandria is still alive and alters even while one tries to sum her up.”¹ Whether scholars believe so or not, the history of Alexandria has repeatedly been deemed “lost.”² To diminish Alexandria’s history to that of what has been lost would be to ignore the city as it stands, the literature and material dedicated to it thousands of years later, historic remains, and the ancient city itself. This study will argue that the history of Alexandria is not a history of what has been lost, but a history of what has been received and restored. I will analyse the types of ‘loss’ in Alexandria’s history to determine what has been truly lost or preserved and why: firstly, losses that occurred in Alexandria will be reviewed, then gradual losses. Then, I will explore modern portrayals of Alexandria and how the city’s history has contributed to them, and vice-versa, in the works of E. M. Forster and C. P. Cavafy. These two arguments will build on each other - in that Alexandria’s history is not lost, as much as it is visible in documentation and alive in literature. It will be concluded that Alexandria’s history is riddled with loss, but is not a history of what has been lost: it is a history of preservation, heritage, and recreation.

To begin, we must define different meanings of ‘loss’ in the history of Alexandria. There are losses that have occurred between the present and ancient Alexandria, and losses that occurred in ancient Alexandria. There exists the loss of material culture, and the loss of intangible societal aspects. Simply because parts of Alexandria’s history have been lost to us, it cannot be argued that Alexandria’s very history is that of what has been lost. Instead, the fragmentary history that has persisted will be navigated, observing ‘types’ of loss, to conclude that time has paid more attention to certain figures, and this narrative delivers a succinct though non-comprehensive history, rather than one of what has been “virtually lost.”³

This argument will firstly consider two individuals who lived in ancient Alexandria: Oenante and Abdaraxus. Oenante was married to a nobleman, but gained power in Alexandria through her children’s connections to Ptolemy IV Philopater, detailed by Justin.⁴ She is also mentioned in Plutarch⁵ and Polybius,⁶ again in regard to her association with Ptolemy; but

¹ Edward M. Forster, *Pharos and Phyllaron* (The Hogarth Press), 1961, 103.

² Edmund Richardson, *Alexandria: The Quest for the Lost City* (Bloomsbury), 2021; Alexander Kitroeff, “The Alexandria We Have Lost.” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 10, no. 1-2 (1983).

³ David A. Warburton, “Alexandria? Or: Architecture in Archaeological World History.” *Archiv Für Orientforschung*, 53 (2015): 128.

⁴ Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, 30.2.

⁵ Plutarch, *Amatorius*, 9.266, *Cleomenes*, 33.2.

⁶ Polybius, *History*. 15.22.12, 15.29.6-14, 15.33.8-13.

nothing more is known about Oenante, and in each description the focus is on the king's ineptitude, not her. Yardley argues that Oenante's involvement in Ptolemy's deposition was important, that she was "able to control all official appointments,"⁷ following from Plutarch: "...the king himself was so corrupted [...] that, [...] the most important affairs of the government were managed by [...] Oenante..."⁸ Scholars cannot be certain of Oenante's role in politics from this source, due to an apparent bias against Ptolemy: the passage itself has little concern for Oenante and her control, but attempts to highlight Ptolemy's incompetence. By declaring that Oenante was able to "control all official appointments," Yardley evidently believes that her jurisdiction was recognised and respected, but there is no reliable way to assess her role in government affairs outside of this unique and driven source. Though evidence is scant, one can grasp restrictions placed on women in ancient Alexandria from certain sources, such as Socrates Scholiasticus' account of Hypatia's murder, which he believed occurred due to "political jealousy."⁹ Of course, Hypatia would have lived several centuries after Oenante and had status as an accomplished scholar, so the two women are not directly comparable. But Hypatia's death, an attack against a learned woman, may allude to the pressure placed on women who transgressed a cultural gender role.

A substantiated judgement on Oenante's power and person cannot be made, but, this is how Oenante has descended to scholars, and perhaps that is why such a lack of attention has been dedicated to her. Her role in politics, as an ancient woman, is not unlike that of Agrippina the Younger, but significantly less scholarship has included her. From this, can one conclude that Oenante is a figure partially lost, and the few sources that do include her neglect to focus on her? Oenante is an example of the intangible loss of Alexandria, a woman who has largely been forgotten, but whose name and existence remains known. Scholars that have studied Oenante have skimmed over her, instead analysing the syntax of Justin's Latin,¹⁰ or the importance of the Greek verb *γωνυπετέω*¹¹ - to fall to one's knees: it is incited as Oenante is pursued by invading Macedonians and she prays to a goddess.¹² Such is her overlooked legacy - a partially lost history which does not truly care for Oenante as herself alone. She is preserved in fragments, like Alexandria itself.

Again, as a figure of loss from the history of Alexandria, we have the name of 'Abdaraxus,' and very little else. Abdaraxus' name is mentioned once throughout antiquity, as "the one who built the machines in Alexandria," in the *Laterculi Alexandrini*.¹³ The *Laterculi* is, itself, an elusive source, a papyrus fragment with no discernable author: it lists important figures in Alexandria,

⁷ John C. Yardley, "Justin on Tribunates and Generalships, Caesares, and Augusti." *The Classical Quarterly*, 50, no. 2 (2000): 633.

⁸ Plutarch, *Cleom.* 33.2.

⁹ Socrates Scholiasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, XV. 160.

¹⁰ Yardley, "Justin on Tribunates", 633; Roger Barnes, "Alexandria: Library of Dreams." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 146.2 (1998): 590.

¹¹ Greg Stanton, "The Oriental Background of the compound *γωνυπετέω*." *Glotta*, 46. 1/2 (1968): 4.

¹² Polybius, *History*, 15.29.9.

¹³ Hermann Diels, *Laterculi Alexandrini: Aus Einem Papyrus Ptole-ma Ischer Zeit*. Akademie der Wissenschaften, (1904): berol 13044, col. 8.

“personalities relevant in diverse fields,”¹⁴ dating “to the early 1st century BCE.”¹⁵ The papyrus is an example of physical loss in Alexandria’s history, but also of the preservation of ancient materials - it may be fragmentary, but from the *Laterculi*, one more name from the ancient world is known, allowing scholarship to take one step closer to a history not quite lost. No further information is given on Abdaraxus, and thus it can be inferred that he and his machines were notable enough at the point of the *Laterculi*’s conception that no further information was needed. Oenanthe was lost in ancient Alexandria through a lack of documentation, and in the centuries between now and then, through scholarly neglect. Abdaraxus has been lost since he was recorded in the *Laterculi*, by the loss of him and his machines and their legacy. But both figures are known to us; here is a history that has not been lost, in the names of Abdaraxus and Oenanthe, in the remains of the *Laterculi Alexandrini*.

There is much to say about a library that held up to 700,000 books,¹⁶ but this study’s review of it will focus on how the Library of Alexandria fits the classification of a physical loss that has occurred over time, though in its living legacy an aspect of history is preserved. Indeed, there is no surviving archaeological evidence of the Library, except for a possible “storage container” in the shape of a block of granite,¹⁷ but the logistics of this block being a part of the Library do not comply with assumptions on holdings - the Library would have required 166,667 of these blocks, according to Bagnall,¹⁸ so the survival of only one is unlikely, if not impossible. Thus, it is more than likely that this block did not belong to the Library. With no remains, scholars can assume it has been entirely, physically lost. We are thereby left with remnants of the Library in written sources - whether that be literature that was produced through the Library, or literature on the Library. The Homeric texts that are still followed today are preserved in the *Venetus A* scholia,¹⁹ which was influenced by critical commentary of Aristarchus, head-librarian in the 2nd c. BCE. Aristarchus’ work, produced through the Library, “constitutes the primary authority of the Homeric scholia,”²⁰ indicating that the Library is not a lost aspect of Alexandria’s history, with a longstanding influence.²¹ The Septuagint, additionally, evidences the Library’s impact on history through surviving sources, as it was originally translated through the Library, under the command of Ptolemy II.²² In a different manner, there is enduring material on the Library to evidence that it has not been entirely lost, and that the history of Alexandria is not the history of what has been lost, in primary texts on the Library. Many ancient sources wrote on the Library, such as Seneca,²³ Lucan,²⁴ and Galen,²⁵ and such texts allow modern scholars to

¹⁴ I. Leyra, “The Order of the Seven Greatest Islands in the ‘Laterculi Alexandrini.’” *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik*, 192, (2014): 85.

¹⁵ Giambattista D’Alessio, “Reconstructions of the Artemidorus Papyrus.” *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik*, 61, 3, (2012): 307.

¹⁶ Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 7.17.

¹⁷ Roger Bagnall. “Alexandria: Library of Dreams.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 146.4 (2002): 357.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Venetus A (Marciana 454 = 822) Folio 12- 308.

²⁰ Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Scholia* (1997):102.

²¹ Timothy Barnes, “Two Passages of Justin” *The Classical Quarterly*, 48.2 (2004):65.

²² Pseudo-Aristeas.

²³ Seneca, *De Tranquillitate*. 9.5.

²⁴ Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 491-503.

²⁵ Galen, *Comentarii in Hippocratem*. 17a605.

understand the Library and its impact on the heritage of ancient Alexandria. And indeed, the Library “has come full circle”²⁶ in the recent foundation of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, which serves to represent and replicate its namesake. Conclusively, whilst the physical figure of the Library of Alexandria is a figure of loss, its legacy, formed through contemporary detailing of it and as a result of its productions, is not lost, and contradicts the belief that the history of Alexandria is the history of what has been lost.

Modern portrayals of Alexandria, like surviving ancient sources on the city, may additionally help us to understand the extent of Alexandria’s loss. It is in the writings of E. M. Forster and C. P. Cavafy that the ancient world does not “symbolise[...] an inaccessible past, but a shining future,”²⁷ an attainable and living memory, much like the preserved names of Oenante, Abdaraxus, and the figure of the Library.

Forster’s two books on Alexandria, *Pharos & Pharillon* and *Alexandria: a History and a Guide* describe the city in unique terms: the former blends ancient with modern to portray Alexandria poetically, while the latter does as its title would suggest. It is Alexandria’s past, blended with present, that I wish to understand, so my focus is on *Pharos & Pharillon*. Herz argues that in *Pharos*, “the Alexandria of [Forster’s] experience, [...] of his intellectual inquiry, and [...] of his imagination fuse”²⁸ - while *Pharos* is indeed an descriptive piece, rather than emerging out of Forster’s creativity, knowledge and familiarity, the Alexandria that he portrays is a representation of history and reality, present and past, blended. It forms a reminiscent modern city that reflects its heritage, and demonstrates that Alexandria’s history is not lost. This representation is reached through describing aspects of Alexandria which no longer exist, but which are preserved in memory and in Forster’s words. He speaks of the body of Alexander beneath the still standing Nabi Daniel Mosque, “walled into a forgotten cellar.”²⁹ But it is not Alexander in the tomb, it is the Muslim scholar Muhammad Daniyal al-Mawsili: “The vanished glory leaps up again...”³⁰ It could be any Alexandrian in the tomb - the importance lies in their burial and the legacy created, the “vanished” glory, and in Forster’s romanticisation and attention given to Alexander, to the Mosque, and to Alexandria. That the Mosque is preserved, the tomb was sealed and its myth lives on, evidences that Alexandria’s history is not the history of what has been lost, but a history protected and open to interpretation in living memory.

When looking at Alexandria from this perspective, however, one must keep in mind that the city is not only one of myth, but a cosmopolitan, functioning city. Forster held a certain lens as he approached Alexandria. Jeffreys highlights that his “perception of Greece stemmed [...] from his study of Classics at Cambridge” and that his lens was “rooted in the inherited Romantic notions of [...] late nineteenth-century [Britain]...”³¹ Jeffreys calls Forster’s interest an obsession; this is arguably the forefront reason for Forster’s largely dismissive attitude to contemporary Alexandria, as he wanted to recall the Hellenic days of the city’s past. In that regard, he preserved

²⁶ Mostafa El-Abbadi, “The Alexandrian Library in History.” *Alexandria, real and imagined*, (2016): 181-2.

²⁷ Edmund Richardson, “Nothing’s Lost Forever.” *Arion*, 20.2 (2012): 26.

²⁸ Judith Herz, “The Remaking of the Past in Forster’s Non-Fiction.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, 31, 2/3 (1985): 291.

²⁹ Forster, *Pharos*, 89.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Peter Jeffreys. “Cavafy, Forster and the Eastern Question.” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 19.1 (2001): 61.

and influenced those memories, but he ignored the modern city, and when he does turn to 1910's Alexandria, he adopts a condescending tone. "Modern Alexandria is scarcely a city of the soul..."³² he writes; it "calls for no enthusiastic comment,"³³ and, "only the north wind and the sea remain as they were..."³⁴ he claims. Forster was obsessed with the ancient, but ignorant of the present. In Williams' view, Forster "live[d] imaginatively in the great metropolis whose site [modern Alexandria] had usurped..."³⁵ While it is agreeable that Forster "lived imaginatively," one could argue that modern Alexandria did not "usurp" any site, having functioned in the same place since Alexander's foundation, and having grown into the city that existed in Forster's lifetime, and exists today. The Library of Alexandria became the Bibliotheca Alexandrina; Alexander's tomb, the Mosque; Pharos, a myth. The ancient city influenced Forster, Forster influenced the ancient city's legacy and understanding; the modern city was a necessity in both, to preserve and contribute to such a history. Thus, in the writings of Forster, in his setting and interpretation, the history of Alexandria is remembered, not lost.

In Forster, however, one does find that the ancient city of Alexandria, despite being preserved in a unique manner, is affected by his own fanciful and poetic writing. Forster writes that Alexandria "had never been young, and hoped to never grow old..."³⁶ He clearly loved the city and romanticised it, influencing its image through his own influenced education, but failed to accept and embrace the modern city as it stood. It seems that Forster was happier to face the city's losses, the missing lighthouse, than to honour its contemporary culture. Whilst aspects of the ancient city have not fully survived to the present day, Forster's attempt to honour and preserve Alexandria's history fail to acknowledge its reality and, in doing so, contributes to the ignorance of a culture.

When in Alexandria, Forster met and came to idolise the poet C. P. Cavafy, a native Alexandrian. In Cavafy's poetry, one finds a similar immortalisation of Alexandria, but not through Forster's Romantic lens. Rather, Cavafy writes the city as it is, in his lifetime and in the ancient past; I will focus on Cavafy's *Alexandrian Kings*, set during Cleopatra's reign, but mirrors sentiments of the contemporary present. In briefly looking at *Alexandrian Kings* in such a manner, it will be established that the history of Alexandria is not the history of what has been lost, if it is preserved and identified with decades later.

The opening line of *Alexandrian Kings*³⁷ details the Alexandrian people, with Cavafy having them turn out "in force," as a sort of military power; the stanza is ended with them as an "array of soldiers." Cavafy himself lived when the city of Alexandria was bombarded during the Anglo-Egyptian War in 1882, in which his family apartment was burned down.³⁸ In having the Alexandrians in the 1912 poem be described in such militaristic terms, Cavafy perhaps relates his political background to that of the titular monarchs and featured people; Alexandria is taken over repeatedly in its history, and the people become soldiers. Alexandria's history repeats in

³² Ibid.; Forster, 91.

³³ Forster, *Pharos*, 99.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Frederick Williams, "E. M. Forster's Alexandrian Quartet." *Hermathena*, 179 (2005): 176.

³⁶ Ibid.; Forster, 42.

³⁷ Constantine P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*. (The Hogarth Press): 1984, 33.

³⁸ See: <https://www.onassis.org/initiatives/cavafy-archive/>.

Cavafy, and is not, thereby, lost. Keeley analyses Cavafy's "treatment of this political occasion..." and determines that Cavafy focuses on the "underdogs... those being manipulated by the event..."³⁹ Indeed, Cavafy ignores Antony and Cleopatra, Alexander and Ptolemy, and the focus is on Caesarion and the people - but is this in the interest of highlighting them as "underdogs"? For the people, perhaps, but for Caesarion, it is unclear. One would rather argue that Cavafy's point is that Alexandria, the city and its people, remain the same regardless of ruler, and such attention to detail on Caesarion is emphatic description. Despite Caesarion's portrait, the people are the focus of *Alexandrian Kings*, because Cavafy is an Alexandrian man, having lived in the city's past and present, having seen it taken over in the same way as his ancient subjects did.

Centuries later, Cavafy is able to conclude that the Alexandrians knew "that this was all just words, all theatre."⁴⁰ He writes in both a cynical and hopeful manner for the Alexandrians - he, in the 19th century, knows that Alexandria still stands, but he, in the 1st century BCE, knows that the city is filled with contempt for its rulers, and their triumphs are theatrical celebrations. Whilst the Alexandrians are "charmed," watching the procession, and Cavafy himself writes poetically of the scene, charmed, the last line determines the Alexandrians' attitude: "they knew [...] what empty words they really were, these kingships."⁴¹ Cavafy was "spiritually linked to contemporary Alexandrians in his poems,"⁴² and he thus writes at the moment of the crowning and retrospectively, to convey Alexandrian omniscience in the faces of their tyrants. Cavafy describes ancient and contemporary Alexandria, the city that still stands, that "goes on being Alexandria still,"⁴³ despite ostentatious rulers, the people's dejection and cynicism, and the history between now and then. In writing about ancient and modern combined, focusing on the people and their collective strength, Cavafy evidences that Alexandria's history is not a lost history, but one that can be recalled, continuously related to, and honoured.

The history of Alexandria, conclusively, is a history of what has been lost as much as it is a history of what has not been lost. As with any history, there are gaps in our present knowledge, and gaps in past records. However, one cannot determine for certain that the entire history of Alexandria is that of what has been lost - in the names of neglected figures, Oenante and Abdaraxus, and the remnants of ancient buildings, the Library, we still know of these "lost" aspects of history, and they are not truly lost. In modern interpretations, Forster's and Cavafy's, this half-documented history is added to and preserved, and if that history is then alive and ever-growing, it cannot be deemed lost. Thereby, through remains and additions, origins and receptions, the history of Alexandria is not the history of what has been lost.

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³⁹ Edmund Keeley. *Cavafy's Alexandria*. (Princeton University Press): 1996, 95.

⁴⁰ Cavafy, *Collected Poems*. 147.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Jane Pinchin, *Alexandria Still*. (Princeton University Press): 1977, 40.

⁴³ Ibid., Cavafy.

