

The Effeminate East:

Orientalism in Roman Military Contexts

(c. 200 BCE to c. 200 CE).

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Summary

The purpose of my research is to illuminate the gendered and ethnic stereotyping of Easterners in Roman literature of the central period (c. 200 BCE to 200 CE), particularly in texts concerned with masculinity and warfare. Military situations were often constructed as the ultimate 'tests' of masculinity and Romanness, and they are, therefore, uniquely revealing for the constructions of these ideas.

The idea of gendered lifestyles was central to these constructions. Roman authors distinguished between easy, pleasurable, feminine lifestyles and hard, austere, masculine ones. Masculinity and virtue were intertwined, and these precepts informed the ways in which Roman authors constructed their own worth, and the worth of other peoples. Easterners were presented as living luxurious, pleasurable lives, which were contrasted with a stereotypical Roman life of martial toil. However, when Easterners were depicted in martial contexts, this resulted in the caricature of their inabilities in this area.

The accusation that Easterners allowed pleasure into martial contexts underpins these caricatures, and this was particularly challenging for Roman authors. Athletic training, for example, was constructed as pseudo-martial but inadequately so, as it was enjoyable. This was contrasted with difficult, 'true' military training, which helped build a man's endurance, and proved his masculinity. The relationship of Easterners to *arma* (arms) was also deemed troubled, and Easterners were often constructed as having poor ability with arms, or an interest in adorned arms for their aesthetic value rather than their rugged purpose. Similarly, in the naval sphere, Roman authors were prone to depict Hellenistic rulers with luxurious and ornamented flagships, oversized and unsuitable for real warfare. In essence, these constructions were used to affirm Roman superiority – both moral and military – and also to serve as a warning as to what could happen should Romans allow themselves to succumb to easy, 'effeminate' lifestyles. Fundamentally, I argue that gendered constructions of ethnic 'warlikeness' were the principal force behind the disparagement of Greeks and other Easterners in Roman literature.

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Abbreviations

I have used the abbreviations that can be found at the beginning of the Oxford Classical Dictionary. However, additional abbreviations are listed below:

1QpHab	The Habakkuk Commentary, one of the original seven 'Dead Sea Scrolls'.
[Caes.] <i>B. Hisp.</i>	<i>De Bello Hispaniensi</i> , falsely attributed to Julius Caesar, but otherwise of unknown authorship.
Cic. <i>Opt. Gen.</i>	Cicero, <i>De Optimo Genere Oratorum</i> .
Fronto, <i>Ep. ad Verum</i>	Fronto, <i>Ad Verum Imperatorem Aurelium Caesarem</i> .
Fronto, <i>Princip. Hist.</i>	Fronto, <i>Principia Historiae</i> .
Plaut. <i>Aul.</i>	Plautus, <i>Aulularia</i> .
Plaut. <i>Truc.</i>	Plautus, <i>Truculentus</i> .
Plaut. <i>Vidul.</i>	Plautus, <i>Vidularia</i> .
Sen. <i>Con. Polyb.</i>	The Younger Seneca, <i>De Consolatione ad Polybium</i> .
Sen. <i>Brev. Vit.</i>	The Younger Seneca, <i>De Brevitate Vitae</i> .
V. Fl.	Valerius Flaccus, <i>Argonautica</i> .

Translations

I use the latest Loeb Classical Library edition, accessed through the Loeb Digital Library, in every case except where noted. Where they have required adaptation, I have noted my intervention. Non-Loeb translations are summarised below.

Verg. <i>Aen.</i> Trans. Fagles.	Virgil. (2008). <i>The Aeneid</i> . Translated by Robert Fagles. London: Penguin.
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Introduction

Every native of the Northern snows is vehement in war and courts death; but every step you go towards the East and the torrid zone, the people grow softer as the sky grows kinder. There one sees loose garments and flowing robes worn even by men [...] Strength belongs to the sword, and all manly peoples wage war with *gladiis* [swords]. But the first hour of battle disarms the Parthians and bids them retreat with emptied quivers. All their reliance is on poison, and none on the strong hand. Do you count those as men, Magnus, who are not content to face the risk of battle with the steel alone?¹

Luc. 8.363-90.

In his seminal *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said argued for the existence of a long-standing ideological tradition which saw Easterners, and the East, stereotyped by European Westerners. According to Said, this phenomenon was millennia old, and could be traced back to Classical Athenian constructions of Persians in the wake of the Persian wars of the fifth century BCE. This confrontation, it has been argued, prompted Athenians to associate the royal splendour of the Persian royal regime, and the despotic tyranny of kingship itself, with the disastrous Persian loss. Might being Persian not encompass all these things, then: slavery, luxury and ‘unwarlikeness’, chauvinistically contrasted with Athenian political freedom, vigour and proven military prowess in the phalanx?² Said’s contention was that in resorting

¹ *Omnis in Arctois populus quicumque pruinis | Nascitur, indomitus bellis et mortis amator: | Quidquid ad Eoos tractus mundique teporem | Ibitur, emollit gentes clementia caeli. | Illic et laxas vestes et fluxa virorum | Velamenta vides. [...] | Ens habet vires, et gens quaecumque virorum | Bella gerit gladiis. Nam Medos proelia prima | Exarmant vacuaque iubent remeare pharetra. | Nulla manus illis, fiducia tota veneni est. | Credis, Magne, viros, quos in discrimina belli | Cum ferro misisse parum est?* I omit lines 368-84 for the sake of brevity, not relevance: these too contain notably orientalist rhetoric.

² Tyranny/slavery: Diodorus Siculus describes an Athenian inscription at Delphi, which read ‘The saviours of spacious Hellas dedicated this, having delivered their cities from hateful slavery’, Diod. Sic. 11.33.2; Hdt. 1.62.1, 7.134-35; Thuc. 3.10.2-4; cf. Hall (1989) 16, 154-60, 192-200; Mitchell (2006) 196.

to invented stereotypes, those levelling such associations denied the realities of the culture and peoples they were supposedly documenting in favour of their own preconceptions. Consequently, those making such arguments actually tell us more about themselves than their rhetorical targets. Their ideals, priorities, and dreams are laid bare in the rhetorical construction of those who supposedly differ.³

As my opening source suggests, Roman authors had their own distinctive brand of orientalist ideology.⁴ In Lucan's Latin epic of the first century CE, Lucius Lentulus advises the Roman general Pompey against an alliance with the Parthians (an Iranian/Persian empire) even after his disastrous civil war loss to Caesar at Pharsalus.⁵ Among the problematic and consequential characteristics listed are softness, a love of feminine clothes, and distrust of the sword. These ideas, grouped together, allow the speaker to call into question the masculinity of the character discussed: 'do you count those as men, Magnus?' Here, Lucan is advertising one opinion of desirable and non-desirable ethnic and gendered characteristics. His observations are indicative of a network of association that arises time and time again in Roman literature: the combination of effeminacy and *imbellitas*

However, Benjamin Isaac argues that the rhetoric of the slavery of nations was understood to be a metaphor, unrelated to ideas of personal liberty, Isaac (2004) 257-303, and esp. 264-77; cf. Hunt (2002) 48ff. Luxury: Aesch. *Pers.* 1-55; cf. Hall (1989) 128. Military weakness: Xen. *Cyr.* 8.8.20-5; Pl. *Menex.* 241b; Isoc. *Panath.* 158. This 'orientalising' rhetoric seemed to become more common in the fourth century BCE, Isaac (2004) 283-89; Gruen (2010a) 10-65.

³ The metaphor of the mirror has been utilised in the historiography on this topic, in the sense that in (misre-)presenting foreign peoples, ancient authors merely reflected their own cultural prejudices. For example, see François Hartog's *The Mirror of Herodotus: the Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (1988).

⁴ Benjamin Isaac writes 'Roman views of the East derive from Greek ideas to a large extent, but the nature of Roman imperialism in the Late Republic and Early Empire is entirely different from Greek imperial designs. It will be argued that the nature of Roman imperialism will be better understood in Roman ideas regarding the subject peoples and enemies are carefully considered in this context.', Isaac (2004) 255.

⁵ It is worth noting that Lucan's account is part of a fictional epic poem, and so should not be read as factual 'history'. However, given that the present work is interested entirely in literary representations, this is not a problem. Nevertheless, a similar conversation is described by Appian in his historical work (though his advisers remain nameless, and aggressive orientalising is mostly absent, minus a reference to the potential rape of a beautiful female associate of Pompey by the Parthian king, rhetoric also present in Lucan): App. *B. Civ.* 2.83; cf. Luc. 8.397-416. Lucius Lentulus was consul in 50 BCE as Caesar crossed the Rubicon, and later raised legions in Asia for Pompey's Civil War campaign, Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.4. For the episode in Lucan, see Tracy (2014) 19-30. For the Parthians in general, see Curtis and Stewart (2010).

(‘unwarlikeness’) in Easterners.⁶ The present work will argue that the analysis of this association can greatly contribute to our understanding of Roman ethnic and gender construction, and the relationship of these cultural categories with the ideology of warfare. This project aims at the elucidation of these ideas.

Roman orientalism has not been as widely examined as its Athenian antecedent, despite a relative abundance of evidence for the phenomenon.⁷ The reasons for this dearth are not easily identified (if an explanation is even required), but I believe a contributing factor is the fact that the Romans extended their described ‘out-group’ to include the Greeks themselves. This is what makes Roman orientalism so confounding, but so interesting. With typical hypocrisy and adaptive verve, the Romans were able to take a Greek literary trope and adapt it, ‘turning’ its invective upon (among others) its progenitors. Thereafter, many of the features of Hellenism (Greek culture) which for the Classical Athenians had always been staunch features of the in-group (athletics, theatre, *symposia*) became embroiled in this rhetoric, presented by Roman authors as invasive Eastern practices.

The Romans were thoroughly versed in Hellenic culture from an early date, as any survey of Roman architecture can attest.⁸ The Classical period was a time of remarkable literary growth for the Greeks, and their invented forms and genres had an indelible imprint upon Italy too. Indeed, early Roman literature was often written in Greek, as was Fabius Pictor’s history of the Second Punic War, written in c. 200 BCE.⁹ Even in Latin, early Roman literature typically used Greek genres and forms – like Ennius’ epic *Annales* (written in the early second century) which detailed Roman

⁶ ‘Unwarlikeness’ is a simple transfer from the word ‘unwarlike’, which is present in the Oxford English Dictionary, defined as ‘not disposed towards war or hostilities.’ The corresponding Latin ‘*imbellis*’ is attested in Roman texts. I explain my terms below, 12.

⁷ See below, 24, for a fuller critical historiography.

⁸ Boëthius, Ling, and Rasmussen (1978) 136ff; P. Davies (2013); Hopkins (2016).

⁹ This may have been to refute Greek accounts of the Punic Wars which depicted the Romans unfavourably, as argued by W. Harris (1979) 108; Badian (1966) 4-6. contra, Gruen (1992) 231, Gruen (1986) 252-55; FRHist 168-70. For a more detailed discussion of the author, see FRHist 160-78; Purcell (2003). Other Roman annalists who wrote in Greek include Cincius Alimentus, Gaius Acilius and Aulus Postumius Albinus.

history and was written in Latin but using Greek dactylic hexameter.¹⁰ Latin reworkings of specific Greek plays, in various dramatic subgenres, were also common in the early Roman literature – Ennius himself composed such works, as did authors such as Pacuvius (second century) and most famously Plautus (late third to early second century). Roman literature arose in the shadow of a pre-existing and vibrant Greek tradition.¹¹ However, Rome did not absorb every cultural facet from the Greeks without resistance. The theatre may have proven popular, but Roman productions took place in pointedly impermanent wooden structures for hundreds of years until the first stone theatre was completed in 55 BCE.¹² Previous attempts had been halted as potential threats to Roman morality.¹³ Athletics provides a similar story, with some attested games occurring in Rome from the late third century BCE, but with nothing permanent until the *Agon Capitolinus*, which started as late as 86 CE. Athletic nudity too, it seems, was only truly accepted under the empire.¹⁴ This is late, in terms of Roman-Greek interaction.

