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THE ROMAN COURTESAN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS OF A LITERARY *TOPOS*

editors

RIA BERG & RICHARD NEUDECKER

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Bibliography

Abbreviations

For the ancient Latin authors, the abbreviations of the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, *Index*, Leipzig 1990, are used; for the Greek authors, see *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 1996, 3. ed. Titles of periodicals are abbreviated as in *l'Année philologique.*

AE = L'Année Épigraphique.

BdI = Bullettino dell'Instituto di corrispondenza archeologica.

CIS = Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum, Paris: e Reipublicae Typographeo, 1881- .

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EE = Ephemeris epigraphica.

FGrHist = F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Vol. 3, B, *Kommentar*, Leiden: Brill, 1950/55.

IGR = Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes, vols. 1-4, R. Cagnat (ed.), Paris: Leroux, 1906-1927.

ILS = Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae. H. Dessau (ed.), Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-1916.

LIMC = Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae, Zürich – München: Artemis, 1981-1999.

LTURS = Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae, suburbium, vols. 1-5, V. Fiocchi Nicolai *et al.* (eds.), Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2001-2008.

NSc = Notizie degli scavi di Antichità.

OGIS = Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae. W. Dittenberger (ed.), Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903-1905.

OLD = Oxford Latin dictionary, P.G.W. Glare *et al.* (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

PIR² = *Prosopographia Imperii Romani,* 2. ed., Berlin, 1933-2015.

PPM = *Pompei. Pitture e mosaici* 1-10, Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1990-2003.

PPM DISEGNATORI = *Pompei. Pitture e mosaici*. *La documentazione nell'opera di disegnatori e pittori dei secoli XVII e XIX,* Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1995.

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Preface

The nucleus of this volume consists of a set of papers delivered on May 30th, 2014, at the *Institutum Romanum Finlandiae*, Rome, at the International Symposium "*The Roman courtesan. Archaeological reflections of a literary topos,"* organized in collaboration with the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom.* In the present book, besides the papers by the original participants at the symposium, a number of other colleagues have been invited to participate with articles that enrich the discourse with further perspectives.

We thank, in particular, the *Federation of the Finnish Learned Societies* for funding the conference organized in Rome. Special thanks are due to the directors of the two institutes, Ortwin Dally and Tuomas Heikkilä and to the institutions they represent, *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom* and *Institutum Romanum Finlandiae*, for financial support and hosting the original symposium at Villa Lante. We also thank Intendent Simo Örmä and Amanuensis Linda Jokela for precious collaboration. Among many colleagues who had an important role in discussing and commenting the papers at the symposium, we would like to express special thanks to John Clarke and Pier Giovanni Guzzo. Finally, we thank Mika Kajava for accepting the volume for publication in the series of *Acta IRF.*

Rome, settembre 2018

Ria Berg and Richard Neudecker

Introduction: Unveiling Roman courtesans

Ria Berg

'Courtesan' – a difficult word

In classical antiquity, to speak of 'courtesans' is obviously anachronistic; this was a term and phenomenon coined for Renaissance and Baroque Rome used in eighteenth-century Venice and still cultivated in nineteenth-century Paris.[1] However, in its place the *corpus* of Latin literature does not seems to offer any precise expression that signifies an independent, non-servile prostitute, or even any single word to translate the Greek *hetaira*, literally 'female companion'.[2] This is certainly not because of a lack of words, as James Noel Adams, in his well-known study, identifies over fifty Latin expressions for prostitutes according to their various conditions and situations.[3] By and large, these Latin terms are used both for prostitutes and for women who in other ages would be called 'courtesans' and range from the extremes of the pejorative *scortum*, *prostibula* and the more neutral *meretrix* (shared with brothel workers) to the adulatory and highly euphemistic *puella*, *amica*, and *domina* (the latter term shared with Roman *matronae* and *filiae familias*).[4]

Sharon James, in the conclusions to her wider studies of female figures in Roman comedy and elegy, promoted the use of the word 'courtesan,' though she has also coined other expressions like 'courtesan-on-contract' and 'professional girl-friend' to describe the specific condition of the independent, non-slave prostitute, often living in longer, exclusive relationships.[5] Likewise, the 2006 publication *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, edited by Christopher Faraone and Laura McClure, promoted the use of the word courtesan even in the Classical world.[6]

The contributors to this volume take slightly different stances to the term 'courtesan', approaching the concept in the framework of their specific fields of study. Thomas McGinn discusses the striking absence of such a term in legal sources, while Sharon James and Alison Keith analyse how in Roman literary sources the ambivalent term *meretrix* is used as the nearest equivalent of 'courtesan'. Antonio Varone dis-

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1 For a diachronic discussion, see, for example Feldman – Gordon 2006. Elaine Fantham (2011, 157, n. 3) has stated that she consciously avoids both 'courtesan' and 'prostitute', leaving the words *hetaira* and *meretrix* untranslated, "because there simply is no accurate and neutral translation for them".

2 The Latinized word *hetaera* appears only in nonclassical sources.

3 Adams 1983.

4 Schneider 1931; Herter 1957; Stumpp 1998, 19-20; Flemming 1999, 47-48; Fayer 2002; 2013, 377-405; McClure 2006, 7; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 9; see also McGinn 1998; 2002; 2004 and the contribution in this volume. *Meretrix* is the most common word for prostitute in the Latin *corpus*. According to the count of McCoy (2006, 178), it is used by Cicero 34 times, by Plautus 72 times, by Seneca the Elder 85 times, and by Quintilian 114 times. Among the technical terms, *scortum* ('hide') and *lupa* ('she-wolf') have a rather debased connotation, as does also the more neutral *meretrix*, meaning a female who earns money (with her body). Legal language employs less colourful and more precise language: *corpora quaestuaria*, *quaestuaria mancipia*, see Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 9. For a philological analysis of the use of the word *puella*, see Hallett 2008.

5 James 2003, 36-52; 2006, 228-32; 2012a, 426.

6 Faraone – McClure 2006.

cusses Pompeian graffiti from the optic that the omnipresent *puella* might in some cases be understood as a 'courtesan'. In iconography and material culture, problems of terminology are less prominent, but lie in the background when we consider whether certain archaeological phenomena may be counted in the sphere of 'courtesanship'. Confrontations with Hellenistic *hetairai* are made in Siri Sande's, Irene Bragantini's and Richard Neudecker's chapters, while Marja-Leena Hänninen and Pia Mustonen examine the limits of the concept in application to immoral matrons and imperial concubines. In the chapters of Luciana Jacobelli, Ria Berg and Donato Labate, the question arises whether traces of 'courtesans' could be recognized in domestic wall painting, furnishings and grave contexts; Ville Hakanen further discusses whether our material evidence could also point to the existence of male 'courtesans'. All in all, where the word 'courtesan' is used, it is done conscious of a precision and a degree of anachronism, and to avoid using the even more incorrect term 'prostitute'.

If it is extremely difficult to define what a Roman prostitute is, defining a Roman courtesan is even more so. Notoriously, other phenomena of non-marital sexual activity, such as adultery and concubinage overlap and are not always easy to label either. McGinn, discussing the difficulties of finding a definition for prostitution has presented one borrowed from social sciences, implying these three criteria: 1) promiscuity; 2) payment; 3) emotional indifference.[7] Interestingly, ancient courtesans do not necessarily fit into any of these criteria, as they 1) may have a restricted number of partners, even only one; 2) do not necessarily receive money, as the payment can be veiled as a gift; 3) may have an emotional engagement, which may be reciprocated.

James Davidson has observed that "the very term 'courtesan' is deliberately vague, used for a group of determinedly hard-to-define women of shady reputation, who worked outside of a brothel, on the one hand, and beyond the pale of respectability on the other, neither immediately available for sex nor completely out of sexual reach".[8] Vagueness and ambiguity seem to be the very traits that best characterize this category of venal sex. This book is an attempt to elaborate further a grid of definitions and to frame this complex social phenomenon in the ancient Roman cultural landscape.

The inevitable archetype: Greek *hetaira*

This *caveat* concerning the use of word 'courtesan' must be followed by similar scepticism about the very existence of *hetairai* and courtesans in antiquity, expressed by many modern scholars starting from the 1990s. The question of Roman courtesans necessarily begins with the consideration of the much more abundant scholarly discussion of Greek elite prostitutes; we investigate here the binary opposition between the upper-class *hetaira* ('companion') and lowly *pornē* ('woman-on-sale').[9] Allison Glazebrook and Madeleine Henry, in their introduction to the volume *Greek prostitutes in the ancient Mediterranean*, have succinctly rehearsed the history of *hetaira–pornē* contraposition starting from Hans Licht's fundamental volume *Sittengeschichte Griechenlands* (trans. *Sexual life of ancient Athens*, 1932) and observed that he dedicated much more space to *hetairai* (40 pages) than to *pornai* (10 pages).[10] The earliest research attributed to the

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7 On defining prostitution, see Gardner 1986, 132; Edwards 1997, 76; McGinn 1998, 17-18; McGinn 2002; McGinn 2004, 7; Cohen 2006, 95; McClure 2006, 6; Guzzo – Scarono Ussani 2009, 9-11 et passim.

8 Davidson 2006, 31.

9 On the *hetaira–pornē* difference, see for example Skinner 2005, 98-99; Davidson 1997, 94-95. On Greek terminology for prostitution, see Kapparis 2006.

10 Licht 1932; Glazebrook – Henry 2011, 4-8; McClure 2006, 3-4. In any case, it should be noted that this state of affairs equally affects classical studies in general, as such percentage of over-attention is surely dedicated also to elite women and men versus lower-class women and men, in general.

figure of the *hetaira* not only her empirical historical existence but also a long series of positive definitions: she was wealthy, rich, powerful, free, learned, privileged – a picture which we now view as simplistic and false.[11] Exemplary is the quotation of Wells (1982), who observes that *hetairai* "were intelligent, witty, articulate and educated, the only women in Athenian society allowed to manage their own financial affairs, stroll through the streets anywhere at any time."[12]

By contrast, Sarah Pomeroy, in her study of *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (1975), put the emphasis on lower-class prostitution, pointing out that, while we know of *hetairai* wishing to resemble citizen wives, the converse was not true. She therefore inferred that, despite the apparent freedom and access to intellectual spheres, the role of the *hetaira* was not a desirable status. However, Pomeroy also noted that the best-known woman of classical Athens was a *hetaira*, Aspasia.[13]

The even more decisive reaction of the 1980's gender-oriented classical studies, represented by Eva Keuls, was to completely eliminate the 'legend' about the independent, wealthy and erudite *hetaira* as a mere romanticization and a "fabrication of the male mind."[14] In her fundamental monograph *Reign of the Phallus* (1983), Keuls strongly criticized the scholarship that represented Athenian prostitution "through rosy mist," noting that there is no reason to believe that Athenian or Corinthian brothels "were any more commodious than the dark and stinking holes in which Roman whores practiced their trade."[15] Eva Keuls and Carola Reinsberg, studying images of prostitutes on Greek vases, saw little evidence for any iconographic distinction between *pornai* and *hetairai*.[16] In a similar vein, Madeleine Henry, in her 1992 article on 'edible women' in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai*, marvels over many scholars' naïve and "surprisingly persistent tendency to idealize women's – particularly prostitutes' – lives in classical antiquity."[17] This deconstructive phase has, indeed, been necessary to demolish any traces of such idealization that might cling to the study of the condition of ancient prostitutes, be they slave or free. However, the denial of the existence of ancient courtesans, seen only as elite male phantasies, can be considered excessive. Davidson well synthesizes this scholarly overreaction in his essay 'Making a Spectacle of Her(self). The Greek Courtesan and the Art of the Present':

> "a large number of scholars treat almost everything said about ancient courtesans as simply made up; their voices are *always* the voices of men ventriloquizing; there is *nothing* of them in their representations. […] To take them seriously can be seen as a sign of weak-mindedness, or even as the indulging of a seductive, romantic, but ultimately misogynist fantasy."

Beyond the negation, much scholarly effort has also been made to distinguish between the categories of Athenian *hetaira* and *pornē*: for example, on the basis of their availability to many or only to few, emo-

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11 see Hauschild 1933; Henry 1985; Skinner 2005, 167-68; with further references to the early stages of modern scholarship. In particular, the Greek *hetaira* has been studied, from early on, as a dramatic figure.

12 Wells 1982; Glazebrook – Henry 2011, 6.

13 Pomeroy 1975, 89.

14 Keuls 1985, 196-97; 199: "It seems that the Athenian men were at pains to construct an image of witty prosperous *hetairai* in order to gloss over the fact that their principal sex outlets were debased and uneducated slaves … certain to end their lives in misery"; cf. Cohen 2006, 97; McClure 2006, 4-5.

15 Keuls 1985, 153.

16 Keuls 1985; Reinsberg 1989. In vase images, male figures are shown holding a (money) purse in discussion with women. According to Keuls (1985, 204-28; 258-59), the question of the identity of the women, who are often veiled and sometimes even spinning wool, is left open: are they courtesans masked as wives or ordinary women negotiating in the market place? See discussion in Skinner 2005, 97, 105-6; Cohen 2006, 106-5. For more recent views, see Kreilinger's (2013) article on *Hetärengelage* that proposes alternative readings for more explicitly depicted *hetairai* on vases, as impersonal signs of opulence and luxury, and Sorkin Rabinowitz's reading of Greek vases, underlining their inherent ambiguity.

17 Henry 1992, 261.

tional dedication to the relationship, or status/class of their clients.[18] Glazebrook and Henry have rightly noted the importance of challenging any binary polarizations that oversimplify complex social categories,[19] and suggest that the role of a prostitute was a fluid rather than fixed state – the status could change in different situations and in different phases of life: for example, a brothel slave could be 'promoted' to a concubine (*pallak*ē) status.[20]

In many late-1990's studies, however, the binary opposition *hetaira–pornē* has been reclaimed as a useful tool for the analysis of Athenian society. Leslie Kurke, in *Coins, bodies, games, and gold* (1999), proposed the idea that this binomy was a creation of the Archaic age, a conscious means of distinction between the elite and the emerging middle-class; the representations of *hetairai* in art would not mark their importance as a social figure, but rather be useful counters in oligarchic political discourse.[21] Davidson, discussing the grand Greek *hetairai* or *megalomisthoi* in his book *Courtesans and fishcakes* (1997), similarly saw the status of courtesan as a marketing strategy, played out in the framework of a nonmonetary, aristocratic gift-economy, where lowly monetary operations were not spoken of.[22]

The confrontation between *hetaira* and citizen wife, rather than the streetwalking *pornē*, can also be significant. Depending on the perspective, the *hetaira* can be associated with or contraposed to either of them. Sean Corner has elaborated the idea of the opposition *hetaira–pornē* as more or less marked depending on the context. They can be assimilated and set in contrast with the wife, as elements of an 'outside' *polis* brought inside the *oikos*. At the same time as the sympotic group can also be set in contrast with the impersonal commercial activities of the marketplace, they similarly mark a clear-cut difference between the wife and *hetaira* (interior) in contrast with *pornē* (exterior).[23] This play with double senses is obviously a fundamental part of the allure of the *hetaira*, living in a fictive seclusion that assimilates her in some respects to a citizen wife.

Edward Cohen has observed that many classicists think *hetaira* and *pornē* were for the Greeks merely two words for covering a single form of exploitation.[24] Cohen himself underlines their difference, which we regard as lying crucially in their legal status, working as a slave under other person's rule and command (*pornē*) on the one hand or, with free status, in independent enterprise (*hetaira*).[25] Cohen lists among the main differences 1) control of one's physical surroundings and body, 2) ownership of personal property, 3) freedom to choose clients, 4) cultural and social leisurely activities – the work being not merely an economic necessity but also a mechanism of self-definition.[26] Laura McClure also points out the polarization

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18 Cantarella 1987, 50; Cohen 2006, 97.

19 Ibid. and Glazebrook 2011, 34. For the difference between *pornē* and *hetaira* also Davidson 2006, 36-37.

20 Glazebrook – Henry 2006, 5. The difference between being a concubine and a slave *pornē* was crucial for the experience of the woman and one that could change in an instant, as is demonstrated by the life course of the famous *hetaira* Neaira, who changes her status from a *hetaira* to a *pallakē* but is also called *pornē*. In his speech *Against Neaira*, Apollodorus argues for the prosecution by classifying women according to their three functions for men: "We keep companions (*hetairas*) to give us pleasure, concubines (*pallakai*) to tend our person on daily basis, and wives (*gynaikai*) to produce legitimate children for us and be trustworthy guardians of our possessions." See further Sorkin Rabinowitz 2011, 125-26.

21 Kurke 1999, 182. However, see the critique of binary opposition between pornē/commodity/city/middling ideology and *hetaera*/gift/symposium/elitist ideology of Corner 2011, 76-77.

22 Davidson 1997, 120-36. A good example of this would be the *hetaira* Theodote, interrogated by Socrates on the sources of her income, which allow her a luxurious way of living, thus speaking ambiguously and euphemistically of 'gifts' and 'friendships', Xen. *Mem*. 3, 11. On Theodote, see also Glazebrook 2011, 51.

23 Corner 2011, 77-78. Hor. *sat*. 1, 2, 47-48. Cf. Ps.-Dem. 59, 122.

24 In fact, Plutarch (*Sol*. 15) says that *hetaira* is only an Athenian euphemism for *pornē*.

25 Cohen 2006, 97; 99 and *passim*.

26 Cohen 2006, 110.

between the axes on the continuum of slavery–freedom: The term *pornē* denotes "a slave woman forced to have sex with whoever desired her and placed under the supervision of *pornoboskos* (brothelkeeper), while the *hetaira* more closely resembled a free citizen wife in her ability to control her male partner's access to her body."[27]

Roman courtesans: Fictive realities?

While the figure of Greek *hetaira* has received lengthy discussion in regards to its existence, precise social meaning, and cultural significance, such questions have rarely been asked in the Roman world, and if they have the existence of Roman courtesans has often been denied even more decidedly than that of her Greek counterparts. Rebecca Flemming, in her thorough article on the sexual economy of female prostitution in 1999, took the view that Rome lacked independent prostitutes, or even distinct categories of prostitutes, seeing the earlier *hetaira* as "a thing of the past … figures such as Lais do not make it beyond the Hellenistic period", reacting against the 1930's views of Kiefer and Schneider, seeing that they both "consider prostitutes who had liaisons with famous poets to be the most blessed of women."[28] Flemming argued that, in the Roman world, only low status prostitutes and *lupanaria* existed, catering primarily for the poor, and she draws the drastic conclusion, that "it is these same locales, not any special, more refined, establishments that also count the upper classes among their customers."[29]

The index to Marilyn Skinner's comprehensive book on *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (2005) reveals that while Greek *hetairai* receive ample discussion, Roman imperial-age courtesans appear only as antiquarian (Greek) figures in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*.[30] Finally, Carla Fayer, in her comprehensive 2013 volume *Meretrix*, stated: "In the Rome of Plautus there is nothing that could correspond to the *hetairai* of Athens; there were prostitutes, but they were of low level, such as one could find in the brothels or in the streets."[31] Upper-class prostitution has, thus, somehow remained a blind spot in the study of Roman mercenary sex.

Thomas McGinn, in his volume on *Economy of Roman Prostitution* (2004), explained the "somewhat surprising lack of evidence for upper-class brothels" in the Roman world by the sexual availability of slaves of the household, and the negative attitude of the elite toward slave prostitutes, again stamping Roman prostitution mostly as a lower-class phenomenon.[32] In his chapter here, Thomas McGinn seeks traces of courtesans in Roman legal sources. While almost no explicit traces of independent prostitutes of free status can be found, this is itself a highly interesting result, as the existence of non-servile prostitutes can hardly be doubted.

Why are the Roman legislators so silent about upper-class prostitution, especially when, paradoxically, well-to-do *meretrices* and mercenary *puellae* are stock characters in Latin literature? The independent

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27 McClure 2006, 11-12.

28 Flemming 1999, 38, n. 1; 47; 46-47. Schneider 1931; Kiefer 1934, 55-63.

29 She sees a "lack of Roman interest in distinctions of prostitutional practice" and would not classify prostitutes according to the degree of their independency, but rather as a group entirely lacking in autonomy: Flemming 1999, 45-47.

30 Skinner 2005.

31 Fayer 2013, 42.

32 McGinn 2004, 72. In the conclusion of his 1998 volume on *Prostitution, Sexuality, and Law in Roman society*, McGinn asks whether there were no equivalents for Greek *hetairai* in Roman society – noting that comparative evidence suggests that in most complex societies prostitution exits in multiple forms – but concludes that the question scarcely interests the jurists, who, beyond slaves, make few references to other types of prostitutes: McGinn 1998, 347.

meretrix of Plautus' and Terence's comedy has been explained away not as a reflection of Roman lived realities but as the result merely of translation of classical, Greek literary genres.[33] Nor have the elegiac *puellae* been seen as the literary elaborations of Roman reality but rather as poetic creations reflecting their authors' poetics, as Roman male poets revisited Greek literary genres and *topoi*. For example, Maria Wyke, in her seminal articles collected in *The Roman mistress*, offers an acute feminist analysis of the "production, dissemination, and consumption of women as Roman mistress," identifying the *puella* of love elegy as a courtesan, but seeing scarcely any relation between lived realities and the socio-sexual status of the elegiac poet's mistress. Her new social status as *docta puella* or 'learned girl' is deliberately left unclear and blurred because she is a 'fictive female,' and thus only a "means of defining the male."[34]

Sharon James has convincingly argued that Plautus' and Terentius' comedies, often presenting *meretrices* as central figures, reflect contemporary Roman, not only Greek realities, and the same applies for female *personae* in Tibullus', Propertius', and Ovid's poetry.[35] In this volume, James interestingly analyses the extremely rich data that these writers offer about the stages of life, familial relations, and religious and social activities of Roman courtesans. She also notes, interestingly, many modern scholars' hostility and moral judgement in discourses about ancient courtesans, in particular continuing to label them 'good' and 'bad' according to their behaviour towards the male client. She concludes that, although these courtesans remain only artistic renderings and reflections, such numerous reflections speak to contemporary social conditions and concerns.[36]

In historiography, Roman courtesans make their appearance at the time of Plautus' and Terentius' work, in the early second-century BCE, with figures such as Faecenia Hispala who, according to Livy, was an important social and political agent, disclosing the Bacchanalian scandal in 186 BCE.[37] This emblematic figure is described by Livy as a former prostitute slave, subsequently manumitted, and continuing her trade independently, helping her young lover and next-door neighbour Aebutius financially and, in the end, making a will in his favour, thus showing more economic liberality (*meretriculae munificentia*) than his own relatives. Livy defines her as a *scortum nobile*, perhaps in an effort to render in Latin the concept of the *hetaira* as an independent escort.[38] In the same time period, after the epochal battle of Pydna in 168 BCE, the beginning of an explosive diffusion of oriental luxuries in Rome, also including courtesans, often of Eastern origin, can be traced in the historical narrative of Polybius.[39]

In this volume, Alison Keith reviews the textual evidence for some 'historical' Roman courtesans, analyzing the rhetoric of their representation in prose genres of Latin literature, in order to study courtesans' lived experience in Roman antiquity but also Roman attitudes to courtesans. Among her examples, in addi-

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33 For an overview of prostitution and comedy, see McClure 2006, 15-17.

34 Skinner 2005, 222-23; Wyke 1994, 125; Wyke (2002, 29-31) elaborates on the interpretations of the elegiac mistress in previous scholarship as adulterous wife (Williams 1968, 529-35); foreign prostitute (Cairns 1972, 156-57); or of fluid social status (Griffin 1985, 27-28). See also Allen Miller 2013.

35 James 1998, 4-5; 2003; 2006, 225-26. For the identification of the elegiac *puella* as a courtesan, see already Lyne 1980, 8-113; Griffin 1985, 114-21.

36 James, in this volume, Ov. *ars* 1, 54-56.

37 Liv. 39, 9-19. For discussion, Langlands 2006, 115-22.

38 It also clings familiar with the Renaissance 'honest courtesan', as discussed, for example, by Margareth Rosenthal in the case of the Venetian-century courtesan Veronica Franco: "A courtesan's appropriation of the courtier's strategies for self-advancement is what accounts for the paradoxical term *cortigiana onesta*, or honest courtesan. The honest courtesan redefines the male humanist category of *virtù* as a woman's intellectual integrity. She calls attention to her acquisition of intellectual, not mercenary capital by dissociating it from the selling of one's body for financial gain." Rosenthal 1992, 6.

39 Polyb. 31, 21, 4.

tion to Hispala Faecenia, are Marc Antony's mistress, the mime actress and freedwoman Volumnia Cytheris, Verres' mistress Chelidon, and Pompey's mistress Flora. It is notable that the last example, Flora, is called a *hetaira* by Plutarkh, writing in Greek and translating the concept of *meretrix* into his own language. These influential women acted in the most elite circles of the late republic, and are shared, as lovers, by the leading politicians of the day. Keith sees their roles as complex, serving as connecting links, sometimes passive pawns and metaphors of political invective, but often as active independent agents inside these male networks of power.

Elite prostitution has been considered a truly marginal upper-class phenomenon that did not in any way affect a great majority of Romans. Yet its numerous artistic representations, such as banquet scenes, where the figure of luxurious woman drinking wine in *convivium* is recurrent, show her to be just as omnipresent as the greedy *puella* is in Latin comedy, elegy, and satire. The straightforward pictorial assimilation of a courtesan as Aphrodite/Venus – several *hetairai* and courtesans were allegedly models of her cult images[40] – made their images omnipresent in the decoration of Roman houses, streets, and public buildings.[41] One of the most diffused pictures of the Greco-Roman world, Aphrodite *Anadyomene*, was said to be sketched by Apelles while seeing Phryne, the famous *hetaira*, bathing.[42] Each of the innumerable reproductions of this image – statuettes, paintings, glyptics, and mosaics – could thus be seen as a courtesan portrait. Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Cnidus (c. 350 BC), for which Phryne also served as the model, became in antiquity, as noted by Marilyn Skinner, "a kind of erotic fetish."[43] The gesture of the *Cnidia*, modestly hiding, while at the same time revealing all her nudity, is emblematic of the courtesan's profession, and Skinner further notes "the extent to which all parties concerned behave as though the *Cnidia* were not a mere sculpture but partly a living woman, a courtesan with the magnetism of the famous Phryne, and partly an embodiment of Aphrodite."[44] The courtesan's image was an omnipresent cultural icon.[45]

In this volume, this pictorial presence of the courtesans in the everyday Roman life is discussed in several contributions. Richard Neudecker discusses the portraits of the most famous and iconic Greek *hetairai* in the domestic wall-paintings of Pompeii. He shows that some Pompeian picture galleries, decorated with series of portrait *tondi* representing beautiful young women, in particular, those in the House of Caecilius Iucundus and the House of the Amorini Dorati, can be recognized as canons of famous Hellenistic *hetairai*. He suggests that their names and the anecdotes narrating their lives would have been quite familiar to moderately educated Pompeians, and their fictitious portrait would have been an efficient means to refer to the cultural memory of bygone glamour and luxury of the Hellenistic courts.

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40 The overlapping representations of courtesans and Venus in a variety of artworks, directly associated with temples and sanctuaries also conferred a religious aura to the figure of courtesans, manifesting itself also in the form of various cults peculiar to prostitutes present in Rome: Flora, Venus Erycina, and Fortuna Virilis. On courtesan's cult practices, also very much tied with Isiac cult, see Lilja 1978, 154-55; Murgatroyd 1980, 108; Gardner 2013, 164 and James in this volume. On the complex question of sacred prostitution in antiquity, see Beard – Henderson 1998, McClure 2006, 8-10; and Budin 2006, 2008, the latter with the controversial stand to negate its existence. For an overview of the Roman cults of Flora and Venus Erycina, see Fayer 2013, 536-50. Palmer (1977, 4-7) has also observed how elegiac mistresses, Tibullus' Delia in particular, could be represented as priestesses in the mystery cult of Venus, their doors venerated like an altar, with true religious fervour.

41 For example, Socrates visiting *hetaira* Theodote found her posing for a painter (Xen. *Mem*. 3, 11, 2), in Rome Plin. *nat*. 35, 119; Plut. *Pomp*. 2, 4. For further references, see the chapter of Berg in this volume, n. 147.

42 For the *anadyomene*, see Mitchel Havelock 1995, 86-88. The anecdote narrating both Praxiteles and Apelles admiring Phryne, in Ath. 13, 590f-91a. Cf. Plin. *nat*. 35, 91.

43 Skinner 2005, 171. For the *Cnidia*, Corso 1997a; 1997b; Mitchel Havelock 1995; Sande, in this volume.

44 Skinner 2005, 175-76. Ath. 13, 591b-c. For discussion and listing of monuments to prostitutes mentioned by Athenaios, see Keesling 2006, 66-71. Furthermore, a gilded statue of Phryne was set up in the temple of Apollo at Delphi by the prostitute herself.

45 Skinner 2005, 100. Laura McClure 2003, in her thorough analysis of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistes*, second-century CE dinner discourse on *hetairai*, argues that the courtesan's role was a cultural sign that carried symbolic value.

Siri Sande, in her contribution, discusses monuments and material memorials left of courtesans, in particular the uses of the iconography of Greek *hetairai* in Roman public spaces, notably in the *Porticus* of the theatre of Pompey, where a gallery of Greek *hetairai* and female writers, the two categories often coinciding, was set up. As noted by Sande, in the Roman world such a portrait gallery was an exception. In the Hellenistic East, *hetairai* were publicly celebrated with great tombs and portraits, but in Rome monuments to contemporary courtesans, even if they probably existed, seem to have been both anonymous and hidden. Funerary portraits of freedwomen represented as Venus may conceal Roman courtesans' anonymous funerary monuments.

Yet another way, in which courtesans could have entered the daily lives of the Roman masses, was through theatrical representations. Among the activities plied by the historical Roman courtesan was the profession of mime actress, as exemplified by Volumnia Cytheris. But being a courtesan, in itself, meant acting a part; even wearing a cosmetic 'mask' was not very different from bearing the theatrical ones.[46] This confrontation is at the centre of the seminal article of Catherine Edwards, 'Unspeakable Professions. Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome.' She examined both actors and prostitutes through the central concept of *infamia*, which legally affected the two categories, people who 'faked it' for a living.[47] In this volume, Ville Hakanen extends this analysis further into the role of Roman courtesans (male and female) as actors, partly bringing their customers into their fictitious world.

In sum, the figure of Roman courtesan was mimetic and hidden behind masks.[48] Paradoxically, we find the medium-upper-class prostitute a figure prominently present in many levels in the Roman social scene, literature, figurative art, and theatre, yet embedded in the system in such a discreet, seamless, and euphemistic way – appearing even in art without labels – as to have eluded the eye, not only of the Roman legislator, aedile, and moralist, but of much of our modern research.

Courtesan and streetwalker

In classical studies, as Rebecca Flemming has noted, little effort has been given to the prostitutes' perspectives of the themselves.[49] Also in this volume, an important *fil rouge* is the perspective, view-point and self-definition of Roman prostitutes of different social statuses. Arguably, for the woman herself the question of status was not mere decorative epithet but a question of vital importance. Indeed, it is clear not only that there existed the broad binary contrast between *lupa* and courtesan, but that a great variety of prostitute statuses were present in the Roman culture: brothel slaves owned by a pimp, confined to a *cella* in a *lupanar* or stationed on the street, under theatre *fornices*, or behind the tombs; medium- or high-priced courtesans owned and trained by a *leno*/*lena*; freedwomen or even freeborn women working independently in their own abode or hiring temporarily *cellae meretriciae*; as well as concubines in long-term exclusive, even marriage-like relationships positioned in houses owned by their lovers or in their own houses.[50]

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46 The same substances were used for both theatrical masks and cosmetics: McClure 2006, 16-17. One important type of courtesan portrait is actually the theatrical mask, which represents various types of courtesans, see Wiles 1991, 178-82.

47 In Anne Duncan's words (Duncan 2005, 252); Edwards 1997, 66-67; 69. For *infamia* see also McGinn 1998, 65-69; Flemming 1999, 50; McClure 2006, 11.

48 Kurke (1999, 182) has noted that, in the Greek world, even the word *hetaira*, not only *pornē*, was a term of derision and therefore often avoided: "the presentation of *hetaira* is so delicate and indirect, indeed so indirect that we need some ingenuity in locating the *hetaira* in Greek verse."

49 Flemming 1999, 38.

50 For *lena*, see Myers 1996; Flemming 1999, 52-53; Fayer 2013, 245-75.

Again, a good starting point to chart the situation is the variegated world of prostitution presented in many different degrees on the stage of Plautus. In *Poenulus*, a pimp called Lycus has bought two Carthaginian girls to be trained as *meretrices*, and they live in his house.[51] One of the girls, Adelphasium, outspokenly comments on the great difference between common prostitutes and themselves, advising her sister not to go to the altar of Venus at the same time as common streetwalking prostitutes gather there. The whole sequence is revealing, underlining the perceived sense of difference, expressed by a scenic courtesan figure herself:

> *Turba nunc est apud aram. An te ibi vis inter istas versarier*
> *Prosedas, pistorum amicas, reliquias alicarias*
> *Miseras schoeno delibutas servolincolas sordidas,*
> *Quae tibi olant stabulum statumque, sellam et sessibulum merum*
> *Quas adeo hau quisquam umquam liber tetigit neque duxit domum,*
> *servulorum sordidulorum scorta diobolaria*? (Plaut. *Poen*. 265-270)
>
> The altar's crowded now. You surely don't want to mingle there with those common prostitutes, mistresses of millers, spelt-mill leavings, wretched, slatternly, slaveling courters, plastered with poor perfumery, that smell of pothouse and profession, things of stool and chair, creatures that no free man ever touched or took home tuppenny sluts of scummy slavelings? (trans. P. Nixon)

The passage contains, as a narrative technique, invective of a high-status prostitute against low-status prostitutes. It is important to note that the (fictive) prostitutes are also engaged competitively in rhetorical invective, as if to distinguish themselves from those lower on the social scale. The prostitutes here primarily rank and rate their colleagues on the basis of the status of their clients, as well as on their price, and their social visibility and availability.

Let us first observe the distinction between free/slave. The two sisters of *Poenulus* are not free themselves, but they allegedly are frequented only by freeborn men. On the contrary, the common prostitutes from whom they distinguish themselves, are visited by no-one of free status ever (*quisquam umquam liber*). This category of prostitutes is characterized as consisting of courters of slaves (*servolincolas*) suited only for dirty slaves (*servuli sordiduli*), friends of millers (*alicariae*). They are consequently stigmatized with all servile brothel *topoi*, from filth to smell.

However, courtesans themselves could be of freed or even freeborn status, which could well have been an important element of their self-definition. As Antonio Varone has shown, and also reviews in this volume, even among the frequenters of the Pompeian *lupanar* there were freeborn women; other Pompeian inscriptions, such as the famous *Lucretia*, point to freeborn women as prostitutes/courtesans.[52] The female poet Sulpicia, whose poems are included in the Tibullan *corpus*, has been defined by Alison Keith as "both a desiring elegiac poet and a desirable elegiac *puella*."[53] Her status, a liberated *filia familias* or a learned courtesan, is extremely difficult to pinpoint, but she might possibly be even an authentic female voice. Sulpicia herself boasts of her noble family, signs her poem with a patronymic, and heralds a neat distinction from ordinary prostitutes, called by the denigratory word *scortum*, characterized by the *toga* worn by adulteresses,

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51 Fayer 2013, 160-67.

52 Varone 2003; 2005.

53 Keith 2008, 192.

and obliged to work wool under the commands of a master.[54] Here, again, the primary distinction is one of rank, a memorial of pride for the poet-courtesan herself.

Freeborn courtesans must have been, however, rarities, and the status of freedwomen was particularly adapted for the profession. The Horatian *Satire* 1, 2 presents, as two extreme alternatives for a man searching for sex, on one hand, the *stola*-dressed matron, and on the other, the cheap *meretrix* in a smelly *fornix*. Horace follows the Epicurean Philodemus in advising his wellborn addressee to avoid both extremes, and he presents several, preferable intermediary solutions, including, especially, the libertine freedwomen.[55] Similar considerations appear in Martial's *epigram* 3, 33, where the poet announces his preference for freeborn women, second choice for freedwomen, and 'extreme' final choice for slaves.[56] Among the historical cases of freedwomen working as courtesans are Faecenia Hispala and Volumnia Cytheris, as discussed by Keith in this volume. As a case of social ascent, Keith underlines how Hispala seems to be included in the networks of matrons while working as an independent courtesan and, in the end, even marries her young lover Aebutius. Freedwomen courtesans or concubines may have achieved quite singular positions, as Nymphidia, described by Tacitus and discussed in this volume by Siri Sande. The comedies of Plautus and Terentius offer many examples of men who want to buy the liberty of a *meretrix* in order to have them as their concubines.[57] Claudia Acte and Antonia Caenis discussed in the contribution of Pia Mustonen, were freedwomen who, as imperial mistresses, were able to exercise great influence on many levels and acquire and manage significant wealth, including landed properties and business enterprise. Mustonen argues that it was their unofficial role outside the standards of traditional Roman matrons that gave them much economic liberty and involvement even in imperial politics and administration. Besides such exceptions, a difficult question to ask is how often prostitutes or concubines, on lower social starata, were able to gather money and buy themselves free.[58]

Another line of internal differentiation and an effective invective between prostitutes, in the passage of Plautus' *Poenulus*, is the low price (*diobolaria*) charged by the targets of the sisters' scorn. In fact, one potential and quite simple differentiation between a *lupa* and courtesan would simply be the amount of money asked or earned. Estimating the wages earned by Roman prostitutes, however, is a difficult task. Thomas McGinn notes that a prostitute may have earned two or three times the wages of unskilled male urban labourers and cautiously suggests that "many prostitutes, at least independent prostitutes, may have lived far better than these labourers." But he also points to the "illusion of profitability": the income was actually undermined by various factors lessening the profit, of which a significant part may have gone to a pimp, subsistence, and even investment in clothing, hairdos, and other beauty products.[59] The prices indicated in the literary sources collected by McGinn vary greatly, mostly between 0,25 and 32 *asses*; but they also reach very high sums. McGinn dismisses as fantastic the prices of 100,000 sesterces, or two *aurei*, reported by Martial.[60] Both the lowest and highest prices could indeed be rhetorical defamations or exaggerations,

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54 Sulpicia *Tib*. 4, 10, 3-4: *Sit tibi cura togae potior pressumque quasillo / scortum quam Servi filia Sulpicia*. Keith 2008, 197-98.

55 Hor. *sat*. 1, 2, 47-48: *tutior at quanto merx est in classe secunda, libertinarum dico.* A similar threefold division of women, although recommending brothel prostitutes, is made by one of Athenaeus' 'sophists', the cynic Cynulcus in the tables discourse of *Deipnosophistai*: see Henry 1992, 260-61.

56 Mart. 3, 33: *Ingenuam malo, sed sit tamen illa negetur, libertina mihi proxuma condicio est: extremo est ancilla loco: sed vincet utramque, si facie haec erit ingenua.*

57 For example in Plaut. *Poen*. a soldier has chosen the other sister and would like to buy her for concubinage, '*in concubinatum sibi vult emere*' (102-103).

58 Flemming 1999, 49 sees this as extremely rare or nonexistent, and Juvenal's (10, 236-39) story about a man who leaves all his money to a prostitute, as a gross exaggeration. For prostitutes, heredities and *fideicommissa*, see McGinn 2003, 114.

59 McGinn 2004, 49-54.

60 McGinn 2004, 41-43; Mart. 2, 63, 1-2; 9, 4, 1.

though they do not necessarily undermine the conclusion that different price categories existed. Two asses are suggested as a plausible base rate advertised at Pompeii, while in Palmyra rates of six, eight asses and a *denarius* emerge.[61] It should be noted, in my opinion, that the advertised practices might differ markedly between upper- and lower-class prostitutes: of which the former normally avoided public appearances and any association with money or payment and were concomitantly less likely to be mentioned in street-side *graffiti*.

The Roman elite courtesan, at least in theory, received only gifts, not money.[62] Davidson notes that Greek *hetairai* "are shown striving hard to avoid anything that reeks of the sexual marketplace, avoiding cash, avoiding even the smell of bronze on their hands after handling a mirror, clinging fiercely to the language of love (*philia*) and friendship (not customers but 'intimate friends,' *philoi*)."[63] Similarly in Plautus' *Mostellaria*, the elderly *meretrix* Scapha suggests to the courtesan Philematium that she not hold up her silver mirror, so as not to have hands smelling of silver (coins).[64] The semantic line between payment and gift seems often intentionally blurred and played on: Propertius, in his first collection of elegies asks why his mistress Cynthia "sells herself for foreign gifts" (*teque peregrinis vendere muneribus*, Prop. 1, 2, 4); Tibullus wishes that girlfriends in Rome would never be "on sale for gifts" (*numquam venales essent ad munus amicae*, Tib. 2, 16, 21).[65]

Policing the boundary between an exclusive *puella* and a common prostitute is frequently of concern in love elegy, as in the following Ovidian passage:

> *stat meretrix certo cuivis mercabilis aere*
> *et miseras iusso corpore quaerit opes;*
> *devovet imperium tamen haec lenonis avari*
> *et, quod vos facitis sponte, coacta facit.* (Ov. *am*. 1, 10, 21-24)
>
> The prostitute stands out, salable to anybody for a fixed price,
> And she seeks miserable wealths by obeying orders with her body;
> Nevertheless she curses the command of the greedy pimp
> And what you do freely, she does by force. (trans. S. James)

Here, the crucial differences between the two categories of free and slave are, again, mirrored in the ability or inability to choose clients (*cuivis mercabilis*) and the capacity to command one's own proper body, in both cases unavailable to a slave prostitute. The wording of the passage emphasizes the question of control over the woman's body with terms meaning overpowering, compulsion, and forcing (*iusso corpore*, *imperium lenonis*, *coacta*) particularly 'cursed' by the woman herself.

For the women themselves there would be a crucial difference not only in the quality, but also the quantity of the clients, the most favourable condition being a single long-term client or lover, in a relationship resembling concubinage. In classical Athens, the term *pallak*ē, concubine, signified an intermediary status between a legal wife and a prostitute and seems to have been a desirable status for courtesans. On the contrary, as noted by Davidson, to descend from the status of *pallak*ē to the brothel was a 'fate worse than

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61 McGinn 2004, 44.

62 Legislation concerning gifts to prostitutes, McGinn 1998, 335-37.

63 Davidson 2006, 45.

64 Plaut. *Most*. 111-12.

65 James 2003, 93. For the complex question of whether elegiac *puellae* are courtesans, Griffin 1976; Fleming 1999, 47; Wyke 1989; James 2003.

death,' illustrated by the example of a *pallakē* who medicated her lover with a poisonous love potion in order to avoid such destiny.[66] Also the more exclusive courtesans were often in long-term relationships regulated by written contracts.[67] Mouritsen notes how the concubinage, or even marriage, of a man with his own freedwoman, was not only considered respectable but also protected by law.[68] This legislation underlines how the question of status had an impact on the subjectivity and lived experience of the women involved, as she thought of herself – and was perceived by others – as slave, freedwoman, or freeborn person. McGinn cautiously reminds us we should not exaggerate this distinction; it was not always crucial.[69]

A debasing obligation of the common prostitute was to be seated or standing on the public street and thus to be visibly and indiscriminately on sale, available to all comers. In the *Poenulus* passage, such a condition is defined by the term *proseda* (woman sitting in front). Indeed, in Plautus' *Cistellaria*, the courtesan Gymnasium says that she must go inside, away from the street, in order to avoid appearing as a street prostitute.[70] Here, we can take up the much-discussed passage of Ulpian in the *Digest* (23, 2, 43, pr. 3), defining prostitution, treated in detail by McGinn in this volume, about the meaning of the word *palam*, which seemingly does not consider as prostitutes those who do not work openly, in public: "Likewise, because she has intercourse with one or two, having taken money, it is not understood that she has openly made a living by her body" (*quod cum uno et altero pecunia accepta commiscuit, non videtur palam corpore quaestum facere*).[71] Practicing in private may, thus, not even have been defined as prostitution; to expose one's body to the public gaze was not only immoral, but made one subject to the legal definition of prostitute.

All professions that exposed the (half)naked body to public view, including prostitutes, actors, and gladiators, were legally affected by *infamia*, which was an important cultural tool for the regulation of good behaviour.[72] Interestingly, *infamia* is not so much 'shame' as the 'formal loss of good reputation', and so it likely had little impact on the lives of most Romans, in particular non-aristocratic/elite women who were already excluded from public life because of their gender.[73] It can also be considered as a paradoxical freedom from the burden of controlling and guarding one's reputation.[74] Yet, even the *puella* had to safeguard her reputation: Propertius laments that Cynthia had too little concern for her *fama* (Prop. 2,5).[75] The expression *famosa*, referring to prostitutes and used as synonym of *vulgares puellae* of Ovid (those visiting the Temple of Venus Erycina near Porta Collina) is also interesting in this respect, as it evidently refers to prostitutes

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66 Davidson 1998, 83. For the prison-like life of women in the *lupanar* cells, see Flemming 1999, 43; McGinn 2004, 37; for *lupanar* and *fornix* serving primarily the poor and the slaves, Flemming 1999, 45.

67 James 2012a, 431; Fayer 2013, 31-37.

68 Mouritsen 2011, 43; McGinn 1991, 346; 2004, 201, n. 9. For freedwomen as prostitutes, Treggiari 1970, 107; McGinn 2004, 35-36; 59-60.

69 McGinn 2004, 60-61, suggesting even that in some case slaves may have received better treatment than free prostitutes.

70 Plaut. *Cist*. 330: *Intro abeo, nam meretricem astare in via solam prostibuli sanest*.

71 Flemming 1999, 52. On the meaning of *palam*, and an overview of Roman legislation, see Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 11-12; Fayer 2013, 567 et passim.

72 Langlands 2006, 18-19 with an elaborate discussion of the feelings of *pudor*, *pudicitia*, and *verecundia*. For *infamia*, also Savunen 1997, 102; McClure 2006, 11; Fayer 2013, 551-54, on *ignominia* and *infamia*, and their opposite, *existimatio*, and Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 13; 16-17 et passim, on *infamia* and *turpes personae* in Roman law.

73 Gardner 1993, 154; Savunen 1997, 102-3.

74 Cf. Catharine Edwards, who notes in her elaborate discourse on *infamia* that the "half-starved prostitute who sold her body among the tombs of Via Appia no doubt had little in common with the star gladiator." However, inversely, I would note that also a half-starved last-row gladiator probably had little in common with the star courtesan, admitting that both were exceptions to the rule, Edwards 1997, 76-77.

75 Langlands 2006, 199.

practicing in public, *palam*.[76] Fame, not only, for a street prostitute, but also for a courtesan, was an advertisement, potentially positive or negative; *fama* and *infamia* had to be controlled and managed as methods of conscious image construction. This balancing between virtue and vice has been examined by Rebecca Langlands, who observes how "the same *puella* may seem in one light a promiscuous and hard-hearted courtesan and in the next an innocent who needs to be sheltered both from moral corruption and from the damaging force of rumour."[77]

Indeed, the seemingly contradictory figure of a virtuous courtesan shows that Roman virtue was not a yes/no proposition, but a much more multidimensional and relative entity.[78] Rhetorical questioning of the limits of virtue and interior morals of a courtesan is represented by the stock figures of New Comedy, where we find the *bona meretrix* and *mala meretrix* – the former ingenuous, naïve, and self-sacrificing, the latter calculating, business-minded and artful, though in fact only minding her own business.[79] Even sexual promiscuity and immorality are not necessary characteristics of courtesans, as shown by another stock figure of middle comedy, a freeborn girl or *pseudokore* conserving her virginity or virtue even as a courtesan-in-training. The limits of conserving one's *pudicitia* in a brothel are rhetorically examined in Elder Seneca's *Controversiae*, in the law case of the girl abducted by pirates and then sold to a *lupanar*, where she has supposedly maintained her virginity until liberated.[80] The advocates discussing the case adduce the various *pros* and *cons* of the question of whether she has, however, maintained her *pudicitia*: the harder views see that her *pudicitia* would have been lost even by a colloquial acquaintance with other prostitutes, after she has learned from them the courtesans' arts of dissimulation and persuasion.[81]

In antiquity, the idea of women deliberately choosing sex work is rare if any others are available. One such exceptional instance is an astrological passage of Firmicus Maternus about women born under the sign of Venus who are represented as having an urge to embark on a life of prostitution, either setting themselves up independently in business or contracting with a *leno* (*in meritorio se statuat vel lenoni locet*).[82] The empress Messalina could be thought of as a rare example of voluntary prostitution, allegedly entering into the most decadent level of prostitution the dark, smelly, and slave-oriented brothel without any material necessity.[83] Her exceptional case is discussed by Marja-Leena Hänninen, in her contribution to this volume, underlining how the narrative about Messalina was not so much about her personal character or vice, but she was used as a rhetorical tool to reveal the moral corruption of political power.

Becoming a courtesan, however, was in most cases not the woman's choice but the decision of someone else – a slave-owning patron, mother, or foster parents. Courtesan mothers often educated their daughters as courtesans, and in literature the figure of mother and daughter living together, both *meretrices*, is a constant.[84] Comparative premodern data suggests that women without men, above all unmarried girls and widows, were especially vulnerable to disruption the of family economy provoked by the death

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76 Ov. *fast*. 4, 865-72. James 2012a, 431: *volgus quae ab se segregant*, girls who do not give public access to themselves.

77 Langlands 2006, 197. In this volume, see James's discussion about the courtesan being necessarily *known* in her neigbourhood.

78 Perry 2014, 9 discussing Roman freedwomen, has stated that only citizen women could be defined as possessing sexual virtue: slaves (and slave prostitutes) did not, and their only virtue was obedience – they were, in a way, not even included in the category of 'Roman women.'

79 For *bona* and *mala meretrix*, see James in this volume.

80 Sen. *contr*. 1.2.

81 Langlands 2006, 254-64.

82 Flemming 1999, 41. Firm. *math*. 3, 6, 22.

83 Tac. *ann*. 11, 26, 1; Plin. *nat*. 10, 83, 172; Dio Cass. 61, 31, 1; Iuv. 6, 132. Langlands 2006, 9-10.

84 Flemming 1999, 41; McGinn 2004, 56-57; Fantham 2011, 165-67.

of a parent or husband.[85] Marilyn Skinner has also underlined foreign origins as a potential force exposing ancient women to prostitution.[86] Similarly, Elaine Fantham discusses "the half-world of unprotected women which is often wrongly dismissed as the life of *meretrices*… women without verifiable citizenship, deprived of the safe environment of comfortable bourgeois families."[87] From the woman's point of view, such female networks might have been the only means to survive. In this volume, Sharon James efficiently analyzes the paths leading Roman women to become independent courtesans and the various stages and phases of their lives, including life-long relationships with colleagues, friends, mothers, sisters, and daughters.

If we continue to search for perceived differences between Roman common prostitutes and courtesans, a distinctive sign, this time more from the point of view of the customer, must have been the woman's *mores*, 'manners.' A similar concept of manners, *tropous*, appears as a qualification of Greek *hetaira*.[88] The question of *mores* (manners) is central to the self-definition of independent courtesans and can be seen in connection with the frequent expression *bellis moribus* of prostitutes' advertisements in graffiti. For example, in Plautus' *Mostellaria*, it is specified that the surplus that the lover buys from the high-priced *meretrix*, with gold and purple, is precisely her pleasant manners (*mores*).[89] Besides educated manners, *mores* can also signify high morals. Cynthia's *duri mores*, when she excludes Propertius from her house, reveal not only stern morals, but also the rather harsh manners (of the *meretrix mala*?).[90] In *Poenulus*, the *bona meretrix* Adelphasium declares herself to be against immoral manners (*turpes mores*) in paradoxical competition with the normative morality of a Roman matron; she would rather be adorned with good character (*bono ingenio*) than wear golden jewels and clothe herself in modesty (*pudor*) rather than purple.

> *bono me esse ingenio ornatam quam auro multo mavolo*
> *aurum, id fortuna invenitur, natura ingenium bonum.*
> *Meretricem pudore gerere magis decet quam purpuram.*
> *Pulchrum ornatum turpes mores peius caeno conlinunt.*
>
> Gold is the gift of fortune; good character is birth-given. Modesty makes a courtesan more beautiful than purple; brutish manners soil a beautiful outfit worse than mud.[91]

Manners, then, may clearly distinguish the more exclusive courtesan not only from the streetwalker but also from the *matrona*. As we have seen, they comprise proper behaviour, probably cleanness (in contrast with the proverbial dirt of the *lupanar*), and even – relatively – chaste moral conduct.

Mores as manners might also refer to literary or artistic education, typical of the elegiac *docta puella*, who, besides literary knowledge, should master musical instruments, singing, and dance.[92] Emien Eyben de-

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85 McGinn 2004, 70.

86 Skinner 2005, 169.

87 Fantham 2011, 158.

88 Davidson 2006, 43 mentions as the best description of *hetaira*'s good manners (to dress up properly, to be neat, tidy, and cheerful, not to drink too much at dinner parties, good table manners, controlled in bed) the sixth book of Lucian's *Courtesans' Dialogues*.

89 Plaut. *Most.* 286: *amator meretricis mores sibi emit auro et purpura*.

90 Prop. 2, 5, 7.

91 Plaut. *Poen*. 299-301: *bono me esse ingenio ornatam quam auro multo mavolo* / *aurum, id fortuna invenitur, natura ingenium bonum.* / *Meretricem pudore gerere magis decet quam purpuram.* / *Pulchrum ornatum turpes mores peius caeno conlinunt.*

92 In this volume, see the contribution of James on the education of courtesans.

fines courtesans as "women with a degree of culture and education that neither the average prostitute nor the average wife possessed."[93] Interestingly, Judith Hallett has shown, on basis of the correspondence of *meretrices* as described in Plautus' comedies, that they were plausibly imagined to master complicated epistolary and rhetoric tactics.[94] Quite probably many prostitutes, even some of those of slave status and working for a pimp, were literate. Sarah Levin-Richardson has also suggested the possibility that prostitutes themselves wrote notices and comments as *graffiti* on the walls, citing also Lukianos' *Dialogues of Courtesans*, where in several instances courtesans discuss *graffiti* about themselves or their colleagues, sometimes written by themselves and commenting on each other's love affairs.[95] Naturally, we should also remember the flourishing erotic literature comprising practical manuals, which mostly circulated under the names of famous *hetairai*, and which is mostly assumed in modern research to have been written by men, under pseudonyms, but perhaps without reason.[96] This aspect must have been important also for the courtesans themselves, not only as a decorative attraction for the *amator*, thus multiplying their survival strategies.

Antonio Varone's chapter in this book moves in the provincial literary world that saw Pompeian courtesans as protagonists. Many Pompeian graffiti cite half-mercenary love affairs based on exchange of gifts, versed letters, and amatory favours, with proliferation of elegiac motifs such as rivalry between *amatores* and selective entrance and battling outside the door, which characterize also the Pompeian provincial elegiac *puellae*, *pupae*, and *dominae*. A particularly interesting piece of evidence, previously unedited, is discussed by Varone in his contribution. A graffito verse from the street front outside the Villa of S. Marco in Stabia, *paraclausithyron* addressed to a woman named *Sabidia*, testifies to both literary exchange and literary play of citations between the writer and the recipient.

To summarize, from the perspective of the *puellae* themselves, the differentiation of social status might have entailed the relative control over one's life and body, crucial as that between life and death, from the courtesans' marriage-like stable relationships, with a proper household, to the total submission of an inability to control one's body in an *ergastulum* such as the *lupanar*. The women's voices, echoing in comedy, elegy, and graffiti, demonstrate that they themselves also kept up, underlined, and showed off these differences of status, referring to price, or gifts received, degree of education, degree of public exposure, and the status of their clients.

Courtesan and matron

The Roman courtesan thus could be defined as possessing the chastity almost of a matron, just as the Greek *hetaira* – remembering Phryne who always appeared veiled in public, discussed by Sande in this volume – exists in a state between wife and whore, depending on situation and viewer. In particular, courtesans with exclusive contracts, show clearly matronly morals. James has illustrated well the prominence of such long-term relations, noting that, in comedy and poetry, both even use the lexicon of marriage, speaking of their

93 Eyben 1993.

94 Hallett 2011.

95 Levin-Richardson 2013, 320-22, Lucian *dial. meret.* 4, 2-3 and 10, 3-4.

96 Skinner 2005, 172; West 1996, 20-21. For a lengthy discussion on erotic manuals *qua* pornography, and the question of authorship, see Parker 1992. Parker holds that though the manuals may have been ascribed to women, "evidence points that it was male authored and male consumed," thus objectifying woman, even more so through elevating her as a seeming narrator/subject (1992, 105). However, we might argue for female authorship in light of the combination with women's authorship both on gynaecology and erotic manuals, see Parker 1992, 106.

husband/wife (*coniunx*), never *contubernalis*.[97] She offers a good picture of how the courtesan herself may have considered herself as *de facto* married, and the elegiac lover pleased to see his beloved in a matron-like domestic situation, weaving at home, alone, at night, underlining her devoted chastity and dedication to a single contracted lover.[98] In Plautus' *Asinaria*, the yearly contract proposed by the would-be lover Diabolus to a courtesan, Philaenium, demands extreme chastity, confinement to her house, not sending or receiving letters, controlling her speech and facial gestures in the presence of other men.[99] Such contracts, *iura* or *syngrapha*, analysed in detail by Fayer, were stipulated by the owner or mother of the girl, or by herself; they were probably not legally binding but rather a private pact tied by custom and paid with the *merces annua*, annual fee.[100]

Such matron-like status, described by Latin writers, has easily been confused with other social groups. Such is the case of love elegy, where *puella* has been understood to be an adulterous wife, not a courtesan, and the *vir* has been understood as the husband, not the contractual official lover.[101] Reading these poems as documents about courtesans lifestyles or as descriptions of citizen wives led an earlier generation of scholars to the idea that Roman elite matrons lived like courtesans.[102] As noted by Maria Wyke, "Augustan elegy has set an especially seductive trap for historians of women's lives in antiquity…read uncritically, such love poetry has been employed to confirm the existence in Augustan Rome of a whole movement of sophisticated and sexually liberated ladies, as in John Balsdon's study *Roman Women* and Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*".[103]

The literary mechanism of camouflaging courtesans as matrons, and sometimes also elite matrons as courtesans (e.g. Catull. 79; Cic. *Cael.* 47-49), confusing for the modern reader, can also be detected in the popular form of invective used against elite women, accusations of a meretrician lifestyle. The rhetorical denunciation of well-born women as prostitutes is analyzed in this volume in the chapter by Marja-Leena Hänninen through the cases of Clodia (Lesbia), Iulia, and Messalina. Hänninen examines how these three women experienced a 'shaming' of their memory, using the overtones of sexual promiscuity and even prostitution. While Clodia and Iulia seem to have adopted the image and freedoms of non-servile courtesans, perhaps based also on their literary education, which assimilated them to the iconic *docta puella*, Messalina was associated with lowly brothels as a common *lupa*, thus making her *damnatio memoriae* double, by sexual invective and servile connotation.

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97 James 2006, 226-27.

98 See James 2012a for a detailed discussion on the vocabulary and rhetoric used by a courtesan-on-contract, Arethusa, in Propertius' poem 4,3, often taken to illustrate the relationship between husband and wife. For the wool-working theme, see in part. p. 435 with further reference.

99 Plaut. *Asin*. 756-805. James 2006, 229; Fayer 2013, 32-37.

100 Rousselle 1988, 97-99; James 2006, 227-28; Herter 1960, 81-82. Plaut. *Asin.* 234; 747; 908; Prop. 3, 20, 16; Ov. *am*. 1, 4, 64; 2, 5, 30; *ars* 2, 545.

101 For a complete treatment of the question of vir/husband, adulterous wife/courtesan, see James 2003, 35-68; 2006, 226. The status of the *puellae* is quite explicitly stated by some authors such as Tibullus, thus mentioning that Delia is not entitled to wear *stola* and *vittae*, emblems of married matron (1, 6, 67-68), or Ovid, thus defining similarly the intended audience of the *Art of love* (*ars* 1, 31-34).

102 For an overview of such an interpretation, see Hallett 1993, 62-65; Wyke 2002, 13, 35; and on the relation between elegy and 'reality', in general, Wyke 2002, 13-18. For an idea of a whole 'movement' of new freedom and sexually liberated ladies in late Republican Rome, King 1976, 70.

103 Wyke 2002, 12 discussing the relative impossibility to extract information on social conditions of 'real' ancient women from literary text, provokes: "Could it constitute an advocacy of a better place for women in the ancient world? Could Augustan elegy be offering its readers realistic representations of women bound up with a feministic message?". Balsdon 1962, 191-92; 226; Pomeroy 1975, 172; Langlands 2006, 196-67.

This ambivalence, a play of opposition and assimilation between matrons and courtesans, may also have been visually expressed in their dress. Kelly Olson has thoroughly examined how prostitutes and matrons rendered visible their status in their dress and how their clothing, at times, seems to have been quite similar: "This blurring of vestimentary (and consequently social) definition is especially evident in an examination of female dress in Roman antiquity."[104] This probably created the dangerous confusion between the matrons and prostitutes, or rather courtesans, reported by writers from Seneca the Elder to church fathers.[105] It has been taken to mean that matrons often dressed in transparent and sexually provocative clothes – but could equally imply that courtesans dressed relatively chastely. Olson also notes the strikingly conflicting descriptions of prostitutes' outfits, varying from nudity, or male toga, to costly transparent silks.[106] In addition, Roman courtesans likely had some leeway in their use of fashion, picking up styles and statuses, as did the sixteenth century Venetian courtesans, 'enterpreneurs of the self,' analysed by Rosenthal; whereas the other women, wives in particular, were restricted by legislation (after Augustus) to show their marital status by wearing the matrona's *stola* and *vittae*.[107] The ambivalent status of the courtesan, indefinably between moral and immoral, made it possible for them to play with and fashion their self-presentation, and even to assimilate their dress to that of the matrons.

As for the iconography, a similar line of confusion runs between the depiction of elite *matronae* and that of courtesans participating in convivial scenes.[108] Although we know that Roman *matronae* participated in the dinner party, even reclining on couches, their pictorial appearance in scenes of after-dinner *convivium* or symposium is doubtful. Katherine Dunbabin comments that at least some female figures in a banquet are evidently meant to be seen "as higher-class courtesans, *hetaerae*, who recline on the couches with men, partially or completely nude, share the wine, and take part in the singing," and sees them as "a paradigm for luxurious life," a life that was beyond the reach of middle-class inhabitants of small town Pompeii, except in their dreams, and yet "unlikely to be entirely based on fiction,"[109] However, Molly Myerowitz and others have suggested that, in images of erotic encounters in luxuriously furnished settings, anonymous elite couples rather than prostitutes were depicted.[110] The question, in fact, always remains open: how to distinguish a matron from a courtesan?

In her chapter of the Villa of the Farnesina, Irene Bragantini discusses the series of paintings from the two *cubicula* flanking the triclinium of Villa della Farnesina, an aristocratic palace, representing couples on beds in richly decorated surroundings, never explicitly in sexual positions. Bragantini sees in such images a strong Hellenistic background and adhesion to earlier Greek motifs, underlining luxury and the pleasures of life in general. It is interesting to consider the possibility that these pictures possibly representing courtesans, could have been chosen by an elite Roman matron, Julia, daughter of Augustus and spouse of Agrippa, to whom it is plausibly conjectured that the Villa belonged. The role of Julia as a matron imitating the lifestyle of a *docta puella*, or an independent courtesan, would make these Hellenistic erotic citations even more

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104 Olson 2006, 187.

105 Ad es. Sen. *contr*. 2, 3, 10; Tert. *pall.* 4, 9.

106 Olson 2006, 194.

107 Rosenthal 2006, 52. For the exclusive signs of a matron's outfit, see Fantham 2008.

108 A parallel problem is the one concerning Athenian vase painting, where in many cases it is still unknown whether the images of conversing men and women should be used as evidence of life of Athenian wives or courtesans.

109 Dunbabin (2003, 22-23; 56) notes that the Roman way of depicting women at banquet is inconsistent, an anomaly that would reflect the adaptation of different models and a "fundamental ambivalence" in actual practice and ideology behind it. Among such ambivalent images, the banquet of young man and courtesan found in Herculaneum (MANN inv. 9024). For images of *hetairai* in Greek banquet, see Peschel 1987.

110 Myerowitz 1992, 145.

interesting.[111] However, the matronly 'chastity' and 'morality' also applied to elite courtesans could have made such a choice more acceptable.

Luciana Jacobelli, in her chapter, analyses realistic banquet scenes found in Pompeii. She notes a clear correspondence with the images of scenes with multiple participants in *triclinia* (House of the Chaste Lovers IX 12, 6.7, House of the Triclinium V 2, 4 *triclinium* r) and banqueting couples, in *cubicula* (House of Meleager VI 9, 2.13, *cubiculum* 12; House of Laocoon VI 14, 28.33, *cubiculum* d; House of Epidius Sabinus IX 1, 22, *cubiculum* z). Textual and archaeological evidence shows that it was precisely in these two types of rooms in which banquets and courtesans' professional activities were principally staged. Jacobelli proposes an alternative reading to one of the paintings in a *triclinium* of the House of the Triclinium, where the woman holding the *rhyton* seems to be the host of the banquet and might be a courtesan.

The interplay between images and architecture brings us to the final central theme of this volume: materiality. Further distinctions between matrons and courtesans, on one hand, and courtesans and common prostitutes, on the other, could be recognized in their material surroundings, composed of architectonic and decorated space, and objects of use and display. Can a distinction be made, for example, between the intended audiences of erotic images on the walls and on every day utensils?

In this volume, Donato Labate and Anna Fedele present and analyse lamps with erotic images found in women's tombs of the Imperial period, with their find contexts. Indeed, even though such lamps are rare in tombs, by far the majority were given as grave goods to women, and many are accompanied with valuable toiletry items. Labate and Fedele discuss the possibility of hypothesizing about the status of the deceased on the basis of these grave goods – a matron or a prostitute/courtesan – though he remains a sceptic about finding a definitive solution. They therefore document a range of possible interpretations. Nonetheless, the discovery of erotic lamps in female burials remains an intriguing fact.

The present writer too, in her chapter in this volume, follows the thread of materiality and its meaning in social definition of matrons/courtesans. Can luxury goods such as gold jewelry, valuable toiletries, banquet and bathing services, as archaeological finds, always be seen as expressions of high social standing, i.e. belonging to elite matrons? Just as it is difficult to connect burial contexts with prostitutes/courtesans, so it is difficult to associate objects found in domestic contexts with a particular gender and social class. While low-status brothel prostitutes were plausibly associated with rather few material finds, I argue that courtesans, both literary and iconographic, are characterized by a multitude of objects, given to them as 'gifts' or used as signs of social distinction from other prostitutes (expensive jewellery, gold), or used by them to create an appropriate setting for staging the banquets, which were central to their activities (vessels for ablutions, furniture of their houses, including erotic paintings, and Venus figures). My chapter presents three Pompeian houses (Caupona di Masculus, House V 3, 10; House of the Beautiful Impluvium), which I reinterpret in the key of non-servile prostitution.

Roman courtesans and matrons were expected to live according to their proper moral codes, which also contained many similarities, such as piety towards family members, religious observation, exercise of self-control, avoiding of promiscuity, ostensible good manners, and favouring of cultured environments. A courtesan's appearance in clothing and iconography, her possession of objects, could therefore bring her close to the elite matron in material status, even if some crucial liberties, scrutinized in the contributions to this volume, might render them distinguishable.

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111 For the figure of Julia, see also Fantham 2006, Richlin 2014, 81-109, and Hänninen in this volume.

Courtesan and *adulescens*

One of the purposes of this volume is to note the widespread presence and the fundamental and built-in role of non-servile prostitution in the Roman society. As noted by David Halperin in *Before Sexuality*, a comprehensive view of ancient sexualities is not possible without considering the varieties of prostitution and prostitutes.[112] In fact, in a society where women married in their teens and men about 10 years later, a gap of about 10 years was created for the young men between the assumption of *toga virilis* and marriage, during which sexual relations with *puellae* and *amicae* were permitted and encouraged for the *adulescens* and, indeed, prescribed by the social convention.[113]

Cato's famous *dictum* congratulated a youth seen at the brothel door for not committing a *crimen* of adultery, even if he recommended against frequenting the brothel too often ('living' in the house of prostitutes).[114] This applies also to courtesans: in comedy, fathers can even appear collaborative in organizing and financing their sons' love affairs with them. In Plautus' *Asinaria*, for example, the whole plot revolves around the acquisition of an annual contract with the courtesan, with *pater* Demaenetus actively helping his son Argyrippus to attain this goal.[115]

However, as Laura McClure notes, even if prostitution did not have the same moral inflection as it does today, it did enter the moral discourse of antiquity: a prodigal lifestyle was a crime against self-control and patrimony. In other words, courtesans were more crucial in economic discourses about wealth and objects, rather than in defining sexual morals. The other stance of paternal response is, thus, negative but from more of an economic than moral standpoint, for it reveals the arcane fear that the family fortunes will be transferred to the *amica*, the courtesan friend. Sumptuous parties with courtesans were part of the excessively prodigious lifestyles of the *adulescens luxuriosus*, such as Philolaches in *Mostellaria*, living in 'Greek fashion' while the father is away.[116] Such parties were viewed not only as a threat to family patrimony, but could lead to political and civil unrest, or conspiracy, as is evident from the description of Catiline's feasting supporters, "reclining at the banquets, embracing harlots, stupid with wine, stuffed with food, crowned with wreaths, smothered by unguents, weakened by vice."[117] The choice of the right kind of courtesan, with the right social status and right price, seems to have been the principal concern of the topic father.

Even more than just a love for luxury, the dangerous trap that transformed a licit affair with a prostitute into a financially hazardous long-term affair with a courtesan was romantic love. In comedy and elegy, the *adulescens* figure is described truly as love-struck, and this feeling is utilized by the pimp, *lena*, and

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112 Halperin – Winkler – Zeitlin 1990, 18.

113 Eyben 1993; Fayer 2013, 37-41 et passim. See further Langlands 2006, 115-22; 205-6 for analysis of the limits of sexuality permitted to a young man.

114 Quoted in Hor. *sat*. 1, 2, 31-32. Flemming 1999, 44. A different, minority view, is that of stoic Musonius Rufus condemning sex with prostitutes, Muson. fr. 12 (Lutz), see Flemming 1999, 45. On marital love and courtesans also Deodato 2009, 313-14. Ter. *Ad.* 101-2: *non est flagitium, mihi crede, adulescentulum scortari necque potare.* Valerius Maximus tells the story of a father who dissuades his son, burning with an insane passion, away from a dangerous, illicit and probably adulterous love affair, by counselling him "to resort to common Venus," i.e., to go first to visit a prostitute, *vulgari et permissa venere uteretur* (Val. Max. 7, 3, 10). For discussion of this passage and sexual morality, see Langlands 2006, 137. Cf. also Plaut. *Curc*. 36-38. Even Cicero similarly recommends prostitution: "If there is anyone who thinks that youth should be forbidden affairs even with courtesans (*meretricii amores*), he is doubtless eminently austere (I cannot deny it), but his view is contrary not only to the licence of this age, but also to the custom and concessions of our ancestors. For when was this not a common practice? When was it blamed? When was it forbidden?" Cic. *Cael*. 20, 48, trans. R. Gardner.

115 James 2006, 228-32.

116 Plaut. *Most*. 959-61. Eyben 1993, 103-5. In the second century BC Polybius (31, 21, 4) notes Scipio as a virtuous exception among the youths of his age, in the habit of paying a talent for beautiful boys, courtesans, musical entertainment, and banquets.

117 Cic. *Cael*. 28, 67; *Att*. 1, 16, 11; *Catil*. 2, 5, 10. For political conspiracy and courtesans, see Rauh 2011.

the girl herself to their advantage – in this state, the youth, made to pine away, will bring in most monetary gains.[118] In fact, it is to be noted that the exciting game of flirting, courting, and winning the object of one's love, by the means of proper attraction, could only occur with a girl who was free to choose and free to move. Therefore, the amorous affair so frequently depicted in Roman comedy and elegy was a phenomenon that could really only occur in the demimonde of courtesans – not in elite society of citizen women.

Sharon James notes how obsessively Roman males, dating a courtesan whom they cannot control and observe, deprecated this freedom: "Free woman, whose very freedom, derived from her noncitizen status as a courtesan, both entices and frightens the man attracted to her." This was different from all other categories of women, somehow under direct male control – the wife under the control of a father, a husband, or a *tutor*; female slaves under their male owners; and the streetwalking prostitutes under the control of their pimp.[119] As an exception from this rule, the courtesan threw the Roman male temporarily into an identity crisis, even metaphorically rendering him her slave according to the poetic motif of *servitium amoris*. In this respect, the figure of courtesan assumed a male, dominant role, thus turning the Roman gender system upside down. Davidson, accordingly, ponders whether the Greek courtesan, who goes to places and does things that other women cannot, might be considered an example of female agency, or whether she is rather given temporarily a male agency, the status of an 'honorary man.'[120] This peculiarly male status is also noted by Christopher Faraone, who assimilates the magical erotic charms used by Greek *hetairai* to 'aggressive' male spells, conferring on them a 'maleness' that is peculiar to the figure of the courtesan in all Mediterranean cultures: wearing items of male dress, attending male symposia and walking in public out on the street, drinking wine or gesturing boldly.[121]

The courtesan's status that brings forth a temporary redefinition of gender roles can be further analysed in connection to the case of male prostitutes of non-servile condition. Interesting literary cases are Tibullus' Marathus as a male 'elegiac mistress',[122] and Cicero's invective against Antony, characterized not only as effeminate, but meretrician, with a career in vice that started young, wearing the *toga virilis* as if it were *toga muliebris* (i.e., a sign of common prostitute), working for a fixed price, and then promoted by Curio as his fixed lover, as if they were married: "First he was a common prostitute … taking a fixed, and not small price for the shame; Curio … took you out from the meretrician work, and, as if he gave you the *stola*, he placed you, as it were, in a stable and secure marriage."[123] In this volume, Ville Hakanen considers the ways in which male prostitutes could be designated as courtesans, as also being of free(d) status, accompanying their *vir* in banquet, receiving gifts, and accumulating wealth, One of his examples, Naevolus, is clearly a male prostitute who is "an elegant dinner guest" known for his witticisms – he is, in fact, both *adulescens* and courtesan.

Conclusions

Arguably, courtesans and other similar figures at the margins of prostitution, such as *mimae* and concubines, were quite an indispensable and integral part of the Roman social and gender system. They were the indis-

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118 Thus, the youth of Plautus' *Poenulus* exclaims: "I'm in love, beyond all self-control!" Plaut. *Poen*. 153: *Amo immodeste*!

119 James 2006, 224-25.

120 Davidson 2006, 31.

121 Faraone 2002, 409, with further references.

122 Drinkwater 2012.

123 Cic. *Phil*. 2, 44: *Primo volgare scortum…certa flagiti merces nec parva; Curio… te a meretricio quaestu abduxit et, tamquam stolam dedisset in matrimonio stabili et certo conlocavit*. See Langlands 2006, 306-10.

pensable counterpart and ideal pair of the unmarried *adulescens* but were integrated into male networks of power as mistresses of leading political men. Similarly, actors and gladiators, famous as persons, *infames* as a social category, were essential for the state as an institution. Further citing Duncan, the same qualities made them both despised low-Others and objects of desire, socially peripheral and symbolically central.[124]

Sarah Levin-Richardson suggested that female writers and readers to Pompeian erotic graffiti can extract plausible female agency and also bring forth women as active sexual agents, thus balancing them between subjective 'empowerment' and objectified oppression: "Women simultaneously reinforcing their own subjugation by the dominant sexual paradigm and becoming subjects and resisting the same paradigm."[125] However, I would underline how they also create their own moral paradigm, almost another gender, combining traits from 'elite male,' 'matron,' and 'prostitute' morals.

A courtesan's status typically avoids focus and definition because that status may be fluid and mimetic; in fact, a courtesan often is also an actor, *mima*, who dresses and masks herself for a show.[126] The image of the courtesan can also be veiled behind images of Venus, and Hellenistic canonic grand *hetairai*. However, the striking absence of courtesans from Roman legislation and Latin language may signal a successful strategy of conscious concealment of the proper status from public eye and, on the other hand, a lack of interest by male authors. For the women themselves, such classification between autonomy or non-autonomy, between slave and free status, may have been vital and crucial, which is literally a matter of life and death.

In conclusion, it seems to be the very definition of Roman courtesans to avoid definitions. To attempt to redefine female figures such as Faecenia Hispala, Chelidon, Volumnia Cytheris, Claudia Acte, Antonia Caenis, Flora, Nymphidia, Sabidia, and Primigenia, means to find new dimensions and variants of female agency in the grey zones between stereotypical topic extremes; to do this, we need to confront the evidence from all available sources, law, onomastics, graffiti, paintings, architecture, historiography, literature, and artefacts, in context.

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124 Duncan 2005, 252.

125 Levin-Richardson 2013, 335; 341.

126 Duncan 2005, 258.

Courtesans in the Roman legal sources

Thomas A.J. McGinn

Introduction

My first task is to attempt a definition of 'courtesan'[1]. A broad definition suits my purposes best, so I propose defining courtesan as an 'upmarket female prostitute', that is, any female prostitute who charges significantly more for her services than other prostitutes or who distinguishes herself from other prostitutes in any way that suggests she enjoys a higher status. I recognize that other definitions are possible, but the reason for my open-ended approach will soon become apparent.

What I propose to do by way of examining the Roman legal evidence for courtesans is first to look for terminology that supports their presence, distinguishing this, if possible from that which refers to other prostitutes. Language relevant to male prostitutes is considered where it sheds light on that used for women. Next are situations of fact or substantive issues in which the presence of courtesans might be detected. Do legal rules apply differently to them than to other prostitutes? Finally, I suggest what conclusions we might draw from the presence – and more importantly the absence – of references to courtesans in the legal evidence.

Terminology

Before we come to the terminology used of prostitutes by the legal sources themselves, we do well, I believe, to consider briefly the results of a magisterial study published in 1983 by James Adams, under the title, "*Words for 'Prostitute' in Latin*".[2] Adams' article ranges over all genres and all periods in antiquity, thus providing a useful context in which to evaluate the usage of the jurists and other legal evidence. He examines "well over 50 genuine, partial or alleged synonyms of *meretrix*".[3] Adams is sensitive to the (possible) presence of courtesans in this material, recognizing it as one of the reasons why the vocabulary is so rich in the first place, when he writes at the outset: "…whores are not a homogeneous class. They differ in social class, in their methods of soliciting, and in the services which they offer, and these differences may be reflected lexically".[4]

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1 I would like to thank my hosts, the Finnish Institute in Rome and the DAI in Rome, for their invitation to speak and their marvelous hospitality, and above all Dr Ria Berg. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to pose new questions to some important though often neglected evidence. I have attempted to retain as far as possible the original form of oral presentation, inserting references only as absolutely necessary.

2 Adams 1983. Fayer 2002, now revised as Fayer 2013, 377-405 has nothing to contribute for our purposes.

3 Adams 1983, 321.

4 Adams 1983, 321.

Unfortunately, when we come to examine the results of Adams' study this promise does not pan out. First, and not surprisingly, many words for 'prostitute' are disparaging references to sexual activity or body parts, such as the very common *scortum*, which originally meant 'leather, hide', or the much less common *culiola*.[5] Other terms derive from the idea of receiving payment. This in itself might disparage a woman through the implication that there was only one conceivable motive for her to receive payment. An obvious example is *meretrix*, in the sense of 'woman who earns, paid woman'; another, with a similar derivation, is *quaestuaria*.[6] Numerous words refer to methods of soliciting clients, such as the Plautine *proseda*, someone who presumably sits in front of a brothel, or the more common *prostibulum* – which could also mean 'brothel' – a term that seems to refer to a prostitute in front of such an establishment, whether seated or not.[7] There are words for those who stand or who are made to stand in front of a brothel, the most obvious being the verb *prostituere* and its cognates, including *prostituta*.[8] Other terms derived from methods of solicitation are *circulatrix*, or 'street-walker', as well as *petulca* and *lupa*, which imply aggressiveness in the pursuit of clients.[9]

Amid all of this material, no clear example emerges of a specialized expression for courtesan. Adams observes that "[i]n most cultures a distinction is made between high class prostitutes, whose services have to be obtained by devious methods (e.g. Eng. *call girl*), and low whores who display themselves in public."[10] Promising as this sounds, it only yields results for the second half of the comparison, situated as it is in the context of a discussion of *prostibulum*. Nothing in Latin offers the same contrast that is widely – though not universally – accepted by moderns for *hetaira* and *pornē* in Greek between 'courtesan' for the former and 'low prostitute' for the latter.[11] The words *amica* and *paelex*, extensively treated by Adams,[12] come close to the meaning we seek, without coming close enough, however. Both terms focus more on the woman's relationship to a male lover than on her status as a prostitute. Some of these women might be courtesans, but these words do not characterize them as such.