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OEDIPUS REX: THE CROSSROADS OF INNOCENCE AND GUILT

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If fate is all encompassing, one may assume humans to be incapable of bearing guilt. If one is not in control of their destiny, how then can they be in control, and thus guilty, of any of their actions?¹ The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines guilt (n.) as ‘The fact of having committed, or of being guilty of, some specified or implied offence.’² It follows then that guilt may exist regardless of free will, as it denotes only the commitment of an act, not the intent which lay behind it. Yet, across legal frameworks, guilt, and its relationship with condemnation, is far trickier to ascertain. Truly, the question of guilt comes down to semantics, whether or not responsibility for an act necessitates intent, or at the very least an acknowledgement one’s own state of ‘being guilty of’ such act. The eponymous character of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* remains ignorant of his crimes until long after their occurrence, whereupon it is only his own thirst for knowledge which brings about their illumination. Sophocles weaves a story such that it is impossible to disregard that all roads lead to Oedipus’ responsibility for the acts of murder and incest which occur to his house. Yet, if it is true that guilt necessitates an acknowledgement of an act, of being ‘guilty’, Oedipus cannot be said to be guilty of his crimes until many years after their occurrence. The question of Oedipus’ guilt in these intervening years, and unto the close of the play (wherein Oedipus is certain of his own guilt), is tricky. To understand the moral position Oedipus occupies, we must look at the possibility that guilt is not a black or white phenomenon, but rather occupies a spectrum, along which Oedipus falls somewhere in the middle.

To judge the severity of Oedipus’ guilt, we must first analyse the complex nature of fate in Sophocles’ Theban plays so that we might determine the extent to which Oedipus retains free will. The concept of free will may not have existed nominally in Ancient Greece, however the fact that heroes in myth blame certain actions on the gods requires some notion of the converse: that others actions are *not* predetermined and are done instead of free will.³ Oedipus makes this concept explicit when he states, ‘Apollo / he ordained my agonies [...] but the hand that struck my eyes was mine, / mine alone.’³ The sins of killing his father and sleeping with his mother, Oedipus claims, were predestined, however his response to this, gouging out his own eyes, was not. What Oedipus seems to imply is that regardless of the predetermined nature of the incest and murder, the actions he takes over the course of the play are done of free will. Many critics have pointed to the fact that with knowledge of the two tenets which might cause his ruin, it seems obvious that Oedipus should have resisted killing any man and sleeping with any woman old enough to be his mother. However, as

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘Guilt (n.)’, sense 4, March 2025.

² Bernard Knox, ‘Introduction,’ in *Sophocles: Oedipus Rex*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics, 1984), 144.

³ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics, 1984), 1467–1470.

Oedipus explains in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Laius' murder was unavoidable. Running from Corinth in an attempt to flee his destiny, he was accosted by a group of travellers, he relates this to the chorus at of old citizens at Colonus, exclaiming, 'the man I murdered—he'd have murdered me!'⁴ He elaborates further, stating that he did not seek out Jocasta, but rather 'Thebes bound [him] fast, / so blind, to a bride who was [his] curse, [his] ruin.'⁵ In both instances Oedipus does not seek out the prophecy (in fact he travels to Thebes fleeing from it), yet there seems a limit to what his free will might accomplish. Oedipus's autonomy must thus lie somewhere amid these absolutes of fate and free will.

Moreover, while prophecy is a key element in *Oedipus Rex*, it is crucial to note that the gods never appear on stage or speak directly during the duration of the play. Unlike in *The Bacchae*, written by Sophocles' contemporary, Euripides, wherein Dionysus is a key figure, shaping the play's storyline and bringing about its main source of conflict, the visible absence of gods in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* clarifies that the play's conflict lies in the hands of its human characters. Oedipus may lament Apollo's oracle, however close inspection reveals a further emphasis on human fault. He bemoans 'Apollo, friends, Apollo— / he ordained my agonies—these, my pains on pains! / But the hand that struck my eyes was mine, / mine alone,'⁶ a mirror to his prophecy in which it is repeatedly noted that he will 'shed my father's blood with my own hands.'⁷ Apollo somehow stands at the root of Oedipus' misfortune, and yet it is never his hands which bring about disaster, but Oedipus' own. Sophocles' emphasise on human fallibility is illuminated upon the realization that each prophecy is absorbed only through hearsay. One might recall that Oedipus is moved to abandon his home in Corinth at the words of 'some man at the banquet who had drunk too much.'⁸ Yet when Tiresias, a lauded seer, comes bearing the truth as shown to him through prophetic vision (338–526), Oedipus lashes out in anger, which as Steven Lattimore notes, rids Oedipus of the intelligence he is typically lauded for, making him instead appear—at least to ancient audiences—obtuse.⁹ An ancient Athenian audience would have recognised Tiresias as the respected seer of myth, understanding his word to be true as he appeared on stage, yet to a modern audience, Oedipus' scepticism appears reasonable. For Tiresias, plainly, is not a god. Even if one has confidence in the verity of the gods of myth, it is hard not to trip over the fundamental nature of human beings: error. It is human to err, thus in listening to Tiresias' recitation of his prophetic sight, it is human to be sceptical of his ability to relate the incident unblemished. Both times in which Oedipus is condemned to be the ruin of Thebes (as Laius' unborn child and as king), it is only at Tiresias' word, the feeble word of man. Lattimore has identified that the quarrel which rages over this scene only further emphasises Tiresias' humanity, the bickering argument marring the impartiality one might assume of an oracle.¹⁰ Oedipus' wavering

⁴ Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics, 1984), 614.

⁵ Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 590–591.

⁶ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 1467–1470.

⁷ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 1092.

⁸ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 858.

⁹ Steven Lattimore, 'Oedipus and Teiresias,' *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 8 (1975): 106.

¹⁰ Lattimore, 'Oedipus and Teiresias,' 108.

belief in the words of man raises the question of to what extent Oedipus is responsible for his tragedy, through his own belief. As Oedipus advances (albeit unconvincingly amidst his quarrel with Tiresias), the words spoken to him cannot be proven—the extent to which they are true is determined only by human belief. As Frederick Ahl identifies, in the end, much of Oedipus’ fear, and his eventual discovery of his “fate” is determined rhetorically by his reliance on the words of others.¹¹ The tragedy of the play occurs precisely because of Oedipus’ belief in the power of prophecies, and because of his belief in his own wrongdoing. When Oedipus declares, ‘to force the gods to act against their will—no man has the power,’¹² it is in stark contrast with the belief of the dictation of human lives. Noting the prevalence of Sophoclean irony throughout this work, it is impossible not to look at this line and wonder if the characters in *Oedipus Rex* might attain unbound freedom if only they would look beyond the assumption that their lives are dictated by the gods.

The obfuscation of Oedipus’ agency may frustrate some modern readers, but we should remember it is the very unreconcilable nature of Oedipus’ fate and autonomy which Aristotle praises in his *Poetics*. Aristotle heralds *Oedipus Rex* as the paragon of tragedy precisely because Oedipus is not destroyed by any feat of evil or disdain for good, instead he is struck down by a *hamartia*, an error.¹³ As Oedipus is no paragon of good or evil, there seems to be no reason for him to be awarded such a terrible fate; instead, we must believe that his fate is the result of a mistake, a morally neutral incident that will harm him for the rest of his life. Oedipus’ guilt, when it rests upon the neutrality of *hamartia* becomes further confused, for it seems then that this incident is indeed wrought by Oedipus himself, and yet was done unconsciously or even mistakenly. While Oedipus’ *hamartia* is commonly taken to refer to the killing of Laius, Lazlo Versényi’s claim, that Oedipus’ *hamartia* may relate not to the murder of Laius, but to his quest for knowledge—to the fallibility of man, who is never wholly pleased with sight, nor blindness¹⁴—is interesting to consider in light of our question of guilt. If we assume Oedipus’ *hamartia* to be his quest for knowledge, this ‘error’, coloured by the vigorous questioning Oedipus undertakes throughout the play, seems to become conscious. Yet it seems overcritical to pin Oedipus’ tragedy on a behaviour so often heralded, done for the benefit of his city. If Sophocles meant to implicate Oedipus in his tragic fate, Oedipus’ downfall becomes one inherent in mankind, leading the play into further pessimism than ever before. Yet even if one was to look at Oedipus’ *hamartia* as it is regularly understood, as P. H. Vellacott asserts, in introducing the banquet scene, in which Oedipus learns of his false parenthood, Sophocles ‘has entirely changed the moral situation of Oedipus in the story. He [becomes] no longer the innocent victim of malevolent powers.’¹⁵ For with Apollo’s warning, and the newfound understanding that Polybus is not his real father, Oedipus has been warned of his fate and chosen to ignore it. For Vellacott, Oedipus, through wilful ignorance, becomes guilty of his crime. Still, while wilful ignorance is

¹¹ Frederick Ahl, *Sophocles’ Oedipus: Evidence and Self-Conviction* (Cornell University Press, 1991), 15–16.

¹² Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 319.

¹³ Aristotle, *The Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (Penguin Classics, 1996), 21.

¹⁴ Lazlo Versényi, ‘Oedipus: Tragedy of Self-Knowledge,’ *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 1, no. 3 (1962): 26.

¹⁵ P. H. Vellacott, ‘The Guilt of Oedipus,’ *Greece & Rome* 11, no. 2 (1964): 140.

inequitable with true ignorance, it is unconvincing that it equates to intent, and thus indisputable guilt. Is Oedipus culpable of crimes he did not intend to commit? Or pushing that question further, is he culpable for a crime he committed despite honest attempts to avoid doing so? To investigate the nuances of this issue more closely, I propose an analysis of the two options Creon proposes as punishment for Laius' killer: 'Banish the man, or pay back blood with blood.'¹⁶ One might note that in the United Kingdom, sentencing based on intent distinguishes manslaughter from murder. The highest sentence for murder is a life order, while for manslaughter, it is 18 years in custody.¹⁷ While both crimes result in loss of life, their punishments are vastly different due to the differing levels of perceived 'guilt' involved in each crime. Murder involves causing the death of another with premeditated intentions, while manslaughter involves no premeditation. Oedipus, having not premeditated the murder of his father, nor the incest he commits with his mother, is still 'guilty' of having committed these crimes, but would not suffer the highest punishment, because he had no intent to commit them. What the courts might convict Oedipus of, and what we might conclude, is that while Oedipus is physically guilty, morally he is not. Thinking of guilt as a conceptual unit, he is thus only guilty to a certain degree—falling in yet another grey area. Consequentially we might assume the punishment Creon implies to reflect, or perhaps even give insight, into the nature of Oedipus' crime. However, as Danielle S. Allen discusses, the graded levels of punishment which many Western countries have embedded in their legal system, in which punishment corresponds with the severity of a crime, did not exist in the Athenian legal order under which Sophocles wrote *Oedipus Rex*.¹⁸ For severe wrongdoings, defendants were commonly expected to inflict their own exile, or *atimía*, a banishment from the Athenian social order.¹⁹ The most famous case in modern memory of capital punishment in ancient Athens is perhaps the death of Socrates, however it should be noted that even this death was not called for outright, but was delegated alongside the choice of exile.²⁰ Legal records calling for defendants to be put to death usually did so only as an exercise in political and oratorical power, in order to reassert some sense of political order that was regarded as having been broken.²¹ Punishment for the killer of Laius would thus only result in death, 'pay[ing] back blood with blood,' if the killer refused to leave the city, and thus purge it of its *miasma*. This leads us no closer to Oedipus' guilt, for his willing exile is proof only of his regret, his remorse, and his desire to save his city. Even the grey areas of modern legislation thus become further clouded, as it becomes evident that Oedipus' guilt is not of concern to the play at large, but rather the focus remains on his response to his perceived guilt.

¹⁶ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 115.

¹⁷ 'Homicide: Murder, manslaughter, infanticide and causing or allowing the death or serious injury of a child or vulnerable adult,' Crown Prosecution Service, last modified October 15, 2024. Available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk>.

¹⁸ Danielle S. Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 64.

¹⁹ Allen, *The World of Prometheus*, 202.

²⁰ Jennet Kirkpatrick, 'Exile out of Athens? Migration and Obligation in Plato's "Crito",' *Political Theory* 43, no. 3 (2015): 363.

²¹ Allen, *The World of Prometheus*, 65.

In writing *Oedipus Rex* Sophocles presented an abundance of questions and few answers. Is fate real? Is Oedipus guilty? Is he deserving of the pain he endures? Such questions are so complex that even Oedipus himself seems torn regarding his fate. Realising, at the end of the play, that he has fulfilled the prophecy, Oedipus seems certain that he is guilty of wrongdoings and must be justly punished. He gouges out his eyes, wishing he had been left to die as a baby, feet bound in the mountains.²² He begs the chorus to ‘kill [him], hurl [him] into the sea,’²³ and then more soberly he pleads that Creon, ‘drive [him] out of the land at once.’²⁴ Yet years after this declaration, when Oedipus has grown old and weary, he changes his tune. He questions the chorus, and in doing so questions the audience. He asks ‘how, with any justice, could you blame *me*? [...] blind to what I was doing, blind to whom I killed—how could you condemn that involuntary act / with any sense of justice?’²⁵ In the years since his discovery, it seems shock and horror have eroded, leaving room for Oedipus to ponder the truth of his guilt. No longer does he feel the need to endure further punishment, but instead reflects upon the injustices he had been dealt as no fault of his own. This discrepancy, even in Oedipus himself, proves how challenging the questions Sophocles poses are, and how impossible a determinate is to be reached, even upon a lifetime of consideration.

Like the sphinx’s riddle, questions of guilt in *Oedipus Rex* are hard to decode. Sophocles’ final work in his Theban Cycle, *Oedipus at Colonus*, does nothing to solve this riddle, instead, only further muddles the issue, proving that perhaps even Sophocles himself wavered on Oedipus’ guilt. It seems at first easy to conclude Oedipus is guilt-free, driven by the gods to his tragic fate, however in analysing the extent to which Oedipus *does* retain free will, the question of Oedipus’ guilt proves harder to solve. If Oedipus’ fate was predestined by the gods, he would never have been able to avoid, and thereafter shed, physical responsibility for his crimes, but with no intent to commit his crimes, he can be found morally innocent, thus placing him forever at the crossroads which changed his life, between innocence and guilt.

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²³ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 1545.

²⁴ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 1571.

²⁵ Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1106–1117.

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‘GOING GREEK’ FOR THE TAXMAN?: ETHNICITY AS A NORMATIVE DISTINCTION OR CULTURAL IDENTIFIER IN THIRD CENTURY PTOLEMAIC EGYPT.

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INTRODUCTION

The volume of papyri that survived from Ptolemaic Egypt makes it arguably one of the best case-studies in Hellenistic bureaucracy and in the interactions between ancient peoples, both through the bureaucratic framework and the cultural sphere. In this paper I will discuss one of the main factors governing interaction with the state and amongst the people of Egypt: ethnicity. In the context of this paper, normative distinctions will be treated as formal administrative categories used for the administration of the state, especially taxation; conversely, cultural identifiers are markers of identity such as language and customs used in social contexts, with some overlap into the normative sphere. I will explore how ethnicity fits into the normative framework of the tax system of the Ptolemaic state and how it contributed to the identity of the peoples of Ptolemaic Egypt. I will explain how ethnicity arguably functioned as both a normative distinction within administrative structures and as a fluid cultural identifier in the social sphere. I will first focus on ethnicity as a normative distinction within the Ptolemaic system of administration.

Based on Willy Clarysse and Dorothy Thompson’s work on the papyrological sources for population registers,¹ I will focus on extant papyrological sources regarding taxation, due to their provision of a large data set to explore ethnicity’s place in the normative framework, and because this system was an integrally literate and meticulous one.² This focus will consist in a close reading of several third century BC composite tax registers and household registers from the Arsinoite Nome,³ and how they inform us on ethnic terminology, the blurred lines between ethnicity and occupations in tax exemptions, composite households, and how these sources inform our understanding of the Ptolemaic state’s attitude to ethnicity. Denise McCoskey’s insight into the consideration of Ptolemaic Egypt as a colonial venture will be an analytical tool to frame my discussion on ethnicity in both the administrative and especially the cultural sphere and Csaba La’Da’s discussion on ethnics and Christelle Buvat’s work on the perception of official identity will be invaluable.

Once I have established that ethnicity predominantly acts as a normative distinction within the administration of Ptolemaic power, through taxation within a colonial framework which is aimed at the extraction of wealth,⁴ I will focus on ethnicity within the cultural sphere, where I will show that it was seemingly based on cultural identifiers, rather than being a *per se*

¹ Clarysse & Thompson 2006

² Thompson 2005, p.107

³ *SBXII* 10860; *P. Vindob. G* 40687; *P. Vindob. G* 40663

⁴ McCoskey 2002, 16; Samuel 1993, 174

cultural identifier, by outlining the relationship between language and self-identification. Through a comparison of several primary sources, I will combine considerations on the normative and cultural aspects of ethnicity to demonstrate its fundamental fluidity and complexity in third century Ptolemaic Egypt.

ETHNICITY AS A NORMATIVE DISTINCTION

The Ptolemaic Tax System and Ethnic labels: Evidence from *P. Vindob. G 40687* and *G 40663*

The control of wealth and power in early Ptolemaic Egypt depended on a careful appreciation of the sensibilities of the pre-existing culture,⁵ and arguably through the nurturing of a system of privileges. The main taxes collected by the Ptolemaic state were the obol tax and the salt tax, and as the tax applied to all adults,⁶ the state took great care in categorising its population for the purpose of collecting tax and granting exemptions.⁷ This categorisation at first seems to be based on ethnicity through ethnic labels assigned to certain categories within the tax registers,⁸ however a more detailed study of these reveals the problems with this assumption and strengthens the notion of ethnicity becoming an administrative label which is gradually divorced from notions of ethnic identity and is fluidly and diversly applied.