Meanwhile, fervent (although perhaps occasionally cynical or hypocritical) resistance against Hellenic institutions was articulated by Roman orators and writers. These views are typified by the Elder Cato above all, who placed austere ancient Roman morality in opposition to imported, sensuous, Greek innovation. However, he was not alone, and this crucial contrast was articulated widely in Roman literature. Thankfully, these ideas have been studied more widely, but studies along these lines have sometimes been more prone to description rather than

¹⁰ Cf. Goldenhard (2003).

¹¹ On early Roman literature, see Kenney (1982), Habinek (1998) 34-68; Gruen (1992) 79-123. Jackie Elliott writes that 'Ennius tempered the Hellenocentricity implied by his use of Homeric metre and phraseology by writing in Latin (a linguistic equivalent to the references to the annalistic tradition that kept the poem's epicentre at Rome), but the Graecising elements broadened the poem's horizons and drew attention to its aspirations not only on a literary level but also as regards its subject's place in the world', Elliott (2013) 281.

¹² Roman theatre traditionally began in 364 BCE, in response to a plague: 'men gave way to superstitious fears, and, amongst other efforts to disarm the wrath of the gods, are said also to have instituted scenic entertainments. This was a new departure for a warlike people, whose only exhibitions had been those of the circus; but indeed it began in a small way, as most things do, and even so was imported from abroad.', Livy 7.2.3-4; cf. Hor. *Epist* 2.1.139-55.

¹³ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20.2; cf. Manuwald (2011) 55-68. Manuwald notes that "'temporary" in this context literally means "erected for a limited period of time" and is not to be equated with 'simple"', 56.

¹⁴ For a fuller account of the uptake of Greek athletics and games, see below, 105.

explanation. This is no criticism – the origins of ethnic stereotypes are miserably complex, after all, and even Greece’s harshest critic, Cato, seems to have happily engaged with Greek culture in some capacity.¹⁵ We also have very little contemporary information on the explicit motivations of those who criticised Greek culture. Some authors have attempted answers, explaining ‘hellenophobia’ in terms of ‘human nature’, ‘nationalism’, ‘rivalry’, the willingness of Romans to only engage with Hellenism on their own terms, or cultural inadequacy.¹⁶ However, I argue that it can be beneficial to look beyond hellenophobia, towards a description which saw Roman orientalism as a manifestation of attitudes towards the East with a longer heritage. I do not argue that such approaches are wrong, because there are many pitfalls which must be navigated when discussing this topic, and studies into anti-Greek sentiment necessarily have to privilege the discussion of Greek cultural features and the response to these in Roman literature. Indeed, much can be learned through such a focus.¹⁷ However, in this approach, the bigger picture can be lost. My project involves not the cataloguing of reactions to specific Greek institutions in isolation – philosophy, or theatre, for example – but in the holistic observation of how Easterners (Greeks among them) were constructed through gendered ideology, and how this was integrated into the ways Roman authors thought about other peoples, and themselves.

There is scope for this project because crucial elements are often missing from academic debates on this topic. Foremost of these is the fact that orientalist sentiments seem to appear either in heightened form, or are disproportionately found, within military contexts. I argue that this is not incidental, but instead betrays a baseline assumption that Easterners were inferior in war to Romans and that any emulation of Eastern practices risked the military weakening of Rome and Romans

¹⁵ Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 2.4, 22-23; cf. Gruen (1992) 52-83.

¹⁶ ‘Human nature’: Petrocheilos (1974) 35. ‘Nationalism’: Petrocheilos (1974) 16; Sherwin-White (1967) 12-13. ‘Rivalry’: Sherwin-White (1967) 62-82. The willingness of Romans to only engage with Hellenism on their own terms: Gruen (1992) 52-83, esp. 81-83. Cultural inadequacy: Syme (1957) 7; Crompton (2006) 79.

¹⁷ I do discuss athletics and the *gymnasium* at length in this thesis, only in order to show that the ways in which Romans thought about these institutions were mediated via existing ideology concerning masculinity and military training.

themselves. I also argue that gender construction needs to be foregrounded, as the suggested military weakening almost always manifested itself within a gendered rhetoric of feminisation as its ultimate cause. In my view, militarism was viewed as a touchstone or litmus test of both masculinity and *Romanitas* ('Romanness').

Furthermore, though Hellenism was embroiled intimately within this phenomenon, it was not always present, as Romans were quite capable of denigrating other, non-Greek Easterners, like the Parthians of my opening quotation, in very similar ways. This justifies an approach to the phenomenon that centralises ideas of orientalism in general, and not only hellenophobia.

There is evidence that Roman authors held preconceptions regarding Easterners *in general*, most often in ways which called into question their martial capabilities. This is not to say all stereotyping was so general – Roman authors were quite capable of prejudging people based upon more specific ethnicity – but there is often a telling unity in the Roman descriptions of Easterners of wildly different regions and periods.¹⁸ Indeed, peoples from as diverse a range as the 'Achaemenid' Persians of Alexander the great's time (fourth century BCE), their enemies the Macedonians, the mythical Phrygians of the *Aeneid*, ancient Indians, Parthians, and mainland Greeks have been treated with remarkable similarity in Roman literature.¹⁹ Despite this, 'Easterner' was probably not a description any of these groups would have used to describe themselves, and neither did Latin-speaking authors regularly use any single word to describe them. Occasionally, the compass direction could be evoked, as when Marc Antony is described as a *militis Eoi fugientis* – a 'fugitive soldier of the East'. *Barbarus* could also be used, along Greek lines, but the term was far from specific, and tended to be used for any who were neither Roman nor Greek.²⁰

¹⁸ For Example, Lucan could write that the Massalians (people from ancient Marseilles) had a steadfastness in war 'rare for Greeks', Luc. 3.302, matching a specific stereotype with a more generalising one. Similarly, Juvenal complains about how much he hates the Greeks in Rome, but also those from Syria too, Juv. 3.58-65.

¹⁹ Achaemenids: Curt. 3.10, 4.13-14, 9.25-29. Macedonians: Livy 9.17-19. Phrygians: Verg. *Aen.* 9.603-20. Indians: Verg. *Georg.* 2.172. Parthians: Luc. 8.363-90. Mainland Greeks: Just. *Epit.* 6.9; Mart. 10.65; Plut. *Mor.* 274d-e.

²⁰ Antony: [Virgil], *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.47. *Barbarus* describing Easterners: Hor. *Carm.* 3.5; Verg. *Aen.* 2.504, 8.685, 11.677; Sen. *Hercules Furens* 471; Curt. 3.12.3; Cic. *Div.* 1.19.37; Cic. *De Off.* 2.25; Hor.

However, it is a general unity of *character*, and not of label, which defines Roman orientalism. A unified term for 'Easterner' may have been convenient for this study, but its lack does not preclude the existence of Roman orientalism. Indeed, Roman descriptions of Easterners often tally, highlighting luxuriousness, effeminacy and military cowardice.²¹ I argue that all that was required for Roman authors to mobilise these kinds of stereotypes was some kind of association with the East. This is why such diverse groups can be described so similarly, and why, for example, the Carthaginians appear to be described in orientalist terms more often in poetry set in the mythical past, closer in time to their foundation by Eastern immigrants. I do not find it particularly useful, therefore, to set specific bounds to the peoples I will study in this project, as Roman orientalism was not so targeted or specific as that, but most of my examples describe Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Phrygians, Persians, Arabs, Indians, and a wider gamut of peoples who lived under Hellenistic kingdoms more generally. However, my broader intention is to set out how Roman authors, in a general sense, considered those in the East unwarlike.

This is not to say that 'Greekness' played no role in Roman stereotyping. Indeed, Hellenism held an undeniable attraction, and by the time Rome began interacting with the East in earnest it had been spread widely via the vast kingdoms of Alexander's successors – to Egypt, Asia-minor, Syria, and beyond into Mesopotamia. In the Middle and Late Republic, Romans could be forgiven for looking East and seeing, almost exclusively, only varying degrees of Greekness. Some cultural synthesis had taken place in the East as well, with the successors of Alexander

Epist. 1.2.7; Hor. *Epod.* 5.61; Frontin. *Str.* 2.3-5; Colum. 10.405. *Barbarus* describing non-Easterners: Cic. *Div.* 1.41.90; Cic. *Q. Fr.* 1.1.27; Hor. *Epod.* 16.11. Plautus, who adapted Greek plays, seems to enjoy suggestions that the Romans are *barbari*, Plaut. *Asin.* 11; *Most.* 825-30; *Barbarus* could also be used as an insult without explicit reference to ethnicity, Cic. *Fam.* 9.3.2; Quint. 1.5.5-7. Lewis and Short define *barbarus* as 'foreign, strange, barbarous, opp. to Greek or Roman.'; cf. Francese (2007) 129-31.

²¹ I concur with Grant Parker, who writes that 'The evidence [...] clearly reveals a real, live Roman notion of the east; it reveals a combination of commodities, imperial ideology and mystification within the same discourse. In the end, it is this combination that broadly distinguishes the east (and to some degree south) from the west and north of the empire. *There is a transferability of qualities* that are themselves well known from Herodotus' Egypt : India shares some of the features of Egypt, such as rivers ; it shares some of the features of Parthia, especially the need to be conquered', G. Parker (2011) 8. Emphasis my own.

adopting modes of representation and traditions which recalled the Achaemenid Persian Royal court: showy display of great wealth, the advertisement of the variety of people which they ruled, and an increased use of eunuchs.²² These were the Greek empires which influenced Roman attitudes to the East – not the more famous and more monocultural trade empire of the Classical Athenians.

However, the most pressing rationale for this study is that orientalist rhetoric appears heightened in military contexts. It is accepted that the Romans became far more engaged with the East after interacting with it through warfare in the Mid- and Late-Republican period. In my opinion there are signs of this indelibly printed upon their ethnicising judgements of Easterners. This work constitutes my insistence, therefore, that Roman orientalism was also forged in the fires of war.

Project Scope

The complex network of moral, gendered and ethnic associations which emerges in our sources – a phenomenon I describe using the useful umbrella-term ‘orientalism’ – provides a rich and vast thematic backdrop for the present study. However, a full description and explanation of the phenomenon is clearly beyond the scope of a single PhD thesis. For reasons of manageability, therefore, I need to clearly delineate the exact research questions I intend to answer.

The transference of orientalist rhetoric from Athenian and Greek thought to Roman is worth addressing here, mostly because it is *not* the subject of this thesis. Roman orientalism shares many ‘non-coincidental’ features with its earlier manifestation, but it was also a specific response to the geopolitics of that later age, moulded via

²² Displays of wealth: Ath. 5.194c-203b, cf. Erskine (2013). Variety of ruled peoples: Livy 37.40.1-13; Plut. *Mor.* 197d-e. Eunuchs: Kosmetatou describes their use by the Attalids of Pergamon as a continuation of Persian custom: ‘Following Alexander’s conquest of the Persian empire, parts of the administration continued to serve their new Macedonian masters, who seem to have shared local ideas on the value of eunuch administrators.’, Kosmetatou (2003), 160. Shaun Tougher notes the use of eunuchs in many Hellenistic Kingdoms (though seemingly not in Macedon itself) including Ptolemaic Egypt, the Seleucid Empire and Pontus. He also notes the Roman association of eunuchs with the East, Tougher (2009) 9. Warwick Ball argues that ‘the ensuing Seleucid state is characterised as much by Persian elements as Hellenic’, Ball (2016) 5; cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993); Garthwaite (2008) 82-83; contra. Austin (2003) 128-29.

uniquely Roman institutions and cultural hang-ups. It merits study in its own right, and it is mainly thematic and methodological inspiration that I take from studies of Classical Greek orientalism. More specifically, I refer to the foregrounding of militaristic ideology, and I propose a refocusing of the discussion of Roman orientalism along similar grounds. I argue that Roman orientalism was mostly concerned with the relative military prowess of the in-group (Romans this time, not Greeks) and Easterners. This is because there is clear evidence that Romans were more inclined to articulate orientalist ideas in agonistic and military contexts. This is, therefore, a key area for this topic and I am confident anchoring my thesis topic firmly within it.