When we turn to the legal sources, we find that they employ a far more restricted range of terminology. They contain only a handful of relevant expressions. We begin with statutory or at least 'official' terminology and then turn to juristic usage.

This is a convenient place to discuss the urban *praetor*'s edict even though it technically does not qualify as legislation. This edict was the source of the vast bulk of the rules of procedure in private law. The most important part of it for our purposes is a series of three rubrics that placed different levels of restriction on the right of certain Roman citizens *postulare*, or to make judicial requests before the *praetor*.[13] The first imposed a total ban, the second allowed requests on behalf of self but not others, and the third restricted the right to self and a small group of others.

Under the second rubric fell women and any man "who will have suffered womanly things with his body" – *qui corpore suo muliebria passus erit*. The phrase clearly embraces male prostitutes, if only among

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5 For the first, see Adams 1983, 322-23; for the second, Adams 1983, 356.

6 Adams 1983, 323.

7 For *proseda*, see Adams 1983, 329-30. For *prostibulum* and its variants, see Adams 1983, 330-31. Other words identifying prostitutes with a place of prostitution are *ganea* and *popina*.

8 Adams 1983, 331-32.

9 Adams 1983, 332-35.

10 Adams 1983, 331.

11 On this problem see recently McGinn 2011, 260, 264, with literature.

12 Adams 1983, 348-50; 355.

13 McGinn 1998, 45-48.

others, while female prostitutes come under the general category of women. So no special phrase emerges for any type of prostitute at all.

We are better placed with regard to the wording of a late Republican statute preserved epigraphically and a series of *leges Iuliae* sponsored by the emperor Augustus whose contents can be reconstructed on this point. The late Republican enactment, preserved on the *Tabula Heracleensis*, lists a series of disqualifications from municipal office and the decurionate. In a section of the law dating to 45 BCE it inflicts these disabilities on prostitutes and pimps, among a number of other types.

The phrase found in the law regarding prostitutes reads as follows:

TH 123-124: *…queive corpore quaestum / fecit fecerit…*
…or he who has made or will have made a living with his body…

The gender-specific wording is explained by the fact that only males were eligible for municipal office and the decurionate. This does not mean that the phrase itself could not in theory concern courtesans if we made the appropriate change to include reference to females. But, even so, there would be no distinction drawn between courtesans and other prostitutes.

The Augustan statutes in question are the *lex Iulia et Papia*, actually two laws of 18 BCE and 9 CE, the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, of 18/17 BCE, and the *lex Iulia de vi*, of c. 18–16 BCE. Since their texts do not survive, their contents must be recovered from other sources, above all, juristic commentaries. Enough survives to reconstruct the phrasing for 'prostitute' for these statutes in a plausible way.[14] While the evidence for the Augustan marriage legislation is the fullest and clearest, we can with some confidence establish the phrase for the others as well. In fact, to leave aside a quibble or two over possible, but unlikely, verb tenses, the language emerges as the same for two of these statutes, and virtually so for the third.

So for the Augustan laws on marriage and *vis*, we have:
qui quaeve palam corpore quaestum facit fecerit
he or she who makes or will have made a living with his or her body 'openly'

The adultery law separates the genders because the relevant provisions are found in different parts of the statute, as I shall explain:
qui palam corpore quaestum facit fecerit
he who makes or will have made a living with his body 'openly'
and
quae palam corpore quaestum facit fecerit
she who makes or will have made a living with her body 'openly'
We can – fortunately – leave aside here the reasons why the lawmaker seems to have preferred this ponderous phrasing and ask whether we have before us evidence of a concern with courtesans. I note that there are three material differences with the phrase from the *Tabula Heracleensis* examined above. The first is the change in verb tense from *fecit* to *facit*, which is clearly of no relevance for us. Of the remaining two, the more obviously pertinent is that which reflects increased gender inclusiveness. In other words,

14 See McGinn 1998, 62, 99-102, 198.

the terminology in these three laws, unlike that in their late Republican predecessor, embraces females as well as males.

The reasons for this are easy to explain. The *lex Iulia de vi* prohibited prostitutes of both genders from giving testimony in the *quaestio de vi* it established. The *lex Iulia et Papia* forbade prostitutes of both genders from marrying freeborn Romans of both genders. The case of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* is a little more complicated, as I have indicated. The reference to female prostitutes occurs in the part of the law establishing a very small number of types of women with whom men could have sex without violating the law, while the phrase referring to male prostitutes occurs in another part of the statute that lists types of men whom the husband could kill if he caught one of them in his house in the act of adultery with his wife, thus exercising the so-called *ius occidendi*.[15] But gender-inclusiveness, as we have already seen, is insufficient by itself for our purposes.

So no information about courtesans so far. Our hopes might be raised by the other change in the wording I mentioned, the inclusion of the adverb *palam*. *Palam* could, one might argue, be understood as implicitly excluding application of these laws to prostitutes who behaved discreetly, so, courtesans, perhaps? This is not, however, how the jurists understood the marriage law, at any rate, and there is no reason to think that the statutory function of *palam* was other than to serve as a moralizing adverb, meaning here not so much, as elsewhere, 'openly', 'commonly', but instead 'indiscriminately', and so 'promiscuously'.[16]

Another example of legislative language comes to us from the law enabling the Caligulan tax on prostitutes and pimps passed in 40 CE. This measure, which introduced a series of taxes on various goods and services, is reported in literary and epigraphical sources. Of great importance is the notice in Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*:

> Suetonius, *Caligula* 40: *…ex capturis prostitutarum quantum quaeque uno concubitu mereret; additumque ad caput legis, ut tenerentur publico et quae meretricium quive lenocinium fecissent, nec non et matrimonia obnoxia essent.*
>
> Suetonius in his *Life of Caligula*: …from the (daily) earnings of prostitutes (was demanded) the amount each earned for one act of sexual intercourse. And a clause was added to this chapter of the law, providing that even those who had (in the past) practiced prostitution or pimping were liable to the treasury (for the tax) and that married persons were subject to it as well.

Suetonius may well be quoting the statute in the very last section of this passage where he refers to the addition tacked on to the *caput legis* in question. From his description Caligula seems to have been intent on taxing even retired pimps and prostitutes, evidently with the aim of discouraging attempts at evasion. The curious phrase *quae meretricium...fecissent* is possibly the biographer's abbreviation of the more ponderous legislative language, if we can assume this was similar or identical to the phrasing in Augustan statutes we have just examined, or it may represent an attempt by Caligula himself to have some fun with this language. In any case there is no obvious reference to courtesans, no more than there is with the word *prostitutae*.

For the sake of convenience we may take a brief detour from consideration of terminology in order to engage with a point of substance. Suetonius does not report in full the provision of the law concerning the tax on prostitutes and pimps, omitting a reference to a ceiling on the rate of this tax. We are in debt to a second-century inscription from Palmyra for this information, which cites a limit of one denarius, mean-

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15 See McGinn 1998, chapter 5.

16 See McGinn 1998, 123-35.

ing that a prostitute was held to pay the equivalent of what she charged for sex only up to that level.[17] We can only guess at the purpose behind this cut-off, which may reflect the fact that relatively few prostitutes charged this much – most of the recorded prices are far lower – and/or that such prices were more difficult to discover and so deemed not worth the administrative hassle required to attempt to track them. It would have benefited, then, higher-priced prostitutes, who were relatively well placed to avoid the incidence of the tax by passing along the higher cost of doing business to their customers. This is not to say that all such women can be deemed 'courtesans', or that the lawmaker had such a category of women in mind. At best it is a rather obscure and indirect reference to such prostitutes.

In sum, the language of Roman legislation so far surveyed contains no obvious reference to courtesans, and the same holds for juristic commentaries on these statutes. We can therefore begin to look in the direction of juristic work in other areas of the law. For example, there is the treatment by jurists – and emperors – of a restrictive covenant in the sale of slaves that forbade prostitution of a slave.[18] There are about a dozen such passages devoted to this subject, so a fair amount of discussion. Most are juristic texts, with occasional reference to imperial interventions, and some are legislation in the form of rescripts. With one exception they refer to the slave not to be prostituted with a variant of the word *prostituere*, e.g. *prostituta*. In fact, the phrase most commonly used to describe the covenant is *ne serva prostituatur*. The one exception is a rescript of the emperor Alexander Severus, who uses a version of the Augustan legislative terminology discussed above in such a way as to suggest this might have been used in an actual covenant: *ne corpore quaestum faceret*.[19] In this case – like all the rest – the emphasis is placed narrowly on (forbidding) the act of prostitution or on the state of having been prostituted. To point out the obvious: we are dealing with slaves here, who might be thought to be poor candidates for courtesan status, whatever the terminology used to describe them.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from other juristic discussions about slave prostitutes, involving the offering of a slave as a form of real security, meaning under the rules of *fiducia*, and the theft or wrongful appropriation of a slave. Here the language used is for the most part limited to references to *prostituere* and *meretrix*.[20] Interestingly, those passages that deal with prostitutes who are not – or not obviously – slaves do not differ much in terms of the terminology they contain. So we have references to a *meretrix* and the adjective *meretricius* in discussions of inheritance, mandate, *condictio*, *operae*, and *iniuria*, various parts of Roman private law that I would be happy to discuss in greater detail were it worth the trouble here.[21]

Substance

An exception to the trend in the terminology referring to prostitutes who were not (obviously) slaves is the use of the word *scortum* by a jurist, which offers us a good opportunity to move from the phrasing that describes prostitutes to situations where the presence of courtesans might be thought to be detectable. The text in question involves the problem of *usucapio* (acquisition of ownership through possession for a fixed period) in sale:

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17 This is *IGR* 3, 1056 = *OGIS* 2, 629 = *CIS* 2, 3, 3913, with McGinn 1998, 282-86.

18 McGinn 1998, chapter 8.

19 Cod. Iust. 4, 56, 3 (*a. 225*).

20 For an important exception regarding the use of the word *scortum*, see below.

21 See McGinn 1998, chapter 9.

> Iul. *dig*. 41, 4, 8 (*ex Minicio*): *Si quis, cum sciret venditorem pecuniam statim consumpturum, servos ab eo emisset, plerique responderunt eum nihilo minus bona fide emptorem esse, idque verius est: quomodo enim mala fide emisse videtur, qui a domino emit? nisi forte et is, qui a luxurioso et protinus scorto daturo pecuniam servos emit, non usucapiet.*
>
> (Julian in the second book from the writings of Minicius). If someone, although he knew that the seller was immediately going to squander the sale price, bought slaves from him, most jurists have held that he is nonetheless a buyer in good faith, and this is the better view. For how can someone be considered to have bought (something) in bad faith if he has purchased (it) from the owner? Unless by chance even he will not usucape who buys slaves from a dissolute person about to hand over the money right away to a whore.

The legal details need not detain us[22] – what matters first is the language and next the context in which this is used. The second century jurist Julian uses the word *scortum*, which, as James Adams notes,[23] often has a pejorative sense when compared to *meretrix*, the more neutral term. Proof of this conclusion is offered by the use of the same word by Ulpian in another text to refer to a prostitute who is unambiguously a slave.[24] So once again the terminology does not itself point to a courtesan.

The situation Julian describes, in which a dissolute client hands over the price he obtained for the sale of some slaves, is a bit more promising. It does seem like a scenario that might involve a courtesan. The same can be said for another text in which an *adulescens luxuriosus* – 'a dissolute young man' – gives a mandate to someone to stand surety for a prostitute.[25] Ulpian compares the situation of the person accepting such a mandate to that of a person knowingly lending money to someone about to squander it and denies the claim. The same holds for a mandate to lend money to a prostitute. Unfortunately, such an association of a prostitute with the waste of material resources can operate for any type of prostitute, and there is no guarantee for any of these situations that we are dealing with a courtesan.

Conclusion

So we have no certain evidence of courtesans in the legal evidence and therefore no sign that the rules were in any sense different for them. Why do the legal sources, as we have broadly construed them above, seem to ignore them? Why would other prostitutes, even slave prostitutes, receive attention and not courtesans, who might be thought to enjoy a higher social profile? Does this mean that there were no courtesans in ancient Rome?

To answer the last question first: far from it. As we have seen, certain of the legal texts are consistent with the presence of courtesans, so the absence of explicit reference cannot prove anything like non-existence. Why then the reticence?

In my view, a decisive clue can be found in an area of the law that we have rather glossed over. I mean here the works of the jurists, especially that of Ulpian, commenting on the Augustan marriage legislation.[26] As we have seen, the law itself, as far as we can reconstruct this, makes no reference to courtesans. But because the statute forbade prostitutes as marriage partners to all freeborn Romans, this phrase – *qui quaeve*

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22 For a discussion, see McGinn 1998, 323-24.

23 Adams 1983, 325.

24 Ulp. *dig*. 47, 2, 39 (31 *ad Sabinum*), on which see McGinn 1998, 325-28.

25 Ulp. *dig*. 17, 1, 12, 11 (31 *ad edictum*), with McGinn 1998, 322-23.

26 For a fuller discussion, see McGinn 1998, 123-38.

palam corpore quaestum facit fecerit – must have concerned them, if not exclusively. So what do the jurists say?

Let us begin with a text of the Antonine jurist Ulpius Marcellus, writing in the mid-160s:

> Marcel. *dig*. 23, 2, 41 pr. (26 *digest*.): *Probrum intellegitur etiam in his mulieribus esse, quae turpiter viverent vulgoque quaestum facerent, etiamsi non palam*.
>
> (Marcellus in the twenty-sixth book of his *Digests*). Disgrace is understood to be incurred also by those women who lived shamefully and made a living from promiscuous sexual relations, even if this was not done 'openly'.

The emphasis is placed – obviously enough – on promiscuous sexual behavior, an emphasis that emerges even more clearly in the Severan jurist Ulpian's commentary on the law:

> Ulp. *dig*. 23, 2, 43 pr.-5 (1 *ad legem Iuliam et Papiam*): pr.: *Palam quaestum facere dicemus non tantum eam, quae in lupanario se prostituit, verum etiam si qua (ut adsolet) in taberna cauponia vel qua alia pudori suo non parcit. 1: Palam autem sic accipimus passim, hoc est sine dilectu: non si qua adulteris vel stupratoribus se committit, sed quae vicem prostitutae sustinet. 2: Item quod cum uno et altero pecunia accepta commiscuit, non videtur palam corpore quaestum facere. 3: Octavenus tamen rectissime ait etiam eam, quae sine quaestu palam se prostituerit, debuisse his connumerari. 4: Non solum autem ea quae facit, verum ea quoque quae fecit, etsi facere desiit, lege notatur: neque enim aboletur turpitudo, quae postea intermissa est. 5: Non est ignoscendum ei, quae obtentu paupertatis turpissimam vitam egit*.
>
> (Ulpian in his first book on the *lex Iulia et Papia*) pr.: We will say that not only does the woman who prostitutes herself in a brothel make a living 'openly', but also any woman in a tavern or inn (a common practice) or any other woman who does not spare her sense of shame. 1: 'Openly' we then take to mean 'everywhere', that is, 'without discrimination': not anyone who gives herself to adulterers or partners in *stuprum*, but one who plays the part of a prostitute. 2: Likewise, because a woman has had intercourse with one or two men after accepting money from them, she is not held to have made a living with her body 'openly'. 3: Octavenus nevertheless says, most correctly, that even she, who has prostituted herself without payment ought to be included in this category. 4: Not only she, moreover, who practices prostitution is subject to degradation according to the statute, but also she who has done so in the past, even if she has ceased to practice this profession. The reason is that sexual disgrace is not effaced by later ceasing the behavior that led to it. 5: She is not to be excused who, on the plea of poverty, has led a very disgraceful life.

Given that the law's intention was in part to prevent prostitutes from rising socially through marriage with freeborn Romans, it is precisely here that one would expect to find a reference to courtesans, since they would be the prostitutes best placed to do so. I note that of course the prostitutes in question are deemed to be freed or freeborn themselves, since marriage with slaves was impossible as a matter of law, and on the same ground they are assumed to be Roman citizens, or at least to enjoy *conubium*. Instead the jurist holds that a prostitute's poverty cannot excuse her from application of the ban, even though poverty itself might be thought a *de facto* disqualification for marriage to a social superior. There is an unrelenting emphasis in this definition on sexual promiscuity, and it is here that I would argue that we can see the key to the – apparent – absence of courtesans in the legal sources.

They are present of course but rendered invisible, and deliberately so, I would argue, through the efforts of legislators and jurists. What mattered above all to these men in their 'legal' conception of the female prostitute was precisely sexual promiscuity. This means that for them courtesans were no different from other prostitutes, at least as a matter of law. At bottom we see a broad social prejudice, at minimum one shared by elite males, transformed into a fundamental legal principle. One final text drives the point home:

> Maec. *dig*. 36, 1, 5 (6 *fideicomm*.): *Sed et qui magna praeditus est dignitate vel auctoritate, harenarii vel eius mulieris, quae corpore quaestum fecerit, hereditatem restituere cogetur.*
>
> (Maecian in the sixth book of *Trusts*) But even a man of high rank or great influence will be compelled to turn over the inheritance of a gladiator or of a woman who has earned money with her body.

Maecian (mid-second century) is concerned with the rules of the *SC Pegasianum* of c. A.D. 73, which allowed persons entitled to a *fideicommissum* (a trust) to approach the *praetor fideicommissarius* in order to compel a reluctant heir to comply with its terms.[27] The extreme case put by the jurist – that of a socially prominent or politically influential heir and a socially despised and powerless beneficiary of a trust – is clearly intended to underline the theoretically unfettered force of the compulsory entry on the inheritance. As such, it can stand as an entirely hypothetical example. Even so, we might ask ourselves whether, say, a brothel prostitute is a likelier recipient of such a bequest than someone we might identify as a courtesan. In any case, from the perspective of the legal authorities it does not matter. Every manner of prostitute is lumped together under a phrase that is – not coincidentally perhaps – reminiscent of the Augustan marriage legislation, namely, 'a woman who has earned money with her body' – *quae corpore quaestum fecerit*. It is not that there were no courtesans in ancient Rome, but only that there were none as a matter of law.

27 McGinn 1998, 113-14.

Historical Roman courtesans

Alison Keith

In memoriam Kweku A. Garbrah (1937-2014)[1]

Introduction

The 'courtesan' (Latin *meretrix*)[2] was long a figure of literary interest in ancient Rome, having arrived early and decisively in Latin literature with the adaptation of Greek New Comedy to the Roman stage.[3] We meet her in the Bacchis sisters of Plautus' *Bacchides*, Erotium of *Menaechmi*, Philocomasium of *Miles Gloriosus*, and Phronesium of *Truculentus*, as well as Terence's Thais in *Eunuchus*, Chrysis in *Andria*, and Bacchis in both *Hecyra* and *Heautontimoroumenos*.[4] These women bear the distinctive Greek names that identify them to the Roman audience of New Comedy as operating on a higher level of prostitution than the brothel slave or streetwalker (usually unnamed in Roman comedy).[5]

Among their Latin literary heirs were the mistresses celebrated by the Roman elegists: Propertius' Cynthia, Ovid's Corinna, and Tibullus' Nemesis. Propertius compares Cynthia to the three most celebrated Greek courtesans – Lais, Thais, and Phryne – in his elegy 2, 6, and Ovid echoes Propertius when he compares his mistress Corinna, on her named entry into his *Amores*, to the courtesan Lais (*am.* 1, 9-12): *ecce,*

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1 I am grateful to Ria Berg for the invitation to chair the session on 'The Written Courtesan' at the Symposium on *The Roman Courtesan: Archaeological Reflections of a Literary Topos*,' organized by the Finnish and German Archaeological Institutes in Rome, on 30 May 2014; and also for the invitation to contribute a chapter on historical Roman courtesans to the conference volume. I am also grateful to Sara Forsdyke for the invitation to present an early version of this chapter at 'Scholarly Offerings: A Symposium in Honor of Kweku Garbrah' at the University of Michigan on 4 October 2014, and to members of the audience for their comments and questions on that occasion, especially Bruce Frier and Donald Sells. My thanks also to Sharon James and Thomas A.J. McGinn for their comments on an earlier draft of the chapter; I alone am responsible for any errors that remain. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Dr Kweku A. Garbrah, who died two days before the symposium held in his honor in Ann Arbor. His generous mentorship of undergraduate Classics students at the University of Alberta, where he taught for twenty-two years, inspired many of us to pursue graduate study in classical philology and ancient history; whether or not we became professional classicists, his selfless friendship and scholarly example enriched our lives in countless ways.

2 I take the Latin word *meretrix* to mean 'a woman who earns money [with her body]', from *mereo*, 'earn money': see *OLD* s.vv., and especially s.v. '*mereo*' 1.b ('earn money by prostitution'). On the difficulties of English nomenclature – 'courtesan' for *meretrix* vs 'prostitute' for *scortum* – see Adams 1983 and McClure 2006, 6-8, with further bibliography. The Roman *meretrix* is not to be confused with the contemporary 'sex worker' or the ancient Mediterranean 'brothel worker'.

3 On Greek courtesans, see Le Barillier 1913; Schneider 1913; Henry 1985, 1992, and 1995; Peschel 1987; Rousselle 1988; Brown 1990; Vanoeyeke 1990; Kurke 1996, 1997, 1999, and 2002; Davidson 1997; McClure 2003; Miner 2003; Faraone – McClure 2006; Glazebrook – Henry 2011. Research on Roman courtesans is less abundant, but see Adams 1983; McGinn 1998, 2004, and 2011; Wyke 2002; James 2003 and 2005; McCoy 2006; Keith 2011; and the papers in this volume. James N.d. is much anticipated.

4 On courtesans in New Comedy, see Fantham 1975; Gilula 1980 (now very outdated); Adams 1982; Henry 1985 and 1992; Brown 1990; Knorr 1995; Dutsch 2008; Traill 2008; James 2013, 188-89, and N.d.

5 On women's names in New Comedy, see Sommerstein 1980; on Greek names in Plautus, see Schmidt 1902; and on Greek love names, see Robinson – Fluck 1937. On the etiquette of publicly mentioning a woman by name in ancient Greece, see Schaps 1977.

Corinna uenit ... qualiter in thalamos … | *dicitur et multis Lais amata uiris* ('Look, Corinna comes … just like … Lais, loved by many men, is said to have entered bed-chambers'). Ovid's Latin gloss on Lais' Greek name (*multis ... uiris*, *am.* 1, 5, 12) emphasizes the courtesan's circulation among men,[6] at the same time that it underlines her linguistic and generic translation from Greece to Rome. By comparing their mistresses to the most celebrated courtesans of classical Greece, both Propertius and Ovid would seem to invite speculation concerning the social standing of their mistresses, even indeed, interpretation of them as courtesans (as their Greek names also suggest). Tibullus' Nemesis also looks just like a courtesan, not only in her conventional name (derived from Hellenistic epigram),[7] but also in her greed for such luxury gifts as clothing of Coan silk, dyed in rich reds and purples, and Indian litter-bearers (Tib. 2, 3, 51-62). For the courtesans of New Comedy expect precisely this kind of expensive and exotic gift from their lovers: we may compare Plautus' Erotium in *Menaechmi*, who receives from her unpleasant lover the gift of his wife's cloak, and Bacchis in Terence's *Hecyra*, who before the action of the play begins had received from her lover the gift of a ring taken from a girl he had raped on the way to see her.[8] Nemesis' enjoyment of her lovers' expensive gifts shows her to be an apt student of the elegiac *lena*, like Ovid's Dipsas or Propertius' Acanthis, who counsels the elegiac *puella* to take lovers according to the gifts they offer (Prop. 4, 5, 21-28; 49-58; Ov. *am.* 1, 8, 59-64).[9]

In this study I analyze the rhetoric of the representation of historical Roman courtesans in prose genres of Latin literature (primarily epistolography, oratory, historiography, and biography), in an effort to enrich our knowledge not only of Roman attitudes to courtesans but also of courtesans' lived experience in Roman antiquity. While feminist historians have occasionally expressed skepticism about using literary evidence to elucidate the lives of women in antiquity,[10] it is crucial in a discipline like Classics, in which relatively little textual and/or material evidence produced by or dealing with women survives (especially in comparison with contemporary world literatures and document archives), to scrutinize every scrap of evidence at our disposal.[11] To this end, I ask what we can know about four women identified by ancient authors as historical Roman courtesans – Marc Antony's mistress Cytheris, Verres' mistress Chelidon, Aebutius' mistress Hispala Faecenia, and Pompey's mistress Flora – by investigating ancient literary and material evidence for the light they can jointly shed on the historical courtesan in ancient Rome.

Cytheris

The literary history of the Roman courtesan in Roman comedy and Latin elegy is of particular note because we have independent textual evidence attesting to the inspiration of the elegiac Lycoris – the mistress celebrated in four books of amatory elegies by Gallus, the founder of the elegiac genre at Rome – in the historical freedwoman and courtesan 'Cytheris' (Serv. *ecl.* 10, 1, 6):[12]

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6 For the etymology, see Hinds 1988, 10.

7 *Anth. Pal.* 5, 273 (Agathias); 9, 260 (Secundus of Tarentum), 405; 11, 326 (Automedon); 12, 193; 229 (Strato), 140 (anon.), 141 (Meleager).

8 Cf. Brown 1990.

9 On the elegiac *lena*, see Myers 1996.

10 Culham 1990; cf. Hillard 1989 and 1992.

11 See, e.g., the exemplary studies of Delia 1991 on Fulvia; Hejduk 2008 and Skinner 2011 on Clodia Metelli, Catullus' Lesbia; Dixon 2007 on Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; Fantham 2006 on Julia Augusti; Treggiari 2007 on Terentia, Tullia, and Publilia; Hallett 2009 on Sulpicia and 2011 on Greek courtesans in Roman comedy; and cf. Olson 2008, who focuses on material culture.

12 Cf. Gallus fr. 145 Hollis; Verg. *ecl.* 10; Prop. 2, 34, 91; Ov. *am.* 1, 15, 30; *ars* 3, 537; Mart. 8, 73, 6; Vir. ill. 82, 2. On Cytheris/Lycoris, see *RE* IX A 883 *Nr.* 17; Mazzarino (1980-1981); Traina 2001[1994]; and Keith 2011.

> *Gallus, ante omnes primus Aegypti praefectus, fuit poeta eximius; nam et Euphorionem, ut supra <VI 72> diximus, transtulit in latinum sermonem, et amorum suorum de Cytheride scripsit libros quattuor. … hic autem Gallus amavit Cytheridem meretricem, libertam Volumnii, quae, eo spreto, Antonium euntem ad Gallias est secuta… SOLLICITOS sollicitatos, plenos sollicitudinis post Cytheridis abscessum, quam Lycorin vocat*.[13]
>
> Gallus, the first prefect of Egypt, was an outstanding poet; for, as we said above on *Buc.* 6, 72, he translated Euphorion into the Latin language, and wrote four books of his *Amores* about Cytheris. … Moreover this same Gallus had a sexual relationship with the courtesan Cytheris, the freedwoman of Volumnius, but she spurned him [Gallus] and followed [Marc] Antony when he went to Gaul… TROUBLED 'tormented', full of anxiety after the departure of Cytheris, whom he calls Lycoris.

It is to the late antique grammarian Servius that we owe this tantalizing notice,[14] and another late source records the information that M. Junius Brutus, "along with Antony and Gallus, loved the mime-actress Cytheris" (Vir. ill. 82, 2): *Cytheridem mimam cum Antonio et Gallo amauit*. The phraseology of these late antique notices concerning the historical Cytheris' lovers obliquely acknowledge the traffic in Greek courtesans among members of the Roman elite, as Cytheris circulates among Caesar's intimates – Volumnius, Gallus, Marc Antony, and even a Junius Brutus.[15] The Italian scholar Giusto Traina therefore suggested that Cytheris' patron Volumnius, to whom she would have owed sexual services upon her manumission, lent her to various powerful friends, as it suited his political purposes.[16] Certainly her attested lovers, like her patron, were adherents or protégés of Caesar in the mid-40s BCE.[17] Traina's interpretation implicitly acknowledges the sexual (and textual) exchange of a woman (here a courtesan), for the consolidation of political (and literary) bonds between men. Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick coined the adjective 'homosocial' to describe social bonds between members of the same sex in such arenas as "friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality",[18] and the relationship between Cytheris' lovers admits precisely such analysis, as an instance of competitive homosocial bonding. That is, their relationship with Cytheris invites interpretation in the context of the shifting dynamics of friendship, politics, and erotic desire that obtained among the different men who shared and circulated her person.[19]

As it happens, we are in the fortunate position of possessing considerable contemporary evidence of this courtesan's circulation among Roman magnates, for Cicero mentions both Cytheris and her patron, P. Volumnius Eutrapelus, not only in his correspondence from the 40s BCE but also in his second *Philippic*, an oration delivered in the fall of 44 BCE as a denunciation of Antony's political actions after Caesar's murder. I have elsewhere analyzed the sharp contrast in tone that distinguishes the references to Cytheris in Cicero's correspondence with his friends Atticus (*Att.* 10, 10; 10, 16) and Paetus (*fam.* 9, 26) from those in his invec-

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13 The text of Servius is cited from THILO – HAGEN 1961; translations are my own.

14 The identification is commonly accepted: see, e.g., HOLLIS 2007, 242-43.

15 See ANDERSON – PARSONS – NISBET 1979, 153, n. 145, on the difficulty of identifying which Junius Brutus loved Cytheris: M. Junius Brutus (reported in Vir. ill.) or D. Junius Brutus.

16 TRAINA 2001, 91.

17 On the Caesarian commitments of these men, see KEITH 2011, 38-39, n. 57.

18 SEDGWICK 1992, 1. Sedgwick further argues that the structure of male homosocial bonding lies 'in an intimate and shifting relation to class; and that no element of that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole'. Her analysis of homosocial desire engages the theoretical paradigm of triangulation elaborated in GIRARD 1961 and applies it to non-novelistic texts: see SEDGWICK 1992, 21-24. Between GIRARD 1961 and SEDGWICK 1992, IRIGARAY 1977, 167-93, offers an important treatment of this triangular dynamic under the term 'hom(m)osexualité': see SEDGWICK 1992, 26-27.

19 Cf. the sharing of the courtesan Chrysis of Terence's *Andria* by three *iuuenes*, or the arrangement Thais' two lovers come to at the end of *Eunuchus* in order to share her; both are highly homosocial arrangements.

tive *Philippics* as a result of the distinct generic pressures exerted by the two very different literary forms of epistolography and political oratory.[20] Yet in both his correspondence with Paetus and Atticus, as also in his invective against Antony, Cicero employs the homosocially inflected rhetoric we can see animating the reference to Cytheris' circulation among Caesar's adherents in Vir. ill. 82, 2.[21] For in both his letters and his invective, Cicero draws attention to the mime-actress Cytheris' appearance in disgraceful public spectacle and he thereby characterizes her as a woman who circulates among men. In the letters to Atticus, moreover, as in the second *Philippic*, the courtesan's illegitimate public circulation among men documents Antony's (and Caesar's) illegitimate usurpation of political authority at Rome. Cicero's references to Cytheris in his correspondence with Atticus thus anticipate those in his invective *Philippics* not only in their presentation of the 'facts', but also in their strategic representation of Antony's relations with Cytheris to figure the perversion of his political and social bonds with other men.

As a freedwoman of Volumnius, Cytheris received the legal Roman name of Volumnia on manumission, although Cicero expresses outrage that municipal Italian officials were required to greet her by this formal Roman name when she appeared in public with Antony (*Phil.* 2, 58):

> *uehebatur in essedo tribunus plebis; lictores laureati antecedebant, inter quos aperta lectica mima portabatur, quam ex oppidis municipales homines honesti, obuiam necessario prodeuntes, non noto illo et mimico nomine, sed Volumniam consalutabant*
>
> [Antony, although] a tribune of the people [and therefore not legally entitled to lictors], was riding in a luxurious chariot; before him walked laurel-bearing lictors, between whom was conveyed in an open litter the mime-actress – whom local aristocrats and prominent citizens from the towns met, by necessity, as they advanced, and greeted not by her well known stage-name [Cytheris] but by the name of Volumnia.

It is especially notable that when Cicero names her in his correspondence with his male friends she is Cytheris the mime-actress, a freedwoman of Greek name and dubious morals who is appropriately trafficked between men. By contrast, when he writes to his wife Terentia in a letter of 47 BCE, he calls her Volumnia (*fam.* 14, 16): *Volumnia debuit in te officiosior esse quam fuit, et id ipsum quod fecit potuit diligentius facere et cautius* ("Volumnia ought to have been more respectful to you than she was, and she could have done what she did more attentively and carefully"). Scholars have not universally accepted the identification of Volumnia here with Volumnia Cytheris, on the assumption "that a Roman matron like Terentia would not have had dealings with such a person".[22] Shackleton Bailey has noted the naivety of this view, however, and rightly observes that when writing to his wellborn, extremely wealthy and respectable wife, Cicero appropriately refers to Volumnia Cytheris by her Roman gentilician.[23] Indeed, the very different epistolary context of *fam.* 14, 16 from that of his letters to his cronies may be taken to illustrate Cicero's punctilious observance of generic propriety.

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20 On the constraints of genre and other cultural traditions that shape the depiction of women in Greco-Roman art and literature, see Dixon 2001; cf. Bodel 2001, 34, on 'epigraphic bias'. See further, e.g., the exemplary studies of Delia 1991 on Fulvia; Hejduk 2008 and Skinner 2011 on Clodia Metelli, Catullus' Lesbia; Dixon 2007 on Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; Fantham 2006 on Julia Augusti; Hallett 2009 on Sulpicia and 2011 on Greek courtesans in Roman comedy; and cf. Olson 2008, which focuses on material culture.

21 Keith 2011.

22 Gundel 1961 rejects the identification, but see *contra* Shackleton Bailey 1977, 502; Shackleton Bailey 1991, 48; and Hollis 2007, 242-43. The quotation is from Shackleton Bailey 1977, 502.

23 So also Shackleton Bailey 1977, 502: "in writing to his wife Cicero would naturally use the more decorous name".

Cicero's letter to his wife, however, may also hint at the observance of gendered propriety on the part of both Terentia and Volumnia, as Terentia here has apparently had recourse to women's channels to effect a transaction (which is, unfortunately, no longer recoverable to us from this brief notice). We have considerable textual evidence for the widespread participation of elite women in the social and political life of triumviral Rome, a practice that emerged publicly in the Principate;[24] and the interaction hinted at here between Terentia and Volumnia suggests that this practice was continuous with the late Republic, when elite women could expect to influence social, financial, and/or political matters of the day by working through female channels and remaining behind the scenes.[25] Shackleton Bailey notes, in his commentary on this letter, that

> as mistress of Antony, now governing Italy in Caesar's absence, [Volumnia Cytheris] had great influence… Terentia as well as her husband was in danger of forfeiting her property [*Att.* 9, 9, 3], and nothing we know of her suggests that she would have let scruples of this kind interfere with her financial interests.[26]

Cicero's short letter to his wife may thus constitute valuable evidence for the participation not only of an elite *matrona*, but also of a subaltern *meretrix*, in the financial, social, and perhaps even political activities of late republican Rome – evidence that is not normally visible in our male-authored *testimonia*.

Chelidon

It is also to Cicero that we owe the earliest portrait of a courtesan in Latin literature, in his descriptions of Verres' mistress Chelidon ('Swallow')[27] in the *Verrines*. Here too, Cicero's rhetorical presentation of the courtesan exerts pressure on our evidence, limiting or distorting the historical 'facts' to conform with generic codes and literary conventions. In the second set of speeches for the prosecution of Verres (never delivered, but put into circulation as pamphlets in the aftermath of Verres' flight into exile late in the summer of 70 BCE), Cicero refers repeatedly to Chelidon's interference in Verres' administration of justice during his tenure of the praetorship at Rome in 74 BCE, in order to prejudice the audience against Verres' tenure of the proconsulship in Sicily (73-71 BCE). He describes Verres' entrance into office in the most prejudicial terms (*Verr. II* 1, 103-4):

> *Verum ad illam iam veniamus praeclaram praeturam, criminaque ea quae notiora sunt his qui adsunt quam nobis qui meditati ad dicendum paratique venimus… Quapropter ita me de praeturae criminibus auditote ut ex utroque genere, et iuris dicendi et sartorum tectorum exigendorum, ea postuletis quae maxime digna sint eo reo cui parvum aut mediocre obici nihil oporteat. [104] Nam ut praetor factus est, qui auspicato a* ***Chelidone*** *surrexisset, sortem nactus est urbanae provinciae magis ex sua* ***Chelidonisque****, quam ex populi Romani voluntate. Qui principio qualis in edicto constituendo fuerit cognoscite.*
>
> But now let us come to that illustrious praetorship and to charges that are better known to this audience than to us who have rehearsed them and have come prepared to speak about them… I ask you therefore to listen to me as I speak about the crimes of his praetorship, expecting only to hear instances of wrongdoing from two categories of crime arising from his administration of justice and the maintenance of public buildings, and only

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24 KEITH 2006; cf. HALLETT 1984, TREGGIARI 1991, and MILNOR 2005.

25 The evidence is collected in KEITH 2006; cf. BRENNAN 2012.

26 SHACKLETON BAILEY 1977, 502; Cic. *fam*. 14, 16, 6.

27 The name likely also played on a slang term for the female genitalia: see *LSJ*, s.v. 5, citing Ar. *Lys.* 770; on the Aristophanic passage, see HENDERSON 1987, 168, ad loc.

> those that are especially worthy of this defendant, who does not deserve to be charged with any small or medium offence. [104] Well then, when he became praetor, and when he had risen with favourable omens from the arms of Chelidon, he obtained by lot the office of urban praetor, which pleased him and Chelidon more than it did the Roman people. Observe the kind of man he showed himself to be at the very beginning, in the formulation of his edict.[28]

Rather than proceeding to the temple as praetor-elect, to take the auspices before the lots were drawn, Verres either compelled the augur to attend him in his bedroom with his mistress, or he may even have taken no auspices at all, substituting Chelidon's embraces instead.[29] In this way Cicero characterizes Verres' praetorship as illegitimate from its inception; and he proceeds to frame the legislation Verres enacted that year as equally tainted by female interference by representing his very first piece of legislation (his praetor's edict, *edictum perpetuum*) as almost wholly composed to suit Chelidon's tastes (*Verr. II*, 1, 41, 106).

Cicero repeatedly documents Verres' derelection of his official duties through Chelidon's illegitimate assumption of the office of praetor urbanus (*Verr. II*, 1, 46, 120; 51, 136):

> *Nam, quaeso, redite in memoriam, iudices,* ***quae libido*** *istius in iure dicendo fuerit,* ***quae varietas*** *decretorum,* ***quae nundinatio****, quam inanes domus eorum omnium qui de iure civili consuli solent,* ***quam plena atque referta Chelidonis; a qua muliere*** *cum erat ad eum ventum et in aurem eius insusurratum, alias revocabat eos inter quos iam decreverat, decretumque mutabat, alias inter aliquos contrarium sine ulla religione decernebat ac proximis paulo ante decreverat… [136] Cum sibi omnes ad istum allegationes difficiles, omnes aditus arduos ac potius interclusos viderent, apud quem non ius, non aequitas, non misericordia, non propinqui oratio, non amici voluntas, non cuiusquam auctoritas, non gratia valeret, statuunt id sibi esse optimum factu quod cuivis venisset in mentem,* ***petere auxilium a Chelidone, quae isto praetore non modo in iure civili privatorumque omnium controversiis populo Romano praefuit, verum etiam in his sartis tectisque dominata est****.*
>
> Now I ask you, gentlemen, to recall **how arbitrarily** Verres administered the law, **how inconsistent** were his judgements, **how much trafficking** took place, how empty were the houses of all those who were usually consulted about matters of civil law, **how full to overflowing was the house of Chelidon. Whenever that woman** came to him and whispered in his ear, he would sometimes recall parties to whom he had already given a decision and change it; at other times he would, without the slightest qualm, give others a decision directly opposite to the one he had just given in the case immediately preceding… [136] Since it seemed to them that any form of representation to Verres was difficult, and that all approaches to him were precipitous, or, to be more exact, closed off (for he was a man on whom neither law, nor equity, nor pity, nor the pleasing of relatives, nor the wishes of friends, nor the personal authority or influence of anyone had any effect), the men decided that the best course of action was the one that might have suggested itself to anyone, namely **to seek help from Chelidon, who, while Verres was praetor, not only presided over the Roman people in matters of civil law and in all disputes between private citizens, but ruled supreme even in matters relating to the maintenance of public buildings**.

Cicero explicitly dissociates Verres from legitimate masculine networks of patronage and politics in this passage, by emphasizing the disgraceful female company he keeps and by referring contemptuously to the *libido* ('fancy, craving, passion'), *varietas* ('inconsistency'), and *nundinatio* ('trading, trafficking') – all qualities associated with the female, rather than the male, in Roman thought – that characterized his admin-

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28 All translations of *Verrines II* 1 are taken from Mitchell 1986.

29 On the passage, and its difficulties of interpretation, see Greenwood 1928, 1.232, with n. a; and Mitchell 1986, 205.

istration of justice as praetor urbanus in Rome.[30] As in later passages, moreover, Cicero comments on Chelidon's appearance in public and thus characterizes her (like Cytheris) as a woman who circulates among men.

Cicero's addresses to the gentlemen of the jury (*iudices*, 1, 46, 120) and his use of second-person plural verb forms throughout, remind us that his published pamphlets (like the opening speech he delivered, and its planned successor) interpellate an audience of fellow Roman senators. Like most of his extant letters, and all of his political and forensic orations, therefore, the pamphlets of the *Second Verrines* addressed the Roman political elite, implicitly documenting their entitlements through the structural congruence between prosecutor and judges, all members of the Roman Senate. Once again, the homosocial networks underpinning the cultural and political structures of republican Rome emerge clearly, founded (at this point in the pamphlet) on the sexual and textual exchange of a courtesan with a Greek name for the consolidation of judicial, social and political bonds between male members of the Roman elite.

Cicero dwells at particular length on the humiliation incurred by the guardians of a youth, whose inheritance of a contract for temple maintenance Verres had imperiled, on the occasion of their visit to Chelidon's house (1, 52, 137):

> *Venit ad Chelidonem C. Mustius, eques Romanus, publicanus, homo cum primis honestus; venit M. Iunius, patruus pueri, frugalissimus homo et castissimus: venit homo summo pudore, summo officio, spectatissimus ordinis sui, P. Titius tutor. O multis acerbam, o miseram atque indignam praeturam tuam! Ut mittam cetera,* ***quo tandem pudore tales viros, quo dolore, meretricis domum venisse arbitramini****? Qui numquam ulla condicione istam turpitudinem subissent, nisi officii necessitudinisque ratio coegisset. Veniunt, ut dico, ad Chelidonem. Domus erat plena; nova iura, nova decreta, nova iudicia petebantur: 'mihi det possessionem, mihi ne adimat, in me iudicium ne det, mihi bona addicat'. Alii nummos numerabant, ab aliis tabellae obsignabantur:* ***domus erat non meretricio conventu sed praetoria turba referta****. Simul ac potestas primum data est, adeunt hi quos dixi. Loquitur C. Mustius, rem demonstrat, petit auxilium, pecuniam pollicetur. Respondit illa,* ***ut meretrix****, non inhumaniter: libenter ait se esse facturam, et se cum isto diligenter sermocinaturam; reverti iubet. Tum discedunt; postridie revertunt; negat illa posse hominem exorari; permagnam eum dicere ex illa re pecuniam confici posse.*
>
> C. Mustius, who was a Roman knight and public contractor and among the most honourable of men, approached Chelidon. So did M. Junius, the boy's uncle, a most moderate and blameless individual. So did P. Titius, the boy's guardian, a man who had the deepest sense of propriety and duty and was a most distinguished member of his order. What a wretched, shameful praetorship was yours, and what a source of grief to many! Not to mention anything else, with what feelings of shame and grief do you think such men approached the house of a prostitute? They would never have submitted to such a disgrace, if consideration of duty and necessity had not compelled them. But, as I say, they made their way to Chelidon. The house was full; novel legal principles, novel judicial decisions, novel grounds for actions were being sought. 'Ask him to give me the right of possession; ask him not to take the right of possession from me; ask him not to decide against me; ask him to assign the property to me.' Some were paying over money, others were signing agreements; the house was packed, not with the gathering that associates with prostitutes, but with the throng that attends a praetor. As soon as an opportunity first presented itself, these men whom I mentioned approached her. C. Mustius spoke, laid out the matter, sought aid, promised money. She replied, like a courtesan, not without courtesy; she said she would gladly do it, and would be sure to speak with him; she bade them return. Then they left and returned the next day. She said the man could not be moved: he said that a great deal of money could be made from the matter.

In this damaging indictment of Verres' (non-)performance of his administrative duties, Cicero describes Chelidon appearing in public, in Verres' absence, to transact Verres' official business. The setting of Cheli-

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30 For the definitions of *libido*, *varietas*, and *nundinatio*, see *OLD* s.vv.

don's house for the transaction of the praetor's business proclaims Verres' illegitimate abdication of his political office while her unparalleled retinue of those seeking political favours embeds her in the masculine political networks of Rome and vividly demonstrates her status as a woman for the display to, and circulation among, men. Her discreditable profession as a courtesan is particularly well suited, Cicero implies, to her domestic role in Verres' sexual life, even though she is not only publicly displayed to the members of the Roman political classes (both senators and equestrians) but also shamelessly transacts their political business for them. The courtesan's illegitimate public appearance among men documents Verres' abuse of his political authority at Rome and prefigures his abuse of gubernatorial authority in Sicily.[31] Again, it is striking that Cicero's sketch of Chelidon appears in a markedly homosocial context, such as also structured the majority of his references to Cytheris in his epistles and Antonian invective. In both his presentation of the 'facts', moreover, as also in his strategic representation of Verres' relations with Chelidon (and other prostituted women),[32] Cicero figures the perversion of Verres' political and social bonds with the Roman elite.

The transaction of public business in a courtesan's establishment is obviously a transgression of Roman elite social and political codes and conventions, and in this homosocial context the fulsome compliments to the boy's guardians are only to be expected. But it strains credulity that none of them had ever visited the establishment of a *meretrix*. After all, Roman comedy is full of youths and *senes* who find it impossible to exercise any self-control either in the company of a *meretrix* or in the vicinity of her household; we need only compare the riotous conclusion of Plautus' *Bacchides*, where the Bacchis sisters fleece their young lovers' fathers and the leader of the comic troop asserts that fathers often engage in sexual rivalry with their sons in the houses of pimps (1207-10). By the conventions of Roman comedy or even, indeed, Cicero's 'boys-will-be-boys' standards in the *Pro Caelio*, men's presence in the courtesan's house is only to be expected.[33] Elsewhere in the *Verrines*, moreover, Cicero draws on comic tropes in his characterization of another prostituted woman, when he charges that Verres 'stole' Tertia, daughter of the mime actor Isidorus (and thus another subaltern woman presumably subject to *infamia*), from a Rhodian flute-player and 'assigned' her to Docimus – by implication for his own use (3, 34, 78). Plautus offers a similar instance of competition over sexual access to a subaltern female in *Casina*, in which a father and son compete for sexual possession of the family slave Casina through their slave proxies (the father's bailiff and the son's *armiger*), who draw lots to 'marry' her and make her sexually available to their master. Like Casina's antici-

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31 As Cicero repeatedly observes: *Verr. II*, 2, 24, *Satisne vobis magnam pecuniam Venerius homo, qui e Chelidonis sinu in provinciam profectus esset, Veneris nomine quaesisse videtur?* ('Does the Court feel that this devotee of Venus, who came to his province fresh from Chelidon's arms, has used the name of Venus to secure enough for himself?'); *Verr. II* 2, 39, *Quid ego istius in iure dicundo libidinem et scelera demonstrem? Quis vestrum non ex urbana iuris dictione cognovit? Quis umquam isto praetore Chelidone invita lege agere potuit? Non istum, ut non neminem, provincia corrupit: idem fuit qui Romae.* ("Need I give you any proof of the criminal way in which this man administers the law as he chooses? Did you not all see how he administered it in Rome? Was the proper legal procedure available at any time for anyone during his term of office, if Chelidon willed otherwise? Unlike some others, Verres was not morally ruined by his province – he was there what he had been in Rome"); *Verr. II* 5, 34 *unum illud, quod ita fuit illustre notumque omnibus ut nemo tam rusticanus homo L. Lucullo M. Cotta consulibus Romam ex ullo municipio vadimonii causa venerit, quin sciret iura omnia praetoris urbani nutu atque arbitrio Chelidonis meretriculae gubernari* ("One is a fact so notorious, so well known to everyone, that during the consulship of Lucullus and Cotta not even the simplest rustic from the remotest provincial town came to Rome, in connection with any case heard in the law-courts, without learning that all the decisions pronounced by the city praetor were controlled by the goodwill and pleasure of that courtesan Chelidon"); 5, 38 *Itaque non modo a domo tua Chelidonem in praeture excludere noluisti, sed in Chelidonis domum praeturam totam detulisti* ("No; and so far from forbidding Chelidon your house during your year of office, you transferred your office bodily to the house of Chelidon").

32 Cicero's references to Chelidon early in the *Second Verrines* anticipate those he makes to a Sicilian woman named Tertia, whom he also characterizes as a prostitute: see *Verr. II* 3, 77-79; 3, 83; 5, 31; 5, 40; 5, 81, and my discussion *infra*. For Verres' treatment of another Sicilian woman as a prostitute, cf. Cicero's references to Pipa (of whose husband he writes *Hic Aeschrio, Pipae vir* ***adumbratus***, 3, 77).

33 On comic tropes in the *Pro Caelio*, see Austin 1960, Geffcken 1973, and Leigh 2004.

pated sexual circulation among members of the comic household, Tertia's sexual circulation among Verres' disreputable cronies may be analyzed as another instance of competitive homosocial bonding, though on a lower social scale than that of Cytheris or Chelidon.

Cicero's portrait of these men's respect for Chelidon's person and property is thus out of keeping not only with the conventions of comedy (which include assaults on both courtesans and their property; e.g., Plaut. *Truc.* 95-111) but also with his own strategic use of comic conventions in his forensic oratory.[34] Yet in his very insistence on the setting of her house as the site of the transaction of Verres' business, the passage is of considerable interest for its inclusion of valuable information about Chelidon's economic standing, *viz.* the implication that she owned or rented a Roman townhouse (*domus*) large enough to accommodate all these men, not in bedrooms but in public rooms.[35] Nor is this the only information we can glean from the *Verrines* about her financial wherewithal. For while discussing Verres' dedication to Venus Erycina of a silver Cupid holding a torch that had belonged to Sthenius of Thermae, Cicero comments that Verres' own resources could have financed the offering to Venus, 'especially as that very year [he] had had a legacy from Chelidon' (*praesertim cum tibi illo ipso anno a Chelidone venisset hereditas*, *Verr. II* 2, 116; cf. 4, 7). Moreover, he later insinuates that this legacy included many choice works of art (*Verr. II* 4, 71): *in istius lenonis turpissimi domo simul cum ceteris Chelidonis hereditariis ornamentis Capitolii ornamenta ponentur?* ('in the house of that most shameless pimp, will the ornaments of the Capitol be placed with the rest of the ornaments he inherited from Chelidon?'). The 'ornaments of the Capitol' to which Cicero here contrasts the ornaments Verres inherited from Chelidon was a lamp-stand worked in gold and precious stones brought to Rome by the sons of the Syrian king Antiochus and intended by them for dedication on the Capitol.[36] Although Chelidon's *ornamenta* were unlikely to have been so sumptuous, it is clear that her moveable property, much of which may have come to her by way of payment for sexual services, was both rich and extensive.

The very casualness of Cicero's remarks about Chelidon's wealth implies that the legal disabilities to which *infames* such as *meretrices* were subject in classical Rome did not include the inability to make a will or leave moveable property where they pleased.[37] Inscriptional and juridical evidence suggests, moreover, that the legal and financial disabilities to which *infames* were subject in classical Rome was connected not with their receipt of payment in gifts (like respectable citizens), but rather with their receipt of payment in coin (felt to be sordid). The light these passages shed on the legal capacity and testamentary practices of subaltern women is often overlooked, but opens up fascinating avenues of inquiry. Was Chelidon a freedwoman, possibly even the freedwoman of Verres? Did she have a legal Roman name as Cytheris did? Could her bequest to Verres even have been the bequest of a freedwoman to her patron? While all women were required to obtain their *tutor*'s consent to make a valid will, freedwomen were further restricted in their capacity of testamentary disposal by the fact that their patron was their *tutor legitimus* and had first claim on the estate if they died intestate.[38]

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34 On Cicero's use of comic tropes in his speeches, see Corbeill 1996; on Cicero's wit, see now Beard 2014.

35 Cf. 5, 38, quoted above n. 31.

36 Cicero expatiates on the gift and its provenance at length: see *Verr. II* 4, 60-71, with Dickinson 1992 and Baldo 2004 ad loc.

37 On prostitutes' earnings, see Gardner 1986, 250-53; more nuanced discussion in McGinn 2004, 14-77. On the legal position of prostitutes generally, see McGinn 1998.

38 On women's rights of inheritance and bequest, see Gardner 1986, 163-203. She does not discuss courtesans' (or prostitutes') rights of inheritance and bequest specifically; but for freedwomen's rights of inheritance and bequest (relevant to Volumnia Cytheris and Hispala Faecenia), see *ead.* 168-69, 191, and 194-96. She notes that the *tutor* seems not to have had any control over the contents of a freedwoman's will, quoting the second-century CE jurist Gaius *inst.* 3, 43 'that if a patron had given his consent and then found that his freedwoman had not made him her heir, then he had only himself to blame' (Gardner 1986, 168).

Faecenia Hispala

In the light of these questions, we may consider Livy's portrait of the courtesan Faecenia Hispala in his much-discussed account of the Bacchanal affair of 186 BCE.[39] Although Cicero is our earliest testimony to the contemporary society of courtesans in Rome, his much younger contemporary Livy credits this courtesan 'with a heart of gold' with saving the state from a serious threat in his report of the Senate's handling of the crisis (Livy 39, 9, 5-7):

> *Scortum nobile libertina Hispala Faecenia, non digna quaestu cui ancillula adsuerat, etiam postquam manumissa erat, eodem se genere tuebatur. Huic consuetudo iuxta vicinitatem cum Aebutio fuit, minime adulescentis aut rei aut famae damnosa: ultro enim amatus appetitusque erat et maligne omnia praebentibus suis meretriculae munificentia sustinebatur. Quin eo processerat consuetudine capta ut post patroni mortem, quia in nullius manu erat, tutore ab tribunis et praetore petito, cum testamentum faceret, unum Aebutium institueret heredem.* (Livy 39, 9, 5-7)
>
> There was a well-known courtesan, a freedwoman named Hispala Faecenia, not worthy of the occupation to which, while still a mere slave, she had accustomed herself, and even after she had been manumitted she maintained herself in the same way. Between her and Aebutius, since they were neighbours, an intimacy developed, not at all damaging either to the young man's fortune or to his reputation; for he had been loved and sought out without any effort on his part, and, since his own relatives made provision for all his needs on a very small scale, he was maintained by the generosity of the courtesan. More than that, she had gone so far, under the influence of their intimacy, that, after the death of her patron, since she was under the legal control of no one, having petitioned the tribunes and the praetor for a guardian, when she made her will she had instituted Aebutius as her sole heir. (Transl. Sage 1922).

Livy introduces Faecenia Hispala as a 'notable prostitute' (*scortum*, 39, 9, 5, but *meretriculae*, 39, 9, 6) and a freedwoman (as her double-barreled name suggests),[40] and he confirms that she supported herself by sex work. Scafuro has noted the comedic convention that she and her young lover Aebutius are neighbours (the circumstance that engenders their intimacy).[41] But her authorship of a will leaving everything to her lover takes her out of the genre of comedy and makes her literary heir to Chelidon. Indeed, Livy's account of the procedure whereby this subaltern woman comes to make a will answers some of the questions posed above about Verres' mistress, though what he reports probably reflects the legal machinery of his own day (i.e., early principate) rather than hers. Livy later contradicts his initial report of her legal capacity, in his report of a senatorial decree to reward the informers, Aebutius and Hispala, with age- and sex-appropriate dispensations (39, 19, 3-7). In Hispala Faecenia's case, these rewards included the rights "of bestowing and alienating property, of marriage outside her *gens*, and choice of a *tutor* just as if her husband had given it to her in a will; and that she should be permitted to marry a man of free birth, nor should any fraud or disgrace on this account attach to a man who should have married her" (*utique Faeceniae Hispalae datio, deminutio, gentis enuptio, tutoris optio item esset, quasi ei uir testamento dedisset; utique ei ingenuo nubere liceret, neu quid ei qui eam duxisset ob id fraudi ignominiaeue esset*, 39, 19, 5-6). In any event, it is clear from the

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39 On the Bacchanal affair, and Livy's treatment of the episode, see North 1979; Gruen 1990; Pailler 1988 and 1995; Scafuro 1989; Takács 2000; and Briscoe 2008, 230-90. On Faecenia Hispala, see also McGinn 1998, 86-90.

40 On the name 'Hispala' indicating Spanish origin, see Solin 1996, I.38 s.v. 'Hispala'; Briscoe 2008, 256 ad loc.

41 On Livy's adaptation of comic conventions in the narrative, see Scafuro 1989 and Briscoe 2008, 256-57 ad 39, 9,5-7.

testimony of both Cicero and Livy that courtesans in Rome had the legal capacity not only to manage their property but also to dispose of it after death by the first century BCE.

Another feature of Livy's account of Hispala Faecenia that has not received the attention it deserves, but which is of interest in the light of Cicero's reference to Terentia's dealings with Volumnia, is the operation of 'women's networks' in the affair. For when Aebutius, on his mistress' advice, refuses to be initiated into the Bacchic rites and is driven, as a result, from the house of his mother and step-father, Livy represents him as consulting his aunt Aebutia (3, 11, 3) and it is she who advises him to report the affair to the consul Postumius. Indeed, Livy's narrative emphasizes both Aebutius' and the consul Postumius' reliance on women's networks and women's knowledge in their investigation of the affair. Thus Aebutius heeds his mistress' advice and, upon his resulting dismissal from his mother's house, turns to his paternal aunt Aebutia, on whose advice he also duly acts without delay. In turn the consul Postumius investigates Aebutius' credibility by questioning his mother-in-law Sulpicia about Aebutius' aunt. When Sulpicia confirms Aebutia's credibility to him, moreover, Postumius draws his mother-in-law still further into the political investigation by making use of her standing amongst her peers (Valerius Maximus reports that she was the most prominent matron of the period, 8, 15, 12),[42] and asking her to invite first Aebutia and then Hispala to her house, where he can question them in person and form his own judgment.

When Postumius is satisfied that he has secured credible testimony from them both, he assigns Aebutius and Hispala, for their safety, to appropriately gendered quarters (Livy 39, 14, 1-3):

> *peracto indicio aduoluta rursus genibus preces easdem, ut se ablegaret, repetiuit. Consul rogat socrum ut aliquam partem aedium uacuam faceret quo Hispala immigraret. Cenaculum super aedes datum est, scalis ferentibus in publicum obseratis, aditu in aedes uerso. Res omnes Faeceniae extemplo translatae et familia arcessita, et Aebutius migrare ad consulis clientem iussus.*
>
> When she finished her testimony, she fell at their feet again and repeated the same prayers that they should banish her. The consul asked his mother-in-law to vacate some part of the house into which Hispala could move. An apartment above the house was granted, with the stairs leading to the street closed up and the approach turned into the house. All Faecenia's property was immediately brought over and her household slaves summoned, and Aebutius was ordered to move to the house of one of the consul's clients.

We should note not only the size and extent of Hispala's household – both furnishings and slaves – but also the relocation of her household in its entirety to an apartment in Sulpicia's *domus*, which was itself apparently reconfigured to accommodate the courtesan's establishment. Moreover, Livy goes to quite to extraordinary lengths here both to distance Hispala Faecenia from the company of men, associating her only with the young Aebutius to whom, he hints at the end his account, she will be legally married (39, 19, 5-6),[43] and also to resituate her in the company of respectable women (hence the consul Postumius questions her in the presence of his mother-in-law Sulpicia, and no other man is present at the interview). This rhetorical strategy is all the more striking by comparison to Cicero's representation of Cytheris and Chelidon, on the one hand, and Livy's own description of the Roman Senate's handling of the conspiracy, on the other, with his extended account of Postumius' speech and the Senate's deliberations.

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42 On the social prominence of Sulpicia, whom Livy calls *grauis femina* (11, 4; 12, 2; 13, 3; cf. *grauissima*, 13, 3) and *talis femina* (12, 4), see Briscoe 2008, 236, with further bibliography.

43 McGinn 1998, 89 n. 182, is skeptical of marriage between Faecenia and Aebutius.

As in the case of Terentia's dealings with Volumnia, we see an expectation of the involvement of elite women, on behalf of their male kin, in the political matters of the day. Here both Aebutius and Postumius draw not only on networks of patronage and kin but also on women's channels. Indeed by harnessing these female channels, and allowing the women to remain behind the scenes, Postumius acquires crucial information in his investigation of the Bacchanalian affair and protects his witnesses. The participation of a freedwoman/courtesan in these networks, moreover, is treated as conventional – not only by Postumius (and Livy), but also, apparently, by his mother-in-law Sulpicia, who is even entrusted with the obligation of supporting the entire establishment of a freedwoman/courtesan in her own house. Whatever the historical value of Livy's report, his narrative testifies to Roman cultural expectations concerning elite Roman matronal – and apparently even subaltern female – intervention into affairs of state in the republican period. His representation of the context of elite women's participation in questions of public moment is, naturally, informed by the social and political conditions of the late republic and triumviral periods; but the light his narrative sheds on the lives of subaltern women in Rome cannot be underestimated.[44]

Flora

Pompey's biographer Plutarch cites the reminiscences of 'Flora the courtesan' (Φλώραν δὲ τὴν ἑταίραν, *Pomp.* 2, 2; cf. 53, 2) early in his account of the republican general's life, as a valuable source of evidence about the great man's youth. Her Latin name Flora ('flower') indicates Italian servile provenance and may also have a comedic or theatrical valence.[45] We have no other evidence about her social status, but the association with her namesake, an ancient Italian vegetation goddess, emphasizes not only her subaltern origins but also her provision of sexual services. For the goddess Flora, although she had long had her own priest (the *flamen Floralis*) and received annual games at a festival in her honour (the *Floralia*) from the mid-republic on, was associated above all with prostitutes, who claimed the Floralia as their own. Indeed, they are reported to have danced naked in the games' spectacular conclusion, to riotous approval from the crowd.[46]

Plutarch reports Flora's reminiscences as anecdotes related in old age (*Pomp*. 2, 2-5; 53, 2), and it would be interesting to know in what kind of written form he found them. The thirteenth book of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* ('banquet of wits') gives copious evidence of the fascination 'the sayings of courtesans' held for the ancients, and her reminiscences were perhaps preserved in such a context.[47] Despite Plutarch's quotation of her remarks for the light they shed on Pompey's habits, and the limits his biographical purpose places on the information he relates about her, he is seduced into a narrative digression from his strictly Pompeian focus to elaborate on this famous courtesan's life. His reflections on Flora offer yet another example of the homosocially-inflected rhetoric we have seen in the accounts of courtesans in Cicero and Livy, as well as the recourse to comic convention typical of those Roman authors.

After reporting Flora's delight in reminiscing about her intimacy with Pompey in their youth, Plutarch records Pompey's generosity in 'turning her over' to his friend Geminius who had fallen in love with her and was persecuting her with his attentions (*Pomp.* 2, 3-4):

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44 Briscoe 2008, 236, notes the ancient parallel of Cicero's information about the Catilinarian conspiracy coming to light from the relationship between Fulvia and Curius (Sall. *Catil.* 24).

45 For the conventional association of prostitution with acting, we may compare the courtesan Cytheris' profession as a mime-actress; and see further Edwards 1997.

46 On the *Floralia*, see Scullard 1981, 110-11; Richlin 1992, 6-10; and Edwards 1993, 119-21, all with further bibliography.

47 On *Deipnosophistai* 13, see McClure 2003; on 'genres of courtesans', see esp. Henry 1995, 61-62, and McClure 2003, 37-58.

> *πρὸς δὲ τούτοις διηγεῖσθαι τὴν Φλώραν ἐπιθυμῆσαί τινα τῶν Πομπηΐου συνήθων αὐτῆς Γεμίνιον, καὶ πράγματα πολλὰ παρέχειν πειρῶντα· αὐτῆς δὲ φαμένης οὐκ ἂν ἐθελῆσαι διὰ Πομπήϊον, ἐκείνῳ τὸν Γεμίνιον διαλέγεσθαι· τὸν οὖν Πομπήϊον ἐπιτρέψαι μὲν τῷ Γεμινίῳ, μηκέτι δὲ αὐτὸν ἅψασθαι τὸ παράπαν μηδὲ ἐντυχεῖν αὐτῇ, καίπερ ἐρᾶν δοκοῦντα· τοῦτο δὲ αὐτὴν οὐχ ἑταιρικῶς ἐνεγκεῖν, ἀλλὰ πολὺν ὑπὸ λύπης καὶ πόθου χρόνον νοσῆσαι. [4] καίτοι τὴν Φλώραν οὕτω λέγουσιν ἀνθῆσαι καὶ γενέσθαι περιβόητον ὥστε Κεκίλιον Μέτελλον ἀνδριάσι καὶ γραφαῖς κσσμοῦντα τὸν νεὼν τῶν Διοσκούρων, κἀκείνης εἰκόνα γραψάμενον ἀναθεῖναι διὰ τὸ κάλλος.*
>
> Furthermore, Flora would tell how Geminius, one of Pompey's companions, fell in love with her and annoyed her greatly by his attentions; and when she declared that she could not consent to his wishes because of Pompey, Geminius laid the matter before Pompey. Pompey, accordingly, turned her over to Geminius, but never afterwards had anything at all to do with her himself, although he was thought to be enamoured of her; and she herself did not take this treatment **in the fashion of a courtesan**, but was sick for a long time with grief and longing. And yet Flora is said to have flowered into such beauty, and to have been so famous for it, that when Caecilius Metellus was decorating the temple of the Dioscuri with paintings and statues, he gave her portrait also a place among his dedications.[48]

Flora's circulation between Pompey and his crony can be paralleled by Cytheris' circulation amongst Caesar's adherents and invites interpretation in the context of the shifting homosocial dynamics of friendship, politics, and erotic desire that structured elite male relations in Republican Rome. Plutarch's handling of the anecdote, moreover, extends the homosocial dynamic from Pompey and Geminius to Caecilius Metellus, who handles not the courtesan herself but an(other) artistic representation of her, and even to himself. Indeed, just as Plutarch puts a representation of Flora on display in his biography of Pompey, and traffics her to his readers, so Metellus hangs her portrait on display in the temple of the Dioscuri in Rome. The self-conscious artistry of Plutarch's account of Flora, confirmed by his Greek gloss on the meaning of her Latin name (*Φλώραν ... ἀνθῆσαι*, 'Flora … flowered'), lays bare his own privileged location in the homosocial relations that structure not only his narrative of Pompey's life but also the cultural attainments and political entitlements of elite Greeks under Roman hegemony.

Conclusion

Although the textual and/or material form in which the evidence of Roman courtesans' lives was couched always exerts pressure on that evidence, limiting or distorting the historical 'facts' to conform with generic codes and conventions, I hope that my discussion has shown how the analysis of the rhetoric of the representation of these subaltern women in literary texts can enrich our knowledge not only of Roman attitudes to courtesans but also of these women's lived experience in Roman antiquity. We have seen evidence of the pressure exerted not only by comic conventions in the representation of the Roman courtesan but also by the homosocial economy of desire that grounded the social relations of patriarchy in classical antiquity. Nonetheless, different emphases and particulars in these texts allow us to tease out details of individual courtesans' lived experience. The courtesans Flora, Chelidon, Volumnia Cytheris, and Faecenia Hispala are constructed as historical subjects and agents in the momentous events of their day. If Flora, Chelidon, and 'Cytheris' are represented as remaining trapped within the ambit of their servile past and dependent on their male patrons for social visibility, 'Volumnia' and Faecenia Hispala are depicted as having transcended their servile origins in some measure, acting on their own volition in their own interests. Their bipartite names

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48 The translation is that of Perrin 1917, lightly adapted.

testify not only to slave provenance but also to their achievement of manumission and Roman citizenship. Their new social standing is even represented as entailing successful participation in matronal women's networks. Faecenia's status was still further enhanced, moreover, by the Senate's recognition of her services to the state and grant of extraordinary financial and social rights (Livy 39, 19, 5-7). Indeed, her social mobility may be interpreted as having outstripped that of the other courtesans we have considered: of Flora, who remains an Italian courtesan in Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*; of Chelidon, who remains a Greek courtesan in Cicero's *Verrines*; and even of Volumnia Cytheris, who remained socially disreputable as a mime-actress and courtesan although she gained her freedom and, with it, limited legal rights. The common themes that emerge from this study of historical Roman courtesans, however, well illustrate the generic pressures that shape the ancient textual and material evidence concerning the lives of all women, especially subaltern women in Antiquity, and still hinder the historian's unmediated access to 'real' Roman women.

Pupa, puella, domina.
Tracce di cortigiane nella documentazione pompeiana?

Antonio Varone

Gli studi sul mondo della prostituzione a Pompei, quasi del tutto evitati durante l'Ottocento[1] ed effettuati in sordina nella prima parte del Novecento,[2] sulla scorta di accenni velati, notazioni incidentali o brevi riferimenti, hanno avuto invece negli ultimi decenni un impulso notevole, con opere e articoli espressamente all'argomento dedicati, o comunque con trattazioni organiche all'interno di opere di più ampia portata.[3]

Quello che tuttavia va rilevato è che ad essere meglio indagato è stato il mondo della prostituzione servile, grazie soprattutto all'abbondanza di documentazione fornitaci dalle iscrizioni graffite, con nomi, prezzi e frequentazioni delle officianti, mentre dal canto suo l'archeologia, con mettere allo scoperto lupanari, *cellae meretriciae* e altri luoghi, diremmo, di 'socializzazione', ha permesso di delineare un quadro di riferimento ancora più concreto, consentendo di operare facili addizioni, senza nemmeno dover incorrere nel deprecato 'metodo combinatorio'.

Rilevo, tuttavia, che incrollabili certezze devono invece più cautamente non essere ritenute verità acquisite e che anche in questo ambito c'è ancora molto da valutare o, se vogliamo, da investigare. Mi spiego subito con un esempio. Mentre prezzi di prostitute si trovano nei luoghi ad alta frequentazione sociale o in luoghi strategici, come in spazi prossimi a *cauponae* o all'interno di esse, su panchine vicino alle porte urbiche, sui monumenti funerari lungo le necropoli, addirittura nelle fauci di 'case', una sola indicazione riportabile a tale tipo è stata trovata proprio nel posto emblematicamente ritenuto, con concordia di tutti, il luogo deputato della prostituzione, l'unico edificio in tutto il mondo romano unanimemente riconosciuto senza ombra di dubbio come postribolo, ossia il lupanare VII 12, 18-20.[4] Eppure in esso si sono lette ben 136 iscrizioni graffite, molte delle quali di contenuto apertamente osceno. Si legge di tutto in esse, attività, predilezioni sessuali, nomi e abilità operative e, in un caso, anche la somma di un denario data da Arpochras a Drauca per un intercorso sessuale.[5] Possibile che vi si legga allora una sola tariffa,[6] che per posizione e modo con cui è scritta non appare nemmeno configurarsi pienamente come *titulus* del prezzo da pagare, ossia la *proscriptio* formale, immancabile nei lupanari, con la quale si offrivano i servizi di meretricio, di cui

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1 Cfr. ad es. l'illustrazione data da Fiorelli allo scavo del Lupanare VII 12, 18-20: Fiorelli 1862, 48-59; Fiorelli 1868, 109; Fiorelli 1875, 286. All'analisi della maniera reticente con cui la letteratura ottocentesca ha trattato il tema della prostituzione dedica molta attenzione McGinn 2004, 182-93.

2 McGinn 2004, 194-97.

3 Per citare solo i più recenti, McGinn 1998; McGinn 2002; McGinn 2004; McGinn 2009; Bradley 2000; Stumpp 1998; Guzzo-Scarano Ussani 2000; Faraone – McClure 2006; Glazebrook – Henry 2011, con interessanti paralleli anche per il mondo romano. Da ultimo v. Fayer 2013, dove è citata la massima parte della ricchissima bibliografia precedente.

4 Cfr. ad es. McGinn 2002, 8-11; 13. Wallace Hadrill 1995, 51-54. Una selezione bibliografica del *consensus doctorum* sul lupanare come postribolo è data da McGinn 2004, 199 n. 80.

5 *CIL* IV 2193. Per l'analisi, il commento e la bibliografia su questa come sulle altre iscrizioni qui riportate cfr. Varone 2002, alle pagine citate *sub indice*.

6 *Victoria a(ssibus) V (CIL* IV 2228).

parlano, tra l'altro, Seneca, Marziale, Giovenale, Petronio?[7] E ancora: i nomi dei fanciullini,[8] le benedizioni inviate al talento erotico attivo di uomini,[9] l'esplicita menzione dell'essere attiva di una tribade (**fig. 1**) e l'identica condizione ricavabile per altre due,[10] la citazione di *gigolo*,[11] il disincantato entusiasmo di una donna che ricorda, serena, *fututa sum hic*[12] (**fig. 2**), e, infine, i sei nomi gentilizi di donna che si trovano sulle pareti,[13] che costituiscono oltre il 20% dei nomi di donna ivi rinvenuti, devono obbligatoriamente lasciarci pensosi. Non certo sull'uso del lupanare come luogo di incontri carnali, ma piuttosto sulle nostre radicate convinzioni circa l'organizzazione della prostituzione all'interno di esso. Quanto detto, la presenza nelle varie celle di tanti nomi diversi di uomini e donne e la distribuzione stessa delle iscrizioni all'interno delle

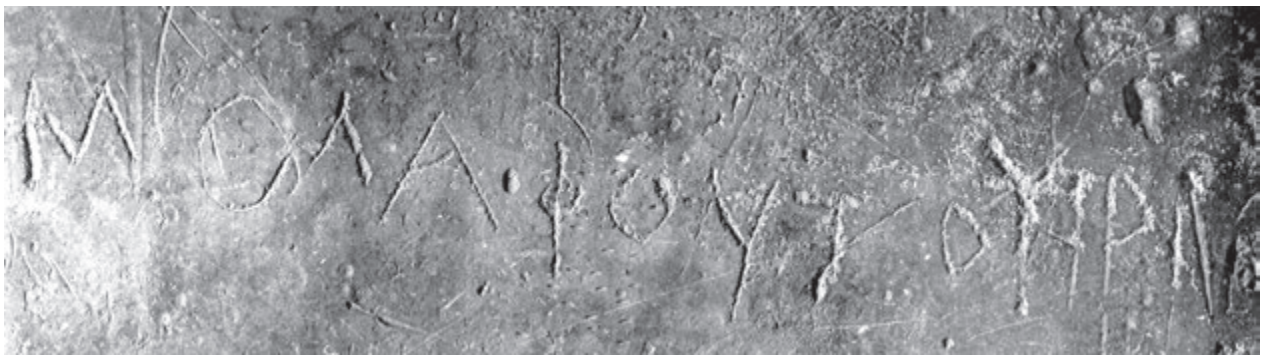

Fig. 1: Pompei. Lupanare. L'iscrizione *CIL* IV 2204: *ΜΟΛΑ ΦΟΥΤΟΥΤΡΙC*.

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7 Sen. *contr*. 1, 2, 1, 10-11: *Ducta es in lupanar, accepisti locum, pretium constitutum est, titulus inscriptus est*; 1, 2, 5, 3: *superpositus est cellae tuae titulus*; Mart. 11, 45, 1: *inscriptae limina cellae*; Iuv. 6, 123: *tunc nuda papillis prostitit auratis titulum mentita Lyciscae*; Petron. 7, 3: *cum ego negarem me agnoscere domum, video quosdam inter titulos nudasque meretrices furtim spatiantes.*

8 *CIL* IV 2258a.

9 *Felix bene futues (CIL* IV 2176), *Sollemnes bene futues (CIL* IV 2185s.), *Vitalio bene futues (CIL* IV 2187), *December bene futuis (CIL* IV 2219), *Συνέρως καλὸς βινεῖς (CIL* IV 2253), *Victor bene futuis*, con la più generale approvazione di un *novimus* a commento (*CIL* IV 2218), che trova preciso riscontro nella benedizione di un *Victor valea, qui bene futues* (*CIL* IV 2260), ancora reiterata in *Victor bene valeas, qui bene futues* (*CIL* IV 2274).

10 Nel primo caso v. *CIL* IV 2204: *ΜΟΛΑ ΦΟΥΤΟΥΤΡΙC*. Nel secondo caso v. *CIL* IV 2198: *Beronice* | *[H]abenda* | *futuere*, dove per l'integrazione *[H]abenda* si cfr. Kajanto 1965, 360. Il verbo *futuo,* si badi, designa esclusivamente l'attività maschile nell'amplesso. Cfr. infatti Prisc. *gramm.* 2, 556, 13: *'futuo', 'nubo', 'futuens', 'nubens' … illud ad mares, hoc ad feminas pertinet solum*; 2, 487, 1: *naturaliter quaedam verba ad solos pertinent mares, ut 'futuo' 'devirgino', vel ad feminas ut 'futor','nubo', 'devirginor'.* La spiegazione circa il significato di tali iscrizioni è allora offerta da Marziale 7, 70: *Ipsarum tribadum tribas, Philaeni,*| *recte quam futuis, vocas amicam* o da 1, 90, 6-8: *at tu, pro facinus, Bassa, fututor eras.* | *Inter se geminos audes committere cunnos* | *mentiturque virum prodigiosa Venus*, che peraltro, pur osando un'arditissima descrizione, non azzarda da un punto di vista linguistico il *fututrix* documentatoci a Pompei, oltre che in questa iscrizione, anche da *CIL* IV 4196: *Miduse fututrix* (o piuttosto *Meroe fututrix*. Cfr. Varone 2012, 224 anche a riguardo della lettura di *CIL* IV 4195). Non è pertanto pienamente condivisibile l'analisi fatta a riguardo di *CIL* IV 2198 dal *ThLL* VI 1, 1664, 35-36. In una recente visione, a mio avviso, fortemente condizionata da approcci modernistici, per Kamen – Levin-Richardson 2015, 244-250, seguite da Pervis 2016/2017, tale innovazione lessicale servirebbe a caratterizzare la 'women's agency' nel rapporto eterosessuale. Senza poter qui entrare nel merito, solo rilevo che l'unirsi a uomini della nostra Mola, testimoniato da altri graffiti, ben può conciliarsi con queste sue ulteriori capacità. Parallelamente rilevo che anche Euplia, donna ben nota alle cronache erotiche pompeiane, viene indicata al tempo stesso come *laxa* e *landicosa* (*CIL* IV 10004), con riferimento per me evidente alla sua ambivalenza. Cfr. Varone 2002, 71. 147.

11 *CIL* IV 2257: *Froto Plane* | *lingit cun*|*num*. Per la lettura *Plane* cfr. Varone 2003, 196-97. A riguardo di tale pratica le fonti antiche sono concordi nel ritenerla dispregiativa per un uomo (si cfr. ad es. già il solo Marziale 4, 43; 6, 26; 7, 24, 8; 9, 92, 11; 11, 25; 12, 85), sì che non meraviglia trovarla a Pompei praticata esplicitamente a pagamento. Cfr. *CIL* IV 3999: *Glyco cunnum lingit a(ssibus) II; CIL* IV 8940: *Maritimus cunnu liget a(ssibus) IIII. Virgines ammittit* per cui v. Varone 2002, 148 n. 260. Sulla prostituzione attiva maschile Marziale del resto dà spie sintomatiche, cfr. ad es. 7, 75: *Vis futui gratis, cum sis deformis anusque.* | *Res perridicula est: vis dare nec dare vis*; 11, 87: *dives eras quondam, sed tunc pedico fuisti. … Egestas … fututorem te … facit;* 11, 62: *Cum futui vult, numerare solet* ecc. Brutale addirittura la terza (*CIL* IV 8483): *Mentula V HS.* Ma v. anche supra n. 9.

12 *CIL* IV 2217.

13 *Ilia* (*CIL* IV 2173), *Aplonia* (*CIL* IV 2197), *Fabia* (*CIL* IV 2239), *Cadia* (*CIL* IV 2243), *Rusatia* (*CIL* IV 2262), *Anaedia* (*CIL* IV 2269), nomi tutti peraltro non ricorrenti in altre iscrizioni relative a prostitute. Per il primo e ultimo nome cfr. Varone 2003, 196-97.