A close study of two fragments of a Greek tax-liability record in the Arsinoite Nome will serve to explore this issue and the main problems associated with it. Both fragments, *P. Vindob. G 40687* and *P. Vindob. G 40663*, date from the mid third century BC and they detail in Greek the tax register for the town of Trikomia. In essence they consist of a census of the town, containing details of all members of households sorted by specific categories.⁹ *G 40687* is shorter than *G 40663*, however it is no less important, as it consists of a numerical overview of the population of Trikomia. It records the total population as 331, the proportion of men and women, two professions (policemen and teachers) and finally a category that seems to be based on ethnicity, 'Hellenes'; crucially, both the two professions and the Hellenes are listed as being exempt from the obol tax.¹⁰ This fact raises some interesting questions that become increasingly problematic when approaching the more comprehensive *G 40663*. This fragment not only contains information similar to *G 40687*, but it also records the names of the taxpayers by household with a specific column for Hellenes, and even the parts of the town in which they lived. The fact that *G 40663* records names is crucial, for if it were the case that the term Hellene, treated as a tax bracket, were linked to ethnicity then individuals classed as Hellenes would be expected to have Greek names, however this is not the case. The most interesting section relates to the settlement of Maron, in which, though most named individuals are Greek, almost 40% of

⁵ Thompson 2005, 105

⁶ Clarysse & Thompson 2006b 532

⁷ Fisher-Bovet 2018, 215-217

⁸ e.g. *SB XII 10860*; *P. Vindob. G 40687*; *P. Vindob. G 40663*

⁹ Clarysse & Thompson 2006a, 319; 356

¹⁰ *P. Vindob. G 40687*, 10-21

the names under the heading Ἕλληνας (Hellēnes) are Jewish,¹¹ and even a certain *Ptesorisis son of Ptesorisis*, an Egyptian, doesn't seem to pay the obol tax.¹² I believe these fragments raise two important questions: firstly, of the relationship between occupation and ethnicity as categories in the tax lists; and secondly, the incongruence in the names that appear in G 40663 raises questions surrounding the relationship between the ethnicity of individuals considered Ἕλληνας and the category itself. Greater clarity to the problems raised by G 40663 and G 40687 can be found with a focus on the terminology used in these tax-registers. A focus on the nature of the terminology in use in the tax registers, however, has the potential to reflect biases in the source material that are linked to the language used and the nature of the bureaucracy using them.

Greek Biases in the Papyrological Record and McCoskey's Colonial Framework

A great number of extant papyri are written in Greek,¹³ and from the arrival of Alexander in 332 BC and as Greeks started to be distributed in the countryside as either κληροῦχοι (*klēroukoi*) or private citizens, the administration progressively used Greek as an official language.¹⁴ Ptolemaic bureaucracy seemed to be a Greek institution and would have inherently favoured Greeks,¹⁵ and A.E Samuel argues that the expansion of the bureaucracy was probably driven by Greek-speakers wanting positions and perks from being administrators.¹⁶ A combination of these factors, and a clear favouring of Greek culture and practices lead Eileen McCoskey to place Ptolemaic Egypt within a colonial framework,¹⁷ and that the administration was a part of this wider colonial framework, a concept which McCoskey notes is often ignored in older scholarship due to an inherent '*Greek bias*' in the source material and in the scholarship itself.¹⁸ This colonial framework is useful in contextualising instances of seemingly ethnic based inequality both in the normative and the cultural sphere. Relevantly, McCoskey argues that there would have been an "*inextricable link between 'Greek' identity and the political process of colonization*" because of Alexander's conquest in 332 BC,¹⁹ and that the establishment of Greek power would have inevitably established inverse positions of social power for Greeks and Egyptians, which she sees as indicative of 'structural violence'.²⁰ Ptolemaic bureaucracy, therefore, seems on the surface to be conceived as a Greek institution.²¹

Though McCoskey's insights into the colonial framework and inherent unequal power dynamics between Greeks and Egyptians are not unreasonable, it would be wrong to view Ptolemaic administration as being wholly situated within a Greek milieu. Based on data collected from papyrological sources, Thompson estimates that the Fayum was only populated by 10-15% Greek immigrants,²² and so the use of local administrators with local knowledge was essential in

¹¹ *P. Vindob. G 40663*, col. vii-xi; Clarysse & Thompson 2006b, 145

¹² *P. Vindob. G 40663*, 33

¹³ McCoskey 2002, 17

¹⁴ Samuel 1993, 175; Thompson 1994, 73, Clarysse 1993, 187

¹⁵ Bowman 1986, 122,

¹⁶ Samuel 1993, 178

¹⁷ McCoskey 2002, 20

¹⁸ McCoskey 2002, 17

¹⁹ McCoskey 2002, 14

²⁰ McCoskey 2002, 1; 16

²¹ McCoskey 2002, 18; Samuel 1993, 178; Bowman 1986, 122

²² Thompson 2001, p.201

the beginning, with Demotic being used alongside Greek in official documents.²³ Furthermore, the previously mentioned G 40687 contains a spelling mistake that Willy Clarysse suggests is due to the scribe's Egyptian background.²⁴ While contextualising them within McCoskey's colonial framework, a focus on the use of tax labels such as Hellene in Demotic papyri mitigates a potential Greek bias in the sources, because if McCoskey or Samuel's insights into a Greek bureaucracy were true, it would be unreasonable to expect many proudly Greek administrators to use Demotic. Furthermore, it provides evidence for the consistency of the use of these categories, suggesting that they were an integral part of the normative framework governing taxation in Third Century Ptolemaic Egypt.

Ethnics in Documents as a Point of Comparison

In scholarship, non-Egyptian geographical ethnic labels tend to be called ethnics,²⁵ or when linked to a personal name as 'ethnic designations',²⁶ or more broadly ethnic labels.²⁷ This variety of labels reflects the confusing nature of the subject matter; however, ethnics seems to be the most concise label. McCoskey argues that 'race' would more appropriately reflect the inherently unequal ethnic power dynamics in Ptolemaic Egypt than the terms 'ethnics' or 'ethnic labels.'²⁸ Though she concedes that the boundaries between ethnicity and race are vague, she appeals that in situations of tension race is more appropriate as it indicates the '*critical degrees of difference at operation in Ptolemaic Egypt*'.²⁹ Conversely, race is an unhelpfully and immediately charged word, which the term ethnics is not.

La'Da's work on ethnics within official Demotic documents can help with the confusion regarding the relationship between occupations and the ethnic "Ἑλλήν'(Hellēn), and the discrepancy between the presumed ethnicity of those named in *P. Vindob. G 40687* and *P. Vindob. G 40663* and their ethnic tax category. In his analysis, La'Da observes that ethnics in administrative documents often operate as indicators of occupation and fiscal privilege, and not strictly as genuine markers of ethnic identity. For La'Da the most immediate expression of ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt comes in the form of the various ethnics that appear in Demotic and Greek papyri.³⁰ He identifies two different kinds of ethnic labels: those used in official documents, so for public use within the instruments of government and bureaucracy, and 'unofficial papyri', for example private letters or literature.³¹ The standard ethnic designations are usually one word, and they come in two groups: either Demotic or foreign in origin, but in established use in Demotic; or Greek ethnic designations transliterated into Demotic.³² The two most recurring terms are *Wynn* (Greek) and *Mdy* (Persian or Mede),³³ however Demotic

²³ Muhs 2010, 187; Clarysse 1993, 187

²⁴ Clarysse 1993, 197

²⁵ Fisher-Bovet 2018, 210

²⁶ La'Da 1994, 184

²⁷ Vantorpe 2012, 268

²⁸ McCoskey 2002, 32

²⁹ McCoskey 2002, 33

³⁰ La'Da 1994, 183

³¹ *ibid.*

³² La'Da 1994, p.184

³³ *Ibid.*

documents also contain complex designations mostly linked to either geographical origin or place of birth, the *ms n* type. The two most interesting complex designations are *Wynn ms n Kmy* (Greek born in Egypt) and *Mdy ms n Kmy* (Persian born in Egypt).³⁴ The use of these complex designations becomes more interesting as La'Da finds examples of the fixed term *Wyn ms n Kmy* related to not only Greek names,³⁵ but Graeco-Egyptian names,³⁶ and even Egyptian names.³⁷ The issue is further complicated by the fact that La'Da identifies intergenerational changes in ethnic designations, and even individuals who change ethnics during their lifetime.³⁸ The issues raised by *P. Vindob. G 40687* and *P. Vindob. G 40663* seem to be raised in Demotic documents as well, however the association with a particular profession may provide some clarity.

The use of *Mdy* and *Wynn* in Demotic documents seem to be closely related to individuals who hold military titles, and in Greek documents, individuals who are classed as *Πέρσης* (*Persēs*) either bear military titles or are associated with social contexts relating to the military.³⁹ *Wynn* and *Mdy* appear in documents dating to 220 BC which contain area censuses for the purpose of collecting the salt tax, indicating that they refer to fiscal categories and not as a genuine marker of ethnicity.⁴⁰ Similarly, Greek tax documents show a similar use of *Πέρσης* & *Ἑλλήν*, the Greek equivalents of *Mdy* and *Wynn*, for individuals exempt from the obol tax.⁴¹ The association of the term with the military is further strengthened by the fact that La'Da identifies that 46% of the men classified as *Wynn* bear military titles.⁴² The use of the term *Mdy* is attested even before the arrival of Alexander, as it is used in the same pattern as Ptolemaic official documents in *P. dem. Cairo 50099*, which dates to the reign of Hakoris (393-380BC).⁴³ The potential for a privileged Greek tax category could be explained within McCoskeys' colonial framework, as the unequal distribution of tax exemptions is undeniable. The term *Mdy* was used by the Egyptian administration to categorise Greek soldiers as either *Mdy* or *Wynn*, because of the association of Greeks with the military and because of previous bureaucratic practice.⁴⁴

From 'Pure' Ethnicity to Occupational Labels

The explanation is a slow shift in meaning from true ethnic occupational label. This transformation followed a clear progression: original ethnic terms became associated with particular professions, in this case the military, which acquired fiscal privileges granted by the state on account of the value placed upon the profession,⁴⁵ which with the passage of time evolved into occupational-status designations that could be obtained seemingly regardless of ethnicity.⁴⁶

³⁴ *P. dem. Adler 6.4-5*; *P. dem. Lille 35* script. ext 4

³⁵ *P. dem. BM 10721.2*

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *P. dem. Adler 5.6*

³⁸ La'Da 1994, 186-187

³⁹ La'Da 1994, 187

⁴⁰ La'Da 1994, 188; *P. dem. Lille III 99* Verso

⁴¹ CPR xxij, l, 2, 4

⁴² La'Da 1994, 188

⁴³ La'Da 1994, 185

⁴⁴ La'Da 1994, 188; *P. dem. Cairo 50099*

⁴⁵ Bovet-Fisher 2018, 230-234

⁴⁶ La'Da 1994, 188-189

The combination of Demotic source material, and crucial Greek documents such as *P. dem. Lille* III 99 Verso, combined with the questions raised by *P. Vindob. G* 40687 and *P. Vindob. G* 40663, contribute to the notion that ethnicity evolved into a normative distinction within administrative structures divorced from actual ethnic definition or self-definition. As La'Da observes, by the early third century 'ethnicity and ethnic considerations in general appear to have played no significant role in the formulation of the Ptolemaic administration's fiscal, legal and social policies.'⁴⁷ The explanation as to why not all *Wynn* were soldiers, or even Greek, can again be explained by the fact that certain professions would have been associated with the Greek cultural spheres, and simply placed under the same category as soldiers. Koen Goudriaan identifies a potential solution in the confusion of ethnic labelling in papyri, that ethnic labelling was at the very least partially dependent on speaking Greek.⁴⁸ Indeed, bilingualism would have become more common with the gradual integration of Greeks into Egyptian milieu.⁴⁹

La'Da's insights are crucial, because they identify a pattern that can be applied to other 'privileged' professions, and La'Da's contributions explain peculiar discrepancies. The Ptolemaic administration seems to have been unconcerned and pragmatic about accurately recording individual's ethnic background. It allowed these designations to be used flexibly and shows that within the normative framework, ethnicity functioned as a practical distinction for the collecting of tax.⁵⁰ Equally, La'Da's framework does not clash with McCoskey's colonial framing of Ptolemaic Egypt, as privileged tax brackets were indicative of a degree of preferential treatment.⁵¹ Fiscal and ethnic identities intersected through these normative nuances, with ethnicity's relationship to cultural markers evolving gradually. Jonathan Hall argues that early that in early stages of Ptolemaic occupation, ethnicity, and consequently ethnics, would have been associated with origin.⁵² With the passage of time, however, origin gradually played less of a role in determining ethnic identity,⁵³ and it may have depended on the adoption of bilingualism.⁵⁴ Tax privileged occupations were associated with Greek culture,⁵⁵ and, fittingly, Greek teachers were a privileged profession.⁵⁶ The association of privileged tax brackets with Greek culture leads Thompson to argue that it would have been advantageous to adopt Greek cultural identifiers,⁵⁷ and that indeed they may have been a '*dispensation to those prepared to go Greek*'.⁵⁸ This complex relationship between fiscal and cultural identifiers might reflect a broader interpretation of ethnicity as being related to the adoption of these cultural identifiers. Through an analysis of relevant primary sources, I will show that in the cultural sphere ethnicity doesn't seem to be a cultural identifier *per se*, but instead that perceptions of ethnicity seem to be based on cultural identifiers, and that the most immediate cultural identifier was language.

⁴⁷ La'Da 1994, 189

⁴⁸ Goudriaan 1988, 92

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Clarysse & Thompson 2006, 164-165

⁵¹ Clarysse 1992, 52

⁵² Hall 1997, 25

⁵³ McCoskey 2002, 27; Thompson 1994, 75

⁵⁴ Goudriaan 1988, 92

⁵⁵ Clarysse 1985, 60; Fischer-Bovet 2018, 216

⁵⁶ Thompson 1992a, 48; *P. Halle* 1.260-65

⁵⁷ Thompson 1992b, 338; 2001, 307

⁵⁸ Thompson 1997, 248

ETHNICITY AS A CULTURAL IDENTIFIER

Cultural Hierarchy and Self Identification in Theocritus Idyll 15

Though ethnic distinctions were normatively flexible, the existence of privileged tax brackets does suggest an unequal relationship between the Greek and the Egyptian cultural sphere. In this case, McCoskey's colonial framework is less helpful in understanding ethnicity's normative connotations, but it does inform and clarify the Greek social presence in Egypt, where Egyptians are systematically seen as inferior.⁵⁹ Perceptions of this relationship and Greek self-identification vary, but the role of language is key. A passage of Polybius describing a visit to Alexandria negatively perceives the mixing of Greek and Egyptian culture,⁶⁰ as the Greeks living there are by his time, the second century *μιγάδες* ("mixed").⁶¹ Equally, though they are *μιγάδες*, they retain some Greek identity, as they still observe Greek *ἔθους* (custom).⁶² In essence, Polybius considers them Greek because they have not forgotten Greek customs, reflecting long established ancient Greek notions of ethnicity as being based on customs and language.⁶³ Theocritus' *Idyll* 15 helps to identify elements of the *ἔθους* of Greek self-identification, especially in the context of Alexandria, where persons identifying as Greek tended to strongly emphasise their identity,⁶⁴ Theocritus' *Idyll* 15 suggests that pride in Greekness seems to have been founded in othering and strongly linked to language. The *Idyll*'s narrative develops around two women, Gorgo and Praxinoa, as they make their way to the Royal palace to see a fire show,⁶⁵ and throughout this narrative they make several comments on Egyptians and themselves as Greeks. The two women clearly see themselves as a minority, as the Egyptians are described as swarms of ants; furthermore, they associate petty crime with Egyptians.⁶⁶ What is more important than this othering, however, is what they say about themselves, as pride in Greek ancestry is very much tied to her speaking a Doric dialect: *Πελοποννασιστὶ λαλεῖμεν* (*Peloponnaisisti lalcumes*).⁶⁷ McCoskey sees the poem as a distillation of *colonial fantasies and paranoias*,⁶⁸ and Erskine notes that much of the tone of Greek literature from Ptolemaic Egypt comes from a place of insecurity.⁶⁹ The passage reflects the inevitable tensions between new arrivals and locals, though Greek sources often do not mention the fact that they had colonised Egypt as a result of military conquest.⁷⁰ This interpretation is reasonable, but it is important to note that these fears may be linked to the women being new arrivals, as Praxinoa complains that her husband has taken her

⁵⁹ McCoskey 2002, 16

⁶⁰ Austin 323; Polybius *Hist.* 34.14

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.* καὶ γὰρ εἰ μιγάδες, Ἕλληνας ὅμως ἀνέκαθεν ἦσαν καὶ ἐμέμνηντο τοῦ κοινοῦ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἔθους

⁶³ Strabo, *Geog.* 14.2.28- Isocrates, *Letter IX.8 to Archidamus*; Saïd 2001, 278

⁶⁴ Thompson 2001, 304

⁶⁵ Theocritus *Idyll* 15.23-25 βᾶμες τῷ βασιλῆος ἐς... θασόμεναι τὸν Ἀδωνιν' ἀκούω χρήμα καλὸν τικοσμεῖν τὰν βασιλίσσαν

⁶⁶ Theocritus, *Idyll* 15.48

⁶⁷ Theocritus, *Idyll* 15.92

⁶⁸ McCoskey 2002, 14-15

⁶⁹ Erskine 1995, 43

⁷⁰ McCoskey 2002, 15

a long way from home to live there.⁷¹ The passage certainly shows that Egyptians were seen as inferior, however the othering factor is arguably based on the cultural identifier of language and indeed the Gorgo and Praxinoa create a direct link between language and ethnicity, which consequently becomes an element of the *ἔθους* of Greek self-identification.

Egyptian Perspectives: The P.Col.66 Complaint Letter

Equally, that Egyptians were seen as inferior, doesn't mean that Egyptians could not and did not adopt Greek cultural identifiers. A letter of complaint to a 'Zenon' from an anonymous plaintiff dating to the mid third century,⁷² shows that the adoption of the Greek language brought with it privileges that do not seem to be precluded on the basis on ethnic origin. A perspective from a person who does not self-identify as Greek is crucial, and the unique value of *P. Col.66* lies in the fact that it informs both considerations on ethnicity's place in cultural identifiers and the normative framework, as it is a formal petition. In his letter to Zenon the anonymous plaintiff complains about mistreatment and unpaid wages, and he says this is because he '*cannot speak Greek*': *ἡληνίζειν* (*hēlēnizein*). Though Austin rightly specifies that *ἡληνίζειν* may mean 'to act Greek',⁷³ the term nevertheless pertains to the adoption of Greek cultural identifiers. *P. Col.66* shows that the plaintiff knows of the practicality of *ἡληνίζειν*, and the essential importance of language and cultural identifiers in relation to ethnicity. This awareness of the advantages of *ἡληνίζειν* also helps in contextualising the variation in labelling in official documents, and strengthens the theories proposed by Thompson and Goudriaan that the adoption of Greek culture, and by extension cultural identifiers in the form of language, was encouraged by normative preferential treatment.⁷⁴ *ἡληνίζειν* would certainly have been possible for a non-Greek, as there is widespread evidence for Greek schooling in rural Egypt by the mid third century.⁷⁵ It is both possible to see Ptolemaic Egypt as a '*structurally violent colonial system*' where Egyptians are systematically seen as inferior,⁷⁶ and to accept that ethnicity was a fluid concept where this structural violence manifested itself in the degree to which non-Greeks were '*prepared to go Greek*','⁷⁷ showing that ethnicity was largely based on cultural identifiers.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have shown that ethnicity gradually became flexible in third century Ptolemaic Egypt. Ethnicity became a flexible tax label, evolving from genuine ethnics to administrative categories that could be achieved through the process of *ἡληνίζειν*. Ethnicity was not a rigid identifier, and indeed it seems to be based on cultural identifiers, principally language. This fluidity nevertheless operated within a colonial framework where Greek cultural identifiers were privileged. The author of *P.Col.66* embodies this, as he knows the benefits of *ἡληνίζειν*, and this

⁷¹ Theocritus *Idyll* 15.8-9 *ἐπ' ἔσχατα γᾶς ἔλαβ' ἐνθὼν ἰλεόν*

⁷² *P. Col.66* (c.256-255 BC); Austin 2006, 545

⁷³ Austin 2006, 545

⁷⁴ Thompson 1992b, 338; 1997, 248; 2001, 307; Goudriaan 1988, 92

⁷⁵ Thompson 1992a 48-49

⁷⁶ McCoskey 2002, 16

⁷⁷ Thompson 1997, 248

consideration strengthens the connection between ethnicity and cultural identifiers, with the first being seemingly dependent on the latter, and highlights ethnicity's fundamental flexibility within normative frameworks.