In terms of periodisation, I intend to look at a 'central period' in Roman history, from c. 200 BCE to c. 200 CE. This is because a study which describes Roman attitudes to Easterners in military contexts is best rooted in an era in or after military exchanges with these peoples had taken place. My nominated period was an emphatic time of transformation in this regard, as Rome became increasingly embroiled in conflicts in the East through the complicated alliances of Carthage during the Punic Wars at the beginning of the second century BCE. To very briefly summarise these developments, thereafter Rome fought to protect its interests in Greece and Asia Minor, slowly bringing more and more of these regions under its dominion. Four 'Macedonian Wars' were fought between 215 and 148 BCE, leaving Greece and Macedonia in Roman hands after that conclusion. Wars against the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire, which held previously Persian lands, occurred at a similar time, and the 'Mithridatic Wars' against Pontus followed in the first century BCE. In the final years of the Republic a catastrophic loss to the Parthians at Carrhae (53 BCE) was followed by great Roman civil wars, which took on a 'West vs East' flavour after Pompey and Marc Antony relied upon Eastern soldiers against the 'Western' factions of Caesar and Octavian, respectively.²³ These occasions provided ample opportunity for

²³ My phrasing here reflects my commitment to privileging of literary interpretations in the course of this study. The primary sources tend to emphasise the eastern troops fighting in these civil wars, and to ignore the large quantities of Italians and other Westerners who must have fought on the side of the 'Eastern' factions: For Pompey, see *Caes. B. Civ.* 3.4; *Luc.* 7.270-79 *App. B. Civ.* 2.70-71, 2.75, 2.80;

Romans to construct a picture of how Easterners fought in comparison to Roman soldiers. The fact that the Romans (or 'Western faction' in cases of civil war) hardly suffered a single defeat in these campaigns no doubt had an influence upon this ideological process.²⁴

I finish my study in 200 CE for different reasons. The campaigns of the second and first centuries BCE were no doubt important for the construction of Eastern peoples in Roman imaginations, but our extant literary sources are not so numerous for this period. This is especially true for the works of history that one usually has to rely upon for battle narratives, and that are more likely to comprehensively discuss the relevant themes. A later end date is, therefore, justified, as this is a study of literary themes, and this period encompasses a broad and vibrant range of extant Roman historiography and other relevant sources. The scope of my potential sources is wide, but this is appropriate for a study of a wide and prevalent phenomenon. I will mainly use authors who wrote in Latin, but for reasons I will relay in more detail below, it is also appropriate that I use Greek-speaking authors on occasion. I hold no specific geographic bounds for my study, but instead focus on those authors who lived within the bounds of the Roman Republic and Empire during my time period.

Methodology

There are tantalising hints that orientalist themes were not only a literary phenomenon - they seem prevalent in surviving oratory, for example - but this study is particularly interested in literary themes.²⁵ Manifestations in visual culture, for example, will not be studied in any great detail, and I instead leave that to others

cf. Grillo (2012) 106-30; Delbruck (1990) 538-55. For Marc Antony, see Verg. *Aen.* 8.678-706; Flor. 2.21.7; cf. Brunt (1971) 502-08; Keppie (2000).

²⁴ Carrhae is an obvious exception. This battle resulted in the death of the Roman statesman Crassus, and the loss of some 30,000 soldiers dead or captured despite overwhelming numerical superiority. The Roman incapability to deal with the Parthian battle tactics perhaps explains Lucius Lentulus' observations in Lucan that the Parthians refuse to fight 'fairly' with swords and instead rely upon horse archers - something akin to a 'fight while fleeing', Luc. 8.380; cf. Prop. 2.10.13-14; 4.3.66; Ov. *Ars. Am.* 1.209-12.

²⁵ Surviving oratory is transmitted to us almost entirely through literature, so it is difficult to be conclusive in this regard.

more qualified.²⁶ I believe that the relevant literary representations probably reflected honestly held societal opinions, at least in the sections of society which wrote our extant literature. Literary studies of Roman history are unfortunately always beholden to the fact that our surviving sources were almost exclusively written by an elite male demographic. Again, I believe there are hints that these opinions were held more widely, and regardless, these constructions are worth studying in their own right even if they were not necessarily held by all sectors of society.²⁷ Doubtless, too, these opinions held by powerful men influenced Roman policy, with major historical consequences.²⁸ Nevertheless, for this project, the literary construction is enough – I do not intend to describe how prejudice influenced policy.

My focus necessarily demands a deeply gender-aware approach. This is no forced attempt to see history through another lens, but is, instead, justified by the fact that Roman authors tended to characterise military skill, bravery and effectiveness as principles of masculinity, with a corresponding lack of such characteristics conversely associated with women or feminised men. Roman gender construction, as commonly articulated in our sources, was aggressively dichotomised along these lines, and this is even more the case in sources which discuss militarised themes. An awareness of how gender is constructed is therefore crucial to my research. I will often suggest that a certain behaviour or object is ‘gendered’, and by this I mean that the stated thing was significantly associated with one of the extremes of allocated genders – masculinity or femininity. Similarly, I will use the corresponding adjective ‘ethnicising’ to correspond to cultural features or activities closely associated with a particular ethnicity in my sources. Both terms depend on an understanding of

²⁶ I await with particular interest a forthcoming work by Glenys Davies in which she examines statuary which depicts defeated Eastern enemies of Rome standing in traditionally feminine poses. She presented her preliminary findings at the Classical Association Conference in 2014 under the title ‘Subservient Body Language: Barbarians, Slaves, Women and Provincials in Roman Art’.

²⁷ The use of orientalising rhetoric in invective – designed to shame politicians in front of a public audience, and in military speeches to common soldiers perhaps seem to suggest this. Both also echo the kind of ‘banter’ soldiers exclaimed at triumphs and the public in crowds during the Republic.

²⁸ Two major examples in which Roman men wrote to those administrating Eastern Roman provinces with advice based around the ethnic stereotyping of those being governed include Cic. *Q. Fr.* 1.1.16; Plin. *Ep.* 8.24.

gender and ethnic identity as culturally constructed. Indeed, the entire thesis depends on this assumption, and the idea that the ways in which Roman authors constructed ethnicity and gender are crucial for our understanding of Roman orientalism.

I reject any 'essentialist' assumption that the ethnic or gender stereotypes which I discuss were simple reflections of what Easterners or women somehow inherently are like, or were like. Instead, I argue that these associations were the results of processes which constructed difference through repeated and elaborated ideology. In some ways I am afforded the luxury of side-stepping some issues, as I truly study the invented, 'straw-men' (or 'straw-women') of male-penned Roman literature. These figures in Roman literature are, thus, not in a true sense real people. However, in light of the agitated fervour of our sources, and the willingness of some earlier modern historical works to accept the validity of such prejudicial characterisations, I feel it bears saying: I believe the feminised caricatures of Easterners in Roman literature are fiction. These figures were constructed to serve an ideological purpose – occasionally 'propaganda' – which served Roman interests. Consequently, these figures provide unique insight for those who seek to understand Roman elite self-construction.

Structurally, my argument is themed around several specific aspects of warfare – these are the 'military contexts' I refer to in my title – to which Roman authors thought Easterners and Romans differed in response. These provide me with my thesis chapters, and in each respectively I initiate 'close readings' of texts discussing military training, arms, naval vessels, and related themes. The chosen aspects are not comprehensive, but instead are revealing for the overarching ideological phenomenon which I hope to elucidate.

Terms & Thematic Background

The Latin *imbellis* or *inbellis* – 'unwarlike' – is an important term for this study. It denotes a character somehow inherently unsuited to war, and could be used to

describe timid animals (deer for example), non-combatants like women and children, and even a peaceful place or period of time.²⁹ It could also describe individuals not inclined to warfare and objects that seemed somehow unwarlike, like musical instruments or weapons wielded by old men.³⁰ Crucially, however, it was also often used to characterise ‘peoples’, to denote an ethnic group without martial inclination or skill. This highlights the Roman propensity to categorise ethnicities and peoples in terms of their bellicosity. In my view, it is actually difficult to understate the importance of this categorisation when discussing Roman views on ethnicity. Military ability was of keen interest to Roman ethnologists.

Livy perhaps sums this attitude up best when he places a speech into the mouth of Valerius Corvus, a Roman general of the Samnite Wars of the fourth century BCE.

But first he spoke a few words of encouragement to his soldiers, bidding them have no fear of a strange war and a strange enemy. With every advance of their arms from Rome, he said, they came to nations that were more and more unwarlike (*imbelles gentes*). They must not judge of the courage of the Samnites by the defeats they had administered to the Sidicini and Campanians. Whatever their respective qualities, it was inevitable that when they fought together, one side should be vanquished. As for the Campanians, there was no question they had been beaten rather by the enervation resulting from excessive luxury

²⁹ Animals: Stat. *Theb.* 7.594; Sil. *Pun.* 2.685; Ov. *Fast.* 5.372. Non-combatants: Val. Max. 6.*Ext.*2; Frontin. *Str.* 2.18, 3.3; Livy 28.23.2. Peaceful places: Stat. *Silv.* 3.84; Livy describes a three-year period of peace as *imbelle triennium*, 4.20.9.

³⁰ Cowardly individuals: Tac. *Germ.* 11.12.1; Sall. *Iug.* 20.2, 67.2; Ov. *Met.* 8.98. Musical Instruments: Ov. *Met.* 5.114. Weapons: Verg. *Aen.* 2.544; V. Fl. 1.760.

and by their own softness (*mollitiaque*), than by the strength of their enemies.³¹

Livy 7.32.6-7.

Despite the early setting, Livy is probably using hindsight, describing a worldview popular in his own time (the Augustan era) that Rome's imperial expansion had exposed them to unwarlike peoples. The passage nevertheless attests to a propensity to categorise *gentes* – 'peoples' – on a spectrum of warlikeness.³² Thus the Samnites are quite warlike, the Campanians not so, but what about the Romans? Here we see Roman ideological self-construction at play: the description of unwarlike people serves to articulate the warlikeness of Valerius and Livy's own. Other important themes are apparent, as the least warlike of those discussed, the Campanians, were a more Hellenised people from southern Italy, and it seems likely that this was a factor in their characterisation. Additionally, Livy has Valerius offer causes for their military weakness, one of which is excessive luxury. This was often thought to be a primary cause of unwarlikeness for Roman authors, who often relayed the idea that the endurance of difficult experiences was necessary to inculcate desirable military virtues.

The gendered nature of the characterisation is made clear via an associated term – *mollitia(que)*. *Mollitia* refers to a softness of behaviour and lifestyle which was to a large extent associated with women. The term is another important one, as it too very often denotes a lifestyle unsuited to warfare.³³ Lactantius, writing in the early fourth century CE shows this connection with a dubious etymological theory:

So the male was named *vir*, because *vis* (strength) in him is greater than in woman. Hence, too, *virtus* (courage) has

³¹ *paucis suos adhortatus ne novum bellum eos novusque hostis terreret: quidquid ab urbe longius proferrent arma, magis magisque in imbelles gentes eos prodire. Ne Sidicinorum Campanorumque cladibus Samnitium aestimarent virtutem; qualescumque inter se certaverint, necesse fuisse alteram partem vinci. Campanos quidem haud dubie magis nimio luxu fluentibus rebus mollitiaque sua quam vi hostium victos esse.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

³² Other examples of Roman authors describing peoples as *imbellis* include Livy 29.25.12, 34.17.2-3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.46; Suet. *Iul.* 35.2; Frontin. *Str.* 3.10.1; Ov. *Fast.* 3.578-9; Curt. 3.10.1; Luc. 10.54.

³³ Good discussions of *mollitia* include Edwards (1993) 63-97; C. Williams (2010) 139-53; C. Williams (2013).

received its name. Likewise, woman [...] is from the word for softness, one letter changed and one taken away, *mollier* rather than *mulier*.³⁴

Lactant. *De Opificio Dei* 12.16–17.

Though late, Lactantius nevertheless preserves an attitude prevalent in my time period. For example, Cicero says much the same about the ‘soft, womanish’ and ‘spineless’ (*enervatum*) parts of a person’s soul, and how they must be constrained by reason and *virtus*.³⁵ These contrasts – between masculine and feminine behaviours and associations – are articulated widely in Roman literature, often to criticise men perceived to be acting like women. However, these qualities could also be further abstracted, as the lexicon of effeminacy was also utilised to describe undesirable qualities in different *gentes* as well.