Fig. 2: Pompei. Lupanare. L'iscrizione *CIL* IV 2217: *Fututa sum hic*.

celle, che vanno in progressione a scalare sui due lati da quelle più esterne a quelle più interne mi hanno spinto, anni addietro, a proporre per il lupanare piuttosto la funzione di luogo in cui si fittavano spazi per consumare rapporti sessuali che non già di luogo dove stazionavano stabilmente nelle varie celle prostitute in attesa che l'avventore scegliesse, come nei moderni bordelli.[14] A riguardo indiziaria, già in un periodo ben anteriore alla costruzione del Lupanare, appare la formula *ad locum duxserunt* dell'iscrizione *CIL* IV 2450, che ricorda tre allegri compari che il 25 novembre del 3 a.C. appunto *ad locum duxserunt mulierem Tychen*; *pretium in singulos a(sses) V f(uit)*.

Va peraltro rilevato, coincidenza o fatalità, che all'interno di nessuna delle numerose *cellae meretriciae* rinvenute a Pompei, dove è invece effettivamente probabile che stazionassero adescatrici fisse che avevano la disponibilità, temporanea o meno, di quel ristretto spazio aperto sulla strada, sono state per converso rinvenute iscrizioni di alcun tipo.

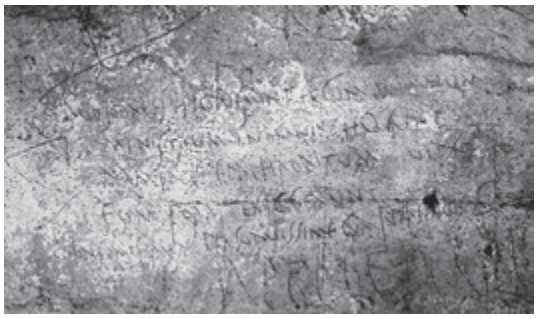

Fig. 3: Ercolano. Terme Suburbane. L'iscrizione *CIL* IV 10675: *Duo sodales hic fuerunt et cum diu malum | ministrum in omnia haberent | nomine Epaphroditum vix tarde | eum foras exigerunt.| Consumpserunt persuavissime cum fu`tu'ere HS CV s(emis).*

Un luogo, il lupanare, come ancora altri a Pompei, di tenore più o meno elegante, quali ad esempio il vicino albergo VII 12, 34-36[15] o, ancora in zona, la casa dell'Orso ferito,[16] dove era possibile appartarsi e, in dipendenza ovvia del prezzo speso, ricevere altri servizi, *in primis* cibi e bevande. Era nel sottobosco di questi ambienti che si proiettava l'ombra lunga di quei *pornoboskoí* tesi all'offerta organizzata di piaceri, come il *malus minister* della notissima iscrizione delle terme Suburbane di Ercolano[17] (**fig. 3**) o il *Castrensis* pompeiano su cui ho anni addietro concentrata la mia attenzione.[18] Quelle stesse testimonianze di *sodalitas*, che a più riprese e in ambito chiaramente

14 Cfr. McGinn 2004, 37: "Slave prostitutes seem to have been fairly tightly controlled and the sources often suggest an environvent of coercition. It is clear that these prostitutes were expected to live and eat in the brothel and were perhaps permitted to leave only rarely". È evidente che ciò non avvenga per il lupanare pompeiano, come le iscrizioni trovate nelle celle senza ombra di dubbio palesano. Si ricordi d'altra parte anche il verso di Giovenale a riguardo di Messalina quando dice (6, 127): *mox lenone suas iam dimittente puellas tristis abit, et quod potuit tamen ultima cellam clausit,* dove è evidente che a differenza delle *puellae* dipendenti dal lenone, Licisca-Messalina lavorava ovviamente in proprio, probabilmente noleggiando la cella.

15 Cfr. Varone 2005, 104-5.

16 Varone 2005, 100-1; Ehrhardt 1988, 76-79.

17 *CIL* IV 10675.

18 Varone 2005, particolarmente 101-4.

osceno si ritrovano nelle iscrizioni pompeiane,[19] vanno inquadrate a mio avviso nella sfera delle attività di questi mezzani che si preoccupavano di mediare tra 'fornitori di servizi' e clienti. Se infatti osserviamo le cifre che i due compagni d'avventura sborsano ad Ercolano per una cena in lieta compagnia,[20] 422 assi, ci accorgiamo che se siamo ben lontani dai 100.000 sesterzi pagati da Milico per togliere Leda dalla strada come ricordato da Marziale,[21] siamo anche tuttavia distanti dalle cifre di pochi spiccioli date alle prostitute di bassa lega, e questo ci porta di per sé a considerare un circuito parallelo a quello della bassa prostituzione servile e non per questo meno animato, anche se le tracce vanno raccolte con pazienza, non essendo come nell'altro caso di lapalissiana evidenza.

Abbiamo intanto visto come proprio nel Lupanare, sintomaticamente e inopinatamente, facciano la loro comparsa ben sei nomi di donne di *status* libero, ma sono ancora altre iscrizioni a metterci sull'avviso. Da un lato troviamo in un graffito l'esplicita asserzione: *Lucilia ex corpore lucru faciebat*.[22] Lucilia è chiaramente un nome gentilizio e l'assunto dell'iscrizione è chiaro: una donna libera faceva di sé commercio carnale. Cestilia, invece, il cui nome si lesse all'ingresso di una probabile *cella meretricia* (**fig. 4**) è definita *regina Pompeianorum*,[23] epiteto che ci deve mettere sull'avviso. Con *Novellia Primigenia*, la donna di Nuceria il cui ricordo è ripetutamente comparso non solo a Pompei, ma anche in altre città campane[24] e di cui addirittura ci viene tramandato l'indirizzo e il modo di contattarla con quel 'passa parola' dell'epoca, che poi si traduce nel messaggio scritto sul muro,[25] facciamo un ulteriore passo avanti nel filo delle nostre argomentazioni.

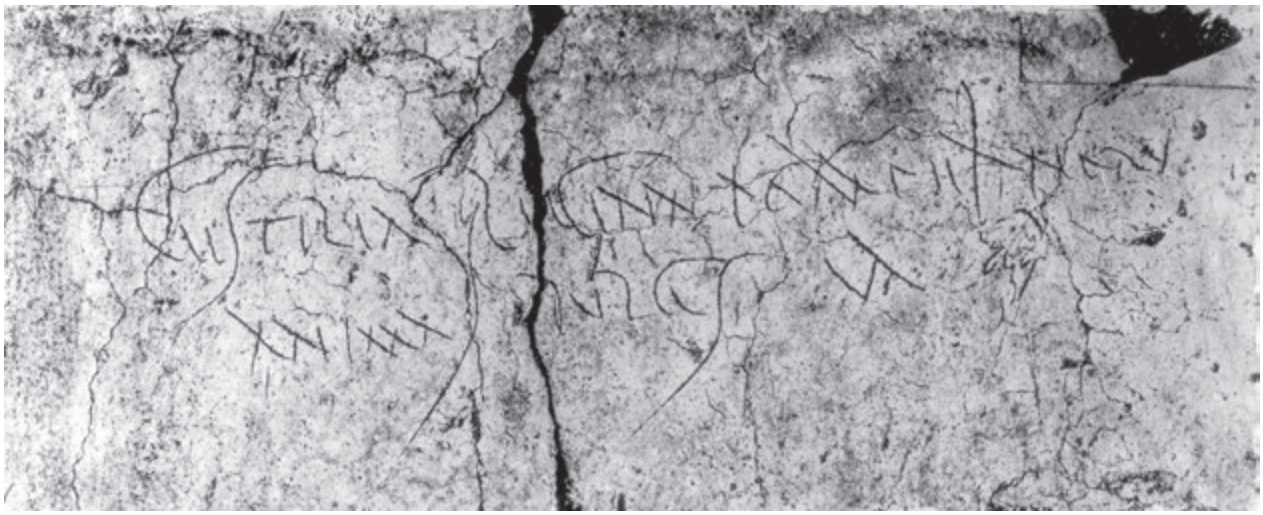

Fig. 4: Napoli. Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv. 111965). Da Pompei, *Reg*. IX, *ins*. 7, nr. 17, verosimilmente una cella meretricia. L'iscrizione *CIL* IV 2413 *h*: *Cestilia, regina Pompeianoru,* | *anima dulcis, vâ(le).*

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19 Varone 2005, 104 con n. 109.

20 *CIL* IV 10675: *Duo sodales hic fuerunt et cum diu malum* | *ministrum in omnia haberent* | *nomine Epaphroditum vix tarde* | *eum foras exigerunt.* | *Consumpserunt persuavissime cum fu`tu'ere HS CV s(emis).* Cfr. allora anche due altre iscrizioni, trovate nello stesso luogo *CIL* IV 10677: *Apelles cubicularius* | *Caesar(is) cum Dextro* | *pranderunt hic* | *iucundissime et* | *futuere simul* e *CIL* IV 10678: *Apelles Mus cum fratre Dextro* | *amabiliter futuimus bis* | *bina.*

21 Mart. 2, 63, 1-2.

22 *CIL* IV 1948 con add. p. 213.

23 *CIL* IV 2413 h con add. p. 222. L'iscrizione fu rinvenuta all'ingresso di IX 7, 17, sito su cui v. McGinn 2004, 202. 294 nr. 13, con bibliografia precedente.

24 Su *Novellia Primigenia* e le iscrizioni ad essa dedicate vedi essenzialmente Della Corte 1958, 83-100.

25 *CIL* IV 8356: *Nucerea quaeres ad porta Romana* | *in vico Venerio Novelliam* | *Primigeniam.*

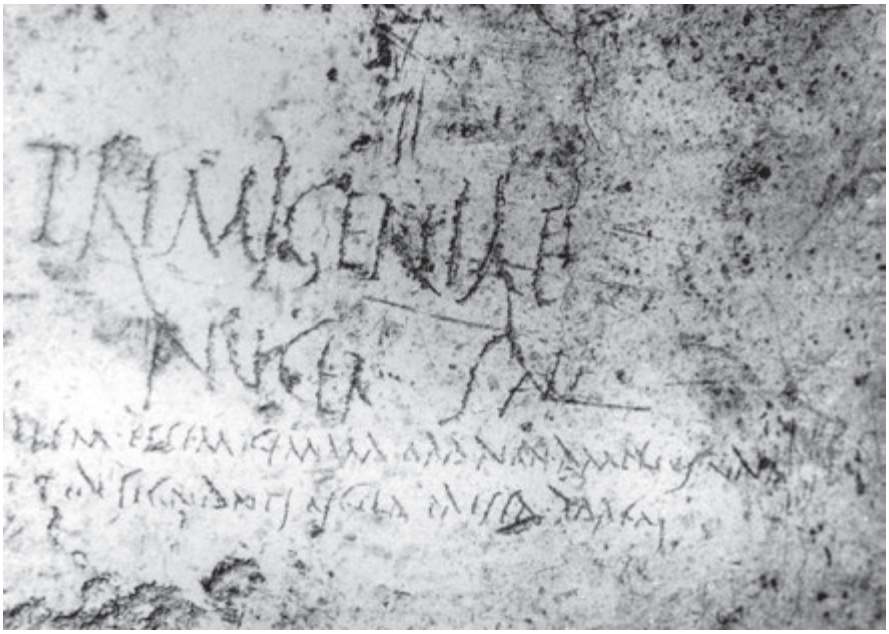

Fig. 5: Pompei. Depositi (inv. nr. 15404). Da Pompei, necropoli di porta Nocera, tomba 20 EN. L'iscrizione *CIL* IV 10241 con successiva rilettura: *Primigeniae* | *Nucer(inae) sal(utem).* | *Vellem essem gemma ora non amplius una* | *ut tibi signanti oscula pressa darem.*

Abbiamo letto per intero due volte[26] a Pompei il distico famoso della gemma, *Vellessem gemma hora non amplius una ut tivi signanti oscula pressa darem,* in cui, per inciso, credo si debba intendere quel *pressa* non già come *impressa*, bensì come *repressa*, *compressa*, dando così compimento logico all'espressione tutta, senza dover immaginare astrusi sottintesi che l'iscrizione di certo non autorizza a ipotizzare.[27] Il motivo dell'anello, del resto, quale espediente dell'approccio erotico ricorre già nella *Tarentilla* di Nevio (78 Ribbeck[3]): *anulum dat alii spectandum*. Il far ammirare il proprio anello è addirittura oggetto di una delle specifiche proibizioni comportamentali elencate nel *syngraphum* stipulato da Diabolo con Cleareta per godere per un anno delle grazie della di lei figlia Filenio nell'*Asinaria* di Plauto (778): *Spectandum ne cui anulum det neque roget*. Tibullo, poi, non fa mistero del come servirsi dell'anello quale tramite per un contatto preliminare a scopo erotico (1, 6, 25-26): *Saepe, velut gemmas eius signumque probarem,* | *per causam memini me tetigisse manum*, mentre Ovidio (*am.* 2, 15) fa addirittura parlare l'anello donato a una ragazza.

Orbene, nella redazione trovatane nella necropoli di porta Nocera (**fig. 5**) il distico è preceduto – inscindibilmente – dal saluto a *Novellia Primigenia*. Il discorso qui si fa allora inequivoco: il distico è il dono che il poeta, non certo *dives amator,* fa alla sua amata, è la properziana *docta tabella* con cui il poeta cerca di convincere l'amata[28] e si entra allora appieno nell'atmosfera della poesia elegiaca ben fattaci ancor più chiara da Sharon Lynn James:[29] la donna, cui altri accedono con il denaro, riceve dal poeta versi dedicati come compenso del suo amore, versi che, celebrandola, ne gratificano il nome presso gli altri contemporanei. E immancabile è allora qui il parallelo con Ovidio *am.* 1, 10, 58-62:[30] *quod quis habet dominae conferat omne suae. Est quoque carminibus meritas celebrare puellas dos mea; quam volui nota fit arte mea …. Carmina quam tribuent*

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26 Nella necropoli di Porta Nocera (*CIL* IV 10241: vedilo a **fig. 5**) e nella casa di Fabio Rufo (Giordano 1966, 83-84, nr. 42, sopra riportato, con minime modifiche.). Un terzo esemplare del distico, non completo e con la variante *gemma velim fieri* compare in *CIL* IV 1698 con add. pp. 463. 704.

27 Traduceva in effetti Gigante (1974, 290; 1979, 88-99), attento lettore della poesia scritta sui muri, "vorrei essere solo per un'ora l'anello (che ora ti porgo) per poter dare a te che l'inumidisci con la bocca (per apporre il sigillo) quei baci che sopra vi ho impressi". Non c'è bisogno di dover regalare l'anello. Il poeta vuol solo essere l'anello indossato dall'amata per poterle dare con erotico furore quei baci ancora repressi, compressi, che non è riuscito ancora a darle nella realtà.

28 Prop. 3, 23, 1. Cfr. anche Prop. 2, 14, 19: *ad dominam faciles aditus per carmina quaero.*

29 James 2003, 36-41, pagine dedicate alla definizione della *docta puella*.

30 Cfr. Dimundo 2000, 207.

fama perennis erit. Sono infatti i carmi che fanno sì che la famosa porta, che spesso rimane chiusa,[31] dischiuda invece i suoi battenti dopo aver squarciato la spranga di quercia infilata nello stipite,[32] facendo sì che la donna *ad vatem, pretium carminis, ipsa venit*.[33] Ai componimenti d'amore, quindi, *magna datur merces*.[34] Non deve sorprenderci, allora, date queste così chiare premesse, di trovarne a profusione anche sui muri di Pompei[35] e, se si entra in quell'ambito ben conosciuto ai filologi, ma che è stato finora, credo, trascurato dalla ricerca archeologica su Pompei, si possono trovare indicazioni precipue sulla vita stessa nella città vesuviana.

Sono infatti solo invenzioni letterarie quelle *puellae* che i poeti, e non solo elegiaci, ripetutamente celebrano nei loro scritti, quali Licoride, Neera, Cinzia, Sulpicia, Delia, Nemesi, Corinna, Pirra, Lidia, Cloe?[36] Sono, come nei personaggi della commedia di Plauto o Terenzio, semplici riflessi delle etere del mondo greco, se pur ciò sia vero?[37] Sono persone reali, che vivono in una dimensione trasfigurata dalla finzione poetica, ma che può avere una sua giustificazione formale solo all'interno di un *milieu* aristocratico come quello dei salotti di Roma, come per la figura di Volumnia Cytheris?

Non credo. La ricerca su Pompei, come ho appena mostrato, dà chiari segni dell'esistenza di una categoria di donne libere in attesa di uomini che ne comprino l'amore, e non la fugace prestazione sessuale, sorta di geishe o di etere, che si accompagnano formalmente all'uomo nei banchetti e in altre occasioni in una condizione non ancora ben definibile, ma che sembra essere appannaggio, invero, di un numero di donne non proprio ristretto, che, a voler essere maligni, sembra siano state istruite nel comportamento dalla Dipsas stessa di *Amores* 1, 8 o dall'Acanthis di Properzio 4, 5. Se si accetta e si approfondisce questa ottica, si vedrà che esempi concreti sono reperibili più di quanto non si possa credere: intanto il richiamo lasciato sui muri a versi, a riguardo significativi, della poesia erotica elegiaca (**fig. 6**), quali il properziano[38] *ianitor ad dantes*

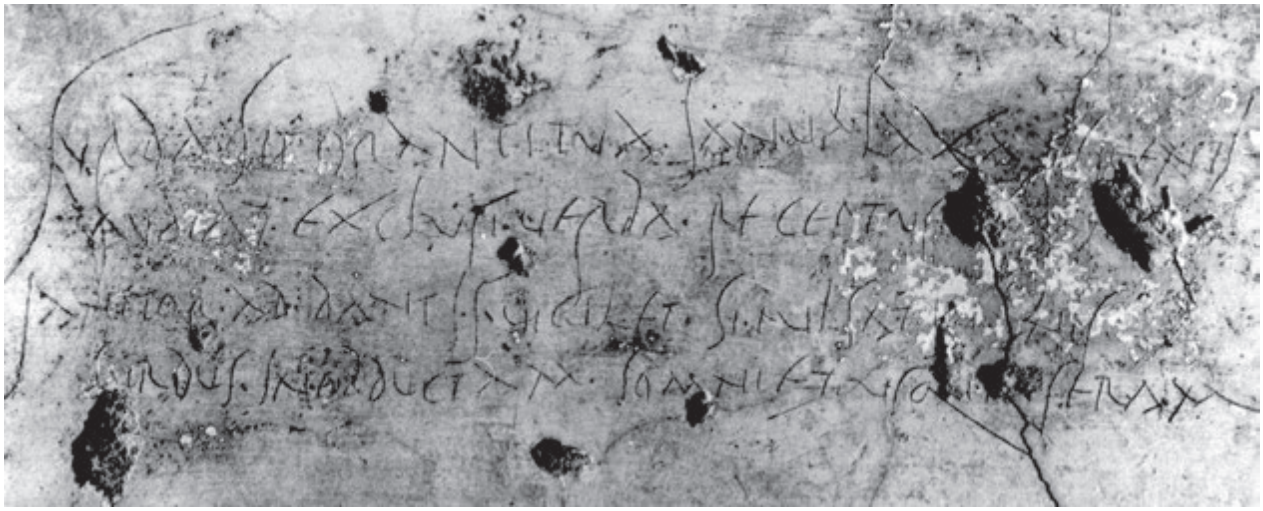

Fig. 6: Napoli. Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv.nr. 4706). Da Pompei, Basilica. In alto, l'iscrizione *CIL* IV 1893: *Surda sit oranti tua ianua laxa ferenti.* | *Audiat exclusi verba receptus [a]man[s]*. In basso l'iscrizione *CIL* IV 1894: *Ianitor ad dantes vigilet: si pulsat inanis* | *surdus in obductam somniet usque seram.*

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31 Ov. *am.* 2, 1, 17, 20. Cfr. anche Prop. 1, 16, 17: *ianua vel domina crudelior ipsa.*

32 Ov. *am.* 1, 6, 27-28.

33 Ov. *am.* 34.

34 Ov. *am.* 35.

35 Ad esempio, *CIL* IV 1781 con add. p. 464; 1928 con add. p. 465, e 704. 6842. 9171. Giordano 1966, 84 nr. 45.

36 Per un'attenta analisi delle figure delle *dominae* cantate dai poeti elegiaci v. Keith 2012.

37 Tale è genericamente ritenuto in letteratura, ma numerosi sono i riferimenti che riportano all'ambiente romano. Noto, ad es., che nella *Cistellaria* di Plauto Lena dichiara (38-39): *quia nos libertinae sumus, et ego et tua mater, ambae* | *meretrices fuimus* con un riferimento alla condizione giuridica che sembra attagliarsi appunto al mondo romano certamente meglio che a quello greco.

38 Prop. 4, 5, 47-48.

vigilet; si pulset inanis | surdus in obductam somniet usque sera[m][39] o l'ovidiano[40] *surda sit oranti tua ianua, laxa ferenti. | Audiat exclusi verba receptus [a]man[s]*[41] che sembrano non essere solo esibizione di conoscenze letterarie, ma piuttosto volerci ricondurre ad una situazione diffusa: una donna che accoglie o respinge, libera nella sua scelta, che deve essere convinta e ricompensata a suon di doni a cui si chiede l'afflato amoroso, più che il semplice e crudo gesto sessuale. Abbiamo anche notizie del valore e della consistenza di tali doni: una notte di intensa passione elargita da Fillide a Marziale viene dal poeta valutata, quale dono in contraccambio, in profumi o lane di pregio, anche dieci aurei, ma la richiesta che la donna, modesta, avanza è solo quella di ricevere un'anfora di vino.[42]

Un nuovo tassello, dato da un'iscrizione inedita che qui ora si presenta, recuperata negli scavi effettuati in questi ultimi anni a Stabia, offre un'ulteriore riprova di quanto si afferma.[43]

Lo scrittore, rivolgendosi ad una *Sabidia*,[44] ritenuta preziosa come l'oro, il cui nome gentilizio la qualifica di condizione non servile, riporta due distici tratti dal libro III dell'*Ars amatoria* di Ovidio, qui presentati in successione diversa. Il primo corrisponde infatti ai versi 71-72, mentre il secondo ai versi 69-70 (**figg. 7-8**):

0,22	*SABIDIA AVRVM*	*0,02-0,03*
0,29	*NEC TVA NOCTVRNA FRANGETVR IANVA RIXA*	*0,01-0,015*
0,335	*SPARSA NEQVE INVENIES LIMINA MANE ROSA*	*0,01-0,018*
0,38	*TEMPVS ERIT CVM TV QVAE NVNC EXCLVDIS AMANTES*	*0,01-0,02*
0,30	*FRIGIDA DESERTA NOCTE IACEBIS ANVS*	*0,01-0,02*

Sabidia aurum: | Nec tua nocturna frangetur ianua rixa | sparsa neque invenies limina mane rosa. | Tempus erit cum tu, quae nunc excludis amantes, | frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus.[45]

Così come nel famoso graffito pompeiano della gemma sopra richiamato, lo scrittore, prima di riportare il distico, si rivolge alla *puella* cui viene dedicato il componimento: in quel caso la nocerina *Novellia Primigenia*, qui la preziosa *Sabidia*, cui ricorda, in tale *paraclausithyron,* come la giovinezza non duri in eterno, esortandola quindi a non respingere gli amanti, come ora di fatto si può permettere di fare.

L'iscrizione chiarisce, ancora una volta, come le *puellae* della tradizione poetica elegiaca, donne *compos sui* che dovevano essere pregate oltre che pagate, fossero creature effettivamente esistenti nella realtà della società romana, e non solo a Roma.

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39 *CIL* IV 1894.

40 Ov. *am.* 1, 8, 77-78.

41 *CIL* IV 1893.

42 Mart. 12, 65.

43 Il graffito è stato da me letto a m 4,36 ad occidente della semicolonna decorativa ovest del *posticum* d'ingresso alla villa San Marco sulla via che scende al mare separando la stessa dal complesso termale ora in corso di scavo e ad un'altezza di cm 176,5 da terra. Per i riferimenti a detti scavi cfr. Varone 2014, partic. 377-80.

44 Per tale nome cfr. anche Mart. 1, 32, 1; 3, 17, 3.

45 L'iscrizione è incisa a lettere quasi impercettibili, con punta sottilissima, in corsivo alquanto posato, con resa particolare di alcune *V* ed *S*. La versione di questi versi conosciuta dalla tradizione letteraria è la seguente:
Tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc excludis amantes, / frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus. / Nec tua frangetur nocturna ianua rixa, / sparsa nec invenies lumina mane rosa.
Rispetto ad essa la versione tradita da questo graffito mostra le seguenti varianti: al v. 69 compare *cum* al posto di *quo*; al v. 71 *nocturna* è anteposto a *frangetur*; al v. 72 compare *neque* al posto di *nec*. Quando pure tali varianti fossero migliorative (e lascio eventualmente ai filologi il compito di dare un tale giudizio), non credo tuttavia si tratti di vere varianti letterarie del testo ovidiano, ma piuttosto l'ennesima riprova che tali testi letterari venivano imparati a memoria, quindi con possibili *defaillances* nella loro citazione. Il graffito è l'ennesima riprova della circolazione che le grandi opere poetiche avevano nel mondo antico, da un lato; delle conoscenze letterarie che molti pompeiani possedevano, dall'altro.

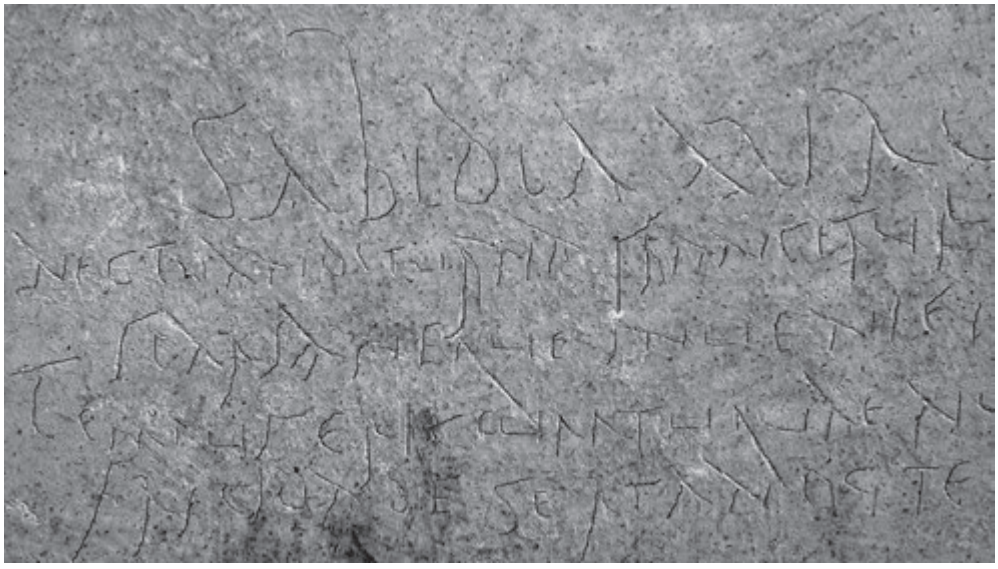

Fig. 7: Stabia, vicolo a nord di villa San Marco. Parte sinistra dell'iscrizione qui edita dedicata a Sabidia con evidenziazione elettronica dei tratti selezionati: *Sabidia aurum:* | *Nec tua nocturna frangetur ianua rixa* | *sparsa neque invenies limina mane rosa.* | *Tempus erit cum tu, quae nunc excludis amantes,* | *frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus.*

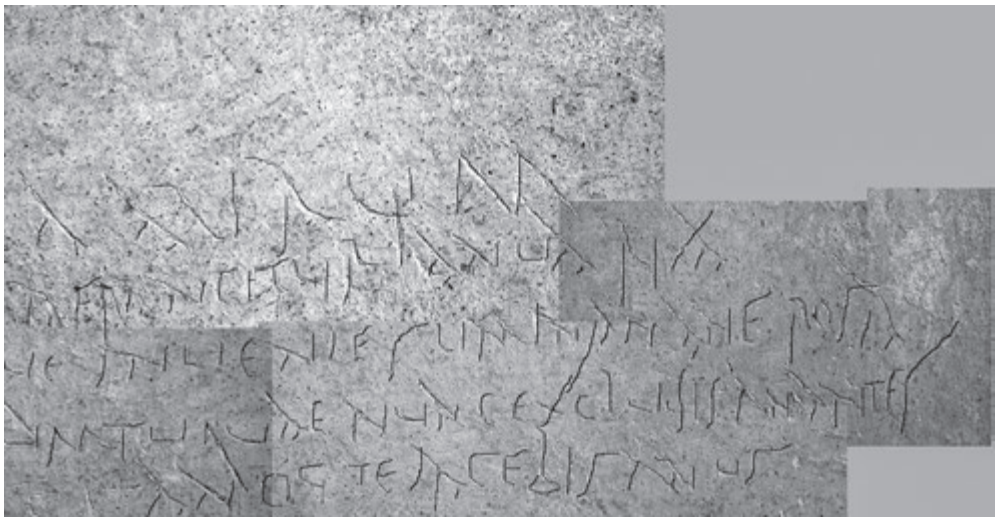

Fig. 8: Stabia, vicolo a nord di villa San Marco. Parte destra dell'iscrizione qui edita dedicata a Sabidia con evidenziazione elettronica dei tratti selezionati: *Sabidia aurum:* | *Nec tua nocturna frangetur ianua rixa* | *sparsa neque invenies limina mane rosa.* | *Tempus erit cum tu, quae nunc excludis amantes,* | *frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus.*

Se si accetta allora questa visione, che vede la ricerca della passione erotica in posti decisamente diversi dal talamo nuziale – che si viveva in effetti piuttosto come semplice struttura giuridica volta al soddisfacimento di altri interessi e bisogni sociali – o dal maleodorante angiporto,[46] e che sembra adombrata anche da un brano sarcastico di Plinio il Vecchio,[47] si possono trovare pertinenti e analoghi esempi, che mostrano una corrispondenza assolutamente insperata, quanto assai poco investigata, tra l'epigrafia del vissuto, a Pompei rappresentata mirabilmente dai graffiti, e l'atmosfera rarefatta e incantata nella quale vengono avvolte le donne della tradizione letteraria della poesia erotica latina, analizzate invece in ogni sfaccettatura caratteriale.

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46 Cfr. anche Prud. *c. Symm.* 2, 832-34: *[Sol] intrat marmoribus Capitolia clara, sed intrat* | *carceris et rimas et tetra foramina clausi* | *stercoris et spurcam redolenti in fornice cellam.*

47 Plin. *nat.* 33, 12, 40: *etiamne pedibus induetur atque inter stolam plebemque hunc medium feminarum equestrem ordinem faciet?* Il riferimento è alle *dominae,* ricoperte dalla testa ai piedi di gioielli che quasi pensano così di crearsi una posizione sociale intermedia tra le matrone e le popolane. Il sarcasmo, a mio avviso, è dato dal rapportare all'ordine equestre, rango sociale intermedio tra senatori e popolo, la figura di queste donne ingioiellate, che, come numerose raffigurazioni attestano, ci vengono spesso presentate intente ad amplessi nella posizione erotica della *mulier equitans.* Pur se in maniera diversa anche Orazio nella seconda satira del primo libro parla di un *genus medium* di donne, quando esalta il pregio nel rivolgersi, trascurando le matrone e le donne dei postriboli, alla 'seconda classe', quella delle liberte: *tutior at quanto merx est in classe secunda, libertinarum dico* (Hor. *sat*. 1, 2, 47-48).

Iscrizioni significative, intanto, ci mostrano di non sbagliare nel cercare anche a Pompei donne reali disposte a vendere non solo semplicemente il corpo. Il biglietto sgrammaticato tracciato sul muro con il quale un uomo prossimo alla vecchiaia si rivolge alla donna da lui desiderata con offerte precise ne è una riprova: *Victoriae suae salute.* | *Zosimus Victoriae* | *salutem.* | *Rogo te* | *ut mihi* | *sucuras* | *etati* | *maeae.* | *Si putes* | *me aes* | *non hab[e]*|*rae [noli]* | *am[are] m[e]*.[48] A questo biglietto la nostra Dipsas avrebbe senz'altro chiosato: *dives amator te cupiit; curae, quid tibi desit, habet*.[49] Non va peraltro sottovalutato che tale biglietto è stato trovato scritto proprio nella casa dell'Orso ferito, già da tempo da me indicata come uno dei locali dove ci si intratteneva appartandosi in gaia compagnia, mentre il nome Victoria compare più volte nel lupanare.[50]

La nostra differente forma di organizzazione sociale, da cui deriva il nostro mutato senso di considerare l'approccio amoroso, crea un velo alla percezione di un'altra realtà, del tutto diversa. L'elegia latina ben ce la illustra e credo siano proprio i biglietti d'amore, le *epistulae*, le *cerae* a darci interessanti ragguagli. Dice Ovidio:[51] *Non male deletae nudant tua facta tabellae, nec data furtive munera crimen habent.* Dal canto suo Marziale (2, 9), con quell'ironia caustica che gli è propria, ci fa anche ben comprendere come tali bigliettini non sempre contenessero solo deliziosi versi, ma, come nel caso del nostro Zosimo, impegni a ben sostanziose largizioni: *Scripsi; rescripsit nil Naevia: non dabit ergo.*| *Sed puto quod scripsi legerat: ergo dabit*.

D'altra parte è indicativa della peculiarità di tali biglietti un'altra iscrizione pompeiana, che, secondo l'interpretazione già da me datane,[52] indicherebbe appunto Pompei come luogo in cui era facile trovare donne disposte ad accompagnarsi a chicchesia: *Amplexus teneros hac si quis quaerit in u[rbe]* | *expect[at ceras] nulla puella viri*.[53] Facendo notare *en passant* l'aggettivo *teneros*, topico della poesia elegiaca[54] che si accompagna ad *amplexus*, che sembra appunto voler escludere il crudo rapporto con la prostituta da pochi assi, l'iscrizione sembra appunto voler sottolineare la disponibilità di tali donne, *puellae*, che si danno da fare e non stanno certo ad aspettare che arrivino i biglietti del proprio *vir*, ossia fedeli e prese dall'amante ufficiale.[55]

Quando leggiamo i biglietti d'amore del tipo *pupa que bela es tibi me misit qui tuus est, vale*,[56] oppure, iscrizione vergata proprio all'interno del disegno di una tavoletta cerata, *Secundus* | *Primae suae ubi*|*que isse salute.*| *Rogo, domna, ut me ames*[57] crediamo forse che un uomo stia cercando di fidanzarsi con una fanciulla? Che stia facendole la corte per impalmarla? Credo, semmai, si tratti di profferte per diventarne il *vir*, o per sostituirsi ad esso,[58] secondo le ben chiarite notazioni della poesia elegiaca amorosa, e basti qui pensare ad *Amores* 1,4, mentre non si dimentichi anche l'oraziano *si exierit vir*.[59] Ritornando poi al biglietto

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48 *CIL* IV 1684.

49 Ov. *am.* 1, 8, 31-32.

50 *CIL* IV 2212. 2221. 2225-28.

51 Ov. *am.* 2, 5, 5-6.

52 Varone 2004, 20.

53 *CIL* IV 1796 con add. p. 464.

54 Cfr. James 2003, 34-35. 245 n. 35.

55 Cfr. Franchi dell'Orto 1993/4, 282.

56 *CIL* IV 1234 con add. p. 205.

57 *CIL* IV 8364. Cfr. anche 8365-66.

58 Cfr. Giordano 1966, 84 nr. 45 con successiva correzione: *Felicem somnum qui tecum nocte quiescet?* | *Hoc ego si facere multo felicior esse.*

59 Hor. *sat.* 1, 2, 120. Sulla figura del *vir* nei componimenti della poesia erotica latina, assolutamente da non identificare con il marito v. James 2003, 35, 41-52.

di Secundus a Prima, scritto all'esterno della casa I 10, 7, ci accorgiamo che esso ha un seguito appunto nella risposta data da Prima a Secundus, trovata nella vicina *caupona* I 10, 3, anch'essa largamente connessa con la prostituzione:[60] *Prima Secudo salute plurima*.[61] Il lasciare queste testimonianze sul muro sembra anzi proprio voler dare aspetto pubblico al rapporto instaurato.

La risposta di Prima è, per il solo suo essere, un'asserzione, come ci hanno insegnato gli autori prima citati, e ha un parallelo preciso in un'altra iscrizione graffita: *Accepi epistulam tuam*.[62] A levarci ogni ulteriore dubbio sul significato preciso che riveste l'accettare il biglietto amoroso è ancora un'altra iscrizione graffita[63] (**fig. 9**): *Quoi scripsi semel et legit mea iure puellast.* | *Quae pretium dixit non mea sed populi est*, dove va appunto notato il termine *iure* ad indicare, se non altro, un atteggiamento di consolidata comune accettazione formale di tale comportamento. La distinzione proposta dallo *scriptor* è sostanziale: chi alla mia richiesta d'amore risponde chiedendo un prezzo si comporta come una donna pubblica, cui non va dato ascolto.[64] Vuole allora il nostro disincantato *scriptor* un amore puro, disinteressato, che avrebbe cercato, peraltro, tra donne che possono anche rispondere con precise richieste in denaro? A chiarirci meglio il concetto è allora un altro graffito che, quando pure rinvenuto a Roma nella *domus Tiberiana*, sembra voler proprio essere chiosa in parallelo di questo: *omnia formonsis cupio donare puellis* | *set mihi de populo nulla puella placet*.[65] Qui a darci la chiave è il *omnia donare.* Ancora una volta diviene stringente, nella sua circolarità concettuale, il ritornare alla poesia elegiaca di Ovidio 1, 10 e al suo *nec dare, sed pretium posci dedignor et odi*; *quod nego poscenti, desine velle, dabo*[66] a dimostrazione di una comunanza comportamentale propria dell'epoca e che ovviamente non dovette interessare solo Roma e Pompei.

Queste *puellae* vanno pregate, supplicate, ricoperte di doni, assecondate in ogni loro desiderio, anche perché altrimenti, mutato avviso, possono liberamente concedersi ad altri: … *rogo domna; per* | *[Venere]m*

Fig. 9: Napoli. Museo Archeologico Nazionale (inv.nr. 4695). Da Pompei, Basilica. L'iscrizione *CIL* IV 1860: *Quoi scripsi semel et legit mea iure puellast.* | *Quae pretium dixit non mea sed populi est.*

60 Si veda *CIL* IV 7339, iscrizione dipinta che sembra appunto essere il *titulus* di profferta di Felix e di Florus e la schermaglia tra Successus e Severus per contendersi i favori di Iride di *CIL* IV 8258-59.

61 *CIL* IV 8270.

62 *CIL* IV 5031.

63 *CIL* IV 1860 con add. p. 464.

64 Il parallelo è strettissimo con il *certo aere* di Ov. *am.* 1, 10, 21: *Stat meretrix certo cuivis mercabilis aere.*

65 Correra 1894, 95 = Castrén – Lilius 1970, 110, nr. 3.

66 Ov. *am*. 1, 10, 63-64. Analogie tra il graffito appena citato e questa elegia vedrei anche nel *formosa* del verso 47: *parcite, formosae, pretium pro nocte pacisci*.

Fisicam te rogo ni me | *[reicias* | *- - -]us. Habeto*….[67] Il timore è palpabile e si ravvisa non solo nelle opere letterarie, ma pienamente anche nei graffiti: *Ceio et multis pupa venusta*;[68] o ancora *Si quis forte meam cupiet vio[lare]* | *puellam illum in desertis* | *montibus urat Amor*,[69] che trova un parallelo strettissimo con un altro graffito, questo ancora della *domus Tiberiana* di Roma: *quisque meam futuit rivalis* | *amicam illum secret[is] montibus* | *ursus edat*.[70] Qui in particolare, in una assolutamente simile identità concettuale al termine *puella* si sostituisce *amica* e val bene allora ricordarsi del *recte quam futuis vocas amicam* di Marziale,[71] dove quel *recte* chiarisce appunto questa accezione corrente del termine *amica*,[72] come, d'altro canto, l'iscrizione funeraria famosa di Aesernia[73] o il verso di Giovenale *mox lenone suas iam dimittente puellas*[74] o il graffito del Lupanare *hic ego puellas multas futui*[75] ugualmente non lasciano equivoci sull'accezione che il termine *puella* rivestiva.

Non deve però necessariamente ritenersi che *puella* nell'accezione erotica stia solo ad indicare la prostituta trivialmente venale, come visto, e di ciò anche il seguente graffito fornisce riprova: *Vasia quae rapui, quaeris, formosa puella;*| *Accipe quae rapui non ego solus; ama.*| *Quisquis amat valeat.*[76] La *formosa puella,* e calco allora l'accento su quel *formosa*[77] qui non è certo la donna che si prostituisce *palam,* visto che si rinzela per l'offesa alla sua *pudicitia* data da quei baci presi di rapina, ma si capisce pure che non è certo la donna immacolata che come Lucrezia potrà riscattare l'onta solo con la morte, visto che di tali furti le viene riconosciuta una certa esperienza, sì che la si invita ad una loro più serena accettazione.

Due altri termini bisogna ancora mettere a fuoco quanto a ben precisa accezione in connessione con l'attività erotica, ed essi sono *pupa* e *domina.*

A mio avviso è stato sinora troppo frettolosamente considerata nell'ambito degli studi sull'argomento l'analisi che Jana Kepartovà effettuò alcuni anni or sono sulla rivista *Listy Filologické* a riguardo del significato del termine *pupa*.[78]

La studiosa ceca con una stringente analisi filologica ha potuto infatti mostrare l'assoluta equivalenza del ricorrente termine *pupa* delle iscrizioni pompeiane con il *puella* della letteratura, con tutte le implicazioni che per quel termine i poeti elegiaci, e i loro commentatori moderni, oltre che un nutrito gruppo di iscrizioni, come prima visto, ci hanno ben insegnato a conoscere.[79]

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67 *CIL* IV 6865.

68 *CIL* IV 8807a.

69 *CIL* IV 1645 con add. p. 463.

70 Castrén – Lilius 1970, 236 nr. 286.

71 Mart. 7, 70: *Ipsarum tribadum tribas, Philaeni,*| *recte quam futuis, vocas amicam.*

72 Sulla quale cfr. in particolare, per le svariate attestazioni, *ThLL, s.v.*

73 *CIL* IX 2689: *L(ucius) Calidius Eroticus sibi et Fanniae Voluptati v(ivus) f(ecit): – Copo, computemus. – Habes vini s(extarium) (unum). Pane(m): a(sse) (uno). Pulmentar(ium): a(ssibus) (duobus). – Convenit. – Puell(am): a(ssibus) (octo). – Et hoc convenit. – Faenum mulo: a(ssibus) (duobus). – Iste mulus me ad factûm dabit*.

74 Iuv. 6, 127.

75 *CIL* IV 2175.

76 Giordano 1966, 85, nr. 46.

77 Cfr. pure il *formosa forma puella, laudata a multis* di *CIL* IV 1516.

78 Kepartovà 1983. Oltre a vari altri siti di Pompei (*CIL* IV 1234, 1645, 4007, 5296, 6842, 8807) il termine è ricorrente nella cosiddetta Caserma dei Gladiatori (V 5, 3): *CIL* IV 4289, 4342, 4353, 4356, 4387.

79 La *puella* è la donna 'sessualmente attiva' (James 2003), ossia quella che ora qualifichiamo come 'cortigiana', che ha un equivalente più moderno nel termine 'escort'. La sua particolarità, tuttavia, come la stessa James 2006, 226 dice è quella che deve essere conquistata e anche pagata: "*Puella* is generically a courtesan who requires both payment and persuasion". Vedi anche circa il termine *puella* Adams 1983, 344-48.

Quando si vede che con *pupula* una donna letterata, con versi struggenti, si rivolge ad un'altra donna, distratta momentaneamente dal suo amore dagli amplessi di un uomo,[80] si comprende allora bene come quella realtà sfuggente prenda pieghe sempre più concrete e lasci aprire una nuova prospettiva d'interpretazione non solo per svariate iscrizioni, ma per la comprensione del modo di vivere stesso l'amore nel mondo romano.

Su un ulteriore concetto credo infine debba essere fatta una compiuta disamina filologica ed è quello del termine *domina*, generalmente a Pompei connesso all'ambito erotico. *Domina* è un termine impegnativo, riguardante la padronanza sulla *domus*, la relazione formale con il *dominus*, e non è un caso che *domina nostra* sia attributo ufficiale delle consorti imperiali. Quale ne è il valore da attribuire ad esso nei graffiti pompeiani? Esso risuona lusinghiero nei corridoi delle case, sì che una fanciulla, verosimilmente una schiava, nella casa di Trebio Valente tenti di sottrarsi a tali lusinghe, pur magari speranzosamente, cosa che denota certamente nel termine uno *status* superiore, non facilmente conseguibile:[81] *Valens, domina essem*! Certo è, per converso, che in un'iscrizione di villa dei Misteri la *domina* si rivela impegnata in gesti di connotato sessuale molto più che espliciti.[82] Il *ThLL*, del resto, dedica un'intera sezione all'accezione di *domina* come '*amica'*.[83]

Quale sarà allora il significato da concedere a tale termine? 'Padrona del mio cuore, della mia mente, del mio corpo', detto da un innamorato gratificante, che per converso si definisce *tuus*? O non piuttosto 'donna padrona di sé', *compos sui*, che può liberamente disporre del proprio corpo così come della propria *domus*[84] magari, in quanto libera, incrementando gli averi lasciatigli dal padre con le fatiche del letto, come dice senza equivoci Ovidio?[85]

Anche se a Pompei non risultano mai attestati termini come *scortum, bustuaria* e simili o anche lo stesso *meretrix,* che in un caso datato all'età augustea è sostituito invece proprio dal termine *mulier,* non sembra tuttavia che con termini quali *puella, pupa o domina* nel contesto in cui vengono impiegati si voglia far riferimento a quelle che noi definiremmo prostitute di strada, ma appare improponibile anche andare decisamente a connotare con differenti tra loro identificazioni di *status* le donne indicate, anche se per *domina* sembra ravvisarsi un tono più deferente; più intimo e colloquiale per *pupa-puella.* Sembra tuttavia, dall'analisi condotta, che si possa pacificamente affermare che *puellae, formosae* o meno, *pupae* e *dominae*, con sfaccettature diverse, possano essere comunque viste come donne pronte a vendere il proprio amore, senza per questo fare in tutti i casi esercizio di prostituzione *palam*.

Il rapporto esclusivo, insomma, era protetto dalle norme nell'ambito matrimoniale, dove quasi per definizione l'amore era invece un complemento del tutto accessorio. Il puro sfogo sessuale poteva trovare invece soddisfazione, per chi non poteva disporre direttamente di schiavi o schiave, nel mondo della prostituzione di bassa lega. L'amore passionale andava invece conquistato e conteso ed iscrizioni a proposito di tale contese e della connessa gelosia certo non mancano.[86] Dal canto loro le donne che avevano uno *status*

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80 *CIL* IV 5296 con add. p. 705: *o utinam liceat collo complexa tenere braciola et teneris* | *oscula ferre labellis. I nunc ventis tua gaudia pupula crede* | *crede mihi levis est natura virorum. Saepe ego cu(m) media* | *vigilare perdita nocte haec mecum meditas: multos* | *Fortuna quos supstulit alte hos modo proiectos subito* | *praecipitesque premit. Sic Venus ut subito coiunxit* | *corpora amantium dividit lux et se*\|*parees qui<d> amant.*

81 *CIL* IV 8824: *Valen(s), domin(a).* | *Valens, domina essem.* | *Salutem rogam(us).* Si confronti per tale ultima espressione *CIL* IV 1991: *Aelius Magnus Plotillae suae.* | *Rogo domina salutem*. Cfr. anche *CIL* IV 1736. 8364 e la citata 6865.

82 *CIL* IV 9246b*: [Hic] ego cum domina resoluto clune* | *[p]er[e]gi* | *[tales se]d versu[s] scribere [turp]e fuit.*

83 *ThLL* s.v. *domina* V1, 1938 sub A, 1-27 (I. Kapp).

84 Veyne 1983, 1-2; James 2003, 51.

85 Ov. *am*. 1, 10, 41: *turpe tori reditu census augere paternos.*

86 Cfr. *CIL* IV 9848: *Hic duo rivales* | *una puella tenet*; *CIL* IV 8259, con botta e risposta di due contendenti*: Successus textor amat coponiaes ancilla* | *nomine Hiredem, quae quidem illum* | *non curat, sed ille rogat, illa comiseretur.* | *Scribit rivalis, vale.*

compatibile erano ben consapevoli di quello che si chiedeva loro e quindi del valore delle loro grazie, e traevano da ciò vantaggio senza per questo doversi direttamente ridurre a rango – anche giuridico – di prostitute.

Ovviamente quelle più 'attente' profittavano di tale situazione assumendo una veste che con brutto termine moderno definiremmo di cortigiane, in una posizione *border line* notata già dagli antichi[87] che non brutalmente quantifica, ma che concretamente valuta il peso economico delle proprie concessioni, secondo quanto raccomandato dallo stesso Ovidio,[88] e che rappresenta un vera categoria di genere se Ovidio nell'elegia *am*. 1, 10, smesso, inopinatamente, il 'tu' con il quale parlava alla sua amata ad esse genericamente si rivolge con un *quod vos facitis sponte* che le differenzia dalla *meretrix,* che "*coacta facit*".[89]

Tra la stola matronale e la toga meretricia c'era quindi una realtà concreta di un *medium genus feminarum* che si concedeva non certo per i pochi assi, ma con sostenute prospettive economiche che potevano a volte trovar riscontro anche nell'immediato *do ut des,* ma che spaziavano sovente su tempi più dilatati e comunque presupponevano una accettazione libera del pretendente.

Certo, se è lecito, credo, ormai ritenere del tutto fondata l'esistenza a Pompei di numerose persone cui potremmo assegnare almeno concettualmente il nome di cortigiane, in qualche caso conoscendole addirittura anche per nome, vale la pena di andare alla loro ricerca anche all'interno di quelle loro case aperte alla cupidigia degli uomini, come avveniva per chi si recava a Nuceria nel *vico Venerio* presso Porta Romana alla ricerca di Novellia Primigenia. Dobbiamo infatti porci il problema se sia possibile rinvenire tracce concrete del loro ambito nell'esame dei contesti archeologici, e al riguardo potrà essere particolarmente interessante la disamina che la dr.ssa Berg[90] ha cominciato a compiere dei contesti di rinvenimento di alcune case pompeiane, che spero possa ulteriormente confortare, in parallelo, quanto le iscrizioni hanno lasciato decisamente trasparire.

Invidiose, quia rumperes, se[ct]are noli formonsiorem | *et qui est homo pravessimus et bellus* e ulteriore replica del primo in *CIL* IV 8258 : *Dixi, scripsi. Amas Hiredem,* | *qua [t]e non curat. SIX Successo* | *ut su[.]r[.] [- - -]s[- - -]* | *Severus*; *CIL* IV 4498: *Thyas,* | *noli amare* | *Fortunatu;* | *vale; CIL* IV 2013*: Niycherate, v*|*ana succula,*| *que amas* | *Felicione* | *et at porta* | *deduces,* | *illuc* | *tantu* | *in mente* | *abeto.*

87 Cic. *Cael*. 49: *Si quae non nupta mulier domum suam patefecerit omnium cupiditati palamque sese in meretricia vita collocarit, virorum alienissimorum conviviis uti instituerit, si hoc in urbe, si in hortis, si in Baiarum illa celebritate faciat, si denique ita sese gerat non incessu solum, sed ornatu atque comitatu, non flagrantia oculorum, non libertate sermonum, sed etiam complexu, osculatione, actis, navigatione, conviviis, ut non solum meretrix, sed etiam proterva meretrix procaxque videatur: cum hac si qui adulescens forte fuerit, utrum hic tibi, L. Herenni, adulter an amator, expugnare pudicitiam an explere libidinem voluisse videatur?*

88 Il *parcite, formosae, pretium pro nocte pacisci* (Ov. *am*. 1, 10, 47) prima riportato si accompagna qualche verso dopo al *Nec tamen indignum est a divite praemia posci; munera poscenti quod dare possit, habet* (53-54).

89 Ov. *am*. 1, 10, 24.

90 Vedila *infra* in questo stesso volume.

The life course of the Roman courtesan

Sharon L. James

This essay briefly sketches out the life course of the Roman courtesan, as seen chiefly in Roman comedy and elegy, with occasional recourse to other literary sources. The first step is to rule out a host of issues and subjects that tend to attach themselves to studies of prostitution, particularly literary courtesans, beginning with moral judgment. This judgment is found in the very wording of a concept found as far back as Plutarch, on the *khreste hetaira*, and Donatus on the *bona meretrix*. This concept comes exclusively from the perspective of the male citizen. A hetaira or *meretrix* is 'good' when she is sweet, naïve, trusting, both sexually faithful to her citizen lover and sexually generous with him. She is 'bad', *mala*, when she insists on compensation for her time, when she seeks more support than the lover wants to give or more than he thinks he has bargained for, when she takes on other clients, or when she simply appears to be looking out for her own interests rather than catering to the interests, preferences, and conveniences of the citizen class. It is not surprising to find this view in our ancient sources, as they generally represent citizen values, but it has no place in scholarship, and it is particularly useless in literary criticism.[1]

Regardless, hostility toward the *meretrices* of the Roman literary sources is everywhere evident in classical scholarship from the 19th to the mid 20th-century, a fact that is not especially surprising: scholars in that period were overwhelmingly male, and they overwhelmingly take the views toward women that are articulated by the male speakers in the literary sources. They are also influenced by an unrecognized combination of Greco-Roman values on women and sexuality and Judeo-Christian values on women and sexuality. These value systems are hostile to both women and sexuality, and most especially to women's sexuality.[2] What is surprising, however, is the continued survival, in the 21st century, of scholarly hostility to the Roman *meretrix*, and it is a subject that must be addressed. Below are a few examples.

> 1. Some of them [the *meretrices*] have a good character, despite growing up in brothels: they are still virgins and regularly turn out to be free-born….But others are mercenary, evil characters, for instance Astaphium in the *Truculentus*. The noncitizen prostitute of noble character, so typical of Terence, does not exist in Plautus.
> De Melo 2011: xxxviii.

> 2. I have argued that there is only one type of a courtesan in the *palliata*, the type of *mala meretrix.* The courtesan with a heart of gold is a modern invention…. Terence' Thais in the *Eunuch*, usually described by scholars as *bona* (see most recently Fantham 2000, 287; 299) has all the characteristics of a *mala* that are prominent and very clear in her treating of the soldier Thraso.
> Gilula 2004, 241 n. 6, citing Gilula 1980, 149-50, 164-65.

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1 I have argued elsewhere that Plautus and Terence do not share citizen values, especially on sexuality. See James 2012b. On Plautus, see James, forthcoming.

2 It would be impossible to disentangle here the complex of ancient and post-ancient attitudes that lead to scholarly disapprobation of *meretrices*. The subject is simply too large.

3. The blurb on the back cover of Guy Lee's (1994) translation of Propertius describes the poet's "helpless infatuation for the sinister figure of his mistress Cynthia" (no source attributed).

4. "The aptly named Nemesis," the "volatile" Cynthia.
Santirocco 2002, xiv n. 9 and xvii).

It is important to note that de Melo does not criticize any other category of characters from Roman comedy for failure to be 'noble'. He recognizes male misogyny, particularly in the *senex*, and he is aware of the foolishness and selfishness of the *adulescens*, and the stupid brutality of the soldier. But he passes moral judgment only on women of the *meretrix* category. He criticizes only Plautine *meretrices* for not being 'noble', praising as 'noble' the Terentian *bona meretrix* who helps out citizens. There is no condemnation of the comic citizen male's tendency to commit rape; there is no critique of the slave-owner's propensity to threaten torture. The criticism of Astaphium is particularly misplaced, for she is not a free *meretrix*. She is a slave to the *meretrix* Phronesium, and she earns no personal profit from any of her activities or relations with men. She acts as a sort of junior courtesan, and she helps to support the household, but she does not gain anything for herself.

Gilula's remarks are a footnote to her comment that the male authors of the plays give "somewhat better press" to the *meretrices* who "serve their lovers' interests" rather than look out for themselves. The good or bad 'press' in fact comes from male characters in the plays, and cannot be attributed to either Plautus or Terence. But it also, as Gilula herself demonstrates, comes from critics in the habit of passing judgment on dramatic characters. Such critics, as I have noted above, focus their moral disapprobation on *meretrices*, but not on the men who seek to exploit women sexually, let alone the men who rape women. Gilula acknowledges that Melaenis of *Cistellaria* objects to what she sees as the "cruel, dishonest use of her daughter" by the young Alcesimarchus, but still criticizes Melaenis as immoral for having temporarily tricked a lover by pretending to have had his baby.

Santirocco's charge against Nemesis represents a widely held attitude; I cite his example simply because it is recent. This common view of Nemesis merits a remark: the only complaints made in Tibullus' poetry are that she insists on her price and that she sees other men – both standard behaviors for an independent *meretrix*. The poetic speaker later says *lena nocet nobis, ipsa puella bona est* (2, 6, 44), when he is trying to console Nemesis for having reminded her of the violent death of her young sister, so even he does not consistently fault her character. The grief that causes her to begin weeping, at the thought of the little girl's fatal fall from an upper window, should serve to remind us that even a woman universally called hard and cruel actually has a loving heart.

These scholarly remarks, and many others very like them, effectively take the view of male clients in the plays, the very men who uniformly seek to gain sexual advantage of the *meretrices* by not compensating the women for their time. Given that not a single one of these male characters is held up as a paragon of objectivity, wisdom, or good sense, it is inappropriate to take their perspective.

William S. Anderson offers a way forward:

> Plautus does not treat the family as the essential measure of value for his comedy, and so, though he recognizes the stereotype of the 'bad prostitute' (*mala meretrix*: *Captivi*, line 57), he tends to change her character from that of negative menace to one of positive appeal: her 'badness' becomes the basis for her superiority to the male characters who share the stage with her (Anderson 1994, 103).

Anderson's insight is crucial to understanding all of Plautus (and is especially important for understanding Plautus' focus on slavery) but our concern here is the *meretrix.* In looking at the Roman literary courtesan, it

is necessary to remember that she is not allowed to participate in citizen society, and most particularly that she is not allowed to practice its morals, a subject to which I will return.

Everything following here, then, begins from this presumption: the Roman literary courtesan belongs to a social and professional class of women who have only themselves, their beauty, their wits, and their self-control, to rely on in a society that considers them at best a necessary evil and at worst an easily disposable function. To understand her, we must look past the male perspectives that present us to her – perspectives that are often absurdly biased – so that we can consider her on her own terms, and in terms of her own experiences. Those, as it turns out, are both implicitly dramatized and explicitly articulated very well in our sources. I begin with a basic biography, then turn to other aspects of her life, many of which are illuminated in the rest of this volume.

How to become an independent courtesan

There are three basic paths to the status of the non-servile *meretrix*. One may start out as a slave, as the historical examples of Volumnia Cytheris and Hispala Faecenia show. Roman comedy shows several such women: Melaenis and Lena of *Cistellaria*, for example, and the various brothel slaves purchased and liberated by their lovers (Phoenicium of *Pseudolus*, Philematium of *Mostellaria*, Acropolistis of *Epidicus,* Lemniselenis of *Persa*, Ampelisca of *Rudens*). In the second path, an exposed baby is found or purchased by an adult *meretrix* who will bring her up as a daughter, as the Athenian Neaira was brought up by Nicarete, or as in Plautus' play *Cistellaria*, with Selenium. Finally – and this is rarely represented in the literary courtesan's life – a baby girl can be born to a practicing *meretrix*, who then brings her up in the profession, as with Gymnasium of *Cistellaria* and Philaenium of *Asinaria.* A citizen woman can fall into concubinage or prostitution if her circumstances are desperate enough, as with the citizen woman Chrysis, in Terence's play *Andria*, or as with Korinna, the daughter of Krobule in Lucian's 6th *Dialogue of Courtesans.*

The courtesan's life develops from her initial entry into her profession, when she may want to cleave only unto a single man, into a fully engaged, busy social life with numerous suitors. The plot of this life-course may seem simple enough, but it is fraught with excitement and risk, supplied primarily by the dangers of male sexual jealousy and violence, as well as the problems of sex and pregnancy. The lover, of course, prefers to believe that she exists only for himself; he views others – friends, family, household slaves, *lenae*, rivals, or live-in boyfriends as unnatural obstacles. Even so, episodes, events, and people from her life turn up uncontrollably. The overall progress of the courtesan's career may be charted on a predictable course, as we shall see.

Steps in the life course of the Roman courtesan

She begins training at music and dance from an early age. Roman comedy and elegy record a wide range of specialties, *passim*: *fidicina*, *tibicina*, *psaltria*, *auletris*, *citharistria, crotalistria*, and more.[3] She also learns to sing attractively. If she is an elegiac *puella*, she begins bilingual training in poetry (Ov. *ars* 3, 329-48).[4] At some point she begins learning dinner party etiquette, charming and seductive conversation, clever and

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3 Ovid includes the *nablia* (*ars* 3, 327-28), about which Gibson 2003, 229 says "a Phoenician harp, about which little is known". He notes that it is an exotic instrument.

4 If she is a foreigner, she will probably already know another language. Greek was the native language of many a Roman courtesan. Diabolus in *Asinaria* fears that Philaenium will speak a language that he does not know (793).

witty speech, attractive physical postures, even board games (*ars* 3, 353-66). Some of these can also be seen in Lucian's *Dialogues of courtesans* 6, where the citizen mother Krobule trains her daughter Korinna in the ways of the *hetaira*.

When the courtesan begins practicing her career, she may still be idealistic and naïve, believing that love and fidelity are possible. It is the job of the *lena*, the advisory older woman, to destroy this illusion. Sometimes the courtesan has a single male client or patron, at least for a period. In the prime of her career, she supports a house populated by slaves and much trafficked by all kinds of visitors. She goes out day and night – to the theater, baths, races, temples, public games and spectacles, dinner parties, etc., as well as to visit friends and perform religious rituals – and she occasionally travels abroad. She may intermittently enter into an contract with a given man, on whom she will certainly cheat as often as possible. In theory, she is saving money and valuables that can support her for a while, at least, in retirement. When she can no longer make a living as a professional girlfriend, the courtesan retires. She may be supported by her daughter (as in *Asinaria, Cistellaria*, *Truculentus*; see also Tib. 1, 6, and, evidently, Propertius 2, 6) or offer freelance advising to a younger courtesan, as in Tib. 1, 5 and 2, 6, Ov. *Amores* 1, 8, Propertius 4, 5. She may be forced back into servitude, as with Scapha of *Mostellaria* and, possibly, Leaena of *Curculio*.

Every element of this life-course is mentioned in elegy and comedy; many of them are advised in *Ars amatoria* book 3. We can now take a closer look at some of these aspects of the life of the courtesan, with specific textual references.

Incidents and episodes from the life of the courtesan

The *meretrix* may have a family: Cynthia's mother and sister visit her (Prop. 2, 6), mother and sister are mentioned at Ovid *Amores* 1, 8, 91. Delia's mother supervises her and brings her to the lover (Tib. 1, 6); Nemesis is still grieving from the violent premature death of her little sister (Tib. 2, 6). It does not matter if these are relatives by blood or by adoption. But the *meretrix* cannot have a male *tutor*: Prop. 2, 18, 33: *cum tibi nec frater sit nec tibi filius ullus*. This condition is an absolutely necessity. If there were a supervisory father, brother, or son, the lover would stand little chance of persuading her.

The courtesan may have very close ties with her household staff, something on view everywhere in Roman comedy – Phronesium and Astaphium work very co-operatively in *Truculentus*, for instance. Cynthia's posthumous speech in Propertius 4, 7 gives us a view of her affection for, and loyalty to, her slaves. She resents the way that her successor has taken over her home and her life – and even melted down a gold statuette of Cynthia – but she particularly resents the way the interloper abuses her former slaves for being loyal to her (43-46), she worries about her old nurse (73-74), and she wants to protect her youngest slave from the new mistress (75-76).

She has an active social life, with friends. In *Cistellaria*, based on Menander's *Synaristosai*, the young Selenium has lunch with her friend Gymnasium and Gymnasium's mother, called simply Lena in the text. Philotis of *Hecyra* spent two years longing for her friends and their conviviality, while she was on contract with a soldier in Corinth. In Propertius 2, 6, Cynthia's house is under constant siege by friends both female and male – and the lover believes that the men are not legitimate relatives with a blood right to kiss Cynthia (7-8). Even a baby comes to visit (10). Her friends may spend the night with her (12). In the *Ars amatoria,* a *puella* who is living with one man can slip out to meet another man because her girlfriend will lend them a place to meet and a bed: *quotiens opus est, fallax aegrotet amica,* | *et cedat lecto quamlibet aegra suo* (Ov. *ars* 3, 641-42: "however often it's necessary, your tricky girlfriend can get sick, and vacate her bed, however sick she is"). The same friend, however, may be a rival *meretrix*: *haec quoque, quae praebet lectum studiosa*

locumque |crede mihi, mecum non semel illa fuit (Ov. *ars* 3, 663-64: "that girl too, who helpfully supplies a meeting place and bed – believe me, she's been with me more than once"). This is a complicated social life: the *meretrix* must watch out for the jealousy and suspicions of her lovers (staged *passim* in comedy and articulated equally throughout elegy).

Finally, a point that is ubiquitous in Roman comedy: the *meretrix* is well known in her neighborhood. This fact of her life is not merely a dramatic necessity, but a professional obligation. It is an inevitable function of her occupation: she *must* go out and be seen, in order to attract new clients. But it is also a basic reality of life in city neighborhoods: the citizens living next door to *meretrices* know them. The slaves of citizen households and *meretrix* households all know each other, everywhere. Thus Bacchis (*Hecyra*), Chrysis (*Andria*), and Thais (*Eunuchus*) are known even to the *patresfamilias* of neighboring houses. In *Hecyra*, the slave Parmeno knows not only Bacchis but the recently returned Philotis and the older Syra. In *Truculentus*, the household of Phronesium is well-known to the citizen women of Callicles' family. The *meretrices* of a town or region know each other: in Plautus' *Epidicus*, the unnamed music girl knows Acropolistis, the play's other music girl, "as well as herself" – *tam facile quam me* (504).

The *meretrix* goes out and about frequently, both socially and professionally. Dinner parties are constant, too common for useful citation. She goes to the theater: Prop. 4, 8, 77-78; Ov. *am.* 2, 7, 3-4; *ars* 3, 394, and most notoriously in *ars* 1: *spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae* (*ars* 1, 99: "the girls go to see, they go to be seen themselves"). The courtesan goes everywhere: the races (Ov. *am.* 3, 2; *ars* 1, 135-162; 3, 396), spectacles such as races, gladiatorial shows and triumphal processions (*ars* 1, 163-228; 3, 395). She goes out in a litter (*ars* 1, 487-90; *rem*. 663-66) and on foot (*ars* 2, 209-10; Tib. 1, 5, 63-64). The charming and clever *scortillum* of Varus, in Catullus 10, asks to borrow the litter and litter-bearers of the poetic speaker (24-27). She walks around everywhere: Ovid's *praeceptor amoris* lists the Porticus Octaviae (*ars* 1, 69-70; 3, 391-92) and Livia (*ars* 1, 71-72), the temple of Palatine Apollo (*ars* 1, 73-74; 3, 389-90), the Jewish temple (*ars* 1, 76), the courts (*ars* 1, 79-88), the temple of Isis (*ars* 1, 77-78; 3, 393-94), Pompey's colonnade (Catull. 55, 7; Ov. *ars* 1, 67-68; 3, 385-87; see also Prop. 4, 8, 75-76).[5] An unexpected detail: the courtesan goes to the temple of the Bona Dea to get her hair done (*ars* 3, 244). The Forum seems to be a common destination, mentioned *passim*. The *puella* is everywhere, says the *praeceptor Amoris*: *tot tibi tamque dabit formosas Roma puellas | 'haec habet' ut dicas 'quicquid in orbe fuit'* (*ars* 1, 55-56).

The *meretrix* participates in religious rituals both public and private, as listed. The annual ritual to Isis, so hated by the elegiac lovers, requires ten days of celibacy (Tib. 1, 3; Prop. 2, 33; 4, 5; Ov. *am.* 1, 8), but the goddess may be consulted on other occasions, particularly for emergencies (Tib. 1, 3; Ov. *am.* 2, 13). The *scortillum* of Catullus 10 wants to borrow the speaker's litter, as noted above, in order to go to Serapis' temple (10, 26-27); the *meretrix* is advised to visit the temple of Palatine Apollo (Ov. *ars* 3, 89-90). She can be found performing the Adonia and, apparently, outside the Jewish temple on the Sabbath (*ars* 1, 75-76). The courtesan goes to her home town for important local rituals, as at Propertius 4, 8, when Cynthia goes to Lanuvium, or at Ovid's *Amores* 3, 13, when the *puella* – here called a *coniunx*, in elegy's program of misusing marital language, which I have discussed elsewhere – goes home for the rite of Juno Quiritis.[6] *Meretrices* perform specific rituals to Venus, in Plautus' *Poenulus*, and general religious rituals are anticipated in the proposed contract for the courtesan Philaenium in *Asinaria* (781-83), but specific rituals to Venus and Cupid are imagined as a ruse for contact with a rival lover (803-805). *Meretrices* are seen at funerals, and

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5 In fact, Pompey's colonnade is apparently so notorious a pick-up zone that in this passage, Cynthia forbids her poet to go there: *tu neque Pompeia spatiabere cultus in umbra*, | *nec cum lasciuum sternet harena Forum* (Prop. 4, 8, 75-76).

6 See James 2003, 41-49 on elegy's deliberate misapplication of the lexicon of marriage.

their grief can be very attractive (*ars* 3, 431-32). Propertius 2, 29 cites a charming detail: once Cynthia had a nightmare, and she went in her purple tunic (2, 29, 25-28) to tell Vesta about it, so that the nightmare could not harm either herself or her lover. This kind of ritual is obviously very personal.

The courtesan travels for both pleasure and business, although the lover suspects that she will be meeting men, as at Prop. 4, 8, 16, where the lover thinks Cynthia's trip to the festival of Juno at Lanuvium is really about an affair with the *vulsus nepos* who has driven off with her. He naturally thought the same of her trip to Baiae in poem 1, 11, but is delighted in poem 2, 19 that she can't be pursued by other men out in the country; Nemesis in Tibullus 2, 3 has gone to the country with a rival. Corinna's planned trip in *Amores* 2, 11 has no stated purpose. Long-term contracts to a soldier, for service abroad, are found in *Hecyra* and Plautus' *Bacchides.* The specter of this contract comes up in Propertius 1, 8 and 2, 26; see also Verg. *Eclogue* 10, where Lycoris has gone off on campaign with a rival to Gallus. Propertius 4, 3 presents, as I have argued, the opposite situation, in which a *puella* stays home while her soldier-lover goes off on campaign.[7]

To attract clients, the courtesan must look her best. Hence the Propertian speaker recalls the dress in which Cynthia first caught his eyes, and wants her to wear it again on her birthday (3, 10, 15; for all we know, it is the purple dress of 2, 29). Plautus' titular Epidicus describes (213-35) the dressed-up and adorned *meretrices* on the way to the harbor, *en masse,* to meet the incoming boats as hunters, looking very stylish and attractive: *pleraeque eae sub vestimentis secum habebant retia* (216).[8] Cosmetics (Ov. *ars* 3, 199-218, the *Medicamina*, Prop. 3, 24, 5-8; Plaut. *Most*. 157-292) and hair-styles are part of the courtesan's method of catching the attention of potential lovers and clients (*ars* 3, 135-68). In Prop. 2, 18, 1-2, the lover-poet suspects that Cynthia is trying to dye her hair red-gold in order to catch male attention (cf. also Corinna's hair treatments in *am.* 1, 14). Of the theater, Ovid's *praeceptor Amoris* notoriously says *ruit ad celebres cultissima femina ludos… spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae* (*ars* 1, 97; 99), but in fact the *meretrices* go out all the time, everywhere, to see and be seen. Indeed, Adelphasium of *Poenulus* dreads the festival of Venus that *meretrices* attend in a parade – she knows that men will be there observing them. Throughout *ars* 3, the *praeceptor* instructs women about how to look good; it is worth noting that his discussion of flattering colors echoes Epidicus' absurdist list.

Finally, the courtesan's life contains much in the way of exciting intrigues. There is much play-acting and manipulation, as cited in *ars* 3. She tries to trick her primary boyfriend into drinking until he passes out so she can meet with a secondary boyfriend (Tib. 1, 6; Ov. *am.* 1, 4; 2, 5; Plaut. *Asin.* 771-73), though she risks passing out herself (Plaut. *Truc*. 854-55, *ars* 3, 761-68). Cynthia claims to have worn down her windowsill by climbing over it on a rope, to meet her poet for sex in the street (Prop. 4, 7, 15-16). The complex charades of Phronesium in *Truculentus* are notorious, but quite a few other plays show the *meretrix* involved in role-playing and trickery, as well.

The courtesan faces occupational hazards. Male jealousy, anger, and drunken impulse are found throughout elegy and comedy.[9] In Propertius 4, 5, the *lena* Acanthis advises the *puella* to take advantage of male violence by, effectively, charging her lover for any damage to hair, clothing, or self (4, 5, 39); the *praeceptor Amoris* cites the same principle (*ars* 2, 167-72). In abjuring violence, the Propertian speaker invokes it, 2, 5, 17-26; 3, 25,29-30; he threatens murder-suicide (2, 8, 25-28). The comic *meretrix* is at almost constant risk of violence: at Plautus' *Poenulus* 1288-91, the soldier Antamonides plans to beat up his

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7 See James 2012a.

8 To Epidicus' hilarious catalogue of dress styles may be added the list of colors that suit different complexions, at *ars* 3, 169-93.

9 See, among other sites, Tib. 1, 1, 73-76; 1, 6, 73-76; 1, 10, 53-64; Ov. *am.* 1, 7. The number of places where violence is threatened is considerably larger.

amica Anterastilis, because he is angry that the *leno* made him pay for lunch; the soldier Pyrgopolynices kidnaps the free *meretrix* Philocomasium (Plaut. *Miles*); the Bacchis sisters are threatened with violence throughout: Plaut. *Bacch*. 501-25, 842-69 (including two death threats, 860, 868-69), and 1118-72, passim. Thraso the soldier leads an assault on Bacchis' house in Terence's *Eunuchus*. The two *senes* in his *Hecyra* are very menacing with Bacchis. Horace *Carmen* 3, 26 lists the weapons used for breaking into the house of the courtesan.

Various illnesses of unstated nature are found in all three elegists (Tib. 1, 5, 9-16, Prop. 2, 9, 25-28 and 2, 28, Ov. *ars* 2, 315-36). The sex that is constantly sought by the courtesan's lovers and clients puts her at risk of pregnancy, which she cannot afford. I have argued elsewhere that some of the illnesses cited in elegy are oddly associated with the bed (Ov. *am.* 2, 13-14, most obviously, but also Tib. 1, 5; Prop. 2, 28), and that texts are overtly concealing symptoms of treatment for termination of a pregnancy.[10] Finally, the alcoholism uniformly associated with the old women, the *lenae*, is absolutely an occupational hazard: all the drinking that the courtesan is expected, even required, to do will put her at risk of developing an alcohol dependence.

Two other paths to the life of the courtesan

Roman comedy offers two examples of paths for the courtesan that are worth noting. Typically, they are found in Terence, whose view on the life of the *meretrix* is very interesting. One is the road by which a citizen woman finds herself turned into a *meretrix*, as seen in his play *Andria*. The citizen Chrysis must leave her home on Andros because she is poor, and her male kin do not support her. She tries to support herself on woolwork, but men come wooing and making offers. Thus she becomes a *meretrix*:

> *primo haec pudice vitam parce ac duriter*
> *agebat, lana ac tela victum quaeritans;*
> *sed postquam amans accessit pretium pollicens*
> *unus et item alter, ita ut ingeniumst omnium*
> *hominum ab labore proclive ad lubidinem,*
> *accepit condicionem, de(h)inc quaestum occipit* (Ter. *Andr*. 74-79).
>
> At first she lived her life modestly, sparingly, in harsh conditions,
> seeking her living by wool and weaving.
> But after a lover came promising a price,
> one and then another, then as it is in the nature of all
> human beings to slide from toil to desire,
> she took the offer, and from that point she began her occupation (transl. author).

Thus, in this play, male neglect and male desire combine to convert a citizen woman into a courtesan. Her particular path is extremely unusual: three young men who are friends provide her with support. There appears to be no jealousy among them – they see her on a set schedule. Such a life is not sustainable in the long term; hence Chrysis dies young.

In another play, Terence's *Self-Tormentor,* the *meretrix* Bacchis explains to the young girl Antiphila, whose lover Clinia has run away, that some non-citizen women are allowed to live as if they were citizens,

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10 See James 2003, 173-84.

in faithful, loving relationships. Others, however, are not, and as we shall see, aggressive male desire again turns the course of a woman's life:

edepol te, mea Antiphila, laudo et fortunatam iudico,
id quom studuisti isti formae ut mores consimiles forent (Ter. *Haut*. 381-82).
…
et quom egomet nunc mecum in animo vitam tuam considero
omniumque adeo vostrarum volgus quae ab se segregant,
et vos esse istius modi et nos non esse haud mirabilest.
nam expedit bonas esse vobis; nos, quibuscum est res, non sinunt:
quippe forma inpulsi nostra nos amatores colunt;
haec ubi immutata est, illi suom animum alio conferunt:
nisi si prospectum interea aliquid est, desertae vivimus.
vobis cum uno semel ubi aetatem agere decretumst viro,
quoius mos maxumest consimilis vostrum, hi se ad vos adplicant.
hoc beneficio utrique ab utrisque vero devincimini,
ut numquam ulla amori vostro incidere possit calamitas.

Goodness, Antiphila dear, I praise you and think you lucky,
because you saw to it that your beauty and habits are like him…

And when I think over your life, and the life
of all you girls who keep away from the common crowd,
it's no surprise that you're like that, and that the rest of us aren't.
It's in your interest to be good, but the men who have business with us don't allow us to be good.
Lovers pursue us, driven by our beauty;
once that has changed, they take their hearts somewhere else elsewhere.
If, in the meantime, we haven't looked out for the future, we live all alone.
With you girls, once you've arranged to spend your lives with a single man,
the ones most like you, they stay with you.
By this good arrangement, you are truly bound, one to the other,
so no catastrophe can crash in on your love.

Sometimes that aggressive male desire can be truly faithful, as in this play, for Clinia returns to Antiphila and they have a sweet reunion on-stage; likewise Pamphilus of *Andria* is faithful to Glycerium, the lost citizen daughter whom he has impregnated (see also Aeschinus of *Adelphoe* and Alcesimarchus of Plautus' *Cistellaria*). Naturally, these young women turn out to be citizens, but Alcesimarchus and Clinia do not know that their beloveds are lost daughters. They resist their fathers' orders to marry because they truly love Selenium and Antiphila, and they take up a *pro uxore* relationship with their beloveds.[11] Because none of the parties involved knows that the girls are lost citizen daughters, about to be restored to their families and thus made eligible for citizen marriage, *iustum coniugium*, these pseudo-marital relationships would legally be *iniustum coniugium*.[12] Such an arrangement must have been the dream of many a young woman growing

11 Other *pro uxore* arrangements in comedy: Plaut. *Truc*. 392-93, Ter. *Andria* 146. In Propertius 4, 3, I have argued, Arethusa and Lycotas have a marriage-like arrangement, though they do not have citizen marriage (James 2012a). The poem cannot tell us if this is a lifetime union.

12 The term *iniustum coniugium* comes from Phang 2001. James 2012a gives a wide discussion of such relationships. Marital-type arrangements for women of the courtesan class did not require citizenship in men: foreign men living in Rome were just as likely

up in Rome, or in Roman cities, who did not have the protection of citizenship but hoped not to have to take up the risky, insecure life of the courtesan.

I give the last words to Selenium, who does not know, as she speaks, that she is a lost citizen daughter. She believes she is the daughter of a retired *meretrix*. She fell in love with Alcesimarchus, who pursued her, and she wanted to live only with him.

> *nam mea mater, quia ego nolo me meretricem dicier,*
> *obsecutast de ea re, gessit morem morigerae mihi,*
> *ut me, quem ego amarem graviter, sineret cum eo vivere* (Plaut. *Cist*. 83-85).
>
> Because I don't want to be called a courtesan, my mother
> indulged me, and gave in to me, as I give in to her.
> She allowed me to live alone with the one I love so terribly.
>
> *At ille conceptis iuravit verbis apud matrem meam,*
> *me uxorem ducturum esse* (98-99).
>
> But he swore to my mother in holy and legal terms,
> that he would marry me.