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PAPYRI AND POWER: THE LEVELS AND USES OF LITERACY IN GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT.

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For the purpose of this paper, the discussion of literacy rates will focus on the specific ability to write in ancient Greek as opposed to proficiency in any other language of the Fayum region at the time. Around this region, the Greek language began to develop itself as the predominant language of official documents and bureaucracy following the influx of Greek settlers into the area during the reign of the Ptolemaic kings, and thus different levels of society were encouraged into literacy at different rates, if they were at all. This essay will discuss who made the most use of Greek writing practices, as well as the most likely theories as to why, using archival papyri as evidence. It will also attempt to explain the varying levels of literacy amongst the changing population of Graeco-Roman Egypt.

It is widely established that throughout both the Ptolemaic and the Roman rule of Egypt, Greek was the official language of administration, and it appears frequently in the papyri of both official records and personal communications, demonstrating the practical advantages and applications of literacy within the public sphere.¹ The archive of Kleon, dating between 260-238 BCE, contains evidence of both private and public affairs communicated in Greek, with various letters addressed to him from both his wife and his son. Within this archive, the advantage of literacy appears prevalent to both the conduction of business and to the advantage of the family. Whilst it is argued by some that the use of Greek among most households was reserved for the business sphere and it was the native language Egyptian that was spoken most in the home,² the personal letters autographed by both his wife and son in particular concern themselves predominantly with the welfare and health of their recipient. The letters also go beyond the traditional formulaic expressions such as ‘If you are well, this would be fine’³ that appear repeated across multiple letters from various authors, suggesting that welfare alone was deemed worth the primary subject of a letter and that letter writing itself was not restricted to business affairs and formal inquiries. In this way, Kleon’s archive provides evidence for the use of Greek literacy for entirely personal affairs, despite its official use in public documents.

Furthermore, Kleon’s archive provides evidence for the multifaceted uses of literacy during this period. For example, in a letter to his father, Polykrates requests that Kleon introduces him to the king, making clear a notable benefit in how the ability to communicate with his father despite his physical absence provides a distinct advantage to his career and social status.⁴ Additionally, within this same papyrus, Polykrates is able to inform Kleon of payments and debts

¹ Schubert 2018 pg 336-337.

² Bagnall 2008 pg 84-85.

³ P Petrie Kleon 1=TM 7674 and P Petrie Kleon 13=TM 7667 trans. Van Beek.

⁴ P Petrie Kleon 13=TM 7667 trans. Van Beek.

within the household, benefiting the family in Kleon's absence as he may respond with instructions as head of the household from afar and maintain the family's financial security.

However, it was not only within the familial sphere that written documents were a strategic asset. Within the archive of Tryphon, the copy of an official exemption was found distributed by a Roman praefect.⁵ The existence of the copy alone implies the significance of literacy as a tool that was essential to provide evidence of extenuating circumstances in everyday life, without the consistent presence of an authoritative figure to confirm such claims in person. Without which, constant referral to said figure would be needed to validate the claims of the disabled individual as Tryphon represents in this papyrus.

Using the written word as authoritative proof of an agreement or situation is also evident further in Tryphon's archive, with a particular focus on the use of literacy by the illiterate. Papyri detailing an apprenticeship contract appears to have been drawn up on behalf of Ptolemaios on account of his illiteracy.⁶ The contract itself outlines the responsibilities of Ptolemaios, who was to be the guardian of Tryphon's son as he learnt Ptolemaios' trade, as well as the responsibilities of Tryphon, outlining a penalty for each party should they fail to uphold their end. The written nature of the text supersedes the temporality of any verbal agreement, as well as potentially highlighting the need for both financial and social security, which the contract guarantees. The cost of sourcing a scribe to draft the contract as well as potentially sign on behalf of the completely illiterate, must have been seen as worth the effort and expense for the security of the document. As a result, these examples from the two archives demonstrate the use of writing by both the literate and the illiterate for personal and formal business affairs, despite their differences in social status.

However, whilst literacy undoubtedly had its uses, the levels at which it was utilised and practised varied widely among the population. In fact, illiteracy appeared to be the common condition amongst the Graeco-Roman population,⁷ but unlike as would be expected in modern times, there is very little evidence for social stigma or social inferiority attached to the illiterate identity.⁸ Being the common condition amongst the rural and urban population alike, during the Roman rule of Egypt, literacy was not a requirement for citizenship status, and as a citizen, an individual was afforded a significantly larger range of legal rights and independence, and thus arguably, also greater respect and privilege than those considered non-citizens.⁹

As the criteria for citizenship was established by individuals who were citizens themselves, I argue that the most basic qualifications for a citizen must be qualifications that the group are willing to have attached to their identity as well. Therefore, if illiteracy were deemed socially unacceptable and reserved for classes below that of citizenship, or if there were a particularly punitive social stigma against the illiterate, the socially elite would not want them being associated with themselves under the class 'citizen' and there is a much higher likelihood that literacy would be deemed a qualification of the status. Supporting evidence that illiteracy was not tied to social inferiority comes from Kraus, who emphasises the fact that illiteracy cannot be used as an

⁵ P Oxy 2.39=TM 20701 trans. Grenfell & Hunt.

⁶ P Oxy 2.275=TM 20546.

⁷ Harris 1989 pg 22.

⁸ Youtie 1975 pgs 201-2.

⁹ Youtie 1975 pgs 205.

indicator of class, and points to the varied papyri that mention high ranking Greek men who were also deemed illiterate.¹⁰

However, though there was little social stigma against the illiterate, this does not mean that being illiterate came without risks, and as the prevalence of written documentation in Greek grew, those who could neither read nor write in Greek were driven to reliance on scribes. Frequent examples of illiterate individuals detailed as having been victims of fraud and scams by the literate around them suggest the dangers of having not even the basic levels of literacy for those whose business frequently deals with it.¹¹

Sheridan argues that it is through these dangers that we can establish what influenced the desire for literacy among those who had it, and thus establish the development of Greek literacy amongst the population of Egypt.¹² In this way, she argues that as most of the evidence for literate individuals comes from land owners, it makes logical sense that literacy was seen as an advantage to the control and supervision of one's own finances, as being literate provides them with added protection against being cheated or manipulated when it came to their livelihood and wealth.

However, a limitation to this argument is that Sheridan's evidence focuses on the evidence of female literacy, of which there is very little, making it difficult to draw conclusions that are not wide generalisations. Despite this, her argument is supported in the recognition that women's guardianship was in one way, a method of protecting her from legal decisions she was not deemed wise enough to make independently.¹³ As a result, if the guardian was also illiterate, as is seen in one papyrus fragment from Tryphon's archive,¹⁴ this forced them to rely on an external scribe to look out for their welfares and trust in their honesty.

There is, however, debate among scholars regarding the impact that scribal distrust had on the pressures to become literate among different members of Egyptian society. Youtie, for example, argues that regardless of legal freedom, both illiterate men and women would turn to the next closest literate family member before a public scribe.¹⁵ Arguing that the individuals appear to have felt safer seeking help from within the family than from outside of it, suggests some level of distrust or danger felt by those without literacy towards the use of scribes.

However, one limitation of this theory is that it does not take into account alternative motivations for seeking family help such as the economic benefits. A scribe's role was professional, and they earned money through commission,¹⁶ so the illiterate turning to family members was likely motivated by the understanding that family is less likely to charge for their aid than a professional scribe would. Therefore, it may not be scribal distrust that resulted in the trend, but the opportunity for saving money, particularly as a scribe's career relied on their integrity.¹⁷

Despite this, when discussing literacy, it is also important to consider that in addition to only considering those able to write in Greek as literate, despite potential proficiencies in other

¹⁰ Kraus 2007 pg 159.

¹¹ Youtie 1975 pgs 206-7.

¹² Sheridan 1998 pg 199.

¹³ Nikitopoulou 2021 pgs 666-71.

¹⁴ P OXY 2.267=TM 20538 tr. Rowlandson.

¹⁵ Youtie 1975 pgs 213-214.

¹⁶ Schubert 2018 pgs 337-9.

¹⁷ Youtie 1975 pg 220.

languages, conclusions are also limited by the small amount of evidence that survives. For example, Bagnall posits that the lower rates in women's literacy may not be a genuine reflection of their skill compared to their male counterparts, but the conscious preservation of business documents over private ones.¹⁸ Therefore, what was previously seen as a reflection of low rates of women's literacy is more accurately a low rate of women's participation in business affairs.

Bagnall goes on to support this by arguing that national identity impacted business involvement and was also connected to gender. As it was predominantly women who were observed with Egyptian names within the upper-class, despite coming from families with both Greek and Egyptian forenames within them, Bagnall argues that this was indicative of the social aspirations of the upper-class families. For as Greek became the administrative language,¹⁹ it was also seen as socially advantageous for young men to have a Greek name to reaffirm their public identity as Greek and as an active member of the ruling stratum.²⁰ This subsequently further encouraged women to embrace their Egyptian identity and thus turn away from the business sphere where literary skills were of most use.

This theory, however, relies heavily on the assumption that names were in fact intrinsically linked to cultural identity, which following the settling of Greek families into Egypt during the Ptolemaic period became harder to assume as inter-ethnic marriages became more common. As a result, by the Roman occupation of Egypt, name etymology became very tenuously, if at all, linked to the cultural identity of the family.

An alternative theory for the infrequency of female literacy rates in comparison to that of men's may be a result of the economic status of the women. As previously mentioned, the hiring of a scribe was one that involved a cost, making the economically affluent best positioned for their services. With the existing pool of letters around the Fayum written by women, a large connecting factor between them is their membership of the elite families. Frequent mentions of wealth and familial positions of public office help evidence this in addition to the appearance of unusual words not apparent in everyday texts that may indicate higher levels of education,²¹ particularly when accompanied by minor spelling or grammatical mistakes, differentiating the text from that of a professional scribe.²² For example, within the archive of Kleon, the woman Metradora also falls into this category with Kleon's close personal connection to the king, as is suggested in various letters including his son's request to be introduced.²³

Additionally, the documents belonging to Aurelia Charite continue to indicate the trend between literacy and wealth. Born into the upper-class of Hermopolis during the Roman occupation, Aurelia Charite had the legal right to own and manage her own land and property, supporting Sheridan's hypothesis that being a member of the upper-class increased the likelihood of Greek literacy. We know of Charite's literate abilities through several letters addressing her personally as a 'knower of letters, acting without a guardian',²⁴ as well as documents being deduced

¹⁸ Bagnall 2008 loc. 58-59.

¹⁹ Youtie 1971 pgs 171-2.

²⁰ Tovar 2010 pg28

²¹ Sheridan 1998 pg197.

²² Bagnall 2008 loc. 209-11.

²³ P Petrie Kleon 13=TM 7667 trans. Van Beek.

²⁴ P Charite 8=TM 15564.

as having been written in her own hand. The handwriting in particular is also notably similar to that of her mother's,²⁵ suggesting an element of generational knowledge was involved in the development of her literacy. The possibility of Charite having learnt to write from her mother also further supports the argument that literacy rates among women were largely reliant on the social position of the family.

However, one rather apt criticism of this hypothesis is that if literacy rates among women were strictly linked to economic opportunity, then we would expect to find many more literate women within this social class.²⁶ Additionally, this explanation fails to account for the evidence we have for literate women preferring to use scribes than write for themselves among the upper-class. Afterall, if the benefit of becoming literate is to manage one's own property it poses more risk to have another write on your behalf. Within the letters composed by Isidora, a member of an upper-class family within Graeco-Roman Egypt, there are a mix of letters written in her own hand and the hand of her scribe. Drawing from the extant evidence within the archive, it appears despite being capable of producing her own letters, she preferred to dictate them to a scribe.²⁷ This is just one example of how whilst the members of the higher social class may have been more motivated to develop literacy out of interest for their land and positions of public office, they are also those in the best position to hire a scribe to construct their letters for them. As a result, the remaining papyri that survive as evidence for literacy rates in Graeco-Roman Egypt display a mixed impression of literacy, half-literacy, and illiteracy, and the conclusions drawn from them are limited in their ability to account for all possible cases.

In conclusion, literacy skills were used by the literate and illiterate alike most prominently in official senses, such as within public correspondence as well as confirmation of official decisions and contracts. But there is also a wide variety of evidence to support the conclusion that it was also used in a private sense between family members who were away for both the running of the household and general inquiries to health and wellbeing. It may also illustrate potential insecurities and distrust within the society at the time as the creation and more importantly the preservation of copies of written documents and receipts became more popular. Following this, it is also argued that one of the motivations for developing literacy skills was for protection against the vulnerability that came with relying on another for literate tasks, such as the risk of falling victim to fraud or scam by signing one's name to an agreement they could not proof-read for themselves.

However, the development of scribal professions resulted in the need of a trustworthy reputation for those paid to read and write on the behalf of others, and so as a result Youtie argues that the impact of scribal distrust was not as significant as previous scholars propose. This is particularly prominent when considering the habit of literate women in hiring scribes to write for them regardless of their own ability as Bagnall argues the observed lower rates of female literacy may be a misinterpretation of the existing evidence, which has been taken at face value, neglecting to consider the socio-political circumstances that may be behind its survival.

²⁵ Sheridan 1998 pg196.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Bagnall 2008 loc. 204-5.

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DECONSTRUCTING THE 'ORIENTAL CULT': CASE STUDIES OF MAGNA MATER AND MITHRAS

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In the study of Roman religion, the term 'Oriental Cult' has historically been used to refer to the worship of those gods originating in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond who had worshippers throughout the Empire.¹ The most well-known of these include the cults of Mithras and Magna Mater. These will be the subject of this essay, but there were numerous others including Jupiter Dolichenus,² Isis,³ and Dea Syria.⁴

The most ardent supporter of this classification was Franz Cumont, a Belgian scholar of the late 19th and early 20th century who desired to explain the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire.⁵ He argued that these cults were similar religious expressions, all distinct from the traditional Roman civic cults in their promise of salvation and an afterlife as reward for devotion, which laid the foundations for the rise of Christendom.⁶ In the decades since, this view has been criticized for its disregard of the regionally diverse forms and practices⁷ evident in the historical record.⁸ In modern scholarship, even those who support the use of the term concede its original usage is archaic.⁹

I do not believe that this broad categorization is justifiable given the evidence and cults should instead be analyzed as individual expressions of religious understanding on their own merits. This is

¹ Ted Kaizer. "In Search of Oriental Cults: Methodological Problems Concerning 'the Particular' and 'the General' in Near Eastern Religion in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." *Historia* 55, 2006: 28.

² see Anna Collar. *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; Eve Harris & John R Harris. *The Oriental Cults in Roman Britain*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965; Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price. *Religions of Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

³ see Ramsay MacMullen. *Paganism in the Roman Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.; Jaime Alvar Ezquerro. *Romanising Oriental Gods*. Vol. 165. Boston: BRILL, 2008.; Greg Woolf. "Isis and the Evolution of Religions." In *Power, Politics and the Cults of Isis*. Leiden: Brill, 2014: 62-69.

⁴ see Harris & Harris, *The Oriental Cults in Roman Britain*, 96; Walter Woodburn Hyde. "Mystery-Religions and Kindred Philosophies." In *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1946: 46-76; Anna Collar. "Military Networks and the Cult of Jupiter Dolichenus." In *Von Kummuh nach Telouch: Historische und archäologische Untersuchungen in Kommagene*, edited by Engelbert Winter. Bonn: Dolichener und Kommagenische Forschungen 4, 2011: 217-245.

⁵ see Franz Cumont *The Mysteries of Mithras*. Chicago : The Open court publishing company; London : Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner. 1903.

⁶ Kaizer, "In Search of Oriental Cults: Methodological Problems Concerning 'the Particular' and 'the General' in Near Eastern Religion in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." 28.

⁷ Peregrine Horden & Nicholas Purcell. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Malden: Blackwell, 2000: 455.

⁸ Kaizer "In Search of Oriental Cults: Methodological Problems Concerning 'the Particular' and 'the General' in Near Eastern Religion in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." 28.

⁹ Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 10.

not to say that these cults were unimportant or ahistorical, but rather that the term itself imposes a flawed lens. This essay will explore the history of the term and argue that the ‘oriental cult’ classification is analytically reductive and historiographically obsolete, as demonstrated through the cases of Magna Mater and Mithras.