The concept of ‘effeminacy’ was based on a dichotomised system of gender construction in which valourised character traits – examples include bravery, self-control, and endurance – were considered masculine. In contrast, as Emily Hemelrijk argues, “‘femininity’, was usually despised: it was associated with timidity, credulity, extravagance, licentiousness, irrationality, love of luxury and, in general, a lack of self-control which made women an easy prey to passions.”³⁶ With femininity so negatively defined, accusations of effeminacy became grave insults, perfectly constructed to erode a man’s respectability on many relevant levels.³⁷ As Craig Williams notes, self-control seems to be the ultimate underlying difference within this gender dichotomy.³⁸ This shows, as Maud Gleason has argued, that masculinity was something that required effort to attain – an idea known as ‘achieved

³⁴ *Vir itaque nominatus est, quod major in eo vis est, quire in femina; et hinc virtus nomen accepit. Item mulier [...] a mollitie, immutata et detracta littera, velut mollier.*

³⁵ Cic. *Tusc.* 2.47–48.

³⁶ Hemelrijk (2004) 282.

³⁷ Hemelrijk argues that ‘effeminacy was one of the worst taunts associated with “pathic” (i.e. passive) homosexuality, moral degeneracy, cowardice, and political and social weakness.’, Hemelrijk (2004) 282.

³⁸ C. Williams (2010) 139, 145, 151–56.

masculinity'.³⁹ Conversely, all that was required in order to be deemed effeminate was to give in to one's 'baser' desires.

The importance of self-control within the rhetoric of effeminacy makes the idea of *luxuria* very relevant, as it was strongly associated with both women and the East. Women were believed to suffer from dangerous materialistic tendencies more than men, and consequently softer lifestyles.⁴⁰ This went further than mere pontificating, and it is telling that one reaction to a devastating military defeat at Cannae (215 BCE) was a law specifically targeting female opulence. The *Lex Oppia* was passed a year later and declared, among other things, 'that no woman should possess more than half an ounce of gold or wear a multicoloured garment'.⁴¹ In a debate over its repeal in 195, Cato the Elder harangues the Senate, arguing in favour of retaining the law, asking them not to 'give loose rein to their [women's] uncontrollable nature and to this untamed creature and expect that they will themselves set bounds to their licence'.⁴² Livy, by reporting the vast speech, gives the issue both political and historical significance.⁴³ In Rome, luxury was a serious business.

In the same speech, Cato reveals yet more about his views on luxury.

You have often heard me complaining of the extravagance of the women and often of the men, both private citizens and magistrates even, and lamenting that the state is suffering from those two opposing evils, avarice and luxury, which have been the destruction of every great

³⁹ Gleason (1995).

⁴⁰ Take, for example, Cicero quotation of an unnamed author who declares *Mulierum genus avarum est* – 'womankind is avaricious', Cic. *Inv. Rhet.* 1.49.94; cf. Prop. 3.13; Juv. 6.286-313; Plin. *HN* 9.58-60; Ov. *Ars Am.* 3.172. For the association between women and luxury, cf. Wyke (1994); Zanda (2011) 3-4. Holt Parker writes that 'Women's avarice, especially for jewels, and its connection with other vices, especially adultery, was a deeply founded stereotype', H. Parker (2013) 173.

⁴¹ *ne qua mulier plus semunciam auri haberet neu vestimento versicolori uteretur*, Livy 34.1.3. Trans. Loeb, adapted. On the *Lex Oppia*, see Culham (1982); Olson (2008) 101-04, 148; Zanda (2011) 114-17.

⁴² *Date frenos impotenti naturae et indomito animali et sperate ipsas modum licentiae facturas*, Livy 34.1.13.

⁴³ The authenticity of the speech is doubted by many, most for supposed anachronism, cf.; Astin (1978) 25-27; Briscoe (1981) 39-43; Chaplin (2000) 98. Livy was writing some two hundred years later, under Augustus, but references in Plautus to female luxury perhaps suggest that this was a contemporary issue: e.g. Plautus, *Poen.* 210-32, *Aul.* 162-169. Scholars have noted similarities between Cato's speech in Livy and Plautine language, cf. M. Skinner (2011) 42-43.

empire. The better and the happier becomes the fortune of our commonwealth day by day and the greater the empire grows – and already we have crossed into Greece and Asia, places filled with all the allurements of vice, and we are handling the treasures of kings – the more I fear that these things will capture us rather than we them.⁴⁴

Livy 34.4.1-3.

Cato shows moral concern for the fate of the Republic in light of the new temptations which faced its citizens. Crucially, these temptations come from the East – from Greece, Asia and the treasures of the Hellenistic kingdoms which they had just begun to conquer there. Under this model, the Roman conquest of the East itself exposed Romans to immoral luxury. Crucially, Livy's Cato was not the only individual to make such assertions, as Polybius, a Greek historian of the second century BCE who lived in Rome, also identifies a similar cause. He argues that 'Greek laxity' (Ἑλλήνων εὐχέρειαν) – seemingly involving banquets and prostitutes, both male and female – was learned after the conquest of Perseus of Macedon.⁴⁵ However, Cato was supposedly speaking decades before the conquest of Macedon, and so Polybius and Livy seem to agree in general terms upon the corrupting influence of the East, but disagree upon the time frame. It is, therefore, important to understand that this rhetoric – like much about orientalist rhetoric – was not particularly precise.

Other authors offer different dates. The first-century BCE author Sallust instead blames Sulla's forays into Asia during the Mithridatic wars, which began in 87 BCE, for teaching Romans to 'indulge in women and drink' and to admire and steal

⁴⁴ *Saepe me querentem de feminarum, saepe de virorum nec de privatorum modo sed etiam magistratum sumptibus audistis, diversisque duobus vitiis, avaritia et luxuria, civitatem laborare, quae pestes omnia magna imperia everterunt. Haec ego, quo melior laetiorque in dies fortuna rei publicae est imperiumque crescit – et iam in Graeciam Asiamque transcendimus omnibus libidinum illecebris repletas et regias etiam attractamus gazas – eo plus horreo, ne illae magis res nos ceperint quam nos illas.*

⁴⁵ Polyb. 31.25.4-5. Polybius also sees a more general decline beginning with the distribution of land by C. Flaminius in 232 BCE, 2.21.7.

artwork.⁴⁶ The Elder Pliny, of the first century CE, blames earlier sorties into Asia alongside the transfer of the kingdom of Pergamon to Rome of 133 BCE, 'a serious blow to our morals'⁴⁷ Finally, Florus, an author of probably the second century CE, seems even more confused than most. He argues that the process was twofold – first involving the conquest of Syria and then afterwards 'the Asiatic inheritance bequeathed by the king of Pergamon [...] spoiled the morals of the age and ruined the State'.⁴⁸ However, his timeline is confused, as the former was undertaken by Pompey as late as 64 BCE and the latter occurred far earlier, in 133. It seems that, for Roman authors, the influence of the corrupting East was more of a general rule: discursively constructed but impossible to pin down conclusively. These are the origin myths of Roman luxury.⁴⁹

Omnipresent in these sources, however, is the belief that Roman military conquests in the East exposed Romans to dissolute morals through the luxurious lifestyles and items they found there. This gives a sense of how inextricable militarism and imperialism are for Roman orientalism, as these authors make it very clear that the end product of this new-found luxury, imported from the East, was unwarlikeness. Plutarch (a Greek-speaking author of the second century) makes it clear that Greek art made the Romans, previously 'accustomed only to war or agriculture, and [...] inexperienced in luxury and ease' become idle, and turn their attention instead to 'glib talk about art and artists'.⁵⁰ Livy says specifically that the province of Asia, 'on account of the pleasantness of its cities and the abundance of its treasures of land and sea and the feebleness of the enemy and the wealth of its kings, made armies richer rather than braver.'⁵¹

⁴⁶ Sall. *Cat.* 11.5.

⁴⁷ Plin. *HN* 33.53.148.

⁴⁸ *Syria prima nos victa corruptit, mox Asiatica Pergameni regis hereditas [...] adflixere saeculi mores*, Flor. 1.47.7-8.

⁴⁹ For further details regarding these 'origin myths' of Roman luxury, see Lintott (1972); Evans (2012).

⁵⁰ Plut. *Marc.* 21. The Greek art in this case was from Syracuse.

⁵¹ *Nam Asia et amoenitate urbium et copia terrestrium maritimarumque rerum et mollitia hostium regiisque opibus ditiores quam fortiores exercitus faciebat*, Livy 39.1.3.

With these ideas in play, even peace could be seen as dangerous. For example, Livy states that a war against the Ligurians was fabricated in 187 BCE only to 'keep alive the military discipline of the Romans during the intervals between their great wars.'⁵² Roman authors seemed to conceive of warlikeness as a fragile thing, easily lost through luxury, cultural imports, and even peace. Juvenal's famous passage shows how peace came to be integrated into debates around luxury:

These days, we are suffering the calamities of long peace.
Luxury has settled down on us, crueller than fighting,
avenging the world we've conquered. From the moment
Roman poverty disappeared, no crime or act of lust has
been missing: Corinth and Sybaris and Rhodes and
Miletus have poured into Rome, along with Tarentum,
garlanded, insolent and sozzled. It was filthy money that
first imported foreign ways (*peregrinos mores*), and soft
wealth (*divitiae molles*) that corrupted our era with its
disgusting decadence.⁵³

Juv. 6.292-300.

Here, peace – the absence of war – can lead to luxury, just as luxury can cause unwarlikeness in other sources, providing more evidence that orientalist rhetoric could be rather imprecise.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Juvenal shows no hesitation in identifying

⁵² *Is hostis velut natus ad continendam inter magnorum intervalla bellorum Romanis militarem disciplinam erat; nec alia provincia militem magis ad virtutem acuebat*, Livy 39.1.1.

⁵³ *nunc patimur longae pacis mala. saevior armis | luxuria incubuit victumque ulciscitur orbem. | nullum crimen abest facinusque libidinis ex quo | paupertas Romana perit: huc fluxit et Isthmos | et Sybaris †collest†, huc et Rhodos et Miletos | atque coronatum et petulans madidumque Tarentum. | prima peregrinos obscena pecunia mores | intulit, et turpi fregerunt saecula luxu | divitiae molles...* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁵⁴ Similarly, Diodorus Siculus argues that 'after the cessation of warfare the young men turned to a soft and undisciplined manner of life, and their wealth served as purveyor to their desires. Throughout the city lavishness was preferred to frugality, a life of ease to the practice of warlike pursuits, and he who was regarded as happy by the populace was not the man distinguished by his high qualities of character, but rather one who passed his whole life in the enjoyment of the most gratifying pleasures.', Diod. Sic. 37.3.1-5.

the geographic origin of Rome's problems: the Greek cities of Asia Minor, mainland Greece, and Greek southern Italy.

The idea that these were not Roman *mores* but instead were *peregrinus* – foreign or alien – is important. The attribution of undesirable behaviours as foreign imports allowed Roman to authors attribute blame elsewhere, and to construct an idealised past in which Romans were previously virtuous and austere, only corrupted later from the consequences of empire.⁵⁵ These sentiments have been labelled 'primitivism' – a belief in a mythical 'golden age' centuries past, a utopia from which society thereafter degrades.⁵⁶ Livy's Cato engages in this rhetoric too, arguing that the Roman ancestors had no need for a law restraining luxury, as 'there was no extravagance to be restrained.'⁵⁷ Cato even casts one of Rome's earliest Greek adversaries, Pyrrhus of Epirus, as the first Eastern tempter of Rome, constructing yet another vector for the import of luxury. However, Cato tells us these advances were rejected at the time – third-century Rome was apparently not so susceptible to such temptations. Moralising Roman literature should be read in these terms: as attempts to arrest the supposedly inevitable decline of Roman morals.

The above constitutes a brief sketch of the thematic background to the discussions contained within this thesis. Ultimately, a 'moral nexus' can be identified, in which targets for moral concern – things like the subversion of gender roles, changes in society, uptake of foreign cultural institutions, and the transition between war and peace, can intertwine and even amplify each other, leading to moral hysteria. There are, no doubt, several ways to focus a study interested in these themes. However, this work is not fundamentally a study of luxury, nor primitivism. Therefore, these concepts will not be treated at length but will instead be summoned only where they

⁵⁵ An example is contained within the Elder Cato's speech cited above, where he remarks that the early Romans had no need for laws constraining the luxury of women

⁵⁶ Suetonius describes a censorial edict of 92 BCE that captures the spirit of the tradition in its declaration that 'All new that is done contrary to the usage and the customs of our ancestors, seems not to be right.' Suet. *Gram. et Rhet.* 25. Similarly, Horace writes 'What has ruinous Time not tainted? | Our parents' age, worse than their ancestors, | Bore us, less worthy, soon to bear, | Children still unworthier', Hor. *Carm.* 3.6.46-49. The theme is explored in Rhiannon Evans' *Utopia Antiqua: Readings of the Golden Age and Decline at Rome* (2007).