These two girls have no social support or protection, and they show a longing to live like a citizen, not to take the risks and the social consequences that are unavoidable in the life of the *meretrix*. In the fantasy universe of Roman Comedy, their reward is to be found citizens. What Melaenis and Bacchis show us is that even fully established courtesans recognize that there are multiple paths for non-citizen women who must try to make a living from relationships with men.

For the permanent *meretrix*, that path always ends up, as Bacchis of Ter. *Haut.* says, in solitude. As we have noted, the courtesan's retirement is fraught. If she is very lucky, she has the support of a daughter and friends; she may have actually saved money and valuables. The literary evidence shows her as often taking up a mentoring role or even servitude to another courtesan.

Conclusion

I make no argument here about the historicity of the Roman literary courtesan, other than to advert again to the historical examples of Hispala Faecenia and Volumnia Cytheris, and to refer to the other essays in this volume. But the courtesan is represented in elegy as populous in Rome: *tot tibi tamque dabit formosas Roma puellas* | '*haec habet' ut dicas 'quicquid in orbe fuit'* (Ov. *ars* 1, 54-56) – as many as there are fish, birds, stars, crops in Gargara, grapes in Methymna (57-58). Leaving aside the exaggeration factor in both that claim and in the literary depictions of exotic intrigue by and about the courtesan, we can say that the independent courtesan exerted a great pull on the Roman literary imagination for more than two hundred years. What is remarkable is that this literary imagination managed, despite its exaggerations, to depict so many very realistic aspects of the lives of the many women who made a living by sexual relationships in the ancient world.[13]

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to be attracted to a courtesan as citizen men were, and they were not hampered by laws and the social practices of citizen families, which would have frowned upon long-term relationships with *meretrices*.

13 This essay owes many happy obligations of thanks, most particularly to Ria Berg, Antonio Varone, and Alison Keith.

The image of a well-born lady as a prostitute. The cases of Clodia, Julia and Messalina

Marja-Leena Hänninen

In his sixth satire, the merciless Roman satirical poet Juvenal lashes out at Roman women for their innumerable vices. One of the most striking sections of the satire deals with Messalina, the third wife of the emperor Claudius. Juvenal describes how Messalina used to work in a brothel at night while her husband was asleep.[1] Juvenal wrote his nasty poem safely after the death of the last Julio-Claudian emperor and did not have to fear the anger of the ruling family. On the other hand, Juvenal can be seen criticizing his contemporaries, the members of the elite, in particular. Could one find a more humiliating picture of the most prominent lady of the empire than the emperor's wife as a prostitute? Prostitutes were listed among gladiators, actors, dancers etc. as persons practicing shameful professions that were not suitable to honourable citizens.[2] Even if freeborn women, too, worked as prostitutes, most women in the business were slaves, freedwomen and foreigners. Is the picture by Juvenal unique and what lies behind this kind of stories about sexual licentiousness of women at the top of the Roman society?

The first imperial dynasty of Rome was not treated very respectfully by ancient authors such as Tacitus, for example. The monarchy represented moral corruption, fading of old Roman virtues and decay of the old aristocracy. The members of the dynasty, including their wives and daughters, were mostly described as somewhat or totally corrupt persons. Only those persons who died young without having reached the highest power, such as Germanicus, could be idealized as possible saviours of the traditional Roman republic. This paper deals mainly with two women of the dynasty, Augustus' daughter Julia and Claudius' wife Messalina who both were infamous for their sexual life, even with insinuations to prostitution. The cases of Julia and Messalina will be compared to a notorious lady of the Late Republican era, Clodia the sister of the tribune Publius Clodius Pulcher.

Messalina was by no means the only or the first member of the Julio-Claudian family connected with prostitution. Suetonius accuses the emperor Caligula of keeping a brothel on the Palatine. According to Suetonius, this was a brothel of high profile and the vicious emperor compelled high-born women and men to work there.[3] Furthermore, Suetonius blames him even for pimping his own sisters with whom he also had incestuous relationships.[4] These stories are hardly credible and are rather meant to colour the portrait of a bad and insane emperor.[5]

But let's go back to the beginning of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, emperor Augustus and his family. Since the consolidation of his power, Augustus carried out both administrative and legislative reforms. He

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1 Iuv. 6, 114-35.

2 Gardner 1993, 135-40. On the marginality of prostitutes and practitioners of other shameful professions, see McGinn 1998, 14-18.

3 Suet. *Cal*. 41, 2-3.

4 Suet. *Cal*. 36.

5 See Harders 2008, 309, note 161.

wanted to restore the values and virtues of the republican era. Sexual morals and family were among the most pivotal themes in this program.[6] The family of the imperator was supposed to be the paragon of the civic virtues.[7] Some members of the family succeeded better than others in the art of virtuous life. Augustus' sister Octavia is so completely idealized in the sources that there is no single malicious word about her, whereas his only biological child, his daughter Julia was one who failed and proved a disappointment to her father. The clash between the expectations of the father and the lifestyle of the daughter culminated in making Julia's crimes public and her relegation in 2 BCE.

Considering Augustus' anger it must be pointed out how Julia's three marriages served the political and dynastic plans of her father.[8] First she married her cousin Marcellus who died soon after the wedding. Julia's second husband was Marcus Agrippa, the closest friend and loyal supporter of Augustus – a man who could have been Julia's father by age. Julia gave birth to five children by Agrippa. Julia's last husband was Tiberius, son of her stepmother Livia. The rumours about her immoral life supposedly increased after this last marriage was driven in crisis and Tiberius retreated to the isle of Rhodes. The lonely Julia who could not divorce and remarry supposedly found comfort in other men. There were actually allegations that Julia had been unfaithful even when married to Agrippa.[9]

In 2 BCE, two remarkable events took place before Julia's fall. First, Augustus got the title of *pater patriae*, and, secondly, the magnificent *Forum Augusti* was inaugurated. This new civic space manifested the virtues of the ancestors and the family of the Julii as well as the glory of the Roman empire. These celebrations were followed by an anticlimax.[10] Augustus publicly denounced his daughter and informed the Roman senate of her adulteries and other misbehaviour. Julia was relegated to a complete isolation in the isle of Pandataria. She was never allowed to return to Rome or even be buried in the mausoleum of the family.[11]

What were the crimes of Julia? She was accused of both adultery (*adulterium*) and general misbehavior (*licentia*, *impudicitia*, *luxuria*). Pliny goes even further and suggests that Julia was planning a parricide.[12] This has led scholars even talk about a conspiracy against Augustus, but this is hard to prove.[13] The list of Julia's lovers somewhat dubiously resembles an all-stars team of the old Roman Republic.[14] On the other hand, a woman of Julia's standing would have socialized with her peers. Furthermore, the role of Livia in Julia's fall has widely been speculated, both in scholarship and in popular culture. However, Julia's disgrace did not practically work for the end that Livia desired – her son Tiberius succeeding Augustus in power.[15] It is not a place here to discuss the possibility of conspiracy, the focus is on the characterization of Julia and her crime.

Ancient authors reporting Julia's disgrace – Seneca, Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius – mainly refer to adultery, but Seneca provides us with the most shocking description, saying that Julia:

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6 For Augustus' legislation on morals and family, see, e.g., Galinsky 1998, 128-40; Severy 2003, 50-55.

7 Severy 2003, 183-84.

8 Temporini-Gräfin Vitzthum 2002, 48-49; Severy 2003, 63–67; Fantham 2006, 28, 45.

9 Tac. *ann*. 1, 53.

10 Galinsky 1996, 197-213; Severy 2003, 161.

11 Vell. 2, 100; Suet. *Aug*. 64-65; Dio Cass. 55, 9, 11-16.

12 Plin. *nat*. 7, 149: *Tot seditiones militum, tot ancipites morbi corporis, suspecta Marcelli vota, pudenda Agrippae ablegatio, totiens petita insidiis vita, incusatae liberorum mortes, luctusque non tantum orbitate tristis, adulterium filiae et consilia parricidae palam facta, contumeliosus privigni Neronis secessus, mortes luctusque aliud in nepte adulterium, iuncta deinde tot mala*. Sen. *dial.* 10, 4, 6 may also be interpreted to refer to a conspiracy.

13 For the history of the theory of a conspiracy in scholarship on Julia, see Ferrill 1980.

14 Ferrill 1980, 339-41.

15 See Barrett 2002, 50-51.

> … scoured the city in nightly escapades, and had chosen the Forum itself and the platform from which her father had carried his laws against adultery for her fornifications; that there had been a daily gathering by the statue of Marsyas, when she turned from adultery to prostitution and claimed the right to every kind of licence with unknown partners.[16]

According to the ancient authors, Augustus did nothing to cover his daughter's disgrace but made it all public. The quaestor read his letter to the Senate. Numerous explanations to the fate of Julia and the strict reaction by her father have been suggested. It may well be that Julia was far from innocent. She certainly did something that made her father madly angry to punish her so severely. It has been suggested by Beth Severy that Augustus' anger is explained by the offence against the dignity of his family caused by Julia.[17] It was also essential that Julia had committed her crimes in a public place. According to Tacitus, Augustus considered her daughter's lifestyle as a sacrilege and treason. Tacitus points out that adultery was a commonplace offence and by defining Julia's crimes so gravely Augustus exceeded the clemency of ancestors and even his own legislation.[18]

Since Julia was accused of adultery and exiled for it, Tiberius was compelled to divorce her.[19] This also meant that she could never again be legitimately married to an honourable man. In this sense, she really could be likened to a prostitute.[20] Augustan legislation had made adultery a public offence that was no longer dealt with in a family council but in a public court. Conviction of adultery had economic consequences and the conviction included loss of some civic rights. For the convicted woman it usually meant exile and divorce.[21] A woman convicted of adultery faced a kind of a social death.

Julia's dubious morals may not only be connected with her sexual behaviour. She may also be compared to the new type of women presented in the poetry of the Augustan era. The *docta puella* figure in the elegiac poetry does not match the traditional Roman matron but rather a cultured courtesan who controls her life and sexual partnerships.[22] Horace, e.g., criticizes in his *Carmen* 3, 6 young women who take pleasure in dancing, drinking and partying. He says that this generation could not have given birth to such sons who defeated Hannibal.[23] An elegiac *puella* is interested in poetry and pleasure, not woolworking or raising children. However, we should also remember that Julia was mother of three sons and two daughters and had, thus, done her share in raising the next generation.

Julia is a special case as the daughter of the first emperor of Rome. As already said, accusations and insinuations of sexual misbehaviour were connected with almost all following emperors as well as many of their family members. As for the imperial ladies, hardly anyone exceeds Messalina in notoriety of this kind. Valeria Messalina was the third wife of emperor Claudius. Messalina was born in a noble family that was related to the Julio-Claudian family. She married Claudius in 39 CE and bore two children to her husband who was 30 years senior to her.[24] Messalina is certainly not gently treated in ancient literature. According

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16 Sen. *benef*. 6, 32: *admissos gregatim adulteros, pererratam nocturnis commissationibus civitatem, forum ipsum ac rostra, ex quibus pater legem de adulteriis tulerat, filiae in stupra placuisse, [ad] cotidianum ad Marsyam concursum, cum ex adultera in quaestuariam versa ius omnis licentiae sub ignoto adultero peteret* (translation from Fantham 2006, 140).

17 Severy 2003, 181-83.

18 Tac. *ann*. 3, 24.

19 Suet. *Tib*. 11, 4.

20 McGinn 1998, 72.

21 Dixon 1992, 78, 80-81; Gardner 1993, 39, 123-26.

22 Lilja 1965, 135-36, 139, 142; Hemelrijk 1999, 79-81.

23 Hor. *carm*. 3, 6, 21-44.

24 Eck 2002, 117; Burns 2007, 64.

to ancient authors, Messalina tried to interfere in the politics of her husband and lived in an immoral way.[25] Juvenal calls her *meretrix augusta*, imperial courtesan.[26] Thus, if some understanding and pity is offered to Julia, Messalina is granted hardly any compassion. According to Tacitus, Messalina manipulated Claudius ruthlessly and completely.[27] Political ambition and sexual misbehaviour are combined in her portrait in ancient sources.

If we are to believe Juvenal and other ancient authors, Messalina was a true nymphomaniac. She worked in the brothel for pure pleasure and she also took money from her clients. Juvenal underlines that the empress acted like this because of her endless, unsatisfied lust.[28] Cassius Dio, historian of the third century, states that Messalina had a brothel in the imperial palace itself and forced respectable women to have sex with other men while their husbands were present and looking on. Those men who refused to have sex with her or offer their wives to her business Messalina destroyed, those who were favourable to her were rewarded.[29] Pliny the Elder states that Messalina victoriously competed with ordinary prostitutes about the number of the partners during one day.[30] According to Cassius Dio, Messalina provided Claudius with slave girls who took care of him while Messalina herself was occupied elsewhere. Thus, Claudius did not notice what was happening in his palace.[31] Allegedly, the famous actor Mnester was among Messalina's lovers.[32] It brought disgrace to a woman to have sex with a man below her rank, especially with one practioning a shameful profession.[33]

Finally, in 48 CE, the freedmen of Claudius interfered and informed him about the deeds of his wife. At the time Messalina was plotting against Claudius with her lover, senator Gaius Silius with the possible intention to raise him to power. In Tacitus' narrative, Messalina is celebrating a clandestine wedding while Claudius is visiting Ostia for performing some religious rituals.[34] Juxtaposition of an emperor taking care of religious rituals and his wife feasting in a drunken party her wedding with another man is rather crude. According to Tacitus, the exposed Messalina was not capable of committing a suicide and the pretorians finally killed her. Her end was not honourable. Messalina was not given a chance to defend herself in front of her husband since Claudius' counselors feared she might turn his head once again. The memory of Messalina was cursed after her death by the senate of Rome and her name was taken off all public monuments and her statues were removed from public places.[35]

The picture of Messalina given by Juvenal and Cassius Dio can hardly be considered reliable. Messalina may have been unfaithful to her husband and she may have tried to gain more influence by dubious

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25 See, e.g., Tac. *ann*. 11, 26; Suet. *Claud*. 29, 1.

26 Iuv. 6, 116-19.

27 E.g., Tac. *ann*. 11, 1-2; 28.

28 Iuv. 6, 120-32: *sed nigrum flauo crinem abscondente galero/ intrauit calidum ueteri centone lupanar/ et cellam uacuam atque suam; tunc nuda papillis/prostitit auratis titulum mentita Lyciscae/ ostenditque tuum, generose Britannice, uentrem./ excepit blanda intrantis atque aera poposcit. /[continueque iacens cunctorum absorbuit ictus.] mox lenone suas iam dimittente puellas /tristis abit, et quod potuit tamen ultima cellam /clausit, adhuc ardens rigidae tentigine uoluae,/ et lassata uiris necdum satiata recessit,/ obscurisque genis turpis fumoque lucernae/ foeda lupanaris tulit ad puluinar odorem.*

29 Dio Cass. 60, 18, 1-2; 61, 31, 1.

30 Plin. *nat*. 10, 172.

31 Dio Cass. 60, 18, 2-3.

32 Tac. *ann*. 11, 36; Dio Cass. 60, 28, 3-5.

33 Edwards 1993, 128-29.

34 Tac. *ann*. 11, 25-29.

35 Tac. *ann*. 11, 37-38; Dio Cass. 61, 31, 2-5. Cassius Dio's version of Messalina's end is slightly different from that of Tacitus, but main lines in the stories are similar.

methods. The most raucous stories about her, such as stories of her as a common prostitute, are difficult to verify and may have been fabricated only after her fall.[36] It has been suggested that Messalina may have been defamed by Agrippina the Younger whom Claudius married after Messalina. It may have been convenient for Agrippina to question the morals of Messalina in order to increase the chances of her own son, the future emperor Nero. If the legitimacy of Claudius' biological son Britannicus was questioned, Nero's star would grow brighter. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that because Messalina was executed without a public trial and her memory was condemned, various rumours may have been spread on the basis of few and possibly misleading facts. Slander and gossips may have replaced reliable testimony. Among the contemporary writers, Seneca depicts Messalina as an innocent victim of Claudius.[37] It is also important to note that Messalina was conspicuously honoured in public during the early principate of Claudius. The malicious and even pornographic stories told about her in later sources conceal the fact that as a great-granddaughter of Augustus' sister Octavia she was of great value to Claudius by linking him more tightly to the Augustan family and thus, reinforcing his claim to the membership of the family.[38] An emperor's wife certainly had symbolic value, both positively and negatively. Her recognized morality supported her husband's power while her infidelity undermined him politically. Messalina may simply have committed adultery and the later stories about her excesses may contain fabricated exaggeration.[39]

If we compare the pictures of Julia and Messalina as women who act like prostitutes, there are some significant differences in their cases. Julia is more like a naughty girl of high society who is disgraced by her immoral habits and multiple adultery. Thus, she ends up in the status resembling that of a prostitute. Messalina, however, is really described as a woman acting as a prostitute and even as a pimp. Juvenal's picture of Messalina is part of a satire about the immorality of Roman women and decay of Roman morals in general. Juvenal criticized Roman women of the day for promiscuity and attraction to low sorts of men, such as actors and gladiators.[40] In Cassius Dio, the portrait of Messalina is a feature in the story about a weak emperor who lets women and freedmen manipulate him. What is common in both Julia's and Messalina's stories as told in antiquity, they choose their sexual partners themselves. They are also portrayed as too independent women to some extent. A woman trying to interfere in men's business, politics so to say, was an abomination for the moralist writers of the imperial era. We do not really know if Julia or Messalina had any political ambitions, but even insinuations to this work. And combination of questionable sexual morals and political ambition worked even better for proving the corruption of the Roman state under monarchy.

Since the Republican era, it was usual in rhetorics to defame one's opponent by accusing him of all kinds of sexual and other types of misbehaviour, such as drinking and gambling. A good citizen, a good man controlled his physical desires, did not excessively desire food, drink and sex.[41] Furthermore, he was supposed to control women of his household. Thus, women, too, could be used as tools of defaming one's political opponents and personal enemies.[42] Women's *castitas* and *pudicitia* brought honour to their families, and lack of these feminine virtues caused dishonour to their fathers, husbands and brothers. Honour once lost was impossible to regain. Women's behaviour could also be seen as a sign of the moral corruption of

36 Osgood 2011, 208-9.

37 Eck 2002, 119-20; Osgood 2011, 210.

38 Barrett 2005, 78-79; Osgood 2011, 206-7.

39 Osgood 2011, 210.

40 Richlin 1992, 205.

41 Edwards 1993, 5; 186-90.

42 Edwards 1993, 46; Severy 2003, 30; 37-38; 40-41.

the state. The collapse of the Roman Republic, in particular, could be partly explained by women's increasing immorality.[43] One must, however, be cautious for taking the criticism of the Late Republican and Early Imperial authors against women as reliable testimony on women's 'emancipation' in the Late Republican Rome. Neither can the allegations about the high level of adultery among the Roman elite be accepted as such. Sexual misbehavior had symbolic significance.[44]

Julia and Messalina have a prominent Republican predecessor as a feminine symptom of moral decay. Clodia, a woman of high rank most mercilessly and colourfully denigrated by Cicero in his speech *Pro Caelio*, is a very illustrative example of the Roman way of using women's behaviour as a political weapon in rhetorics. This Clodia was born in an ancient and prestigious Roman noble family of the Claudii Pulchri and was married to a man of the same rank, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer (cos. 60 CE). Clodia's brother was the notorious populist politician and tribune of the plebs, Publius Clodius Pulcher.[45] Cicero, the only contemporary source for the life of Clodia, was a bitter enemy of Clodius. The gens Claudia was obviously as proud of their family traditions as any Roman noble family, but among the enemies of the family, nasty rumours were spread. The label of the 'hereditary arrogance' of the Claudii was later also connected with the members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.[46]

Publius Clodius Pulcher had three sisters, all bearing the name Claudia (Clodia) and identified by the names of their husbands. All the sisters had husbands who reached the office of consul in their career and had, therefore, a high social standing. However, the sisters seem to be more tightly connected to their brother than to their husbands in ancient sources. The habit of using the 'plebeian' form Clodia instead of Claudia may be related to their affinity with their brother.[47] Clodius was known to be specifically intimate with the sister who was married to Metellus Celer. Clodia Metelli is known to have supported her brother's political career especially after the death of her husband and gained a prominent role in the circle of Clodius.[48] There are several insinuations to incest between Clodius and all his three sisters in Cicero's speeches, and these accusations are later repeated, e.g., in the biography of Cicero by Plutarch.[49] The target of the incest accusations was primarily Publius Clodius, not any of his sisters. Leading Roman politicians frequently accused one another of various sexual misbehaviour. Repeated hints about incestuous relationships were effective tools of invective in hands of a skillful orator.[50] Charges connected with sexual morality appear in most of Cicero's speeches and can, thus be considered typical elements in political rhetoric of the era. Charges of incest insinuate that the opponent lacked *dignitas* and *virtus* and therefore political integrity. This kind of charges also shook the manhood of the opponent.[51] Even very respected persons such as Cicero himself could be accused of incestuous relationships. Incest charges should, thus, be treated rather as a literary topos than historical facts. In the case of Publius Clodius, they were generated by a vilification campaign and Clodius was also accused of incest with his brothers. There are actually no neutral contemporary sources about the life of P. Clodius and his sisters – all our sources are written by their enemies.[52]

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43 Edwards 1993, 42-47.

44 Edwards 1993, 35-36.

45 For basic facts about Clodia's life, see Skinner 2011, 2-3; 79-95.

46 Skinner 2011, 23-25; 28.

47 Harders 2008, 228.

48 Harders 2008, 231-32.

49 Cic. *Cael*. 13, 32; 32, 78; Cic. *Mil*. 27, 73; Cic. *off*. 2, 3; Plut. *Cic*. 29, 1-5.

50 Edwards 1993, 10-11; 25-26. See also Richlin 1992a, 85-86.

51 Harders 2008, 238-39.

52 Harders 2008, 234-35; 244.

Clodia Metelli was personally attacked by Cicero in a trial against M. Caelius Rufus in 56 BCE. Cicero defended Caelius and Clodia Metelli was a witness of the prosecution. The defence is heavily based on denying Clodia's decency and reliability as a witness. Cicero tries to argue that Clodia had fabricated her accusations in order to revenge her former lover Caelius for leaving her.[53] The picture of Clodia in Cicero's speech on behalf of Caelius is evident already in the opening of the speech where Clodia is not even mentioned by name. According to Cicero, it was shameful that a young man of Caelius' standing was "attacked by the wealth of a courtesan" (*opibus meretriciis*).[54] Clodia is both *nobilis* and *nota* – noble and notorious – a woman who does not deserve the title of an honourable matron.[55]

From the beginning on, Clodia is depicted as a morally corrupt character who resembles rather a courtesan than a respectable matron of the Roman aristocracy. The passus 15, 35 in Cicero's *Pro Caelio* is most illustrative in this respect. Cicero aims to describe Clodia's relationship with Caelius as morally dubious. Clodia's lifestyle is lavish and extravagant. By accusing Caelius Clodia forces Cicero to make all her life public to the members of the court. She should disprove the allegations about her notorious lifestyle or her evidence cannot be considered reliable.[56] In Roman literature, licentiousness and luxury are typically linked together. Accusations of immoral behaviour were frequent in the political debates and trials of the Late Republican era as well as during the civil wars following Caesar's murder.[57] Wealth and pretentious expenditure were essentially included in the picture of Clodia in Cicero's speeches. Women's wealth may still have been criticized in Clodia's and Cicero's days and a rich widow such as Clodia may have faced prejudices among the jury of the Caelius trial.[58]

Clodia obviously had a prominent role in the high society of Rome. Marilyn Skinner points out in her biography of Clodia that Clodia's lifestyle with banquets and holidays in Baiae was quite normal for a middle-aged aristocratic widow. Aristocratic widows of the day were not expected to retire from social life. Cicero, however, associates Clodia's expenditure with licentious life and sexual immorality.[59] Cicero gives his audience a picture of a fictional noblewoman who is rich and lovelorn, who leads a luxurious life and has a villa in Baiae, who enjoys the company of young men and even supports them. Cicero assures that he is not talking about Clodia (*ista mulier*) but someone quite unlike her. According to Cicero, his fictional woman is an amorous widow living like a courtesan (*meretricio more*).[60] It is interesting that Cicero depicts Clodia as a woman both as living like a courtesan and a woman acting like a client of prostitutes, since there are allegations of her attempts to buy Caelius's favour by money and gifts.

Cicero repeats the portrait of a fictional immoral widow later in his speech on behalf of Caelius and refuses, again, to name any particular woman. Baiae, lifestyle of a courtesan, extravagance and licentiousness are mentioned once again. The 'anonymous' woman without a husband opens her house to any man.[61] It is obvious that the anonymous woman is Clodia herself. Cicero tries to assure that his personal enmity with Clodia does not affect his words against Clodia. He continues by saying that it would not be especially shameful if a young man like Caelius had a relationship with a courtesan he just described. It was natural

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53 Skinner 2011, 3.

54 Cic. *Cael*. 1, 1.

55 Cic. *Cael*. 13, 31-32.

56 Cic. *Cael*. 15, 35. Prostitutes could not appear as witnesses for the prosecution in courts. See Gardner 1993, 128-30.

57 Edwards 1993, 5.

58 Skinner 2011, 32, 43-44.

59 Skinner 2011, 109; 112.

60 Cic. *Cael*. 16, 38.

61 Cic. *Cael*. 20, 48-49.

for young men too seek the company of prostitutes. Young men should be allowed some freedom before they grow up to maturity and learn their responsibilities.[62] Cicero aims to label Clodia's accusations against Caelius as a revenge of a disgraced woman who was disappointed in her relationship to a younger man who, according to Cicero, was decent and virtuous.[63] Clodia's alleged immorality is also reflected in the status of the slaves in her household. Cicero states that Clodia's slaves had unusual freedom and in a household whose mistress lived the life of a courtesan, slaves were actually not slaves anymore.[64]

Cicero does not claim that Clodia would have worked as a prostitute or taken money for her sexual services. He states that her lifestyle resembled that of a courtesan. She was morally corrupt, not in the same level as the other Roman elite matrons. Thus, her accusations against Caelius cannot be taken seriously. A person occupied in a shameful profession such as prostitution or otherwise fallen in disgrace faced various bans in Roman society. The label of *infamia* restricted one's possibilities to appear in court, especially as a witness.[65] Basically, if there was a sexual relationship between Clodia and Caelius, the relationship was disgraceful because Caelius' social standing was lower than that of Clodia. Cicero had to protect his client against the charge of *stuprum* and claim that Clodia did not have any more a reputation to lose as she behaved like a whore. There was nothing illegal in a relationship of a young man with a prostitute.[66]

When defending Caelius, Cicero aims to discredit the testimony against his client before the witnesses appear in the court. He leads the attention from the alleged crimes of his client elsewhere, to the key witness of the prosecution, that is Clodia and, more generally, to the immorality of Roman aristocratic women. As Skinner points out, Cicero's *Pro Caelio* is a rhetorical masterpiece, but not a reliable source for the lifestyle of Roman noble women. Personal attacks on prosecutors and their witnesses were essential tools of the defender, and moral evaluation of the character and lifestyle of the witnesses was considered perfectly relevant in an ancient Roman court room.[67] It cannot be taken as self-evident that Cicero's audience would have accepted his portrait of Clodia. If Clodia would have widely been known for her immoral lifestyle at the time of the Caelius trial, she would hardly have been called as a witness in a trial.[68] Furthermore, it has to be kept in mind that in his speeches, Cicero does not defame Clodia because she was a woman but primarily because she was sister of Publius Clodius.[69]

There is still one feature in Clodia's portrait that deserves attention. Before the imperial era, erudition and cultural sophistication were not particularly appreciated as feminine virtues. Noble women of the Late Republican era were also criticized for being too interested in poetry and other arts. The moralists feared the cultural activities made women neglect their most important duties as wives and mothers.[70] Cultural and literary interests of women could be associated with the vice of luxury and, thus, with loose sexual habits. Sempronia's portrait in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* is a good example of this kind of prejudices. Sallust depicts her as a high-ranking lady who is well read and also "able to play lyre and dance more skillfully than a respectable woman needs". Sempronia's education and charms are dubious, she lacks modesty and chastity, she uses her wealth to wrong purposes and she tries to satisfy her sexual desires even if men were

62 Cic. *Cael*. 18; 20, 49-50.

63 Cic. *Cael*. 22, 53-55.

64 Cic. *Cael*. 23, 57.

65 See Gardner 1993, 110-54.

66 Skinner 2011, 109-10.

67 Skinner 2011, 96-99.

68 Skinner 2011, 73, 147.

69 Skinner 2011, 18.

70 E.g., Hor. *carm*. 3, 6, 21-32.

not equally interested in her. Her cultural accomplishments link her rather to lower-class courtesans. An educated woman seems to have been vulnerable to accusations of wantonness.[71]

Clodia Metelli was not so unequivocally connected with cultural or intellectual interests, but there are references to the field of literature in Cicero's mentions of Clodia. These references are obviously meant to compromise Clodia and her brother. Cicero tries to connect Clodius and Clodia with mime performers in his speech on behalf of Sestius, thus associating the siblings with the morally suspicious world of theatre and the shameful profession of actor.[72] It has also been suggested that Clodia actually had connections to theatre business or even that she herself composed mimes. In the genre of mimes, female slaves and courtesans played disreputable women such as adulteresses. Cicero also calls Clodia a *poetria*, poetess, in his Caelius speech. Cicero probably means that Clodia had fabricated her accusations against Caelius, not that she would have actually written mimes. It would have been extraordinary if Clodia had written plays of a genre generally despised by the Roman aristocracy. It is probable that the association of Clodia with the stage was specifically meant to tarnish her reputation.[73]

In addition to Cicero, there is another contemporary source linking Clodia or a woman resembling her public image with the world of poetry, that is Catullus. The poetic mistress of Catullus, Lesbia, was identified with Clodia already by the ancients. It is however, difficult to conclude definitively if they identified Lesbia precisely with Clodia Metelli or one of her two sisters. Furthermore, it is very hard to prove if Catullus was writing about real or fictional persons in the first place.[74] What we eventually have is the portrait of a woman that resembles the Clodia of *Pro Caelio* to some extent. Catullus' poem 79 is the clearest reference to Clodia Metelli, since it contains the insinuation to incest between the brother and sister. The picture of Lesbia in the poems of Catullus is far from coherent – it varies from a sensitive *puella* to a mature woman who gives her favours to any man. Aristocratic arrogance and duplicity can be perceived in Lesbia. Catullus portrays an immoral aristocratic whore in some of his poems, and in some poems he actually depicts Lesbia as a prostitute.[75]

Roman love poets connected the term *puella docta* with charming young women skilled in poetry, music and dance. These accomplishments are part of their erotic attraction and compensate the lack of traditional feminine virtues. Sexual freedom and independence are also connected with the *puellae*. Thus, they have same kind of charm as educated courtesans.[76] The ideal of the *puella docta* with its erotic implications contradicted the traditional morality and traditional matronal virtues. The combination of poetry, music and dance was associated with courtesans. Thus, praising an upper-class woman for skills in these fields might have ruined her reputation. *Puella docta* may have been a contrast to the traditional ideal of a chaste matron but it may also reflect the changing lifestyle of the women of the Roman elite. Augustus' daughter Julia may have been a *puella docta*, too. She was known as a smart and cultured young woman who was accused of licentious life and finally ruined by accusations of adultery. Her portrait is highly ambiguous in ancient literature, but the fifth-century author Macrobius gives a positive judgement of her. According to Macrobius Julia had love of literature and great learning and great humanity. Julia is interestingly contradictory: an

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71 Sall. *Catil*. 25; Hemelrijk 1999, 84-86, 174-75; Skinner 2011, 121-22.

72 Cic. *Sest*. 116; Skinner 2011, 124.

73 Cic. *Cael*. 64; Wiseman 1985, 26-38; Hemelrijk 1999, 174-75; Skinner 2011, 125.

74 Hemelrijk 1999, 175; Harders 2008, 236-37; Skinner 2011, 131-33.

75 Skinner 2011, 133-44.

76 Hemelrijk 1999, 79-80. See also Lilja 1965, 133-43.

educated mother of five children who in her liveliness and youthfulness rather resembles a *puella docta* than a severe matron.[77]

The members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty were by no means immune to the kind of defaming that appears in Cicero's speeches. Women's behavior, sexual misbehavior in particular, was often presented as the symptom of a morally corrupt society. Furthermore, political opponents and personal enemies might be attacked by defaming the women of the family. Still, Clodia, Julia and Messalina may not have been just innocent victims of malicious men. Julia may well have really committed adultery and she certainly was expelled by her father, but the details of the story are coloured by moralistic attitudes and criticism against the monarchy. The *pater patriae* failed as a father of his daughter who could not behave like a modest, decent matron. Whatever the real character of Messalina was, she served as one proof of corrupted power. Accusations of prostitution were effective rhetorical tools. The fallen women of the imperial family serve as signs of moral and political corruption in narratives about the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

77 Macr. *Sat*. 2, 5, 2. Hemelrijk 1999, 80.

Influential mistresses in the imperial dynasties of first-century Rome: Claudia Acte and Antonia Caenis

Pia Mustonen

Introduction

This article examines imperial mistresses during the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties, analyzing their relationship with the emperor and the ways in which they participated in imperial politics and economic life. In the first section, I will briefly clarify the use of different terms denoting quasi-marital unions and other sexual relationships in ancient Rome. As regards imperial mistresses, my focus here is on two freedwomen who had previously served as slaves in the imperial court, Claudia Acte and Antonia Caenis. In the context of the early principate, they are in a category of their own, as female ex-slaves who were able to obtain influence and accumulate wealth of their own through their intimacy with the emperor. In historiography they are often implicitly compared and contraposed to the women who had an official position in the imperial family and propaganda, such as the emperor's wife or mother. Roman historians typically give us information about the women of the imperial household only to the extent that their actions are directly related to the emperor. However, by combining literary evidence with other sources, such as archaeological findings, we can create a more complete picture of their life and activities also outside of the court.

Wives, concubines, and other lovers

A legal marriage existed only for Romans and certain non-Romans who had been given the *ius conubii* with citizens; it meant that children took their father's status and were *in patria potestate*.[1] From at least the late Republic onwards, Roman marriage did not require a formal ceremony to be valid: it consisted essentially of cohabitation between two eligible partners. Most of the rules that disqualified certain citizens from marrying were probably general social conventions before they were formalized by Augustus in his marital legislation.[2] When marriage was not possible because of social or legal obstacles, the partners could live together in a quasi-marital union, either *concubinatus* or *contubernium*.

Concubinage (*concubinatus*) was a form of cohabitation between a man and a woman who lacked either the legal capacity to enter into matrimony or the intention to do so (*affectio maritalis*). This union could take place between individuals of freeborn status and slaves, between freeborn and freedwomen, or

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1 Treggiari 1981b, 43; Treggiari 1991, 43.

2 Too close a degree of relationship precluded marriage, as did a young age (the minimum age at the time of marriage was twelve for girls, fourteen for boys). Soldiers could not marry during their term of service, and governors could not marry women resident in their provinces during their governorship. Marriage was illegal between freeborn citizens and persons involved in certain infamous occupations, such as prostitution and acting; Augustan legislation added women convicted of adultery to this category. Augustus also prohibited marriage between members of the senatorial families and freedpersons. Rawson 1974, 279-82.

between freedpersons.[3] Freeborn couples and persons who were eligible to contract a legally recognized marriage were, however, expected to marry to produce legitimate children.[4] Usually, the status of the male was higher than that of the female, and this created a situation where their concubinate relationship was socially approved. For young men, it was acceptable to have a slave or a freedwoman as a concubine during the period between puberty and marriage. Taking a concubine was a convenient solution also for widows or divorced men with legitimate children by a former wife, because a new wife who could bear new offspring would have complicated the inheritance.[5]

Concubinage seems to have been relatively common already during the Republic, but its major diffusion in all social classes coincides with the Augustan age.[6] Augustus' legislation on sexual offences made it important to distinguish concubinage not merely from marriage but from other sexual relationships as well.[7] In the Republican era, marriages between freed and freeborn were valid, though socially despised. In this sense, Augustus actually introduced a liberalization by prohibiting only marriages between members of senatorial families and freedpersons in his *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 BCE).[8]

A concubine (*concubina*) was a free woman who lived together with a man without being his wife, and their cohabitation sufficed to distinguish the relationship from a casual affair.[9] The Roman law code recognized that a concubine's position was very similar to that of a legal wife, and marriage and concubinage were supposed to be mutually exclusive. Roman marriage was monogamous, and the special relationship with a concubine would be tantamount to bigamy.[10] In literature, however, the meaning of the word *concubina* is often vague. It may be loosely used of the mistress of a married man or of multiple lovers kept by men of the upper classes.[11]

The social disparity of concubinage is also reflected in the terminology: the woman is called *concubina*, but there is no specific word to describe the male partner. *Contubernium*, by contrast, was a reciprocal union where *affectio maritalis* might be present but legal incapacity ruled out marriage.[12] In its original sense, *contubernium* was used of 'tent-companion' for comrades in the army. In juristic, literary, and epigraphic sources, the usual meaning of *contubernalis* was a slave 'wife' or 'husband', since a valid marriage was impossible between slaves.[13] *Contubernium* could also take place between a slave and a free person (whether freed or freeborn), but at least one partner was or had been a slave during the union.[14]

In addition to long-term *concubinae* and *contubernales*, there were other, more casual, girlfriends and lovers. A particular word, *paelex* or *pel(l)ex*, which undoubtedly has archaic origins, occurs in a law attributed to Rome's second king, Numa Pompilius.[15] The exact significance of this term is not entirely clear,

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3 Fayer 2005, 12.

4 Rawson 1974, 280-81.

5 Dixon 1992, 93; Fayer 2005, 13.

6 Fayer 2005, 20.

7 Gardner 1986, 57.

8 Cf. Dio Cass. 54, 16, 2; McGinn 1998, 86.

9 Gardner 1986, 56.

10 Treggiari 1981a, 77; Rawson 1974, 288; McGinn 1991, 336.

11 Treggiari 1981a, 60, 77. For a list of imperial concubines, see Friedl 1996, 170-76.

12 Treggiari 1981a, 59; Treggiari 1991, 52.

13 In literature: Colum. 1, 8, 5; 12, 1, 1; Petron. 57, 6; 61, 9; Plin. *nat.* 36, 82; Roman jurists: Scaev. *dig*. 32, 41, 2; 40, 4, 59; Ulp. *dig*. 33, 7, 12, 33; Paul. *dig*. 35, 1, 81; Gai. 40, 7, 31, 1.

14 Treggiari 1981b, 42-44.

15 Paul. Fest. p. 248 L: *Pelex aram Iunonis ne tangito; si tanget, Iunoni crinibus demissis agnum feminam caedito*. Juno was the tutelary deity of *iustae nuptiae*, and this law indirectly distinguished the role of *paelex* from that of *uxor*, giving the legally married wife a higher position. Fayer 2005, 18-19.

and its definitions vary in ancient sources; Roman authors agree, however, that the origin of the term *paelex* derived from Greek *παλλακή*. Most often, *paelex* meant a woman who had a sexual relationship with a married man. In the Republican era, this word was less commonly used of a woman who cohabited with a man *uxoris loco*; in the Imperial era, she would rather be called *amica* or, more respectably, *concubina*.[16] *Amica*, 'girl friend', seems to have been a more transitory partner, and this term was perhaps inappropriate for a long-term spouse.[17] Although concubinage was not a legal institution, it was of interest to Roman jurists and relevant to discussions of marriage or family property, because *concubinae* could be confused with wives. Ordinary *amicae*, on the other hand, were left out of account.[18]

Claudia Acte

Claudia Acte[19] was one of the figures in the larger circles of Emperor Nero's court. She was a native of Asia Minor, bought as a slave there and brought to Rome, where she served as an imperial slave.[20] She was freed by either Emperor Claudius or his stepson and successor Nero. According to Tacitus, who is our main source on Acte, Nero took her as his lover in 55 CE, the year after Claudius' death and Nero's accession. Nero's two advisers Seneca and Burrus tried to keep his relationship with a freedwoman hidden from the public view as long as possible, using Annaeus Serenus, Seneca's protégé, as a cover for the affair. When Nero's mother, Agrippina minor, found out about the affair, she scolded him for giving so much importance to a person of low birth. Agrippina opposed this liaison right from its beginning, fearing it would erode her power in the court – she had been *de facto* a co-ruler with Nero, managing many political affairs on his behalf. Nero's loveless marriage with Octavia, the daughter of Emperor Claudius and Messalina, had been arranged by Agrippina as a political move to join further the Julian and Claudian families. Agrippina's threats and efforts to separate the two lovers had only the contrary effect on Nero, making him feel even more attachment to Acte, thus openly insulting his wife and defying his mother.[21]

Seneca and Burrus had encouraged the affair because Nero was deeply unhappy in his marriage, and having a mistress was considered a harmless way of letting him satisfy his needs and keeping his cravings in control. Otherwise, there was a risk that a sexually frustrated Nero would aim his passions at upper-class *matronae*. On the other hand, Seneca and Burrus also profited from the situation, gaining more influence when Nero distanced himself from his mother's control. Agrippina gradually lost her foothold in the court although she had allied herself with Nero's abandoned wife Octavia. She was about thirteen years old at the time they had married, and is described as noble and virtuous; very soon, Octavia found herself a wife in name alone.[22]

A turning point in the relationship between Nero, Agrippina, and Octavia came in 55 CE, when Nero poisoned his stepbrother Britannicus, whom Agrippina had threatened to put on the throne instead of Nero. Agrippina tried to ally herself with Octavia and gain supporters among the senatorial class, but she was soon stripped of her privileges and removed from the imperial palace to a separate establishment.[23] This, in conse-

16 Paul. *dig.* 50, 16, 144; cf. Paul. Fest. p. 248 L; Gell. *NA* 4, 3, 3; Fayer 2005, 14-18.

17 Rawson 1974, 299, n. 67.

18 Treggiari 1981a, 60.

19 *PIR*² C 1067.

20 Dio Cass. 61, 7, 1.

21 Tac. *ann.* 13, 12-13; Dio Cass. 61, 7, 1; Holztrattner 1995, 133; Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 515-17.

22 Tac. *ann.* 13, 12-13; Suet. *Nero* 35, 1; Holztrattner 1995, 134.

23 Tac. *ann.* 13, 16; 13, 18.

quence, re-enforced Acte's position: Nero even planned to marry her and bribed some ex-consuls to lie that she was of royal birth. In the account by Cassius Dio, this fake descent from King Attalus III of Pergamum was even made formal by a false adoption.[24] At the time, Nero seems to have considered for the first time seriously divorcing Octavia and marrying Acte. He donated to her vast imperial *latifundia* in Velitrae,[25] in Puteoli,[26] possibly in Egypt,[27] and above all in Olbia (Sardinia),[28] the last one probably from Nero's private patrimony of the *gens Domitia*.[29]

Suetonius places Nero's affair with Acte among a long list of his sexual crimes, which included debauching the Vestal virgin Rubria as well as castrating and marrying the slave boy Sporus: preferring a freedwoman over his aristocratic wife and planning an illegal marriage with her demonstrated Nero's depravity and self-indulgence.[30] Suetonius describes Acte as Nero's *concubina*,[31] but Tacitus calls her more correctly *paelex*, which was the word used of the lover of a married man.[32] Concubinage between a freeborn man and a freedwoman was not uncommon in Rome: it was considered a socially acceptable option when a legal marriage was not possible. Having a concubine and a wife simultaneously, however, was prohibited, since these were parallel forms of a stable, long-term relationship.[33]

The planned marriage never happened, and Claudia Acte disappears temporarily from the scene at the time Nero had found a new woman in his life, Poppaea Sabina, in about 58 CE, while he was still married to Octavia.[34] Although we can assume that Acte retired from the imperial court while Nero focused on Poppaea, she must have still stayed on good terms with him. When an open rivalry broke out between Poppaea and Agrippina in 59 CE, Acte continued to play an important role in the court, once again at the prompting of Seneca. Worried that Agrippina would tempt her son into an incestuous relationship in order to retain her influence and to alienate Nero from Poppaea, Seneca sought Acte's help. Fearing for both her own safety and for Nero's honour, she informed Nero that the incest was widely known in the court because his mother was boasting of it and that the troops would refuse to serve a sacrilegious emperor. Acte's words struck Nero, especially on account of the fear of possible reactions by the army: he started to avoid Agrippina and finally arranged her assassination in March 59.[35]

The death of Burrus in 62 CE caused a rupture in the equilibrum, provoking as a consequence the decline of Seneca's influence and indirectly that of Acte.[36] During the same year, Nero married Poppaea after divorcing Octavia, who was first sent into exile and then murdered.[37] Between the years 62 and 65 Poppaea was the sole mistress in the court without rivals; during this time, Acte probably focused on managing her estates in Sardinia. The conspiracy of Gaius Calpurnius Piso in 65 CE was another dramatic turning point:

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24 Suet. *Nero* 28, 1; Dio Cass. 61, 7, 1.

25 *CIL* X 6589, a water pipe with the inscription *Claudiae Aug(usti) l(ibertae) Actes*.

26 *CIL* X 1903, a water pipe with the inscription *Claudiae Aug(usti) l(ibertae) Actes*.

27 *P.Ross.Georg*. 2, 42, a revision of the land register from the Memphite region.

28 *CIL* X 8046, 9 a-e, bricks with the stamp *Actes Aug(usti) l(ibertae)*, produced in Olbia.

29 Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 519.

30 Suet. *Nero* 28-29; Holztrattner 1995, 140.

31 Suet. *Nero* 50.

32 Tac. *ann.* 13, 46, Poppaea mocking Nero's affection for his slave-girl. Elsewhere she is described as *liberta*, Treggiari 1981, 77, n. 93.

33 Gardner 1986, 56: Rawson 1974, 288.

34 Tac. *ann.* 13, 45-46.

35 Tac. *ann.* 14, 2; cf. Dio Cass. 61, 11; Suet. *Nero* 28; Holztrattner 1995, 134; Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 525-26.

36 Tac. *ann.* 14, 52.

37 Tac. *ann.* 14, 63-64; Suet. *Nero* 35, 2-3.

the conspirators planned to kill Nero during the *ludi Ceriales* (19 Apr. 65), at which the emperor would certainly have been present.[38] The plot failed and the conspirators were condemned to death, among them Nero's *tutor* Seneca. To thank the divine powers for saving the emperor, the Senate voted for offerings and thanks to the Sun, who had an old temple in the Circus Maximus where the crime was to be staged; and the Circensian Games of Ceres were to be celebrated with an increased number of horse-races.[39] According to Paola Ruggeri's hypothesis, it was on this occasion that Claudia Acte dedicated a temple to Ceres in Olbia to express her gratitude for the exposure of the conspiracy that aimed at assassinating Nero during the festival in honour of the goddess Ceres. Only the right part of the architrave in granite remains of the building, which was transferred to Pisa during the Middle Ages.[40]

It is possible that Poppaea's death in 65 CE enabled Acte to return to Rome, but apparently Nero did not resume his relationship with her, since he soon took Statilia Messalina as his third (and last) wife.[41] Acte is mentioned once again only after Nero's death in 68 CE: according to Suetonius, Acte gave Nero a proper burial together with his old nurses Egloge and Alexandria, laying his ashes in the family tomb of the Domitii, the family of Nero's biological father. The funeral is said to have cost 200.000 sesterces: since Nero had suffered *damnatio memoriae* and died as a hated tyrant, it is unlikely that this was paid from public expenses; quite possibly it was Acte who arranged and paid for his burial.[42] After this, she disappears from the historical record, although a potential epitaph survives in Velitrae.[43] Emperor Galba had many of Nero's most prominent freedmen executed soon after his accession,[44] but since Claudia Acte is not named among those executed in the summer of 68 or thereafter, it is possible that she survived into Vespasian's reign.

Although Claudia Acte was Nero's mistress for only about four years (between 55 and 58), she was able to accumulate considerable wealth during this time. There are many proofs of Acte's presence in Sardinia, including numerous stamps on *instrumentum domesticum*, mostly on bricks. The brick stamps demonstrate the extent of her economic activities on *latifundia* which were transferred more or less temporarily to Acte and, after her, probably back to imperial control under Vespasian. In addition to brick production, the imperial enterprises also included agriculture and the utilization of granite caves; some of these probably originated from the *gens Domitia*, and the few *Domitii* known from Olbia may have been connected to Nero's local property.[45] The existence of a direct relationship between Nero and Olbia is further attested by a portrait of the young Nero, found at Olbia and currently in the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Cagliari. The statue is an example of a portrait created on the occasion of Nero's accession to the throne, and it may have been brought to Olbia from the imperial court by Acte during her temporary retirement in Sardinia while Poppaea was the sole mistress in the court.[46]

It is significant that more inscriptions survive for the household of Claudia Acte than for any other imperial freedwoman. Mastino and Ruggeri have compiled a list of Acte's slaves and freedmen, counting a total of 58 names, 26 of which are uncertain. These include also three freedmen bearing her *agnomen*, who

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38 Tac. *ann.* 15, 53.

39 Tac. *ann.* 15, 74.

40 *CIL* XI 1414: *[C]ereri sacrum / [Claudia] Aug(usti) lib(erta) Acte*; Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 528-30.

41 Suet. *Nero* 35, 1.

42 Suet. *Nero* 50.

43 *CIL* X 6599: *D(is) M(anibus) / Claudiae Actes.*

44 Plut. *Galba* 17, 1-3; Dio Cass. 64, 3, 4.

45 Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 518-19; 530-31; Ruggeri 2004, 281-82. *Domitii* in Olbia in the 1st century CE: *CIL* X 7982; *EE* 8, 736; *CIL* X 1481.

46 Cagliari, Museo archeologico nazionale, inv. 35533; Saletti 1989, 79; Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 534-35.

were originally Acte's slaves and later became imperial property. The majority of Acte's slaves and freedmen appear in Rome itself, occupied in managing various tasks either in Acte's villa on Caelian Hill or in her other properties in the city.[47] A similar organisation must have existed in each of the *latifundia* in her possession, to take care of their operations. In Sardinia, we find three of Acte's freedmen and one imperial freedwoman with the *agnomen* Acteniana in separate inscriptions; most probably, all of them were originally located at Olbia.[48]

Antonia Caenis

A similar case of a freedwoman as an imperial mistress appears under Emperor Vespasian. The important factor behind the successful life of Antonia Caenis[49] was the skills and social networks acquired during her years as a trusted secretary (*a manu*) of Antonia Minor, the mother of Emperor Claudius. Nothing is known about the origins of Caenis, but she was possibly brought to Rome from Istria, modern-day Croatia.[50] Her name, Antonia Caenis, tells us that she was freed by Antonia, more probably during her lifetime, before her suicide in 37 CE.[51]

There are very few literary sources on Antonia Caenis' life: Suetonius mentions her three times and Cassius Dio once.[52] Suetonius tells that after the death of his wife Flavia Domitilla, which occurred before his accession in 69 CE, Vespasian "resumed his relationship with Caenis, the freedwoman and secretary of Antonia, and formerly his mistress, and even after he became emperor he treated her almost as a lawful wife (*paene iustae uxoris loco*)".[53] Thus, the relationship predated Vespasian's marriage and ended when he married Flavia Domitilla, probably sometime around the year 39.[54] Vespasian's choice not to remarry, but instead to take back his former lover, may have been based on true affection, but it also had practical aspects. He had already two legitimate sons, Titus and Domitian, from his first marriage, and a new wife with the potential to produce new heirs would have threatened their status and complicated the inheritance.[55] After Caenis' death, Vespasian kept several mistresses, but none of them seems to have risen to her position at the court, since all their names remain unknown to posterity.[56]

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47 Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 520-21, 532, 542-44. Acte's household in Rome included a personal secretary (*a manu*, *CIL* VI 8890 = *ILS* 7396), a courier (*cursor*, *CIL* VI 8801 = *AE* 2000, +132), an account manager (*procurator summarum*, *CIL* VI 9030 = *CIL* VI 4865a = *ILS* 7386 = *AE* 1969/70, +67), two bedroom attendants (*a cubiculo*, *CIL* VI 8760 = *ILS* 1742; *cubicularius*, *CIL* VI 8791), two scribes (*scriba librarius*, *CIL* VI 1867a = *CIL* VI 32269; *scriba cubiculariorum*, *CIL* VI 8767) and a baker (*pistor*, *CIL* VI 9002). The rare occupational title of *Demetria Act(e)s Aug(usti) l(ibertae)*, *acroamat(ica) Graeca* (*CIL* VI 8693) is interesting; she was probably a professional entertainer specialised in reciting poetry to the accompaniment of a musical instrument.

48 *AE* 1892, 137; *CIL* X 7980; *CIL* X 7984 at Olbia. The original location of *CIL* X 7640 is uncertain, since it was transferred to Genoa in the eighteenth century together with a sarcophagus from Carales. Mastino – Ruggeri 1995, 520; 532-33.

49 *PIR*² A 888.

50 This suggestion is based on Suet. *Dom.* 12, 3, who tells an anecdote about Domitian's disrespectful behaviour towards Caenis, who had just returned to Rome from Istria.

51 *CIL* X 6666, an inscription for *Eros Caenidianus Augustae libertus*, confirms that Caenis was freed during Antonia's lifetime rather than in her will, since she could not otherwise have transferred a slave bearing her *agnomen* to her patron.

52 Suet. *Vesp.* 3; 21; Suet. *Dom.* 12, 3; Dio Cass. 65, 14.

53 Suet. *Vesp*. 3. The year of Flavia Domitilla's death is not known.

54 Suetonius' choice of words (*revocavit*) suggests that Vespasian had discontinued their relationship during his marriage with Domitilla. Titus, the first child of that union, was born on 30 Dec. 39.

55 Vespasian and Flavia Domitilla had two sons, the future emperors Titus and Domitian, and a daughter, Flavia Domitilla the Younger, who died before Vespasian's accession.

56 Suet. *Vesp.* 21. Vespasian's lovers are mentioned only in one sentence. Suetonius designates them by means of the rare word *pallaca*, from Greek *παλλακή*; this also implies that none of them was a *concubina* in the legal sense of the term, as Caenis had been.

Dio has recorded Caenis' death in c. 74/75 CE, because "she was exceedingly faithful and gifted with a most excellent memory". He demonstrates these characteristics with an anecdote from the time when Caenis served as a slave in the imperial court: Antonia Minor charged Caenis to write a secret letter to Emperor Tiberius, then residing in Capri, to warn him of a suspicious plot by the Praetorian Prefect Sejanus. When she ordered Caenis to destroy the message so that no trace of it would be left, Caenis replied: "It is useless for you to give me this order, *domina*; for not only this, but as whatever you dictate to me I'll always carry in my memory, and it can never be erased."[57]

Caenis' position as an imperial secretary was of considerable importance, because it involved drafting private correspondence and offered her a place in the inner circles of power. One interesting figure behind Vespasian's political career was Tiberius Claudius Narcissus, one of the freedmen who formed the core of the imperial court under Claudius. Narcissus reportedly exercised great influence over the emperor, and this made him the most powerful freedman of his time.[58] It was specifically through his influence that Vespasian was appointed legate of the *Legio II Augusta* in Germania upon the accession of Claudius in 41 CE. Narcissus is described as *praepositus ab epistulis*, in charge of correspondence, which means that Antonia Caenis and Narcissus were practically colleagues in the imperial court.[59] It is an appealing idea that Caenis may have brought Vespasian to the notice of Narcissus, whose favour and influence over Emperor Claudius secured him important offices.[60] Vespasian's success as the legate of a legion earned him a consulship in 51 CE, after which he retired from public life, since he had incurred the enmity of Claudius' wife Agrippina minor. During the greater part of Nero's reign, Vespasian was in debt and out of favour: Caenis may have come to his aid, using her influence in the court to ensure that his name was considered in the matter of the Judean command.[61]

Unlike Claudia Acte, Caenis was "almost in the position of a lawful wife": Suetonius describes her as *concubina* and her relationship with Vespasian as *contubernium*. Both terms suggest a monogamous, stable union.[62] He places the affair with Caenis before and after Vespasian's marriage to Flavia Domitilla, thus removing any question about Vespasian's high morals: only bad emperors kept mistresses during their marriage, as Nero had done with Acte. However, Suetonius' account of Vespasian's relationship with Antonia Caenis poses some problems, when we consider the influence that she had on Vespasian's early career. It is difficult to believe that Vespasian broke off his relationship with Caenis when he married, before he even began his public career, and yet benefited from the connections that Caenis had inside the Julio-Claudian court.[63] It is thus quite probable that Vespasian maintained his relations with Caenis throughout his marriage, although his military command and other offices took him away from Rome for several years.

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57 Dio Cass. 65, 14, 1-2 (Loeb Classical Library edition, transl. Earnest Cary). Antonia Caenis may have been freed as a result of being involved in uncovering Sejanus' plot. Sejanus was accused of a conspiracy against the emperor and executed in 31 CE.

58 Dio Cass. 60, 14, 13; 60, 30, 6; 60, 34, 4; Suet. *Claud*. 28. Narcissus was also the richest man in Rome: according to Cassius Dio (60, 34, 4), he possessed the extraordinary fortune of 400 million sesterces; Pliny the Elder (*nat.* 33, 134) describes him as even wealthier than Crassus, the richest man of the Republican era.

59 However, the duties of slaves or freedpersons *a manu* and *ab epistulis* differed somewhat: the former was a private secretary, while the latter was specifically employed in imperial correspondence concerning civil and military administration. See Boulvert 1970, 91-92, 376-78.

60 Suet. *Vesp*. 4, 1-2: *Claudio principe Narcissi gratia legatus legionis in Germaniam missus est*.

61 Suet. *Vesp*. 4, 2-5.

62 Suet. *Vesp.* 3; *Dom.* 12, 3. *Contubernium* in its strict sense was a term that described a quasi-marital relationship where at least one of the partners was or had been a slave during the union, see Treggiari 1981b, 42-44.

63 Wardle 2010, 110-11.

Cassius Dio tells that Antonia Caenis was a remarkable woman not only for her memory, but also because Vespasian "took such excessive delight in her". Dio emphasises Caenis' great influence in the imperial court and how this granted her the possibility to accumulate considerable wealth. It was thought that Vespasian made money by using Caenis as his intermediary: although Vespasian did not condemn anyone to death on account of his money, he spared the lives of many who surrendered their property to the emperor. These donations, and possibly also the bribes from many citizens seeking the emperor's favour, were arranged to pass through Caenis' hands, so that she got her share of the wealth. She also received vast sums of money from other sources as well, since Vespasian apparently allowed her to sell magistracies and priesthoods, and even imperial decisions.[64] However, it is possible that Caenis was wealthy even before Vespasian's accession: she may have been one of the beneficiaries of her former mistress Antonia Minor.

In addition to literary sources, a few archaeological findings attest her wealth. A funerary inscription on a marble altar found near the Porta Nomentana in Rome is the last piece of evidence about her life. The monument was erected to the memory of their former mistress by her freedman Aglaeus and his children: *Dis Manib(us) / Antoniae Aug(ustae) / l(ibertae) Caenidis / optumae patron(ae) / Aglaus l(ibertus) cum Aglao / et Glene et Aglaide / filiis*.[65] The location of the altar is hardly a coincidence, because the villa of Caenis is assumed to have been located in the area outside the Porta Nomentana. Originally, the funerary altar probably stood on the estate of Antonia Caenis in the vicinity of her tomb.[66] Besides the freedman who commemorated her, inscriptions have recorded the names of two of her slaves[67] along with three freed imperial slaves[68] who bear the *agnomen* Caenidianus/a.

In the excavations completed in 1905 at the beginning of the Via Nomentana, in the area of the Villa Patrizi, a few inscribed water pipes (*fistulae aquariae*) were unearthed: one inscription contained the name of the *plumbarius*, the other one the name of the owner of water. The name in the first stamp, *Ti. Claudius Felix*, is known also from other water pipes dated to Nero's reign.[69] The second inscription carries the name of the owner of the water, *Antoniae Caenidis*, repeated several times on the pipes.[70] In Imperial Rome, the permission to conduct water pipes to a private house was usually the privilege of influential or very wealthy individuals. Thus, Antonia Caenis, whose Greek *cognomen* indicates her servile origin, could not have been just any freedwoman. The estates of Caenis must have been rather vast, extending along the Via Nomentana to the east from the city, as the excavation map indicates. During the first century CE, a residential quartier characterized by large villas was built in this area.[71]

Among the water pipes were also pieces dated to the consular year 164 with the imperial stamp of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, which were later restorations or extensions of the original plumbing.[72] It

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64 Dio Cass. 65, 14, 3-4. A similar account of Messalina (and imperial freedmen) selling citizenships and magistracies during Claudius' reign: Dio Cass. 60, 17, 5-8.

65 *CIL* VI 12037.

66 Nonnis 2009, 405; *LTURS* I, s.v. '*Antonia Caenidis praedium*', 70 (P. Baccini Leotardi).

67 *CIL* VI 4057; *CIL* VI 8900.

68 *CIL* X 6666; *CIL* VI 15110; *CIL* VI 18358.

69 Water pipes recording the same name, found on the Caelian Hill, are inscribed on the other side with the name of a freedman known from the Neronian era, *Diadumenu(s) Aug. l. a libellis*, *CIL* XV 7444. One of the pipes found from the same area of the Villa Patrizi in 1869 bears the name of the owner of the water, *Ti. Alieni Caecina(e)*, who was probably related to Aulus Caecina Alienus, consul suffect in 69 CE, *CIL* XV 7382. The activity of *Ti. Claudius Felix* can be thus dated to the period of Nero and the Flavians. Friggeri 1977-78, 145-47.

70 *AE* 1908, 231.

71 Friggeri 1977-78, 145-48, 152; map of the area in *LTURS* I, 277, fig. 73.

72 *AE* 1908, 232.

seems that the plumbing originally owned by a private individual later became imperial property: the estate of Antonia Caenis was most probably transferred after her death to the emperor, while imperial officials (freedmen or slaves) continued to look after it. This would also explain the repairs to the plumbing under Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. In this context, another archaeological finding near the same area is also significant: a funerary altar dated to the beginning of the second century CE, dedicated to Julia Fortunata who died as a child, by Julius Florus and the imperial slave Onesimus, who was employed in the *balineum Caenidianum*.[73] Although the *balineum Caenidianum* may have been open to the public, they were the emperor's property and were administrated by one of his slaves; the baths probably formed part of the private imperial complex of villas and gardens in Rome. They certainly got their name, *Caenidianum*, from their previous owner, who must have been of some importance, if her name was maintained to designate the baths. Antonia Caenis was the only important person known to us with such a name. The hypothesis of her ownership is further confirmed by the fact that the slaves who were previously hers and later passed into imperial property were likewise designated by means of the appellative Caenidianus.[74]

It is hardly a coincidence that the inscription mentioning the *balineum Caenidianum* was found in the area where the villa of Antonia Caenis was supposedly located: the private baths were almost certainly connected with the building. In excavations of the area of Villa Patrizi, several remains of baths were found: in 1888, ruins of a *sudatorium* behind a convent church, and in 1896, on the right side of the Via dei Villini a *sudatorium* built before the year 80.[75] In addition to these, the ruins of baths near a villa called Vaccareccia were found in 1888. Although there is evidence of several baths in the same area, the exact location of the *balineum Caenidianum* is still uncertain. The aforementioned findings are hardly associated with it, although the area of the two *sudatoria* is quite near the plumbing of Antonia Caenis. It is possible that the baths have not yet been found because of a lack of systematic excavations in the area.[76]

Conclusions

As Nero's mistress, Claudia Acte had a position which would have enabled her to exert influence over political decision-making. It is unknown whether she was involved in Nero's politics or not, but literary sources imply that Acte was the central cause of the beginning of conflicts between Nero and his mother. This is a narrative repeated by all our main sources: Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio. Nero's advisors Seneca and Burrus used Acte as their intermediary to exploit Nero's passion for her and to employ her as the balancing force against Agrippina minor. As a consequence, Agrippina lost gradually both her political power and her grip on Nero, who eventually took absolute control of the Empire and ordered the assassination of his mother. Unlike Seneca and Burrus, Claudia Acte not only survived through Nero's reign, but also stayed loyal to him until the end, arranging a proper burial for him. Epigrahic records attest her possessions in Italy

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73 *AE* 1989, 211 = *AE* 1993, 149: *D(is) M(anibus) / Iuliae Fortunatae, / vixit anno uno et / menses X dieb(us) VIII; / Iulius Florus et / Onesimus Caesar(is) / n(ostri) vilicus balin(ei) / Caenidiani, / alumnae dulcissi / mae fecerunt.* Paul Weaver and Peter Wilkins have argued that the Onesimus who appears in another inscription (*CIL* VI 8679 = *AE* 1996, 92) as *vilic(us) thermar(um) / bybliothec(ae) Gra[ec(ae)]* should be identified with the Onesimus of *balinei Caenidiani*, since the same name, occupation and the two foster children (*alumnae*) are mentioned in the two inscriptions; Jesper Carlsen, however, refutes this suggestion, since Onesimus was one of the most common slave names in Rome, and *thermae* implies a larger complex than a private *balineum*. Weaver – Wilkins 1993, 244; Carlsen 2015, 5.

74 Weaver – Wilkins 1993, 242; Friggeri 1977-78, 148, 152-53. Three freed imperial slaves with the *agnomen* Caenidianus, see n. 68.

75 This dating is based on inscription *CIL* XV 1097. *Sudatorium* was a vaulted sweating-room in the Roman baths.

76 Friggeri 1977-78, 153-54. For a catalogue of archaeological findings in the area (with maps), see Fusco 2009, 120-30.

and Sardinia, and her household of slaves and freedmen is the largest of its kind known from an imperial freedwoman. During the years when she was in control of the vast imperial *latifundia*, Claudia Acte must have been an important figure in Olbia even after she had been replaced at the court by Poppaea as the imperial mistress.

Antonia Caenis is a rare example of a woman from outside the imperial family who, despite her humble origins, was able to acquire wealth and an access to political life, even if she operated behind the scenes. Caenis and her social network may even have been crucial for the early career of the future emperor Vespasian, providing him with access to the imperial court and contact with the highly influential freedman Narcissus. Vespasian, in turn, rewarded her by resuming their relationship after his wife's death and by treating her in all respects almost as a lawful wife. Although Caenis is said to have used direct influence on imperial decisions, using her administrative skills to their mutual profit, ancient historians show her in a favourable light, noting her remarkable memory and faithful character.

Despite their unofficial status – or even because of it – Claudia Acte and Antonia Caenis were able to exercise influence on many levels and acquire wealth through their personal intimacy with the emperor. They often appear in the various sources more as business partners than as traditional Roman matrons, actively involved in imperial politics and administration. Women of the imperial family who transgressed their limits by gaining too much influence in the court were often subjects of attack and portrayed as a negative female stereotype, threateningly powerful and sexually perverted, as can be seen in the case of Agrippina minor. Because Acte and Caenis were not lawful wives, but unofficial mistresses, they had no role in the imperial ideology, and this may partly explain their rather benevolent treatment in Roman historiography.

Quadretti con coppie su *klinai* dalla Villa della Farnesina*

Irene Bragantini

La villa romana detta della Farnesina (**fig. 1**) è venuta in luce in occasione della costruzione degli argini del Tevere, a fine Ottocento; rinvenuta priva di arredi e di suppellettili, la villa conservava la decorazione 'immobile' di pavimenti, pareti e soffitti di alcuni ambienti ubicati nella metà orientale del complesso.[1] Gli scarsissimi interventi successivi all'impianto originario suggeriscono che la costruzione sia stata abbandonata poco tempo dopo la sua costruzione, rimuovendo quanto in essa contenuto.[2]

Indizi di diverso tipo suggeriscono che il proprietario sia stato un personaggio vicino alla corte di Augusto, forse lo stesso Agrippa.[3] È comunque sicuro che si debba trattare di un personaggio 'di spicco' della Roma protoaugustea, come risulta dall'analisi delle strutture e delle decorazioni. Per quanto riguarda le strutture, il Krause[4] ha potuto dimostrare come l'articolazione planimetrica della villa, caratterizzata dall'abside centrale aperta sul fiume, sia stata ripresa in una serie di edificazioni successive, prima fra tutte la Villa di Tiberio a Capri, circostanza che dimostra l'alto livello della committenza della Villa della Farnesina. Lo studioso riconosce l'area centrale della villa, caratterizzata da *herrschaftlichem Repräsentationsanspruch*,[5] nel grande *oecus* affacciato sul fiume e identificato come *coenatio*: dal momento che in quest'area della villa non sono state rinvenute pitture, Krause ipotizza che le pareti fossero rivestite di marmo.[6]

Il lato orientale della villa, che ha restituito gli ambienti decorati, non fa dunque parte dell'area 'di rappresentanza' del complesso: gli ambienti si trovano invece in un'ala più appartata, aperta su un giardino, L, anch'esso dipinto. Si ricrea qui la sequenza di un ambiente tricliniare, C, il cui uniforme fondo nero contrasta fortemente con i due cubicoli a fondo rosso cinabro, B e D, che si aprono ai lati, formando una suite, come nei ben noti *Dreiraumgruppen*.[7] Più semplice, per dimensioni e impianto decorativo, è il cubicolo a

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* Ringrazio Ria Berg e Richard Neudecker per avermi invitato a contribuire a questi Atti. Ho apportato solo leggere modifiche al manoscritto consegnato nel 2014.

1 Cfr. Bragantini – De Vos 1982; Di Mino 1998; Mools – Moormann 2008.

2 La possibilità che la villa sia stata proprietà di Giulia (v. *infra*) potrebbe aver causato, secondo Mols – Moormann 2008, 80, l'abbattimento del secondo piano della villa (indiziato dalla scala presente nell'ambiente O), come forma di *damnatio memoriae,* nonché – più in generale – l'abbandono della villa stessa, abbandono che viene normalmente spiegato con le frequenti esondazioni del fiume, delle quali però, come notano i due autori, non vi è traccia nei rapporti di scavo.

3 Gli argomenti di natura topografica e urbanistica a sostegno di questa ipotesi proposti da diversi studiosi sono ripresi da Foresta 2004.

4 Krause 2000. Mols – Moormann 2008, 8 ritengono 'poco verosimile' questa ricostruzione a causa della distanza cronologica rispetto agli altri esempi noti, ma l'obiezione non mi sembra cogente, in considerazione dell'alto livello di questa committenza che – in questo come in altri casi analoghi – può ben spiegare queste 'anticipazioni'.

5 È a quest'area del complesso che si applicano in particolare le argomentazioni sviluppate da Foresta (Foresta 2004), che evidenzia la visuale sul paesaggio monumentale della città che la villa offriva.

6 Il recente rinvenimento dei materiali immagazzinati nella cd. *Domus* del Gianicolo, attribuiti all'età di Claudio (Filippi 2005), che anticipano di qualche decennio – rispetto all'esempio della *Domus Aurea* – il largo uso di rivestimenti parietali in marmo ben dimostra quanto conoscenze date per acquisite possano essere smentite dal progresso delle indagini.

7 Dickmann 1999, 395, *s.v.* Dreiraumgruppe (in particolare 322-31); cfr. anche Zaccaria Ruggiu 2001.

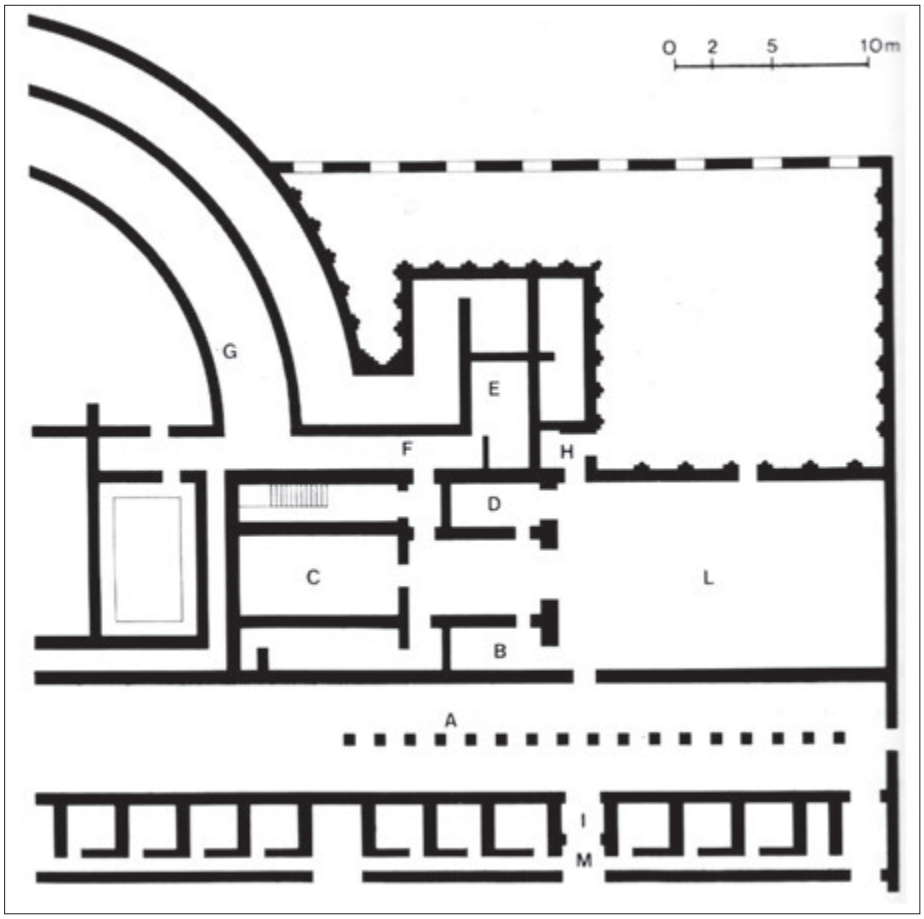

Fig. 1: Pianta della Villa della Farnesina (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

fondo bianco, E, nel quale la successione di quadretti con figure femminili, intente ad occupazioni 'da gineceo',[8] suggerisce che si debba riconoscere un cubicolo 'femminile'.[9]

Anche l'analisi delle decorazioni della villa dimostra che siamo in presenza di una committenza di altissimo livello, per la quale è attiva un'ampia équipe di decoratori, comprendente pittori, stuccatori e mosaicisti. Per quanto riguarda i pittori, che qui particolarmente interessano, il loro operato si segnala per l'ampiezza e la novità del repertorio iconografico e per la padronanza delle varie tecniche pittoriche: segno sicuro di artigiani che hanno una formazione globale, 'mediterranea', una conoscenza diretta delle più importanti testimonianze di pittura, da Atene ad Alessandria, e possiedono i modi e le tecniche per riprodurle.

È all'interno di un contesto figurativo così delineato che dobbiamo inserire l'analisi delle scene con coppie su *klinai*,[10] per capire come una tematica quale quella affrontata in questo incontro sia declinata al livello di queste committenze, committenze che – per cronologia e qualità – ci riportano a livelli ben più alti di quelli presentati negli altri interventi. Collocati sull'attico, i quadretti di cui tratteremo si trovano nei due cubicoli B e D, accomunati da una serie di rimandi interni: dimensioni, rapporti planimetrici, fondo cinabro,

8 Nessuna figura sembra intenta ad operazioni che abbiano a che fare con il tema della *paideia* femminile: la ricostruzione in Museo della pittura inv. 1215 tra quelle del cubicolo E non è infatti accertata: Bragantini, De Vos 1982, 293-95; *contra* Blanckenhagen 1988, 357.

9 Cfr. il cubicolo 45 della Casa del Labirinto a Pompei, identificato come cubicolo femminile per l'*emblema* con pernice che tiene nel becco uno specchio: Strocka 1991, 101. *Contra* Mols, Moormann 2008, 72.

10 Questa è in particolare la posizione di Clarke (Clarke 1998, 93-107), che costruisce in maniera molto convincente e articolata il significato di queste particolari figurazioni, argomentandolo su una accurata ricostruzione del contesto. Su questi quadri e la poesia di Ovidio cfr. anche Bergmann 1995, 103; La Rocca 2004, 86; Slavazzi 2011, 145-47.

nonché il gioco di assemblare nella decorazione di un unico ambiente colori e caratteri stilistici che citano le opere e gli 'objets d'art' più disparati, conferendo agli ambienti l'aspetto di una pinacoteca.[11] In misura assai minore le stesse caratteristiche ritornano nel più semplice cubicolo E, in cui è pure presente un quadretto con coppia sulla *kline*. Conformemente ad una ambientazione di elevata qualità artistica che la decorazione intende ricreare in queste stanze, i quadretti con coppie su *klinai* dei cubicoli B e D sono rappresentati come quadretti di particolare pregio, protetti da sportelli lignei.[12]

Cubicolo B

Cominciamo la descrizione dei quadretti dal cubicolo B, che per la grande varietà di stili pittorici che esibisce, in particolare nei grandi quadri che ornano il centro delle pareti dell'anticamera e dell'alcova, possiamo considerare come 'principale'. Nell'anticamera, al di sopra del quadro 'arcaizzante'[13] con Afrodite in trono, la zona superiore presenta due quadretti ottagonali, il cui fondo scuro li pone in continuità con la tradizione della pittura ellenistica, alla quale pure si richiamano i soggetti e lo stile delle rappresentazioni.[14] In uno dei quadretti vediamo un poeta comico coronato in compagnia della musa Talia e di una figura femminile di minori dimensioni; anche l'altro quadretto presenta un poeta (tragico?) coronato, che regge davanti a sé un rotolo aperto, presso il quale è una figura femminile declamante (Melpomene?) e una seconda figura femminile. Tutto qui ci rimanda al mondo della cultura ellenistica,[15] e nel mondo di questa cultura figurativa vanno inseriti anche i quadretti con coppie su *klinai*,[16] che si trovavano a lato dei quadretti con scene teatrali.[17]

Sulla parete sinistra dell'anticamera (**fig. 2**) è una affollata scena, al centro della quale è la coppia seduta sulla *kline* sulla quale posa una coperta di colore chiaro e un cuscino verde: la donna è vista di spalle, veste un chitone rosato e un mantello giallo, ha i capelli raccolti in una crocchia. Di fronte a lei è un giovane uomo a petto nudo. Sulla sinistra, una ancella (qui come negli altri quadretti di cui parleremo servi e ancelle sono sempre caratterizzati da dimensioni molto ridotte) vestita di una tunica azzurra che le lascia scoperta la spalla sinistra versa vino da un'anfora – che per l'alto collo cilindrico, impostazione delle anse e corpo troncoconico terminante in un piccolo puntale riprende la forma delle anfore vinarie ellenistiche – in un bas-

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11 Sul significato culturale di questa 'simulated translation' cfr. Bergmann 1995, in particolare 102-7.

12 A questo soggetto è dedicata la tesi di dottorato di A. Loiseleur des Longchamps, *Les pinacothèques fictives dans la peinture pariétale romaine au Ier s.av. J.-C. à Rome et en Campanie* (Università di Paris Ouest - Nanterre La Défense), che ha potuto dimostrare che nell'epoca indicata i *pinakes* 'a sportelli' compaiono sempre in contesti di alto livello decorativo che la loro presenza contribuisce a connotare, sgombrando anche il campo dall'ipotesi che gli sportelli avessero la funzione di nascondere alla vista soggetti sconvenienti.

13 Non si può qui insistere sul valore e il significato dei caratteri stilistici di questo quadro, il cui stile per semplicità definiamo arcaizzante, ma che appartengono alla stessa matrice stilistica e figurativa che ha prodotto opere estremamente raffinate, come le teste in terracotta del Palatino, sulle quali vedi Tomei 1992; La Rocca 2004, in particolare 106-7.

14 Nella stessa posizione, protetti da sportelli lignei come i quadretti con coppie appresso descritti, sono collocati i sei *pinakes* con 'ciclo di poeti' della Villa Imperiale a Pompei: Pappalardo 2001, 899-904.

15 Sul clima figurativo evocato dalle *Nachahmungen* o dalle riprese dei modelli ellenistici, e sull'interpretazione di questo fenomeno culturale, di importanza fondamentale per comprendere il linguaggio figurative della società romana, cfr. Zanker 1992.

16 Sul clima figurativo evocato dalle Nachahmungen o dalle riprese dei modelli ellenistici, e sull'interpretazione di questo fenomeno culturale, di importanza fondamentale per comprendere il linguaggio figurativo della società romana, cfr. Zanker 1992.

17 Dei quattro quadretti con coppie sulla *kline* che dovevano decorare l'alcova se ne conservano solo due, dal momento che il secondo della parete destra è andato perduto nella larga lacuna che interessa la parete, mentre il secondo della parete sinistra è stato asportato. Non è però scontato che ciò sia avvenuto in età moderna (Bragantini – De Vos 1982, 30; Clarke 1998, 95): un *pinax* con una coppia che si bacia è sì presente in questa posizione nella documentazione grafica ottocentesca (per 'completare' la rappresentazione?) ma non viene descritto (Mau 1884, 321-22; Id. 1885 b, 312, *Monumenti dell'Istituto* 12, 1884, tavole 8 e 19). Segni analoghi compaiono anche sulle pareti della Casa di Augusto, dove indicano evidentemente quadri asportati in antico (Carettoni 1983, 386), pratica del resto ben nota dai centri vesuviani (Ling 1991, 205-7).