The adoption of foreign deities into the Roman pantheon is a well-attested phenomenon.¹⁰ This process was not an equal or universal one and in many cases was closely tied to the conquest and incorporation of new territories into the Roman state.¹¹ This was not always the case, however, as exemplified by the import of the goddess Cybele, called Magna Mater by the Romans. Her worship is often seen as the earliest of the ‘oriental cults’, taking up residence in Rome in 204 BC during the Second Punic War within the Temple of Victory before the dedication of her own temple in the South West area of the Palatine Hill in 191 BC.¹² Wartime tensions, exacerbated by meteor showers the previous year, prompted the Senate to consult the Sibylline Books.¹³ The response was thus: “Whensoever a foreign enemy should bring war into the land of Italy, he may be driven out of Italy and conquered, if the Idaean Mother should be brought from Pessinus¹⁴ to Rome”.¹⁵ Following this revelation, envoys were sent to King Attalos I of Pergamon who delivered the envoys to Pessinus and gave them the sacred image (a black meteorite) of the goddess which was accompanied by her eunuch cult leaders.¹⁶

However, a Phrygian¹⁷ genesis is decidedly unlikely based on the material evidence, and interestingly, this passage presents two possible origins for the goddess’ cult: (1) Pessinus in Phrygia where the envoys were supposedly sent, and (2) Mount Ida on Crete to which her epithet ‘Idaean’ refers. It is this second location which the historical record suggests is a more likely origin for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is unlikely that King Attalos’ authority extended far enough into Phrygia to control the cult center at Pessinus at the time this event supposedly occurred, but he did control Mt. Ida.¹⁸ There were also notable differences in ritual practice between the Phrygian and Greek traditions.¹⁹ This is particularly manifest in votive depictions. Phrygian depictions tend to present the goddess frontally and architecturally framed - clad in a long obfuscating robe, veil, and headdress - and characterized by the bird of prey she holds in her hand.²⁰ Hellenistic representations instead show the goddess seated, wearing a chiton belted below the breasts and a long mantle, alongside a

¹⁰ Eric Orlin. *Foreign Cults in Rome*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

¹¹ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 32.

¹² Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 44-45; Livy. *History of Rome*, 29.14.14-15.

¹³ Lynn E. Roller. *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999: 264; Livy 29.10.4-5.

¹⁴ This term refers both to a city in and the area of central western Anatolia.

¹⁵ Livy 29.10, 4-5.

¹⁶ Kirk Sumners. “Lucretius’ Roman Cybele”. In *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M.J. Vermaseren*. Leiden: Brill. 1996: 363-364.

¹⁷ Phrygia was a kingdom in central western Anatolia.

¹⁸ Roller *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*, 269-270.

¹⁹ Lynn E. Roller. “The Great Mother at Gordion: The Hellenization of an Anatolian Cult.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111, 1991: 128.

²⁰ Roller, “The Great Mother at Gordion: The Hellenization of an Anatolian Cult.” 129.

lion.²¹ Hellenistic depictions highlight the sexuality of a female goddess through emphasis on the breasts in a way clearly distinct from Phrygian tradition,²² and one of the key points for the goddess' identification, the presence of a bird of prey,²³ is replaced by the lion.

As the goddess' cult leaders accompanied her to Rome, if the cult was brought from Phrygia, one would expect to see evidence for Phrygian practices and iconography. Instead, the evidence points to the Hellenized version, not the Phrygian, being adopted in Rome. Take, for example, the statue in her temple on the Palatine Hill, which shows her in a belted chiton seated on a throne, attended to by lions and wearing a mural crown headdress,²⁴ uncommon in the Hellenistic world with the exception of the site of Pergamon.²⁵

There is another potential reason to suggest an Idaean origin. Unlike other adopted deities, Magna Mater was not seen as foreign.²⁶ In the *Aeneid*, it is Mount Ida where Aeneas and his followers shelter following the sack of Troy²⁷ and as such, "By establishing ties to this Magna Mater, the Romans were able to import the cult, not as a foreign deity in the city, but as their own ancestral protector who was coming home to her own people".²⁸

This pattern follows the importation of Venus Erycina, a Punic deity intimately tied to Aeneas, which represented a public proclamation of Trojan heritage.²⁹ The presence of her temple on the Palatine Hill, which the Romans understood as the oldest part of the city given its status as Romulus' home,³⁰ further affirms this.³¹ While I find this compelling, it is important to keep in mind the chronological distance between the import of Magna Mater and the composition of the *Aeneid*³² as it is possible that this is evidence of retrospective legitimization rather than a reflection of Roman beliefs at the time of the goddess' introduction.

Among the most famous of the 'oriental cults' is that of Mithras. Modeled after the Greek mystery cults,³³ it appears in the historical and archaeological record from the late 1st century AD.³⁴ Cumont claimed that the cult originated from the Persian worship of Mitra, an Indo-European deity

²¹ Roller, "The Great Mother at Gordion: The Hellenization of an Anatolian Cult." 132-133.

²² Many of the chitons are very thin, low cut, or deliberately pulled back/down, similar to the wet drapery style of classical Greek art.

²³ Which itself harkens back to earlier Anatolian and Hittite religious depictions (Mellink 1983: 351-352 as cited in Roller, "The Great Mother at Gordion: The Hellenization of an Anatolian Cult." 130).

²⁴ Samuel Ball Platner & Thomas Ashby. *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. London: Oxford University Press. 1929: 324.

²⁵ Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*, 276.

²⁶ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 80.

²⁷ Virgil *The Aeneid*: 3.1, 7-12.

²⁸ Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*, 271.

²⁹ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 76.

³⁰ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 82.

³¹ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 80: This raises an interesting question. If the Romans claimed Trojan, and therefore Anatolian, descent, does that make Roman religion itself 'oriental'?

³² 204 BCE and 19 BCE, respectively.

³³ Hugh Bowden. *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2010.

³⁴ David Walsh. *The Cult of Mithras in Late Antiquity: Development, Decline, and Demise ca. A.D. 270-430*. Leiden: Brill, 2018: 4.

related to contracts and the sun, whose presence is attested in Hittite Anatolia from the second millennium BC and Persia from the fifth or fourth century BC in various forms.³⁵

The first major challenge to this view emerged in scholarship during the early 1950s, shortly after his passing in 1947. Scholars like Martin Nilsson and Stig Wikander identified the lack of evidence for similarities with Roman worship of Mithra cults in Anatolia which would have bridged the gap to the Empire.³⁶ The theory of Iranian origin continued to be argued for through the late 1970s and into the 80s, with its most vocal support coming from M.J. Vermaseren³⁷ as well as Ugo Bianchi and Geo Widengren.³⁸ This relationship is tenuous at best and fanciful at worst, however, as there is no evidence for any direct relationship between Persian worship of Mitra and the Roman mysteries of Mithras.³⁹ However, it should be noted that scholars continue to posit 'soft' theories of Iranian origin, and alternative positions persist.⁴⁰

The lack of evidence for Mithraism in the eastern provinces further demonstrates the issues posed by the proximity of hostile Persian enemies and traditional Mitra worshipers for the direct diffusionist theory.⁴¹ Mithraism appears in Roman culture at a time of veneration of the East as a place to gain new sacred understandings given its immense time scale, and Mithraic doctrines incorporated these 'Eastern tidbits' with the trappings of the Greek mystery cults of which its audience would have been more familiar "with almost commercial intuition".⁴² Some scholars have proposed that Mithraism was put together "by some unknown religious genius"⁴³ who was familiar with parts of both Greek and Persian traditions. This inspiration is evident in the name, garments, and relationship with the sun found in depictions of Roman Mithras.⁴⁴ Outside of the name, there is almost no evidence for "explicit stress"⁴⁵ on the cult's supposed Persian origin.⁴⁶ This is quite telling when compared to other appropriated cults, such as Serapis⁴⁷ or Isis⁴⁸ in which exoticism is deliberately emphasized, likely illustrating that ancient understandings of the cult differed

³⁵ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 305; Manfred Clauss & Richard Gordon. *The Roman Cult of Mithras : The God and His Mysteries*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000: 3.

³⁶ Gordon, "Persae in spelaeis Solem colunt: Mithra(s) between Persia and Rome." 284.

³⁷ Who viewed himself as Cumont's scholarly heir, which presents numerous complications.

³⁸ Gordon, "Persae in spelaeis Solem colunt: Mithra(s) between Persia and Rome.": 285.

³⁹ Clauss & Gordon, *The Roman Cult of Mithras : The God and His Mysteries*, 7.

⁴⁰ Russell (1987) and (1994). Ehling (2001) as cited in Richard Gordon. "Persae in spelaeis Solem colunt: Mithra(s) between Persia and Rome." In *Persianism in Antiquity*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017: 285.

⁴¹ Walsh, *The Cult of Mithras in Late Antiquity: Development, Decline, and Demise ca. A.D. 270-430*. 4.

⁴² MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 122.

⁴³ MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 119.

⁴⁴ Walsh, *The Cult of Mithras in Late Antiquity: Development, Decline, and Demise ca. A.D. 270-430*. 4.

⁴⁵ Gordon, "Persae in spelaeis Solem colunt: Mithra(s) between Persia and Rome." 297.

⁴⁶ "The sole explicit reference to Mithras (before the late Antonine period) as a Persian god occurs in a brief poem by a late-fourth-century senator Rufius Caecilius Sabinus, attached to a record of his having performed a *taurobolium* for Mater Magna. Among his religious offices he mentions being a Mithraic *pater sacrorum*, which versified becomes: *Persidiciq(ue) Mithrae antistes Babylonie templi* (Gordon, "Persae in spelaeis Solem colunt: Mithra(s) between Persia and Rome." 297).

⁴⁷ Aliaa Mohamed Hassan Nematallah. "The Cult of Serapis in the Decapolis During the Roman Period." *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies* 14, no. 1, 2024: 111-20; Martin Bommas & Christina Riggs. "Isis, Osiris, and Serapis." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁴⁸ See citation 3, also Bommas & Riggs, "Isis, Osiris, and Serapis."

significantly from those of the traditional scholarship. I believe this difference is due to the intrinsic biases within many of the foundational works of the field which have been recycled or taken at face value in the decades since.

It is impossible to really know where the cult was first developed, but many locations have been suggested including Rome or Ostia,⁴⁹ the Danube provinces,⁵⁰ and the Eastern Mediterranean more broadly.⁵¹ Regardless of its precise origin, the cult of Mithras clearly emerged as a Roman rather than Persian phenomenon. This is exemplified by the Tetrarchic emperors passing laws against Manichaeism,⁵² a religion of the Sassanid Persians, citing the status of the Persians as enemies as justification, while simultaneously dedicating an altar to Mithras in which he is referred to as *fautor imperii* (protector of the Empire), a title which would certainly not be given to a deity viewed as non-Roman.⁵³ Additionally, there is no known evidence for many key aspects of Roman worship of Mithras, such as the tauroctony, design of the *mithraeum*, and complex grade system of initiation, beyond the frontiers of the Empire, thus eliminating any sense of a direct cultic importation.⁵⁴

Rather than continuing to search for a single geographic or cultural origin, a more fruitful lens may be Jonathan Z. Smith's concept of the diasporic cult.⁵⁵ Diasporic cults, as Smith describes, do not rely on continuity with sacred geography, but evolve in new contexts, adapting to shifting communities, urban centers, and cultural pressures.⁵⁶ They also tended to be led by particularly charismatic individuals such as the theorized religious genius credited with the advent of Roman Mithraisms previously. This model allows for religious transformation and hybridization without assuming or necessitating a linear diffusion from East to West. Framing Mithraisms in this way accommodates the cults' Roman features while acknowledging the selective borrowing from perceived "Eastern" elements. This formulation also allows us to address the evolution of religions and practices in all of its complexities, illustrating the ways in which beliefs evolved to fit the "new niches that emerged in a more connected and more urbanized world".⁵⁷

The term 'oriental cult' has had a lasting effect upon the study of Roman religion. Since its conception at the beginning of the twentieth century, it has shaped the views of scholars from around the world, particularly those of the European continent, and has been revised in an attempt to modernize its application.⁵⁸ As demonstrated by the exploration of the origins of Magna Mater and Roman Mithras, the 'oriental cult' category is already quite broad, and the basic tenet of originating in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond is not adhered to by the most famous examples of the

⁴⁹ Clauss & Gordon, *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and His Mysteries*, 8.

⁵⁰ MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 119.

⁵¹ Richard Gordon. "Institutionalized Religious Options: Mithras." In *A Companion to Roman Religion*, edited by Jörg Rüpke. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007: 395.

⁵² *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* XV. 3.1 p. 130-131.

⁵³ Clauss & Gordon, *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and His Mysteries*, 7.

⁵⁴ David Walsh, email to author, December 11, 2024.

⁵⁵ J.Z. Smith. *Map is not Territory*. Leiden. 1978; J.Z. Smith, "Native Cults in the Hellenistic Period", *History of Religions* 11. (1971): 236-249.

⁵⁶ Woolf, "Isis and the Evolution of Religions." 76.

⁵⁷ Woolf, "Isis and the Evolution of Religions." 74.

⁵⁸ Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 6-7 discusses the work of M.J. Vermaseren to these ends.

type. These changes render an already broad category even broader to the point of incoherence. While I agree that a term is needed to denote those cults which emphasized their distinction from Roman religious norms,⁵⁹ I believe the current term, especially considering its origin as an explanation for the “triumph of Christendom” and modern derogatory usage, carries too much objectionable baggage⁶⁰ to justify its continued use, even in its updated forms.

Smith’s model better acknowledges the complexities of working with synchronistic cults across vast expanses of time and space and the intrinsic inadequacies of a catch-all term or defined categorizations for such a task. “What is at stake is not some end product—for instance new reified categories up for adoption by students of Late Antiquity—but a process, a way of working”.⁶¹ In embracing Smith’s model, scholars can better trace how religious forms shift and evolve with their communities rather than being categorized by imagined origin points. This approach not only removes reliance on outdated diffusionist logic but also encourages a more dynamic understanding of religion as lived and constructed, rather than received. It also eliminates the usage of the outdated term ‘Oriental,’ with its long history of derogatory usage in the Western world, and aligns well with recent works in the field, such as the Lived Ancient Religion project,⁶² to move away from broad institutional categorizations and prioritize individual and localized experiences of worship and belief in relation to their changing environments.⁶³

Additionally, Greg Woolf and Miguel J. Versluys have both used globalization theory to suggest that the changes we can see within Roman religions are best understood as evolutions to fit within a more urbanized and connected world,⁶⁴ and that objects and practices are actively transformed and reconceptualized by their movements through space and time, thus making direct diffusionist models like Cumont’s and his supporters’ decidedly unhelpful for our understanding of religious practices throughout the empire,⁶⁵ respectively.

Abandoning the ‘oriental cult’ classification will enable scholars to develop more nuanced methodological frameworks that better acknowledge the complex religious expressions of the Roman Empire. This will lead to research that more accurately reflects the dynamic processes of

⁵⁹ Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 2-4: J.Z. Smith has proposed the idea of ‘religions of anywhere’ to refer to those religious formations that “occupied an interstitial space between domestic religion and civic religion” (J.Z. Smith “Here, There and Anywhere”, in *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*. University Park PA. 2003. 21-36. as cited in Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 4), a category which would include both Magna Mater and Mithras.

⁶⁰ Greg Woolf. “Only Connect? Network Analysis and Religious Change in the Roman World.” *Hélide* 2 (2016): 50.

⁶¹ Nicolas Meylan. “Here, There, and Anywhere.” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 31, no. 1. 2019: 87.

⁶² Janico Albrecht, Christopher Degelmann, Valentino Gasparini, Richard Gordon, Maik Patzelt, Georgia Petridou, Rubina Raja, et al. “Religion in the Making: The Lived Ancient Religion Approach.” *Religion* 48 (4), 2018: 568-93.

⁶³ Albrecht et al, “Religion in the Making: The Lived Ancient Religion Approach.” 586-587.

⁶⁴ Greg Woolf. *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*. Cambridge University Press, 1998; Woolf, “Isis and the Evolution of Religions.”

⁶⁵ Martin Pitts & Miguel John Versluys. *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture*. 1st ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.; Miguel John Versluys. *Visual Style and Constructing Identity in the Hellenistic World: Nemrud Dağ and Commagene under Antiochos I*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

cultural adaptation and individual religious experience rather than perpetuating problematic generalizations rooted in outdated diffusionist models. By transitioning our scholarly focus away from archaic delineated categories and towards a full acknowledgement and acceptance of the intricate nuances of human religious experiences, we rid ourselves of dated terminology and evaluate each expression on its own merits. Moving forward, new scholarship will benefit greatly from replacing diffusionist models with case-based methodologies grounded in material and ritual analysis, moving toward a more faithful understanding of ancient religious practice that reflects complexity, transformation, and local lived experience.

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***HEIS THEOS*: RECONSTRUCTING XENOPHANEAN RATIONAL THEOLOGY FROM FRAGMENT 23**

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“Xenophanes, semi-pretentious, made mincemeat of Homer's deceptions, fashioned a god, far from human, equal in all his relations, lacking in pain and in motion, and better at thinking than thought” (Timon, Frag 60.)¹

Among the Presocratics, Xenophanes is the first to propose a more systematic approach to thinking about the nature of the divine. Many scholars see him as a pioneer for bringing about some sort of religious development or ‘reform’ from the traditional Homeric deities, some even go as far as calling Xenophanes a mystic.² If we turn to the extant fragments, particularly his so-called ‘anti-Homeric’ doctrines (fragments 11, 14 and 16), what Xenophanes sets out is *prima facie* nothing entirely creative or impressive, but simply an attack on the anthropomorphic gods of Homer and Greek conventional religion in general. Yet, it is the constructive or positive theology constructed from the rest of his theological fragments that marks Xenophanes out from his Milesian predecessors and the Presocratics as a whole.

Hitherto Xenophanean scholarship has almost exhausted the treatment of his theology, either through Jonathan Barnes’ comprehensive analytical approach or James Lesher’s nuanced interpretation of individual doxographical issues.³ This essay adopts a new methodology to the rational theology of Xenophanes and argues for an inherent structure in fragment 23 – one that can be revealed through the interdependent concepts of *heis* (εἷς), *demas* (δέμας) and *noēma* (νόημα), each of which contains in itself multiple layers of meaning. By applying this proposed structure to the whole of Xenophanean rational theology, fragment 23, acting as the ‘creed’ of his theological system, illuminates a comprehensive nature of Xenophanes’ God.

I. εἷς θεός: A SELF-PREDICATION STATEMENT OF THE ONE GOD

εἷς θεός, ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος...
God is one, greatest among gods and men...⁴

¹ Diels-Kranz (hereafter DK) 1985, 21A25; translation by Feyerabend 1987, 15.

² Jaeger 1947, 52 (Xenophanes as pioneer for religious developments); for the idea of ‘reform’, see Eisenstadt 1974, 142; for the label of ‘mystic’, see Jaeger 1947, 49.

³ Barnes 1982; Lesher 2001.

⁴ DK 21B23; translation by McKirahan 2011, 61.