⁵⁷ *nulla erat luxuria quae coerceretur*, Livy 34.4.7.

can inform my more specific arguments around gender, orientalism and unwarlikeness.

Sources

Orientalist stereotyping can be found in a wide variety of Roman literature. It will therefore necessarily need to use evidence from a broad range of ancient authors to make this case. This may make the task sound easy, but the landscapes of Roman authorship are not simple, and I am aware that studies based around single sources have a comparatively easier task in discussing the full range of relevant biases and backgrounds of their author, while I must attempt to make sense of this for many. Using material from various genres will be useful to show that these were stereotypes which many Romans engaged in constructing, collectively – though I will make every effort to engage with the possible effects the expectations of genre may have placed upon the authors making these arguments.

I will prioritise the discussion of those authors who wrote in Latin, and those who lived in Italy. This is partially because it is easier to make the case that these are exhibiting ‘Roman’ attitudes. Nevertheless, I have already argued that orientalism was not unique to Italian authors, and in the Roman Empire, Greek-speaking authors do seem to make arguments informed by the same, or similar, worldviews. As this is a thematic study, and these authors seem to utilise these themes, it is, therefore, justifiable to use authors such as Plutarch, Appian and Cassius Dio in my arguments.⁵⁸ However, it will be interesting to explore why Greek-speaking authors were also interested in such themes here. One reason is related to the fact that Roman orientalism was itself focused around an ‘infective’ model of Eastern culture which feared its potential to infect and degrade Roman society. This often made such rhetoric part of an ‘autocritical’ discourse – that is, one which was used to identify faults in contemporary society. Autocriticism was invariably a focus of Roman moralising rhetoric, and enabled the primitivist worldview which I have

⁵⁸ Appian wrote in the middle of the second century CE, Cassius Dio at the end of the second century and beginning of the third.

already discussed. However, such rhetoric was not only focused upon the Romans, but also allowed for the idea that Greeks, too, used to live more moral lives in previous eras – especially during the Homeric and Classical eras – but had now degraded. Thus, we should not be surprised to find Greek authors, writing in Roman contexts, engaging in similar autocritical discourses, accepting the idea that Greek culture had degraded since its heyday. Examples of this have already been cited – Polybius talking about ‘Greek laxity’ and Plutarch agreeing that Greek art caused Rome to become unwarlike. If it is not surprising that Latin authors criticised their own culture, then neither should it be for Greeks living under Rome.

Greek authors could, therefore, conceive of luxurious practices as the downfall of both the Greeks *and* Romans, in a way consistent with themes in Latin literature, with which they were likely familiar. Indeed, Latin-speaking authors too were capable of arguing that Rome was so infected that it was now in danger of infecting other cultures.⁵⁹ Tacitus describes a speech of Queen Boudicca of the *Iceni* complaining about the Romans in faintly orientalisising terms, describing how Roman cupidity (*cupiditas*) had corrupted her kingdom and person, but their troops were actually cowards unable to face up to war-cries, let alone swords.⁶⁰ However, in Greek-speaking Cassius Dio’s version of events, Boudicca’s speech is seems much more aggressively orientalist. Dio highlights the unwarlike cowardice of the Romans, and the emperor Nero is treated with particular ire: he ‘though in name is a man, is in fact a woman, as is proved by his singing, lyre-playing and beautification of his person’.⁶¹ Such things were associated with the East in any case, but Boudicca explicitly places him among a list of females who ruled over soft peoples which include the Eastern queens Nicrotis of Egypt and Semiramis of Assyria. More references allude to pederastic activity and anointments of myrrh.⁶² These descriptions evoke orientalist stereotypes, wielded here against Rome.

⁵⁹ For example, Juv. 2.163-70. Such a contention may lie behind Caesar’s argument that of all the Gauls, ‘the Belgae are the most courageous, because they are farthest removed from the culture and the civilization of the [nearest Roman] Province.’, *Caes. B. Civ.* 1.1; cf. *Tac. Agr.* 21.

⁶⁰ *Tac. Ann.* 14.35.

⁶¹ *Cass. Dio* 62.6.2-2-5.

⁶² *Cass. Dio* 62.6.4.

How can this be explained? Orientalism was a strongly developed discourse by the time Cassius Dio was writing, and could thus be mobilised in a variety of contexts. Here they are clearly used to show Roman leadership has been perverted under Nero. Elsewhere Dio could make further use of such themes by placing them within the speeches of Western characters in their speeches, as he does here and later in Octavian's speech before the battle of Actium.⁶³ Greek authors dealing with events from Roman history which were embroiled heavily in orientalist mythos may have felt they had no choice but to repeat these themes, so as to tell the entire story within the appropriate tradition. This may well have been the case with accounts of the battle of Actium, for example, where Octavian faced Marc Antony and Cleopatra, who were so overtly orientalised in Latin accounts.⁶⁴ Additionally, Greek-speaking authors of the Roman period also had the option to mobilise orientalist stereotypes against non-Greeks of the East like the Arabs or Parthians, or to concentrate their ire upon specific semi-Greek ethnicities like Syrians and Egyptians or proverbially soft Greek-speaking regions like Phrygia, or Asia more generally.⁶⁵

The fact that Eastern peoples share similar characterisations in works written in both Latin and Greek provides further evidence that orientalism as a phenomenon in and of itself is worth study – not necessarily simple 'hellenophobia' alone. Greeks had a plethora of ways of articulating orientalist views which they could readily use without being seen as hypocrites. This is what enables Plutarch to dismiss the elder Cato's particularly anti-Hellenic brand of orientalism but still fervently criticise Marc Antony for his orientalising ways in his *Life*.⁶⁶ Greeks could enjoy and use these literary themes, and most of those who did lived in an era when these themes had greater cultural currency than at any time before.

⁶³ Cass. Dio 50.27.

⁶⁴ The battle is examined at length in my fourth chapter.

⁶⁵ Persians: Dio Chrys. 21.3-5; Cilicians: Plut. *Pomp.* 28.3; Asia: Plut. *Ant.* 24.1.

⁶⁶ Plutarch writes that 'But time has certainly shown the emptiness of this ill-boding speech of his, for while the city was at the zenith of its empire, she made every form of Greek learning and culture her own.', Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 23.3; cf. Plut. *Ant.* 54.6.

Critical Historiography

The aims of this study – to explore Roman ideas about the unwarlikeness and effeminacy of Eastern peoples – require the study of ancient, deep-seated attitudes based on assumptions of morality, history, geography, and culture. These discourses involved elements of ethnic stereotyping, gender-construction, moralising and primitivist ideology in equal measure. Good studies exist for many of these elements, but the rationale of my study is that to understand the phenomenon of Roman orientalism, a combined understanding of each is important. Few studies of ethnic stereotyping, for example, have given much thought to sexual and gendered aspects to these stereotypes.

Easterners – usually those living in Asia Minor and the Near East – have been described as effeminate and luxurious in a variety of historical contexts. These stereotypes can be found in the literature of Classical Athens regarding the Achaemenid Persians, in that of the Western Latin Kingdoms regarding Byzantine Greeks, and even in British colonial literature regarding Arabs and Indians.⁶⁷ Edward Said argued, in his seminal *Orientalism* (1978), that such cultural representations form a coherent, millennia-old, process of ideological subordination.⁶⁸ However, my thesis is not a study of the reception of orientalist rhetoric, so I will try to restrict my historiographical discussion to studies of unwarlikeness and effeminacy in Easterners in works of ancient history.⁶⁹ No literature review can be exhaustive, and this one does not intend to be, but I do intend to tackle the main themes and most important works of literature for my topic in order to ground my arguments within their historiographical contexts.

⁶⁷ Athens: Foxhall and Salmon (2013) 55-59; Hall (1989) 206. Latin Kingdoms: J. Harris (2006) *xv*; 89-90; Garland and Neil (2013) 8; Britain: El Sadda (2012) 57; Parramore (2008) 78; Wien (2014).

⁶⁸ Said argues that ‘...as early as Aeschylus’s play *The Persians* the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar (in Aeschylus’s case, grieving Asiatic women). The dramatic immediacy of representation in *The Persians* obscures the fact that the audience is watching a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient.’, Said (1978) 21.

⁶⁹ For the purposes of this literature review I consider Classical Athenian stereotyping of Persians to be tangentially relevant to the current enquiry due to its predating of Roman orientalism, and the strong possibility of a causal link.

As far back as the seventeenth century, historians have shown an interest in these themes. Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Historie of the World* (1614), written in the Tower of London, references the 'baseness of those effeminate Asiaticks' as a motive for Ancient Greeks who wanted to invade Persia.⁷⁰ A similar reference appears in a travel monologue of Sir Thomas Herbert's a few decades later, in which the author argues that the Persian armies lost to Alexander the Great because they had grown effeminate through luxury.⁷¹ In the same work, the Romans are incorporated into the story: he claims that luxurious dining practices were transmitted from the 'effeminate Asians' to the 'Grecians' and only in turn to the 'Romanes' later.⁷² Into the eighteenth century, George Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733) echoed extant ancient authors quite closely, arguing that Greece had declined via an effeminate enervation caused by luxury, and which infected Rome in turn. Now, the same process was constructed as occurring in England.⁷³ In a rapidly prospering British Empire, arguments rooted in Roman rhetoric became increasingly resonant.⁷⁴

Some four decades later, Gibbon published the first volume of his seminal *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), and many of his explanations for Roman 'decline' fit into the same pattern. For Gibbon, the 'manly pride' of the Romans became eroded as the 'simplicity of Roman manners was insensibly corrupted by the stately affectation of the courts of Asia.'⁷⁵ He also suggests that there were military consequences, arguing that 'effeminate luxury [...] had instilled a secret and destructive poison into the camps of the legions'.⁷⁶ Echoing their

⁷⁰ Raleigh (1614) 107.

⁷¹ Herbert (1638) 245.

⁷² Herbert (1638) 61.

⁷³ Cheyne (1733) 57: 'The antient Greeks, while they lived in their Simplicity and Virtue were Healthy, Strong, and Valiant : But afterwards [...] they sunk into Effeminacy, Luxury, and Diseases, and began to study Physick, to remedy those Evils which their Luxury and Laziness had brought upon them. In like manner, the Romans fell from their former Bravery, Courage, and heroick Virtue, which had gain'd them the Empire of the World.' The work is intentionally parallelising, arguing that the diseases which had been characterised on the continent as peculiarly English could be cured via a reinvigoration of English masculine spirit. These diseases included the obesity and 'melancholy' that he suffered from himself, Gilman (2007) 45-46; Guerrini (2000) xv.

⁷⁴ Cf. Montagu (1806).

⁷⁵ Gibbon (1781b) 192.

⁷⁶ Gibbon (1781b) 70.

sources, Gibbon and other historians of the era often concluded that the Roman Empire 'fell' for the very reasons that their Roman sources feared it would.⁷⁷ According to these historians, ancient writers were *correct* to fear the *actually* feminising forces of Eastern cultural practices.⁷⁸ In this model, infective Eastern culture was an important and relevant agent of historical change, just as the ancients had themselves believed.

John Cramer, in his *A Geographical and Historical Description of Asia Minor* (1832), argued that 'Effeminacy and luxury have been the prevailing habits of the inhabitants [of Asia Minor] from the times of the soft and voluptuous Lydians to those of the indolent Turk and this will probably always be the case.'⁷⁹ This is representative of a view which Said was reacting to in his vital 1978 work, *Orientalism*. Said argued that western ideas of 'the Orient' had developed via a process of 'schematization' mediated through a western imagination that sought to privilege inherently western preconceptions above any objective depictions of the East – most often in ways which exoticised 'Orientals' and labelled them as inferior and strange. Under this model, the creation of prejudicial stereotypes about Easterners was a traceable historic phenomenon. Crucially, Said traced the relevant 'system of knowledge' as back ancient times – beyond Aeschylus, and as far back as Homer.⁸⁰ His work has rightly been lauded for influencing postcolonial theory by examining how representations of 'Othered' peoples could be manipulated by those who controlled systems of 'power and knowledge' for ideological purposes.⁸¹ This is an important approach for my own study, and a far cry from earlier authors who took biased ancient sources as factual reports of historical 'reality'. The idea is that

⁷⁷ John Lord posited a fully cyclical model of empire whereby martial nations conquered effeminate ones, were exposed to luxury, and became enervated themselves: 'We see however in each successive conquest the destruction not of civilization but of men', Lord (1869) 438; cf. Browne (1853) 190; Torrance (1854) 6.