Fig. 2: Villa della Farnesina, cubicolo B: *pinax* con coppia sulla *kline* (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

so cratere argenteo posato su una *trapeza*. A destra, altre due ancelle (una delle quali con lo sguardo rivolto verso l'osservatore?[18]) si affaccendano intorno alla coppia.

Come è stato da tempo riconosciuto,[19] l'iconografia di questo quadretto ritorna in un *emblema* rinvenuto nel suburbio di Roma, mentre alcuni particolari iconografici, seppur profondamente mutati di segno, sono attestati a Pompei.[20]

L'altro quadretto conservato in questo ambiente (**fig. 3**) si trova sulla parete destra dell'alcova ed è assai mal conservato: rappresenta una coppia semidistesa su una *kline* sulla quale posa una coperta bianca con fascia operata rossa. La donna, avviluppata nelle sue vesti chiare, accosta il volto a quello dell'uomo coronato apprestandosi a baciarlo.

Anche per questo *pinax* possiamo riconoscere una scena assai simile nel quadretto che orna la parete di fondo dell'ambiente a fondo cinabro di una *domus* di Assisi, le cui decorazioni sono datate ad età augustea:[21] nel quadretto, su una *kline* coperta da una stoffa gialla con alto bordo viola e fasce di colore

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18 Su questo 'dispositivo figurativo' cfr. *infra*, 137.

19 Rodenwaldt 1925; Werner 1994, 162-63 cat. K66, con datazione alla fine del II secolo d.C.: *emblema* dalla tenuta di Centocelle ora a Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Cfr. anche *infra*, 140.

20 Per gli esempi pompeiani cfr. *infra*, 140.

21 La *domus* è nota come Casa sotto Palazzo Giampè o *Domus* del *lararium*: Manca 2012 identifica l'ambiente come *oecus* e la scena come raffigurante una conversazione intima tra coniugi.

Fig. 3: Villa della Farnesina, cubicolo B: *pinax* con coppia sulla *kline* (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

verde, è stesa una figura maschile con il petto nudo, che posa la mano destra attirandola a sé sul capo della sua compagna, che alza lo sguardo verso di lui. La donna veste una tunica bianca, dalla quale fuoriesce una veste più lunga di colore viola, ha capelli chiari legati in una crocchia sul collo e lo sguardo rivolto verso l'uomo. Anche qui, come alla Farnesina, il contrasto tra le carni scure del corpo maschile e quelle chiare del corpo femminile è particolarmente accentuato. L'ambientazione è in un interno, privo però di arredi o di altre figure.

Cubicolo D

Più intrigante la situazione che troviamo in questo cubicolo: sulla stessa parete (destra) dell'anticamera, inquadrati e messi in risalto da prospetti ad edicola di colore azzurro, troviamo due scene di segno completamente diverso. A sinistra (**fig. 4**) quella che si presenta come un'immagine di 'persuasione coniugale': su una *kline* coperta da teli di colori vivaci e 'saturi' (viola, giallo, verde) è disteso un uomo, con il petto nudo e carni di toni molto scuri; la mano destra è poggiata sulle spalle della compagna, la sinistra le posa in grembo. La figura femminile, con il capo e lo sguardo pudicamente volti verso il basso, indossa una tunica bianca ed è coperta da un mantello giallo che le vela anche il capo; con la sinistra stringe davanti a sé il braccio del compagno. Sia l'abbigliamento della figura femminile, che la presa di lei sul braccio di lui, suggeriscono l'immagine della sposa, e quindi di una 'seduzione ritualmente

Fig. 4: Villa della Farnesina, cubicolo D: quadretto con coppia sulla *kline* (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

sancita'.[22] Due (?) figure completano la rappresentazione, ma solo quella a sinistra è più leggibile: una giovane ancella che, dietro la *kline*, regge un basso e largo bacile.[23] Dal momento che non riconosco in queste figurazioni l'intento di creare una sequenza narrativa,[24] non credo che il quadretto che si trova all'estremità opposta della stessa parete rappresenti la stessa sposa, finalmente 'persuasa' (**fig. 5**). Anche in questo caso, come altrove nella villa, la cultura artistica dei pittori affida ai colori saturi e cangianti il compito di rappresentare stili di vita piacevoli e lussuosi: sulla *kline,* coperta da drappi viola e verdi, è una figura femminile, nuda dalla vita in su, col resto del corpo coperto da una tunica bianca e un mantello giallo. Con la destra la figura abbraccia e attira a sé l'uomo, dal corpo nudo e con una corona sul capo,[25] che a sua volta l'abbraccia posandole la destra sulla spalla, mentre con la sinistra sembra averne appena denudato il seno (la sinistra della donna si intravvede sotto il suo braccio). Nel

22 Così Zanker 1998, 576, a proposito di un gruppo in terracotta da Mirina. Alla difficoltà di distinguere – all'interno di queste tematiche – tra scene nuziali e 'Liebesszenen' (una difficoltà che mi pare spieghi bene il significato di queste figurazioni all'interno di questi discorsi figurativi) allude Scheibler (Scheibler 1998, nota 20), che mette anche in rilievo il carattere festivo-cerimoniale delle rappresentazioni.

23 Non è chiaro se lo sguardo di questa figura sia rivolto verso l'esterno del quadro, espediente 'comunicativo' per il quale v. *infra*, 137.

24 Così invece Mau 1884, 321-22, Clarke 2003b, 31-32 e Blanc – Eristov 2017, 30.

25 Il volto dell'uomo è dipinto con grande maestria e con intenti quasi ritrattistici.

Fig. 5: Villa della Farnesina, cubicolo D: quadretto con coppia sulla *kline* (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

contesto della scena erotica, la corona sul capo dell'uomo allude al consumo del vino, al quale pure alludono arredi e suppellettili: in secondo piano a sinistra si intravvede appena una figura femminile (che regge nella destra un vaso bronzeo?); sulla destra è un tavolo a zampe animali, sul quale posano una *oinochoe* argentea e un alto vaso (una situla?) dello stesso materiale. Infine, un giovane servo, dal corpo nudo e dai lunghi riccioli, tiene nelle mani un calice il cui colore e la cui trasparenza riprendono quella del vetro. Il giovane servo è la figura che ha più intrigato gli osservatori, che vi hanno visto un espediente del pittore per far 'entrare' nella scena l'osservatore: è la figura del *Betrachter im Bild*, della quale è stata data anche una lettura 'voyeuristica'.[26]

Alla tematica 'teatrale ed ellenistica' del cubicolo B si sostituisce qui, sempre su fondo scuro – qui però violetto – quella delle fanciulle che reggono in grembo delle lepri entro ambientazioni dionisiache indicate da erme di Pan. Sulla parete antistante manca il primo quadro, il secondo (**fig. 6**) rappresenta ancora una coppia che si bacia. La figura femminile è vestita, attira a sé con la destra alzata sopra il capo la testa

26 È questa in particolare la lettura di Clarke 2003b, 30-33, anche sulla base del confronto con la coppa Warren, dove l'aspetto 'voyeuristico' è però accentuato dal fatto che il servo spia dalla porta socchiusa. Il valore di questo confronto è peraltro fortemente inficiato dalla convincente proposta di Marabini Moevs 2008 e 2013 che la coppa sia un falso, realizzato a Roma tra la fine dell'Ottocento e l'inizio del Novecento (così ora anche Giuliani 2013 e – seppure ancora in via ipotetica, in attesa di una prova conclusiva – Sande 2017); contra Clarke 2014, 707-9. Per la definizione del 'Betrachter im Bild' v. Lorenz 2007; Ead. 2008, 138; Anguissola 2010, 448-49 nota 85. Cfr. inoltre Platt 2002, 90, che parla di 'anxiety-producing dialectic between observer and observed'.

Fig. 6: Villa della Farnesina, cubicolo D: quadretto con coppia sulla *kline* (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

dell'uomo,[27] nella sinistra regge una pesante ghirlanda. Completano la scena, a sinistra, un'alta figura coperta da un manto giallo che le copre anche il capo, con in mano un alto calice vitreo, rivolta verso il piccolo schiavo vestito di un corto chitone; questi poggia la mano destra su un alto cratere argenteo, di fronte al quale è una coppa vitrea che contiene piccoli frutti gialli, anche questa suppellettile posata su un trapezoforo. In primo piano, una serva vestita di bianco si piega, volgendo la schiena verso l'osservatore, e si affaccenda ai piedi della *kline,* come se stesse togliendo le scarpe della donna distesa, che indossa una veste ornata in basso da una fascia celeste.

Cubicolo E

Sulla parete di fondo dell'alcova di questo cubicolo a fondo bianco, che nell'anticamera presenta figure femminili intente in occupazioni 'di gineceo',[28] è rappresentata a sinistra il bacio di una coppia seduta sulla *kline* (**fig. 7**). La pittura è molto mal conservata, ma si può riconoscere che sia l'uomo che la donna portano sul capo una corona vegetale, che la figura maschile è vestita, e quella femminile ha la spalla scoperta. Sulla

27 La lettura dei tre quadretti di questo ambiente è resa più incerta dal fatto che i volti maschili sembrano molto caratterizzati. Non credo però che questa circostanza vada valorizzata, cosí come credo non intenzionale la somiglianza del volto della figura femminile di fig. 4 con la figura femminile ammantata di questo quadretto.

28 Cfr. *supra*, 132.

Fig. 7: Villa della Farnesina, cubicolo E: *pinax* con coppia sulla *kline* (foto Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma).

destra anche qui sembra rappresentata una piccola *trapeza*, l'ambientazione è solo accennata dai panneggi che occupano il fondo della scena.

Il *pinax* di destra rappresenta invece tre donne in un interno, delle quali non è possibile stabilire se possiedano un legame narrativo con la scena rappresentata a sinistra.

Conclusione

Quale senso, quale valore dobbiamo dare a queste immagini? A me sembra che balzi in primo piano il ruolo pittorico che – osservate con attenzione al loro contesto figurativo – queste immagini rivestono. L'uso del colore, la mescolanza di stili, la varietà di temi, formati e tecniche, il 'gioco' di immagini che ci viene presentato (le 'Isidi'!), dimostrano infatti la funzione che la pittura continua a giocare in queste residenze. In una colta fusione di narrazioni ellenistiche e linguaggi contemporanei, e con i materiali e le tecniche della pittura – che a questa funzione si presta più e meglio di altre tecniche decorative –, i pittori operano mettendo a servizio della ideologia abitativa dell'élite dell'epoca le loro abilità e dando cosí forma agli spazi in cui questi committenti vivono e ricevono gli ospiti 'di alto rango'. Questo ruolo della pittura, 'capace di dare forma al lusso e al piacere degli stili di vita' – una tematica che pervade di sé tanta parte del repertorio figurativo di destinazione privata dell'età ellenistica[29] – risulta

[29] Su questo tema delle 'immagini del piacere di vivere dionisiaco ed erotico', di un'arte 'della gioia dei sensi' rivolta agli individui e non destinata a rappresentare comportamenti sociali, cfr. in generale Zanker 1998.

anche nel confronto con il più appartato cubicolo E, dove più semplice è anche le rappresentazione della coppia su *kline* che orna la parete di fondo dell'alcova con un quadretto più piccolo, arricchito da una policromia più ridotta, e in generale con una minore enfatizzazione del lusso.

Le pitture della Villa della Farnesina si prestano dunque a farci capire quali tematiche – legate al mondo di Dioniso e di Afrodite[30] – potevano essere ritenute 'adatte' in contesti di questo livello culturale e sociale per costruire lo spazio figurativo destinato a questo tipo di rituali, nel momento in cui i pittori cominciano a 'ristrutturare' il loro repertorio per rispondere alle esigenze figurative in via di mutamento dei loro committenti: il ruolo che le decorazioni della Villa della Farnesina possiedono nello sviluppo di queste tematiche serve per altra via a dimostrare la qualità di chi ha dato forma a questo 'programma decorativo'.[31]

Il contesto della villa, e nello specifico, il livello delle sue decorazioni, impediscono di confondere queste scene – che contribuiscono a creare in quest'ala della villa un clima figurativo che mette in scena stili di vita piacevoli e lussuosi – con le numerose immagini di coppie esplicitamente intente all'atto sessuale che troviamo sulle pareti di Pompei. Le coppie della villa della Farnesina non sono mai raffigurate durante l'atto sessuale, né sono mai rappresentate da sole:[32] al contrario, viene sempre raffigurata l'ambientazione entro un interno arricchito da arredi e suppellettili di tradizione ellenistica, che connotano stili di vita 'alti', ai quali alludono esplicitamente gli accesi colori delle vesti femminili nonché i piccoli schiavi e le ancelle al servizio della coppia.[33] Le coppie della Farnesina trovano piuttosto continuazione – seppure in contesti e in composizioni di segno assai diverso – nei quadri con coppie a banchetto discussi da Antonio Varone, che con i nostri hanno in comune oltre a qualche particolarità iconografica[34] la ricchezza delle vesti, delle suppellettili e degli arredi: il clima è qui però mutato in senso narrativo, e alla coppia dei nostri quadretti si sostituiscono più coppie, mentre il ben diverso contesto architettonico affida alla stereotipata allusione agli stili di vita ellenistici il compito di sublimare le azioni che si svolgono negli ambienti così decorati.[35]

Che valore dobbiamo infine dare al fatto che gli schemi iconografici presenti in alcuni dei nostri *pinakes* tornino in altre testimonianze? Dobbiamo pensare che i quadretti della Farnesina 'copino' quadri più antichi o ne derivino?[36] Senza voler escludere questa eventualità, credo comunque che il livello dei pittori qui attivi li renda pienamente in grado di produrre quadretti come quelli sopra descritti attingendo a un consolidato repertorio di schemi e immagini di matrice ellenistica: questo è anche il caso del quadretto di Assisi al quale si è sopra fatto cenno, che può facilmente essere accostato ai quadretti della Villa della Farnesina per quanto riguarda cronologia e livello decorativo.[37] In una ricostruzione di questo tipo, che nello svolgimento

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30 Sul valore essenzialmente culturale di queste figurazioni di divinità cfr. Wyler 2004.

31 Con la definizione di programma decorativo intendo qui riferirmi strettamente alla distribuzione delle diverse tecniche e delle diverse tematiche nei vari ambienti, ricordando in particolare sia gli ambienti che per ragioni di spazio non ho qui descritto (il criptoportico A, il triclinio C, i corridoi F e G e il giardino L), nonché la notevole qualità delle volte in stucco.

32 Anche per questa via il cubicolo E si differenzia da quelli B e D, in quanto la coppia di questo cubicolo non è accompagnata da altre figure.

33 Cfr. anche Mols – Moormann 2008, 76; Anguissola 2010, 51.

34 Si noti in particolare lo schema iconografico dell'ancella che versa il vino dall'anfora in un grande cratere (Varone 1997, fig. 3; Dunbabin 2003, fig. 26), presente anche nel più tardo *emblema* da Centocelle sopra citato (nota 19), o la coppia che si bacia sulla *kline* (Varone 1997, figg. 1 e 3; Dunbabin 2003, fig. 26 e tav. II), che richiama sia quella del cubicolo B che quella di Assisi sopra citata.

35 Roller (Roller 2006, in part. 61-68) enfatizza invece gli elementi di continuità tra queste immagini e le pratiche della società romana, affidando quindi loro una diversa funzione nel costruire lo spazio figurativo.

36 Così ad es. Mielsch 2001, 164-67.

37 Le pitture di Assisi (cfr. nota 21) sono inquadrabili qualche decennio dopo quelle della Villa della Farnesina: il loro livello decorativo è ben attestato dall'uso del cinabro come colore di fondo dell'ambiente e dalla presenza di una predella a fondo nero con

della pittura parietale di età romana pone attenzione alla circolazione degli schemi decorativi, valorizzando la capacità dei pittori di creare per gli spazi abitativi dei loro committenti quadri e composizioni che 'travestono alla greca' quegli spazi, è più difficile rendere ragione di un oggetto come l'*emblema* da Centocelle, la cui qualità – difficilmente inseribile nel livello generalmente alto degli *emblemata* delle epoche di cui qui ci occupiamo – ne suggerisce una cronologia più tarda, costringendo a cercare una motivazione che renda ragione della persistenza di questa iconografia.[38]

Per cercare di dare un senso a queste immagini, è anche utile gettare uno sguardo più avanti nel tempo, e vedere che cosa ci testimonia la pittura dei decenni successivi.[39] Particolarmente significative risultano quelle scene costruite sfruttando alcuni dei segni e degli schemi iconografici di questo repertorio per rappresentare scene conviviali,[40] nelle quali abbondano allusioni erotiche ma non è mai rappresentato l'atto sessuale.[41] Come è stato già sottolineato,[42] le coppie dei *pinakes* della Farnesina, ambientate in scenari arricchiti da lussuose suppellettili, non sono però mai rappresentate 'a banchetto', testimonianze utili anche a farci comprendere come – nella vita lunga e lunghissima delle tradizioni artigianali – gli schemi iconografici sopravvivano al mutamento delle tematiche e delle esigenze sociali dei loro committenti.

figure dipinte in colori molto vivi, dispositivo figurativo che compare in contesti di alta qualità: cfr. Bragantini 2013, 113-14. In generale su pareti con esteso uso del fondo nero cfr. ora inoltre Burlot – Eristov 2017.

38 Cfr. nota 19.

39 Anguissola 2010, 332-39.

40 Cfr. gli studi citati a nota 34.

41 Roller 2006, 145, che sottolinea anche come nelle scene in cui l'atto è rappresentato non vi siano mai elementi che rimandano a convivi, il che aiuta a distinguere le due tematiche.

42 Cfr. nota precedente: "Dining and sex may exist in close proximity, but they are not conflated".

Beauties from a distant world. On portrait galleries of Hellenistic *hetairai* in several houses of Pompeii

Richard Neudecker

Not all that frequently – and thus stirring the greatest sensation and interest when it does so – the beholder of Pompeiian walls' gaze encounters portraits of beautiful young women. They are always *tondi*, the preferred portrait format in Roman painting.[1] In order to discover what these portraits conveyed to the viewer of Antiquity, or, first of all, to determine whether they had any appreciable significance for those using the rooms – one worth our while exploring – it is necessary to follow, as it were, the intellectual traces leading from them to their sources.

Methodologically, then, it is a matter of tracing the contexts in which the viewer could place them, be they immediately vivid or only to be revealed interpretatively. Was the contextual attribution a primarily Pompeiian one, for instance, so that everyone would read the picture as being of a Pompeian girl? Or did these images lead, like almost all Pompeiian walls, to an artificial world, one evoked as Greek?

To throw light on how these pictures of beautiful girls in Pompeii were perceived, I will quickly run through the riches of information on Greek *hetairai*, as most of what was written on extraordinarily beautiful women until the painting of the tondi comes under this term.[2] It is therefore not a question of compiling written information on commercial sexual activities in Roman Pompeii. Neither is it one of judging the reality of life for unmarried women in Hellenistic Greece based on antique texts[3] that, for the most part, seize on a theme that was consciously seen as a historical one. My intention is, rather, first to note what was known of such literary portraits of women in the Early Imperial Period and could have had an impact. Second, I would like to submit a proposal for an answer to the question of the 'girls' or '*hetairai*' depicted on a number of walls in Pompeii. At the same time, however, with the hesitancy that arises between two definitions, I wish to suggest that the dichotomy of 'normal' women on the one hand and prostitutes of various categories on the other can be placed in doubt. In the antique mind, oppositions between free and paid-for sexuality, physical self-determination and coercion, and within the controversial rules covering women's social presence do not run along the same faultlines, such as that between the moral and immoral, as they do in modern society.

In the *Fragmenta Graecorum Historicorum*, compiled by Felix Jacoby from 1923 on, we find the remains of several monographs on *hetairai*.[4] These were drawn on by Athenaeus of Naucratis around 200 CE as he was devoting the thirteenth book of his *Deipnosophistae* to *hetairai* – titled *περὶ γαμετῶν καὶ ἑταιρῶν*.[5]

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1 De Maria 1997, 48-49.

2 In general, ancient literature concerning this topic is made use of as source for cultural narratives of actual living conditions, see Reinsberg 1989; Vanoyeke 1990; Davidson 1997; Schuller 2002; Schuller 2005; Schuller 2008; literary aspects with Schuller 2014; questions of context and discourse are treated in Faraone – McClure 2006.

3 Späth 2013 summarizes inherent problems of theory and method; Kurke 1997 for the discourse; in a comparable way the *hetaera* of the New Comedy entered Roman imagination, cf. Krieter-Spiro 1997.

4 *FGrHist* nn. 347-51 and 113-15, most of them philologists like Aristophanes from Byzantion and Apollodoros from Athens; overview in Schuller 2002, 68, 263.

5 Lukinovich 1990; Kurke 1999; McClure 2003, 171-77 lists the titles cited by Athenaios, those about *hetairai* included.

For us, this thirteenth volume is the most important source of information; interested readers in Pompeii, however, could read the selfsame Hellenistic sources that Athenaeus later drew on.[6]

Some one hundred fifty *hetairai*, historically or otherwise relevant, appear in this work alone. Forty-two columns in *Pauly's Realencyclopädie* come under the lemma '*Hetairai*',[7] they contain a range of literary, historical, and half-way historical figures, as well as both actual and alleged *hetairai*, and even several versions of an individual defined in opposing terms. One glance shows the difficulty of distinguishing between them all, and that the notes' authors presumably did not plan for this in any case, the borders between individual figures and types being porous. We are thus faced with an abundance that stems from the primary authors' intentions to divulge and – feeding off of this – lives up to the authors of the *lemmata*'s knowing wink.[8] This is so even though, for the most part, only names with very few lexicographical addenda have come down to us. In number, however, there are more proper names than are known to us of Hellenistic rulers, though these are employed repeatedly. Yet this applies equally for the names of *hetairai*.[9] With all their links to historical celebrities, one could almost give a lecture on Hellenistic history based simply on a leitmotif of the era's courtesans. I would like to extend our present gaze to three vocations: artists, intellectuals, and rulers.

It is notable and revealing that *hetairai* were associated with the ruling sphere as far back as the profession's first reported practitioner, Rhodopis. Herodotus[10] treats her to a historical-critical excursus on the occasion of his visit to the pyramid of the Pharaoh Menkaure at Giza, in the construction of which Rhodopis is implicated. One also comes across her name in votive offerings in Delphi, doubtless the sanctuary most befitting her far-flung fame. The base with Rhodopis's inscription was discovered in Delphi, albeit without the spits dedicated in her name.[11] The most interesting names connected with Rhodopis, and of which the reader may at least assume a liaison, were those of Aesop and Sappho's brother, Charaxus,[12] thus incorporating literary and artistic spheres into her life alongside royalty. The manifold reports of Rhodopis flow from Herodotus via many channels on towards Strabo and Pliny[13] – and to Pompeii.

The most divine of all *hetairai*, nevertheless, was deemed to be Phryne from Thespiae.[14] The legend of her beauty was made official, so to speak, with an anecdote that had done the rounds, with varying details, in the writings of antiquity, and was still being presented as a historical delicacy in paintings in Parisian salons in the late nineteenth century (**fig. 1**).[15] The story related Phryne's appearance before an Athenian court, where her then

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6 Ath. 583 d-e for the names; nearly all of it is lost, as well as works allegedly or actually composed by famous *hetairai* like Elephantis and her supposed co-author Lais; her books about gynaecology and cosmetics as well as illustrated pornography was well known to Plin. *nat.* 28, 81, Mart. 12, 43 and Suet. *Tib.* 43; Crusius 1905; Parker 1992 and Davidson 1995 for details.

7 Schneider 1913.

8 "Eine Frau, die ihre Reize um Geld verkaufte…", Schneider 1913; Raubitschek 1941, 895-96 gives enthusiastic descriptions like from his own experience.

9 McClure 2003, 59-78.

10 Hdt. 2, 134-35; Ath. 13, 596 b-d; Miller 1914.

11 *SEG* 13, 364; Keesling 2006, 61-63.

12 All passages in Miller 1914, especially Suda s.v. Ροδὸπιδος ἀνάθημα; Plin. *nat.* 36, 82 and Ov. *epist.* 15, 65-66 drop remarks for informed readers.

13 Diod. Sic. 1, 64, 14; Str. 17, 1, 33; Plin. *nat.* 36, 82, and Ael. *VH* 13, 33 for later periods.

14 Ath. 13, 591 e, quoting Poseidippos (*CAF* 3, 339 n. 12); see also Prop. 2, 5; for Phryne Raubitschek 1941; Davidson 2006; Schuller 2008, 263.

15 The whole story in Quint. *inst.* 10, 5, 2; Ath. 13, 590 d-f; McClure 2003, 41, 132-36; Glazebrook 2006; paintings like "*Phryné devant l'aréopag*" by Jean-Léon Gérome (1861, now Kunsthalle Hamburg, see Ackerman 2000) gave splendour to the ambience of Parisian *maîtresses* during the Second Empire whose highlight Harriet Howard, mistress and financial backer of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, later Napoleon III, was rewarded with title and castle (see Maurois 1958).

Fig. 1: Jean-Léon Gérome, *Phryné devant l'aréopag*, 1861 (Kunsthalle Hamburg).

lover and counsel for the defence, Hyperides, advised her to bare her breasts in front of the judges. In another version, Hyperides is said to have simply revealed them himself. Within moments the Athenian judges, brought to the intended pitch of emotion, exonerated her of all guilt. A comment from our own time such as "schade, wenn die Geschichte erfunden wäre – was leider wahrscheinlich ist"[16] repeats the voyeurism of the scene in antiquity. Embedding the anecdote in the narrative indicates how history could be written with pictures of women, wherein the male interest of an ancient historian giving his commentary and a Pompeiian coincide.

Among the accounts of the effect of Phryne's beauty was her association with Praxiteles, which bestowed renown on them both. She is said to have modelled for him for more than one statue of Aphrodite, so that the erotically loaded stories soon entwining themselves around the most famous, the Aphrodite of Knidos, always also spoke of Phryne's desirability.[17] Full-length portraits of Phryne could be seen in several places, such as the one between portraits of the kings Agesilaus und Philip II in Delphi, which Pausanias noted for his readers.[18] In Thespiae she stood next to a statue of Aphrodite and, since both statues were by the hand of Praxiteles,[19] it was presumable only possible to distinguish them epigraphically. Apelles is said to have painted her as Aphrodite *Anadyomene*, naked and appearing from the waves in front of onlookers, just as he did Alexander's beloved, Pankaspe, whom the painter promptly fell in love with.[20] Alexander presented her to Apelles, who soon also went on to discover, love, paint and immortalize Lais before she

16 Schuller 2002, 270.

17 Commented by Arnob. *nat.* 6, 3; for the portrait statue see Richter 1965, 2, 246; Salomon 1997; Corso 2007a, 9-187; Corso 1997b; McClure 2003, 126-32.

18 Paus. 10, 15, 1; also Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 14 (*Mor.* 400 F); Ath. 13, 591 b-c; Suda s.v. Ροδὸπιδος ἀνάθημα; Keesling 2006, 66-71; most detailed Corso 1997a; Dillon 2010, 48, 122, 165.

19 Paus. 9, 27, 65; *Der Neue Overbeck* n. 1891-92; cf. Alciphr. 4, 1.

20 Ath. 13, 591 a, for Phryne; Plin. *nat.* 35, 86; 91 for Pankaspe; Neumer-Pfau 1986.

attained her full fame. Lais herself, in her role as *hetaira*, devoted herself to Aristippus and his renown two months a year.[21]

In the reports of Phryne, three aspects are noteworthy. First is the interest in portraits. Portrayals of *hetairai* are not only hidden in Aphrodite's statue; a list of such likenesses can be drawn up from the notes, including self-portraits such as that of Kallo, who additionally supplied her work's poetic *ekphrasis* with her own stylus.[22] The second aspect is the connection to elevated intellectual circles, with the linking in the cultural memory of the *hetaira* Phryne with the carriers of Greek culture par excellence – its fine artists. Via these artists' works came the third facet, the bringing into play of a latent divinity.

In fact, numerous *hetairai* are interlaced in the history of Greek intellectuals. The name of Epicurus is linked with his courtesan Leontion, who for her part also had dealings with his pupils.[23] Alongside Menander's name was to be found again and again that of his *hetaira* Glycera, who deemed an invitation to him to attend the court of Alexandria to be acceptable only if she were also invited – such was to be read in Glycera's correspondence, published by Alciphron in the 2nd century CE.[24] That this was, naturally, an invention tallies perfectly with the wish to weave women into a historical reality.

It was a surprise to nobody that Alcibiades' biography featured more than one famous *hetaira* – or that hers contained more than him. Timandra was more to him than a *hetaira* in the conventional sense, for she accompanied him in adversity as far as the Phrygian backwater in which he perished and buried him there.[25] Xenophon[26] helped another, Theodote, to even greater fame. In a bravura maeotic demonstration, he connected Socrates with her, who, incidentally, had her portrait painted upon meeting Socrates. The result is one of the most sophisticated discussions between a man and a woman in antiquity, in which – naturally – the conditions of *hetairai* are examined but sexuality not even mentioned. Instead, the keywords '*symposion*' and '*esprit*' would be associated with Theodote forevermore.

In company with Hellenistic rulers, *hetairai* became actual courtesans. The personal mistresses of rulers strove for longer-lasting relations that could lead to political power and royal rank. One example of this was Bilistiche, who rose from *hetaira* to the position of queen of Ptolemy II. She also went down in history in her own right as an Olympic champion in chariot racing.[27] In the courtly context, the reports acquired a historical substance that the anecdotes of artists and scholars lack. These *hetairai* and their princely lovers appeared most clearly as couples in the historical memory. This accent on the 'princely couple' can be traced back to Alexander, who allegedly set fire to Persepolis upon the wish of his *hetaira* Thais,[28] and was

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21 Geyer 1924 points at the impossibility to unite all informations on one single person; Ath. 13, 588 c-d for Apelles; Ath. 12, 544 b; 13, 588 c-f and 599 b for Aristipp who according to Diog. Laert. 2, 84 was said to have written a book about mirrors for Lais; cf. Schuller 2008, 263.

22 *Anth. Pal.* 9, 605 (Gow – Page 1965, 152); artists were said to have come to Lais in order to portray her bossom, so Ath. 13, 588 e and Ael. *VH* 10, 2; for spectators during sessions see Plut. *Alc.* 16, 7 (Aristophon portraying Nemea and Alkibiades) and notes 20, 56 and 57; for criticisms see Freund 2015.

23 Diog. Laert. 10, 4. 6. 27 for Epikuros and Metrodoros with Leontion and other *hetairai*; likewise Aristippos (Diog. Laert. 2, 8, 69. 74), Xenokrates (4, 2, 7), Arkesilaos (4, 6, 40), Karneades (4, 9, 63) and Zenon (7, 13); Castner 1982; McClure 2003, 56; Haake 2007, 294-96; Schuller 2008, 264.

24 Alciphr. 4, 18. 19, dating in the 2nd century AD (Schmitz 2004); for the fabrication see Radermacher 1931, 712; for Glykera see also Mart. 14, 187 and Ath. 13, 594 d; cf. Alciphr. 4, 1. 3. 4. 5 for Phryne.

25 Also called Damasandra, see Plut. *Alc.* 39, 1; Ath. 12, 535 c and 13, 574 e mistakes Theodote for her; see Plut. *Alc.* 16, 7 for Alkibiades' *hetaira* Nemea.

26 Xen. *Mem.* 3, 11.

27 Plut. *Amat.* 9, 9 (*Mor.* 753 E); Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4, 42 P.; Paus. 5, 8, 11; Ath. 13, 576 f. 596 f; Diogenes called *hetairai* 'kings' queens' according to Diog. Laert. 6, 63; for Bilistiche see Ogden 2008.

28 Plut. *Alex.* 38; Ath. 13, 576 e.

very marked in the case of Harpalus. Both of the *hetairai* associated with him, Pythionike and her successor Glycera, would have decisively added to the radiance of his position – and this is what was deemed important when the two women passed into history.[29]

Hetairai were of heightened interest when in the society of strong and wild rulers. The feasts of Demetrios Poliorcetes in the Parthenon on the Acropolis were reported upon due to their scandalous behaviour, and because Demetrios had a whole host of *hetairai* devoted to him[30] – Leaina and Myrrhine are named, the latter of whom also had relations with Hyperides.[31] Said to find highest favour was Lamia[32] besides Mania,[33] who also had liaisons with the most famous Olympic boxers of the time, Leontiskos and Antenor. These were evidently the sort of heroes with which rulers shared their *hetairai* and *klinai*.

It is remarkable that the names of these young women, the *hetairai*, have been passed on in historiography down the centuries and that their biographies were enriched with anecdotes that turned, as it were, into myth.[34] This was accompanied less and less by authentic history and, instead, increasingly by the construction of a fascinating world containing powerful rulers and beautiful *hetairai*. It is just such a court milieu, I suggest, that is referred to in some of the panel paintings depicting the carousing of strong men and appealing young courtesans, which were still being copied as paintings with wooden frames onto walls in the Third Style. The decorative context into which, for example, several such painted symposia have been placed within the feasting rooms of the Villa della Farnesina, very much suggests that actual Hellenistic paintings had been reproduced.[35] All the interiors depicted are characteristic of Hellenistic luxury, from the colourful upholstery and baldachins to the drinking vessels and statues in the adjacent garden.[36] There are banqueting scenes with two to four participants of both sexes that, though they address erotic atmospheres and intimate emotions, leave the inevitable ensuing sexual activities to whatever the viewer may dream or fantasize of.

Replicas in painting and mosaic confirm the former existence of original paintings.[37] Among the copies, alongside a complete one with two couples, a version reduced to a single pair sometimes also appears, into which is concentrated the full meaning of the joy of feasting. A historical constellation with nameable actors who may have at one time sparked the picture's creation was by that point no longer being appealed to.[38] It is in any case questionable whether historical accuracy was of great import in the copies. The pictures

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29 Ath. 13, 586 c-d and 595 a-596 a with reference to Hellenistic historians; McClure 2003, 52-53.

30 Plut. *Demetr.* 24.

31 Ath. 13, 590 c-593 a.

32 Geyer 1924a; Plut. *Demetr.* 16; 24; 27; Alciphr. 4, 16.

33 Ath. 13, 578 f-579 a.

34 Demetrios was dubbed 'Mythos' on account of his relationship with Lamia who got linked to the mythological Lamia, see Plut. *Demetr.* 27; apart from Alkiphron it was Lucian who in *Dialogues of the courtesans* presented them in a world of celebrities; comparably, the *hetairai*'s historical esteem covers over moralistic considerations in Friedrich Jacobs's *Historische(r) Galerie der vornehmsten Hetären Athens*, published in C.M. Wieland's *Attisches Museum* 2 (1798) 153, and *Vermischte Schriften*, 4 (Leipzig 1830) 331; for the literary afterlife cf. Schuller 2008, 15-18.

35 See Bragantini and Jacobelli in this volume; material evidence for such pictures does not exist but the idea of the image reminds of the *mise-en-scène* of meta-symposiasts in the royal pavilion of Ptolemy II Philadelphos (Kallixenos in Ath. 5, 196), as well as the painting of Alkibiades in Nemea's arms (above note 22).

36 Nielsen 1998 for details concerning the Hellenistic royal backdrop of Roman *convivia*; Wallace-Hadrill 2004, 115-16 points out the title of *rex* and the custom of *regnari* for the *convivium*; statues of gods in the background of some pictures refer to sacral connotations like did a feast of Aphrodite which was arranged for Demetrios by Lamia, see Ath. 13, 101 e-f.

37 Assembled by Varone 1997 and illustrated by Wallace-Hadrill 2004.

38 Historical *symposia* with *hetairai* had been recorded in poetry, see Plut. *Demetr.* 27; in Ath. 4, 146 f-148 f the *basilikon symposion* has become a *topos* that could be animated with different sets of participants; a *biclinium* for two couples tallies with the idea of competing courtesans in twos, like in Asklepiades of Samos (or Poseidippos from Pella) in c. 270 BCE, see *Anth. Pal.* 5, 202, and Gow – Page 1965, 53 Nr. 35; Wallace-Hadrill 2004, 117 reduces the contents to "common currency of Hellenistic imagery"

could be related arbitrarily to any notorious couple from literature, since their primary task was to conjure up the distant pleasures and indulgences at court. I do not wish to elucidate anything of the phenomenon of actual Greek courtesans with the few quotes provided above from the extensive antique tradition. My focus rather concerns the evidence of a wealth of images, names and facts in the cultural memory that reminded one that the most famous Greek *hetairai* were central players in a highly enjoyable conviviality. There was a sufficient amount of this to keep the memory alive up until the time of Pompeii. If the assumption that the *symposia* pictures were understood historically, or pseudo-historically, rather than in terms of genre proves correct, then individual portraits of famous *hetairai* should also have left their mark. To be precise, all that had long been embedded pictorially or textually in the discourse of the erotic could be called on, at any time, to be slipped into contemporary life.

In the Casa degli Amorini dorati (VI 16, 7), there is a small *triclinium* (letter 'E' on plan) next to a large banqueting hall that, however, was not yet finished in 79 AD (**fig. 2**).[39] It is an intimate room with a serving hatch from the adjoining kitchen, which was recently declared a small window for voyeurs.[40] Eight *tondi* with likenesses have been placed within the scheme of the painted wall decorations (**fig. 3**). They catch the eye, for the central pictures which they flank are not especially large.

From the *klinai* one could see, in a painted medaillon A to the right of the opening to the portico, a half-length portrait of a young girl with light-brown curls reaching down to the shoulders. She is wearing a diaphanous garment and is holding a myrtle branch – a popular dispenser of fragrance and gift to Aphrodite.[41] Thus is described a portrait of a girl who, astoundingly enough, is followed by a whole series of companions around all four walls. The viewer is well advised to follow and observe them more closely: Further

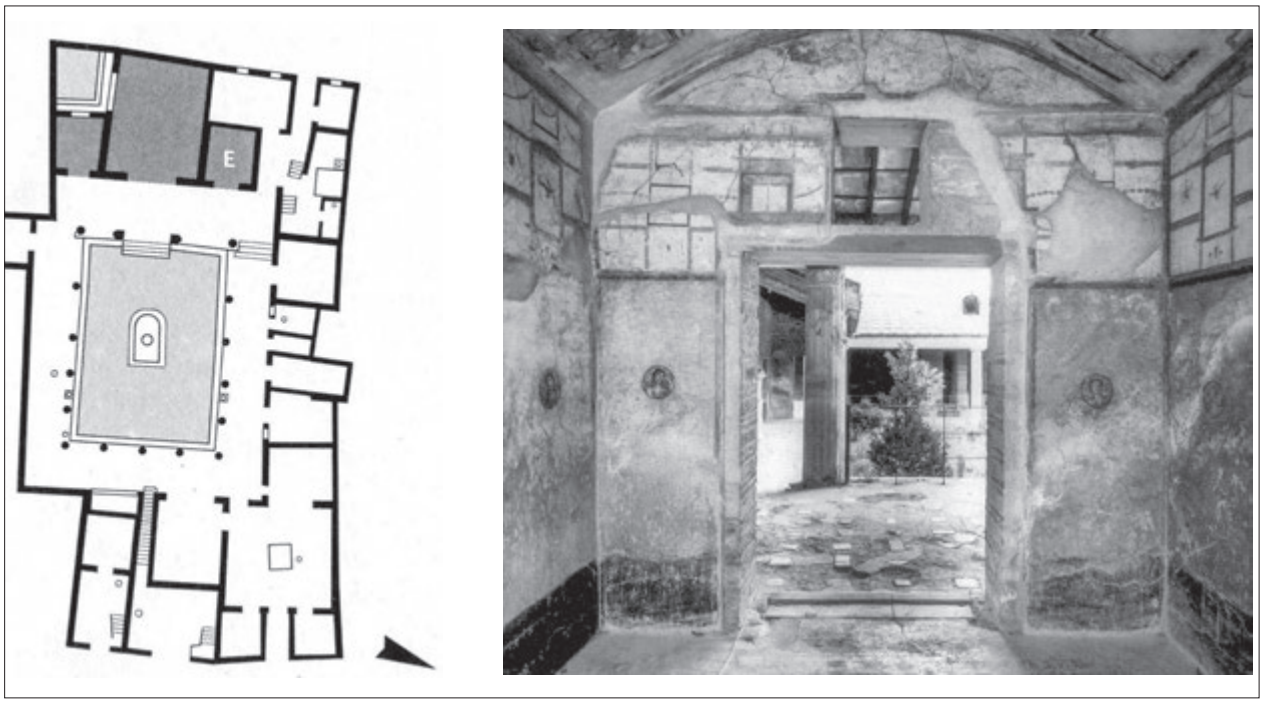

Fig. 2: Casa degli Amorini dorati (VI 16, 7), plan and view of room E.

which would be the lowest common denominator indeed; yet, also a narrative explanation following New Comedy is possible – would not all detailed assessments of womens' behaviour during *symposia* exclusively focus on royal *hetairai*, e.g. in Ath. 13, 583 a-b; cf. Murray 1996.

39 Seiler 1992, 55-59, fig. 362, plan fig. 86; Seiler 1994, 836-43.

40 Pollini 2010, 308-9.

41 Used by *hetairai* according to Ath. 13, 568 a, and Clem. Al. *Paed.* 3, 2, 8.

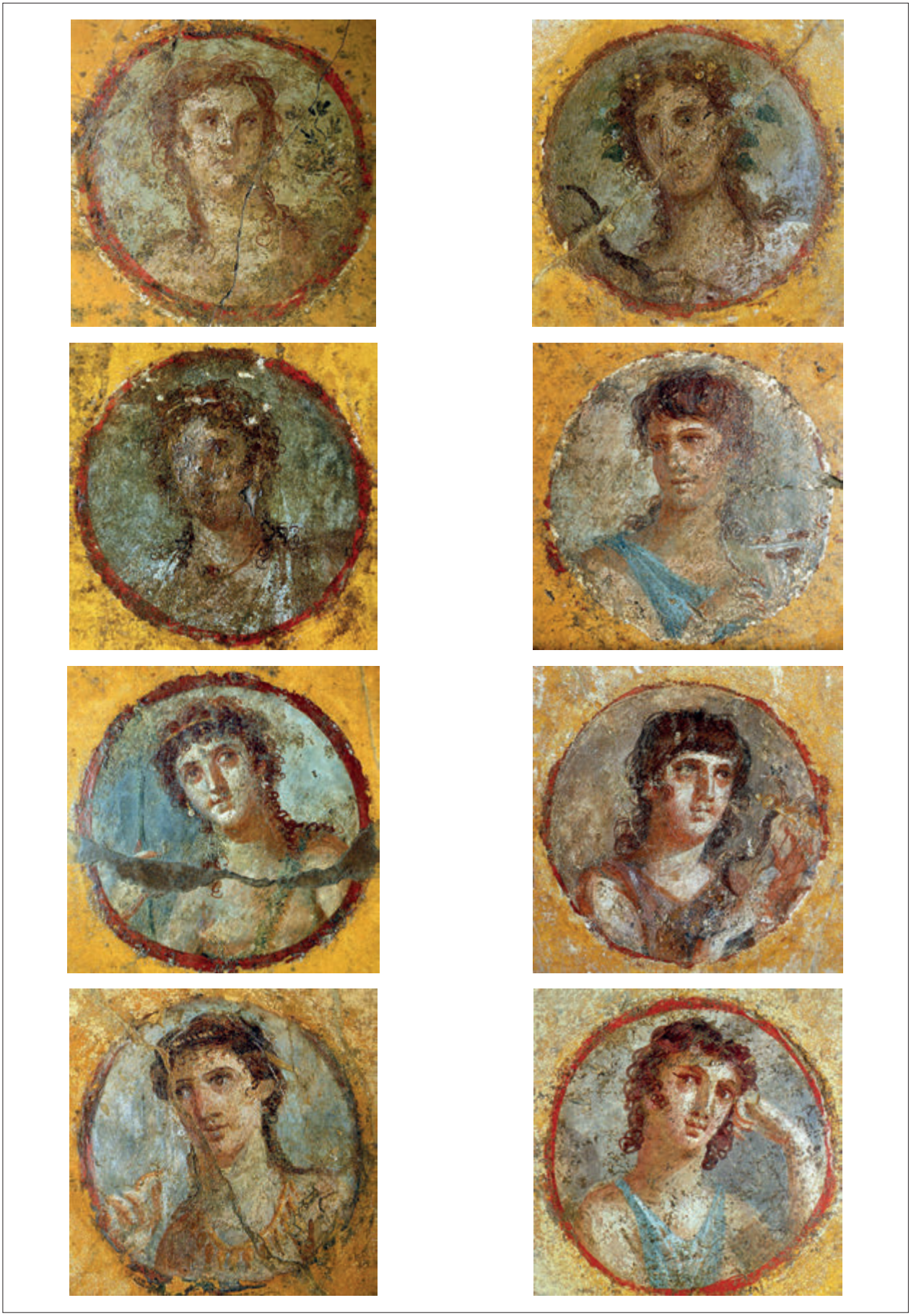

Fig. 3: Casa degli Amorini dorati, portraits A – H from left to right, top down.

to the right is a similar *tondo* B. The girl's brown hair is also shoulder-length. She is crowned with ivy, a white chiton at least covers her left shoulder. She gazes at the beholder whilst playing a lyre. This *tondo* is followed by the middle piece on this wall which depicts the myth of Actaeon. The rendering has a clearly erotic note, which also goes for all the central pictures in the room.[42] A picture of a girl C with opulent gold jewellery follows to the right; we see a red stone on her throat, a diadem in her hair, and gold swinging from her ears. She is grasping the chiton on her shoulder with her left hand. On the rear wall we see another girl D, this one with straighter hair, but which still falls on the shoulders in curls. The hairstyle has doubtlessly been done skilfully and elaborately. This girl is wearing a light-blue piece over what is either a completely transparent undergarment or simply naked skin. Her smiling gaze is directed sideways. She is pressing a silver *cantharos* rather tightly to herself. To the right we again find a brunette E with ringlets, a golden band in her hair and pearls in her ears. If she is wearing anything at all, it is one of those gowns that make a woman appear more naked than if they wore nothing at all.[43] We see a garland on this chiton, or on her bare skin. She looks back out at the viewer with large eyes whilst holding the stem of a plant in her hand. A further medaillon follows on the adjacent wall. This girl F appears to be singing with a lyre. On the right we come across an out-and-out beauty G with rich golden jewellery in her hair and round her throat. No clothing can be made out anymore, it can at most have been a see-through veil. She is holding an object in her hand, a flower presumably. To the left of the entrance we see the final and eighth girl H. She has somewhat shorter curls, her face with its large eyes is distinctly pretty. A very slight light-blue piece of chiton is falling from her shoulders.

The question of which eight girls we are dealing with here seems puzzling at first. One interpretation, that they are contemporary portraits of the family, is contradicted by the sheer number of girls. Designating them maenads, on the other hand, does not fit with the girls' well looked-after and in part luxurious appearance, as well as their individual physiognomies. Faced with this plight, someone named them "damals bewunderte Schönheiten", and surely there is no objection to that, since for what other purpose could they have been applied to the wall?[44] The context, the particular flair of the house, may lead to a more distinct individualisation of these 'Schönheiten'. The Casa degli Amorini dorati displays several specific features, beginning with the gable over the central, planned main hall. Most strikingly, there is the collection of Greek marbles, above all the originals and also fragments of reliefs in the portico.[45] The gallery of feminine beauties could in the same way lead the viewer into an admired Hellenistic world. Since these cannot have been an uncanonical gathering of goddesses, who would be lacking their identifying attributes, they must be famous *hetairai*, and their accessories are indeed prominently visible.[46]

Tracing these historical *hetairai* likenesses is difficult because it is hard in stand-alone cases to tell them apart from contemporary portraits. The proposed interpretation will be more plausible given a gallery of several portraits.[47] The Casa di Caecilius Iucundus (V 1, 26) contains a gallery of similar type, though

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42 Seiler 1992, figg. 382, 388, 389.

43 That is how Sen. *benef.* 7, 9, 5 described it; see note 46.

44 Seiler 1992, 114 quoting Schefold, opts for human actors – possibly in dionysiac costumes in order to stimulate an atmosphere; De Maria 1997, 48 reduces the message to "*bellezza femminile in quanto tale*".

45 Neudecker 2015; noteworthy the sheets of obsidian set into the walls as mirrors (Seiler 1992, 47), cf. Beretta – Di Pasquale 2004, 288.

46 For the clothing Dalby 2002, 111-24; for jewellery Patera 2012, 36; in a letter Melissa (late Hellenistic) describes "clothing streaked with purple and gold, for that kind of dress is worn by *hetairai*": Thesleff 1965, 116.

47 Impossible to decide in the case of young women coupled with intellectual men, e.g. in X 5, 11 (*PPM* 9, 542), in VII 12, 26 (*PPM* 7, 574) and the so-called Sappho (Allroggen-Bedel 1975, fig. 95 b); the same applies to beautiful women accompanied by non-identified persons like in VII 2, 20. 40 (*PPM* 6, 621); the most frequent subject of *tondi* are divine and mythological figures, yet

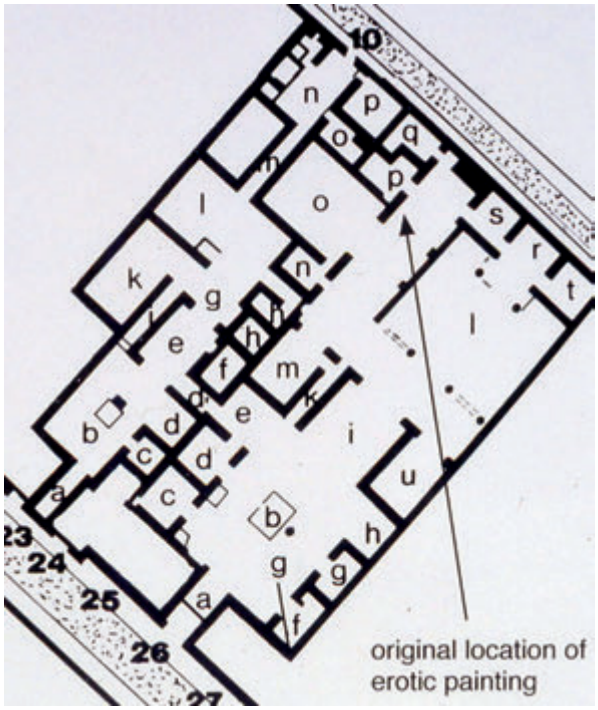

Fig. 4: Casa di Caecilius Iucundus (V, 1, 26), plan.

Fig. 5: Casa di Caecilius Iucundus, peristyle I, couple on bed, MANN inv. 110569.

smaller.[48] When the visitors walked along the portico of the peristyle garden (**fig. 4**), they came across a small wall painting between the entrances to a triclinium and a cubiculum which is reminiscent of well-known sex pictures, but different (**fig. 5**):[49] the couple on the couch are not alone, the woman is giving instructions to a *cubicularia*. She is wearing opulent jewellery – an armband and hairnet which, according to August Mau,[50] were once coated with gold. Even the robe covering her legs is gold in colour. The man behind this lady is gazing with obvious delight at her lower back; meanwhile, she moves one hand backwards, to fend him off. In contrast to genuinely pornographic pictures, an intermezzo is shown here, one which must be classified in the order of events as coming between the copious drinking – as in the banquetting pictures – and the subsequent sexual intercourse.[51]

Should the visitors then step into the *triclinium* to the left, they would see four medaillons with girls' portraits. Only three remain, and in bad condition (**fig. 6**).[52] Two are located on the rear wall, two flank the entrance. The girls' hair also falls in curls to more or less shoulder length in these portraits, and much luxuriant jewellery may be seen on the hair, necks and ears of all three. The light garment of one girl is slip-

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some alleged maenads are accompanied by small figures more similar to an older nurse than a satyr, e.g. in I 11, 15 (*PPM* 2, 648); see also note 56 for series of portraits with *Erotes*; Vos 1981 and Moormann 1984, 651 for further indefinable portraits in tondi; even features like fan, jewellery and clothing are never unambiguous, e.g. in VI 7, 20 (*PPM* 4, 466); *hetairai* and their portraits are popular when in groups, not only in the gallery of Pompey (see below) but also in *Anth. Pal.* 9, 26 (note 65); five women's portraits had been discovered in Vedius Pollio's luggage, tells Cic. *Att.* 6, 1, 25 placing the ladies on the same level as seven *amicae* in the retinue of Marcus Antonius and his courtesan Cytheris near Baiae (Cic. *Att.* 10, 11, 5); as a reading pleasure could be enjoyed the group of seven girls brought up by Nikandre for a future as *hetairai* and called her 'daughters' in Ps.-Dem. 59, 18.

48 De Vos 1991, 607-15, "o" and "p" on plan 574. For the house's wallpaintings see Karivieri 2014.

49 De Vos 1991, 605; Clarke 1998, 153-57 plate 6; for the sex pictures see Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2000.

50 Mau 1876, 228-29.

51 Pollini 2010, 293, describing the activity as 'lovemaking' – not very convincingly; Clarke 1998 emphasizes the distance in quality and performance to the *figurae Veneris* – which always are found in *cubicula* and never in open spaces; Ritter 2017, 235-36 with wrong description.

52 Cf. De Vos 1991, 609. 614-15 and the drawings; Mau 1876, 166-68.

Fig. 6: Casa di Caecilius Iucundus, portraits A – C.

ping off her shoulder, another girl is fumbling with a coquettish gesture on her right shoulder whilst the left shoulder already seems to be exposed. The girl to the left of the entrance is holding a silver *cantharus*. The lost medaillon would also have presented a girl. We may thus also refer to this as a gallery. The attributes of the girls – lyre, *cantharus*, flowers and crown – point to the situation of a symposium. Although appearances and postures are repeated, we see no real repetitions among the girls in both of these series. Instead, the painter is at pains to give individuality to the faces.

In the Casa dell'Ara Massima (VI 16, 15) we encounter a third gallery. It is a small house, which in its few rooms offers, however, a remarkable standard of furnishings.[53] *Triclinium* G sparkles in the colour of the gold on the walls, upon which eight medaillons once flanked eight central pictures (**fig. 7**); only five remain.[54] Four of them depict young women (**fig. 8**). One (A) has her hand heading to the chiton on her shoulder, a motif we have already seen. The second (B) is wearing a bonnet on her head, and one (C) is looking up from her writing tablet, thus indicating intellectual or artistic skills that were appreciated in women at *symposia*.[55] The fourth medaillon (D) is not easy to interpret. The lady with the diadem in her hair exceeds her companions in beauty, and the small Eros looking at her over her shoulder is doubtless a nod towards Aphrodite. On the other hand, many *hetaerae* were seen as similarly comparable with Aphrodite – not only Phryne.[56] The game of the diva was explored in anecdotes about painters and sculptors from Praxiteles to Arellius, who depicted their models and lovers as goddesses.[57] Whether the goddess herself or one of her personifications was supposed to have been seen in this fourth medaillon was left open, perhaps deliberately.

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53 Stemmer 1992; Stemmer 1994, 871-78 for room G.

54 Stemmer 1992, figg. 154-185; Stemmer 1994, 878.

55 According to Ath. 13, 583 f - 584 a some *hetairai* distinguished themselves by higher education and maintained to teach men more than philosophers, i.e. ἐρωτικὰ instead of ἐριστικὰ σοφίσματα; in the literary tradition the boundary between *hetairai* and female philosophers was vague, cf. Diog. Laert. 10, 5-6 who reports on Themista, Epikuros' pilosophical penfriend, in the same breath with his *hetaira* Leontion; Cic. *fin.* 2, 21, 68 makes disparaging remarks about her; see also Theano's letter to Rhodope (Thesleff 1965, 200 n. 6; Reuthner 2009).

56 See note 22 for Lais; according to Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4, 53, 6 Phryne was painted by all painters of her time as Aphrodite; the ambiguity of a female head with Amor may have been intended, e.g. in the Casa di Apollo VI 7, 23 (Sampaolo 1993, 483-90) where four rather different female portraits, each one with Amor on her shoulder, keep company to a representation of Aphrodite at her dressing table; see Plut. *Ant.* 26 and 29 for Cleopatra's disguise as Fishing Aphrodite in company of Marcus Antonius; cf. Neumer-Pfau 1986.

57 Plin. *nat.* 35, 119.

Fig. 7: Casa dell'Ara Massima (VI 16, 15), triclinium G.

In any case, the portrait establishes a link to the superhuman realm, to which the fifth surviving medaillon,[58] with its image of Pan or a satyr, also belongs.

The *hetairai* portraits on at least three of the medaillons sit in an amorous thematic sphere of Greek origin, flanking as they do erotically understood mythic pictures of Endymion and Ariadne.[59] Among them, the singular portrayal of Herakles stands out all the more, should this actually be an image of him – according to the only plausible interpretation to date – at the Ara Maxima in Rome (**fig. 7**).[60] In myth, this is where the *hetairai* revelry par excellence took place; the *aedituus* of the Temple of Hercules challenged the demigod to a game of dice, offering an opulent meal with a fantastic woman as a stake. As would be expected, Herakles won the meal and Acca Larentia, the mythical prostitute.[61]

All in all, we have three galleries of beautiful girls radiating eroticism but with no addenda to give us any certainty as to their identity. The immediate and the mental contexts do furnish some hints, however. The pictures of girls decorate feasting rooms; they have the accessories of symposia with them. In view of

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58 Stemmer 1992, fig. 185.

59 Fredrick 1995, 283-84 with illustrations.

60 See Stemmer 1992, 53-55 with discussion and fig. 181.

61 For Acca Larentia as *hetaira* see Plut. *Rom.* 5 and *Quaest. Rom.* 35 (*Mor.* 272 F - 273 B); thus, the wall-painting would depict Herakles speaking with his *aedituus* as starting point for a night of love; see Sabbatucci 1958, 56-69; Arias 1981, 10-11; Hraste – Vukovic 2015, 325-26.

Fig. 8: Casa dell'Ara Massima, portraits A – D. Top down, from left to right.

the level of awareness of Greek *hetairai* as evidenced in literature and pictures, I suggest we are looking at portrait galleries of Greek *hetairai* in these series of pictures, comparable to the galleries of Hellenistic rulers and intellectuals.

These most beautiful girls of Pompeii are first of all ideal images of beauty from what was already an almost mythical world. They represented a life of luxury, with a strong element of sex. To this end, though, they were also supposed to have sprung from a historical reality. In actual fact, there is sufficient talk in the texts of individual portraits of famous *hetairai* that they should have been available for pictorial depiction as historical personalities at any time. Admittedly, there is no indication that the portraits of women discussed here had already been supplied with historical proper names. But if somebody had wished so, they need not have remained anonymous. For the existence of such portrait galleries – if not the individual portraits themselves – may have been reasonably well known.

Besides *hetairai*, the most famous of this type of portrait gallery also encompassed female poets and women with unusual experiences of childbirth. It was to be found in the Theatre of Pompey in the Campus Martius,[62] and was still visible to Tatian in his time in Rome from 150-172 CE. The apologist deployed his

62 Coarelli 1972; Gros 1999; Bravi 2012, 69-73; Bravi 2014, 75-81; for the gallery see Kuttner 1999 who describes the cultural setting – a precursor and example for the furnishing of the Casa degli Amorini dorati; in detail Sande 2014 and in this volume.

observations of the gallery when criticizing the sharp contrast between the chaste behaviour of Christian women and the immorality of all the women portrayed – *hetairai* and poets to him being one and the same.[63] What he saw in Campus Martius was an Augustan realignment of an older gallery, as the surviving inscription fragments from the bases attest. Under Augustus there was clearly sufficient interest to display this gallery in an appropriate manner. Its creator, however, was Pompey, who, in doing so, assumed the habitus of a Hellenistic ruler, not only with a portrait gallery, but also in flesh and blood. His public appearances with his courtesan, Flora, would have caused the greatest of stirs when his tempestuous affection for her was all too visible. Flora's portrait in the Temple of Castor and Pollux at the Circus Flaminius also fits in harmoniously in the tradition of *hetairai* portraits in Greek temples.[64]

The inscription on one of the surviving bases of the gallery mentions Mystis. Lined up alongside her were the most famous *hetairai*: Phryne, Glycera, Argeia, Neaira, Lais, Pannychis, and also Sappho. The names of the Greek *hetairai* of this rank were just as familiar to a moderately educated class in Pompeii as mythological names, and the same applies to the accompanying anecdotes.[65] The gallery's portrait statues were chiselled by the hands of renowned sculptors and sought out by Atticus,[66] more of a Greek than a Roman. It would not have been too difficult to get hold of authentic or ostensible portraits of these women. It is worth recalling that Clodius Pulcher obtained a statue from Greece for the sacellum of Libertas at around the same time; according to Cicero[67] it must actually have been a tomb statue of a *hetaira*. The tomb of Pythionike at Eleusis was still well known at the time of Plutarch[68] and presumably also furnished with a statue devoid of identifying features, as in all Hellenistic female portraits.

As with the portraits in the gallery of Pompey, so with those on Pompeii's walls: nobody expected authentically physiognomic rendering. Pseudo-historical likenesses fulfilled their purpose. The galleries of beauty and also the copies of pictures of *symposia* were intended to evoke the bygone glamour of Hellenistic courts, and lend the golden shine of the highest pleasure to Roman *convivia*.[69] It is not by chance that the walls are painted in rare gold, which is the colour of *hetairai* – some of them called *Chryse, Goldy, Gold-fish* – and of their diaphanous garments and hand-mirrors.[70] Some of them dedicated their full-length portrait or Aphrodite's image in gold earned by their own body's charms.[71] Unintentionally, then, the political buzzword *aurea aetas* made it, as it were, into the dining room.

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63 Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 33-34; Plin. *nat.* 7, 34; Evans 2009 feels uncomfortable with *hetairai* and admits only presentable poetesses.

64 Plut. *Pomp.* 2.

65 Coarelli 1972, 100-1 for the statue-base of Mystis who probably is identical with Demetrios' and Seleukos' courtesan Mysta (Ath. 13, 578 a. 593 e); Bravi 2014, 77 proposes Mystis, Dionysos' nurse; not to forget Myrtis, obscure poetess amidst a group of Muses in Antipatros of Thessalonike, see *Anth. Pal.* 9, 26 (Gow – Page 1968, 1, 25 n. 19 and 2, 36-37); without findplace but from Rome a lost inscription of Phryne's statue by Herodotos (Moretti 1990, n. 1496); for the *hetairai* called Lais see Ath. 13, 570 b-c. e, 582 c, 586 e, 587 d, 588 c-e, 592 d-e with their lovers' names and notes 6. 21. 22. 56. 68; for Neaira see Ps. Dem. 59, 18-23 and Ath. 13, 586 e, 590 a, 593 f; for Glykera see Ath. 13, 584 a, 585 c-d and 594 d, 586 c-d, 595 d - 596 a. 605 d, and notes 24. 28; for Neaira with Phryne see Ath. 13, 567 e. 583 c. 584 c. 585 e. 590 d - 592 e, and notes 17-19 for Phryne's portrait statues.

66 Cic. *Att.* 4, 9, 1; Coarelli 1972, 105.

67 Cic. *dom.* 109.

68 Plut. *Phoc.* 22, Ath. 13, 595 a-c and 594 e; for Lais' tomb near the Peneios see Ath. 13, 589 a-b and Paus. 2, 19, and a spurious tomb near Corinthos, see Paus. 2, 2, 4 and Ath. 13, 589 c; for tomb-tourism and further details McClure 2003, 145-54; for the statues see Dillon 2010, 122.

69 Portrait galleries as Greek genre merge well in a multifarious ensemble of aristocratic connotations in Roman living spaces, see Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 69-77.

70 For the significance of gold see Berg p. 206-12 in this volume; Kurke 1997, 116-18; above note 46 and Patera 2012, 35-36; Ath. 13, 591 c for '*Gold-fish*' Phryne.

71 See Nossis about Polyarchis' dedication in *Anth. Pal.* 9, 332 (Gow – Page 1965, 1, 152 n. IV; 2, 437).

Pitture di banchetto con presenze femminili nelle case di Pompei: alcune considerazioni

Luciana Jacobelli

Gli affreschi con scene di banchetti realistici e con presenze femminili ritrovate nelle case di Pompei non sono numerosi.[1] La loro lettura iconografica è stata compiuta in modo esauriente[2] e dunque vorrei soffermarmi su alcuni aspetti la cui analisi può risultare utile alle tematiche affrontate in questo convegno.[3] In particolare un primo elemento riguarda la collocazione dei quadri all'interno della casa e l'altro il ruolo e lo *status* sociale da attribuire alle donne in essi raffigurate.

Per quanto riguarda il primo punto vediamo che, quando ricostruibile, tutti i quadri realistici di banchetti provengono da due ambienti: *triclinia* e *cubicula*. Questo è un primo dato di grande interesse in quanto è proprio in questi due ambienti che si tenevano le cene. Infatti, a partire dal II secolo a.C. quando la casa italica si arricchisce di ambienti di rappresentanza ad imitazione delle dimore ellenistiche, si modifica anche la funzione di alcuni vani come i *cubicula* che da semplici stanze da letto divengono all'occorrenza spazio per meditare, leggere, studiare, dipingere, ricevere e anche cenare. Da questo periodo si afferma anche un altro fenomeno, quello dell'abbinamento *triclinium* - *cubiculum*. Accanto o assieme ai molteplici *cubicula* disposti attorno all'atrio, appaiono con sempre maggiore frequenza particolari tipi di cubicoli in collegamento diretto o nei pressi dei triclini.[4] Questo accostamento è espressione della trasformazione della cultura abitativa romana che portò all'affermazione della casa come luogo dell'ostentazione del lusso e fattore rilevatore dello *status* sociale del proprietario.[5] Il *cubiculum* collocato al lato del triclinio è nient'altro che la "materializzazione del piacere in tutte le sue accezioni che adesso trova un luogo appropriato isolato, chiuso e separato anche se adiacente alla stanza del banchetto".[6] Il *cubiculum* può servire ai convitati per dormire, spezzando la lunga durata del banchetto nel momento del cambio delle mense, per riprendersi dopo un passaggio alle terme e il proseguimento della cena, per intraprendere discorsi privati, magari politici, ma anche, naturalmente per soddisfare una passione amorosa stimolata ancor di più dall'atmosfera conviviale e dal consumo del vino. Nonostante il clima licenzioso che permeava il banchetto, esistevano infatti norme comportamentali che tendevano a frenare atteggiamenti troppo 'spinti'. La discrezione doveva essere una regola

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1 Si contano circa una dozzina di quadri con scene di banchetto tutti appartenenti al tardo III stile e al IV stile cfr. Dunbabin 2003, 52-63 e 70. Ad una tradizione differente rimandano invece le immagini di banchetti raffigurate sui monumenti funerari con significato commemorativo ed evergetico, tema per il quale si rimanda a Ghedini 1990, 34-62 e Compostella 2, 1992, 659-89 con ulteriore bibliografia. In questo contributo si prenderanno in considerazione solo i quadretti 'realistici', e non quelli 'storici' o di ambiente nilotico.

2 Varone 1993, 617-40; Dunbabin 2003.

3 Desidero esprimere il mio vivo ringraziamento al prof. Mario Liotti, al prof. Enrico Renna, e al dott. Thomas Fröhlich che mi hanno fornito consigli, suggerimenti e preziosi ed amichevoli aiuti.

4 Il processo è spiegato molto bene da Zaccaria Ruggiu 2001, 59-101. Si veda anche Anguissola 2010, in particolare 173-76.

5 Numerosi sono gli articoli legati a questa tematica, ma ancora fondamentale resta il contributo di Wallace-Hadrill 1994.

6 Zaccaria Ruggiu 2001, 94.

ben chiara come dimostra sia la letteratura,[7] che l'evidenza archeologica. In particolare proprio da Pompei nel triclinio della casa del Moralista (III 4, 2-3) sono enunciati tre distici che esortano al pudore, al linguaggio onesto, all'evitare liti e contrasti durante le cene.[8]

Fig. 1: 'Banchettante ed etera', da Ercolano. Museo Nazionale di Napoli, inv. 9024 (foto da Sampaolo 1992).

Le pitture di banchetto che adornano i triclini e le stanze da letto, sottolineano il rapporto tra struttura, apparato decorativo e funzioni d'uso in modo significativo. Infatti all'interno di questa tipologia sembrano potersi distinguere due tipi di scene. Quelle che raffigurano più partecipanti al convivio si svolgono in una sala triclinare o in un triclinio all'aperto, che può essere anche un giardino all'interno della *domus*. Al contrario i quadri con le scene a due personaggi sembrerebbero svolgersi nei *cubicula*. Questa stessa differenziazione è riscontrabile anche nella collocazione dei quadri nei due diversi ambienti: le scene di banchetti a più personaggi si trovano raffigurati nei *triclinia*, mentre le scene a due convitati si trovano collocate prevalentemente nelle stanze da letto, spesso come allusione ai preliminari dell'atto amoroso.[9]

Tra le scene di banchetto a due spicca la bella pittura proveniente da Ercolano (**fig. 1**) oggi al Museo Nazionale di Napoli, che viene interpretata come 'banchettante ed etera'.[10] Vi è raffigurata una fanciulla che porta sul busto un velo trasparente, mentre un manto giallo foderato di grigio le avvolge le gambe. Indossa orecchini a globetti e una retina d'oro sui capelli secondo una moda di età neroniana. L'ostentazione di questi monili suggerirebbe l'appartenenza ad uno *status* elevato piuttosto di quello di etera. D'altronde la coppia è colta nell'intimità della propria stanza nell'atto di bere e conversare. Il compagno beve da un *rhyton*, sdraiato su una *kline* avanti alla quale è un tavolo su cui poggia l'*argentum potorium*.[11] Una giovane servetta si avvicina alla donna con una cassettina nelle mani, contenente forse dei gioielli. La presenza di schiavi *cubiculariae* è comune in questi quadri, anche in scene in cui l'intimità della coppia è più evidente.[12]

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7 Svetonio racconta che Antonio rinfacciò ad Augusto il fatto che durante una cena aveva portato fuori dal triclinio in un cubicolo (*e triclinio in cubiculum*) la moglie di un consolare, sotto gli occhi del marito, e di averla riportata in sala con i capelli in disordine e le orecchie in fiamme (Suet. *Aug*. 69).

8 *CIL* IV, 7698.

9 Il tema dei conviti amorosi è tratto da composizioni di ascendenza ellenistica spesso nobilitati da una trasposizione in ambito divino o mitologico Pucci 1977, 9-31. Ma nelle stanze da letto si trovano anche scene di sesso esplicito Jacobelli 1995, 83-92.

10 MANN inv. 9024; *Collezioni* 1986, 65, n. 340; Sampaolo 1992, 105-6; Beretta – Di Pasquale 2004, 275; Dunbabin 2003, 56.

11 Sia il tipo di tavolino che i servizi potori in argento sono presenti nelle collezioni pompeiane. Per i tavolini si veda De Carolis 2007, in particolare 100-4; per i servizi da mensa in argento: Tamm 2001, 168-69; Guzzo 2006.

12 Per esempio gli affreschi dei *cubicula* B e D nella Villa della Farnesina cfr. Sanzi Di Mino 1998, 57-93, in particolare 68, 74-77; affresco dalla Casa di Caecilius Iucundus a Pompei (MANN inv. 110569). In generale si veda Clarke 1998. Numerose le fonti che attestano la presenza costante dei servi *cubicularii* presso le stanze da letto, si veda per esempio Apul. *met*. 9, 2 e 9, 30; 10, 28; Tac. *ann*. 13, 44; Val. Max. 1, 7, 7 e 9, 13 ext. 4; Petron. 53, 10.

Fig. 2: Scena di banchetto tra due convitati, da Pompei, Casa del Laocoonte VI, 14, 28-33. Museo Nazionale di Napoli, inv. 111209 (foto da *PPM* 5).

Una scena piuttosto simile, ora al Museo Nazionale di Napoli (inv. 9254) proveniva dalla parete ovest del cubicolo 12 della Casa del Meleagro (VI 9, 2-13) a Pompei.[13] Una coppia è seduta su una *kline*, l'uomo con il torso nudo poggia il braccio sulla spalla della compagna che ha il braccio destro alzato con l'indice sollevato. Avanti al letto triclinare è il solito tavolino a tre gambe con il servizio di vasi per le libagioni.

Dalla parete nord del cubicolo d della Casa del Laocoonte (VI 14, 28-33) proviene un'altra scena di banchetto a due, attualmente al Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli (**fig. 2**).[14] Quando venne realizzato l'affresco il cubicolo era aperto sull'atrio; successivamente la comunicazione venne chiusa e fu aperta una porta direttamente sulla strada.[15] Il quadro raffigura una coppia distesa su *kline* avanti alla quale è posto un tavolino dal piano rettangolare e tre gambe arcuate all'esterno, piuttosto differente dai tavolini solitamente raffigurati in questo tipo di affreschi. Sul piano sono visibili resti di cibo non identificabili. La donna, dalle spalle nude, è sdraiata a destra e ha in mano una coppa, l'uomo steso di fronte indossa una tunica che gli lascia scoperta una spalla; entrambi sono coronati. L'intimità della coppia è disturbata dall'arrivo di una donna ammantata accompagnata da uno schiavetto che porta una tavoletta cerata. Sullo sfondo si intravedono delle colonnine come se l'ambiente si affacciasse su un peristilio.

Un'altra scena di cena 'a due' proviene dal triclinio H (parete nord) della casa VI 16, 36.37, purtroppo molto mal conservata.[16] Un uomo, con capo coronato è seduto sul letto triclinare; al centro è una donna stesa di tre quarti con il braccio sinistro sollevato come nell'atto di parlare o declamare.[17] Da sinistra avanza un'ancella con manto viola. Interessante è la collocazione di questo ambiente posto tra due cubicoli (I e J).[18]

Una scena che potremmo definire 'a due commensali' si trovava sulla parete est del cubicolo z della Casa di Epidio Sabino (IX 1, 22). Oggi è completamente sparita ed è conosciuta solo grazie ai disegni di Nicola La Volpe e Geremia Discanno.[19] È raffigurata una coppia sdraiata su *kline*; in primo piano è il tavolo con recipienti e vivande che uno schiavetto è in procinto di servire. L'intimità della cena sembra interrotta da una donna ammantata, visibilmente ubriaca, con in mano un *kantharos* e sostenuta da un'ancella. Il motivo dell'ubriaca – o dell'ubriaco – ricorre piuttosto spesso nelle scene di banchetto.[20] Una donna simile a quella

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13 *PPM* 4, 1993, 689, fig. 61.

14 MANN inv. 111209, *PPM* 5, 1994, 341 con bibliografia.

15 Questo ed altri mutamenti ne determinarono forse una nuova destinazione d'uso cfr. Della Corte 1965³, 90-94.

16 *PPM* 5, 1994, 988, fig. 12.

17 Nello stesso ambiente, sulla parete est è una scena di agone poetico *PPM* 5, 1994, 989-91, figg. 14-16

18 *PPM* 5, 1994, 981.

19 Per l'analisi dei disegni, del quadro e la bibliografia relativa si veda Varone 1993, in particolare 624-25.

20 Si veda *infra*.

descritta si ritrova nella famosa scena di banchetto sulla parete ovest del triclinio della Casa dei Casti amanti (IX 12, 6), dove però alla cena partecipano due coppie.[21]

Il triclinio della Casa dei Casti amanti (IX 12, 6-7), presenta ben tre raffigurazioni di banchetto. Non sono molti gli ambienti con interi cicli pittorici di contenuto simposiaco se si eccettuano il triclinio r della Casa del Triclinio (V 2, 4) e quello della Casa I 3, 18. Le pitture della Casa dei Casti amanti, databili all'ultimissima fase del III stile, sono molto simili ad altri quadretti con scene di banchetto tanto da potersi ipotizzare un prototipo comune.[22] Anche il quadretto sulla parete nord con simposio all'aperto ha una perfetta replica nel quadro al Museo archeologico nazionale inv. 9015.[23] Caratteristiche stilistiche diverse mostra invece il quadro sulla parete est. La scena, ambientata forse sotto un portico, rappresenta un momento del banchetto piuttosto avanzato: una donna aiuta a bere il compagno da un *rhyton*, mentre l'uomo dell'altra coppia è già bello che addormentato.[24] In primo piano è il solito tavolino a tre piedi a zampa ungulata sul quale poggiano le suppellettili per bere.

Ma vorrei soffermare la mia attenzione su un ultimo ciclo di pitture dal quale si possono ricavare ipotesi piuttosto interessanti rispetto al tema trattato nel presente convegno. Si tratta delle immagini di banchetto datate al IV stile, oggi al Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli (inv. 120029-120031) provenienti dal triclinio r della Casa V 2, 4.[25] L'abitazione che ospitava le pitture è di modeste proporzioni (**fig. 3**). Delle profonde fauci (a) introducono in un atrio (b) con impluvio, al centro del quale era un pilastrino sorreggente una statuetta di Venere al bagno. Intorno all'atrio si dispongono con scarsa simmetria, vari ambienti identificati come stanze da letto (d, l, k), un vano scala per il piano superiore (d'), un triclino (n) una dispensa (m), un piccolo ambiente servile (i) e il tablino (g) aperto su un peristilio a tre bracci (p) con viridario al centro (o). Sul fondo della casa è il triclinio (r) adiacente al viridario e di fronte all'elegante cubicolo (u).[26]

Fig. 3: Pianta della Casa del Triclinio V 2, 4 (foto da *PPM* 3).

Rispetto alle scene di simposio sopradescritte, lo stile dei quadretti del triclinio r appare meno raffinato e più rispondente ai canoni della pittura romana 'realistica'. Nel quadro sulla parete ovest il banchetto è in pieno svolgimento (**fig. 4**).[27] La scena è poco leggibile: a destra si vede una statua in bronzo di fanciullo sopra una bassa base triangolare: si tratta di un lampadoforo, del tipo ritrovato nella Casa dell'Efebo e in quella di

21 Varone 1993, 617-40, in particolare 624-25.

22 Sul problema della bottega Varone 1993, 623 con bibliografia a nota 34. Ad un prototipo comune pensa la Dunbabin 2003, 54.

23 Varone 1993, 627-28, pl. CLVIII; Dunbabin 2003, 54.

24 Varone 1993, 628-29, tav. CLX, 1.

25 Le pitture dovrebbero datarsi a prima del terremoto del 62. Si veda Fröhlich 1991, 222-29, tav. 20, 2; 21; *PPM* 3, 1991, 813-18, figg. 39, 41, 47; Dunbabin 2003, 57, figg. 28, 29.

26 *PPM* 3, 1991, 797, 823. Sulle varie ipotesi circa la destinazione della casa si veda anche *infra*. La casa fu ritenuta dal Della Corte (Della Corte 1965, 128-29) una *caupona* a causa di molti graffiti del fullone L. Quintilius Crescens. Sogliano riteneva piuttosto che esistesse un rapporto di amicizia tra il proprietario o abitante della casa e i fulloni della vicina officina VI 14, 22 (Sogliano 1884, 47-50). Sulla casa e sulle pitture si veda anche Rizzo 1929, 89, tav. CXCVII b; Borda 1958, 252; Felletti Maj 1977, 329, fig. 159; Fröhlich 1991, 222-29, tav. 20, 2; 21, 1-2; Clarke 2003a, 239-45; Ritter 2005, 356-59; Ritter 2011, 155-220.

27 MANN inv. 120030; *PPM* 3, 1991, 818, fig. 47.

Fig. 4: Scena di banchetto, da Pompei, Casa del Triclinio, parete ovest del triclinio (r). Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, inv. 120030.