The first word of fragment 23 emphatically states the fundamental nature of the Divine in Xenophanean theology: God is One, and One is God. Scholarly debate on this fragment has long been centred around the way in which this Oneness and its relation to the Divine should be interpreted. Hermann Fränkel views Xenophanes as *ein Apostel eines radikalen Monotheismus* ('an apostle of radical monotheism').⁵ Such a claim is rooted not only in the fragments, but also in modern scholarship where it has become a widely accepted stance on Xenophanes. Subsequently, any monotheistic argument would demand a definition as to *how* God is one. The starting point, I believe, is the self-predication statement of God suggested in fragment 23, which is fundamental to understanding what the Divine entails for Xenophanes. Here I borrow Gregory Vlastos' notion of self-predication in his exposition of the Platonic Form. *A* has many attributes, but only one essence.⁶ Only the essence (in the case of Xenophanes, Oneness) can be said to be identified with *A* (i.e., Xenophanes' God). It follows that for Xenophanes, One ($\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$) self-predicates God ($\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$).

The flexibility of the word order in the Greek invites two possible interpretations as $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$ could be read in both the attributive and the predicative sense. 1) If attributive, then the function of $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$ is to modify $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$. This results in a reading of the opening of the fragment as inferring one (certain) god, i.e. the one being described here in particular, among possibly multiple such gods – since $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$ can mean 'one' in the numerical sense (I shall later refute such usage in the case of this fragment and the Xenophanean corpus as a whole). 2) On the other hand, the (self-)predicative usage, as I argue in this essay, provides an answer to the essential question of 'What God is', which I take to be more likely what Xenophanes originally set out to achieve.⁷ The subtle variations in the translation of $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ pose a much more substantial challenge in the interpretation of fragment 23. Here I will examine three translations, each representative of either the attributive or the predicative sense:

- i) *One god* (KRS)⁸
- ii) *God is one* (Guthrie)⁹
- iii) *Ein einziger Gott* (Diels-Kranz)¹⁰

Following Guthrie, I believe that the predicative use is more appropriate than KRS's attributive one in accommodating the idea of self-predication, whereas Diels-Kranz's *einzig* ('only one') makes a satisfactory compromise between the two usages. With *einzig*, the sense of uniqueness and unity is brought to the fore, compensating for the obscurity caused by the attributive *ein*.

Although more recent translations, such as that of Laks and Most, have largely adopted the attributive reading, I would argue that, in light of his Eleatic connexion, Xenophanes'

⁵ Fränkel 1962, 376, German translations in this essay are my own; cf. McKirahan 2011, 62.

⁶ For a full discussion of self-predication in the context of *Parmenides* and the Platonic Form, see Vlastos 1954, especially 324: 'Any form can be predicated of itself. Largeness is itself large. F-ness is itself F'.

⁷ Liddell-Scott-Jones (hereafter LSJ) 1996, 492.

⁸ Kirk, Raven and Schofield (hereafter KRS) 1983, 169.

⁹ Guthrie 1962, 374.

¹⁰ DK 21B23.

philosophical position can be more plausibly interpreted through my proposed [self-]predicative lens.¹¹ An account by Clement of Alexandria credits Xenophanes as the pioneer of the Eleatic school.¹² If this attribution holds, the expression of *εἷς θεός* would naturally carry monistic implications. Consequently, the formulation ‘God is One’, as opposed to the more neutral ‘one god’, resonates more profoundly with the Eleatic proposition of unity and absolute oneness.

In addition, *εἷς*, in its simplest sense, is normally used as a numeral. Yet ‘one alone’ and the more philosophical use ‘one, i.e. the same’, both of which I take to be compatible and complementary, are more fitting in the context of fragment 23.¹³ Since by combining the notions of the One both ‘alone’ and ‘the same’, Xenophanes’ God could be said to possess a unity. Such implication of meaning can also be found in fragment 24, where Xenophanes claims that:

οὔλος ὁρᾷ, οὔλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὔλος δέ τ’ ἀκούει
All of him sees, all thinks, and all hears¹⁴

The tricolon of *οὔλος* reinforces this idea of unity, which is inseparable with the idea of divinity in Xenophanean theology – McKirahan’s label ‘unitary divinity’, succinctly demonstrates my point here.¹⁵ In addition, *εἷς* is sometimes used emphatically with the superlative to strengthen the notion of such unity, as is the case of fragment 23:

ἐν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος
greatest among gods and men¹⁶

μέγιστος in the unique context of this fragment has always been a subject of confusion and debate among scholarship.¹⁷ It is certainly tempting to attribute the phrase to yet another attack on traditional deities – Xenophanes’ god is superior to Homer’s.¹⁸ Yet does this suggest that this god is reduced to merely one among many, albeit greatest in power? Indeed many have taken this to mean that Xenophanes believed in a divine hierarchy and was therefore not a monotheist;¹⁹ while others have chosen to not take this phrase literally, labelling it instead as a ‘polar expression’ – an emphatic device that further strengthens the position of the Divine.²⁰ I argue, however, that it may not suffice to simply refute the comparative use of *μέγιστος* and therefore remove the ‘polytheistic baggage’ that it carries. The rational theology of Xenophanes would demand that

¹¹ Laks and Most 2016, 33.

¹² DK 21A8; this Eleatic affiliation is later found in Plato *Sophist* (DK 21A29); however, the Eleatization of Xenophanes has often raised doubts among scholarship, see KRS 1983, 164.

¹³ For the numeric use of *εἷς* in Homer, see II.2.204; for use in philosophical texts, see Arist. *Metaph.* 1039a28; LSJ 1996, 492.

¹⁴ DK 21B24; translation by KRS 1983, 170.

¹⁵ McKirahan 2011, 63.

¹⁶ For the pairing with superlative, see LSJ 1996, 492; DK 21B23.

¹⁷ See for example KRS 1983, 170 and Leshner 2001, 97.

¹⁸ cf. DK 21B14-16.

¹⁹ See Waterfield 2001, 23.

²⁰ For ‘polar expression’, see KRS 1983, 170, McKirahan 2011, 62.

μέγιστος and εἶς together form a theological axiom that reveals the fundamental nature of his Divine.²¹

The one god, whose whole being is predicated only by itself, should naturally be greatest in and of itself. This means that the sense of ‘greatness’ in fragment 23, and in the broader context of Xenophanean theology, stems from the God’s very Being, and not from any superiority within a divine hierarchy. Such an absolute statement of the Divine by Xenophanes perhaps, as Jaeger suggests, ‘springs from an immediate sense of awe at the sublimity of the Divine’.²² Therefore, the self-predicative use of εἶς, which opens the great theological statement of Xenophanes, can be safely assumed to be more plausible or, in Xenophanes’ own words, ‘resembling the truth’.²³ In virtue of this usage, fragment 23 may be interpreted as meaning: God is One, and the One itself is God.

II. δέμας: A DIVINE BODY IDENTICAL WITH THE *KOSMOS*?

The second half of fragment 23 treats the issue of the divine body (δέμας), which raises the question: did Xenophanes have in mind any spatial or temporal qualities for this divinity? If so, it would seem to undermine the perfect divinity of the *heis theos* emphatically suggested in the previous line.

...οὔτι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὐδὲ νόημα
...not at all like mortals in bodily form or thought²⁴

That some translations employ words such as ‘bodily form’, ‘form’, or *Gestalt*, points to a difficulty in interpretation.²⁵ For example, *Gestalt*, for which there is no English equivalent, can only be translated unsatisfactorily as ‘form’ or a ‘unified whole’. This seems to achieve a similar effect as the phrase *heis theos* and does not necessarily develop what can already be understood from the εἶς alone. Form, on the other hand, is somewhat vague and general while ‘bodily form’ serves a middle ground that is perhaps useful in conceiving the unique corporeality of such a being.

As always with Xenophanes’ extant theological fragments, there is the possibility of multiple interpretations regarding the δέμας of the Divine. The first, which is more widespread in scholarship, is that God does have a body, but it is by no means a body in the mortal sense, rather, it is something more ‘fitting’ for such a divine being.²⁶ The second argues for incorporeality, interpreting the fragment as meaning: this god is unlike mortals, in that it does not possess *any* kind of body – it is incorporeal or immaterial. However, only one testimony from

²¹ Barnes 1982, 89.

²² Jaeger 1947, 49.

²³ DK 21B35.

²⁴ DK 21B23; translation by McKirahan 2011, 61.

²⁵ McKirahan 2011, 61; Barnes 1982, 92; DK 21B23.

²⁶ Xenophanes talks about ‘seemliness’ of the divine in DK 21B26.

Clement supports this view: [...] διδάσκων ὅτι εἷς καὶ ἀσώματος ὁ θεός ([Xenophanes] ‘teaching that God is one and immaterial’).²⁷

Elsewhere in the fragments and other earlier testimonies the use of ἀσώματος cannot be found and most scholars would not endorse this, except Fränkel’s claim that Xenophanes’ God ‘operates through his spirit only’.²⁸ Such assumption is anachronistic for Presocratic thought of this period; and Clement’s testimony itself could readily be read as reflecting his Christian background as other early Christian writers use ἀσώματος to describe the Judaeo-Christian God.²⁹ The concept of incorporeality, similar to that in Christian theology, was entirely absent in Presocratic thought. Naturally, Xenophanes who was among the earliest of these thinkers, would not have conceived such immateriality/incorporeality on this level.³⁰ Therefore, I am inclined towards the first interpretation as it is more compatible with general Presocratic thinking at this time.

Although δέμας is usually used in Homer for mortal bodies, and Xenophanes says that the divine body is ‘not at all like mortals’, the word can be found in comparing worthy and heroic figures to Olympian deities. For example, in the *Odyssey*, Alcinous is praised for having a body like the immortals (δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοῖος).³¹ Leshner explains Xenophanes’ choice of δέμας here as drawing on the ‘traditional poetic comparisons of divine and mortal bodies’.³² Subsequently, δέμας can be used for both mortals and immortals (‘immortals’ here strictly refers to the traditional deities in the Homeric and Hesiodic sense). It is safe to conceive of Xenophanes’ God as an entity possessing some form of body that is on a different plane than that of humans and Homeric deities.

What then is the nature of this body? No where in the extant fragments does Xenophanes himself expound on this and scholarship has proposed many interpretations based on doxographical evidence. Most testimonies agree that Xenophanes believed the body (δέμας) of the divine to be a sphere.³³ Guthrie’s study on the divine sphere and its surrounding scholarly debate is exhaustive. I would argue that the possibility of a spherical divine does not impair arguments of Xenophanean theology, as the idea of perfection and sphere being linked together was common among the Presocratics and such perfection is similarly appropriate for Xenophanes.³⁴ This essay will thus focus on the alternative interpretation which is mainly borne out by Aristotle’s testimony.³⁵

...εἰς τὸν ὅλον οὐρανὸν ἀποβλέψας τὸ ἓν εἶναί φησι τὸν θεόν
...with his eye on the whole heaven he says that the One is god³⁶

²⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 5.109.1.

²⁸ KRS 1983, 172; Fränkel 1962, 331.

²⁹ Origen, *de principiis*, 241.

³⁰ Cf. Guthrie 1962, 376.

³¹ *Od.* 8.14; cf. *Il.* 8.305 and *Od.* 8.116.

³² Leshner 2001, 97.

³³ DK 21A1 and A33-36; Guthrie 1962, 376-80; (DK 21A5).

³⁴ Simplicius, *de anima*. 70, 17 (not in DK), Empedocles’ *Sphairos* is likewise given divine status.

³⁵ For the general significance and validity of this testimony, see KRS 1983, 172.

³⁶ DK 21A1; translation by KRS 1983, 171.

Most scholars agree that the implications here of a god identical with the world is strong and some are convinced that Xenophanes himself should have claimed this idea.³⁷ John Palmer's view of the divine body is such that it exists only in the sense that it is spread throughout the world, not in the human sense but as an entity that permeates all things.³⁸ A similar notion can be found among the works of Xenophanes' predecessors, especially within the Milesian school of thought. Thales' water, for example, is said to be divine in this sense. Thales believes that all things are not only originated from water but are also composed of water. And since he also makes the claim that 'all things are full of gods' (πάντα πλήρη θεῶν εἶναι), it follows that the originative element water is given divine quality or status. Likewise, Anaximenes' air assumes a similar function as the fundamental and divine substance.³⁹ Since the Milesian forms of the *arkhe* have established exactly such a thought, this notion of a permeating divine that is at once identical to the *kosmos* could not have been unfamiliar to Xenophanes.

III. νόημα: THE CRUX OF XENOPHANEAN THEOLOGY

Hitherto I have proposed interpretations on the nature of Xenophanes' Divine, yet for a rational theology to not only stand but become more systematic, this notion of God being defined by its self-predicated oneness, possessing a body that is inseparable from this idea of unity, is not sufficient. It is a rather static concept that lacks the explanation of how the Divine participates and interacts with the world. This rational need for participation in the universe was one of the primary concerns for Xenophanes' Milesian predecessors, who have attempted to account for plurality in the *kosmos* by means of a single *arkhe*, such as Thales' divine permeating water and Anaximander's unlimited *apeiron*. The question as to how the one motionless God 'steers' (κυβερνάω), to borrow Anaximander's terminology, the *kosmos* calls for a solution.

A return to fragment 23 reveals that the culminating term of Xenophanes' rational theology is *noēma* (νόημα), which offers precisely such a solution. English translations often fail to capture the impressive full range of meaning νόημα is capable of expressing in the Greek. The single word can be understood as meaning, for example, perception, thought, idea, understanding mind...⁴⁰ Xenophanes and other Presocratics also uses *nous* (νοῦς) to articulate the same nuanced and diverse meanings (and here I shall use them rather interchangeably). The verbal form νοέω also appears frequently in the fragments.⁴¹ In fragment 25 Xenophanes says that God 'shakes all things by the thought of his mind' (νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει). Leshner comments that this 'would be the minimum description necessary to assert that the cosmos was causally linked with a divine intelligence'.⁴² This does seem to account for how the divine should be able to interact with the *kosmos*.

Yet a divinity exercising his mind does not concomitantly mean that this interaction can be attributed to one single god, as is the case for Anaxagoras' *nous*, which Jaeger refers to as the

³⁷ See especially Zeller 563-64, 43 and Guthrie 1962, 376-83.

³⁸ Palmer 1998, 8, 20.

³⁹ DK 13B2; KRS 1983, 159.

⁴⁰ LSJ 1996, 1178.

⁴¹ For a comprehensive list of translations of νοῦς, see McKirahan 2011, 62.

⁴² Leshner 2001, 109.

‘divine Mind’ acting in the role of a ‘divine-world principle’.⁴³ This no doubt situates Anaxagoras firmly in the Ionian tradition which would suggest that this ‘divine Mind’ allows no room for any systematic theological construction of the divine. Problems in chronology prevent us from drawing any definitive connexion between Anaxagoras’ and Xenophanes’ solution to a divine mind. However, a rational reconstruction in hindsight would show that Xenophanes’ *nous* or *noēma* is what fulfils the criteria of a rational theology. *noēma* alone is not sufficient, it is only by the inseparable and tripartite nature of *heis* (εἷς), *demas* (δέμας) and *noēma* (νόημα), presented in the unique context of fragment 23, that the Xenophanean Divine is revealed.

CONCLUSION: PIONEERING A MODEL OF THEOLOGY BEYOND THE HOMERIC TRADITION

In both ancient and modern discussions of a system for theology, the model of the Homeric gods – so vehemently critiqued by Xenophanes – offers no genuine theological solution in understanding the Divine. It belongs to the age of *mythos* which the Presocratics altogether abandon at the dawn of *logos*. Nor is the answer to be found in the Spinozian model of pantheism implicit in the philosophical stances of the Milesians or Anaxagoras. Xenophanean theology is thus distinctive in the history of Greek philosophy. Overall, I have argued that by understanding the tripartite structure inherent in fragment 23, we can reconstruct Xenophanean theology in a way that illuminates the more profound meaning to this impressive model of rational theology. Such a theology is formed through the interdependent connexion between *heis* (εἷς), *demas* (δέμας) and *noēma* (νόημα), each carrying layers of meaning that are fulfilled only in each other. We arrive at the logical conclusion that: the one God is one in itself, in virtue of its unique body and the divine exercise of his Mind. Just as Thales marks the shift from myth to science and philosophy, so too does Xenophanes signify the transition from religion rooted in popular beliefs to a theology grounded in reason and logical inquiry.

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⁴³ DK 59B12; Jaeger 1947, 163.

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CREATIVE PIECES

THE NEGLECTED DINNER PARTY

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TRANSLATION

Hey you! You promised to come to dinner – yet you didn't? The judgement is passed: you will restore the expenses to a penny, not that they were a trifling amount. They were all prepared, a lettuce, three snails, and two eggs each, porridge, and honeyed wine covered in snow – for this you will also count, indeed you will reckon it foremost for it vanishes in the vessel – olives, beetroots, gourds, onions, and a thousand other dishes, no less praiseworthy. You would have heard comedians or a reader or a singer or (through my generosity) all three. But you, unknowing, instead chose to have oysters, sow's womb, sea-urchins, and Spanish girls. You will pay the penalty, I won't say how. Your denial was a cruel trick: I do not know if it was to yourself, certainly to me, but definitely to you as well. How much we would have joked, laughed, and studied! You're able to dine sumptuously with many, but nowhere else with more cheer, more mirth, more lightheartedly. In short, give me a trial, and if you will still prefer to make excuses to others, you are always excused to me. Farewell.

LATIN TEXT

Heus tu! promittis ad cenam, nec venis? Dicitur ius: ad assem impendium reddes, nec id modicum. Paratae erant lactucae singulae, cochleae ternae, ova bina, halica cum mulso et nive (nam hanc quoque computabis, immo hanc in primis quae perit in ferculo), olivae betacei cucurbitae bulbi, alia mille non minus lauta. Audisses comoedos vel lectorem vel lyristen vel (quae mea liberalitas) omnes. At tu apud nescio quem ostrea vulvas echinos Gaditanas maluisti. Dabis poenas, non dico quas. Dure fecisti: invidisti, nescio an tibi, certe mihi, sed tamen et tibi. Quantum nos luissemus risissemus studuissemus! potes adparatius cenare apud multos, nusquam hilarius simplicius incautius. In summa experire, et nisi postea te aliis potius excusaveris, mihi semper excusa. Vale.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The letter above is taken from the first book of Pliny the Younger's published letters, and is addressed to a certain Septicius Clarus. The first book of Pliny's collection of letters was likely published at the start of the 2nd century AD, and this first collection is dedicated to the same

Septicius in its opening poem.¹ The letter gives us a humorous picture into elite social circles and what food and entertainment might have looked like, albeit through the distorted lens of Pliny's retrospective persuasive argument on the delights of his dinner party.