⁷⁸ Charges of effeminacy are explicitly judgemental for Gibbon. For example, he writes 'he sullied the dignity of an emperor and a man', Gibbon (1781a) 579.

⁷⁹ Cramer (1832) 13.

⁸⁰ Said (1978) 21.

⁸¹ Said was influenced by Michel Foucault in the idea that power and knowledge influenced social constructions, cf. Walia (2001) 23-31.

representations of other people can tell us almost as much about the people making the claims as those supposedly represented. This is fundamental for my research.

However, Said was not an ancient historian, and in some areas he mistreats the classical material. For example, modern readings of some of the few ancient texts he cites, the *Iliad* and Aeschylus' *The Persians*, have strongly called into question the supposed 'Otherness' of the Easterners depicted.⁸² He also does not acknowledge Roman depictions of Easterners, which seem to share many of the same characteristics. One wonders if it muddied his narrative too much to have the supposed forefathers of the Western tradition, the Greeks – who elsewhere he casts in the role of European – accused of behaviours reminiscent of his 'Orientalism'.

Some other crucial differences between the ancient and modern phenomena are not discussed. Said argues that a strong facet of early modern orientalisating discourse was that the East was seen to be easily and justifiably 'penetrable' by Europeans.⁸³ In contrast, Roman sources are usually far more worried – perhaps obsessed – with the idea that their own culture was the one being invaded by Eastern practices.⁸⁴

Offering reflections relevant to a wide variety of disciplines, *Orientalism* proved controversial in many fields – especially within 'Oriental studies', a field which Said heavily criticised.⁸⁵ Responses by authors such as Wang Ning, and especially Bernard Lewis, have tended to emphasise how generalising Said was himself about the West.⁸⁶ Said considered himself a historian, but as John MacKenzie articulates,

⁸² Gruen (2010a) 9-20.

⁸³ Said (1978) 44, 179.

⁸⁴ Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 12.2; Juv. 3.60-1; Polyb. 31.25.3; Tac. *Ann.* 14.20.

⁸⁵ This should perhaps not be unexpected, as Said comes close to accusing those who practice Oriental studies in the West of racism, and complicity in imperial subjugation. Literary critics, on the other hand, were far less resistant and it is probably that field which was influenced most by the work, cf. Das (2005) 342-51.

⁸⁶ Wang (1997); Lewis (1982). MacKenzie (2000) describes Said's West as 'hermetic and stereotypical', 130. Specific examples have involved assertions of how more proximal 'Others', for example the French for the English, seemed to have loomed larger in the colonial imagination than even the Orient, Colley (2005) 368. MacKenzie (2000) adds that Said also 'fails to notice that the building of empire is first an internal process, with internalised others (Welsh, Scots, Irish, working-class "provincials")', 134. Many similar arguments have been made. For example, a recent work by Jeremy Brotton (2016) has stressed English affiliation and alignment with the Ottoman empire; feelings which arose in response to their alienation with the rest of Catholic Europe during Elizabeth I's reign. This is complemented by the likes of Phillips' recent *Before Orientalism* (2013) which asserts the plurality of

Orientalism has had less effect upon historians than might have been expected'.⁸⁷ He argues that though Said had much to say on historiographical matters, his generalising tendencies alienated historians who were used to intellectual history 'deeply embedded in its varied economic and social settings', not frozen throughout millennia.⁸⁸ In many ways, Said's work was inherently politicised, a chastisement of poor – perhaps even 'evil' – practices in historiography, not truly concerned with the (unique!) consequences of the imagery he sketches for his historical subjects. Said did have things to say concerning specific historical themes and eras (and these have often been specifically refuted or nuanced), but his most profound arguments, although contentious, were historiographical. Said posed questions about the biases of those assessing and constructing historical literature. Said was probably wrong on many fronts, but as a touchstone for the field and instigator of debate, he is crucial.

There has been some explicit engagement with Said by classical scholars, although, for the most part, only recently. Huang Yang's 'Orientalism in the Ancient World' (2006) is probably the most direct attempt, but in practice Yang seems to simply apply Said's methodology to further areas of the ancient world, and posits the work only as a 'proposal for further research'.⁸⁹ However, more critical responses have occurred in sections of larger works, with topics ranging from Josephus to Graeco-Roman religion.⁹⁰ Parker's *The Making of Roman India*, in particular, highlights one important and potential response to Said: the idea that even though the contexts are different, and one cannot assume a simple inheritance from ancient to modern orientalism, nevertheless studies interested in the creation of an 'empire of knowledge' share aims with Said. The Romans never ruled India, and few visited it, so it had to be created and imagined.⁹¹ I defend the usefulness of orientalism as a

responses to Asia in the travel writings of Europeans from 1245-1510 CE. Cannadine argued in *Ornamentalism* (2002) that class in their colonies was of great concern to British imperial rulers, a concern which Said does not address.

⁸⁷ MacKenzie (2000) 128.

⁸⁸ MacKenzie (2000) 131.

⁸⁹ Yang (2006) 113. He should nevertheless be credited for attempting to apply the model to Roman material – something which Said did not do.

⁹⁰ Barclay (2005) 34-35; Bruegge (2016) 24-26; Versluys (2013).

⁹¹ G. Parker (2008) 8. Such responses seem to have more in common with my own approach than Vasunia's 'Hellenism and Empire: Reading Edward Said' (2003), which is more interested in

term, especially in light of the deficiencies of ‘hellenophobia’ or ‘anti-Greek rhetoric’ to describe the phenomenon in Roman literature.⁹²

Less explicit, but nevertheless vital, engagement with postcolonial theory by classical scholars was conducted in the late eighties. Hartog’s crucial *The Mirror of Herodotus: the Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (1988) saw in Herodotus’ constructions of the Scythians indications not only of how Greeks thought about Scythians, but also about themselves.⁹³ As one reviewer puts it, this was ‘to a large extent a new kind of reading of an ancient text.’⁹⁴ In terms of Orientalism, Edith Hall’s *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition Through Tragedy* (1989) was also vital. Hall argued that invented representations of Persians in the wake of the Persian wars became vital for Greek self-definition through ‘Othering’, and a section on ‘Orientalism’ clearly shows her indebtedness to Said.⁹⁵ Hall perhaps sums her argument best in a later update, arguing that ‘the imaginary figure of the barbarian despot, gorgeous and sensual within his luxurious court, arose from his golden throne. He minced in his soft slippers from the Athenian stage and directly into the ancient imagination.’⁹⁶ Hall argues that, though classical scholars had admitted the

highlighting the orientalist tendencies of modern ancient historians, rather relegating the matter to pure historiographical concern. He argues that the colonial context in which modern classical research was invented leaves an indelible mark upon the field which still blinkers scholars to this day. Though I defend some of his arguments – the academic distance between Near-Eastern studies and Ancient History is still too large – I also support Parker’s arguments, who stated that ‘for all its radical critique, it [Orientalism] fails to offer viable alternatives.’, G. Parker (2011) 8. Like Said, Vasunia does not actually tell the reader what a post-orientalist Hellenist history should look like.

⁹² In my own view, it is probably not a coincidence that anti-Eastern rhetoric took similar forms in the works of Roman authors well versed in Classical Athenian literature. Neither, then, that the Latin Kingdoms still speaking dialects of the Roman language applied similar rhetoric towards those located east of themselves, or indeed post-enlightenment Europeans whose literary culture was also underpinned by classical texts. Nevertheless, until some wide-ranging project comes along to systematically map the lineage of these ideas, such assertions are beside the point – at least for my project.

⁹³ The Scythians were a group of Eurasian nomads, proficient horsemen and archers, who inhabited the Black Sea and Caucasus region in the Classical period.

⁹⁴ Dewald (1990) 217. The same reviewer shows a strong resistance to Hartog’s argument, almost willing it to be false: ‘[Herodotus has] on my reading, done his best to find the *λογος* most likely to be true, while fully recognizing the difficulty of doing so. If we reduce this central passion for accuracy to a rhetoric of persuasion, we lose a very great part of Herodotus’ organizing energy as a writer.’, 224. John Percival’s review in *Greece & Rome* also notes its novelty, Percival (1990).

⁹⁵ Hall (1989) 99-100.

⁹⁶ Hall (2006) 184.

bias of Athenian sources, they often nevertheless sought factual truths about Persian culture within these representations. Hall goes far further towards replicating Said's methodology, then, stressing that in the late eighties it 'seemed overwhelmingly necessary to demonstrate the potency of the Greek ideological agenda behind Greek thinking about ethnicity, and the unreliability of both their imaginative constructions and their empirical observation, however self-evident this may all now seem to younger scholars.'⁹⁷

I am perhaps one of those younger scholars, but I see no less urgency in the study of these potent themes. This is despite the fact that the topic has now gained far greater scholarly attention. Indeed, Hall praises recent works which have articulated the seemingly contradictory ways in which Athenians positively engaged in Persian culture.⁹⁸ It is probably a sign of the mainstreaming of Said and Hall's ideas that responses have been required to nuance the picture, and to articulate how rhetorical bias in literature and theatre were often counterbalanced by cultural influence and uptake in other spheres. There are similar tensions in the Roman evidence, and a key idea for this thesis, therefore, is 'contradictoriness'. This refers to the ways in which authors sometimes responded to Eastern institutions in unexpected ways, or in ways which seem incongruent with findings derived from other types of evidence. Despite intense stereotyping and negative attitudes towards facets of Eastern and Greek culture – there is perhaps even more evidence for this in the Roman period than the equivalent for Classical Athens – Roman culture showed deep indebtedness to the Greeks. However, this does not invalidate the study of such a prominent literary theme.

These contradictions have rarely been explored in great depth. Instead, discussions have usually explored either the positive or the negative responses. For example, Eduard Fraenkel's *Rome and Greek Culture* (1935) makes no mention of negative

⁹⁷ Hall (2006) 194.

⁹⁸ Prominent examples include the works of Margaret Miller, who has articulated how 'Persian material culture – art, metalwork, and textiles – had a significant impact on taste, clothing, and design in classical Athens', Hall (2006) 211; cf. Miller (2004); Miller (2012).

attitudes to Greece whatsoever.⁹⁹ Similarly, Wardman's *Rome's Debt to Greece* (1978) devotes almost its entirety to positive interactions – philhellenism, and the influences of poetry, history, philosophy etc – with only a short introduction regarding 'The Greek Character', which lists some personal vices associated with Greeks, including untrustworthiness and a propensity towards luxury.¹⁰⁰ Wardman does occasionally argue that these stereotypes tell us things about the Romans, but he also sometimes assumes that the stereotypes contained elements of truth.¹⁰¹ His main concern seems to be identifying whether Roman stereotyping influenced practical imperial policies in the East.

In the sixties and seventies, other works were produced that followed broadly the same methodologies. These include Sherwin-White's *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (1967), Petrocheilos' *Roman Attitudes to the Greeks* (1974) and Balsdon's *Romans and Aliens* (1979). These works sketch typical characteristics attributed to Greeks, tending to describe rather than analyse. This model usually involves discussing 'commonplaces' in the characterisations of Greeks – untrustworthiness, over-education, propensity towards laziness, interest in the *gymnasium* and dancing etc. – but very often tries to generalise these 'Roman attitudes' using only one or a handful of sources. The criticisms of Hall regarding works in her field springs to mind – these works seem to be aware of the biases of their sources but still seek to find the truth about the Greek character behind it, instead of seeing these constructions as a window into Roman culture.