Giulio Polibio.[28] Affianco è un servo che si avvicina al tavolino, in primo piano (ma di dimensioni ridotte) vi sono, probabilmente, una danzatrice vista di spalle e due flautiste. Al centro del triclinio è un personaggio vestito di rosso, accanto a lui è un commensale ormai ubriaco, la testa reclinata, un braccio che pende verso il tavolo in primo piano. La scena si svolge all'interno di un vasto ambiente che ospita un triclinio a forma di P greco su cui sembrano trattenersi sei o sette commensali.[29]

Nel quadro ad est è raffigurato il momento conclusivo del banchetto quando alcuni convitati sono pronti ad andar via (**fig. 5**).[30] Sulla sinistra è un uomo seduto che discorre con un altro convitato disteso. L'uomo seduto sembra in procinto di andar via, infatti uno schiavo gli infila il sandalo, mentre un altro gli offre il 'bicchiere della staffa'. In alto è il graffito "*scio*". Al centro è un altro uomo rivolto verso destra che osserva un personaggio ammantato e con il capo coperto, accudito da uno schiavo negro. Sulla sua testa è graffito il saluto "*valetis*". Un altro commensale è seduto a destra con in mano una coppa sul cui capo è graffito "*bibo*" a palesare la ferma intenzione di non abbandonare ancora il simposio. In primo piano sulla destra è un commensale ubriaco, che vomita sorretto da uno schiavo. Il quadretto è l'unico ove apparentemente non compaiono donne, almeno che non consideriamo come femminile il personaggio ammantato, identificato però generalmente come un uomo.[31]

Ma la scena più interessante ai fini di questo intervento, è quella che si trova sulla parete nord, proprio di fronte l'ingresso (**fig. 6**).[32] Sono raffigurati cinque personaggi distesi su letti triclinari ricoperti da drappi verdi. Il banchetto sembra svolgersi all'aperto perché sui personaggi è steso un *velum* che ricade ai lati di un pilastro di sostegno. A sinistra è una coppia reclinata: la donna sembra coperta solo nella parte inferiore con un drappo, ma il quadro è troppo lacunoso per determinare se e che tipo di indumento indossasse nella parte superiore. Ella ha il braccio sinistro sollevato nell'atto di bere da un *rhyton* dal quale fuoriesce uno zampillo di vino. Una fanciulla con una cassetta procede verso di lei. L'uomo accanto le tiene una mano sulla spalla, mentre nell'altra tiene un *kantharos*; ha una ghirlanda sul torso nudo ed è l'unico rivolto verso gli spettatori. Segue un personaggio maschile isolato la cui centralità è scandita dalla collocazione in asse con la mensa ed il puntello della tenda. Sembra avere il braccio piegato sulla testa in un gesto replicato in scene di rilas-

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28 *PPM* 3, 1991, 818; Moormann 1988, 166.

29 Sulla forma dei triclini Dunbabin 2003, 58.

30 MANN inv. 120029; *PPM* 3, 1991, 815, fig. 41.

31 Fröhlich 1991, 224; Dunbabin 2003, 58.

32 MANN inv. 120031; *PPM* 3, 1991, 813, fig. 38. La posizione di fronte l'ingresso ne fa il quadro più importante del ciclo perché focalizzava maggiormente l'attenzione dello spettatore.

samento spesso legate al sesso.[33] A destra è raffigurata una seconda coppia: l'uomo di spalle rivolto verso destra, è ricoperto nella parte inferiore da una tunica rossa di cui un lembo gli ricade sul braccio sinistro; nella mano corrispondente tiene un *kantharos*, l'altro braccio è sollevato in alto. Di fronte è appena visibile la testa coronata della compagna che lo abbraccia, tenendogli una mano alla vita. In primo piano è un tavolino di legno a tre piedi con *instrumentum potorium* verso cui avanza un inserviente con due *oinochoai*. Al di sopra dei commensali, a mò di fumetto, compare un testo scritto realizzato contestualmente alle immagini e da considerare, quindi, componente essenziale del programma figurativo della scena.[34] Sull'attribuzione e la lettura stessa del testo ci sono pareri contrastanti,[35] ma recentemente è stata formulata un'ipotesi, a mio avviso molto convincente, basata sulla stretta simmetria che lega pittura e scrittura.[36] Secondo questa ipotesi l'articolazione più verosimile è quella che presuppone una scansione tripartita delle frasi, al pari della disposizione tripartita dei personaggi (coppia reclinata a sinistra; giovane nel mezzo; coppia a destra). Su questa base, sarebbe la donna a sinistra che rivolta ai commensali augura "*Facitis vobis suaviter*" (spassatevela), l'uomo della coppia di destra, la cui postura è perfettamente speculare a quella della donna della prima coppia le risponde "*Est ita; valeas*" (È così, salute a te) mentre l'uomo al centro esprime la sua scelta di cantare "*ego canto*". È stato notato da tempo che l'esortazione a 'spassarsela' (*facitis vobis suaviter*) ha i suoi riscontri più stretti nella cena di Trimalcione,[37] quando ad un certo punto il padrone di casa raccomanda ai suoi ospiti di divertirsi e l'invito apre la strada ad una autocelebrazione della propria *virtus*.[38] Un carattere 'letterario' ha anche l'espressione

Fig. 5: Scena di banchetto, da Pompei, Casa del Triclinio, parete Est del triclinio (r) (da *PPM* 3, fig. 41). MANN, inv. 120029.

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33 Si veda per esempio la scena erotica nel cubicolo 43 della Casa del Centenario, o il quadretto dalla Casa del Bell'impluvio (I 9, 1), e il cammeo con scena erotica MANN inv. 25847/15. Anche se il gesto è prevalentemente maschile si veda l'affresco della Casa del Ristorante (IX 5, 14) in cui è la donna a poggiare il gomito sulla testa, o anche la scena da Ercolano (MANN inv. 9387) in contesto non erotico, con conversazione tra donne. Per questo gesto di *erotic repose* si veda anche Clarke 1998, 68-70; 104-5; 165; 181; 218; 257. Ritter 2005, 313, asserisce che il gesto ricorda le figure dionisiache e attribuisce all'uomo uno stato di mistica ebrezza che lo porta a cantare.

34 *CIL* IV 3442 a-b. Sulla scrittura nell'immagine cfr. Corbier 1995, 113-57, ed in particolare 140, fig. 23. Su testo preso in esame si veda tra gli altri Richardson 2000, 177 il quale ipotizza che il pittore qui operante sarebbe stato specializzato in insegne e manifesti elettorali. Un'analisi accurata del quadro, con bibliografia precedente, è in Stramaglia 2007, 596-600.

35 Le battute generalmente vengono ripartite fra due soli personaggi: il giovane al centro che pronuncerebbe tutta la frase e quello alla sua destra che risponderebbe *est ita valeas* (così per esempio Fröhlich 1991, 226 e *PPM* 3, 813, fig. 38). Clarke 2003a, 243, attribuisce la prima battuta all'uomo stempiato a destra, la seconda o allo stesso o ad un altro convitato. Addirittura Wallace-Hadrill 2004, 114, divide il testo in cinque articolazioni. Più interessante e convincente è l'ipotesi di Ritter 2005, 313-15, fig. 5, che ritiene che a formulare la prima frase sia l'uomo a sinistra e che la frase non sia destinata alle persone raffigurate sul dipinto, ma allo spettatore verso cui il personaggio è rivolto.

36 L'ipotesi accennata da Dunbabin 2003, 58 è accuratamente analizzata in Stramaglia 2007, 597.

37 Già Maiuri 1945, 229-30 e tav. VII.

38 Hor. *sat*. 9, 25; Petron. *sat.* 75, 8: *vos rogo, amici, ut vobis suaviter sit*.

Fig. 6: Scena di banchetto, da Pompei, Casa del Triclinio parete nord del triclinio (r). MANN, inv. 120031.

Fig. 7: Disegno riproducente un frammento del quadro con Diotima e Socrate (DAIR Neg. 53.597), da Pompei, Casa del Triclinio parete nord del cubicolo (u).

ego canto, tratta dalla satira IX di Orazio.[39] Inoltre, come ricorda opportunamente Roller, sempre durante il banchetto di Trimalcione, un ospite è invitato a cantare per allietare i convitati.[40] Dunque la rappresentazione del banchetto con citazioni 'letterarie' famose sembrerebbe mostrarsi come l'esplicitazione del prestigio sociale del padrone di casa.

Alcuni degli studiosi che si sono occupati dell'affresco si sono anche cimentati nel riconoscimento iconografico del committente-padrone di casa, riconoscendolo chi nell'uomo reclinato a destra del dipinto della parete nord,[41] chi nell'anziano ammantato dell'affresco sulla parete est.[42] Certo è curioso che nessuno abbia pensato alla donna: se infatti fosse lei a pronunciare la frase, dimostrerebbe di essere la proprietaria, o almeno la moglie o la concubina del padrone di casa. Quasi a sottolineare l'autorità di questa figura femminile è il fatto che sia lei a bere dal *rhython*, laddove in tutte le raffigurazioni questo elemento è sempre usato da uomini.[43] Il fatto che stia bevendo non esclude che sia lei a parlare.[44] Altre raffigurazioni su medaglioni della Valle del Rodano propongono personaggi che 'parlano' mentre fanno sprizzare vino dal corno potorio.[45] Dunque

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39 Ringrazio per questa annotazione il prof. Enrico Renna.

40 Roller 2006, 73, n. 115; Petron. *sat.* 64, 2-5.

41 Fröhlich 1991, 227; Clarke 2003a, 242-45; Roller 2006, 74, 76.

42 Stramaglia 2006, 599.

43 Sul *rhyton* quale simbolo di lusso e di piacere: Tamm 2001, 168-69. Su scene erotiche in cui uomini bevono dal *rhyton*, Jacobelli 2011, 124, fig. 13.

44 Ritter 2005, 314 ritiene che non possa essere la donna a parlare proprio perché si sta spruzzando il vino in bocca.

45 Varone 2000, 87, fig. 88. Probabilmente questa possibilità di parlare per coloro che bevevano dai corni potori è data dal fatto che il foro da cui usciva il vino era facilmente ostruibile e dunque il convitato poteva modulare a suo piacere come e quando gustare

si potrebbe ipotizzare che sia lei la committente delle pitture e la proprietaria di casa. In questo caso dovremmo pensare ad una donna indipendente che dispone della sua abitazione e delle sue cose liberamente e che organizza banchetti, nei quali, come dice Ovidio "c'è qualcosa da cercare oltre il vino….[che] prepara i cuori e li rende adatti all'ardore".[46] L'ipotesi che sia la donna a parlare trova una corrispondenza con alcuni medaglioni erotici della Valle del Rodano, che hanno anch'essi raffigurazioni di donne 'parlanti'. Le brevi frasi pronunciate dimostrano un approccio giocoso al sesso ed un piacevole coinvolgimento in quello che fanno, al pari dei loro compagni.[47] Anche in questo caso non è sempre chiaro il ruolo di queste donne ('etere', schiave, libere?), ma il loro atteggiamento appare in ogni caso libero, spregiudicato e comunque mai sottomesso, come invece appare nelle raffigurazioni di scene di sesso o di simposio della ceramica greca.[48]

Un'ulteriore suggestione, che ci fa proseguire nell'affascinante ipotesi di aver identificato in una donna, forse una cortigiana, la padrona della Casa del Triclinio è la particolare decorazione del cubicolo u.[49]

Come già accennato, proprio di fronte al triclinio si trova questo cubicolo, che conserva una decorazione in III stile finale, piuttosto singolare.[50] Vi sono tre quadri che riproducono coppie di insegnanti e discepoli: Diotima e Socrate, Corinna e Pindaro, Saffo e fanciulla.[51] La particolarità consiste nel fatto che ad insegnare sono le donne quasi che si volesse evidenziare una sorta di 'superiorità' femminile: Corinna è una poetessa la cui attività si colloca tradizionalmente verso la fine del VI secolo a.C. che avrebbe istruito Pindaro nella poesia, battendolo ben cinque volte in gare poetiche (**fig. 8**).[52] Diotima di Mantinea, vissuta nel V secolo è ricordata nel *Simposio* come colei che avrebbe edotto Socrate sulla filosofia dell'Eros,[53] mentre Saffo è la famosa poetessa greca che curò l'educazione di giovani fanciulle. Questi temi, poesia ed eros, sono in qualche modo legati al simposio e ai discorsi che vi si tenevano.

La vicinanza del cubicolo u con il triclinio r ci fa ipotizzare che esso fosse messo a disposizione dei convitati del banchetto.[54] Come abbiamo visto, la presenza di *cubicula* in prossimità di *triclinia* adatti ad ospitare i commensali per il loro riposo, trova un preciso riscontro archeologico a partire dalla tarda età repubblicana creando all'interno della casa vere e proprie unità spaziali e funzionali.[55] Nei testi trova largo uso l'accostamento di triclini e cubicoli in giochi di parole basati sull'analogia e sulla contrapposizione, che li qualificano come sedi privilegiate dei piaceri della vita, oppure stigmatizzando gli abusi che vi avve-

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il liquido centellinandolo. Alcuni corni potori sono stati trovati anche a Pompei cfr. Beretta – Di Pasquale 2004, 200, 1.3; 232, fig. 2.16; 306, fig. 4.3.

46 Ov. *ars* 1, 229-51.

47 Jacobelli 2012, 407-22. Vorrei inoltre ricordare una coppa a rilievo ritrovata a Pompei in cui è raffigurato il profilo di una donna con una frase che invita a bere (*bibe amice de meo*), Museo Borbonico, 1831, VII, tav. XXIX; Morel 1979, 251-52, fig. 165.

48 Nella vasta bibliografia pertinente a scene di banchetto nell'arte greca si rimanda al volume della Dunbabin, con bibliografia precedente.

49 Per il cubicolo vedi Ritter 2005, 356-59.

50 Non sembra che ricorra a Pompei un altro ciclo del genere (cfr. Romizzi 2006).

51 *PPM* 3 (1991), 819-23, figg. 50-52, 56. Il quadro con Diotima e Socrate, mal conservato, fu staccato e conservato nei depositi di Pompei (disegno riprodotto in DAIR 53.597); gli altri quadri, lasciati sul posto sono oggi quasi completamente sbiaditi (DAIR 53.557). Il quadro con Pindaro e Corinna contribuì ad una delle denominazioni attribuite alla casa, cfr. Bastet – De Vos 1979, 91. Il soggetto è replicato sette volte in quadri di III stile, quello più simile al quadro della Casa del Triclinio sembra essere quello della Casa del Citarista (I 4, 5), vedi *PPM* 1, 1990, 161-62, figg. 71-72.

52 Ael. *VH* 13, 25; secondo Pausania (9, 22, 3), invece Pindaro fu battuto da lei una sola volta.

53 Pl. *Symp.* 201d-212 c; Si veda: Capogrossi 2007.

54 Così anche Anguissola 2010, 191.

55 Si veda *supra*, p. 157.

Fig. 8: Disegno riproducente il quadro con gara musicale tra Corinna e Pindaro del tutto simile a quello della Casa del Triclinio, oggi evanido. Da Pompei, Casa del Citarista, amb. 23. (DAIR, 684810).

nivano.[56] Questa moda si impone anche in case modeste dove all'insieme di triclinio e cubicolo viene sacrificata buona parte dello spazio disponibile al pianoterra, con un impegno finanziario talvolta spropositato all'effettivo *status* del *dominus*. Nel caso della casa V 2, 4 vediamo che la parte di rappresentanza è spinta sul fondo dell'abitazione, che prevede un giardino intorno al quale si dispongono triclinio e cubicolo (**fig. 3**). Quello che comunque mi preme sottolineare è che se, come sembra, questo cubicolo dalle belle pitture di III stile era riservato agli ospiti, la scelta dei quadri appare ancor più significativa perché comunica ad un pubblico più ampio di quello dei soli abitanti della casa un'idea di superiorità femminile in campi 'alti', come la poesia e la filosofia. Ma forse però non si mancava di alludere ironicamente ad altre specialità in cui alcune donne, o la stessa padrona di casa, potevano considerarsi 'esperte' e 'maestre'.[57]

Potremmo dunque ipotizzare che la casa fosse abitata da una donna, dotata di una certa istruzione ed anche di un buon senso d'ironia, che in maniera del tutto libera ed autonoma sceglie di usare la sua casa per feste ed incontri amorosi. Le scritte realizzate contestualmente al quadro sulla parete nord del triclinio svolgono un ruolo determinante nella veicolazione del messaggio complessivo che si vuole dare e sottolineano l'intenzione di autorappresentazione del committente. Attraverso di esse si reclamizzano i piaceri delle feste che il proprietario può offrire ai suoi ospiti. E che la dimora fosse assiduamente frequentata lo si coglie leggendo i tanti graffiti lasciati sulle colonne del peristilio dal fullone L. Quintilius Crescens, che manifesta in più modi la sua esaltazione salutando il *caupo* (*CIL* IV, 4100), i *fullones* (*CIL* IV 4118), i Pompeiani, i *Salinenses*, gli *Stabiani* e i *Surrentini* (*CIL* IV 4102, 4103, 4109), fino a dichiarare di essere lì rinato (*CIL* IV 4107).[58] Questo aveva fatto ipotizzare a Della Corte che nell'ultimo periodo di vita della città questa abitazione fosse stata destinata a *caupona*, oppure che il triclinio fosse dato in affitto per le feste.[59] Più recentemente Wallace-Hadrill ha dimostrato definitivamente che la Casa del Triclinio è una dimora privata.[60]

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56 In un passo dell'*Apologia* di Apuleio (75) si descrivono un triclinio in subbuglio per l'esuberanza dei commensali e la relativa stanza da letto ridotta ad un andirivieni di adulteri; Cicerone nella seconda *Filippica* (2, 69) annovera tra i tratti d'immoralità di Antonio l'uso perverso che nella sua casa veniva fatta delle sale da pranzo mutate in vere taberne e dei *cubicula* ridotti al rango di bordelli.

57 La casa conserva pitture di III e IV stile (Romizzi 2006, 25). In ogni caso tra i due cicli pittorici non intercorrono molti anni, essendo datato, quello del cubicolo u alla fase finale del III stile e quello del triclinio al IV stile pre 62. È dunque possibile che ad abitare la casa sia sempre lo stesso proprietario / proprietaria, che abbia voluto ridecorare in modo più autocelebrativo il triclinio; sugli interventi strutturali nel triclinio r si veda *PPM* 798, figg. 40-42.

58 Sul fullone grafomane si veda anche Roller 2006.

59 Della Corte 1965, 128-29. Sulla destinazione dell'edificio si veda anche Fröhlich 1991, 227-28; Eschebach – Müller-Trollius 1993, 130-31.

60 Wallace-Hadrill 2004, 114-17.

Dunque nel variegato tessuto sociale di Pompei in età imperiale potremmo ipotizzare la presenza di donne imprenditrici di sé stesse, che gestiscono amicizie e incontri amorosi utilizzando le proprie abitazioni.

Infine un'ultima annotazione. Fino a questo momento le scene con banchetti trovate a Pompei non provengono da case dell'alta borghesia, ma da abitazioni piuttosto modeste. Questo sembrerebbe suggerire che nelle *villae* o nelle grandi *domus* il triclinio come luogo ove le *élites* si riuniscono, mettendo in mostra il loro stile di vita collegato al piacere, all'ostentazione del lusso e all'esaltazione dell'io, prevalgono, pittoricamente, scene di maggiore sobrietà, legate al più a temi mitologici solo allusivi ai piaceri del bere e dell'amore.[61] Nei grandi triclini va in scena dal vivo lo spettacolo del banchetto, nello sfarzo della presentazione del cibo, nella sua ridondanza scenografica, nella ricercatezza e nel lusso dell'arredo e della suppellettile.

Al contrario, nelle dimore di minor prestigio sociale, si decorano le pareti dei triclini evocando le grandi *cenae* aristocratiche o le loro ascendenze ellenistiche. Talvolta queste ascendenze sono più evidenti, come nella Casa dei Casti amanti, a volte prevalgono valori più tipicamente romani, come nella Casa del Triclinio.[62] In ogni caso spesso le scene simposiache subiscono 'contaminazioni' e attualizzazione in chiave romana che si esprimono nell'abbigliamento dei personaggi raffigurati[63] o nella suppellettile e nel mobilio rappresentato.[64]

Forse questa contaminazione di elementi avrà coinvolto anche il modo di percepire le donne raffigurate nei banchetti. Lo scopo di questi quadri era principalmente quella di accogliere i convitati evocando atmosfere di lusso, di esotismo e di raffinata festività. Forse il ruolo e lo *status* delle donne nelle pitture di banchetto saranno stati vissuti in maniera differente dai diversi fruitori, che vi avranno visto ora etere greche, ora cortigiane romane, ora le disinvolte e ricche dame dell'aristocrazia romana che partecipavano a sontuosi banchetti, a cui la classe media poteva aspirare e vagheggiare solo nell'immaginario iconografico del proprio modesto triclinio.

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61 Romizzi 2006, 138-45.

62 Non è improbabile che alcune scene in particolare abbiano anche attinto ad elementi della tradizione teatrale, come sembrerebbero suggerire alcuni personaggi che vi compaiono costantemente. Inoltre l'attualizzazione in chiave romana di questi quadri è visibile anche in raffigurazioni raffinate, come quella proveniente da Ercolano (MANN inv. 9024) ove l'acconciatura della fanciulla era 'di moda' all'epoca della realizzazione del dipinto; così come anche elementi dell'arredo tipici della prima età imperiale.

63 Si veda la pittura di Ercolano (MANN inv. 9024) trattata prima p. 158.

64 Si veda *infra*, nota 11.

A perfect scenery for male courtesans? Ganymede in two Pompeian wall paintings

Ville Hakanen

The goal of this collection of articles is to explore the more independent upper strata of prostitutes in the Roman world, individuals who might be given the epithet 'courtesan'. To get a complete picture of the subject, it is necessary to keep this somewhat artificial category open for all candidates, including men. In this article I look for evidence of 'male courtesans' in ancient Rome. Within this larger theme I am interested in the role of the artistic representation of the myth of Ganymede, a surprisingly frequent metaphor or point of reference in the context of adult male prostitution. The first part of the article is a short survey of Roman literary sources. In the second part I take a closer look at two Pompeian houses and their decorations asking whether they could have been connected to upper class male prostitution.

Male courtesans and their customers

There is ample evidence in Roman literary sources of freeborn men who prostituted themselves. *Lex Iulia municipalis* from 45 BCE forbade those "who have made a living with their bodies" from participating in the governing of councils of small towns.[1] Since male citizens were the only legitimate candidates for such a position, that law must have been targeted at them. In his commentary on the Praetor's Edict, the jurist Ulpian notes that pimps were not only trading the services of slaves, but of free persons as well.[2] There are accounts of similar laws having existed already in the third and second centuries BCE, before the alleged breakthrough of the 'luxurious Greek ways'.[3]

These fairly straightforward juridical texts fail to communicate the actual working conditions of the prostitutes in question. Fortunately other literary genres come to aid. Several stories in historical biographies and satirical fiction tell about men who are closer to escorts than street prostitutes and might be titled 'courtesans'. They are guests at banquets and engage with their patrons relatively publicly.[4] They receive gifts

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1 *CIL* I^2 593 (*Tabula Heracleensis*) 123: *queive corpore quaestum fecit fecerit*. Among the other discriminated classes of men were thieves, debtors, gladiatorial trainers, actors, pimps etc. See Crawford 1996, 1.362 for the interpretation of this part of *Tabula Heracleensis* as *Lex Iulia municipalis*.

2 Ulp. *dig.* 3, 2, 4, 2: *lenocinium facit, qui quaestuaria mancipia habuerit: sed et qui in liberis hunc quaestum exercet, in eadem causa est*.

3 Val. Max. 6, 1, 10; Cato fr. 212. Expensive boy prostitutes are given by Polybius (31, 25, 4-5) as the prime example of the loose Greek morals adopted by aristocratic Roman men during the Third Macedonian War (171-168 BC). Williams 2010, 42, 46, 70-72.

4 For banquets see Mart. 1, 23; 9, 63; Iuv. 9, 10; Plutarch, *Sulla* 2, 2-4; 36, 1. According to Williams (2010, 89) Plutarch's account of the relationship between Sulla and his lover Metrobios stresses the fact that Sulla did not try to hide it. Livy (39, 42, 8) tells about an "expensive and well-known prostitute" (*carum ac nobile scortum*), the Phoenician Philippus, who provoked his lover, the nobleman and proconsul in Gaul Flamininus to kill a refuge-seeking local nobleman at a banquet. For the incident see Williams 2010, 46-49. Tacitus (*ann*. 1, 54) tells that the theatrical festivities of *Ludi Augustales* were originally a favour from Augustus to Maecenas, who was deeply in love with the actor Bathyllus, which seems to have been common knowledge.

and favours from their patrons and some might become wealthy.[5] They serve their patrons sexually, but at least sometimes seem to be able to choose not to.[6] In one case the prostitute is explicitly his patron's client.[7] These men fall roughly into three types: aspiring idlers ready to serve generous patrons, freedmen doing their 'duty' for their patrons or professional actors who might blend into either one of the former categories.[8] Moreover some slaves engaged in sex work might have had a relatively high status.[9] Some sources suggest that women might also have paid for male prostitutes but in this article I focus on men using the services of other men.[10]

Many of the high class escorts we know by name were actors. Prostitution was a side-line of their careers on stage and the relationship to their patrons was complicated by the possibility that they were freedmen or even slaves.[11] Metrobios, an actor and impersonator of women was Sulla's lover, even when already "past his prime" (*exôros*).[12] Maecenas was in love with the pantomime actor Bathyllus.[13] Pliny the Elder tells about another pantomime actor called Mysticus, an outstanding beauty whose skills in lovemaking wore two equestrian men to death.[14]

Catharine Edwards has argued that actors, gladiators and prostitutes were "symbols of the shameful" in ancient Rome. They were classified as *infames* and hence lacked the full citizenship and could be subjected to corporal violence without punishment. As a result of selling their bodies for the pleasure of others they had lost their physical and sexual integrity.[15] Anne Duncan adds an important factor that separates actors and prostitutes from gladiators: actors and prostitutes operated under the sign of the fictional, the fake. They could thus be seen as equivalent: the actor as a prostitute, the prostitute as an actor.[16]

Not only actors and prostitutes were fake. A similar charge could be thrown upon those who used their services. Craig A. Williams argues that being the penetrating partner in sex with a socially inferior adult man was acceptable in the public eye. However, an open interest towards grown up men could always imply an inclination for being the receptive partner in sexual acts, a habit heavily condemned by Roman authors who often labelled the man in question as a *cinaedus*, the scare-figure of gender role-reversal.[17] Men who claimed to be respectable but behind the social mask desired to be sexually penetrated were a common subject of scorn

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5 Sen. *benef*. 2, 21; Mart. 1, 58; 6, 50; 11, 87; Iuv. 2, 17-18.

6 The freedom of choice is of course limited by the economic conditions of the prostitute. However, the men in Martial's epigrams and Juvenal's ninth satire would seem to be able to choose at least between different customers.

7 Iuv. 9, 72. Since the point of Juvenal is to exaggerate the corruption of the patron-client relationship this is probably a strategic set-up.

8 According to the famous argument used in defence of an Augustan freedman accused of being his patron's concubine, "a lack of *pudicitia* [sexual inviolability] in a freeborn man is matter of reproach, in a slave a matter of necessity, in a freeman a matter of moral duty" (Sen. *contr*. 4, praef. 10, trans. Williams). See Williams 2010, 107-8. In Juvenal's second satire (58-61) the effeminate men labelled as *cinaedi* enjoy sexual services of their freedmen.

9 Williams 2010, 32-36; 171, n. 117. Some of Martial's boys can afford to be arrogant (4, 42; 5, 83; 8, 46; 11, 73; 12, 75), although this feature is probably indebted to some degree to the poet's Greek models.

10 Petron. 126, 4; Mart. 7, 75; 11,62. Martial poses himself as a gold digger in 11, 23 and 11, 29. Male legacy hunters eager to please elder women appear in Juvenal (1, 37-41), and the prostitute Naevolus (see below) serves both men and women (9, 25). It seems a safe bet to assume that there were male prostitutes specialized in serving wealthy women.

11 It would seem that Bathyllus was Maecenas' freedman (Sen. *contr*. 10, praef. 8: *Bathyllus Maecenatis*, which is translated by Winterbottom in Loeb to mean "Bathyllus, freedman of Maecenas").

12 Plutarch, *Life of Sulla* 2, 2-4; 36, 1. See Williams 2010, 89-92.

13 Sen. *contr.* 3, *praef*. 16 and *contr*. 10, *praef*. 8; Tac. *ann*. 1, 54; Dio Cass. 54, 17.

14 Plin. *nat.* 7, 184.

15 Edwards 1997, 66-76.

16 Duncan 2006, 256-57.

17 Halperin 2002, 33-34; Williams 2010, 84-93, 191-200.

and laughter.[18] At the other end of this line of foul social acting was the open staging of oneself in the role of a female.[19] The ultimate example of this is the figure of Nero, who is accused of marrying his slave Pythagoras in a formal ceremony and playing the role of the virgin bride.[20] Seneca's account of Hostius Quadra, a rich man and accused sexual pervert also begins by comparing his acts to those performed on stage.[21]

The voyeuristic fascination of unveiling the setup of male prostitution could be deployed for comic and satirical purposes. *Prostibulum*, an Atellan farce composed by Pomponius in the early first century BCE, was dedicated to an adult male prostitute who serves male citizens by sexually penetrating them.[22] The character of the prostitute could be read as a metaphor for the play itself: the *infamis* actor on stage pours out words that penetrate the paying customers in the theatre.[23] Juvenal's ninth satire was probably inspired by Pomponius' play.[24] It presents Naevolus, a freeborn adult male prostitute. In the prime of his years Naevolus is described as "an elegant dinner guest, with biting humour and forceful witticisms" (10). A notorious womanizer who also secretly serves the husbands for payment. Now he complains about his long-time patron's avarice. Similar types of men, though sometimes economically more fortunate, appear in Martial's epigrams.[25]

In satire the hungry male prostitute and his rich but sexually submissive client might epitomize the corruption of morals, the perverted relationship between social classes, the fear of an 'outsider within',[26] or the poet's persona as the 'fucker' of the world.[27] These characters are supposed to shock, but are not to be completely unthinkable for the public who would have enjoyed the moralizing exaggeration of recognizable people and social phenomena. Although the comic or satiric 'courtesans' are represented by and for their potential customers and thus give a fantastic and metaphorical version of the trade, I think it is reasonable to assume that they had their counterparts in Roman reality.[28]

Adult men in the role of Ganymede in Roman literature

The figure of Ganymede was a common metaphor for beautiful, passive youths in ancient literature – for freeborn *eromenoi* in Greece and young slave servants in Rome.[29] Statius and Martial liken Domitian's fa-

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18 Mart. 1, 23; 1, 96; 7, 58; 7, 62; 9, 27; Iuv. 2; 7, 58; 9, 47. See Williams 2010, 208-14.

19 See Roller 2012, 302-4 for the discrepancy between the two ways of playing the female role as presented in Juvenal's second satire.

20 Tac. *ann.* 15, 37; Dio Cass. 62, 13, 2. Suetonius (Suet. *Nero* 29) tells the same story but names the bridegroom Doryphorus, Nero's freedman. Aurelius Victor (Aurel. Vict. *Caes.* 5, 5) repeats it without naming the groom. Martial (11, 6, 10) refers to Nero's cup-bearer as Pythagoras. Vout (2002, 495) thinks the name Doryphorus (such was his name) might be a joke in the meaning of the name of the famous statue, 'spear-carrier'. For Nero as an actor see Edwards 1994.

21 Sen. *nat.* 1, 16. Williams 2010, 224-25.

22 Williams 2010, 30-31.

23 In one of his lines the *prostibulum* states: *ut nullum civem pedicavi per dolum / nisi ipsus orans ultro qui ocquinisceret* ("I haven't butt-fucked a single citizen by deceit – only when he himself came up to me begging to bend over", transl. Williams 2010). This underlines the theme of deception proudly stating that it is not the prostitute who is fake but his customers. For the idea of words sexually penetrating the listener see Roller (2012, 306) on Pers. 1, 19-20.

24 Williams 2010, 91.

25 Mart. 1, 23; 6, 50; 11, 87.

26 Uden 2015, 78-84.

27 Rosen – Keane 2014, 382, 393-95.

28 See also Williams 2010, 90-93.

29 For Greece see *Anth. Pal.* 12, 64; 65; 66; 67; 68; 69; 70; 194; 222; Ibyc. fr. 289 (Loeb Greek Lyric III); Thgn. fr. 1, 1345 (Loeb Greek Elegiac) and Pl. *Phdr*. 255c. For Rome see Petron. 92; Mart. 2, 43; 3, 39; 8, 55, 16; 9, 22; 9, 25; 9, 36; 9, 73; 9, 103; 10, 66; 10, 98; 11, 22; 11, 26; 11, 43; Iuv. 5, 59 and Stat. *silv.* 1, 6, 34; 4, 2, 11. For the relationship between the uses of Ganymede in Greek and Roman literature see Richlin 1992a, 39-42; Vout 2007, 67-68 and Williams 2010, 63.

vourite, the castrated slave-boy Earinos, to Ganymede, apparently without irony.[30] Martial and Juvenal take it for granted that the boy servants they compare to the mythical youth were sexually available at least to their masters.[31] In the context of theatre and satire, this cliché could have been used ironically or inverted altogether to ridicule adult men who liked to be sexually penetrated by their subordinates. For this purpose an artistic representation of the myth seems to have been especially useful, since as an imitation of nature, it was as fake as the role-play it referred to.[32]

In the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, a *paterfamilias,* who is on his way to meet a female courtesan, play-acts a painting that represents Ganymede or Adonis in front of another man.[33] The image of the adult man in the role of the stereotypically effeminate, subjugated youths reflects his position of being dominated by his social inferiors.[34] It is also a powerful metaphor for the levels of deception present in the scene, a circular sequence of unfaithful imitations: the actor (who was by profession seen as effeminate) plays a *paterfamilias*, who plays a painting that represents Ganymede. There is a similar use of Ganymede in Juvenal's ninth satire: the patron of the prostitute Naevolus, a rich old man, who runs after well-endowed men, fancies himself soft, pretty and boyish, "worthy of the heavenly cup".[35] In Petronius' *Satyrica* Encolpius, the antihero and victim of several sexual assaults, identifies himself with Jupiter in the painting depicting the rape of Ganymede, even though he has just been deprived of both his beloved and his sword (83). An ironic allusion to Ganymede can also be read in Martial's epigram, where the supposedly manly Pythagoras (see above) is imagined serving strong wine to Nero.[36]

Another reference to Ganymede in Juvenal's ninth satire would seem to confirm that at least in Roman literary tradition a picture of Ganymede could be associated with prostitution, deception and effeminate role-play. Juvenal imagines Naevolus meeting his customers by the shrine of Isis, by the Ganymede of *Forum Pacis* and by the temples of Magna Mater and Ceres. After this the poet asks: "for which temple *doesn't* have sex on sale?"[37] Of the four cults mentioned, Isis and Ceres would seem to refer to the loose *matronae* and Magna Mater and Ganymede to their effeminate husbands.[38] The Ganymede is usually understood to

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30 Stat. *silv.* 3, 4, 1221; 3, 4, 5664; Mart. 9, 36.

31 Mart. 2, 43; 8, 55, 16; 9, 22; 9, 73; 11, 22; 11, 26; 11, 43; Iuv. 11, 145-58. For sexually available slave-boys see also Sen. *epist*. 47, 7 and Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 48-52.

32 Elsner 2007, 191-92, 197-99.

33 Plaut. *Men.* 141-51.

34 McCarthy 2000, 45-46.

35 Iuv. 9, 46-47: *sed tu sane tenerum et puerum te / et pulchrum et dignum cyatho caeloque putabas*. See Courtney 1980, 432.

36 Mart. 11, 6, 10. Probably the same Pythagoras whom the emperor allegedly married (see above). Here he is imagined in the traditional role of a boy servant, but according to Obermayer 1998, 73 the pun of the poem lies in remembering that Pythagoras was the penetrating partner in bed. Martial compares Pythagoras to a servant who is mixing a strong potion of wine, which could hint towards his manliness.

37 Iuv. 9, 22-24: *nuper enim, ut repeto, fanum Isidis et Ganymedem / Pacis et advectae secreta Palatia matris / et Cererem (nam quo non prostat femina templo?).* The above translation by Uden (2015, 77) probably conveys the meaning of the final question better than a more literal "is there, then, any temple where women don't prostitute themselves?" by Morton Braund (Juvenal and Persius in the Loeb edition). I think that the word *femina* should not be taken at face value – in 9, 50-53 Naevolus' patron is pictured as a *femina* fondling in secret his present of Matronalia (Naevolus' genitals?). Furthermore, Naevolus' probable model, the prostitute in Pomponius' *Prostibulum* uses the feminine form of the demonstrative pronoun of his male customers (see Williams 2010, 30-31), and, in the second satire, Juvenal portrays the *cinaedi* as practically female (54-57, 83-114, 117-42).

38 Isis and Ceres were female goddesses of fertility worshipped through initiatory rites that the poet apparently associates with licentiousness (cf. Iuv. 6, 314-45). The castrated *Galli* priests of Magna Mater were "the ultimate scare-figures of Roman masculinity" (Williams 2010, 140-41, 195-96), and Ganymede was a homoerotic euphemism for sexually available youths (see above and cf. 9, 46-47). Juvenal ends the phrase of 9, 22-26 by calling Naevolus a womanizer who secretly lies with the husbands. This notion would be balanced by the inclusion of both women and men in the temples, especially since the rest of the satire is focused on Naevolus's male customers.

be a statue that stood on *Forum Pacis*.[39] The Christian writer Tatian presumably groups the same statue together with portraits of famous courtesans and immoral men that were exhibited in Rome at the time of the Antonines.[40]

Effeminate adult men identifying themselves with a picture of Ganymede also attest to the incontrollable nature of viewing a picture: the viewer can choose to identify him/herself with the role he desires regardless of the correspondence between himself and the part. All in all, it seems that a picture of Ganymede would have been at home around male courtesans and their customers. But how much of this is an imagination of the writers? Even if literarily cultivated viewers would have seen irony or a possibility to role-play in a picture of Ganymede, could it have been its intended purpose? Could a picture of Ganymede lead us to places that were used by male courtesans and their customers?

Picture of Ganymede in archaeological contexts with signs of erotic activity

There is one occasion where an existing picture of Ganymede has been associated to male prostitution, in my opinion quite convincingly. The House of Jupiter and Ganymede at Ostia (I 4, 2, casa 3) has a large hall with a fine wall painting decoration from the late 2nd century CE. It culminates in a central picture representing Ganymede in front of the throne of Jupiter. The same house has a remarkable collection of erotic graffiti, which relate exclusively to sex between males. John Clarke, who has written the most comprehensive study on the house, has suggested that it served as a hotel for male 'homosexuals', but has since withdrawn this conclusion.[41] Thomas McGinn rightly separates the problem of the 'sexuality' of the possible customers from that of brothel-identification. He presents the possibility that the House of Jupiter and Ganymede might have been both a hotel and a brothel. Although it cannot be proven that it was specialized in male-to-male sexual encounters, this is not impossible.[42] The picture of Ganymede had such an outstanding position in the decoration, that it is reasonable to argue that it obtained a particular meaning if male prostitutes and their customers were using the house.

The most famous representation of Ganymede in Pompeii is a stucco relief in the Forum Baths (VII 5, 2). The reliefs of the vault of the *tepidarium* represent Ganymede abducted by the eagle, a young Eros standing with a bow and Apollo flying on a griffin. Erotic subjects were a standard feature in Roman baths and sex was one of the attractions associated with bathing.[43] According to several sources, lustful rich men used the baths to spot well-endowed male prostitutes and opportunistic non-professionals. The sexually available men would then have been invited to dinner and/or enjoyed elsewhere.[44] The fact that the Ganymede in the Forum Baths was in the part reserved for men and that the decoration included only representations of nude male characters could point towards a planned homoerotic scheme.[45] However, there is no direct evidence of male prostitution in the Forum Baths.

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39 Courtney 1980, 429-30; Meneghini – Corsaro – Pinna Caboni 2009, 193; Williams 2010, 61. According to Pliny (*nat*. 35, 36; 35, 102; 35, 112) there were also famous paintings in the *Forum Pacis* and in theory 'the Ganymede' could have been one of them. What makes a statue perhaps more likely is that in antiquity the most famous representation of Ganymede seems to have been a statue by Leochares (Plin. *nat*. 34, 79; Mart. 1, 6) and that Tatian also tells about a publicly exhibited statue of Ganymede with a bad reputation (see below).

40 Cadario 2011, 31-32 on Tatianus *Ad Gr.* 33-34.

41 Clarke 1991; Clarke 1998, 88.

42 McGinn 2004, 226-31.

43 Dunbabin 1989, 24-25; Fagan 1999, 34-36.

44 Sen. *nat*. 1, 16; Mart. 1, 23; Petron. 92. For female courtesans in the baths see Amm. 28, 4, 9.

45 This is the subject of a forthcoming article by the author.

There are five certain representations of Ganymede in Campanian wall paintings.[46] Two of them are found in contexts that might have been connected to prostitution. Wall paintings in the *oecus g* of the house VII 13, 4 (*Casa di Ganimede*) and in a room f of the house IX 5, 11.13 show sleeping Ganymede observed by the eagle. The two pictures are compositionally similar and the poses of the youths are linked by a painting of Endymion that was found in the same *oecus g* of the *Casa di Ganimede*. It has been proposed that the *Casa di Ganimede* could have been a brothel.[47] No similar conclusion has been drawn of the house IX 5, 11.13, but the graffiti found in its peristyle suggest that it hosted some kind of homoerotic activity.

Ganymede in the house of a brothel magnate: *Casa di Ganimede*

The *Casa di Ganimede* (VII 13, 4, **fig. 1**) was a large atrium house to the east of the Forum of Pompeii, in the middle of a zone with a concentration of places selling sex.[48] In the north-western corner of its *insula* (VII 13, 19.21) there was a tavern with a separate *cella meretricia,* or a prostitutes' crib. According to McGinn the tavern was "evidently a property of the owner of the *Casa di Ganimede* in the final years of the city's existence".[49] Two more *cellae* (VII 13, 15 and VII 13, 16) were cut out of the rear part of the *Casa di Ganimede* after the earthquake of the year 62 CE.[50] Hans Eschebach suggests it is possible that also the house itself might have been a *lupanar*.[51] McGinn notes more cautiously that though the owners clearly exploited their property for the sale of sex, the business didn't necessarily occupy the entire house.[52] To further complicate matters, there are two representations of a phallus around the insula. The other one is carved on the pavement of Via dell'Abbondanza in front of the *Casa di Ganimede* and points towards the entrance of the house.[53]

Fig. 1: The house VII 13, 4 (*Casa di Ganimede*). Source *PPM*.

After the earthquake of 62 CE the *Casa di Ganimede* went through several changes that, according to Eschebach, were due to the owner's acute need of additional sources of income. Some of the surrounding stores were split and one

46 I follow Colpo (2005, 67-68, note 4) in her exclusion of a few uncertain examples, mainly listed by Schefold. I also exclude a painting from VII 12, 23 (*Casa del Camillo*) listed by Colpo, but known only from a verbal description by Helbig. The secure cases of wall paintings representing Ganymede are: the central picture from VI 9, 2.13 (*Casa di Meleagro*) now in the Museo Nazionale in Naples (inv. 9547); the central picture from VII 4, 31.51 (*Casa dei Capitelli colorati*) known from a copy by La Volpe; the central picture from the *triclinium* 3 of the Villa Arianna at Stabiae; and the two paintings discussed in detail below.

47 Eschebach 1982, 277.

48 Laurence 1998, 73-75; McGinn 2004, 240-41, 280-81, 293-94.

49 Eschebach 1982, 248-49, 312; McGinn 2004, 281.

50 Eschebach 1982, 247-48, 274-75

51 Eschebach 1982, 277: "Eine Nutzung der *Casa di Ganimede* als Lupanar kann nicht ausgeschlossen werden."

52 McGinn 2005, 281.

53 Eschebach (1982, 277) first proposes that the phalli in question were apotropaic but in the next sentence suggests the entire house was a brothel. Laurence (1998, 75) thinks the phalli were supposed to guide the person looking for a prostitute from Via dell'Abbondanza to the *cellae* at Vicolo degli Scheletri. Clarke (2003, 98, fig. 64) argues instead the phallus pointing to the entrance of the Casa di Ganimede was supposed to bring good fortune. McClain – Rauh (2011, 156-65) have recently interpreted certain ancient phallus reliefs as non-apotropaic directional indicators and occasionally even markers of male prostitution.

Fig. 2: Ganymede and the eagle from the *oecus* g of the *Casa di Ganimede*, G. Abbate, ink on cardboard, 1840. Source *PPM*.

(VII 13, 3) was joined to the house through a door. The prostitutes' cribs were built by reducing the service area in the back of the house. A *cubiculum* (*5*) by the peristyle was given over to the tavern of VII 13, 19-21 and the end of the southern *porticus* was transformed into a separate room e. The entrance VII 13, 18 in the back of the house leading directly to the stairway upstairs was partly covered.[54] This leads Eschebach to conclude that the upper floor above the service area was not restored after the earthquake (and that the prostitutes' cribs were built downstairs because of this).[55] It seems to me that the stairway could still have been used from inside the house and, consequently the filling of the door could as well have reclaimed the upper floor to the exclusive use of the visitors of the house.

At the same phase as these transformations took place, three rooms north of the peristyle were united to form a huge *triclinium* p and the *oecus* g and the *cubiculum* i received wall paintings in the Fourth Style. A big cupboard was added into the eastern ala h.[56] The *triclinium*, that had not been finished by the time of the eruption, was used to store a remarkable amount of luxury furniture, including legs for at least nine bronze beds or couches.[57] This scale of grandeur seems to question the owner's acute need of funds, but would fit the picture if it served the purpose of making a profit as well. Despite its unfinished state, the house seems to have been in use at least partially at the time of the eruption, since the *lararium* in the peristyle housed three statuettes of gods (Venus, Diana and an unidentified deity).[58]

The *Casa di Ganimede* takes its name from one of the two mythological central pictures that were found in the *oecus* g and that have survived only in drawings made by Giulio Abbate at the time of the excavation (1840) and in another pair of drawings done 20 years later by Nicola La Volpe.[59] The paintings that faced each other on the north and south walls of the room represented sleeping Ganymede (**fig. 2**) and sleeping Endymion (**fig. 3**). Ganymede is seen lying in a rocky landscape on his side, supporting his head with his right hand, the left hand fallen in front of his stomach. A sleeping cupid is placed in almost a mirror

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54 Eschebach 1982, 241, 274-77, 311-12.

55 Eschebach 1982, 312. Eschebach, thus, seems to suggest that the prostitutes' cribs were removed from the upper floor. Liselotte Eschebach proposes explicitly that the upper floor in the back of the house could have been a *lupanar*; see Eschebach – Müller-Trollius 1993, 333.

56 Eschebach 1982, 274-77; De Vos 1982, 317-18, 320-24.

57 Eschebach 1982, 236, 240. Other findings from the house listed in the 19th century excavation reports include toilet equipments, a mirror, 15 locks, and, from the *triclinium*, the head and pilaster of a 'bacchic' herm in *giallo antico* marble.

58 Eschebach 1982, 277.

59 Abbate's drawings were made with ink on cardboard, La Volpe's with pencil and ink on cardboard. The rendering of the paintings in the drawings is practically identical. *PPM* 7, 624-25; *PPM Disegnatori*, 251, 686. According to Hodske 2007, 210. 231 the pictures would have measured 62-70x57-60 cm.

image above the youth's legs. Above the cupid, an eagle is sitting on the branch of a tree. On the right side of the picture, a nymph observes the scene from a rock.

The pose of Endymion is very similar to that of Ganymede and of the Cupid: He is lying on his side, the left hand behind his neck, leaning on his right elbow. Selene is approaching from the left and there is a dog barking at her. Endymion's body is fully exposed, while the genitals of Ganymede are barely covered by his cape. Both youths have a muscular physique. The side panels of the *oecus* g were decorated with vignettes representing the four Seasons.[60] Hellenistic and Roman poets used the Seasons habitually as a part of the mythological entourage at the marriages of the gods, or as givers of beauty to nymphs and mortals. They were frequently connected with the loves of the gods in Roman art.[61]

Fig. 3: Endymion approached by Selene from the *oecus* g of the *Casa di Ganimede*, G. Abbate, ink on cardboard, 1840. Source *PPM*.

Isabella Colpo argues that the pictures of Ganymede and Endymion of the *Casa di Ganimede* accentuate the common characteristics of the two mythical youths: both were mortals who gained eternal life because of divine love, both were passive in the culminating event of the story, and both of the myths took place in the East, in Anatolia. Colpo notes that the pose of Ganymede derives from a Hellenistic model created for Eros and was apparently chosen because the usual pose for a sleeping Ganymede was adopted from representations of Endymion and was already taken by the other youth in the room.[62] Both youths hold spears identifying them as hunters – an activity that was the symbol of sexual desire in antiquity.[63]

The similarity of the compositions of the two paintings draws special attention to the additional figures. The almost phallic shape of the eagle, standing for Jupiter, is underlined by the parallel diagonal of the two spears held by the Cupid pointing to the bottom of Ganymede. The passivity of Endymion is reinforced by the activity of the goddess, whose movement is accentuated by her clothes. She holds a sceptre that, like the spears of the Cupid, points penetratively to the youth's exposed armpit – the young hunters have themselves become the prey.[64] The dog is barking at Selene, its head and neck forming a diagonal connecting the groins of Endymion and the goddess. The nymph that observes Ganymede functions as a mediator between the viewer of the painting and the scene depicted: the viewer can voyeuristically identify with her and enjoy the beauty of the boy and the desire of Jupiter from a safe distance.[65]

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60 *PPM* 7, 627-28.

61 See Hanfmann 1951, 105, 147. According to Hanfmann (140-41) the Seasons in the Pompeian wall paintings could also have reflected the desire to secure their blessing and to obtain good fortune. Cf. Colpo 2005, 84.

62 Colpo 2005, 70-74, 83.

63 Elsner 2007, 153; Schnapp 1989, 71-87.

64 An open armpit was a conventional way to identify a sleeper, but also to highlight the sleeper's sexual attractiveness, as specifically expressed by Philostratus (*Imagines* 1, 15) and Lucian (*Dialogues of the Gods* 19). Sorabella 2010, 27-28.

65 Dorothea Michel has analysed the 'onlooker figures' (*Zuschauerfiguren*) in Pompeian mythological wall paintings, but her approach is formalistic-iconographic and the role of the figures between the viewer and the subject of the painting is all but ignored. Michel 1982, 537-97.

Jean Sorabella has analysed the relationship between sleeping figures and what he calls 'sleepwatchers' in Greco-Roman art. He argues that the viewer of a picture that represented sleeping Endymion with Selene could have construed the female figure both as the goddess herself and as Endymion's dream of her.[66] The erotic dream of Endymion corresponds in turn to the desire and fantasy felt by the viewer of the image.

Sorabella seems to identify the viewer more with the sleepwatcher than the sleeper. Caroline Vout who analyses a sex-scene that utilizes the pose of Endymion, suggests instead, that the spectators would have imagined themselves as Endymion, the seducer of a goddess.[67] The viewer's possibilities of choosing between the role of the passive sleeper (who might be dreaming of the scene), the sleepwatcher, and an outside observer are demonstrated in a passage from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which often casts the reader as a witness (of a witness) of the told events*:* from a hiding place, a man sees how a female witch approaches her sleeping male lover, an adult man whom she has charmed, and calls him "my darling Endymion, my Ganymede".[68]

The *oecus* g of the Casa di Ganimede measuring ca. 4,4x3,6 m had a wide main entrance facing the peristyle and a narrow side entrance presumably for the waiters. Barely fitting the standard formation of three dining couches it would have provided a relatively intimate setting for dining. The poses of the youths in the pictures would have reflected the postures of the persons lying on the couches below blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy.

For a Roman male viewer the pictures offered a possibility to play with different erotic roles. The most obvious one was probably that of the sexual aggressor who desires the attractive and available youths posing in front of his eyes. A voyeuristic outsider's perspective that corresponds to the actual position of the viewer is given in the shape of the nymph in the Ganymede scene. And finally, the viewer could imagine himself in the role of the youths who were going to get a divine sexual experience with an active male or female. The possibility, that this experience was only a dream, invited the viewer to further explore his desires, even those that only came alive in his dreams and were not (yet) fulfilled in real life.[69]

On the other hand, if dreaming of a sexual encounter with a god was taken at face value and not as a metaphor for a real-life desire, it could be seen as a favourable omen for the dreamer. According to Artemidorus, this was also the case with dreams of an eagle and that of the Seasons.[70]

Poetic fantasies of erotic desire: The House IX 5, 11.13

Like the *Casa di Ganimede,* the house IX 5, 11.13 (**fig. 4**) was a relatively large atrium house that faced a busy road (Via Nolana) and shared the same insula with houses that have been connected to prostitution. Its southern

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66 Sorabella 2010, 21-22.

67 Vout 2013, 122-23.

68 *Hic est* […] *carus Endymion, hic Catamitus meus*. Apul. *met.* 1, 12.

69 In his *Oneirocritica* the dream interpreter Artemidorus draws a distinction between the dreams that have a predictive value (*oneiroi*) and those that only reflect the present state of affairs of the dreamer (*enhypnia*) and thus hold no interest. Dreams of desires and fears fall into the latter category. For example, when a man saw a dream of performing *cunnilingus* to his wife, Artemidorus dismissed it as irrelevant, because he had found out that the man was simply seeing what aroused him also during the day (4.59). See Price 2004, 233-34. However, social concerns might have restrained men from gratifying the cravings released in their dreams. Plutarch writes that during sleep the "naturally despotic soul" gives "loose rein to the desires which in the daytime the law keeps confined by means of shame and fear." Plut. *mor.* 82 D (trans. Babbit).

70 For Artemidorus dreaming of sex with gods fell into the category of predictive dreams (*oneiroi*). A healthy person who dreamt of having sex with a god and enjoyed it was given material aid by a better-off person (1, 80). If the god was Selene and the dreamer a traveller or a merchant it was particularly beneficial (for a non-travelling person it meant that he got hydropsy). Also dreaming of an eagle that was sitting high on a tree or approaching was a good omen (2, 20 a), and dreaming of the Seasons likewise (2, 37 c).

neighbour (IX 5, 14.16) had a small room f' decorated with scenes of explicit lovemaking. Clarke suggests it was "a house to tavern makeover, with one of the attractions being a room that could be used – among other things – for the occasional tryst by willing (and sometimes paid) partners."[71] In the south-western corner of the *insula* a door (IX 5, 19) led to a second floor that has been proposed as a *lupanar* based on the graffiti found along the southern facade of the insula mentioning clients, prostitutes and prices.[72] The next house to the east along Via Nolana was the House of the Centenary (IX 8, 6) with its private bath complex and an 'entertainment suite' decorated with sex-scenes.[73]

Fig. 4: The house IX 5, 11-13. Source *PPM*.

The house IX 5, 11.13 itself has gained little attention apart from its graffiti that have, however, not been treated collectively. In the back of the house there was a small peristyle that was almost completely occupied by a masonry *triclinium*. A couple of *cubicula* and stairs leading upstairs opened to the peristyle. A selection of romantic and erotic graffiti was inscribed on the columns surrounding the peristyle.[74] A verse inscription, one of the most famous inscriptions from Pompeii, urges a mule driver to hurry to Pompeii "where my sweet love lives".[75] This is a proper piece of poetry, an imaginative experiment not to be taken at face value.[76] It seems to evoke the concept of elegiac poetry and was written by someone familiar at least with Catullus.[77] The lover of the poet is called *iuvenis Venustus,* but the word *iuvenis* ('young man') is written above the word *puer* ('boy') that has been crossed out but left clearly legible as if it was supposed to be seen corrected. Both words seem to have been written by the same hand.

Antonio Varone favours the interpretation that the poem was written by a man and I am inclined to the same conclusion.[78] The correction of *puer* to *iuvenis* might be best understood in the context of the anxieties of Roman men concerning the age and status of a man's male object of desire. It could underline the fact, that the *iuvenis Venustus* is not a slave, or that he is no more a boy – both options making the sexual role played by the writer's persona more ambivalent.[79] The poem could, in my eyes, be an allusion to a perhaps

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71 Clarke 1998, 186-87.

72 For the graffiti (*CIL* IV 5105-5157) and their interpretation, see Della Corte 1965, 130 and McGinn 2004, 284.

73 Clarke (1998, 169) thinks that the erotic suite by the bath complex was an imitation of similar suites in wealthy villas and rejects the idea that it hosted sexual entertainment. Pollini (2010, 314) argues instead that the room with the sex scenes was a 'lovemaking room' where "the *dominus* and/or his guests might have engaged actively in sexual behaviour" or "enjoyed such 'sex-capades' voyeuristically through the small window in the wall between the antechamber and this room."

74 *CIL* IV 5094-96; IV 5098.

75 *CIL* IV 5092, trans. Varone – Berg.

76 Williams 2010, 292: "Rather than as a record of someone's real experience or as a transcript of an actual dialogue with a mule-driver, this poem invites being read as an inventive composition, an imaginative experiment, a verbal expression of something that *could* or *might* have happened."

77 *Venustus* is a typical attribute in Catullus' love poetry. According to Seager (1974, 891-94), Catullus calls a man *venustus* "because he is a person of taste in matters over which the *Veneres Cupidinesque* preside: conversation, the pleasures of the table and friendship, as well as love". Good taste, wit and charm are the connotations of the word, set explicitly against the mere physical attraction.

78 Varone 2002, 19; cfr. Courtney 1995, 300.

79 In Ovid's account of Narcissus (*met.* 3, 352, see below) the two words are juxtaposed in the sense that *puer* is the passive beloved and *iuvenis* already capable of being an active lover. The sixteen-year-old Narcissus is both. *Puer* was extended to refer also to all male slaves regardless of their age (*OLD*). For Roman attitudes towards homoerotic objectification of boys and men see Williams 2010, 20-29, 78-93.

fantastic, but all the more charming young man reclining with his lover/lovers in this garden. The other graffiti of the peristyle are less refined, but add to the erotic atmosphere of the space.[80] One fragmentary inscription begins by stating that Sophe (a Greek female name) loves Asus, but then turns into a comparison between the fellation skills of the man (Asus) and a *cinaedus,* and talks about witnessing this activity.[81]

The picture of Ganymede is far less prominent in the house IX 5, 11.13 (**fig. 5**) than in the Casa di Ganimede. It occupies one of the side walls of a *cubiculum* (f) by the atrium and is considerably smaller and of inferior quality than its counterpart.[82] What is striking is that it is practically a combination of the pictures of Ganymede and Endymion of the Casa di Ganimede: the youth's pose is that of Endymion, while the eagle and the landscape repeat the painting of Ganymede. This way of representing Ganymede in the pose of Endymion was not unique and is attested since Augustan times.[83] However, these three Pompeian paintings are by far the most similar and, if not direct copies of each other, certainly derive from the same model. In the painting of the house IX 5, 11.13 the additional figures have been left out, possibly because the painting is smaller and more simple. In contrast to the painting in the Casa di Ganimede, the body of Ganymede is slender and boyish and the eagle is plump and less dynamic.

The main wall of the *cubiculum* f facing the doorway had a picture representing a naked male figure, probably Narcissus, together with a Cupid (**fig. 6**).[84] On the right wall the central picture represented a satyr

Fig. 5: Ganymede and the eagle from the *cubiculum* f of the house IX 5, 11.13, G. Discanno, pencil on paper, ca 1877. Source *PPM*.

Fig. 6: Narcissus from the *cubiculum* f of the house IX 5, 11.13, G. Discanno, pencil on paper, ca 1877. Source *PPM*.

80 *CIL* IV 5094-96, IV 5098.

81 *CIL* IV 5095. I thank Tuomo Nuorluoto for his kind help in deciphering this fragmentary inscription. The author is of course responsible for the possible errors. For the problematic category of *cinaedus* see above and Williams 2010, 191-245.

82 The room measures ca. 2,7x2,5 m. The painting is not completely destroyed and the outlines of the main figures are quite clear. It has also been copied faithfully at the time of the excavation (1877) by G. Discanno (pencil on paper).

83 Colpo 2005, 73-74. There was possibly another painting of Ganymede in the same pose in the house VII 12, 23 (Casa del Camillo), although with some additional figures. It is known only through a verbal description by Helbig. Colpo 2005, 72; 84-85.

84 The painting is destroyed but has been copied at the time of the excavation by G. Discanno (pencil on paper). In front of the youth there is an oval shape that looks very much like the outline of a pond. *PPM* 9, 555. Mau (*BdI* 1879, 203-4), identifies the figure as Narcissus, noting that the reflection of the youth is not visible due to the painting's damaged condition. Likewise also Schefold

uncovering a sleeping maenad (**fig. 7**) that was clearly a pendant of the Ganymede picture.[85] Both represent a scene of divine or semi-divine passion, symbolized also by the bestial nature of the attackers.[86] The objects of the lust are both asleep, passive, effeminate. Again sleep is the key element that invites the viewer to participate in daydreaming.

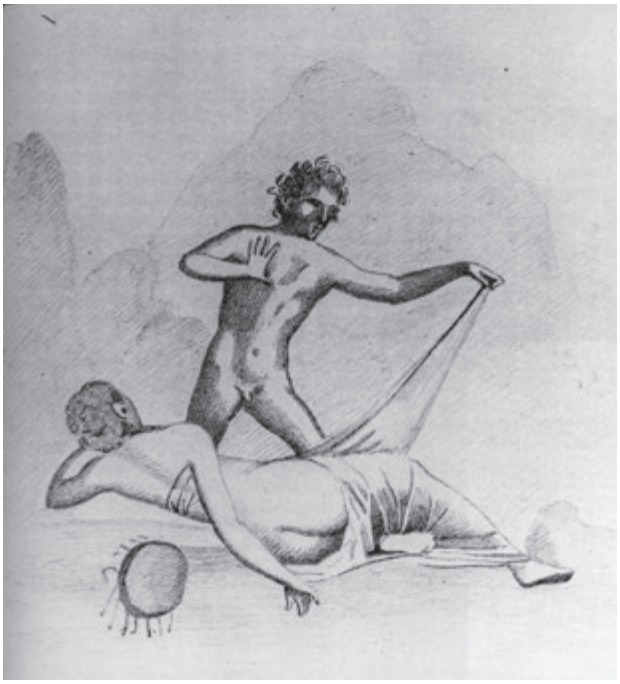

Fig. 7: A satyr uncovering a sleeping maenad from the *cubiculum* f of the house IX 5, 11.13, G. Discanno, pencil on paper, ca 1877. Source *PPM*.

The figure of Narcissus intensifies the incorporation of the viewer to the world of the paintings. The story of Narcissus, who desires a beautiful youth who is only a deceptive image, reflects the viewer's relationship to the erotic paintings of the room and forms a parallel to the sleepers' fantasies represented on the side walls. At the same time Narcissus questions the subject-object dichotomy and invites the viewer to see himself (the viewer) as a potential erotic object. In Ovid's version of the myth the sixteen-year-old Narcissus "could be seen either as a boy (*puer*) or a young man (*iuvenis*)".[87] This formulation that is similar to the graffito in the peristyle, underlines the fact that Narcissus does not know whether he is the active lover or the passive beloved. He becomes a kind of hermaphrodite.[88] Narcissus in the *cubiculum* f is a picture of his inner conflict: his body is feminine and brings him close to the representations of Hermaphroditus.[89]

If we read the pictures in the *cubiculum* f from the point of view of the male characters depicted, they represent a passive, effeminate adolescent in Ganymede, a youth potentially both active and passive, masculine and feminine in Narcissus, and an aggressive, Priapus-like man in the satyr. However, even the status of the satyr is complicated by his hand gesture that is probably apotropaic and seems to have been associated with phalluses, most often in paintings representing Pan with Hermaphroditus. Following this clue, the viewer could have interpreted the sleeping figure as Hermaphroditus, teasingly concealed from his eyes, but obviously impressing the satyr.[90] Furthermore, the satyr surprised (positively?) by the penis of Hermaphro-

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(1957, 258) and Bragantini (*PPM* 9, 554). Colpo (2005, 83) considers the Narcissus identification uncertain. Fiorelli (*NSc* 1877, 249) interprets the figure as Adonis.

85 The painting of satyr and maenad is destroyed but has been copied at the time of the excavation by G. Discanno (pencil on paper). *PPM* 9, 549.

86 For bestiality see Vout 2013, 72-74, 149-58.

87 Ov. *met.* 3, 351-52: *namque ter ad quinos unum Cephisius annum / addiderat poteratque puer iuvenisque videri*. See Taylor 2008, 70.

88 Elsner 2007, 147-48.

89 Cf. Taylor 2008, 73-74, 78-81; Grassigli 2007, 106-10.

90 See Beard – Henderson 2001, 134-39, fig. 95a; Sorabella 2010, 5-6 (esp. n. 16), 28-30, fig. 2. The same gesture is performed by Pan surprised to see Hermaphroditus's penis in wall paintings from the *Casa dei Dioscuri* (VI 9, 6-7; see *PPM* 4, 889, fig. 57), the *Casa di Meleagro* (VI 9, 2; see *PPM* 4, 692, fig. 65), the *Casa dei Vettii* (VI 15, 1, *triclinium* p; see *PPM* 5, 540-42, figs. 123, 124) and the house VIII 4, 4 (see *PPM* 8, 499, fig. 89), and by ithyphallic satyrs in the famous bronze tripod found in the *Praedia* of Julia Felix (see Parslow 2013, 55-60). The gesture of Silenus looking at Hermaphroditus's penis in wall paintings from the *Casa di Epidio Sabino* (IX 1, 22; see *PPM* 8, 973, fig. 32) and the *Casa dei Vettii* (VI 15, 1, *oecus* q; see *PPM* 5, fig. 159) is also similar, though perhaps just surprised. I am grateful to Siri Sande for this notion.

ditus would be an appropriate reading in the context of this decoration that calls first impressions and normative sex roles into question both encouraging and complicating a male viewer's potential of identification.

It is interesting that the mythological central pictures of the *cubiculum* f were inserted into the Fourth Style decoration after it was completed.[91] Pollini interprets similar additions in the House of the Centenary as evidence of an active involvement of the *dominus* of the house.[92] In the house IX 5, 11.13 the added panel paintings reflect, at the very least, a will to reinforce the erotic atmosphere of the house. A painted inscription on the wall of the *ala* h is a wonderful synthesis of the themes present in the house: the wish that artistic, poetic and fantastic representations of desired objects and the witnessed desire itself materialized in the viewer's world. The inscription states in hexameter "I don't think a Venus made of marble would be as favourable to me as...".[93]

Conclusions

In the light of Roman literary sources, it seems probable that there were male 'courtesans' also in Pompeii. The figure of Ganymede would have provided a mythological point of identification for them and their customers. However, neither the decorations nor the graffiti of the two houses discussed in this article are direct documents of the presence of male prostitutes. To suggest on their basis that the houses served as brothels would be even more precarious. It would seem that the paintings were intended to create an atmosphere of erotic possibilities emphasizing the homoerotic desire and offering different points of identification for the viewer, but seen the prevalence of erotic subjects in Roman wall decorations, this could have been the case in most of the houses in Pompeii.

On the other hand, the owners of the *Casa di Ganimede* were almost certainly involved in the brothel business that took place in the immediate vicinity of the house, if not in the house itself. Furthermore, the inscriptions in the peristyle of the house IX 5, 11.13 were of the sort that could perhaps be best imagined as done by visitors who had had the requisite capability and time on the spot to formulate the lengthy pieces and who were very interested in homoeroticism. Thus the possibility that the houses were used by upper class men who used the services of upper class male prostitutes is insecure but nonetheless existent.

To continue with this speculative path, it is possible that both of the houses were (or were intended to become) inns or restaurants for wealthy travellers, who were probably mostly male. Several inns and restaurants in Pompeii had the same features of the upper class *domus* and some had originally been private houses.[94] A building complex found in Moregine (Murecine) on the outskirts of Pompeii, that included a peristyle flanked by three handsomely decorated dining rooms, has been identified as a *caupona*, a hotel or the seat of a corporation.[95] The *Praedia* of Julia Felix (II 4, 1.12) with shops, dining rooms, apartments and a bath complex to rent was equally sumptuous.[96] This testifies to the fact that the highest level of luxury was

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91 New central pictures seem to have been inserted also to the decorations of some other rooms in the house. *PPM* 9, 548-55, 566-76.

92 Pollini 2010, 312.

93 *CIL* IV 3691, trans. Varone – Berg. See Varone 2002, 29. On the rear wall of the *ala* h there was a painting representing a naked female that could have brought into mind a statue of Venus (*PPM* 9, 565). The painting seems to belong to the original decoration of the house, but the inscription painted on a representation of a papyrus scroll might have been added later.

94 Packer 1978, 12, 18, 24-26, 44; DeFelice 2007, 476-77.

95 McGinn 2005, 268; Mazzoleni – Pappalardo 2004, 320-23.

96 Parslow 2007, 218-20; Nappo 2007, 358-61.

not unheard of in spaces hosting paying customers. In addition, McGinn notes that the distinction between hotels and brothels is "impossible to maintain for the Romans" so sex would have probably been for sale in these locations, though perhaps only as a side business.[97] The *oecus* g of the *Casa di Ganimede*, a relatively intimate dining room would have been just the kind of a setting, where a well-off man could have brought a male companion – perhaps spotted in the Stabian Baths or provided by the house – for a dinner. The *cubiculum* f of the house IX 5, 11.13 would have been the kind of a room where the male couple could have withdrawn after dinner.

Whether restaurants, hotels, some sort of clubs or simply private homes, the world of erotic choices offered in the decorations of the *oecus* g of the *Casa di Ganimede* and the *cubiculum* f of the house IX 5, 11.13 could not have been enjoyed in the marriage bed. A stimulated freeborn male viewer would have had the possibility to abuse a slave serving in the property. He could have also tried to find suitable company among fellow visitors of the house, though this might have severely compromised his reputation. And finally he could have turned to a male prostitute, who would not have been out of place in the setting provided by these two houses.

97 McGinn 2005, 227.

Instrumentum con scene erotiche da tombe femminili di età romana

Anna Fedele – Donato Labate

Premessa

I recenti rinvenimenti in Emilia di tombe di età alto imperiale contenenti *instrumentum* figurato con scene erotiche, riferibili principalmente a corredi sepolcrali femminili,[1] ha stimolato l'interesse ad approfondire la ricerca da un lato per verificare se la stessa circostanza sia documentata in altri contesti funerari, dall'altro per cercare di dare una possibile risposta a questa associazione alquanto singolare. La domanda che ci si è posti è stata se si trattasse di oggetti attinenti all'attività praticata in vita dalla defunta, come la prostituzione, o piuttosto oggetti lasciati dal congiunto per esaltare aspetti gioiosi dell'esistenza o come ricordo dei momenti felici trascorsi in vita con la compagna.[2]

Scene erotiche su *instrumentum* sono attestate anche in tombe femminili dell'età del ferro. La scena di un *symplegma* tra un uomo nudo e una donna velata è raffigurata sullo specchio della necropoli etrusca della Galassina di Castelvetro nel Modenese (V sec. a.C.). La scena fa parte di una teoria di raffigurazioni interpretata come rappresentazione di un contratto nuziale o di una *ierogamia*.[3] Scene di *symplegma* molto simili a quella di Castelvetro sono presenti sulle situle venetiche di Sanzeno in Val di Non[4] e di Pieve di Alpago nel Bellunese.[5] In quest'ultima il *symplegma* è preceduto da altre quattro scene erotiche intercalate da scene di vita domestica, che iniziano con la raffigurazione di un probabile contratto nuziale e trovano compimento nella rappresentazione di un parto con la partoriente assistita da levatrici. I giochi erotici che precedono l'accoppiamento nell'alcova hanno inizio in presenza dei possibili genitori della coppia, mentre questa, in piedi e ammantata, è intenta nel primo approccio sessuale (prima scena) che ha seguito, in altre tre scene erotiche, con la donna ancora ammantata e l'uomo nudo in piedi contro un muro (seconda scena), con la donna seduta su un mortaio (terza scena), entrambi in piedi con coito da tergo (quarta scena). Queste scene rimandano al *mundus muliebris:* i giochi erotici si alternano ai lavori femminili, *in primis* tessitura e preparazione di cibi raffigurati rispettivamente da una donna intenta a tessere al telaio e un'altra a pestare alimenti in un mortaio, mentre altre due donne impugnano attrezzi verosimilmente domestici come un probabile mattarello e un non meglio specificabile martello ligneo. Si tratta di scene finalizzate a sottolineare l'identità femminile sia nell'ambito dell'economia domestica[6] sia nel soddisfare sessualmente il compagno, sia infine di assicurare, tramite il parto, la discendenza.

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1 Fedele – Labate 2013b; Fedele – Labate 2014.

2 Fedele – Labate 2014, 285.

3 Labate 2006, 50, figg. 29-30; Pizzirani 2009, 135, fig. 55, ivi bibl. prec.

4 Pizzirani 2009, 143, fig. 58.

5 Gangemi 2013, fig. a p. 290, cat. n° 6.9.

6 Un peso da telaio con impresso due bolli con scene erotiche è stato rinvenuto a Bitonto (BA) in una tomba femminile di età ellenistica (Riccardi 2003, Tomba 12/1981della seconda metà del IV sec. a.C.).

Fig. 1: Modena, necropoli di Novi Sad, Tomba 152, lucerna con scena di sesso acrobatico.

Fig. 2: Modena, necropoli di Novi Sad, Tomba 52, lucerna con scena di *coitus a tergo.*

I giochi erotici che precedono l'amplesso nell'alcova (quinta scena) e si concludono nel parto (sesta scena) rivelano che la finalità del rapporto sessuale è quella di garantire la continuità dinastica. L'intangibilità dell'unione per garantire la discendenza è pertanto il significato ultimo di queste scene, piuttosto che una mera raffigurazione erotica come nel caso delle scene riprodotte sull'*instrumentum* di età romana, in particolare sulle lucerne, dove le stesse erano tese a stimolare i sensi con un intento puramente erotico.

Le attestazioni di età romana

Per l'età romana la ricerca della presenza di *instrumentum* con scene erotiche in contesti sepolcrali ha preso avvio dall'Emilia-Romagna dove sono documentate sei sepolture: quattro a Modena, le altre a Reggio Emilia e Piacenza che hanno restituito una *spintria* e 5 lucerne. Tutte o quasi tutte appartenevano a tombe femminili, di una sola, quella di Cittanova, è incerto il sesso dell'inumato per la povertà del corredo. Altre nove attestazioni sono distribuite dal nord al sud d'Italia: cinque nel Veneto, le altre, una ciascuna, in Piemonte, Lombardia, Lazio e Sicilia. Anche di queste 5 sono da riferire a contesti femminili, due probabilmente femminile e due incerti. Su un totale di 16 attestazioni, 11 (69%) sono riferibili a sepolture femminili, le restanti 5 (31%) potrebbero anche esserlo, ma non vi sono sufficienti elementi probanti, nessuna è certamente maschile.[7] In ogni caso l'alta percentuale di sepolture femminili con *instrumentum* con scene

[7] A queste attestazioni sarebbero d'aggiungere altre quattro da contesti funerari di cui non sono stati distinti i corredi: necropoli di Via Zima a Brescia, lucerna con scena erotica con *coitus a tergo* (Bezzi Martini 1987, 70, fig. 2); da Caprino Veronese (VR), lucerna

Fig. 3: Modena, necropoli di Cittanova, Tomba 25, lucerna con scena di sesso acrobatico con iscrizione a commento.

erotiche è indice di una pratica funeraria diffusa in un ambito territoriale piuttosto ampio che interessa, principalmente in età alto imperiale, tutta la penisola italica e non solo.[8]

L'attribuzione a contesti femminili è stata possibile per la presenza, come elementi di corredo, di oggetti riferibili al decoro personale (anelli, aghi crinali, collane), alla toilette (unguentari, pissidi) e a utensili da lavoro tipici della *materfamilias* (fusi e fusaiole).

L'unica tomba sottoposta ad analisi antropologica, e riferita ad una donna adulta, è quella di Piacenza, il cui corredo, per la presenza di tre fusi e di un ago crinale, non lasciava dubbi sulla sua appartenenza (**fig. 4**).

Ma veniamo all'*instrumentum* con scene erotiche rinvenuto nelle tombe, tutte riprodotte su lucerne ad esclusione di una raffigurata su una *spintria.* La scena erotica più documentata è quella del *coitus a tergo* (7 su 15), una delle quali, di tipo umoristico, con pigmeo e *mulier equitans* che gli offre le spalle. A seguire due sono relative a scene di donna che cavalca (*pendula aversa* o *equus aversus),* due con accoppiamento sul dorso di un asino (**fig. 1**), una con coito frontale,[9] una con scena di sesso di gruppo (**fig. 3**) ed una con *fellatio*. Di una non è nota la scena.

Tutte le scene, ad esclusione del coito sul dorso di un asino e quella di sesso di gruppo, sono attestate sia negli affreschi pompeiani sia sull'*instrumentum domesticum* ed in particolare sulle lucerne,[10] quella del *coitus a tergo* sembrerebbe la più diffusa almeno sulle lucerne da contesti sepolcrali.[11]

Le immagini più inconsuete nel repertorio figurativo delle lucerne da contesti sepolcrali sono le scene di coito sul dorso di un asino o quella di sesso di gruppo entrambe attestate a Modena nel I sec. d.C.[12] La lucerna con coito sul dorso di un asino ammantato (**fig. 1**), proveniente da una tomba attribuita alla sepoltura

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configurata a testa grottesca con tre scene erotiche, due raffigurate sul disco – un *coitus a tergo* ed uno con *Venus pendula* – ed uno sulla presa della lucerna con coito in piedi (Larese – Sgreva 1996, 173-74, fig. 268).

8 Lucerne con scene erotiche son presenti anche in altre regioni dell'impero romano: si segnalano ad esempio il rinvenimento di *Viminacium* in Serbia e di Monte da Loja in Portogallo. Nel primo caso si tratta di una sepoltura femminile per la presenza di un ago crinale (Nikolicć – Raičović 2008, 332; 336: tomba ad incinerazione indicata con la sigla G1– 998) e nel secondo caso di una tomba ad inumazione, sesso non indicato (Laurenço – Craco 2013).

9 Il repertorio delle raffigurazioni erotiche, chiamate *figurae Veneris,* più rappresentate nell'arte romana, è vasto (delle posizioni amorose ci parla Ovidio chiamandole *mille modi Veneris* nell'*Ars amatoria* 3, 786-87), dalla posizione della donna detta *Venus pendula* o *pendula conversa* o *mulier equitans* (donna a cavallo) dove la donna è sopra l'uomo, in posizione frontale alla posizione della donna detta *pendula aversa* o *equus aversus* quando questa volge le spalle all'uomo, alla *Venus prona*, inginocchiata sul letto per il *coitus a tergo*.

10 Jacobelli 1955; Johns 1992; Varone 1994; Cantarella 1998.

11 Un'altra lucerna con scena di *coitus a tergo* è stata rinvenuta a Brescia, nella necropoli di via Zima. Del rinvenimento, che risale all'inizio del '900, non si conosce l'associazione ad una tomba specifica (Bezzi Martini 1987, 70, fig. 2).

12 Per la prima edizione delle lucerne cfr. Fedele – Labate 2013a; Fedele – Labate 2014.

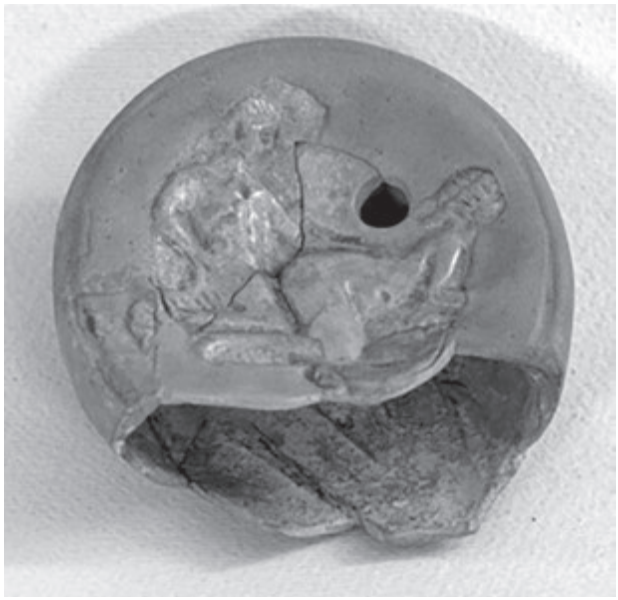

Fig. 4: Piacenza, necropoli di via Venturini, Tomba 12, lucerna con scena di *coitus a tergo*.

Fig. 5: Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella (VR), Tomba da località Borgo Aleardi, lucerna con scena erotica: *mulier equitans* (da Bolla 1995).

di una donna per la presenza di un ago crinale. La scena è composta da un uomo, seduto sul dorso dell'equino, rappresentato nell'atto di un coito frontale con la donna distesa sull'asino. Questa, con gambe sollevate rette dal compagno, si trattiene con la mano destra ad un albero mentre con la sinistra, sembra masturbare l'asino itifallico mentre questo è intento a cibarsi. La scena trova un confronto stringente con una lucerna a volute rinvenuta in una tomba nel Reggiano anche questa riferibile ad una sepoltura femminile per la presenza di un anello digitale in bronzo (**fig. 8**). La scena erotica è del tutto identica a quella modenese tant'è che sembra prodotta dalla stessa matrice. Risulta alquanto singolare che entrambe le lucerne, con scena erotica inconsueta, siano al momento attestate in contesti sepolcrali e per di più in tombe femminili.[13]

L'iconografia del coito sull'asino sembra derivare da una raffigurazione simile presente sulla ceramica aretina ma con due piccole varianti: la donna non masturba l'asino e l'asino si ciba da un grande bacile-mangiatoia. La scena è stata interpretata come un coito fra satiro e ninfa a causa dell'ambientazione agreste.[14] A questa iconografia fa rimando la scena erotica, più sobria di quella modenese e reggiana, con satiro e ninfa sulla schiena di un asino raffigurata su una lucerna rivenuta in una tomba portoghese.[15]

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13 Alle lucerne di Modena e Reggio Emilia di I sec. d.C. bisogna aggiungere una terza, più tarda, rinvenuta in Portogallo in una tomba femminile di fine II - inizi III sec. d.C.: Da Monte da Loja proviene una lucerna con ansa spezzata con raffigurata sul disco una scena di coito sul dorso di un equino (Laurenço – Craco 2013, 59-61, fig. 16). La lucerna a disco, tipo Dressel 28, è stata rinvenuta con una patera e bicchieri posti ai piedi di un inumato di sesso non meglio specificato. La lucerna è stata riferita ad una produzione locale (lusitana); altro esemplare identico con marca MV è presente nella raccolta del museo di Évora in Portogallo (Morais 2011, 62-63). Anche questa lucerna ha l'ansa spezzata ritualmente come la lucerna di Monte da Loja e non è escluso che possa provenire da un contesto funerario.