Starting out with a strong interjection, Pliny instantly lambasts his friend for not coming to a dinner party, proceeding to list in exaggerated detail the food and entertainment that Septicius has missed out on by neglecting to attend. He closes the letter by sardonically remarking that, whatever dinner appointments Septicius chooses to excuse himself from in the future, Pliny will always consider him already excused. A final, and somewhat petty *vale* ends the tirade in a curt manner, which contrasts with the exaggerated detail in the rest of the letter.

In my translation, I have tried to stay as faithful to the original Latin as possible, while maintaining clarity in English. The Latin text is taken from the Loeb edition of Pliny's letters. This epistle overall takes on a petty, joking tone, which I have tried to reflect in my translation, including some contractions like 'didn't', 'won't', and 'you're' to mimic the conversational tone. Pliny's style is relatively relaxed, but he uses long and exaggerated lists to describe the food provided, and multiple tricola to emphasise what Septicius has missed out on. I translated *Dicitur ius* as "the judgement is passed" to mimic Pliny's disapproving, judicial language. Near the end of the passage, I translated *Dure fecisti: invidisti*, which might be more literally translated as "You played a cruel trick: you refused" instead as "Your denial was a cruel trick". I chose to use the word "denial" to carry a judicial connotation, staying consistent with Pliny's legalistic language in this epistle. When Pliny describes the elaborate foods, he makes especial note of the dish of "honeyed snow", a most extravagant dish that he orders Septicius to count (*computabis*) foremost among the expenses. He describes the snow as *perit in ferculo*, more literally "passes away in the dish", but I chose to translate it as "vanishes in the vessel" both for better sense, and a bit of alliteration to emphasise the melodramatic tone Pliny is using. I also took care to translate the comparative tricolon "*hilarius simplicius incautius*" as "more cheer, more mirth, more lightheartedly" to preserve more of the Latin form in English, although comparatives can be clunkier.

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¹ Gibson, 2011.

A STROLL BY THE VIA SACRA

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TRANSLATION

I was strolling by chance by the Via Sacra, as is my habit; I don't know what nonsense I was musing on, wholly absorbed. Then a certain person known to me only by name runs up, and seizing my hand: 'How are you doing, dearest of all things?'

'Pleasantly, as it is now,' I say, 'and I wish for all you do.' When he was still tailing me, I interrupted 'You don't need anything, do you?' But he said: 'You know me, I am learned.' I said 'I will consider you more for it.'

Desperately looking for a chance to leave, now I walk quicker, sometimes stop, and say something, I don't know what, to my slave in his ear, while sweat flows to the bottom of my ankles. I was silently saying to myself, 'O Bolanus, blessed with wrath!' while he was chattering on about whatever, praising the streets and the city. Since I was not answering him, he said 'You desperately wish to leave; I have long since seen that: but you're doing nothing; I will cling right on to you; and I will pursue you from here to your destination.'

'You don't need to be led around; I wish to see someone you don't know: he lies ill a long way across the Tiber, near Caesar's gardens.'

'I have nothing to do, and I am not lazy, I will follow you from here.' My ears sag, just like a sad donkey, when it has been placed under a burden too heavy for his back. He began: 'If I understand correctly, you will consider neither Viscus nor Varius as more of a friend than me: for who can write more than me or verses quicker than me? Who can dance more elegantly? Even Hermogenes should envy my singing.' Here was a chance for interruption: 'Do you have a mother or relative that requires your safety?'

'Not the one: I have buried all of them.' Lucky them! Now I remain. Dispatch me, for now that sad fate threatens me, that prophecy a Sabine crone shaking her pot had sung for me as a boy:

His end shall not be evil venom,
or would hostile sword end him,
nor chest pain or cough,
nor limping gout but the chatterbox,
if he is wise, the talkative he shall avoid,
as his life old age enjoys.

We had arrived at Vesta's temple, already with a quarter of the day passed, and at that time by chance he had to respond to a case, which if he did not do, he would lose his case. He said, 'If you love me, stay here a little.'

‘Damned if I am strong enough to stand or know the civil laws. And you know where I am hurrying.’

‘I am wondering what I should do,’ he said, ‘whether I should abandon you or the case.’

‘Me please.’

He said, ‘I shall not do that,’ and began to walk ahead. I, as it is a hardship to struggle with a conqueror, follow. He returns to this ‘How is Maecenas with you?’ He, of few friends and right common sense. Nobody has used fortune more skilfully. You could have a great accomplice, who could be considered your second, if you should wish to introduce me. I shall die if you do not drive everyone else off.’

‘We do not live there in the way that you think: there is no house more unsoiled than that nor more foreign to these mischiefs, I say it doesn’t worry me at all, that someone is richer or more learned, there is a place for each person.’

‘You say such things that are scarcely believable.’

‘But still it is true.’

‘Thus you set aflame my wish to be closer to him.’

‘You only need to wish it; as your character shall conquer him: and he is that sort who can be won, and so makes the first approach difficult.’

‘I will not fail myself: I will bribe his slaves with gifts. If today I will be shut out, I will not stop; I will seek a time, I shall run to meet him in the crossroads, I will escort him. Life gives nothing to a mortal without great effort.’ While he was doing this, look! Fuscus Aristus came, dear to me and he knew him very well. We stop.

‘Where did you come from and where are you going?’ he asks and answers. I begin to grab and to squeeze his most unresponsive arms with my hands, flickering and gesturing wildly with my eyes, so that he may rescue me. Wickedly, the joker was laughing, pretending to not understand: I burned with anger. ‘Surely you said that you had something that you wished to say to me in secret.’

‘I remember it well, but I will tell you at a better time: today is the 30th Sabbath: do you wish to mock the docked Jews?’

I said, ‘I have no qualms’.

‘But I do. I am a little weaker-minded, one of many. Forgive me: I will speak some other time.’ That such a black sun rose for me! That bastard runs away and abandons me under the knife. By chance his opponent and adversary came to him and shouts with a great voice ‘Where are you going, you disgrace?’ and to me, ‘May I call you as witness?’ I offered my ear. He bundles him to court, chaos and tumult here and there. Thus Apollo rescued me.

SOURCE TEXT

- 1 Ibam forte via Sacra, sicut meus est mos,
nescio quid meditans nugarum, totus in illis.
accurrit quidam notus mihi nomine tantum,
arreptaque manu: ‘quid agis, dulcissime rerum?’
5 ‘suaviter, ut nunc est’ inquam, ‘et cupio omnia quae vis.’

- cum adsectaretur, 'num quid vis?' occupo. at ille
'noris nos' inquit; 'docti sumus.' hic ego 'pluris
hoc' inquam 'mihi eris.' misere discedere quaerens,
ire modo ocius, interdum consistere, in aurem
10 dicere nescio quid puero, cum sudor ad imos
manaret talos. 'o te, Bolane, cerebri
felicem!' aiebam tacitus, cum quidlibet ille
garriret, vicos, urbem laudaret. ut illi
nil respondebam, 'misere cupis' inquit 'abire;
15 iamdudum video: sed nil agis; usque tenebo;
persequar hinc quo nunc iter est tibi.' 'nil opus est te
circumagi: quendam volo visere non tibi notum:
trans Tiberim longe cubat is, prope Caesaris hortos.'
'nil habeo quod agam et non sum piger: usque sequar te.'
20 demitto auriculas, ut iniquae mentis asellus,
cum gravius dorso subiit onus. incipit ille:
'si bene me novi, non Viscum pluris amicum,
non Varium facies: nam quis me scribere pluris
aut citius possit versus? quis membra movere
25 mollius? invidet quod et Hermogenes ego canto.'
interpellandi locus hic erat: 'est tibi mater,
cognati, quis te salvo est opus?' 'haud mihi quisquam:
omnis composui.' 'felices! nunc ego resto.
confice; namque instat fatum mihi triste, Sabella
30 quod puero cecinit divinamota anus urna:
'hunc neque dira venena nec hosticus auferet ensis,
nec laterum dolor aut tussis, nec tarda podagra;
garrulus hunc quando consumet cumque: loquaces,
si sapiat, vitet, simul atque adoleverit actas.'
35 ventum erat ad Vestae, quarta iam parte diei
praeterita, et casu tunc respondere vadato
debebat, quod ni fecisset, perdere litem.
'si me amas' inquit 'paulum hic ades.' 'inteream si
aut valeo stare aut novi civilia iura;
40 et propero quo scis.' 'dubius sum quid faciam' inquit,
'tene relinquam an rem.' 'me, sodes.' 'non faciam' ille,
et praecedere coepit. ego, ut contendere durum
cum victore, sequor. 'Maecenas quomodo tecum?'
hinc repetit: 'paucorum hominum et mentis bene sanae.
45 nemo dexterius fortuna est usus. haberes
magnum adiutorem, posset qui ferre secundas,
hunc hominem velles si tradere: dispeream ni

summosses omnis.' 'non isto vivimus illic
 quo tu rere modo: domus hac nec purior ulla est
 50 nec magis his aliena malis; nil mi officit, inquam,
 ditior hic aut est quia doctior; est locus uni
 cuique suus.' 'magnum narras, vix credibile.' 'atqui
 sic habet.' 'accendis, quare cupiam magis illi
 proximus esse.' 'velis tantummodo, quae tua virtus,
 55 expugnabis: et est qui vinci possit, eoque
 difficilis aditus primos habet.' 'haud mihi dero:
 muneribus servos corrumpam; non, hodie si
 exclusus fuero, desistam; tempora quaeram;
 occurram in triviis; deducam. nil sine magno
 60 vita labore dedit mortalibus.' haec dum agit, ecce
 Fuscus Aristius occurrit, mihi carus et ilium
 qui pulchre nosset. consistimus. 'undeveniset
 quo tendis?' rogat et respondet. Vellere coepi,
 et pressare manu lentissima brachia, nutans,
 65 distortuens oculos, ut me eriperet. male salsus
 ridens dissimulare: meum iecur urere bilis.
 'certe nescio quid secreto velle loqui te
 aiebas mecum.' 'memini bene, sed meliore
 tempore dicam: hodie tricesima Sabbata: vin tu
 70 curtis Iudaeis oppedere?' 'nulla mihi' inquam
 'religio est.' 'at mi: sum paulo infirmior, unus
 multorum: ignosces: alias loquar.' huncine solem
 tarn nigrum surrexe mihi! fugit improbus ac me
 sub cultro linquit. casu venit obviis illi
 75 adversarius et 'quo tu turpissime?' magna
 inclamat voce, et 'licet antestari?' ego vero
 oppono auriculam. rapit in ius: clamor utrimque:
 undique concursus. sic me servavit Apollo.

COMMENTARY

Satire 1.9 is a strikingly conversational and funny poem in which Horace describes an encounter he really would rather not have had to endure. This passage is significant because of the way it describes relationships in Augustan Rome. The chatterbox's main motive in approaching Horace is to meet Maecenas, Horace's literary patron. Horace gives us insight into how others perceive this social circle, as the chatterbox offers to clear the competition (*Sat* 1.9.48) for him, using the verb *summosses*, the technical verb for how lictors would clear the way for consuls (Brown (1993) p.180). Horace pushes back on this notion, saying that 'there is a place for each person' (*Sat* 1.9.51-52).

Horace's voice and inner monologue constantly interrupts the dialogue between him and the chatterbox. His voice involves more idioms and slang, so I have tried to capture the more conversational tone. While doing this, I have tried to stick close to the Latin text, but have had to make changes to account for some Latin idioms. For instance, as Horace seethes when his friend leaves him to the devices of the chatterbox, the Latin literally describes him as burning from his liver *meum iecur urere bilis* (*Sat* 1.9.66), which was considered the seat of emotions (Brown (1993) p.181). This does not particularly make sense in English, so I decided to translate this more freely as 'I burned with anger'. I have decided to translate the chatterbox's speech as more obsequiously formal. This is reflected in the Latin, as he makes boastful claims, and emphasises his own learnedness. His boasts fall upon unsympathetic ears, as he boasts of being an adept dancer, *quis membra movere mollius* (*Sat* 1.9.24-25), which was rather frowned upon by the elite circles Horace was in (Brown, p.178).

Most of my translation is in prose, since I think that it conveys the conversational style in English better, but I have put lines 31-34 into rhyming couplets to demonstrate Horace's desperation to get out of this situation as he composes something on the fly. This Sabine prophecy demonstrates Horace's humour because of the mix of highly elevated poetry and deeply mundane ailments. The prophecy begins by describing poison and swords, both real concerns in war and in epic, before describing pains in the side, cough, and gout, which is personified as 'delaying' *tarda* (*Sat* 1.9.32). The poem is bookmarked by chance, *forte* (*Sat* 1.9.1) and *casu* (*Sat* 1.9.74), as Horace's misfortune leads to the unpleasant encounter and subsequent fortune removes the offending person. To give this impression in English, I repeat 'by chance' at the start and end of my translation.

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THE FIRST INVENTOR

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TRANSLATION [LINES 441-506]:

Prometheus: ...But I remain silent about that, since I would be telling you what you already know – but listen to the woes of mortals, how they were mere babies before I made them thoughtful and possessed of a soul. And I say this, having no criticism for humans, but to explain the kindnesses I had given them. At first, though they had eyes, they were seeing blindly; though they had ears, they could not hear, but like shapes of dreams they spent their long lives in swirling chaos. They had not known brick-built, sun-warm houses, nor woodworking, but lived underground, just as small ants, in the sunless, innermost crooks of caves. And they had no certain mark of frost, or blossoming spring, or fruitful summer, but did everything without knowledge, until I showed them the difficult to discern rising and setting of the stars. Furthermore I truly invented for them numbers, outstanding among skills, and the art of turning letters into words, the work that enables all memory and the mother of the Muses. I first brought beasts to the yoke, as slavery to the strap and saddle so that they could become relief for mortals from their greatest toils; and I led pliant horses to the chariot, glorious luxury of the rich. And no one other than me invented the sail-winged vessels of sailors, wanderers of the sea. I, wretched, invented devices such as these for mortals, but still I have no trick by which I now can escape from present sufferings.

Chorus: You have experienced shameful suffering. Lost, your mind has been forced astray, and like a bad healer fallen into illness, you are despairing and cannot discover by what remedies you can be cured.

Prometheus: Hearing the rest, you will be more astonished at such skills and devices I provided. This was the greatest: if anyone would fall sick, there was no remedy, neither by food nor salve, nor brew, but they would wither by want of medicine before I showed them the mixing of gentle remedies, with this they can drive away all diseases. And I classified the many courses of oracles, I first determined from dreams what was fated to be, and I explained to them the difficult to interpret omens and roadside auguries, and I distinguished precisely the flight of crooked-taloned eagles, which ones are fortunate in nature and which ones are sinister, and what each kind have as a way of living, and their hatred, love and friends, and the smoothness of the innards, and what colour bile should have, if it would be pleasing to the gods, and the mottling and symmetry of the lobe. Burning the loin and wrapping up long limbs with fat, I guided mortals to the difficult skill, and opened their eyes to the flaming signs, before, they were clouded from them. Enough of this: for the things hidden far below the ground and useful for humans – copper, silver, iron, and gold – who can claim to have discovered them before me? Nobody, I know certainly, unless

he wants to spew nonsense. In short – know this in a brief sentence: all mortal skills are from Prometheus.

SOURCE TEXT (ARIS AND PHILIPS):

- 441 ἄλλ' αὐτὰ σιγῶ, καὶ γὰρ εἰδυίαισιν ἄν
ὕμιν λέγομι· τάν βροτοῖς δὲ πῆματα
ἀκούσαθ', ὥς σφας νηπίους ὄντας τὸ πρὶν
ἔννοους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους.
- 445 λέξω δέ, μέμψιν οὐτὶν' ἀνθρώποις ἔχων,
ἀλλ' ὦν δέδωκ' εὖνοϊαν ἐξηγούμενος·
οἱ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην,
κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον, ἀλλ' ὄνειράτων
ἀλίγκιοι μορφῇσι τὸν μακρὸν βίον
- 450 ἔφυρον εἰκῇ πάντα, κοῦτε πλινθυφεῖς
δόμους προσείλους ἦσαν, οὐ ξυλουργίαν,
κατώρυχες δ' ἔναιον ὥστ' ἀήσυροι
μύρμηκες ἄντρων ἐν μυχοῖς ἀνηλίοις.
ἦν δ' οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς οὔτε χεῖματος τέκμαρ
- 455 οὔτ' ἀνθεμώδους ἦρος οὔτε καρπίμου
θέρους βέβαιον, ἀλλ' ἄτερ γνώμης τὸ πᾶν
ἔπρασσον, ἔστε δὴ σφιν ἀντολὰς ἐγὼ
ἄστρον ἐδειξα τάς τε δυσκρίτους δύσεις.
καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων,
- 460 ἐξηῦρον αὐτοῖς, γραμμάτων τε συνθέσεις,
Μνήμης ἀρωγὴν μουσομήτορ' ἐργάνην.
κᾶζευξα πρῶτος ἐν ζυγοῖσι κνώδαλα,
ζεύγλησι δουλεύσοντα σάγμασιν θ' ὅπως
θνητοῖς μεγίστων διάδοχοι μοχθημάτων
- 465 γένοιονθ'· ὑφ' ἄρμά τ' ἤγαγον φιληνίους
ἵππους, ἄγαλμα τῆς ὑπερπλούτου χλιδῆς.
θαλασσόπλαγκτα δ' οὔτις ἄλλος ἀντ' ἐμοῦ
λινόπτερ' ἠὔρε ναυτίλων ὀχήματα.
τοιαῦτα μηχανήματ' ἐξευρὼν τάλας
- 470 βροτοῖσιν, αὐτὸς οὐκ ἔχω σοφισμ' ὅτῳ
τῆς νῦν παρούσης πημονῆς ἀπαλλαγῶ.
Χο. πέπονθας αἰκὲς πῆμ'· ἀποσφαλεῖς φρενῶν
πλανᾷ, κακὸς δ' ἱατρὸς ὥς τις εἰς νόσον
πεσῶν ἀθυμεῖς καὶ σεαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχεις
- 475 εὐρεῖν ὁποίοις φαρμάκοις ἰάσιμος.