Petrocheilos most impressively documents the stereotypes held about Greeks, but the work is taxonomic in its outlook, and a small section on 'lack of manliness' does not discuss how the rhetoric of gender and ethnicity may have overlapped, or how this was constructed to suit those who held power in the Roman world.¹⁰² Instead, it is just one more thing on a long list of 'Greek traits'. It is probably unfair to expect

⁹⁹ Originally an oration to Oxford University, but also published in Fraenkel (1964) 583-98.

¹⁰⁰ Wardman (1978) 1-13.

¹⁰¹ Wardman (1978) *xiv*.

¹⁰² Petrocheilos (1974) 46-48. The author does, however superficially, recognise that deficiency in warfare was a related idea.

this in a work released in 1974, but it does highlight later success in the social nuancing of this topic. The 1980s saw a feminist history revolution which began in studies of the oppressed (through gender, race or class), but which soon argued that even traditional historical topics could benefit from an awareness of the construction of sex and gender. Michel Foucault had argued for the social negotiation of ideas of sexuality in the 1970s and the interaction with power, but it was in the 1980s that *gender* as an important analytic category became strongly advocated. Feminist historians tend to see gender as constructed through a discursive cultural process which reflect power disparities between genders. The analysis of these power structures could therefore illuminate the societies making the claims. Joan Scott's 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' (1986) articulated this position influentially, arguing that gender, as a 'primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated'¹⁰³ could play a strong role in analysing even 'war, diplomacy, and high politics'.¹⁰⁴ This assumption is vital for the present work.

Feminist historians of ancient history were also part of this process. Three years before Scott's article was published, Amy Richlin's *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (1983) asserted the role gender and sexuality could play in understanding the contexts of aggressive rhetoric at Rome – a quite traditional historical topic, tackled in a satisfyingly new way. This more socially nuanced approach has paid dividends for the scholarship on my topic, taking it beyond Said, who never had much to say on gender, despite acknowledging that effeminacy was an associated stereotype.¹⁰⁵ Roman orientalism was deeply gendered, and some of the keenest insights into it have, therefore, come in smaller sections of works explicitly interested in sexuality and gender in more broad terms. Catharine Edwards' *The Politics of Immorality in Republican Rome* (1993), for example, follows Scott in using gender as only one tool to tackle ideas of immorality in Roman thought. This includes a section about 'effeminacy and Hellenisation' in which she argues that a Roman conflict between traditionalism and the contemporary

¹⁰³ J. Scott (1986) 1069.

¹⁰⁴ J. Scott (1986) 1073.

¹⁰⁵ Said (1978) 137-38, 206.

sophistication of Hellenism, when negotiated, upset traditional views of gender. Similarly, Diana Swancutt has sought explanation for the association between Greeks and effeminacy in anxiety over the comparative power of women in Roman and Greek societies, and via associations with the cult of Cybele.¹⁰⁶ In this model, Romans mapped these anxieties onto imperial ideology, casting androgyny as a symptom of ethnic mixing.¹⁰⁷ These are nuanced works which see the constructions of ethnicity and gender as the consequences of power disparities.

Never have gendered approaches proved more fruitful than in the study of pederasty. This is one small area where sex and ethnicity have often been discussed together, mostly due to a belief that sex between two males was considered ethnically Greek by the Romans. This was the traditional view, typified by the likes of MacMullen's 'Roman Attitudes to Greek Love' (1982).¹⁰⁸ However, John Boswell notably dissented from this argument in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980), which was praised for 'bringing sexuality into the academy' – a necessary redress, as shown in his historiographical section which shows the prudishness with which the topic had been covered up until that point.¹⁰⁹ Boswell rightfully showed that male-male sex was not seen as Greek, but his presumption that homosexual identities existed in the ancient world is arguably anachronistic.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the field was ripe for disruption, and the key was to analyse sex and gender hand-in-hand.

Craig Williams' *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, first published in 1999, entered the debate by foregrounding the social construction

¹⁰⁶ Swancutt (2006) 24-26.

¹⁰⁷ For ancient and historiographical attitudes to ethnic mixing, cf. Isaac (2004) 514; Dench (2005) 5-6, and esp. 227-64.

¹⁰⁸ MacMullen (1982) 501-02; cf. Wilkinson (1978) 111-36; Balsdon (1979) 225; Edwards (1993) 94. For further refs, see C. Williams (2010) 337.

¹⁰⁹ Boswell (1980) 20. This included the translation of sexually explicit Greek into Latin instead of English, or the avoidance of those passages altogether. Other authors who dissented and acknowledged the acceptance of male-male sex in certain contexts in Rome include Griffin (1976) 101-2; Cantarella (2002) 104.

¹¹⁰ His methodology is flawed, ignoring the mocking nuances of most of his sources, and only occasionally admitting that 'a very strong bias' existed against receptive sexual behaviour, Boswell (1980) 74.

of *gender*.¹¹¹ He showed that opprobrium was almost entirely reserved for the 'receptive' partner in such exchanges.¹¹² This was the vital link to Greek Culture that was missing, as Athens famously allowed pederasty involving citizens, whereas this was forbidden and indeed illegal in Rome. The nuances are subtle, but important, and have been missed or misidentified to varying degrees in works discussing this topic.¹¹³ Williams articulates how a hierarchical gender model meant that age and power disparities between the penetrated and penetrator directly informed Roman ideas of sexual acceptability and gender construction. Thus, the 'male prerogative' of penetration was enshrined in the very qualities elite Romans were expected to embody, with any deviation leading to an eroded reputation, and an effeminate reputation. The crucial tenet here is that a deeper understanding of the nuances of gender and sexuality demonstrably upended a long-held historical assumption about Roman hellenophobia.¹¹⁴ This testifies to the importance of such approaches, not to be dismissed as peripheral methodologies.

The flexibility of these methodologies is apparent. Joan Scott argued that 'the sketch I have offered of the process of constructing gender relationships could be used to discuss class, race, ethnicity, or, for that matter, any social process.'¹¹⁵ This has been noted for the Roman material, just as Richlin argues that 'Roman literature, like Greek, [...] was obsessed with the Other and found it in women and (enslaved or conquered) foreigners equally; in fact, in a move now familiar from postcolonial studies, these cultures not only saw the female as foreign but the foreign as female...'¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Many of his arguments are expanded from his 1995 article, 'Greek Love at Rome'. I will refer to the second edition, published in 2010, for the remainder of the thesis.

¹¹² Like Williams, I favour the more descriptive mechanical terms 'insertive' and 'receptive' rather than the traditionally used 'active' and 'passive' to describe the roles of partners engaging in male-male sex. For William's justification, see C. Williams (2010) 18.

¹¹³ Paul Veyne, for example, agreed that Roman and Greek sexual preferences were not so different and identifies Roman 'cultish masculinism', slave-owning and political status as important factors in ancient sexuality, but still elides sex with child slaves with 'homosexuality', and bizarrely argues that ancient misogyny inflated the numbers of ancient homosexuals, as men found women so disgusting, Veyne (1986) 26-34.

¹¹⁴ C. Williams (2010) 69-78.

¹¹⁵ J. Scott (1986) 1069.

¹¹⁶ Richlin (1983) *xviii*.

These approaches have also influenced authors less interested in sexuality and gender. Emma Dench's *Romulus' Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (2005) and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (2008) are two such works, showing an understanding that the study of ethnic constructions involves nuanced social understanding. Dench articulates how different 'Roman identities' were constructed with constant reference to Athens, and Greekness more broadly, at all times showing awareness of the biases of her sources, power disparity and the implications of these things for the ideology of Roman self-construction. Wallace-Hadrill's work is perhaps a more traditional study of Hellenisation methodologically (even if its insights are new), but he too reflects upon how identities were constructed and negotiated between Greek and Roman in different contexts.

These are far cries from earlier works, which tended to privilege psychological – and even Freudian – explanations which essentialised 'Roman' or 'Greek' attitudes. Scholars have used the apparent, 'objective', superiority of Greek culture over Roman to explain Roman contempt. Thus, for Syme, the Romans 'exploited a contrast with the Greeks in their own defense against a superior civilization'.¹¹⁷ Surprisingly, this is a sentiment which is still expressed in recent works of the twenty-first century.¹¹⁸ This tendency is probably related to the belief that the Greeks were the inventors of the Western rational tradition, while the Romans were mere conduits. This is asserted by Fraenkel, who argues that the Romans were 'uncreative' compared to the Greeks but the world owes them a 'debt' nonetheless for transmitting Greek culture to us.¹¹⁹ However, having been exposed to the postcolonial tradition, I cannot agree that any one culture can be in any way 'superior' to another. Using *negative* portrayals of Greeks as evidence that the Romans considered the Greeks superior is too problematic, and can just as easily be

¹¹⁷ Syme (1957) 7.

¹¹⁸ Crompton writes that 'The relatively crude and unpolished Romans were soon forced to recognize the cultural superiority of a people they had defeated in the field', Crompton (2006) 79; cf. Gruen (2010b) 460; Braund (2002) 242.

¹¹⁹ Fraenkel (1964) 594-95.

used as evidence that the Romans considered themselves superior. However, Hellenophobia again muddles the narrative, and so is ignored.

Such assertions are reductive. Instead, I argue that it is better to recognise that cultural prejudices are very complex in their workings. Sometimes attitudes to individual institutions, like athletics, varied in different works by the same author.¹²⁰ Some Greek things were reviled while others were respected. Positively received Greek influences have provided the backbone to the works of Erich Gruen, who often tries to downplay the idea that 'Othering' occurred in classical antiquity.¹²¹ His *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (1992) argues that the Romans established an identity through (essentially positive) interaction with Greek mythology, literature and art. In *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* Gruen (2010a) Gruen attacks scholars who focus only on negative attitudes, saying that '...it is easy enough to gather individual derogatory remarks (often out of context), piecemeal comments, and particular observations that suggest bias or antipathy.'¹²² This is a fair analysis, and an important warning against the dangers inherent in selective source reading. Gruen does argue for an active Roman engagement with Hellenism on Roman terms, for Roman ends, but as one reviewer puts it, the work attempts to 'probe... past paradox' to argue that 'the response of Roman *nobiles* to Hellenism exhibits a surprising consistency.'¹²³ Any idea that Romans may have felt both negative and positive attitudes at the same time is quashed – often simply by ignoring negative sources or using some mental gymnastics to dismiss clearly negative attitudes in those he uses. His arguments are often, in practice, refutations of scholars who study only negative attitudes. It is a shame that Gruen's work is easily some of the most rigorous in the field, and there is no equally seminal text describing negative aspects – i.e. describing Roman orientalism. However, this should not lead to the conclusion that anti-Eastern bias is unimportant or has been refuted. Indeed, if only concentrating on negative aspects is not the answer, then

¹²⁰ For example, Cic. *Tusc.* 2.26.62; *De Or.* 2.5.21; *Att.* 1.10.3-4; *Rep.* 4.4-5; Quint. 8.3.10-11, 2.15.25-26, 1.11.15-16, 10.1.33.

¹²¹ Cf. Gruen (1992); Gruen (1996); Gruen (2010a).

¹²² Gruen (2010a) 3.

¹²³ Gruen (1992) 269.

neither is ignoring the large body of critical evidence and focusing only upon positive ones. The picture is complex, and both sides need airing.

The 'other side', in this instance, is the study of prejudice in the ancient past. This is a reasonably well-studied area, but finding an appropriate term for ancient group categories has been a challenge. The idea of 'race' has been used, usually under the assumption (sometimes explicitly explored, and sometimes not) that the same mechanisms lie behind modern racism and ancient prejudice. This is the case in Sherwin-White's title '*Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome*', for which the author was criticised for in immediate reviews of his work, with den Boer arguing in the *Classical Review* that 'A general concept of "race" was unknown to ancient scholarship.'¹²⁴ How then could the Romans be racist? Sherwin-White calls his use of the term 'convenient'¹²⁵, and this may have been the case for Sherwin-White, but is it appropriate?

More recently, authors have produced works which more explicitly justify the usage of such terms. For Benjamin Isaac in *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (2004), it was only the 'seeds' of racism which were laid down in Antiquity, a phenomenon which he labels 'proto-racism'.¹²⁶ This is no work of lazy assumptions, and the work is detailed, extensive, and has been lauded even by critics of his conclusions for 'methodological rigour'.¹²⁷ Isaac argues that ancient peoples believed in the heredity of acquired characteristics, whereby enslaved people become increasingly and irrevocably servile as the duration of their slavery goes on.¹²⁸ For Isaac, heredity is a crucial component of racism, and thus a kind of proto-social-Lamarckism enabled an ancestor of modern racism (a by-product of Darwinism) to form in the ancient world.¹²⁹ His argument that slave-status and ethnicity were

¹²⁴ Den Boer (1970) 184.