14 Porten Palange 2009, 269. La scena deriva dal punzone dell'officina di Publio Cornelio (Porten Palange 2004, Sy17a, Taf. 22; Troso 1991, n. 62). Ringrazio Massimo Brando per la segnalazione suggerita nell'ambito del confronto nel gruppo 'Ceramica in archeologia' che mette a contatto chiunque sia interessato allo studio della ceramica: *https://www.facebook.com/groups/ceramicainarcheologia*.

15 Cfr. supra nota 13.

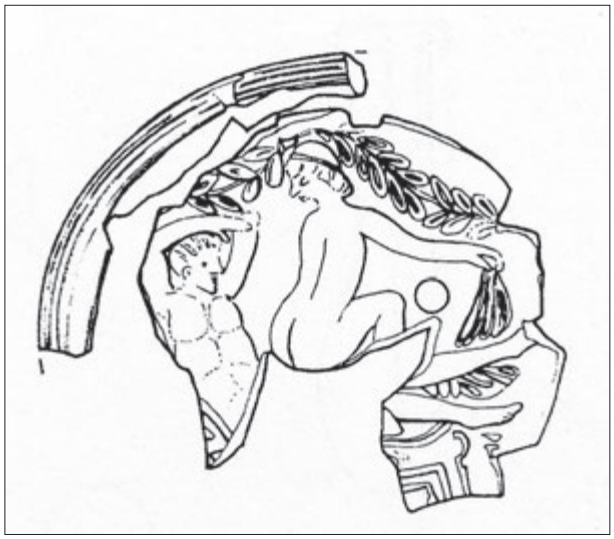

Fig. 6: Veronese, necropoli di Santa Maria di Zevio, Tomba 164, lucerna con scena di *mulier equitans* (da Biondani 1996).

Fig. 7: Pompei, necropoli di Porta Nocera, Tomba 8 (da Van Andringa – Duday – Lepetz – Joly-Lind 2013).

Fig. 8: Francia, Provenza, necropoli di *Vernègues,* Tomba 41, lucerna con scienza di sesso acrobatico (da Chapon et al 2004).

Nel caso delle lucerne di Modena e Reggio Emilia le raffigurazioni erotiche rimandano a scene umoristico/dissacranti connesse forse a spettacoli di sesso acrobatico.[16] La rappresentazione della ninfa che masturba l'asino nell'atto di accoppiarsi con il satiro è da ritenere una rielaborazione umoristico/sarcastica della scena più sobria presente sulla ceramica aretina e sulle lucerne della Lusitania.

Altra scena inusuale è quella di sesso di gruppo e iscrizione a commento presente su una lucerna rivenuta in una tomba di Cittanova (Modena). La tomba, del tipo a cremazione diretta con corredo composto (**fig. 3**) da lucerna e da una piccola olpe in ceramica comune, è ascrivibile al I sec. d.C.

Sul disco della lucerna è raffigurata una scena erotica di gruppo con tre uomini e una donna, a un livello di esplicitazione sessuale senza uguali nel panorama figurativo di età romana. La donna, in piedi è posta al centro della scena nell'atto di un simultaneo coito frontale, di un *coitus a tergo* e di una *fellatio* praticata ad un uomo prono sorretto dagli altri due uomini in piedi intenti nella copula. Tutti i personaggi sono raffigurati nudi ad esclusione di uno, seduto su uno sgabello, vestito con tunica a maniche corte sollevata all'altezza del bacino.[17]

La donna, raffigurata di tre quarti, con seno e pancia pronunciati, sorregge con le mani i falli spropositati dei due uomini posti davanti e dietro di lei, e con la testa reclinata pratica la *fellatio* al terzo uomo. A commento della scena un'iscrizione: *(AD)IVVA(T)E SODALES*, "aiutate(mi), compagni" (**fig**. **3**). La lucerna

16 Per spettacoli erotici cfr. Varone 2000, 48-53, fig. 46; Johns 1992, 174.

17 Fedele – Labate 2014, 270-80.

trova un confronto stringente con un esemplare rinvenuto nel 1930 a Forlimpopoli meglio conservato rispetto a quello modenese, sia per la qualità delle figure sia per l'integrità dell'iscrizione *ADIVVATE ROGO SODALES*, "aiutate(mi), (vi) prego, compagni" e deriva da una matrice diversa da quella utilizzata per la lucerna modenese, pur rifacendosi allo stesso prototipo. Nella lucerna di Forlimpopoli, a differenza di quella di Cittanova, la donna indossa due cavigliere.[18]

L'interesse particolare delle lucerne di Cittanova e Forlimpopoli deriva dalla scena raffigurata piuttosto rara, che non trova, al momento, nessun confronto nella cultura figurativa romana, ivi compresa quella presente sull'*instrumentum* domestico. Altra peculiarità delle lucerne di Forlimpopoli e Cittanova è la presenza dell'iscrizione a commento della scena erotica riprodotta sul disco. L'iscrizione *ADIVVATE SODALES* compare su altre lucerne associata alla rappresentazione di alcuni Amorini intenti a giocare con la clava di Ercole e a bere da una coppa. La scena è da mettere in relazione al mito di Ercole ed Onfale, ovvero Ercole ebbro, vinto dall'amore, che abbandona la clava. In questo caso l'iscrizione *ADIVVATE SODALES* dovrebbe fare riferimento al sodalizio degli Amorini finalizzato a far vincere Amore sulla Forza.[19]

La stessa iscrizione a commento della scena sesso di gruppo raffigurata sulle lucerne di Cittanova e Forlimpopoli è da ritenere dissacrante per il rimando al mito di Ercole ebbro, ovvero della Forza che si piega ad Amore, resa, nella lucerna con sesso di gruppo, in senso umoristico. Non è escluso che la scena possa rappresentare uno spettacolo di sesso acrobatico dove a pronunciare *(AD)IVVA(T)E SODALES* "*aiutate(mi), compagni*" o *ADIVVATE ROGO SODALES*, "*aiutate(mi), (vi) prego, compagni*" sia il personaggio sostenuto sulle braccia dei compari, che chiede aiuto a questi, presi dall'amplesso, per non cadere rovinosamente a terra. Una vignetta dissacrante, ironica, sfacciatamente erotica, e, trattandosi verosimilmente di una scena di spettacolo di sesso acrobatico,[20] finalizzata a stupire per le singolari e audaci acrobazie del gruppo.[21]

Un accenno merita infine la presenza di un altro genere di *instrumentum* con scena erotica da contesti funerari: la *spintria* o tessera numeraria con scena di *fellatio* rinvenuta in un'altra tomba modenese ascrivibile all'età giulio-claudia, che faceva parte di un corredo composto da tessere lusorie e di manufatti tipicamente femminili: un ago crinale in osso e una bacchetta mesciprofumo in vetro.[22] Anche in questo caso si tratta di una tomba femminile con una rarissima attestazione, in ambito funerario, di tessera con scena erotica; si tratta con molta probabilità di un *unicum*.[23] Una lucerna con scena di *fellatio* acrobatico è presente in una tomba femminile francese.

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18 Fedele – Labate 2013b.

19 Loeschcke 1919, n. 347; altre lucerne con stessa iconografia da Oedenburg (Siegmund 2000*,* 4-5) da Pozzuoli, conservata presso il British Museum e da Pompei (Amarger – Brun 2007, 165, fig. 27); cfr. da ultimo con confronti con altre scene simili su affreschi, mosaici e cammei Fedele – Labate 2014, 271-80, figg. 14-15.

20 Da una *caupona* proviene un affresco con raffigurato un amplesso funambolico, un genere di spettacolo che avveniva in pubblico (Varone 2000, 49-53 e fig. 46). Anche Catherine Johns ipotizza l'esistenza di spettacoli pubblici erotici (Johns 1992, 174).

21 Che possa trattarsi della rappresentazione di uno spettacolo erotico è suggerito da un'altra scena dello stesso tipo presente su un'altra lucerna con raffigurati tre personaggi maschili e uno femminile, sullo sfondo un quinto personaggio che tiene aperto un drappo come da scena teatrale: la donna è riversa su un uomo supino (coito frontale) che si tiene sui gomiti reggendo nella sinistra in bella mostra una corona (di alloro?); alle spalle della donna, un secondo uomo in ginocchio nell'atto di un *coitus a tergo*, un terzo uomo in piedi si solleva la veste mentre la donna gli pratica una *fellatio.* La presenza della corona tenuta da uno degli uomini che partecipano all'ammucchiata potrebbe rimandare ad uno spettacolo di sesso acrobatico con premio rappresentato dalla corona mostrata in primo piano (cfr. Fedele – Labate 3013a, 68, fig. 3; Fedele – Labate 2014, 271, fig. 13); si tratta di una lucerna che compare nel Catalogo Christie's, *Ars amatoria. The Haddad family collection of ancient erotic and amuletic art*, New York 1998; una seconda lucerna con stessa scena, appartenuta alla raccolta Berry, è stata venduta in una recente asta (ivi, nota 18).

22 Benassi – Giordani – Poggi 2003; Giordani 2009.

23 Si tratta dell'unico rinvenimento noto di *spintria* da contesto stratigrafico ben datato (Benassi – Giordani – Poggi 2003; Campana 2009). Preme sottolineare che un'altra *spintria* in terracotta con scena erotica (non indicata la scena) è segnalata in una tomba a Roma (Tomassetti 1881, 108), ma resta dubbia l'attribuzione ad una *spintria,* che sarebbe l'unica in terracotta nota in letteratura. Non è escluso che si possa trattare del disco di una lucerna figurata.

Discussione

Se si esclude la *spintria* la presenza di lucerne in contesti funerari di età romana è molto diffusa. Il loro valore simbolico è confermato dalle attestazioni letterarie, epigrafiche ed archeologiche. La lucerna, come rappresentazione della luce della vita antitetica all'oscurità della morte, veniva solitamente deposta, all'interno della tomba, capovolta. Il gesto del rovesciamento della lucerna doveva simbolicamente rappresentare lo spegnimento della luce, la fine della vita.[24] Rara è invece la presenza in contesti funerari di *instrumentum* con scene erotiche. Se prendiamo come esempio il contesto Modenese, da noi esaminato in maniera più approfondita, sono documentate tre lucerne con scene erotiche: due provenienti dal Novi Sad (2 tombe su 292 indagate) e una da Cittanova (1 tomba su 144 indagate) e una *spintria* con scena di *fellatio* nella necropoli orientale di *Mutina* (1 tomba su 163 indagate). Nel complesso si tratta di 4 attestazioni su circa 600 tombe, ovvero poco più dello 0,5% delle tombe: considerato che provengono quasi tutte da sepolture femminili si può supporre presenti in queste in poco più dell'1% dei casi.

La domanda che ci siamo posti all'inizio cioè se l'*instrumentum* con scene erotiche si possa mettere in relazione all'attività praticata in vita dalla defunta non può trovare al momento una risposta adeguata. Non è possibile stabilire lo *status* delle defunte con la sola lettura del corredo: in età alto imperiale infatti, periodo a cui sono da riferire la maggior parte delle sepolture esaminate, lo *status* veniva esaltato dal monumento funerario piuttosto che dal corredo.[25] Dei corredi presi in esame solo alcuni risultano particolarmente ricchi, nello specifico quelli di Modena (scheda 3), Piacenza (sc. 6) e San Pietro in Cariano (sc. 10), la presenza di tessere da gioco rimanda all'attività ludica delle defunte esercitata anche in età avanzata, come nel caso di Piacenza. Difficile stabilire se si tratti di attività ludiche che si svolgevano in ambito domestico o in ambienti pubblici o commerciali come le *cauponae* dove le donne che vi prestavano servizio potevano intrattenere i clienti anche prostituendosi. Si deve tuttavia rilevare che nel corredo di Piacenza figurano tre fusi e in quello di Salò (sc. 8) una fusaiola, utensili della *materfamilias*, che rinviano alla filatura e forse ad un'implicita esaltazione del modello della donna/matrona romana dedita alla filatura della lana e alla custodia della casa, attività spesso lodate dai consorti nelle iscrizioni funerarie con gli epiteti *lanifica, domiseda* a cui è associato anche quello di *pudica.*

La tomba di Salò e quella di Valmontone (sc. 14) contenevano manufatti di un certo pregio, come la pisside in vetro con decori in argento trovata nella prima e un pettorale in cuoio con ricami in oro nella seconda, che rimandano ad uno *status* agiato delle defunte di cui non è possibile stabilire la natura se legata alle condizioni economiche della famiglia o del consorte o piuttosto all'attività svolta dalla donna.

Un'unica tomba, quella di Vercelli (sc. 7), ritenuta ricca per la presenza di una bella collana con perle in pasta vitrea e pendagli a forma di fallo, è stata riferita ad una probabile sepoltura di una cortigiana.[26]

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24 Scheid 1984, 137-38. La lucerna rovesciata nel contesto funerario assume lo stesso significato della fiaccola rovesciata tenuta da eroti raffigurata, in funzione funeraria, su diversi sarcofagi. La raffigurazione degli eroti reggifiaccola, intesi come geni della morte ovvero metafora della vita che finisce e la fiaccola che si spegne, è ripresa, con lo stesso significato, nei monumenti cristiani (Settis 1984, 316-31, figg. 287-90).

25 Un esempio emblematico è rappresentato dal grandioso monumento funerario di Vetila Egloghe, alto circa 4 m, con ara in marmo proconnesio e basamento in pietra di Verona, fatto erigere per sé, per il coniuge (?) decurione e il figlio sacerdote apollinare e augustale. Le quattro tombe rinvenute all'interno del recinto funerario, ampio 54 mq, contenevano corredi molto miseri composto da alcune lucerne e poco altro. La tomba 2, che, per la presenza di due anelli in bronzo, può essere riferita alla committente del monumento, conteneva, oltre agli anelli, una lucerna, una moneta di Traiano e un'olla cineraria con coperchio in ceramica d'impasto (Labate – Palazzini 2009).

26 Deodato 2011.

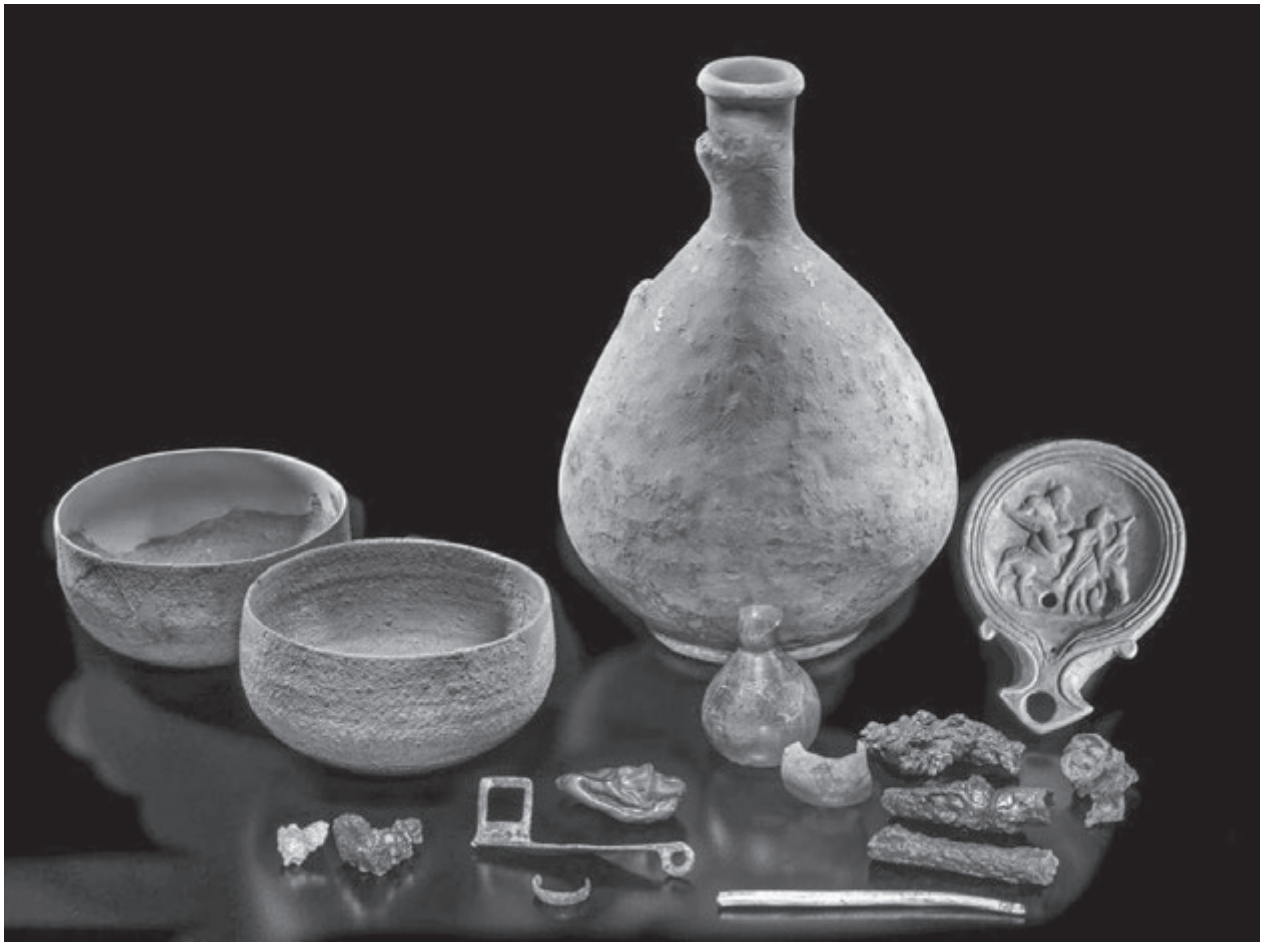

Fig. 8: Reggio Emilia, San Lazzaro, tomba 60.

Non si può escludere che alcune delle tombe prese in esame in questo contributo possano essere riferite a deposizioni di cortigiane, meretrici, *mimae* o *lupae* nonostante sia molto improbabile che queste possano aver voluto con sé nella tomba manufatti riconducibili alla loro attività. La composizione dei manufatti che costituiscono il corredo funerario solo in parte può rispettare la volontà della deceduta, e tra questi possono figurare gli oggetti relativi ad decoro personale e alla toilette, gli altri oggetti sono deposti dai congiunti nel rispetto del rituale funerario e non è da escludere che parte di questi siano stati riposti dal coniuge come manifestazione di tipo affettivo. Al pari delle iscrizioni funerarie nelle quali i coniugi decantano le virtù della scomparsa, le lucerne con scene erotiche possono, al di là della condizione sociale vissuta dalla defunta, rappresentare un omaggio in reminiscenza dei piaceri e dei giochi erotici vissuti dalla coppia. Che si possa trattare di un omaggio del coniuge è indiziato non solo dal tipo di scene rappresentate sull'*instrumentum* deposto nelle tombe (per lo più scene di sesso acrobatico, *coitus a tergo* e *fellatio)* più vicine all'immaginario erotico dell'uomo, ma anche dalla constatazione che al momento mancano attestazioni simili in tombe maschili. Assenza che si può spiegare verosimilmente con il pudore della donna romana, la quale avrebbe forse preferito ricordare il coniuge con scene di tipo diverso e più vicine all'immaginario erotico femminile.

Schede con rinvenimenti di *instrumentum* con scene erotiche da contesti funerari in Italia

1. Modena, ex Parco Novi Sad, tomba 152 (cremazione con corredo incompleto), I sec. d.C. (**fig. 1**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con coito frontale di satiro e ninfa sul dorso di un asino mentre la ninfa masturba o si aggrappa al fallo dell'equino.
Toilette: –
Decoro: spillone crinale in osso.
Utensili *materfamilias:* –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: elemento in ferro di letto funerario.
Bibliografia: Fedele – Labate 2014, 206-7, fig. 7.

2. Modena, ex Parco Novi Sad, Tomba 52 (cremazione), I sec. d.C. (**fig. 2**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con *coitus a tergo*.
Toilette: 8 unguentari.
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: lucerna a canale chiuso, patera in terra sigillata, moneta.
Bibliografia: Fedele – Labate 2014, 269, fig. 6.

3. Modena, Via Emilia Est, sottopasso ferrovia Modena-Sassuolo, tomba 151 (cremazione), prima metà del I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: tessera numeraria (*spintria*) in bronzo dorato con *fellatio*.
Toilette: 7 unguentari, mesciprofumo in vetro.
Decoro: spillone crinale in osso.
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: quattro tessere lusorie.
Altri reperti: 4 lucerna a canale chiuso, una lucerna a voluta?, 4 monete, due *pocula* e tre tazze a pareti sottili, coperchio e bottiglia in ceramica comune, fr. di patera a vernice nera?, fr. di olletta in ceramica grezza.
Bibliografia: Benassi – Giordani – Poggi 2003; Fedele – Labate 2014, 280.

4. Modena, Cittanova, Via Emilia Ovest-Canale Diversivo, Tomba 25 (cremazione), I sec. d.C. (**fig. 3**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con sesso di gruppo (una donna e tre uomini, *coitus* frontale, a tergo e *fellatio*), iscrizione a commento "adivvate sodales".
Toilette: –
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: olpe in ceramica comune.
Bibliografia: Fedele – Labate 2014, 270, fig. 11.

5. Reggio Emilia, San Lazzaro, tomba 60 (cremazione), I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con *coitus* frontale sul dorso di un asino itifallico mentre la donna con la sinistra masturba l'equino e con la destra si aggrappa ad un albero (lucena posta all'esterno della tomba ad incinerazione del tipo a cappuccina) (**fig. 8**).
Toilette: tre balsamari.
Decoro: spillone crinale in osso; anello digitale.
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –

Altri reperti: lucerna a volute, due bottiglie in ceramica comune, olla in ceramica grezza, due coppette in pareti sottili, elementi in metallo di cassettina per trucco.
Bibliografia: Fedele – Labate 2014, 206-7, fig. 8.

6. Piacenza, Via Venturini, tomba 12, I sec. d.C. (età tiberiana) (**fig. 4**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con *coitus a tergo* con donna prona.
Toilette: circa 12 balsamarii, chiodini di cofanetto.
Decoro: spillone crinale in osso.
Utensili *materfamilias*: tre fusi in osso.
Gioco: una pedina.
Altri reperti: olla biansata (cinerario) con coperchio in ceramica comune, tre bicchieri e due tazze in pareti sottili, una coppa, due lucerna a volute, strigile, quattro incensieri e un piattino.
Bibliografia: Carini 2013.

7. Vercelli, Corso Prestinari, tomba 70 (cremazione), I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute *con coitus a tergo*.
Toilette: due balsamarii.
Decoro: collana con vaghi in pasta vitrea e pendagli a forma di fallo, due anelli digitali uno dei quali con corniola decorata con due uccellini affrontati.
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: Anfora segata (cinerario) coperta da un ciotola-catino in ceramica comune, piatto in terra sigillata, olpe in ceramica comune, tazza in ceramica a pareti sottili, chiodi in ferro.
Bibliografia: Deodato 2011.

8. Salò (BS), località Lugone, tomba 33 (cremazione), seconda metà del I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con *coitus a tergo*.
Toilette: –
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: fusaiola.
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: piatto in terra sigillata, olpe in ceramica comune, bicchiere in ceramica a pareti sottili, bicchiere in vetro.
Bibliografia: Massa 1997, scheda 5, tav. XXXI, 8.

9. Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella (VR), località Borgo Aleardi, tomba a cremazione, I sec. d.C. (**fig. 5**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna con donna che 'cavalca un uomo'
Toilette: quattro balsamari.
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: olpe.
Bibliografia: Bolla 1995.

10. San Pietro in Cariano (VR), Prunea di sotto, podere Serego, tomba a cremazione, prima metà del I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna con scena erotica.
Toilette: sette balsamari.
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: un 'dado in pasta bruna', otto tessere lusorie in piombo e ventisette in vetro colorato (*calculi*),
Altri reperti: vasi in vetro (brocca e bicchiere), un "vasetto fittile" due denari e undici assi (I sec. a.C. – I sec. d.C.).

Bibliografia: Forlati 1953; Capuis – Leonardi – Panzavento Mattioli – Rossadi 1990, 73.

11. Bovolone (VR), tomba a cremazione, prima metà del I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna con coito frontale.
Toilette: –
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: due assi uno dei quali di Augusto
Bibliografia: Larese – Sgreva 1996, I, 141, fig. 227.

12. S. Maria di Zevio (VR), tomba 164, I sec. d.C. (**fig. 6**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con *coitus a tergo* con donna che cavalca l'uomo.
Toilette: –
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: Lucerna a volute, coppetta in terra sigillata, patera a vernice nera, vaso in pareti sottili.
Bibliografia: Biondani 1996, 194, 203.

13. Este (PD), fondo Rebado, tomba 102 (cremazione), I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna con donna che cavalca un uomo.
Toilette: balsamario, pisside in vetro ornata con festoni in argento.
Decoro: fibula in ferro, 2 conchiglie, 'punta-pendaglio' in corno di cervo (ago crinale?).
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: anfora segata (cinerario) coperta da una ciotola, due bottiglie, bicchiere in ceramica a pareti sottili, moneta di Tiberio.
Bibliografia: Bernabei 1922, 30-31, fig. 28.

14. Valmontone (ROMA), Colle dei Lepri, tomba 1 (inumazione), II sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a disco con *coitus a tergo*.
Toilette: –
Decoro: pettorale in cuoio decorato con lamine in oro e rame dorato.
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: pettine in legno e un boccalino monoansato in pareti sottili.
Bibliografia: www.ermes-multimedia.net/em/demo/15/2400.swf.

15. Pompei (NA), Necropoli di Porta Nocera, tomba 8 (incinerazione), I sec. d.C. (**fig. 7**)
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con coppia nuda su *kline* (donna seduta, alle sue spalle uomo sdraiato) raffigurata verosimilmente nel momento *post coitum* (la donna con la mano destra scosta il tendaggio che assicurava l'intimità della coppia). Lucerna rinvenuta all'interno del recinto funerario in superficie (deposizione *post mortem*) vicino alla tomba 8.
Toilette: 1 balsamario.
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: moneta in bronzo, cinerario con coperchio, reperto in osso decorato ad onde, 1 *murex* e due denti non combusti di animale. La tomba 8 era sormontata da una stele antropomorfa che presenta uno chignon nella parte

posteriore e pertanto riferita ad una sepoltura femminile che l'analisi antropologica ha confermato appartenere ad un personaggio adulto.
Bibliografia: van Andringa – Duday – Lepetz – Joly – Lind 2013, I, 260, pl. 1, 3a-b; 6, 40.

16. Lipari, contrada Diana, tomba 211 (inumazione), I sec. d.C.
Reperto con scena erotica: lucerna a volute con *coitus a tergo* di pigmei con donna prona e uomo sdraiato, iscrizione incisa *sex. ma sa*.
Toilette: 3 balsamari, serratura e chiodini di cofanetto.
Decoro: –
Utensili *materfamilias*: –
Gioco: –
Altri reperti: due tazze e due urnette in pareti sottili, piattino in ceramica grezza, due lucerne, catenelle porta lucerne.
Bibliografia: Bernabò Brea – Cavalier 1965, 70-71.

Furnishing the courtesan's house. Material culture and elite prostitution in Pompeii

Ria Berg

> *Ita agitur tecum in aedibus lenosis. Priusquam unum dederis, centum quae poscat parat: / aut periit aurum aut conscissa pallula est / aut empta ancilla aut aliquod vasum argenteum / aut vasum ahenum aliquod aut lectus sculptilis / aut armariola Greca aut … aliquid semper est / quod praestet debeatque amans scorto suo.*
>
> This is how it goes in the meretrician houses – before you've given her one thing she finds a hundred things to ask for: a golden jewel is lost, or the mantlet is torn, or a maid or some silver bowl has been bought, or some bronze vase or a relief inlaid bed or a Greek casket, or… there is always something, that the lover is obliged to buy to his slut.
> Plautus, *Truculentus* vv. 51-56 (trans. W. de Melo)

In this passage from Plautus' *Truculentus*, young Diniarchus speaks against mercenary love, lamenting the infinite shopping list that a prostitute imposes on her lover: golden jewels, clothes, servants, silver vases, and exotic furniture.[1]

At least in the literary and imaginary worlds of Plautine comedy, there was a direct relationship between *meretrices* and luxury objects. Most research, however, has seen Roman prostitution as occurring in a physical context totally devoid of material commodities. For example, Carla Fayer and Rebecca Flemming have sided with the idea that in the Roman world, only servile, dirty and bare *lupanaria* existed. They assert that the *hetairai* of the New Comedy, who are distinguished by an uncontainable greed for luxury objects, were only literary *topoi* belonging to an idealized Greek past.[2] If, however, we accept, as suggested by many contributions in this book, the historical existence of a class of independent, non-servile courtesans in Rome,[3] characterized by a series of activities such as grooming, banqueting, and gift exchange, those activities could plausibly have left material traces in the archaeological record. I presume, that the status of a Roman courtesan is importantly crafted and communicated by the use of objects connected with such activities. The underlying theoretical framework is that of examining the agency of material artefacts, which are

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1 Regardless of the atmosphere of luxury created in the passage, the term *scortum* used for the prostitute is strongly pejorative, as is *aedibus lenosis* for her premises. For the term *scortum*, see Flemming 1999, 48. Similarly, in Plautus' *Trinummus* (243), a *meretrix* asks for all the objects she has seen in the house of her lover: *da mihi hoc, mel meum, si me amas*! For an analysis of this passage and feminine discourse in Roman comedy, see Dutsch 2008, 76.

2 Fayer 2013, 78; Flemming 1999, 47. We might however presume that if the recurring courtesan figures in Roman comedy and love elegy were to be amusing or moving, they must have been constructed using elements from contemporary realities, although they obviously do not directly refer to any 'historical' persons.

3 For the definition of the word 'courtesan' as an independent, non-servile person gaining a living with sexual relationships that are not explicitly paid for, and its differentiation from more straightforward 'prostitute', see the *Introduction* and the articles of McGinn, James and Keith, in this volume.

capable of carrying, conveying and performing cultural meaning and memory.[4] In this essay, I will examine material objects – both those referred to in literature and those found in archaeological contexts – as potential indications of Roman non-servile prostitution, i.e. 'courtesans'. In particular, I analyse three Pompeian houses that might be interpreted as settings for 'middle-class' courtesans operating in grey zones between hospitality business and prostitution.

Before examining the question of material objects of Roman (elite) courtesans, I will start with a short *excursus* on material objects as evidence for Roman lower level prostitution.

Roman prostitution and material culture

As Pietro Giovanni Guzzo and Vincenzo Scarano Ussani have observed in their catalogue of the archaeological evidence of prostitution in Pompeii (2009), identifying commercial sex using archaeological evidence is an arduous task: "ben difficilmente si potrà identificare documentazione archeologica materiale sicura ed univoca dell'attività meretricia".[5] At Pompeii, the so-called *Lupanare grande*, the sole purpose-built brothel in the city, is the only building that presents all three indicators that Andrew Wallace-Hadrill already in 1995 defined as indispensable in recognizing a house as a brothel: cells with masonry beds, erotic pictures and explicit sexual graffiti.[6]

At the moment of discovery, the ground floor cells of the *Lupanare grande*, of a bare and essential architectonic form, were empty of furniture and finds.[7] This has perhaps contributed to the view that objects are not useful as indicators of Roman prostitution. Many scholars have, in fact, noted the striking contrast between the despoiled *cellae* and the luxurious furnishings depicted in their erotic paintings.[8] And yet, even in this architectonic complex representing the economically and socially lowest stratum of Roman prostitution, material objects were not completely absent. According to Fiorelli's *Giornale di scavo*, the rooms in the upper storey of the *Lupanar*, which may have been lodgings of the sex workers, did contain several objects, including coins, vessels, lamps and a *candelabrum*.[9] Although they are modest, these finds convey some signs of minimal luxury, in particular the lamp-holder. Besides the *Lupanare grande*, the Pompeian *cellae meretriciae*, or one-room cribs with a masonry bed, opening directly onto the street, have also been identified as *loci* of prostitution.[10] Some cribs, like the series of such rooms in the Pompeian insula VII 13, did contain several objects, including elements of suspended ithyphallic bronze lamps, a silver mirror, and a gold ring.[11]

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4 For the theory of the agency of objects, see in particular Van Eck – Versluys – ter Keurs 2015, 4-6, with further bibliography.

5 Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 28.

6 Wallace-Hadrill 1995, 51. On the definitions of *lupanar,* see also Savunen 1997, 105; 111; Cantarella 1998, 87; Clarke 1998, 195; McGinn 2004, 16-22; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 21-26. On different kinds of Roman *lupanaria*, see Fayer 2013, 475-90.

7 Excavated in 1862; Fiorelli 1862, 48; 55; 58-59; Eschebach – Müller-Trollius 1993, 330; Irene Bragantini in *PPM* 7, 1997, 520-39; Savunen 1997, 111; Clarke 1998, 196-206; McGinn 2004, 280, cat. 26.

8 Clarke 1998, 202; Jacobelli 2012, 420. McGinn 2004, 115 notes that "we can see that the beds in the paintings are richly furnished and at times accompanied by other elegant pieces of furniture, such as lampstands, that contrast dramatically with the austere trappings of the brothel itself". He affirms that the establishments would thus be selling not only sex, but also the "fantasy of sex".

9 Fiorelli 1862, 58-59 reports that while the ground floor with the *cellae* was found empty, several finds – starting from a bronze bell near the door – actually came from the upper floor, although he suspects they had already been robbed in part by *fossores*: "(2 giugno 1862) due monete di bronzo e una piccola caraffina di vetro, più: 5 monete bronzo, un unguentario, due piccole tazze, un vasetto di vetro, lucerna di terracotta ad un lume, più arnesi trovati 28 maggio 1862, candelabro di bronzo, caccabus di rame pieno di fagiuoli e cipolle"; "Null'altro si trovò nell'edificio".

10 For *cellae meretriciae*, see Savunen 1997, 113; McGinn 2002, 10, 12; 2004, 202; Guzzo – Scarano-Ussani 2009, 25-26; 70-72.

11 The crib VII 13, 15, excavated on 6th and 20th of March 1863, contained phallic amulets in bronze ("oggetti itifallici"), elements of bronze scales, and remains of a wooden chest, including numerous lock plates and keys; the neighbouring crib VII 13, 16

Naturally, such lists of objects are too short to give a statistically valid picture of objects connected with brothel prostitution. While preparing a more systematic study of objects found in loci of venal sex in Pompeii, only some preliminary observations about the material culture connected with low-status prostitution can be made.

Firstly, the presence of a few luxurious objects in precious metals, especially the gold ring and silver mirror, suggest a possible conflict with the idea that all prostitutes operated in absolute material poverty.

The second observation concerns lighting instruments, *candelabra*, lamps, and the ithyphallic suspended bronze lamps, as the most prominent category of objects possibly connected with lower status prostitution.[12] Of all kinds of domestic objects, lamps are those most frequently decorated with erotic images.[13] Lamps are well visible in Roman erotic imagery as *lucerna cubicularis*, the use of which – in more elevated societal contexts – has been analysed by Luciana Jacobelli.[14] Set outside of the doors on the street front, lamps may have indicated loci of commercial sex: according to Tertullian, they – at least if burning in the daytime – signalled brothels.[15] However, Giuseppe Spano, discussing Pompeian finds in a 1920 article, dissented from a hypothesis connecting the ithyphallic bronze lamps with *lupanaria,* seeing them only as generic apotropaic charms.[16] Even so, lamps remain a material category with a particularly close relation with the erotic sphere.

In the city of Rome, lamp finds were strikingly numerous in its largest putative *lupanar*, situated along the Via Sacra near the Arch of Titus, identified as such because of its c. 50 subterranean *cellae* with masonry supports for beds.[17] The materials found in original Boni excavations have been published in 1995

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contained elements of a hanging bronze lamp, found at ca. 2,10 m height (a bronze dwarf, riding an ithyphallic horse, with hooks to append bells, other phallic figures with wings, and 18 bronze bells), Fiorelli 1875, 298; Eschebach 1982, 247-48; Eschebach – Müller Trollius 1993, 335; Wallace-Hadrill 1995, 61, n. 70; Guzzo – Scarano-Ussani 2000, 66; McGinn 2004, 293, n. 7; Guzzo – Scarano-Ussani 2009, 48-49. The crib VII 13, 19, excavated on 25 February 1863, contained fragments of a silver mirror and silver spoon, and a gold ring with a gem engraved with an Eros with a wreath in its hand, see Fiorelli 1875, 298; Eschebach 1982, 248-49; Eschebach – Müller Trollius 1993, 336; Guzzo – Scarano-Ussani 2000, 66; McGinn 2002, 41, n. 30; McGinn 2004, 281 n. 30; 293 n. 9; Guzzo – Scarano-Ussani 2009, 50.

12 Petitti 2011a, 46. For considerations about the potential of lamps and other objects as indicators of prostitution, see McGinn 2002, 10-11; McGinn 2004, 203.

13 Although the percentage of erotic imagery, according to a recent study, is actually not very high, ranging from ca. 2 to 6 %: Sanja Vucetic 2013 has shown that in various early imperial sites the percentage of lamps with erotic images is relatively low (Ampurias 2,13%, Vindonissa 4,14%, Carthage 4,5%, Salamis 6,10%).

14 Focussing in particular on Rhône Valley pottery reliefs, Jacobelli 2012, 414. Cf. Fayer 2013, 479, n. 78. Among literary passages connecting lamps with sexual intercourse: a lamp lighting up amorous encounters with a *puella* in Mart. 11, 104; 14, 39: *lucerna cubicularis*; Prop. 2, 15; *Anth. Pal*. 4, 4; 5, 5; 6, 162. For references to lamps in brothels, Hor. *sat*. 2, 7, 48: *sub clara nuda lucerna*; Sen. *contr*. 1, 2, 21: *fuliginem fornicis*; Mart. 4, 4, 9: *spurcae moriens lucernae Ledae*; 12, 61, 8: *nigri fornicis* (blackened by smoke).

15 Tert. *apol*. 35, 4; *uxor.* 2, 6, 1. Spano (1920, 34-36) suggests that all shops and private doors would have been provided with lamps, but those of the brothels were illuminated day and night, recording the continuity of such a habit in 'old Naples'. Cf. McGinn 2002, 11; 2004, 203.

16 Spano 1920, 25-26; Petitti 2011b, 56-59. For the apotropaic character of the phallus, see for example Clarke 2014, 524-25. In my opinion, these objects and their meaning remains to be re-examined more thoroughly. In several cases, including the above-mentioned crib VII 13, 16, suspended phallic lamps do come from *tabernae* connected with venal sex, and none of them comes from an elite *domus*. Other potential cases of phallic lamps in front of *cauponae* or *lupanaria* include: the *Caupona* of Felix and Dorus VI 16, 39.40 (Spano 1920, 10-11); *Thermopolium* of Asellina IX 11, 2, where the suspended lamp (inv. 1098) was found in 11/12/1911 near the *thermopolium* counter (Conticello de Spagnolis – De Carolis 1988, 72, cat. 60); and the shop I 6, 3.4 (Spano 1920, 11-12; Conticello de Spagnolis – De Carolis 1988, 73, cat. 61). In the *thermopolium lupanar* of Aurunculeius Secundio VI 16, 33 two suspended bronze lamps (though not ithyphallic) were found (Spano 1920, 19). Nor should we overlook the combination of lamps with bells, which have also been linked to prostitution. A very late source, Paulus Diaconus in 8th century CE (*hist. miscel.* 13, 2), refers that earlier prostitutes used door-bells to signal availability: *includebant in angusto prostibula et admittentes tintinnabula percutiebant ut eo sono illarum iniuria fierent manifesta*. For *tintinnabula*, also Petitti 2011b, 59.

17 Naturally, the interpretations as a *hospitium* or *deversorium* or slave quarters are also possible. The complex remained sealed by the Neronian fire, which has also determined their good conservation. The original excavator, Giacomo Boni, interpreted the house as a Republican *domus* (of L. Aemilius Scaurus) with subterranean accommodation for slaves. The premises contain also a *caupona*

by Maria Antonietta Tomei, and include, besides numerous fragments, 148 whole lamps, several of which are richly decorated, and *plurilychne* (with up to 12 beaks).[18] The anomalously high number of lamps proves at least the intensive use of these subterranean rooms, each complete with masonry supports for a wooden bed and a sewer outlet, but might also strengthen (even if not confirm), by their quantity, the interpretation of the space as a locus of commercial sex.[19]

As the above evidence indicates, the lowest social level of Roman prostitution, while recognizable by some clear architectonic features, would have been characterized only by a small number of modest mobile finds.

The dividing line between a slave prostitute and a non-servile courtesan would, to a significant degree, have been marked precisely by material objects. The more euphemistic prostitution in higher social contexts, involving free or freed persons both as clients and as operators, would not have left recognizable architectonic remains, because it was presumably conducted in buildings designed for other purposes (banqueting, bathing, entertaining guests, or, simply, housing), but it would plausibly have been characterized by specific groupings of artefacts.

But how can we identify such artefact assemblies? Suggestive parallels to the study of the material organization of pre-modern elite prostitution which naturally are not directly comparable, but share some similar methodological problems, can be found in Renaissance and Baroque Italy and the nineteenth-century United States, epochs that benefit from abundant contemporary written documentation.

The most relevant parallels to the archaeological evidence of the models of social stratification of prostitution are the excavations of several red light districts in the United States, in particular in the excavation of a house owned by Mary Ann Hill, a prostitute and madam, in 19th century Washington D.C.[20] Its excavators write:

> Until recently, few studies of the archaeology of the urban brothel have appeared in the literature. It is likely that brothels in cities have been excavated, but not recognized or reported as such, probably because researchers have not known how to recognize them in historical documents or in archaeological assemblages. Brothels are unusual households, but are unusual in a variety of ways, depending on the status of the residents and clients. The archaeological record provides physical evidence of the material culture of brothel life, reflecting the economic status of both residence and place of business … Like other institutions serving a city with a wide range of social and economic circumstances, brothels reflected the disparities within the population. However, the environs, amenities, and providers varied according to the class of the clientele.[21]

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and baths. Giuseppe Lugli, after a re-examination of the evidence, interpreted the complex as a *lupanar* (Lugli 1947). Boni's interpretation has been taken up again by Andrea Carandini, who has excavated the area since 1985. See further Tomei 1995, 553-56, plan, fig. 4; Carandini 1990, 159; Carandini 2010, 98-106, fig. 45. For numerous literary passages that connect Via Sacra with mercenary sex, see García Barraco 2012, 27-32, for the *domus/lupanar*, 78-82. Similarly, the so-called *carcer* near the Temple of Romulus was reinterpreted by Lugli as a *lupanar*, noting, similarly, the presence of masonry structures to sustain beds (Lugli 1947).

18 Tomei 1995, 558; 582; 594-95. The lamp with twelve beaks, inv. 8944, Tomei 1995, 587-88, cat. 74, tav. III, 74. Tomei stresses that all the lamps present signs of use, so this cannot be a shop or store. Besides the whole lamps catalogued by Boni, stored in the Antiquarium Forense, were 442 lamp handles, 60 stamped bases, 338 decorated and 4456 non-decorated disc fragments, and one iron lamp, Tomei 1995, 613.

19 For the other kinds of finds, pottery, metal and bone, see Tomei 1995, 614. Numerous shells from edible marine species are evidence drinking and eating, and there is also a conspicuous quantity of *terra sigillata* ware, Tomei 1995, 616-18. Cf. similarly also García Barraco 2012, 15. Some rooms present simple painted decoration, but no erotic scenes, Tomei 1995, 615.

20 For the excavations, see Seifert – Balicki 2004; Seifert – O'Brien – Balicki 2005, in part 117. Mary Ann Hall, proprietor of a successful brothel active between 1840-1883, and known from census records, city directories, tax assesments and legal records, built the three-storey house at the age of 23, and died at age of 71, leaving an estate of $80,000. Her two sisters also worked in and owned brothels.

21 Seifert – O'Brien – Balicki 2005, 119.

In these excavations, a clear differentiation was observed between domestic items found on sites of elite brothels, poorer brothels and 'normal' houses in the neighbourhood. Elite brothels were characterized by anomalously high percentages of luxury products connected with the activities of eating, drinking and body-care (costly table-services in porcelain, champagne bottles and remains of expensive furniture).[22]

Another interesting methodological exercise consists of reading an article on the 'archaeology of desire', which analyzes the excavation of a possible 1820's brothel site in New Orleans, putatively the Rising Sun of the famous song.[23] The authors ask (in this case sceptically) whether we as scholars are basically guided by our own desire to interpret the exceptionally high number of faiance rouge pot fragments found on the site as evidence linking sexuality, the 'Frenchness' of New Orleans, and, ultimately, the brothel of the popular song. This also remains a good question and *caveat* in the case of Pompeii, haunted for centuries by a touristic desire to find erotic narratives.[24]

Tessa Storey's study of the objects in the houses of courtesans in Baroque Rome, based on inventories and account books of their households, is also very illuminating.[25] She points out how the courtesans' often splendid and luxurious objects, including furniture, paintings, musical instruments, and books, were described and moralized by contemporary writers as dangerous instruments of seduction, alluring and capturing men in their houses.[26] According to Storey's analysis, the Baroque courtesan herself can simultaneously be considered an object, a collector's piece that demonstrates the tastes and wealth of her sponsor, or an agent creating in an eclectic way a collection of objects that mirrors, like a collection of lovers, her status and professional success.[27]

Thomas McGinn too, in his book about the organization of Roman prostitution, presents parallels from modern literary descriptions of brothels, which combine *faux-élite* and seemingly luxurious *mobilia* with mercenary sex – silk, red velvet and other such 'seductive' materials that 'invite to touch'.[28] This brings up important questions about materiality, understood as the agency and power of the very materials used to craft the objects, also in the context of Roman courtesans.

My hypothesis is that in Classical Antiquity too, the presence of artefact assemblies of luxury products relative to grooming, body-care and banqueting, which are in contrast with the modest, non-elite status of the house (modest paintings, non-canonical form, presence of other commercial activities, in particular bars), may be interpreted as archaeological indicators of professional hospitality business and non-servile prostitution.[29] To test this hypothesis, and to start sketching an artefact pattern indicative of non-servile

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22 For the results of the comparison with contemporaneous 'normal' households and lower-class brothels, see Seifert – O'Brien – Balicki 2005, 119-24. In particular, the Mary Ann Hall brothel had a higher percentage of vessels for preparing and serving food, and high value porcelain: "Mary Ann Hall's house, with its elegant furnishings, expensive table service, exotic foods, exorbitant champagne … was one of the best in Washington's demi-monde, offering satisfaction for all appetites and pleasing all senses."

23 Dawdy – Weyhing 2008.

24 For a good account of early reactions to Pompeian *erotica*, sometimes distorting their reception for a long time, see McGinn 2004.

25 Storey 2006.

26 Storey 2006, 24-25, citing the English traveller Thomas Coryat (beginning of the 17th century).

27 Storey 2006, 27. In Baroque Rome, the upper-class courtesans received their guests in their own homes, organizing convivial evenings including eating, drinking, playing cards, music, and, eventually, sex; this complex of activities was called 'pratticare in casa', Storey 2006, 30-31.

28 McGinn 2004, 227-28; Best 1998: The inventories of nineteenth-century Victorian establishments likewise included pianos and other luxuries.

29 This is based on my doctoral dissertation on the distribution of female toiletry objects in Pompeian houses (Berg 2010a). In this research, the most complete and elaborate cosmetic assemblies were identified, not in large *domus*-type houses, but in several small and relatively modestly decorated houses that were evidently active in the hospitality business. See also Berg 2018.

mercenary sex, I will examine in this essay some material artefacts that have a specific connection with a courtesan's activities: vessels for ablutions, gold jewellery, and, finally, evidence for locations, types, and furnishings of courtesan's houses.

Water basins and cosmetics

Silver and bronze vases figure prominently in Diniarchus' 'shopping list' for a courtesan, which I quoted at the beginning of this essay. Basins, dippers and jugs designed to hold and pour water were functional in beauty care, ablutions during the banquet, and in the bedroom. These were also the most central activities of courtesans, and, indeed, such vessels were instruments and symbols of pleasure and luxury in the Roman culture, closely connected with the erotic sphere. The connection between water and sex was so close that even water and bathing, *per se*, could be considered simply immoral.[30]

Vessels for ablutions appear frequently and prominently in erotic art, among other bourgeois comforts of life, from Hellenistic times onward.[31] They evoke, as does the depiction of the bed with finely worked legs and cushions, the exquisite luxuriousness of the situation and the material comfort that surrounds the protagonists. Water basin and water jug, positioned mostly under the bed, are the most commonly represented objects in Roman *Veneris figurae*, in wall-painting, and in small-scale images in reliefs on lamps, *spintriae*, gems and *terra sigillata* vases.[32] One of the best examples is the mirror cover found on the Esquiline, presenting in bronze relief a richly adorned couple intent on lovemaking, and the abundant furnishings include, under the bed, a water basin and a jug decorated with reliefs (**fig. 1**).[33] The series of erotic images on Rhône Valley pottery decorated with reliefs (ca. 70-250 CE) has been collected and analysed by Luciana Jacobelli, who interprets the vases as references to pre- and post-coital ablutions, and also to the function of ablutions as a contraceptive.[34] The fact that the basin and jug even appear in the smaller iconographic formats, like lamps and *spintriae*, reduced to the essential, indicates that they are indispensable for the understanding of the scene (**fig. 2**).

Fig. 1: The Esquiline mirror, second half of the 1st century AD. Antiquarium Comunale, Roma, inv. 13694.

The best-known literary description of Roman female ablutions belongs to the meretrician

30 For eating and drinking in brothels, see McGinn 2004, 38.

31 For Hellenistic predecessors, see Clarke 2014, 511-13; Myerowitz 1992, 138. On objects depicted in Roman iconography, see Fayer 2013, 478-79 and n. 78 (*candelabra*, basins, jugs).

32 On basins and jugs in erotic scenes and a discussion on their meaning, Jacobelli 2012, 416-18.

33 Antiquarium Comunale, Rome, inv. 13694. For the finding, see *NSc* 1877, 267: "Sulla piazza di S. M. Maggiore, a mezzo metro sotto il piano stradale, è stato scoperto un pavimento di mosaico ordinario, sul quale giaceva una teca di specchio in bronzo, con rilievi osceni di arte perfetta. Il disco superiore misura nel diametro met. 0,165". Clarke 1998, 166-68, fig. 60; Clarke 2003a, 44-46; Anguissola 2010, 56; Clarke 2014, 518-19, fig. 31.8.

34 Jacobelli 2012, 416-18, fig. 4-6. In the images, the basins represented are characterized with a distinct foot, offset lip and two handles, often decorated with ribbing, indicative of silver or bronze vessels. See also Clarke 2014, 526-30.

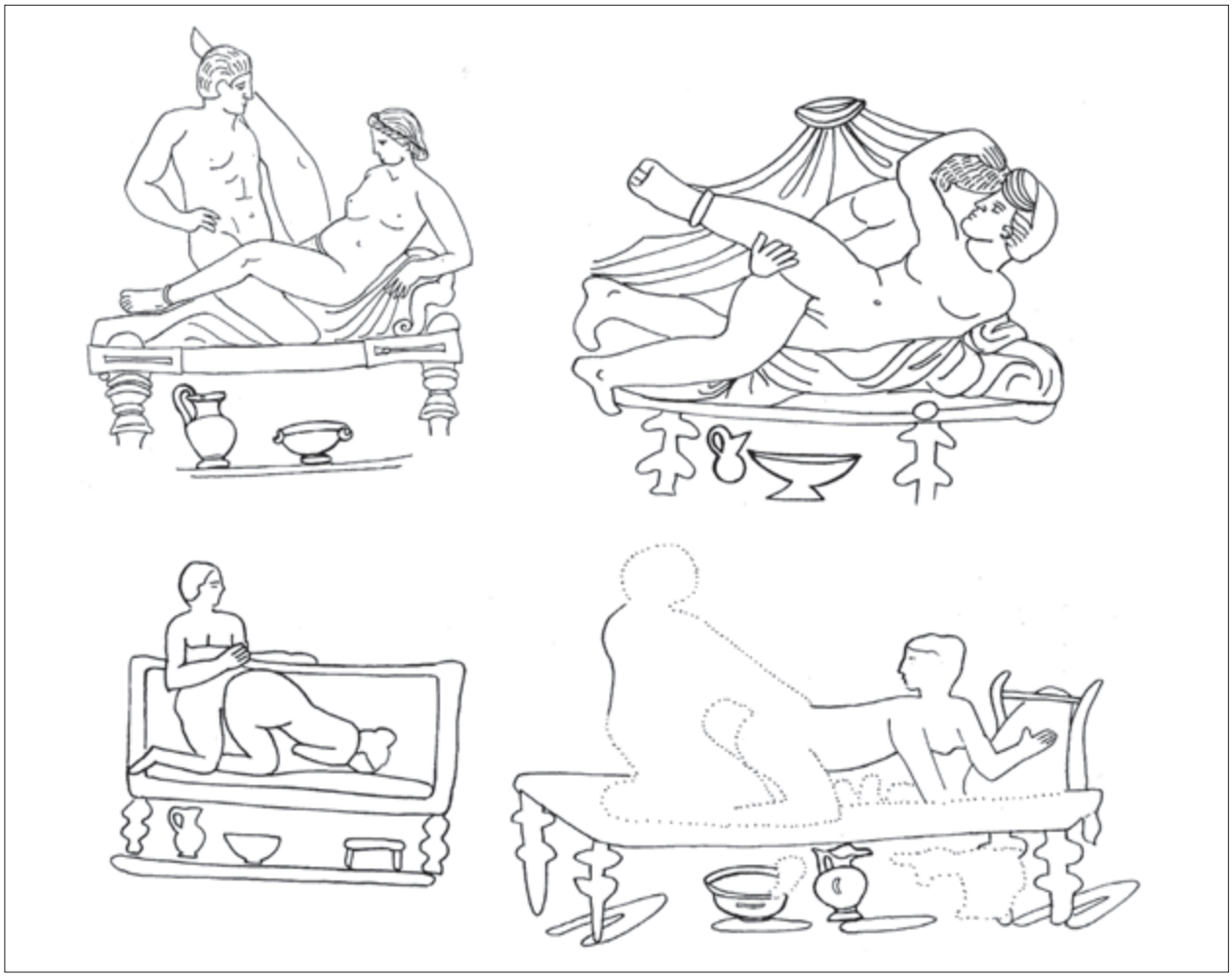

Fig. 2: Erotic scenes presenting a water-basin and a jug under the elaborately decorated bed: a) terra sigillata bowl fragment in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. Res. 08.33h (30 BCE – 30 CE), b) fragment of a terracotta vessel, Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. V.I.4991 (II-I cent BC), c) *spintria*, Civiche Raccolte Numismatiche del Castello Sforzesco, Milan, d) wall-painting in the House of the Painted Vaults (III, 5, 1), Ostia Antica, room 5 (ca. AD 250).

sphere. In Plautus' *Poenulus*, two Carthaginian girls sold to a *leno,* and thus *meretrices*-in-training, talk between themselves about the 'excessive' ablutions of women. The passage has often been cited as evidence of the grooming habits of Roman women in general, but considering its context, it quite specifically describes courtesans' bathing habits:[35]

> *et una / binae singulis quae datae nobis ancillae*
> *eae nos lavando eluendo operam dederunt*
> *aggerundaque aqua sunt viri duo defessi.* (Plaut. *Poen*. 218-31)
> "Yes, and we both had two maids that helped with bathing and scouring, and we tired out two men with water carrying." (transl. P. Nixon).[36]

Cicero, in a rhetorical attack on Clodia, asked whether her illustrious ancestor had constructed an aqueduct so that she could "use water immorally" (*aqua inceste uti*). This creative invective has kindled an

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35 Besides this, women (courtesans) are compared to salted fish that has to be kept in water to soften. For further references to women (prostitutes) as fish, or fish as women, see the article of Henry 1992, 256 on 'edible' women in Athenaeus' *Sophists at Dinner*; Ath. 3, 106a1.3; 4, 135a7-8; 4, 135c1-3.

36 Water-carriers were in fact listed among the habitual employees of brothels by Festus 20 L: *aquarioli dicebantur mulierum impudicarum sordidi adseculae*. Apuleius (*apol*. 75) accuses his adversary Herennius Rufinus of prostituting his own wife (*uxor lupa*) and adds, as a further dirty detail, that he even worked as her water-carrier, *aquariolus*, see also McGinn 2004, 37, n. 163.

interesting debate between Christer Bruun and James Butrica about the exact significance of the phrase.[37] Bruun, in his 1997 paper 'Water for Roman brothels', affirmed that the allusion was made specifically to the illegal conduits by which bars and brothels, in late Republican Rome, were in habit of stealing water from public aqueducts. Cicero would thus have indirectly been calling Clodia a brothel prostitute.[38] Butrica, in his paper 'Using water unchastely', underlines, more in general, the connotation of water with washing after sexual intercourse, and further notes numerous passages where *sumere aquam*, 'to take water', is used in the specific meaning of a douche.[39]

The connection between water basins and prostitution is present in many further literary passages. In book 5 of Phaedrus' *Fabulae,* a father gives each of his three daughters a legacy she merits; to the immoral daughter (*filia moecha*) goes the silver washing basin.[40] Water basins are also, significantly, among the kinds of *instrumentum domesticum* on which erotic imagery can be found.[41]

Water was thus an important feature in the architecture of sex, and water installations and water basins were present even in servile *lupanaria*.[42] A high number of water basins could thus hypothetically be a relevant material pattern.

We now turn to examine a small Pompeian house, V 3, 11, a modest habitation without a conventional name, distinguished by its rich finds, that included an exceptionally high number of water basins, amulets, female toiletries, and also a water jug with an erotic image.[43] It has a central court rather than an atrium (A), provided with a small makeshift *impluvium*, and opening into it a *tablinum*, a *triclinium* (C), a kitchen, three *cubicula* and a small *viridarium* (G) (**fig. 3**). It was excavated in 1902, with final touches in 1903, and immediately described in *Notizie degli scavi* using multiple diminutives, referring to 'mediocre' paintings present only in *tablinum* and *triclinium*, and hasty redecoration of the *atrium* and *viridarium* walls.[44]

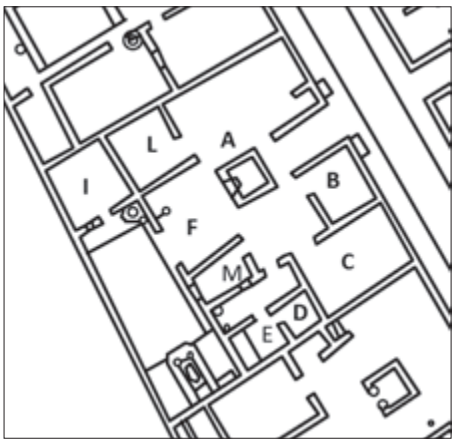

Fig. 3: Plan of the house V 3, 11, Pompeii (from *PPM* 3, 1991).

Despite the generally modest appearance of the house, the garden *triclinium* with two masonry beds and a painted *nymphaeum aedicula* is rather sumptuous (**fig. 4**).[45]

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37 Cic. *Cael.* 34: "Was it for this that I [i.e. Appius Claudius Caecus, an ancestor of Clodia] brought water into the city, that you should use it for your impious purposes?", see Bruun 1997; Butrica 1999.

38 Bruun 1997 bases his discussion on a passage in Frontin. *aq*. 76, 1-2, where a speech delivered in 50 BCE by the aedile Caelius Rufus is cited: *quae nunc nos omnia simili licentia usurpata utinam non res offensas probaremus: inrigos agros, tabernas, cenacula etiam, corruptelas denique omnes perpetuis salientibus instructos invenimus*.

39 Butrica 1999. Ov. *ars* 3, 96: *quid, nisi quam sumes, dic mihi, perdis aquam* (in promiscuous sex, nothing is lost but the spilled douche water); Ov. *am*. 3, 7, 84: *dedecus hoc sumpta dissimulavit aqua* (an amorous *défaillance* is covered up by feigned douching); also Ov. *am*. 3, 620; Mart. 2, 50 (washing the mouth after *fellatio*).

40 Phaedr. 5: *seponit moechae vestem, mundum muliebrem, lavationem argenteam, eunuchos glabros*.

41 These include central medallions on some basins, for example, MANN inv. 27671; De Simone – Merella 1975, 98-99.

42 And as I have mentioned earlier, each cell in what may have been the Roman *lupanar* near the Arch of Titus was provided with a proper outlet to drain, in the form of a perforated concave stone slab. The building Z3 of the Athenian Kerameikos, identified as a brothel, consisting of twenty-two small rooms and several *androne*s for banquets, was provided with a lavish water supply, including three cisterns, three drains and a well. Glazebrook 2011, 39.

43 For the contexts of *mundus muliebris*, Berg 2010, 250-55 and for the glassware Scatozza 2012, 200-2. *NSc* 1902, 274-76; 369-72 and 515; *PPM* 3, 1991, 944-60; Eschebach – Müller-Trollius 1993, 139-40; Tassinari 1993, I, 168; II, 468.

44 *NSc* 1902, 276.

45 Masonry couches with three or two wings are present in several Pompeian *cauponae*; they are not present in most large elite houses, where the *triclinia* and *oeci*, presumably, were furnished with mobile wooden and bronze couches. Masonry *triclinium*-beds

Fig. 4: The garden-nymphaeum and dining area (room G) in the House V 3, 11 (Photo: *NSc* 1902, 276).

The finds were numerous (**table 1**), even though the excavators suspected that a part of the objects was missing, because of robbing by *fossores* at an early date. The number of large decorated bronze basins was particularly high: three round S category basins with horizontal handles, and one so called 'bread-basket' basin, category P, with high handles (**fig. 5**).[46] By comparison with the number of bronze basins in average Pompeian contexts, among the houses published by Suzanne Tassinari, fifty produced only one bronze basin S. As I have argued elsewhere, one basin was the norm even in larger Pompeian households.[47] Besides V 3, 11, only in three other houses were as many as three basins S found (a small *domus*, a *caupona* and a *hospitium*); four basins S were present only in the extremely wealthy house of Menander, and two houses had five of them.[48]

Another possible material indicator of Roman courtesan's activities, besides the water basins, are the objects relative to cosmetic practices. Alison Glazebook has argued that in Greece, only prostitutes wore significant amounts of make-up, and I have earlier argued the same for Roman women, on the basis of Pompeian evidence with a list and analysis of modest houses containing high numbers of toiletries and

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may well have shared with the *lupanar* masonry beds a slight connotation of commercial mass-use, and were therefore not very attractive as fixed structures in elite houses. In a study of the *tabernae* of the Region I Gulino 1987, 115-18 includes in the type I (large restaurants with more than four rooms) several establishments with masonry beds in a garden area (I 2, 18.19; I 2, 20.21; I 2, 24.25; I 6, 8.9; I 11, 10; I 11, 16; I 14, 5). Probable *hospitia* with outdoor dining facilities: II 8, 6; II 1, 8.9; II 5,5; a bar connected with *praedia* of Julia Felix II 4, 7.

46 Tassinari 1997. For the specific uses of vessel forms in bathing, see Nenova-Merdjanova 2002.

47 Berg 2015.

48 Tassinari 1993, 1, 375-78. Berg 2015. Among the vessels published by Tassinari (comprising the finds kept in the archaeological deposits of Pompeii) three basins S in the *caupona* of Vetutius Placidus (I 8, 8.9), the *hospitium* I 14, 9 and in the House of the Prince of Naples (VI 15, 8.9), four basins S in the House of Menander (I 4, 10) and five basins S in the House of Epidius Primus (I 8, 14) and I 9, 2, a tavern directly connected with the House of the Beautiful Impluvium (I 9, 1).

	Room A *atrium*	**Room B** *cubiculum*	**Room C** *triclinium*	**Room D** kitchen	**Room F** *tablinum*	**Room I**
Vessels for ablutions	bronze jug	2 bronze amphorae	bronze cauldron	bronze handle of jug		
		3 bronze jugs				
		bronze oval dish O				
		bronze patera H				
		3 bronze basins S				
Other vessels	tc cup	bronze cup	3 tc plates		bronze cup	glass bottle
	tc jug	other bronze vase	2 tc mugs			tc vase
		bronze vase handle	2 tc cups			
		glass cup				
		glass plate				
Cosmetic, adorment	glass bottle	19 glass *unguentaria*	4 glass *unguentaria*	2 glass *unguentaria*		
		2 bronze coins				
		amulets in different materials				
		bronze pyxis				
		3 bronze mirrors				
		gold textile band				
		gilded silver ring				
		2 bronze tweezers				
		bone hair pin				
		bone needle				
		bone spatula				
		3 bone spoons				
Lamps	tc lamp	2 tc lamps		2 tc lamps		
	iron *candelabrum*	2 bronze lamps				
		glass cup				
Fixtures		bone elements from cascet			iron door fixtures	bronze stud
		iron hinge			bone hinges from cascet	
		iron key				
		2 bronze lock plates				
		3 bronze studs				
		bronze nails				
		bronze rings				
		6 bronze hinges				
Entertainment		3 tc *fritilli*				
		bronze statuette (dog)				
		amber statuette (animal)				
		40 game counters				
Utilitarian/ tools	object in bronze/lead?	2 utensils for nets	2 iron hoes			iron scythe
		iron hoe				iron pick-axe
Other		marble fountain mask				

Table 1: The distribution and functional classification of objects found in the House V 3, 11. Based on *GdS* and *NSc* 1902. Tc = terracotta.

cosmetics.[49] In most Pompeian houses, toiletries found together form only modest arrays, of less than ten items. This was evinced in the data collected in an earlier study on female-associated toiletries in Pompeian

[49] For a list of modest houses containing high numbers of toiletries and cosmetics, see Berg 2017. Perfumes as a form of payment to a prostitute: Mart. 12, 55, 6-9: *Hoc vendit quoque nec levi rapina: / aut libram petit illa Cosmiani, / aut binos quater a nova*

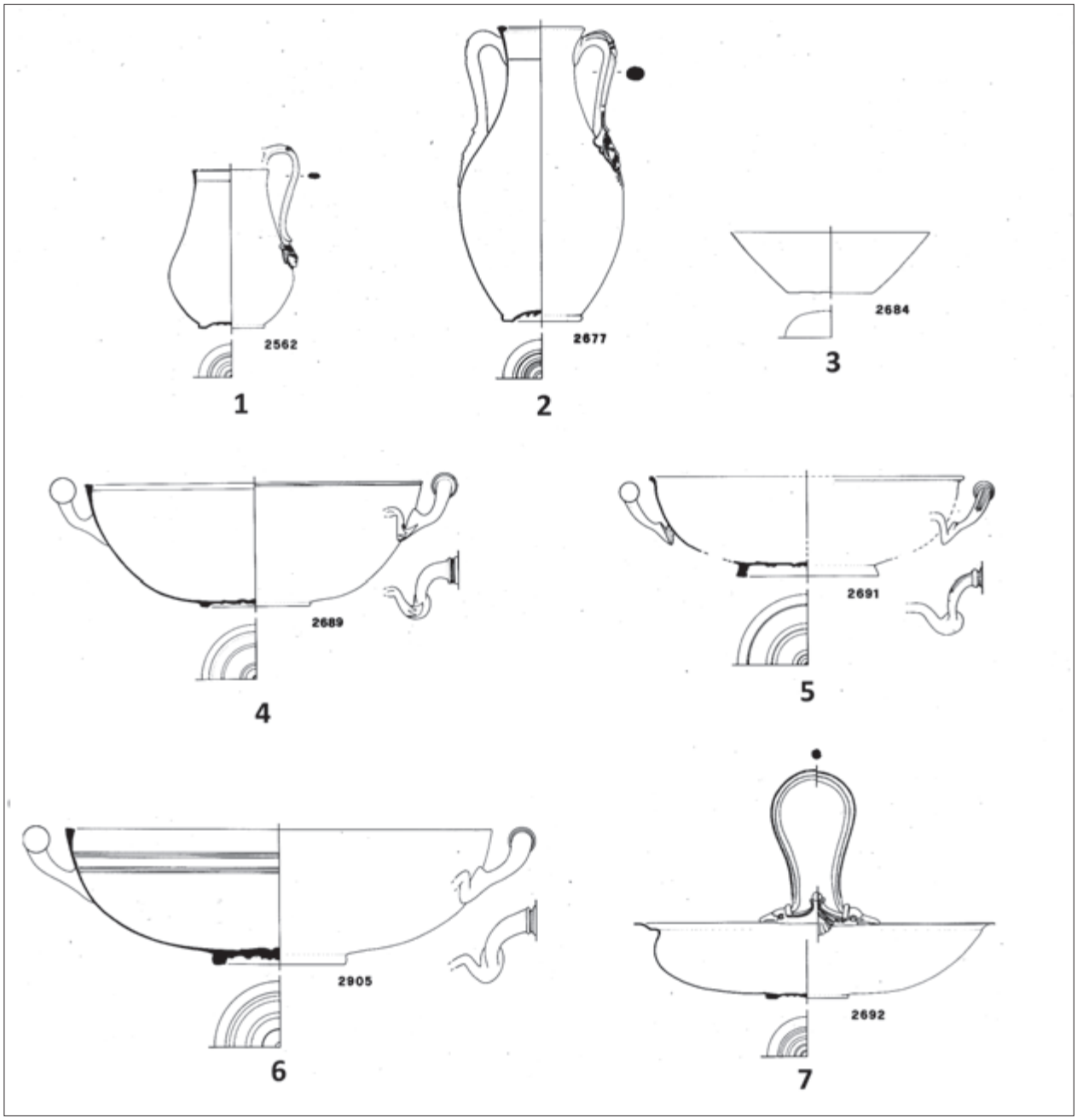

Fig. 5: Bronze vessels found in the House V 3, 11. 1) Jugs of type B1252; 2) amphora of type A3220; 3) oval dish of type O2000; 4-6) three washing basins of type S (S4111 and S4322); 7) basin with high handles of type P2210 (from Tassinari 1993, 1, 168; 2, 468).

house-floor context, on which this chapter is based.[50] In only fifteen houses was a mirror found together with more than ten toiletry items. The houses are mostly small or medium sized, in quartiles 2 and 3, except those with larger vineyards. Two of them have conventionally received the label of *hospitium* or inn, one has been defined a *lupanar* and includes a *thermopolium*, one is a large *thermopolium* with back rooms, one is a one-room shop.

moneta. And for the connection between Greek prostitutes and make-up, see Glazebrook 2009, 236-38, in particular the negative and mercenary associations of eye make-up.

50 Berg 2010.

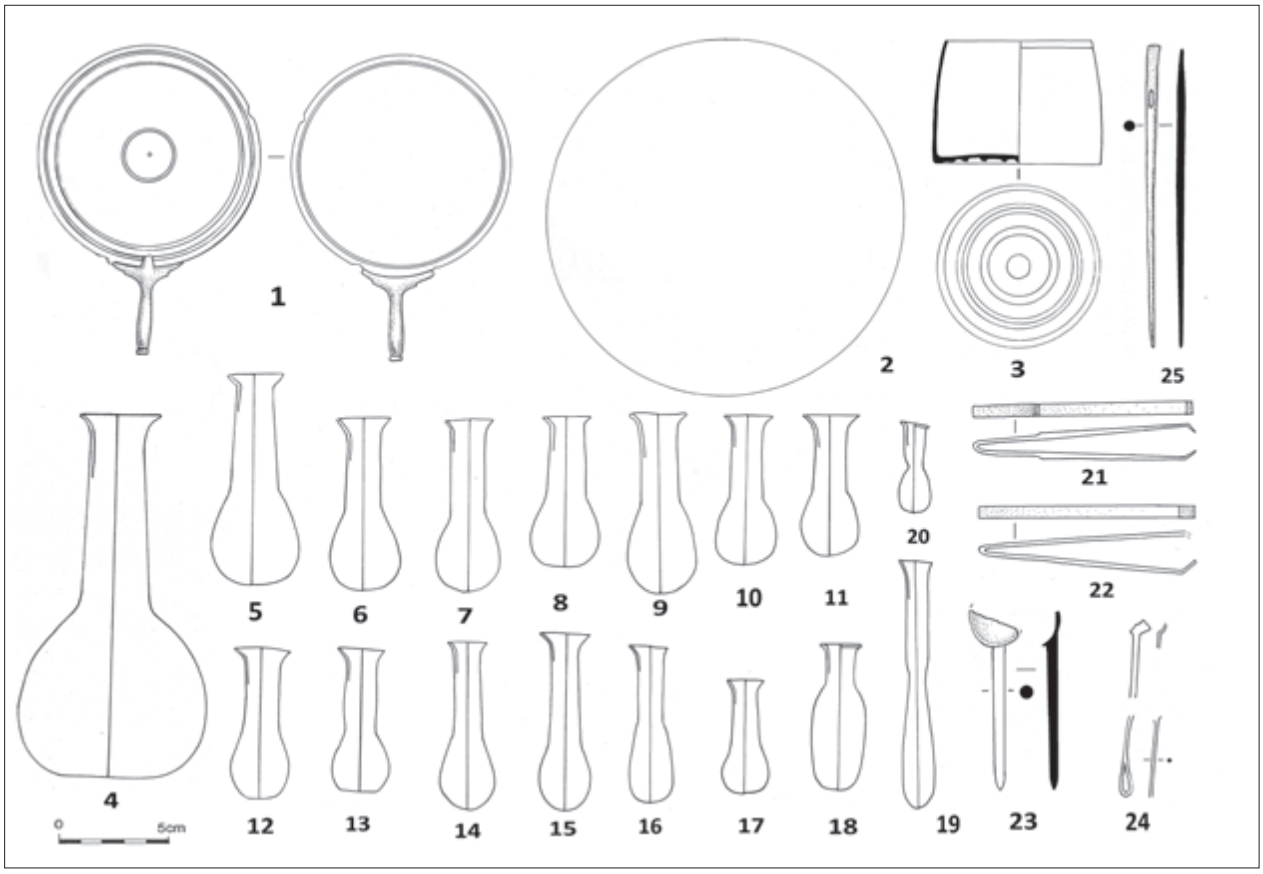

Fig. 6: 1) Bronze mirror, type Lloyd-Morgan G, d. 10.3 h. 14.3 (inv. 55039); 2) Bronze mirror, type Lloyd-Morgan B, d. 16.5 (inv. 55040); 3) Bronze *pyxis*, d. 7.0. h. 5.7 (inv. 55038); 4) Pear-shaped glass *unguentarium*, h. 17.0, type Scatozza 49 (inv. 55017); 5-17) Thirteen glass *unguentaria* of type Scatozza 46, h. 5.3-9.8 (inv. 55018-28; 55030-31); 18) Glass *unguentarium* of type Scatozza 26, h. 6.7 (inv. 55029); 19) Tubular glass *unguentarium*, type Scatozza 47, h. 11.5 (inv. 55038); 20) Miniaturistic glass *unguentarium*, h. 4.2 (inv. 55033); 21) Bronze tweezer, l. 10.4, type Riha F (inv. 55010); 22) Bronze tweezer, type Riha l. 10.1 (inv. 55011); 23) Bone spoon, l. 9.0 (inv. 55014); 24) Fragments of silver spoons (55015); 25) Bronze needle (for sewing coiffures, *acus crinalis*?), l. 14.0 (inv. 55012). Further two glass *unguentaria*, one of h. 13, and the other still containing organic material, were destroyed in the World War II (old inv. 2673-4). A bone hair-pin, with a hand-shaped finial (old inv. 2665), has been transferred to MANN (drawings: author).

Also in House V 3, 11, room B, an above-average amount of *mundus muliebris*, i.e. female cosmetics and toiletries, was found – two bronze mirrors, a collection of 19 glass *unguentaria*, two tweezers, a cosmetic spoon and a pyxis (**table 2**).[51] An average number of *unguentaria* in Pompeian houses, counting from the finds published by Penelope Allison as a database, is five (**table 2**).[52] Thus the collection of glass *unguentaria*, here, is much above the average number found in Pompeian houses.

Not only the quantity, but also the decoration of some of the finds can suggest a venereal connotation for the activities of the house. No erotic paintings have been found in the house, and it has therefore never been labelled as a *lupanar*. However, it contained several mobile finds with erotic imagery: one handle for a water jug, and several amulets. The handle of a bronze jug, found in the kitchen, is an *unicum*, depicting a 'symplegma oscena' (as defined in the *Giornale di Scavo*) between a man and a woman, or rather a satyr and a nymph (**fig. 7**).[53] The figure is in low relief on a rectangular plate, the lower part of the handle of a (water) jug. The object has been published in the volume *Eros in Pompeii*, but without reference to its find

51 For the average numbers of mirrors in Pompeian houses, mostly only one, see Berg 2010a.

52 Allison, *Pompeian Households: An On-line Companion*, http://www.stoa.org/projects/ph/home, consulted on 8.3.2016.

53 MANN, inv. 2533. According to the Pompeii inventory, sent to MANN in 1910 (spedito a Napoli n. 253, fol. 2, ottobre 1910) fra lo strato medio delle terre un'ansa terminante a scudetto rettangolare su cui è rappresentato un *symplegma*. *NSc* 1902, 274.

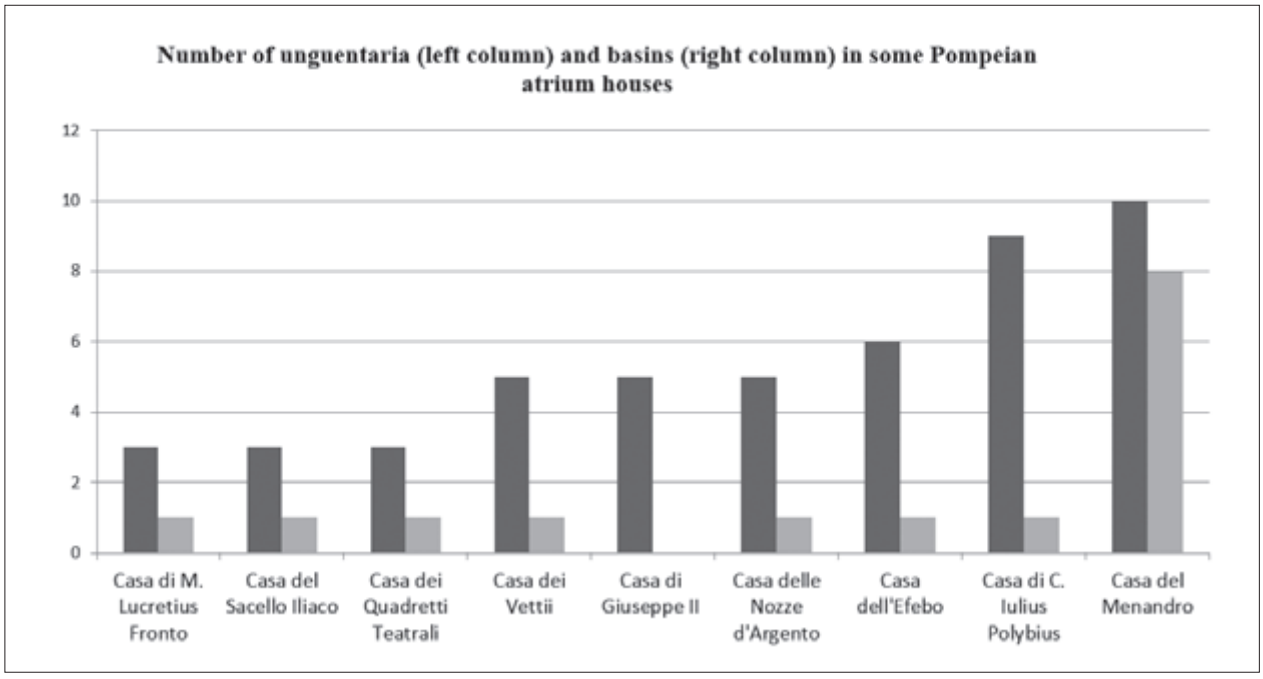

Table 2: Numbers of *unguentaria* and bronze water basins found in nine large Pompeian atrium houses (based on Allison, *Pompeian Households: An On-line Companion*).