- Πρ. τὰ λοιπά μου κλύουσα θαυμάση πλέον,
 οἷας τέχνας τε καὶ πόρους ἐμησάμην.
 τὸ μὲν μέγιστον, εἴ τις εἰς νόσον πέσοι,
 οὐκ ἦν ἀλέξημι' οὐδέν, οὔτε βρώσιμον,
 480 οὐ χριστόν, οὐδὲ πιστόν, ἀλλὰ φαρμάκων
 χρεῖα κατεσκέλλοντο, πρὶν γ' ἐγὼ σφισιν
 ἔδειξα κράσεις ἡπίων ἀκεσμάτων
 αἷς τὰς ἀπάσας ἐξαμύνονται νόσους.
 τρόπους τε πολλοὺς μαντικῆς ἐστοίχισα,
 485 κᾶκρινα πρῶτος ἐξ ὄνειράτων ἃ χρὴ
 ὕπαρ γενέσθαι, κληδόνας τε δυσκρίτους
 ἐγνώρισ' αὐτοῖς ἐνοδίους τε συμβόλους,
 γαμψωνύχων τε πτῆσιν οἰωνῶν σκεθρῶς
 διώρισ', οἵτινές τε δεξιοὶ φύσιν
 490 εὐωνύμους τε, καὶ δίαιταν ἦντινα
 ἔχουσ' ἕκαστοι, καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους τίνες
 ἔχθραι τε καὶ στέργηθρα καὶ συνεδρίαι,
 σπλάγχνων τε λειότητα, καὶ χροιάν τίνα
 ἔχουσ' ἂν εἴη δαίμοσιν πρὸς ἡδονὴν
 495 χολή, λοβοῦ τε ποικίλην εὐμορφίαν·
 κνίσση τε κῶλα ξυγκαλυπτὰ καὶ μακρὰν
 ὀσφύν πυρώσας δυστέκμαρτον εἰς τέχνην
 ὥδωσα θνητούς, καὶ φλογωπὰ σήματα
 ἐξωμιάτωσα πρόσθεν ὄντ' ἐπάργεμα.
 500 τοιαῦτα μὲν δὴ ταῦτ'· ἔνερθε δὲ χθονὸς
 κεκρυμμέν' ἀνθρώποισιν ὠφελήματα,
 χαλκόν, σίδηρον, ἄργυρον χρυσόν τε, τίς
 φήσειεν ἂν πάροιθεν ἐξευρεῖν ἐμοῦ;
 οὐδεῖς, σάφ' οἶδα, μὴ μάτην φλύσαι θέλων.
 505 βραχεῖ δὲ μύθῳ πάντα συλλήβδην μάθε·
 πᾶσαι τέχναι βροτοῖσιν ἐκ Προμηθέως.

COMMENTARY:

Staged no later than 430 BCE, *Prometheus Bound* is traditionally attributed to Aeschylus, but this is contested. Nonetheless, this play is deeply compelling as Prometheus attempts to understand how he has come to the position of being punished. In the passage I have chosen, Prometheus describes the gifts he gave to humanity, previously incapable of doing anything. After this passage, Prometheus speaks to the chorus about Zeus, as they press him on whether or not Zeus is fated to remain king of the Gods.

My approach was to be as true to the Greek as possible, while making mild modifications for sense. This meant keeping my translation in prose, because the limitations of verse would force changes that deviate further from the Greek. While translating terms, I have decided to keep the language as simple as possible, to create an almost primeval tone reflecting Prometheus describing humans in their earliest form, and his solutions that form the basis for further human invention. For instance, I translated *πλινθυφεῖς δόμους προσείλους* (450-451) as brick-built, sun-warm houses. I have kept descriptions of Prometheus' gifts similarly simple because I think that an indicator is required that he is the origin of human crafts, rather than the final end point. Mortals before Prometheus' intervention were utterly helpless, which is emphasised by the repetitive language *οἱ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον* (447-448). In line 460, Aeschylus makes use of wordplay relating to the Muses and Memory *καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων, ἐξηῦρον αὐτοῖς, γραμμάτων τε συνθέσεις, μνήμην ἀπάντων, μουσομήτορ' ἐργάνην*, 'the work that enables all memory and the mother of the Muses', in reference to Hesiod's *Theogony* (915-17). This suggests a time before the Muses, as Prometheus is trying to have his own story remembered in some way. Discovery and invention is a recurring theme in this passage and throughout the play, so I have tried to consistently translate the verb *εὕρισκω* as 'invent', since Prometheus crafts solutions for humans, with two exceptions for sense.

A particular challenge was handling the particles, which I have tried to address with punctuation to give a similar discursive effect. As Prometheus describes the gift of oracles, he goes into a great amount of detail regarding birds. While he explains the flight of birds, he categorises them as *οἵτινές τε δεξιοὶ φύσιν εὐωνύμους* (489-490), those that are 'fortunate', or 'from the left', using an euphemism. Line 499 describes the signs that were previously hidden from humans, using the participle *ἐπάργεμα*, which means to be blinded, glaucoma-like. I decided to translate this 'as they were clouded from them'. For idiomatic English I also changed line 504 *μὴ μάτην φλύσαι θέλων*, literally 'unless wishing to boil up uselessly', as 'unless he wants to spew nonsense'.

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[MOUTH]ING THE *ILIAD*

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Wrath, like teeth threatening
under gums – that first thrill
of internal risk, when your body
[]s a second mocking meaning
under your name. Groups of soldiers
make a curving advance,
like the fluctuating swerve
of a foreign word. The chariots: flurried
sentence loosed through lips; clash
of spears like the transfer of taste
between mother tongues. The wild
[]s of birds and dogs fall easily
to their labour. A wasp works its clicking
lips round the flesh of a peach;
a bluebottle sketches a []'s
interior with its metallic buzz.
Two soldiers stand toothsome
in bronze and talk about fathers –
a fisherman and an apple farmer.
The cacophony softens only
to hear one say ‘sweetness’
in a dead tongue. Achilles’ lips: a literal split:
godhood bitten to blood; mortal wishing
for a coin’s cool kiss like a hole in the tongue.
The [] of a demigod choked like a river;
the [] of a god like a gun.
Like an easy suggestion of shepherds
or a birth-blue lamb, even while dust exhales
from the feet of retreating soldiers, shields
working pitch against each other. A battle
feast. The [] of the wine,
like divinity’s frothy laugh. And now,
the story’s [] – its slow-tipping
throat, its escalation of names. A canine
of light slipping through the window; dawn’s

blushed gums. A poet stands in half-light,
in an age where the written word
means nothing, and where a []]
can only be learnt firsthand,
red as battle blood, as time.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY

This poem comments on the oral tradition of classical storytelling, as well as the *Iliad*'s focus on eating. Within the *Iliad*, hunger is emphasised through epic similes comparing heroes to predatory animals devouring prey: Hector, for instance, is likened to a "hill-bred lion, ravenous / for meat".¹ I tried to mimic this poetic technique through my own use of similes in the poem, beginning from the first lines ("Wrath, like teeth"), as well as through the focus on carnivorous eating in my poem's subject matter.

I was also inspired by the connection drawn in the *Iliad* between eating, and the transition between worlds, through the symbolic consumption of bodies on funeral pyres. Indeed, language of eating is frequently used in reference to cremation: whilst Patroclus' body is given "to the great flame to be devoured", Hector is "licked" by the flames of his funeral pyre.² References to the consumption of bodies by animals after death also occur frequently in the *Iliad*, and inspired the depiction of hungry "birds and dogs" in my poem. In this section I drew particular inspiration from Priam's fear of being "torn apart / on my own doorstep" by his own dogs – an image which starkly contrasts to the peaceful consumption of the body on a funeral pyre.³

Throughout the poem I decided to represent the word 'mouth' through a gap, marked by brackets. I hoped this would emphasise the poem's focus on hunger, textually depicting an unfilled absence. I was interested in how this absence relates to oral storytelling: when reading the poem, the reader is (hopefully) compelled to fill in the absences themselves with the word 'mouth', taking an active role in the poem's narrative, and continuing, even in a very small way, the tradition of adaptive storytelling. By involving themselves in the narration, the reader literally 'mouths the *Iliad*', like the title describes. I was also interested in exploring the topic of oral storytelling in the poem's subject matter: the poem's final lines elaborate on this point, emphasising the immediacy brought to the texts through live narration.

Whilst my poem's imagery is almost entirely classical, I included brief modern references to attempt to represent the immortal power of the gods – comparing a god's mouth to "a gun", for example. This intentionally jarring word choice is partially inspired by the use of modern weaponry in the RSC's 2018 production of 'Troilus and Cressida' – Shakespeare's tragicomedy, set in the seventh year of the Trojan war. The production's depiction of Patroclus' death particularly stayed with me: instead of being killed by a sword or spear, like other heroes in the production, Patroclus was shot by Ulysses. This decision clearly marked out the death as one of the play's turning points, and literalised not only the ruthlessness of Ulysses' manipulation, but

¹ Homer, *The Iliad*, 12.299-300.

² Homer, *The Iliad*, 23.250-251; 24.791-792.

³ Homer, *The Iliad*, 22.66-71.

also the role of divine interference. This was implied by Ulysses' placement on stage: at a distance, and on a higher level than the other mortal characters, they were framed almost like a divine puppet. The sudden use of a gun in a production otherwise dominated by classical weapons was immediately striking, and efficiently suggested divine power over mortal lives – something I also wanted to convey through the reference to modern weaponry in my own poem. Overall, the poem centres the 'mouths' of the *Iliad*: points of absence, of hunger, and of voice.

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EURIPIDES' *MEDEA*, 230-266: A NEW ADAPTATION

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MEDEA

This is the end. I am a wife yet I no longer have a husband, and I suppose that's that. That's all there is. To be a woman really is to be a most wretched being. We are traded from man to man like property, our lives stolen again and again. You see, I left the house, the one I grew up in, as soon as I could. I could not stand being suffocated by my brother, his hands always crowding me in that small room in that small house. I left and I did not look back. I was looking forward to this freedom, like a boat looks forward to the open sea after cresting the waves.

Jason and I met soon after I'd left, when I was still in between things. We moved in together quickly. After two months I was pregnant, but we were happy in our little shitbox in the middle of the city. I didn't know anyone, but I knew Jason, and that was more than I'd known for a while. I'd worked all the way up to my due date, it wasn't anything special, just a job at the shop, but it was mine; and the money was mine, and I felt like I was getting somewhere.

Then the baby came. Jason complained, a child couldn't grow up here, he'd said. And I was tired, God, I was tired. We moved to the house. This one was never really mine either. This house, the house I have lived in for years, the house my children have grown to know; the one where we marked their heights on the wall in pencil. This is, and always has been, a foreign house.

When we first moved in, wallpaper covered all the walls. It was hideous, a dark yellow, I couldn't stand to look at it. But I couldn't fix it, I was so tired. I couldn't tell when I was awake from when I was asleep. One day I started ripping the paper from the walls. There was ugly scratched up plaster beneath, but I didn't care. I ripped and pulled until all the walls were bare and I was standing in the middle of a pile of rubble. When Jason came home, he was furious. Did I know how much money it would cost to redecorate? Did I even understand how hard he worked? All for me to sit on my ass all day, and not even comfort the child who wouldn't stop crying. I had one job, why couldn't I just get it to stop fucking crying? But even then, when we repainted the walls, it remained a foreign house.

I do not know anyone. I do not know how to know anyone. I can hardly leave, the children always need me, and I don't know the area well enough, even after all these years. I remember when we first moved, when it was just me and the first one, and he was so little, I tried leaving. I tucked him into a scarf on my chest, zipped him under my jacket. I walked and I thought that maybe I could just keep walking. Then it started to rain, and he started to cry, and I knew it wouldn't work.

Back then when I would shower, I would look down at my stomach and legs and I'd see the bruises and the stretch marks, and I could remember how pretty I was before. How much more I was. And I'd think *who was this?* I'd pick at the skin. *Who was this?*

Soon enough I was pregnant again with the second one. My body wasn't mine. It hadn't been for a long time, but I realised it only then.

But is a woman's body ever really hers? Her biggest weapon and her biggest weakness.

And then the second one came and Jason had to work more and more. And now, with two, I really couldn't leave. But hey, I was the lucky one, right? I didn't have to work, no, I was at home playing caretaker to our children. I played house all day long, and how lucky I was to not have to hang a tie around my neck and leave that house each day. I'd often wondered when I would be able to go back to work. I thought maybe I'd even go back to school—the children were old enough for day-care, but Jason wouldn't send them. He wanted another child. Men always want more. It's easy when they're nothing more than pictures in your wallet. I would have rather worked three jobs than had one more child.

And then the girl came along, because of course she does. I always knew about her, I'm not stupid. Jason, spending more and more time at the office. Jason, getting calls late at night. Jason, not wanting to touch me anymore, when he's spent years convincing me that the only thing I'm good for is sex. This is all I have and now he wants me to leave. Don't you understand? He's made it so that this house is all I have. We're not married, he doesn't need to file for divorce. And even the house, *this house*, is not mine. And so, I'm evicted like a cheap roommate or some visiting whore. I'm merely leeching off him and growing old and ugly and unfuckable.

I've bitten down on my tongue for so many years I've grown accustomed to the taste of blood. Only now it seems to be the only thing I can think of.

A MODERN MEDEA

Brutality is a word frequently associated with Euripides' *Medea*. At its close, audiences leave the theatre reflecting of the tragic horror of filicide, the relentless nature of the play's titular character. Yet, brutality is not merely what Medea employs by the play's close, but what her monologues evidence she endures throughout her marriage to her husband, Jason. Looking specifically at the 'plight of women' speech (referencing translations by Rex Warner (1944), and David Kovacs (1994)), I sought to adapt this speech into modernity, transforming Medea from myth into person, and showcasing the elements of isolation and gender inequality which thrust her towards filicide.

In adapting this passage (230–266), I prioritised communicating themes of gender inequality and isolation, sacrificing a closeness with the Greek in order to attain poignancy for modern audiences. No longer the sweeping monologue made to a chorus of women, I hoped to write a speech which should be read colloquially, the stories woven throughout simply tangents that often happen unconsciously amidst conversation. Rather than translating the speech line by line, I chose to piece out Medea's primary grievances and weave them through the adapted speech, referencing

Rachel Cusk's 2015 adaptation all the while, for the anecdotal style it employs throughout. For instance, I sought to mimic the sense of entrapment, which while not existing in the legal sense (as it did in Ancient Athens), can still present itself socially and economically today. While Medea is thus not exchanged in any legal sense from one guardian to another, there is a sense that she never truly attains personal autonomy, instead remaining emotionally and fiscally dependent on the men in her life.

While taking a variety of liberties, I have in multiple instances referred to Euripides' text closely, using phrases to signpost the adapted text's relationship to the original. The early line, 'To be a woman really is to be a most wretched being,' for example, refers directly back to line 230 of Kovacs' translation: 'Of all creatures that have breath and sensation, we women are the most unfortunate.' Furthermore, Euripides' original text repeatedly emphasises Medea's foreignness, an aspect I have tried to incorporate, and which should heighten readers' understanding of Medea's isolation. Not only have I made repeated mention to the foreign nature of the house (heightened by her lack of ownership over it), but I have characterised Medea's own body to be foreign. Looking down at her postpartum body and thinking 'Who [is] this?', my adaptation forces Medea into the position of an outsider even within the walls of her own body. For Medea, the world is insular, but even familiar walls feel foreign.

Yet, despite my attempts to humanise Medea, I did not seek to entirely erase the mythic nature of Euripides' *Medea*, or of the character herself. Introducing an allusion to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, I attempted to propose Medea's story as an archetype of sorts, a modern cultural mythos. *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which centres a young woman struggling postpartum with an undiagnosed mental illness, is a story which highlights how quickly gender roles can skew power imbalances. If Medea is both an individual and an archetype of an oppressed woman, then themes of gender inequality and isolation become both personal and universal. What I hope is evident at the close of this adaptation is that the tragedy of *Medea* is not merely the deaths which occur at the play's close, but all the events which accrued to lead up to that point.

THE OLYMPIANS

JACK ROBERTSON
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Imagine the sun-drenched slopes of Mount Olympus. Here, the air hums with divine energy. This poem? A heartfelt invocation. It summons the ancient Greek gods and goddesses. Born from a love of the myths, those timeless stories shimmer with power and wisdom. Just like the poets of old, who sought the Muses' touch before each grand tale, this song I offer to the Olympians. A humble attempt, it aims to capture their essence. Feel the echo of their presence in our world. Think of it: a whispered prayer, a celebration of the forces that shape our lives. From the thunderous might of Zeus to the gentle bounty of Demeter, these immortals hold sway. Join me, then. Let their stories unfold once more, as we call upon them.

Hear me, Muses, daughters of Zeus, the thunderer,
Sing of the gods immortal, the blessed ones of Olympus!
First among them, Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, king of all,
Whose nod shakes the earth and the wide-reaching heavens.

Hera, his wife, the ox-eyed queen, majestic and proud,
Guardian of marriage, protecting women in childbirth.
Poseidon, earth-shaker, ruling the stormy deep,
His trident commands the waves, both gentle and fierce.

Hades, the unseen, lord of the underworld's gloom,
Where souls of mortals dwell in the darkness of death.
Demeter, life-bringer, goddess of grain, earth's bounty,
She nourishes the fields, and brings forth the changing seasons, through grief and joy.

Athena, the wise, grey-eyed goddess of war,
Her spear protects the city, her wisdom guides the hero.
Apollo, the far-shooter, god of light and music,
His lyre brings joy, his arrows bring swift plague.

Artemis, the huntress, who roams the mountain wilds,
With her silver bow, she slays the beasts of the forest.
Ares, the bloodthirsty, god of war and battle,

His rage knows no bounds, his fury brings destruction.

Aphrodite, the golden, goddess of love and beauty,
Her laughter fills the air, her charm conquers all.
Hephaestus, the fire-god, skilled in the forge's craft,
He fashions wondrous weapons, and armour for the gods, with labour's sweat.

Hermes, the swift messenger, with wings upon his feet,
He guides the dead, Zeus' messages he fleetly bears.
Dionysus, god of wine, of revelry and joy,
He brings release from sorrow, and fills the heart with gladness.

These are the immortals, the blessed ones of Olympus,
To them we offer praise, and seek their favour and blessing.
So ends my song, O Muses, may your favour remain,
And grant me inspiration to sing of the gods again.

Durham University's Classics Society

Durham University's Classics Society is a student-led organisation. Our socials and events are geared towards any students with an interest in Classics and Ancient History, regardless of degree programme; among these include our annual Toga Bar Crawl, Saturnalia Dinner, and Floralia Charity Ball. Although the Classics Society is not officially part of the Durham Classics Department, we maintain relationships with members of staff to ensure our members get as much out of their university experience as possible. *The Ostraka Journal* is the Classics Society's official student publication.



WITH A FOREWORD BY
THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Rosalind A. Watkin