Fig. 7: Handle plate of a bronze jug from House V 3, 11, inv. MANN 129477 (Photo: Author).

context.[54] In this publication, De Simone and Merella comment that the objects prove that sexual imagery was "quite accepted as a normal part of life, since it was used to decorate objects in everyday use." I would nevertheless underline that the object is in fact unique in Pompeii, not a common household utensil.

Another exceptional find from this house is a collection of more than 40 amulets. The small figures sculpted in various materials, possibly, but not necessarily originally tied together as a necklace, include a number of scarabs and figures of Isis, Bastet and Harpocrates. Many of the amulets have a sexual reference, such as three *phalloi* and two 'mani impudiche' (hands with a gesture referring to the female genitals)[55] in faiance, an ithyphallic herm, and one so-called *concubine* (a female figure with divaricated legs), carved in bone.[56] A generic apotropaic reading of the figures is, again, possible, but we must remember that most Pompeian houses did not contain such concentrations of amulets. Christopher Faraone states that prostitutes and courtesans appear regularly as users of erotic spells, magical charms (such as *rhombos* or *iunx*) and amulets, to enhance their sexual allure, to bring back old lovers or ac-

54 Inv. MANN 129477; De Simone – Merella 1975, 90. See also Tassinari 1993, 1, 168 (with old inv. 2533). According to Tassinari, another handle (also representing nude male and female figures) would have been found in the house, too. However, this may rather be the same object, erroneously duplicated.

55 Or *mano fica*, a fist with a thumb set between the middle and the index fingers (Ov. *fast*. 5, 433), see Petitti 2011b, 59.

56 Inv. MANN 29488/512. Venditto 2006, 215; De Vos 1983, 66-67.

quire new ones.[57] Equipment for sorcery and love magic are often mentioned in connection with the elderly, retired courtesan figure, *lena*, discussed for example by Marilyn Skinner.[58] The Isiac symbols could also be understood as strengthening such a connection, since the cult of Isis was typically practiced by the elegiac *puellae*.[59] A possible parallel may be a woman's grave found in Vercelli (tomb 70), where, besides an essential ceramic set, two iron rings, an erotic lamp and a collection of amulets, two of which phallic, were deposited as funerary gifts. Angela Deodato, who has published the materials, poses the question whether the woman may identified as a *domina*, *lupa* or *saga*, and underlines the exceptionality of many of the grave-goods, pointing to the relative sexual liberty, and superstitious and magical practices – and proposing, with all due caution, that the deceased might be interpreted as a courtesan.[60]

To conclude, the artefact collection found in House V 3, 11, combining an exceptionally high number of bronze vessels for ablutions (one with an erotic image) with an exceptionally large amount of toiletries (mirrors, *unguentaria*, *pyxides*) and amulets with sexual imagery, could be recognized, on the analogy of methods in modern era archaeology used by Seifert and Balicki, as a possible locus of venal sex, or at least as active in the hospitality business on the borderline of prostitution.

Courtesans and gold

In general, there was a close semantic relationship between gold and courtesans in the Greek and Hellenistic cultures.[61] Golden statues erected in honour of *hetairai* rendered the assimilation corporeal, alluding to the 'golden Aphrodite', not to mention the common *hetaira* name *Chrysis*, 'Goldie'.[62] In Hellenistic comedy, the outfit of courtesans was of saffron colour and their hair mostly golden blond – and Pollux' list of masks includes the 'golden' *hetaira*.[63] A fragment of Donatus' *On comedy* (6, 6) says that also in Roman comedy, *meretrices* regularly wore golden yellow, "because of their greed": *leno pallio colore vario utitur, meretrici ob avaritiam luteum datur*. It is noteworthy that in many mosaic representations of Menander's comedies, a yellow mantle is the distinctive sign of actors who play *hetairai* on the stage.[64] In Roman wall-painting, female protagonists in banquets regularly wear saffron coloured robes, as in two banquet scenes in the *triclinium* of the House of the Chaste Lovers in Pompeii (IX 12, 6), as well as in many allusive love-making

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57 Faraone 2002, 407-11. These were used by *hetairai* to draw the man to their house; see for example a charm used by Simaetha to attract back her lover Delphis, Theoc. *Id*. 2, 32 (trans. Gow): "*Iunx*, draw to my house the man I love". On *rhombos/iunx*, see Faraone 1999, 150-51. More recently on love magic, Edmonds 2014.

58 Skinner 2005, 181. For a Pompeian find context combining *mundus muliebris*, medical and magical elements, in House I 13, 2, see Berg 2004.

59 For example, Iuv. 6, 489 speaks of Isis as a *lena*. For the connection between Isis and courtesans, an example is the elegiac *puella* Delia: see Tib. 1, 3, 11-12; Lilja 1965, 154-55; Murgatroyd 1980, 108; James 2003, 180-81; Gardner 2013, 164.

60 "…la tentazione di ipotizzare una figura femminile probabilmente dotata di una considerevole libertà nel campo delle pratiche sessuali e che verosimilmente ci piacerebbe anche identificare, non in una semplice *lupa*, bensì in una di quelle donne che nell'elegia d'amore sono oggetto di ardente passione da parte di poeti, colte bellezze del *demi-monde*". Deodato 2009, 318-19, fig. 316-17; see also Deodato 2011.

61 Gold can be used metaphorically to characterize the good-hearted and moral prostitute, in contrast to the evil and greedy one, see Kurke 1997, 116-17. Kurke (1999, 182) suggests that the idea of Middle Comedy or the *hetaira* with a 'golden nature' or, rather, a 'golden heart' is a stereotype that goes back to archaic culture.

62 Plut. *mor*. 753 e-f. The golden statue of the *hetaira* Phryne, set up by herself, is a notable act of economic agency, Dillon 2010, 50-51, with further references. We may also compare the golden *hetaira* statues described by the Locrian female poet Nossis, possibly a *hetaira* herself, on which see Gutzwiller 1998, 74-84.

63 The lexicon of Julius Pollux, founded probably on a third-century BCE stage manual, numbers in the catalogue of masks (Poll. *Onom*. 4, 153) the 'golden *hetaira'*. For the blonde prostitute, Menander *apud* Clem. Al. *Paed*. 3, 2, 6; Iuv. 6, 365, 16: *flava lupa*; 6, 120. See further Fayer 2013, 450-51; Dalby 2002, 119-21,

64 Slater 2014, 371.

scenes, like those from the House of the Beautiful Impluvium (I 9, 1.2) (**fig. 12**) and the House of Caecilius Iucundus (V 1, 26, peristyle l), where some details were originally accentuated with gold leaf.[65] A series of paintings with 'couples on bed', women dressed in saffron, come from *cubiculum* D of the Villa of the Farnesina, discussed by Irene Bragantini in the present volume.[66] Golden yellow was thus the distinctive, although not exclusive, colour of Greek and Roman courtesans, and their characteristic saffron veil could possibly be identified as the *crocota*, *epicrocum*, or *crocotula* mentioned in literary sources.[67]

This symbolic connection with gold makes it natural that courtesans in both Hellenistic and Roman worlds are described wearing gold jewellery.[68] Of course, prostitutes did not necessarily own the jewellery they wore; it may have been assigned for their use as an *instrumentum meretricii*.[69] Such is, in fact, the case in the story told by Xenophon of Ephesus, where the eponymous protagonist Anthia is sold to a brothel in Tarentum, and has to stand in front of the door in rich clothes, wearing gold ornaments that obviously do not belong to her.[70] However, many literary sources make it clear that in some cases the jewels worn were the propriety of the courtesan herself.[71] In Lucian's *Dialogues of courtesans*,[72] discourses about acquiring, displaying and maintaining golden jewellery are of central importance, and in several instances jewels are used as competitive signs that denote the success of a courtesan compared with her colleagues. For example, a *hetaira* called Myrtale sneers at her old lover, stating that the new lover has given her a heavier necklace with stones: "The one you saw on me before was much thinner and had no emeralds."[73]

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65 Varone 1993, 637, fig. CLVII and 638, fig. CLIX; Clarke 2014, 516-17, fig. 31.6. Neudecker in this volume, 151, Fig. 8.

66 See Bragantini in this volume, 134, Fig. 32; 137, Fig. 5. A yellow mantle is worn by the woman sitting on a bed with a man, in the painting on the left wall of cubiculum B, and by two women in the two paintings on the right wall of cubiculum D, the 'matrimonial' scene, and the composition with an embracing couple and two servants. Mols – Moormann (2008, 75-76) interpret them as generic love scenes alluding to leisure and pleasure, not explicitly to marriage, nor as *hetairai.* Clarke (1998, 104; 106-7; 147-48), too, connects the scenes rather with marriage, but also as a generic reference to love and its pleasures. Also, MANN 9024, see Jacobelli in this volume, 158, Fig. 1. For the use of yellow clothes in ancient Rome, see Goldman 2013, 57-62.

67 Yellow diaphanous female clothes comprise *epicrocum* (Varro *ling*. 7, 53; Non. p. 498 L), *crocota*, defined as a thin female undergarment (Ciris 251-52: *frigidulam iniecta circumdat ueste puellam quae prius in tenui steterat succincta crocota*, worn by an effeminate man in Cic. *har. resp.* 21, 44) and *crocotula*, mentioned in Plaut. *Epid*. 231 and Varro *ling*. 5, 131, 7. For the use of yellow clothes in ancient Rome, see Goldman 2013, 57-62. According to Olson (2008, 13, with further references), the yellow colour, in general, "strongly denoted clothing as female", and the use of yellow was reprehensible for males. We should also remember the nuptial, and thus erotic, symbolism of the saffron-yellow (*luteum* and *flammeum*), see Hersch 2010, 97.

68 There is a legal reference in Syracuse, where Diodorus of Sicily reports a law forbidding women to wear gold ornaments, or coloured dresses, unless they admit to be common *hetairai* – although the law was supposed to be provocative and cunning, by hallmarking items of luxury with a negative connotation, Diod. Sic. 12, 21; this is referred to also by Athenaeus 12, 521b.

69 For this term, coined by Costabile 2005, 48, see Scarano Ussani 2005b, 103 and n. 28.

70 *Ephesiaca* 5, 7 (mid-second century CE).

71 Neaira (Ps.-Dem. 59, 35) adorns herself with fine clothes and gold jewellery. Olympiodorus lives with a *hetaira* who boasts of her luxurious goods, gold jewellery and a train of servants (Demosthenes 48, 55).

72 *Dialogi meretrici* was written by the Syrian Lucian of Samosata in the second century CE. It contains thirteen discussions between courtesans and clients, set in classical Athens, and focuses innovatively on the view-point of the women themselves, and the difficulties of their lives. The roughly contemporary *Deipnosophists* of Athenaeus has a very different view-point: this text presents courtesans much more like 'consumer goods' themselves, see Shreve-Price 2014.

73 Lucian *Dial. meret*., Corinna: "I knew Daphnis when she was in rags … that was before she got sense enough to make use of her body. Look at her now! She struts like a queen, all bespangled with gold, wearing flowery dresses, and no less than four slaves behind her." *ibid*., Mousarion: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You are the only one among courtesans without a pair of earrings, without a necklace, or one Tarentine tunic?" In Menander's *Paidion,* a *hetaira* scorns a soldier's gift, complaining that the gold necklace is not set with gems (314-315). In late Republican Rome, similar *topoi* surface: Lucretius lists among the damages of love the fact that entire patrimonies are transformed into a gift to the beloved (probably a courtesan), including emeralds set in gold. Lucr. 4, 1126: *unguenta et pulchra in pedibus Sicyonia rident, scilicet et grandes viridi cum luce zmaragdi /auro includuntur teriturque thalassina vestis /adsidue et Veneris sudorem exercita potat.*

Notably, in the Pompeian portrait galleries of famous Hellenistic *hetairai*, identified by Richard Neudecker in his chapter in this volume, many women display jewellery and two wear heavy golden necklaces (see Neudecker **figg. 3c, 6c**).

In the works of Plautus, we find the connection *aurum – meretrix* particularly often, in a variety of practical situations of a courtesan's life. The *meretrix* Erotium in Plautus' *Menaechmi* exemplifies the frequent and close professional collaboration of courtesans with the goldsmiths: Erotium asks Menaechmus to take the golden bracelet, *spinter,* that he has stolen from his wife to the goldsmith to be remodelled; more gold, to the weight of an *uncia* (ca. 27 g), is to be added.[74] The golden jewel is thus not only a means of attraction and adornment, but also a closely controlled possession of the courtesan, an object to be negotiated with the *amator*, an advertisement to colleagues, on-lookers, and clients, evaluated according to its weight and price. Jewels also function as tools of flirtation, especially the finger ring, which is to be touched and admired (together with the hand).[75]

Gold was a necessary professional investment and a tool for the courtesan to remain attractive, but it was also a form of durable and portable investment.[76] It was also a straightforward payment in exchange for a night, as we read in *Poenulus*: *dat aurum, ducit noctem*.[77] In *Mostellaria*, instead, it is specified that the surplus that the lover buys with gold and purple from the high-priced *meretrix* are her educated and pleasant manners, *mores*.[78] The theme of *puella* and gold is lovingly cultivated further by Roman elegists: as Alison Keith underlines, rich adornment, love of luxury and greed for gifts are the conventional hallmarks of the elegiac mistress; they also regularly wear gilded clothing.[79] Interestingly, a *paraclausithyron* graffito written in elegiac style on the outer wall of the Villa San Marco, published by Antonio Varone in his chapter in this volume (nn. 44-45), addresses the *puella* as 'golden', *Sabidia aurum*.

Another *topos* linking *meretrices* with gold, is the courtesan who is robbed of her jewels, or claims to have lost them.[80] This must be seen in connection, on the one hand, with the dangerous companies frequented by courtesans, or, on the other hand, with topic ideas of 'greed' and 'falsity': faking a loss as a pretext for new acquisitions. In fact, the starting point of this paper, the passage of *Truculentus,* enumerates among the

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74 Plaut. *Men*. 524-27: *Menaechme, amare ait te multum Erotium, / ut hoc una opera <sibi> ad aurificem deferas, / atque huc ut addas auri pondo unciam / iubeasque spinter novom reconcinnarier.* Even Erotium's servant girl requires for her services earrings weighing two *nummi*. In verses 803-4, Menaechmus' wife complains that her gold has been stolen and given to *meretrices*: *at ille suppilat mihi aurum et pallas ex arcis domo, me despoliat, mea ornamenta clam ad meretrices degerit*.

75 Fayer 2013, 34-35; 454. Plaut. *Asin.* 778: *spectandum ne cui anulum det neque roget*; Tib. 1, 6, 25-26: *saepe velut gemmas eius signumque probarem, / per causam memini me tetigisse manum*. In the *Hecyra* of Terence, the whole story is concentrated on a ring, probably golden, stolen from a girl and donated to Bacchis, a courtesan.

76 James 2003, 38; McGinn 2004, 53. For the Roman discourse about jewels as 'portable patrimonies', see Berg 2002.

77 Plaut. *Poen*. 108; similarly also 705.

78 Plaut. *Most.* 286: *amator meretricis mores sibi emit auro et purpura*. In *Epidicus* Plautus also describes the appearance of courtesans as heavily bejewelled: *Tum meretricum numerus tantus, quantum in urbe omni fuit, obviam ornatae occurrebant suis quaeque amatoribus, eos captabant* (213-15); *sed vestita, aurata, ornata ut lepide, ut concinne, ut nove* (222). In Terence's *Self-Tormentor*, Bacchis has large amounts of gold and clothes carried by her servants: *ancillas secum adduxit plus decem / oneratas veste atque auro* (449-53).

79 Propertius (4, 8, 39-40) describes the successor of Cynthia, previously a streetwalker, now brushing the ground with a golden hem on her cloak. I thank Sharon James for pointing me out this citation. See also Keith 2008, 194, and Olson's (2008, 84-85) discussion about the 'perils of jewellery', which functions as a metonymy for the concepts of greed and sexual incontinence. For the motif of greed, see also Davidson 1997, 209-10; on 'greedy' *puella* in Roman love elegy, see James 2003, 84-98. James notes how the poets tendentiously and systematically ignore the financial pressures of survival that the courtesan faces, versifying this as 'greed', "depicting the gifts she requests as luxuries rather than necessities". Among poets' gifts to the elegiac *puellae*, just to take one example of the rhetoric of gold, we have the verse of Propertius (1, 8, 39-40): "I did not persuade this girl with gold, nor Indian pearls, but only with my sweet verses" (*hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis*); a good example of the elegiac discourse of giving only poems as gifts instead of such material things, James 2003, 35 and *passim*.

80 *Auri custos* appears among the servants of a wealthy courtesan, guarding against theft. Plautus, *Trinummus*, 251-252.

things to buy for a *meretrix*, a lost golden jewel that must be replaced (*periit aurum*).[81] A passage in the first epistle of Horace speaks of the habitual lament of a *meretrix* who weeps over her stolen jewels.

…nota refert meretricis acumina, saepe catellam, saepe periscelidem raptam sibi flentis.[82]

The two types of jewels that Horace mentions in this passage are those, in general, most closely associated with *meretrices*, the *catella* and the anklets, *periscelides*.[83]

The second type of jewel mentioned by Horace, the *catella*, is the long golden body chain that seems to have a specific connection with (venal) sex.[84] As Vincenzo Scarano Ussani has noted, golden body chains, always worn crossed on the nude body, are present in a significant number of erotic images.[85] A crossed chain is visible also in the erotic scene on a bronze mirror lid found on the Esquiline (**fig. 1**). The interpretations of this female figure having varied from a courtesan to a sexually liberated 'normal' Roman matron,[86] but as I have suggested above, the argument about gold and luxury objects does not, however, necessarily apply only to matrons, and thus a courtesan might quite probably have been intended here.

The golden chains running around the flanks, and gold worn on the feet by the *dominae* are mentioned in the often cited and enigmatic passage of Pliny (*nat*. 33, 40), which states that such jewels have become the distinctive signs of a 'middle class' of women between matrons and the plebs.

> *discurrant catenae circa latera et in secreto margaritarum sacculi e collo dominarum auro pendeant, ut in somno quoque unionum conscientia adsit: etiamne pedibus induetur atque inter stolam plebemque hunc medium feminarum equestrem ordinem faciet*?
>
> Let women have … gold chains run at random round their waists; and let little bags of pearls hang invisible suspended by gold from their lady owners' neck, so that even in their sleep they may retain the consciousness of possessing gems: but are even their feet to be shod with gold, and shall gold create this Order of Knighthood, intermediate between the matron's robe and the common people? (trans. H. Rackham)

Thus, according to Pliny, these bejewelled 'middle class' *dominae* did not have the right to wear the *stola*, and consequently were not matrons, but were too well-off to belong to the *plebs*, either. The two types of

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81 Plaut. *Truc*. 51-56.

82 Hor. *epist.* 1, 17, 55-56.

83 Fayer 2013, 438 and Vanoyeke 1990, 37 connect both bracelets and anklets with prostitution. Pietro Giovanni Guzzo has discussed amply the connections between anklets and prostitution, but presumes that, since they are extremely rare among archaeological finds, common prostitutes would normally have worn perishable, perhaps leather anklets: Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2000, 56-57.

84 In numerous iconographic sources, such chains are worn crossing on the breast, and on the back, hanging down to the waist, always on a nude body, and never on top of clothing. We find this on several images of Venus and Cupids, and thus the visual allusion of such jewellery, when worn on the body, would have been directly to the bejewelled nudity of Venus herself. For the *catella* chain (necklace type A1) in Vesuvian wall painting, see d'Ambrosio – De Carolis – Guzzo 2007, 21; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2001, 993; Scarano Ussani 2005b, 88-100, fig. 24-39. For the 'bejewelled nudity,' see the seminal article of Bonfante 1989. Sex without clothes, or in particular without the *strophium*, could be seen typical of *meretrices*, Deodato 2009, 314-15, Val. Max. 2, 1, 7; Plut. *mor*. 279 E. Also Trimalchio's Fortunata, designed as an "ex-courtesan" by many signs in the text (contra Gloyn 2012, with bibliography), wears a yellow *cingillum* chain/belt (Petron. 67, 4), that might refer to this ornament, and even golden anklets (67, 7).

85 In the *apodyterium* of Pompeian Suburban Baths (VII 16, B), such gold chains are visible in the *cunnilingus* scene, where the elevated status of the woman is underlined both by her jewellery and her position. For the Suburban Baths, see Jacobelli 1995; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2001, 59, cat. 59; tav. XXXVIII; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 39, n. 22; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2000, fig. p. 25; 27, and from the House of the Vettii VI 15, 1, *cubiculum* x', west wall, d'Ambrosio – De Carolis – Guzzo 2007, cat. 493, from VI 15, 1. The *catella* is visible also in one *symplegma* scene.

86 See above and n. 33. For a discussion of the mirror, see also the contribution of Sande in this volume. Jacobelli 2012, 420-21, tends towards an interpretation in terms of 'anonymous couples' and standardized actions, not of prostitutes or *hetairai*. Molly Myerowitz suggested seeing it as a "stereotypical scene of an aristocratic Roman couple", because of the elaborate coiffeur and rich jewels of the woman, Myerowitz 1992, 145.

jewels Pliny refers to are exactly those with a meretrician connotation, *catenae* on the flanks and gold on the feet, i.e. anklets. The third jewel mentioned – pearls kept in a bag around her neck in the night – recalls of the prostitute's worries about having her jewellery stolen. Perhaps the reference here, rather than to a class of *nouveau riche* freedwomen, should be read as a reference to libertine *dominae* (in the sense of *puellae*). The expression *noster ordo*, in contrast with matrons, is used also by *lena* in Plautus' *Cistellaria*.[87] Golden jewels would thus be emblematic even of a certain amount of 'class consciousness' on the part of the *ordo* of independent courtesans.

The most complete long golden *catella* in the Vesuvian area come from the villa of Boscoreale, and from the so-called villa B of Oplontis (a commercial magazine complex) among the belongings of skeleton n. 27, presumably a female.[88] A more relevant case in this context is, however, the long and complete golden *catella* found in a *caupona*, the river port *hospitium* complex of Murecine/Moregine near Pompeii (room 8).[89] It was discovered among the belongings of the skeleton of a c. 30-year-old woman, who was found with three younger and one older female individuals. Her belongings included golden semispherical bracelets, a snake bracelet, and another with the inscription *domnus ancillae suae* on the inside.[90] The bracelet with the inscription has been the subject of lengthy discussions about the status of the *ancilla*, and the question of who owned the gold.[91] Vincenzo Scarano Ussani finds most likely that the gold is the *peculium* of a slave, quite possibly a prostitute. I follow the interpretation of Scarano Ussani when he proposes a connection between the place of the finding, a *caupona*, and the women searching shelter therein, perhaps those who conducted of the establishment in the role of *copa* or *lena*.[92] In any case, such a context is a *caveat* against assuming that gold jewellery, as an archaeological find, would always be a straightforward indicator of elite status.[93]

After this literary and iconographic digression, I will consider in this light one Pompeian find context: a golden chain (**fig. 8**)[94] found in the *caupona*/*lupanar* of Masculus (I 7, 13.14), near its entrance.[95] The building complex includes a *thermopolium* with a sales counter, flanked by two contiguous rooms (b-c), a central court from which larger rooms and a kitchen are accessible (**fig. 9**). The bar counter was painted with images, of which only photographs remain (**fig. 10**): At the centre of the outer surface of the desk, there was an image of Priapus, flanked by phalli in the form of lions.[96] This has brought the establishment onto the lists of possible *lupanaria* compiled by Guzzo and McGinn, although both scholars conclude that there

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87 Plaut. *Cist*. 33, cf. 23. Fantham 2011, 158; James 2012a, 431.

88 D'Ambrosio – De Carolis 1997, 24, 65-66; Avvisati 2012, 18-19.

89 Guzzo 2005, 20-21, plan of the complex of four *cauponae*, fig. 4.

90 Scarano Ussani 2005b, 78-85, figg. 1-18.

91 In short, the main positions are the following: the bracelet and the whole set of jewellery is 1) a love gift of a master to his female slave (a *peculium* technically remaining in the possession of the *dominus*), 2) a love gift of a former master to her *liberta* (oddly still addressing her as *ancilla*, slave), or 3) an *instrumentum meretricii*, a parure in professional use of the slave prostitute and owned by the master. For the discussion, see Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2001; Scarano Ussani 2003; Costabile 2005 and Scarano Ussani 2005b. The latter also notes (103-4) that inscriptions on bracelets, in general, are rare. An exception would be the inscription mentioning Corilia Nymphe, probably a freedwoman (*CIL* X 8071, 1).

92 Scarano Ussani 2005b, 103-4.

93 For example, in the analysis of the typology of Vesuvian jewelry by Antonio d'Ambrosio, it is assumed *a priori* that wearing precious jewelry is limited to upper social classes, "riferibile… a classi sociali elevati", see d'Ambrosio 2009, 293. Fayer (2013, 454) repeats this idea of jewels as a privilege of the élite: "profumi e gioielli costituivano un lusso riservato ad una ricca élite."

94 D'Ambrosio – De Carolis 1997, 36, cat. 33, 70, 85.

95 Kleberg 1957, 40; Della Corte 1965³, 319-20; *PPM* 1, 728-29; Wallace-Hadrill 1995, 61, n. 72; Eschebach – Müller-Trollius 1993, 41; Tassinari 1993, I, 131; II, 367; Stefani 2005, 101; Ellis 2005, 251-54.

96 We cannot take up here the much-debated question whether explicit sexual images should always be read as indications of mercenary sex, risking "overeagerness to identify locations as a brothel on the basis of erotic art", see McGinn 2004, 182. Guzzo –

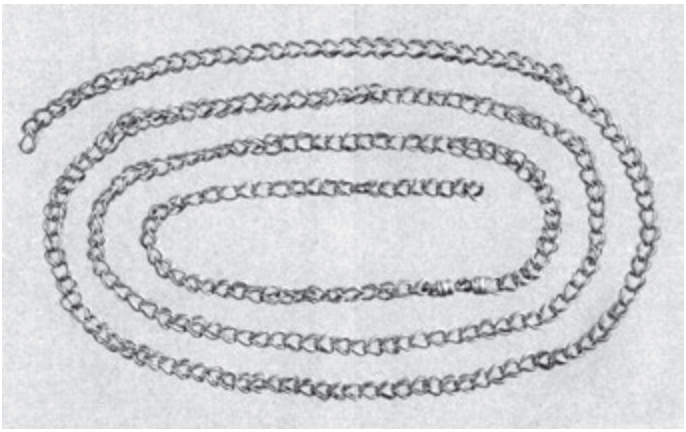

Fig. 8: Gold chain from the *caupona/lupanar* of Masculus (I 7, 13.14), Pompeii, inv. P7471 (source D'Ambrosio – De Carolis 1997, 33, cat. 33, tav. IV).

is no compelling evidence for identifying it as such.[97]

The fragmented chain found in the establishment is made in simple loop-in-loop technique, and consists of two parts united with a lock, with the total length of 121 cm. The chain is not of refined workmanship, but its length suggests that we should group it with *catellae*.[98] This was not the only gold item found in the establishment. In the small 'retrobottega' b, a modest room with signs of shelving on the walls, recognized either as a *cella meretricia* or a storeroom,[99] were found a bronze mirror, a glass *unguentarium*, a lead *pyxis* and two gold rings.[100]

The presence of a woman with such a gold body chain and simple female cosmetic implements in this *caupona* raises, again, questions. In this case, I think, it could be read as an indication, besides the phallic paintings and graffiti, that the *Caupona* of Masculus was functional in some form of prostitution, possibly of slightly more elevated status than the servile *lupanar*. The exact status of the persons who owned, ran and frequented it is, of course, impossible to define. This is one example of a contradiction between a modest, mercantile architectonic complex that has produced a golden luxury object, normally considered a matronly status symbol. It seems certain that the woman wearing the chain in this inn was not an elite matron; whether she was involved in venal sex (as the *copa* or an *ancilla*) remains hypothetical.

I have already discussed elsewhere another case of a Pompeian *caupona-lupanar* in which a significant quantity of female toiletries, including silver bracelets decorated with *phalli*, were found: the house of Aurunculeius Secundio (VI 16, 32.33).[101] Here too, the phallic paintings on the *thermopolium* counter have suggested that the establishment may have been a *lupanar*.[102] The findings of the house include a relatively high number of female toiletries, a decorated bronze *pyxis*, jewels, and bronze vessels for ablutions. Here, gold was present only in the form of a woven gold band, possibly belonging to a headdress.

In conclusion, golden jewels, as archaeological finds do not mark exclusively aristocratic status. To interpret their meaning, also the type, the quality of workmanship, and the find context must be carefully

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Scarano Ussani 2000 demonstrate the tendency to explicit sexual representations in the context of a brothel; for the question, more broadly, see McGinn 2004, 15-19, 112-19.

97 Vedi Stefani 2005, fig. p. 101. Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 29-30, Cat. 4; McGinn 2002, 37-38, Cat. 3. For the difficulties of distinguishing between *caupona* and *lupanar*, in general, see McGinn 2002, 12; 2004, 8; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 21, Fayer 2013, 464; for *cauponae* as loci for commercial sex, Fayer 2013, 491-516. The name Masculus appeared three times on the façade of this *caupona.* This name was once associated with a group of *codati*, which is also a phallic epithet in Latin sexual vocabulary. The connection of the establishment with sexual activities is thus strongly underlined.

98 d'Ambrosio – De Carolis 1997, 33, *contra*, suggest it would have been worn as a necklace in various coils.

99 Ellis 2005, 253.

100 *Giornale di scavo*: 27 February 1936 (Manuscript in the Archaeological deposit rooms of Pompeii, Casa Bacco).

101 Berg (forthcoming); Berg 2010a, 277-81. Silver jewellery has been found also in Athens Kerameikos building Z, identified as a brothel, in rooms Aa, F and K, see Glazebrook 2011, 43; Davidson 1998, 85-86.

102 McGinn 2002, 39, n. 15; McGinn 2004 276, n. 15; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 39.

Fig. 9: Plan of the *caupona/lupanar* of Masculus (from *PPM*).

Fig. 10: Selling counter of the *caupona/lupanar* of Masculus I, 7, 13.14, (from Stefani 2005, 101).

considered. In particular, the golden body chains have a strong connotation with the *ordo* of well-to-do courtesans.

Real estate and interior design

> The house of Corinthian Lais, at whose door all Greece lay, was not so full of men; the house of Menander's Thais, with whom Erichthonius's people entertained themselves, long ago, was not so crowded, nor was Phryne enriched by so many men, and she could rebuild Thebes after it was thrown down.[103]

Finally, I discuss the spatial container of courtesan's belongings, the house. As defined by Stephen Harrison, the 'default location' of Roman love elegy is "a private residence of some kind… the key events in the life of love are enacted in a Roman house."[104] Sharon James has stated that the *docta puella* "seems most of the time to run her own household: she owns various slaves and has the power to lock out her versifying suitors."[105] In the above passage, Propertius directly compares Cynthia's house (*aedes*) to the impressive houses of the most famous and rich Hellenistic *hetairai*, Lais, Thais and Phryne.[106]

The Roman courtesan could evidently be imagined to own a house, to be the *domina* not only as the mistress of her *amator*, but also of a household comprising a *domus* and servants.[107] The word *domus* is used frequently of the habitations of the most successful courtesans, as exemplified by Propertius, who uses

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103 Prop. 2, 6, 1-4. *Non ita complebant Ephyraeae Laidos aedis / ad cuius iacuit Graecia tota fores; / turba Menandreae fuerat nec Thaidos olim / tanta, in qua populus lusit Erichthonius; / nec quae deletas potuit componere Thebas, / Phryne tam multis facta beata viris*.

104 Harrison 2013, 144.

105 James 2003, 37.

106 The houses of famous Hellenistic courtesans were clearly imitated by Roman courtesans. Another notable example of a real-estate owning *hetaira* was Myrtion, the mistress of Ptolemy II, who, according to Polybius, lived in one of Alexandria's most beautiful houses, as did two of her colleagues: "And are not the most splendid houses there those which go by the names of Murtium, Mnesis, and Pothine? And yet Mnesis was a flute-girl, as was Pothine, and Murtium was a public prostitute", Polyb. 14, 11, 2-3, quoted in Athenaeus 13, 576e. Among the most celebrated houses is that of Theodote, where she lives with her mother, impressing Socrates with its luxurious spaces and furnishings (Xen. *Mem*. 3, 11, 4-5), and numerous maidservants.

107 Prop. 4, 8: Cynthia is described as having numerous servants, old and young, Lalage and Petale, Partenie her old *nutrix*, Latris, an *ornatrix*, who holds up the mirror. In a long list of *desiderata* in Plautus' *Trinummus* (250-51), a courtesan's servants are mentioned: the guardian of gold, the carrier of chests and sandals, holders of fans, messengers (*nox datur, ducitur familia tota*: *vestiplica*, *unctor*, *auri custos*, *flabelliferae, sandaligerulae, cantrices, cistellatrices*, *nuntii*, *renuntii*).

persuasion to urge a woman to choose him as his boyfriend: "Your house (*domus*) would be fortunate, if you would have a faithful friend".[108] Of course, a *domus* inhabited by a courtesan would not necessarily be in her ownership, it could also belong to a *leno* or a *vir*,[109] but according to literary sources, a gift of the *dives amator* to the *puella* might even consist of real estate, houses, *fundi* and *villae*.[110] These were exactly the kind of gifts that the fathers of prodigal sons feared most, since they were capable of ruining family economies.[111] Horace, for example, mentions an actress named Origo, to whom her *vir* donates the house of his father and a *fundus* in the countryside:

> *ut quondam Marsaeus, amator Originis ille*
> *qui patrium mimae donat fundumque laremque.*[112]
>
> Like Marsaeus, lover of Origo,
> who to that mime actress donated his paternal estate and homestead.

A central emblem of the elegiac *puella* courtesan is in fact the house-door that she herself controls, deciding to whom to open it, and before whom to keep it closed – the famous door that must be knocked on with a well-filled hand.[113] In fact, the house itself is described rather rarely, the door standing as its *pars pro toto*.[114] So it is also with the elegiac figure of Cynthia, whose housing is referred to in Propertius' verses. Although Cynthia has earlier been living modestly in Subura, later in her life she seems to be stationed in a *domus*, with an imposing door, situated in a more aristocratic zone; her door is the narrator of elegy 1, 16.[115] In the first verses, the door, currently offended by the drunken nightly quarreling of its mistress' suitors and lovers, recalls its former glory:

> *Quae fueram magnis olim patefacta triumphis,*
> *ianua Patriciae vota Pudicitiae,*
> *cuius inaurati celebrarunt limina currus,*
> *captorum lacrimis umida supplicibus* (Prop. 1, 16).[116]

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108 Prop. 3, 20: *fortunata domus, modo sit tibi fidus amicus*. Cf. James 2006, 226. On the elegiac *domus*, see Gardner 2010.

109 A house owned by a pimp could evidently have differently furnished rooms for clients of different status: In Plautus' *Pseudolus*, the pimp Ballio threatens his elegant high-earners with being demoted to the *pergula*, evidently a low-status cell (214; 229). I thank Sharon James for this citation.

110 In fact, the first land-owning courtesan of Latin legend is Acca Larentia, who, according to Cato, left her landed properties (*agros*) in inheritance to the people of Rome, after having become rich by prostitution: *meretricio questu locupletata,* Aulus Gellius *NA* 7, 7; Cato apud Macr. *Sat*. 1, 10, 16. See also the account of Plut. *Sulla* 2, 4: "He began by loving a common, but wealthy woman, Nicopolis by name … and was left her heir when she died."

111 For legal problems of inheritance, prostitutes and the prodigal son, see McGinn 1998, 322-24; more in general for *meretrix* as a threat to the patrimony of an *adulescens luxuriosus*, Herter 1957, 1164-65.

112 Hor. *sat*. 1, 2, 55-59.

113 Tib. 1, 5, 68: *ianua sed plena est percutienda manu*. An early case is related by Aulus Gellius *NA* 4, 14, documenting a lawsuit against the *meretrix* Manilia, who had refused to open the door to Hostilius Mancinus, a drunken aedile, who had come to her house (*ad aedes suas*).

114 It is unimaginable that the nightly brawling, singing and knocking on doors, and the hanging of garlands could have possibly taken place in front of an elite house, addressed to a daughter or a wife, and *lupanaria* scarcely closed their doors in front of potential customers. For the passages of Ovid describing the hardness of the door, the threshold, the door's guard, see James 2003, 127; on *paraclausithyron* in general, James 2003, 136-41; on the *topos* of an assault of a courtesan's house and the breaking down of its door, James 2003, 196.

115 Cynthia lived earlier on in *Subura vigilax*, Suburra 'that-never-sleeps' (Prop. 4, 7, 15-16), and in the elegy in which Cynthia speaks from beyond the grave, she recalls their clandestine encounters there. One of their later encounters takes place in a suburban villa in Tivoli, where she summons him at midnight (Prop. 3, 16, 1-2). Whose is the villa? The question remains open. Propertius also gives some information on the living quarters of Cynthia's lower-status rivals, like Phyllis who lives near the temple of Diana on the Aventine (4, 8, 30-32).

116 The translations are by the author, if not otherwise specified.

I, door, that once was opened for grand triumphs,
and was dedicated to Pudicitia Patricia,
the threshold of which was frequented by golden carriages,
and moistened by the tears of supplicant captives.

The door and house thus formerly belonged to an elite *dominus* who had won military triumphs, and a chaste patrician *materfamilias*.[117] In short, the house would be situated in elite surroundings: Cynthia, or any courtesan, could plausibly occupy an elite *domus* that had changed proprietor, visitors and function, but not its appearance and form.

Many Plautine comedies are set in front of a *domus meretricia*, where *meretrices* live either independently, with their mother, contractual *vir* or the pimp, as next-door neighbours to other protagonists. In appearance, their houses do not seem to differ from the others.[118] Elaine Fantham has defined the door as the most central element of the play on stage in *Truculentus*, where its principal occupant, the courtesan Phronesium, triumphs in the course of the plot.[119] In *Menaechmi*, the courtesan Erotium, when leaving her house, gives instructions to her slave to "Leave the doors open… I don't want them shut", in an evident gesture of open invitation.[120] The courtesan's door was also a sort of sign board: Cynthia's door, as narrated by Propertius, displays garlands left by lovers and torches left as mementoes by *exclusi amatores*. An interesting detail in *Asinaria* describes how a courtesan-on-contract is obliged to write a sign at her door noting that she is occupied; her door must be closed for everyone but the contractual *vir*.[121]

The door, thus, becomes a means of communication of professional success, of the available or non-available status of its proprietor, and finally a strong metaphor for the courtesan's body, and its relative independence.

In historical narrative, a prime example of a courtesan with independent housing in late Republican Rome is the imposing figure of Chelidon, the beloved of Verres, the ill-famed proconsul of Sicily. Cicero, in his speech against Verres, makes strong accusations about his private life-style and morality, exemplified by his publicly visible relationship with a free courtesan while he held the office of praetor. Cicero insists on the character of his amours as 'domestic prostitution', *domesticum lenocinium*, and that he not only frequented, but permanently lived with prostitutes and pimps, *cum meretricibus lenonibusque vixisset*.[122] The meretrician house in question would not be his, but that of Chelidon, who lived and operated in her own premises,

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117 Opting for the correction *Patricia Pudicitia* instead of the problematic *Tarpeian pudicitia*, which is to be understood as ironic, since Tarpeia was the Vestal who opened the doors to Sabine soldiers in exchange for golden bracelets. The cult of Pudicitia Patricia was open only to patrician *univirae*.

118 For example, in Plaut. *Eunuchus* 382. Fayer 2013, 36 also presents the possibility of cohabitation in his or her house, or the case of a girl in Plautus' *Asinaria*, who, with an annual contract, continues to live in her mother's house. Livy's Hispala Faecenia, the heroine of the Bacchanal scandal, is the next-door neighbour of her lover, Aebutius, Liv. 39, 9, 6.

119 Fantham 2000, 147: "In fact Astaphium is the mistress of ceremonies, the doorkeeper who controls the comings and goings of the play. Like those odd little weather houses, Phronesium's house is one into which one figure is expelled as another is admitted: the stage street is more of an antechamber for her clients than a public thoroughfare, and virtually everyone who comes on stage is hoping to enter her house or reluctantly leaving". At the beginning of the play Phronesium's servant girl, going out from their house (*aedes*), leaves instructions to the doorkeeper to ensure that visitors do not enter with empty hands and leave with hands full (of objects stolen from the house). Plaut. *Truc*. 51-56.

120 Plaut. *Men*. 351.

121 Plaut. *Asin*. 759-60: *fores occlusae omnibus sint nisi tibi / in foribus scribat occupatam esse se*. Discussed in James 2006, 229.

122 Cic. *Verr*. *II*, 1, 101; 3, 6. For the figure of Chelidon and the use made of her figure in the political rhetoric of Cicero, see particularly McCoy 2006, 178-80, and Keith, in the present volume.

which are repeatedly referred to by Cicero with the word *domus*.[123] In this courtesan's house, *domus meretricis*, according to Cicero's accusations, even the clients of Verres were introduced, to pay homage and to conduct official business and legal transactions:

> *Itaque non modo a domo tua Chelidonem in praetura excludere noluisti, sed in Chelidonis domum praeturam totam detulisti.* Cic. *Verr. II*, 5, 38.
>
> So far from forbidding Chelidon your house during your year of office, you transferred your office to the house of Chelidon.[124]

He also elaborates on the shame forced on respectable citizens who were obliged to enter the house of a prostitute, *meretricis domus*:

> *Ut omittam cetera, quo tandem pudore talis viros, quo dolore meretricis domum venisse arbitramini? ... Veniunt, ut dico, ad Chelidonem. Domus erat plena; nova iura, nova decreta, nova iudicia petebantur. ... Alii nummos numerabant, ab aliis tabellae obsignabantur; domus erat non meretricio conventu sed praetoria turba referta.* Cic. *Verr*. *II*, 1, 137.
>
> Leaving out the rest, with what shame, with what indignation do you think that such men as these went to the house of a prostitute? … They went, as I have said, to meet Chelidon. Her house was full: decisions, judgements, methods of procedure – none ever heard before – were being applied for … Some were paying her cash, others were signing promissory notes: the house was filled, not with a prostitute's visitors, but with the crowd that attends a praetor's court.

Here, the insistently repetitive use of the word *domus* seems to indicate that the house had a canonical layout designed for the representative receiving of guests, and that it could have been an ordinary elite townhouse. As McGinn notes, even the Roman lower class brothels tended to blend quite indiscriminately into the urban housing stock, and many primarily pursued some other business, such as the sale of food and drink.[125] The more we approach the top of the iceberg, the more mimetic would both the architectonic framework and the neighbourhood of mercenary sex be.

After her death, Chelidon left the *domus*, complete with its luxurious furniture (including a gilded *candelabrum*) to Verres, who transported at least a part of the objects to his own house.[126] In fact, a courtesan's house would be distinguished not so much by its layout as by its mobile furniture. Here we return to the topic of the previous chapter, the convivial equipment. In Plautus' *Menaechmi*, the *meretrix* Erotium is shown as consciously creating in her house a perfect setting for a *convivium*: in order to attract spendthrift lovers, the house must be distinguished by its cleanness (*munditia*) and all comforts (*amoenitas*).[127] The servant Lydus harshly criticizes this house, which is furnished in the most luxurious and opulent way (*instructa opime atque opipare*) in order to lead the visitors to ruin, comparing its door to that of Orcus –

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123 Cic. *Verr. II* 1, 104; 1, 136-137; 4, 7; 4, 83. For further discussion of the passages, McCoy 2006, 179-81, and Keith in this volume.

124 The translations of the Verrine orations are by L.G.H. Greenwood, with some modifications.

125 McGinn 2004, 234; 2006.

126 Cic. *Verr*. *II*, 2, 116: *tibi illo ipso anno a Chelidone venisset hereditas*; Cic. *Verr*. *II*, 4, 71: *Verresne habebit domi suae candelabrum Iovis e gemmis auroque perfectum? cuius fulgore conlucere atque inlustrari Iovis Optimi Maximi templum oportebat, id apud istum in eius modi conviviis constituetur, quae domesticis stupris flagitiisque flagrabunt? in istius lenonis turpissimi domo simul cum ceteris Chelidonis hereditariis ornamentis Capitoli ornamenta ponentur?*

127 Plaut. *Men*. 354-56.

all that enter must abandon all hope to 'remain gentlemen'.[128] Yet Erotium's words emphasize that the furnishings have been arranged according to the specific wishes of the *vir*: "this house is more home to you than your own, everything is ready, just as you ordered, just as you wanted it".[129] When we speak of rich mobile furnishings, we must also remember the courtesans' fear of theft: in the play *Truculentus,* instructions are given to guard the door well, because of bands of young men who are in the habit of looting the houses of *meretrices*.[130]

Fig. 11: Plan of the House of the Beautiful Impluvium (I 9, 1.2), Pompeii (from *PPM*).

To try a mapping of Pompeian houses with such characteristics remains impossible, both because of the ambivalence of the evidence and, above all, because of the incomplete state of documentation of the finds from the houses. In the last part of this chapter, I will propose three Pompeian houses as candidates for 'courtesan's houses'. The first is the House of the Beautiful Impluvium I 9, 1.2 (**fig. 11**).[131] This small atrium house was mentioned above because of an annexed *taberna*, in which elements of five water basins were found, a record among Pompeian houses.[132] It has earlier been included in the catalogues of possible brothels,[133] because it has one central *cubiculum* (11), decorated with an erotic painting showing a couple half-reclined on a bed, the woman wearing a yellow mantle; a prelude to an amorous encounter (**fig. 12**).[134] The *cubiculum*, opening on the left side of the atrium, is the most central and lavishly decorated of the house. The current interpretations have suggested that this was the bedroom of the *patronus*, who simply delighted in having such a painting, or prostituted a slave there.[135] The latter hypothesis is not truly compatible with the central position of the room, which is the most visible *cubiculum* of the house. Therefore, McGinn has proposed that some kind of *sodalitas* or a private 'sex club' met in the house.[136]

There are no concrete elements that entitle us to prefer any one of these explanations. I therefore suggest that also a fourth possible reading should be considered, even if it remains just as hypothetical as the others that have been proposed. Instead of a *dominus* ordering the painting of the erotic image, this may have been done by a *domina* of the house.[137]

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128 Plaut. *Men*. 373. The house was excavated first in 1916 and then in 1954.

129 Plaut. *Men*. 363-65. On similar arrangements in Baroque Rome, with the patron choosing and paying furniture for the courtesan's house, see Storey 2006, 34-35.

130 Plaut. *Truc*. 95-111.

131 Eschebach – Müller-Trollius 1993, 48; *NSc* 1912, 401; 405; 443; 1913, 28; 34-35; 56.

132 The excavation history of the house unfortunately leaves the exact amount and location of finds unclear, as the excavations in 1951 and 1952 were speedy and have remained unpublished. See Berry.

133 Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2000, 27; Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009. 31, cat. 6; McGinn 2004, 163.

134 *PPM 1*, 1990, 919-41. Clarke 1998, 150, fig. 49. The image shows an elaborate bed: a man is reclining with the gesture of the raised hand behind the neck, a woman, letting her shoes drop, is embracing the man.

135 Anguissola 2010, 103-4.

136 McGinn 2004, 163-65 and map 5 of possible 'sex clubs' in Pompeii.

137 We must, however, bear in mind that the pictures refer to some decades earlier, to the III style decoration phase of the house.

Fig. 12: Wall-painting from the house of the Beautiful Impluvium, room 11 (From Guzzo – Scarano-Ussani 2000, 43).

Literary sources mentioning erotic painting in courtesans' houses are relatively numerous. An *ekphrasis* of an erotic painting in a courtesan's house (representing the encounter between Jupiter and Danaë), appears in Terentius' *Eunuchus*.[138] In Plautus' *Asinaria,* a contract is proposed to a courtesan, demanding her exclusivity up to matronly chastity, and among the details of the contract is the requirement to get rid of all the erotic paintings in her house.[139] In Propertius' poem 2, 6 the poet compares the house of Cynthia to those of famous Hellenistic courtesans and lists among things that cause jealousy in him the erotic paintings that corrupt the girl's eyes.[140]

Also the finds of the house, even if only partially conserved, included some important items of female toiletry and adornment.[141] Among these were a relief decorated silver mirror (inv. 8359) and a couple of heavy golden bracelets composed of half-spherical elements (inv. 8348-49). Such bracelets have convincingly been reinterpreted by Gesa Schenke as anklets, because of their length, weight, and the locking mechanism, and would thus not be typical matronly jewels.[142] The silver mirror is of the type decorated with a handle in form of *clava* and *leonté* of Hercules, possibly alluding to the figure of Omphale enslaving the hero with her beauty.

Joan Berry, analysing the whole complex of finds of the House of the Beautiful Impluvium as a case study, concludes that the house was quite probably inhabited at the moment of eruption, and "the uncovered artefacts represent a range of domestic activities, including dining and dicing, toilet activities and personal adornment".[143] It is to be noted that the underlined occupations are quite central to the courtesan's arts, which, together with the presence of the erotic painting, affirm the house on the list of possible 'courtesans' houses'.

Besides erotic paintings, another category of possible decoration in houses active in venal sex are the sculpted or painted Venus-figures.[144] Statues of Venus, both as patron deities and portraits of the *domina*,

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138 Ter. *Eun*. 583-85: The youth Chaerea is in love with the servant girl of the courtesan Thais, Pamphila, and visits her while she is being prepared for a bath in her room (*conclave*). They both admire the wall-painting; the picture moves Chaerea to rape the girl. The passage is famously analysed by Ginzburg 1978. Cf. Anguissola 2010, 55. On Danaë as a veritable emblem of Renaissance courtesans, often present in their houses in form of a painting, see Santore 1991, 412.

139 Plaut. *Asin.* 763-766. James 2006, 229. The contract stipulates that if she has not sold them in four days, counting from the payment, he can destroy them.

140 v. 9. In the following passage, Propertius develops a more articulate attack against erotic painting in general. The reader may presume that this springs from something seen in Cynthia's house (vv. 27-34). He curses the one who corrupted the girl's eyes, *puellarum ingenuos corrumpit ocellos*, and has depicted foul faces in a 'chaste house', *posuit casta turpia visa domo*.

141 *Giornale degli scavi*, 22 dicembre 1951 (manuscript, Casa Bacco). The most important concentration of finds in the house, including the most valuable items, was found in a cupboard in the atrium. Castiglione Morelli – Vitale 1989; Berry 2007, Berg 2010, 185-87.

142 Schenke 2003, 48.

143 Berry 2007, 297-99.

144 Courtesans themselves often posed as models for statues of Aphrodite. According to Pliny (*nat*. 35, 119), the Roman painter Arellius often depicted his mistresses: for reference, see Myerowitz 1992, 137-38; McGinn 2004, 131. A portrait of Flora, mistress

can be seen as probable objects contained in courtesan's houses. A significant Roman literary parallel is Cynthia's golden statue in her house, presumably in the guise of Venus.[145] Images of Priapus seem to be more directly connected with servile *lupanaria*: In the story of Apollonius king of Tyre, the girl Tarsi is sold into a brothel, and the text describes a room there, decorated with a golden Priapus set with gems. McGinn comments that Priapus is thus the 'icon' of brothels; there is also an example from the Pompeian purpose-built *lupanar*.[146]

Finally, two small Pompeian houses, modest in size, but distinguished by numerous cosmetic utensils, are also connotated by well visible Venus statuettes: the House of Venus in Bikini and the House of the Flamen. The House of Venus in Bikini (I 11, 6) presented a gilded Venus statue exceptionally set in the atrium on a pedestal, and flanked by a Priapus, Eros, and a Hermaphrodite. The entrance *fauces* of the house was decorated with two female portrait *tondi*, of the type discussed by Richard Neudecker in this volume. The house also contained a pair of golden bracelets or anklets composed of half-spherical elements (inv. 10759 A-B), and an exceptionally numerous collection of toiletry items.[147] The House of the Flamen (V 4, 3) likewise stands out for the quantity of cosmetic utensils preserved in the house, and contained a marble Venus Anadyomene statue.[148] In Pompeii, Venus statuettes have been found in a prominent position in a number of small houses more clearly connected with lower class prostitution. One of the largest domestic Venus statues comes from a garden niche in the *caupona/lupanar* of Demetrius and Helpis Afra (I 2, 17.19);[149] a Venus statuette was also found in the *caupona* of Euxinus and Iustus, identified as a possible *lupanar* (I, 11, 10.12);[150] the *caupona/lupanar* of IX 7, 26 had a mosaic Venus in the garden,[151] and the *caupona/lupanar* VII 9, 29.34 had a painting of Venus and Mars in the garden.[152]

In sum, houses owned by courtesans are a commonplace in Greek and Latin literature. Among their furnishings, luxurious banquet equipment, erotic paintings and images of Venus seem to be the most distinctive elements.

Conclusion

The fact that prostitution is always fundamentally a phenomenon of violence and oppression is not in conflict with the idea that the world of venal sex can, however, also be strongly stratified in different statuses and material living conditions. Considering the wealth of information that points to the existence of also independent female (and male) prostitutes of various statuses in the Roman world, archaeological domestic

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of Pompey, could be seen at the temple of the Dioscuri (Plut. *Pomp*. 2, 4). On the courtesan sculptures in Roman public space, an overview is provided in Siri Sande's contribution in the present volume. For Greek *hetairai* in art, see McClure 2003, 153. Pausias painted Glycera, Aristeides painted Leontion, who was the mistress of Metrodorus and a pupil of Epicurus. For Phryne, as a crafted work of art, see Rosenmeyer. Many of the Magna Graecian poetess Nossis' epigrams depict statue-portraits of *hetairai*, in part. *Anth. Pal.* 6, 275 on a statue of Aphrodite dedicated by a courtesan: "Let us go to Aphrodite's temple to see her statue, / how finely it is embellished with gold. / Polyarchis dedicated it, having made a great fortune / out of the splendor of her own body." See further Gutzwiller 1998, 74-84.

145 Prop. 4, 7, 47-48.

146 Hist. Apoll. 33. McGinn 2004, 288.

147 Mileti, 2000, in part. 109-10; 115-16; Inserra 2008, 52-54; Berg 2010, 203-6. For the bronzes, Tassinari 1993, I, 146-47.

148 Berg 2010, 255-60; Berg (forthcoming). *NSc* 1899, 144-45, 340-43; *NSc* 1901, 258-59; *RM* 16, 1901, 317-25. For the statue, Carrella 2008, 79-80. For the bronzes, Tassinari 1993, I, 169-70; II, 471-72.

149 Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 28-29, cat. 1; McGinn 2004, 270, cat. 1.

150 Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 32, cat. 10; McGinn 2004, 285, cat. 39.

151 Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 56, cat. 55; McGinn 2004, 271-72, cat. 7.

152 Guzzo – Scarano Ussani 2009, 43-44, cat. 34; McGinn 2004, 279, cat. 24.

contexts should undergo a specific analysis in order to find material traits pertinent to such a phenomenon. This essay constitutes a preliminary approach to such an analysis.

The lowest social strata of prostitution are clearly defined by some architectonic features, but the few known purpose-built brothels are sparsely furnished, leaving as the best candidate for a 'fossile guida' anomalously high quantities of lamps or suspended lamps with phallic imagery, and possibly also simple cosmetic implements and phallic amulets.

Prostitution with a higher social standing is less evident in structural features, but is culturally more intimately entwined with mobile objects; this may result in more complex artefact patterns. Independent *meretrices*, both narrated and depicted, were archetypes of uninhibited consumerism, and associated with greed, vanity and luxury. The Esquiline mirror-cover depicting a couple on a luxurious bed, which we have mentioned several times, is emblematic in its depiction in minute detail, with a voyeuristic, almost 'pornographic' curiosity of the objects surrounding the scene: the relief-decorated water basin and the jug, the bed with turned bronze feet, veneered with miniature images, the draperies of the bed-linen, the erotic painting on the wall, the foot-stool for the slippers, and the decorated basket suspended above (or a *pyxis*, often provided with bronze chains for hanging). It is obvious that the figure of the courtesan is meticulously created and defined through her juxtaposition with these objects. It is here that the theory of the 'objects' agency' enters into action, with the multiple semantic levels on which objects communicate, signify and define elite prostitution.

First, objects as gifts are comparable with aristocratic gift exchange, and they can be read as emblems of distinction of the class of free courtesans who received euphemistic presents in exchange for their favours instead of money.[153] Second, there is the discourse of objectifying the woman herself, making her just another entry on the list of luxury commodities, or piece in the collection of beautiful objects of the *amator*, showing his wealth, taste and class. As Leslie Kurke has noted: "As such, the women functioned as so much sympotic furniture, like the couches and the pillows – objects to serve the needs of the male symposiasts and create a certain atmosphere."[154] A third reading sees the luxury objects as expressions of the courtesan's agency, representing a collection of her lovers, expressing the success, career, and ability of the woman, as a courtesan.[155] The courtesan herself could be creating her performances of the phantasy of sex, also by creating material contexts and environments of real or fake luxury, where the final commercial product is the whole *convivium*, with all its *personae*, recitals and trappings.[156] The constructive elements and instruments of such a performance would be constructed spaces, manners, gestures, and above all, sets of material objects.

The association between upper-class prostitution, luxury objects and furnishings is a literary *topos*, but it is far from evident as an archaeological interpretation. In this paper, some types of objects have been proposed as possible indicators of elite prostitution. First, the case of bronze basins and jugs was examined, since sets of bathing vessels are strongly connected with 'immoral' uses of water in literature and iconography. Similarly, in literature, the connotation of courtesans with gold is constant. Besides these, glass *unguen-*

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153 Kurke 1997, 113.

154 Kurke 1999, 186.

155 Storey 2006, 26. "I mobili e gli arredi contribuivano non solo alla "mise en scène" complessiva, ma attraverso gli oggetti esposti in casa – fossero questi regalati dai client, o acquistati o affittati dalla cortigiana stessa – si poteva leggere lo status dei suoi visitatori e capire quanto la donna fosse ricercata e alla moda." The scholar asks whether the atmosphere created by furniture mirrored the courtesan or the patron, noting that the relation between the objects of the courtesan is so close that it is difficult to know whether they are telling us about him or about her.

156 Dunbabin 2003, 22.

taria, magical/erotic amulets, erotic paintings and statues of Venus were considered as possible indicators of non-servile prostitution connected with the hospitality business.

Courtesans are known to have lived in houses furnished for banqueting and decorated with erotic paintings, yet they have not been considered among the putative owners of such houses in Pompeii. In conclusion, six houses have been proposed in this chapter as possible courtesans' houses – combining quantitatively and qualitatively above-average sets for convivial dining and cosmetic uses, with relatively modest architectonic settings: the House/*caupona* of Masculus (I 7, 13.14), the House of the Beautiful Impluvium (I 9, 1.2), the House of Venus in Bikini (I 11, 6), the House V 3, 11, the House of the Flamen (V 4, 3) and the House with *caupona* of Aurunculeius Secundio (VI 16, 32.33).[157]

157 I am grateful to Sharon L. James, Katariina Mustakallio, Richard Neudecker and Antonio Varone, who have read, commented and discussed earlier versions of the text, and to anonymous readers for important comments; all remaining mistakes are my own.

Prostitutes and entertainers at Rome. Did they leave memories of themselves?

Siri Sande

The question as to whether Roman prostitutes and entertainers left memories of themselves, cannot be answered without references to the great Greek *hetairai*, who did leave such memories.[1] Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistes* gives an account of monuments commemorating prostitutes. The monuments fall into two types: dedications in sanctuaries and funerary monuments. Of the first, Phryne's statue in Delphi was the most famous. It was in gilt bronze and was said to have been made by the sculptor Praxiteles, allegedly one of Phryne's lovers.[2] She was reported to have served as a model for the famous Knidian Aphrodite, and it has been suggested that the statue in Delphi, which stood on a pillar, represented Phryne nude like a second Aphrodite. This is unlikely, however. The statue was furnished with a plaque saying: "Phryne, daughter of Epicles of Thespiae". This shows that the statue was an ordinary portrait statue, the base of which generally gives the woman's family connections (daughter, wife etc.), and place of origin. The only revealing feature would have been her name (her real name was said to have been Mnesarete), since names relating to the animal world were often chosen by prostitutes as their *nom de guerre*.

Judging from other female portrait statues of the fourth century, Phryne's statue will have presented a conventional beauty without individual features, and a fully clothed body. Indeed, Phryne's body may have been more covered than most, since one of the marks of the great *hetairai* was their inaccessibility to all but the chosen few. When they went out, they could even be veiled.[3]

Phryne's 'invisibility' probably lies at the root of some of the anecdotes told about her. When she undressed and went into the sea on the occasion of the festival of the Eleusinia, she reportedly inspired the painter Apelles for his *Aphrodite Anadyomene*. More famous is the story of how the orator Hypereides bared her breasts during a trial when she was persecuted for a capital charge. According to another account, Phryne clasped the hands of the judges one by one, looking at them with tears in her eyes. This last method is likely to have been more efficient. To most of the judges, physical contact with that fabled creature, even if it was only a handshake, must have been like meeting a famous film star or a charismatic member of a Royal House nowadays.

While Phryne apparently financed her dedication in Delphi,[4] funerary monuments to *hetairai* were more commonly paid for by their lovers. Athenaeus mentions three funerary monuments to Pythionike, two in Babylon, and one on the Sacred Way to Eleusis. At least one of these is likely to have been a cenotaph, or

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1 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistes* 13, 572f-605d (collected in Keesling 2006, 71-72).

2 For the statue see Keesling 2006, 66-71.

3 Davidson 1997, 127-36.

4 According to Pausanias, who saw the statue, Phryne dedicated the statue herself. According to Athenaeus, or rather his source Alcetas, the statue was dedicated by 'the neighbours' (*Deipnosophistes* 13, 591b-c). Aelian (*VH* 9, 32) claimed that the statue was dedicated by 'the Greeks'.

perhaps the monuments referred to by Athenaeus were made for more than one Pythionike, since the same name could be used by several prostitutes.

Cicero speaks about a funerary statue of a prostitute which entered his own house after his exile in 58 BCE.[5] His enemy Publius Clodius Pulcher turned a portico in Cicero's domus into a *dedicatio* by placing an altar and a statue of *Libertas* there. That statue, which Clodius' brother Appius Clodius had got hold of outside Tanagra, was according to Cicero taken from a prostitute's grave.

This claim may of course be a lie, but even as a lie it had to be plausible. The story indicates that funerary statues of prostitutes did exist. The statue in question was probably a typical Greek female portrait statue with a nondescript, idealized face. Torn from its base and brought to Rome, it could serve as a statue of one of the many Roman divinities (in this case Liberty) which were no more than concepts, and which were defined only by the names on their bases. When Cicero returned to Rome in 57 BCE, he took steps to have the portico demolished, and succeeded in this in the autumn of the same year. One must assume that the offensive statue disappeared at the same time.

Not long after Cicero's eviction of the prostitute's statue, several statues of such women were set up in a public space in Rome. In 55 BCE Pompey inaugurated his theatre, the first in Rome to be built in stone. Adjacent to this structure was the Porticus Pompei, a colonnaded area which had the character of a park, containing trees, fountains and works of art. Conspicuous among the latter was a group of statues representing famous Greek women, among them a number of *hetairai*.[6]

The most complete account of this group, which according to Pliny was commissioned by Pompey himself, is given by the Christian apologetic writer Tatian in his *Oratio ad Graecos* (33-35).[7] The work was probably written in the period 150-170 CE. Tatian was not interested in the statues as works of art, but used them to vindicate the intellect and morals of Christian women. They had evidently been ridiculed, but Tatian retorted that the women venerated by then pagans were stupid, lewd and downright ridiculous, using Pompey's statue gallery as an example.

The statues mentioned by Tatian fall into two groups, one comprising women who were famous for their intellect (mainly authors), and the other women who were famous for their bodies. The second group can be divided in two sub-groups: *hetairai* and women who had undergone remarkable pregnancies and deliveries, the latter sometimes resulting in the birth of a 'monster'. The names of the women and the reason for their fame were evidently written on the base of the statues or on a plaque beside them, in the manner of the *eulogiae* accompanying the statues of the *summi viri* on Augustus' forum. Tatian also mentions statues of Melanippe, 'a wise woman', and of Pasiphae. They may have been included in the gallery as emblematic figures: one symbolizing the female intellect and the other one symbolizing the female body's ability to bear portents (in this case the Minotaur).

Tatian gives the names of two more women without saying that they were statues. They are Philaenis and Elephantis, both of whom were famous for their sex manuals. Judging from Pliny, Elephantis also wrote about more general gynaecological matters.[8] Like Philaenis she must have been a *hetaira*, since her name, taken from the animal world, is typical of that category of women. Philaenis and Elephantis would have made a perfect link between the female authors and the *hetairai*, so I think they probably formed part of the statue gallery.

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5 Cic. *dom.* 108, 110-12.

6 Kuttner 1999; Evans 2009; Nasrallah 2010, 241-46; Thorsen 2012; Sande 2014 with further bibliography.

7 For Tatian see especially Nasrallah 2010, 65-70, 236-48.

8 Plin. *nat*. 28, 23, 81.

Tatian mentions five secure instances of statues representing *hetairai* or entertainers: Phryne, made by Herodotus from Olynthus and Praxiteles, Glycera and the lyre-player Argeia both works by Herodotus from Olynthus, Neaira by Calliades and Lais by a sculptor who may have been called Turnus. Apart from Praxiteles these artists are otherwise unknown. They are therefore unlikely to have been 'old masters'. More probably they were contemporaries of Pompey, and engaged by him to make statues for his gallery.

Praxiteles poses a problem, however. It is not clear if Tatian thought of Phryne as Praxiteles' model (one of the reasons for her fame), or if a 1st century namesake of the famous artist made the sculpture in collaboration with Herodotus from Olynthus. A third possibility is that Herodotus' work was a copy of Praxiteles' statue of Phryne at Delphi.[9] In that case it must have been a rather free copy, since the statue stood on a pillar and would have been difficult to copy by mechanical means.

Pompey's gallery of famous Greek women was definitely a novelty in Rome. Different interpretations of its meaning have been given, and with regard to the *hetairai*, Jane de Rose Evans has even denied that these statues represented prostitutes, whom she thinks would have been alien to the moral climate in Rome. According to her, they are more likely to have represented heroines of Attic comedies in the shape of actors wearing masks.[10]

There are several objections to this hypothesis. Statues of masked actors (traditionally male) would have disrupted the unity of the female gallery. Furthermore, the figures of the Greco-Roman theatre were not individuals, but stock types (old slave, young hero etc.), which acquired individuality only with interaction with other *personae*. Tatian's agenda should also be taken into account. A man with his background would hardly be interested in theatrical figures, so he would probably have passed them by without mention.

The female authors in Pompey's portrait gallery may have been picked out with the aid of literary canons. Also the choice of courtesans seems to have been influenced by the women's connections with men of letters. Neaira was not in the class of the great and famous *hetairai*, she is known through Demosthenes' oration. Phryne was associated with another famous orator: Hypereides. Why has Lais been chosen, and not Thais, and why Glycera and not the equally famous Pythionike? The answer may be that Glycera was said to have been the mistress of Menander, while Lais was loved by the philosopher Aristippus. It should also be noted that Pliny, in a passage where he mentions the above-mentioned Elephantis and her opinions of menstruation blood and its ability to cause abortions, names a certain Lais who wrote about the same subjects.[11] Menstruation and abortion are likely to interest prostitutes, and it is therefore possible that the writings of Lais were attributed to the famous courtesan of the same name.

The lyre-player Argeia remains without associations. She appears to be completely anonymous. Argeia means only 'a woman from Argos'. When Tatian in his list of female authors mentions an otherwise unknown Thaliarchis, he uses '*argeia'* as an epithet. It is therefore likely that Argeia was only the epithet of the lyre-player, her real name having been lost during the various transcriptions of the manuscripts. This woman could also have had literary connections: she may for instance have accompanied a poet with her lyre-playing.

Before the erection of the *Porticus Pompei*, very few female statues had been set up in public. The female statue gallery would therefore certainly have had an impact on contemporary female portrait sculpture, but we do not know if any of the portraits in the gallery were actually copied. Portraits of famous Greek

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9 Antonio Corso's suggestion that the statue of Phryne in the *Porticus Pompei* is identical with the so-called Laughing Courtesan allegedly made by Praxiteles (Plin. *nat*. 34, 70), is without fundament (Corso 2004, 310-12).

10 Evans 2009, especially 131-38.

11 Plin. *nat*. 28, 23,81. An author named Lais is also mentioned in 28, 23, 82.

women were made in the Roman period, but apart from Hellenistic queens, they cannot be named since they lack inscriptions.

There is only one possible exception, a double herm in the Musée Vivenel at Compiègne in the south of France (**fig. 1**).[12] It shows a mature man and a woman who appears to be young, since her coiffure with a topknot is typical of representations of young women, especially mythological figures. The Danish archaeologist Frederik Poulsen identified the two as Hypereides and Phryne, and though other suggestions have been made, this hypothesis remains the most attractive one.[13] The man is known in several replicas and must have been a famous Greek, but unfortunately none of the replicas is inscribed.

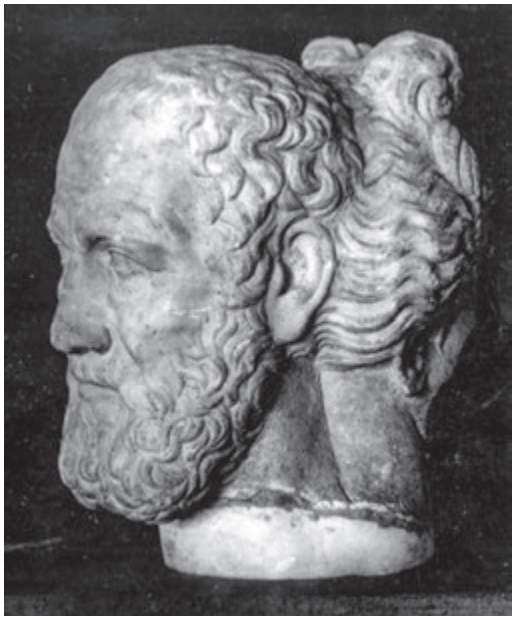

Fig. 1: Double herm, Musée Vivenel at Compiègne. Photo credit: Photo Hutin, Musée Antoine Vivenel, Compiègne.

The face of his partner has been obliterated, but a similar hairdo is often seen in representations of Aphrodite, the Graces and nymphs. It would therefore suit a woman like Phryne, who could be seen as a handmaiden of the goddess of love. It is interesting to note that her face has been completely smashed, seemingly with an axe, while her partner is untouched. Could it be that some late antique or early medieval moralist has vented his displeasure on this sinful woman?

Was the head of the putative Phryne a copy of one of her portraits at Delphi or Rome? It is of course possible, but it is equally possible that the workshop did not have Phryne in stock, and that it therefore copied a head of Aphrodite or a nymph. In a case like this it would have been easy to 'cheat', since Phryne's portrait would in any case have showed her as a beautiful woman with idealized features.

The features of the Greek *hetairai* must remain elusive, and that is even more the case with their possible counterparts in Rome. Cicero uses the word *meretrix* quite often, but the women he tries to blacken with this epithet do not seem to have been *meretrices* (registered prostitutes) in the strict sense of the word. One of his favourite targets was Clodia, the sister of his enemy Publius Clodius Pulcher.[14] Like the great Greek *hetairai* she chose her lovers freely, but she does not appear to have received gifts for her favours. Quite the contrary, Cicero claimed that she gave economic support to the young men who surrounded her at Baiae, so she looks more like a modern socialite with toy boys.

Another *meretrix* mentioned by Cicero is Chelidon, mistress of the notorious Verres.[15] When Verres was *praetor urbanus* in Rome in 74 BCE, every contact with him had to go through Chelidon, whose house was filled with applicants and supplicants. As Cicero writes: "the house was filled, not with a prostitute's visitors, but with the crowd that attends a praetor's court".

Chelidon comes closer to our notions of a courtesan, but was she therefore 'a kept woman'? Not necessarily, for when she died, she made Verres her heir. This suggests that she had means of her own – and indeed, according to Cicero she took bribes from all the persons who wanted to approach Verres. In that case

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12 Richter 1965, 2, 211, no. 3, figs. 1355-57; Richter – Smith 1984, 150, no. 2, fig. 110.

13 Poulsen 1913.

14 For Clodia see Skinner 2011 and Hänninen, in this volume.

15 *Verr. II* 1, 136-37; 2, 116; 5, 34. For a comparison between Chelidon and Clodia in the light of Cicero's orations, see McCoy 2006.

she would have made a tidy sum. The clients of Chelidon did not come to her for sex, but because of her influence on Verres. In addition to money Chelidon wanted social and political influence, which she could get only through Verres, since she herself did not belong to the elite.

Tacitus introduces us to real *meretrices*. At the extravagant banquet which Tigellinus, prefect of the imperial bodyguard under Nero, arranged on the pool of Agrippa in Rome, prostitutes were present in considerable numbers:[16]

> *Crepidinibus stagni lupanaria adstant, inlustribus feminis completa, et contra scorta visebantur nudis corporibus.*

In the translation by John Jackson in the Loeb edition this passage runs:

> On the quays of the lake stood brothels, filled with women of high rank; and, opposite, naked harlots met the view.

As a general rule, *inlustribus feminis* are rendered as women of high rank in the translations of this passage. The translators may have been influenced by Suetonius' story about Caligula setting up a brothel filled with married women and freeborn boys, but it seems unlikely that Tigellinus should have been able to persuade or force high-ranking women to act as prostitutes. I believe that *inlustris* (read *illustris*) in this case do not refer to social rank, but rather to class, that is, that Tacitus contrasts high class prostitutes with nude harlots. The former were inside a building hidden from view, while the latter were exposed to all. That is typical for the lowest class of prostitute, the *scortum*. Juvenal describes a harlot as one who stands naked in a foul-smelling alley.[17] This interpretation would mean that in Rome as in Greece, prostitutes fell into different categories, and that prostitution was not always a sordid affair involving *scorta* and men of no social standing.

When introducing the notorious Nymphidius Sabinus, who became prefect of the imperial bodyguard together with Tigellinus, Tacitus describes him as "The son, then, of a freedwoman who had prostituted her handsome person among the slaves and freedmen of emperors…".[18] This woman, Nymphidia, seems to have been a free agent who chose her clients with care. Even if they were of low social extraction, they may have been rich and influential on account of their positions at the court. Nymphidius himself claimed to be the son of Caligula, while Plutarch says that his father was a gladiator. More probably he was the son of one of his mother's clients at the court, which would account for his rise to power.

A decorated mirror cover in bronze might have shown Nymphidia in a working situation (see Berg, Fig. 1, p. 198, in this volume).[19] Its date does not coincide with that of Nymphidia's career, since it is Flavian, not Julio-Claudian. Still, the circumstances probably had not changed. The prostitute is seen inside a *cubiculum* with a painting showing an erotic scene on the wall. She wears body jewellery and a fashionable coiffure, and is reclining on a sumptuous bed. The picture on the wall has shutters, a sign that it is valuable (made in tempera or encaustic technique) and has to be protected from light. Also the metal basin and jug at the feet of the bed are signs of wealth. The woman is certainly a high-class prostitute.

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16 Tac. *ann*. 15, 37.

17 Iuv. 1, 2, 30.

18 Tac. *ann.* 15, 72. Translation by John Jackson in the Loeb edition.

19 Virgili – Viola 1990, 99, cat. no. 145, fig. 35; Clarke 1998, 166-68, Fig. 60. For an illustration of the mirror, see Fig. 1 in Ria Berg's article in this volume.

Moving still higher up on the social scale, one arrives at Poppaea Sabina, who comes very close to the famous Greek *hetairai*. Like them, she went out veiled, and she was shared by two men, which also approaches her to luxury *hetairai*, who were sometimes shared by two or more men to sustain the outlays.

In Poppaea's case, she was shared by Nero and his friend Otho, the later emperor.[20] Otho was married to Poppaea, but that did not improve matters. According to the laws promulgated under Augustus, a man who did not divorce his unfaithful wife automatically became her pimp, and she a prostitute. Of course Otho was never registered as a pimp, nor did Poppaea ever wear the dark toga, the badge of the unfaithful woman. On the contrary, she eventually married Nero and became an empress. After the birth of a daughter she was made Augusta, and her portrait appeared on coins, but no three-dimensional portrait of her can be ascertained.

With regard to women like Nymphidia and her colleagues, it is quite possible that we have portraits of some of them in the many funerary groups of freedmen and freedwomen from the early Empire. In such portraits the profession of the deceased, if she had been a prostitute, would never have been hinted at, nor would a woman have represented herself wearing a toga, which prostitutes wore according to written sources. In fact, the only representations of *togatae* in Roman art feature girls, whose virginal state contrasted strongly with the lascivious adulteresses and *meretrices*. The toga of these girls (if it ever was worn in real life) must have been white in order to distinguish it from that of the prostitute, which was supposedly characterized by garish colours.[21]

There was another group of women who were considered on par with prostitutes, but who were more present in public life. They were the actresses of the mime.[22] This category did not exist in the Greek world, where the *mimi* appear to have been exclusively men. When they were introduced into the Roman world, the *mimae* became immensely popular. The mime was in Roman times something of a slapstick comedy, and it may also be compared to the modern *burlesque*, since it contained both humour and sex (the latter generally provided by actresses with few or no clothes on).

One of Verres' mistresses was a *mima* by the name of Tertia, the daughter of the *mimus* Isidorus.[23] More famous was Cytheris. She was a freedwoman who had been owned by the wealthy Volumnius. After an affair with Gaius Cornelius Gallus, the inventor of Latin love elegy,[24] she became the mistress of Mark Antony. According to Cicero, she went with her lover to Brundisium riding in an open litter, as if she were his second wife. People greeted her not with her stage name, but as Volumnia. This angered Cicero, though it was normal for an enfranchised slave to take the family name of his or her former owner.[25]

The *mimae* were subject to many of the same restrictions as prostitutes, being *infames* like actors, gladiators and charioteers. Like those groups, they were not adverse to leave memories of themselves with their professions indicated. We have inscriptions naming *mimae* and *archimimae*.[26]

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20 Tac. *ann*. 13, 45-46; Dio Cass. 61, 11, 2-3.

21 For representations of girls wearing toga, see Goette 1990, 80-82, Pl. 70; Tomei – Rea 2011, 234, no. 11. For the toga supposedly worn by prostitutes and adulteresses, see Duncan 2006, 269-70; Olson 2006, 192-201. As Olson has pointed out, the expressions *togata* and *stolata* (a matron) indicate a woman's position in society rather that the clothes she actually wore. Although prostitutes wore brightly coloured togas according to literary sources, none of the many 'party girls' in Pompeian paintings is seen wearing this garment.

22 Daremberg – Saglio 3 (1904) s.v. *mimus* 1899-1907, especially 1906 (G. Boissier); *RE* 15 (1932) 1743-61 s.v. *mimos* (E. Wüst); Bieber 1961, 248-52; Edwards 1997; French 1998; Duncan 2006.

23 Cic. *Verr. II* 3, 78; 3, 83; 5, 31; 5, 81.

24 For Gallus see Raymond 2013.

25 Cic. *Att*. 10, 10; *Phil.* 2, 24, 58; 2, 25, 61-62.

26 *CIL* VI, 10096, 10106-10111.

Fig. 2: Diptych made for the consul Anastasius in the year 517 showing a *mima*.

The most famous *mima* from antiquity is Theodora, the later empress (479-548 CE). A diptych made for the consul Anastasius in the year 517 shows a *mima* who places her hand on the head of a supplicating, bald figure (**fig. 2**). Her boyish haircut, lack of a mask and her insolent stance with one hand on the hip are characteristic of this group of entertainers.[27] Theodora may have looked like that in her heyday, but of course, no portrait from this period of her life exists. The famous mosaic in San Vitale in Ravenna shows her as the spouse of Justinian I, far removed from her lowly origins.[28]

To conclude: While no prostitute would identify herself as a *hetaira* or a *meretrix* on a commemorative monument, actresses did give their profession. The only exception are the statues in the *Porticus Pompei*, which were evidently labelled as *hetairai*, but these statues had been put up long after the women had died, and were not personal monuments.

27 Delbrück 1929, 131-34, no. 21, Pl. 21; Bieber 1961, 251, fig. 834, a; Volbach 1976, 36-37, no. 21, pl. 9; Olovsdotter 2005, 47-50, no. 11 A, pl. 11, 1; Sande 2005, 13-15, fig. 8.

28 Deichmann 1976, 180-87, pl. IX, figs. 358, 360, 365. Good illustrations in Grabar 1966, figs. 172-73.

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Names in fiction and poetry are in italics.

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