¹²⁵ Sherwin-White (1967) 99.

¹²⁶ Isaac (2004) 1.

¹²⁷ Richter (2006) 287.

¹²⁸ Isaac (2004) 74-82.

¹²⁹ Jean-Baptiste Lamarck published his *Philosophie Zoologique* in 1809, in which he argued that animals could acquire characteristics as required and pass them on to their offspring, Lamarck (1830). The idea, *Lamarckism*, was a forerunner to Darwin's theory of natural selection.

frequently conflated is particularly compelling, showing that ‘slave-like’ characteristics could be given to both individuals and entire peoples.¹³⁰ Indeed, he actually takes this further, arguing for a structuralist ‘system of opposites’ whereby Romans granted themselves positive attributes, and gave foreigners negative ones. Here gender is tantalisingly alluded to: ‘we see that the opposition between masculine and effeminate play a dominant role.’¹³¹ Unfortunately this is not expanded upon – gender is perhaps one status too far. However, for a general work, it paints a holistic picture of ancient ethnic biases, based on wider Roman ideas about the environment, physiognomy, class, morality, ideology etc.

I note that the concept of ‘race’ – as an idea, and not biological reality – has more currency in North America than in Europe.¹³² However, I still prefer the use of ‘ethnicity’ for the present work. Isaac argues that prejudice should only be labelled racism if there was no ‘possibility of change’ in the described people, but critics have noted that in many of his descriptions, the Romans and Greek tended to think they could change other peoples or be changed themselves readily.¹³³ Isaac’s alternative descriptions are ‘ethnic or cultural prejudice’ and to me these seem like more appropriate terms. ‘Ethnicity’, in contrast, allocates a far greater role for the *cultural construction* of the characteristics associated with certain groups. This puts it much more in line with how ‘gender’ is thought to be constructed – and therefore seems more appropriate for this study, which considers both.

Isaac also makes it clear that martial stereotyping was an important component of ancient prejudice.¹³⁴ It is, therefore, appropriate that I discuss relevant literature regarding the Roman responses to war. One important question is that of Roman belligerence. Early- and mid-twentieth century studies tended to favour the idea that

¹³⁰ Isaac (2004) 170-94.

¹³¹ Isaac (2004) 512.

¹³² McCoskey (2012) also strongly justifies her own use of the term by explaining that her understanding of race as socially constructed puts it on similar footing with ethnicity, and ‘race’ is a more useful term to describe power imbalances and structures, 27-29.

¹³³ Richter (2006) 288; Isaac (2004) 24. Isaac stresses that he ‘does not think the idea of “race” has any biological merit’ but simply says that to study racism he needs to look at race ‘as devised by racists.’, 16.

¹³⁴ Isaac (2004) 169-224, 304-23.

Rome achieved its empire through a system of ‘defensive imperialism’ in which it gained territory via the sum of small reactions to specific external threats, with no grand master plan.¹³⁵ However, this view was challenged by Harris in the late 1970s, who argued that the Romans were actually exceptionally belligerent, and both elite and poor supported a long campaign of intentional warmongering in order to benefit from the increased prestige and material wealth that was the consequence of its success.¹³⁶ He described a ‘drive to expand’ that was based on social and cultural pressures.¹³⁷ The thesis has been widely accepted, probably because the evidence he collated for the Roman interest in warfare was so extensive as to be near-undeniable.¹³⁸

The Harris view may compliment my own research, as if the Romans were exceptionally belligerent, they may have had very good reason to stereotype their rivals as unwarlike. However, an important challenge to this view was provided by Arthur Eckstein in his *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (2006). Eckstein actually agreed that the Romans were bellicose, but with one key modification: so was everybody else. Eckstein persuasively argues that many of these ‘exceptional Roman traits’ were actually shared across the turbulent Mediterranean of this period, in which war was endemic and surviving peoples were necessarily military-focused. His evidence base makes the argument compelling and the idea is important for my arguments. Following this view, the Romans merely *constructed* themselves as exceptionally warlike, for reasons more to do with identity than hard fact. For me, this contention seems more in keeping with the ancient evidence.

¹³⁵ Mommsen (1894); Holleaux (1921); Badian (1968); Sherwin-White (1980); cf. North (1981) 1.

¹³⁶ W. Harris (1979).

¹³⁷ W. Harris (1979) 107.

¹³⁸ Nevertheless, Harris was criticised for oversimplification in contemporary reviews, and North in particular criticised Harris for concentrating too much upon conscious decision-making, and not on the structures of Roman society that encouraged warfare, North (1981); cf. Briscoe (1980) 86-87; Sherwin-White (1980) 177-81; Eckstein (2006) 184. Eckstein has his own criticisms, as detailed below, of Harris’ ‘failure to consider in detail the cultural attitudes and geopolitical conduct of states other than Rome.’ He collates more recent works that, he argues, follow Harris’ approach, 184. For the historiographical debate, see Rich (1995) 39-44.

Neither Harris nor Eckstein refer to ethnic characterisation often. Harris does discuss a 'pronounced willingness to use violence against alien peoples' with reference to Roman atrocities when sacking cities – but Eckstein finds very similar cases of atrocities undertaken by non-Roman armies in similar circumstances, and besides, it is not clear whether the fact that these people were 'alien' was important or not.¹³⁹ However, discussions of warlikeness are foregrounded in Isaac's aforementioned *Invention of Racism*. Isaac insists that 'imperialism is as much an attitude of mind as a specific policy' and takes a keen interest in the idea throughout.¹⁴⁰ Isaac states, regarding classical Greek discussions of other peoples, and their influence on Roman ideology, that 'almost from the start these ideas were closely connected with visions of warfare and conquest.'¹⁴¹ This is a centrepiece of his argument, and if his first priority was to map the origins of 'proto-racism' to antiquity, then his secondary thesis was to articulate how these ideas influenced ancient imperialism. The supposed warlikeness of each of the ethnicities he discusses are detailed at length, painting a picture of ancient prejudicial thought which prioritised the bellicosity of other peoples in their assessments. Isaac's work is, therefore, of more direct influence on my own.

Discussions of Roman bellicosity have tended to be focused on the expansionist Middle Republic. My period of study is somewhat later, but these issues are relevant due to their foregrounding of ideas of Roman cultural militarism – after all, presumably militaristic societies do not become non-militaristic overnight. Nevertheless, the Late Republic and Early Imperial periods did involve rather different military contexts and this cannot be ignored. For example, it has been highlighted how Late Republican soldiers became professionalised, careerist, multi-ethnic (even including soldiers from the East) and materially poor, and this contrasted with the hazily idealised Early Republican forces, virtuous themselves,

¹³⁹ Eckstein (2006) 84, 90, and esp. 203-05.

¹⁴⁰ Isaac (2004) 297.

¹⁴¹ Isaac (2004) 108.

land-owners at least, and led by great commanders like Cincinnatus.¹⁴² This continued into the Imperial period, and eventually it seems that many elites, too, lost interest in the army as an avenue for advancement.¹⁴³ Additionally, the Early Imperial period perhaps saw different anxieties again, including a *pax Romana* that could be constructed as enervating.¹⁴⁴ These issues presumably provided further anxieties for Roman authors to ponder.

General studies on the symbolic or literary significance of war in Roman conceptions have been limited, probably because of the gargantuan task such an enterprise would be. However, a few recent works are worth mentioning here for their combination of more traditional study with nuanced ideological and gendered treatment. Sara Phang's *Roman Military Service: Ideologies of Discipline in the Late Republic and Early Principate* (2008) described the training of Roman soldiers as both a practical and an ideological phenomenon, while *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers* (2001) discussed the sex lives of Roman soldiers with considerable nuance.¹⁴⁵ Works specifically linking military themes with masculinity have also been undertaken by Myles McDonnell and Richard Alston.¹⁴⁶ Finally, there is Simon James' *Rome & the Sword: How Warriors & Weapons Shaped Roman History* (2011) which discusses both

¹⁴² On property qualifications in the Roman army, see Gabba (1976) who espouses the traditional view that property-qualifications were abolished by Marius in 107 BCE; Rich (1983) suggests a later date, during the Social Wars; cf. Rathbone (1993). Timothy Cornell highlights 'a shift from a closely integrated society to a more differentiated one in which functions such as government, war and religion became the preserve of specialized groups, instead of being embedded in the totality of the citizen body', Cornell (1995b) 164, citing Hopkins (1978) 74-96.

¹⁴³ On the increasing reliance upon provincial troops into the Imperial period, see Forni (1953). On the elite losing interest, see Cornell (1995b) 164-68.

¹⁴⁴ Tacitus writes 'I am not unaware that very many of the events I have described, and shall describe, may perhaps seem little things, trifles too slight for record; but no parallel can be drawn between these chronicles of mine and the work of the men who composed the ancient history of the Roman people. Gigantic wars, cities stormed, routed and captive kings, or, when they turned by choice to domestic affairs, the feuds of consul and tribune, land-laws and corn-laws, the duel of nobles and commons—such were the themes on which they dwelt, or digressed, at will. Mine is an inglorious labour in a narrow field: for this was an age of peace unbroken or half-heartedly challenged', Tac. *Ann.* 4.32; cf. Cornell (1995b) 150ff; Barton (2006). Greg Woolf argues that the *pax Romana* was ideologically constructed, despite continued war and rebellion on the frontiers, in terms useful for the imperial administration and their 'carefully balanced economy' of violence, ruling through the continued network of rivalries in the empire, Woolf (1995) 190-91.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Walters (1997) for his influential arguments regarding the 'penetrability' of the Roman soldiery.

¹⁴⁶ McDonnell (2006a); Alston (2013).

the practical and ideological significance of swords. All demonstrate a newfound acceptability in the academy for the application of gender theory for even ultra-traditional topics like historic militarism. Perhaps showing a quicker uptake in the use of gendered themes due to a closeness with literary studies, discussions of ancient epic have gone further, often discussing gender, ethnicity and militarism in strong conjunction – notably the important works of Alison Keith, including *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic* (2000) and *Engendering Orientalism in Silius' Punica* (2009). Indeed, this is clearly an expanding area of research.¹⁴⁷ This is to be applauded, though I lament the fact no such explosion seems to be occurring in the study of other genres. Works of history too, for example, show no less fascination with questions of gender, ethnicity, and militarism. Such qualms justify the current thesis.

Conclusions & Road-map

Writing a critical historiography for my topic is difficult because my study intentionally crosses the boundaries of several sub-disciplines of classical research: gender, ethnicity, and militarism. These topics can be discussed fruitfully in isolation, and have been, and yet the similarities in the construction of these ideas lead me to believe a wider, connective study would be of benefit. I work in an era in which gendered approaches are not particularly controversial, and in which the cultural construction of social phenomena is a mainstay. These provide me with the methodological tools to analyse the relevant source material. It is also the ever-important influence of systems of power (political and military) for the construction of gender and ethnicity which leads me to the terminology of orientalism.

Authors such as Erich Gruen have shown the enormous respect the Romans clearly had for Greek culture, and archaeological studies paint a similar picture.

Nevertheless, I argue that it is viable to study only negative attitudes. This is because I do not claim that this literary discourse is somehow a definitive window into the

¹⁴⁷ The *Aeneid* has proved particularly fruitful for such studies, see Syed (2005) esp. 136-93; Maier (1996); Whitehorne (2005); Nauta (2007); O'Rourke (2011).

deepest souls of Roman authors – or even that any such window would reveal such simple mental formations. I only argue that this is a startlingly present literary theme – coherent, interesting, and ripe for study. Indeed, the theme often trends towards the hyperbolic, and I suspect that the supposed ‘contradiction’ of simultaneous personal involvement in Greek cultural activities and the denigration of such activities in public did not cause too many problems for my authors. Instead, for whatever reason, Roman orientalism lived on the page. It also dwelled within a Roman ‘moralising’ tradition which has similar notable tensions within it. How could millionaire Romans, their power resting upon their very wealth and privilege, proclaim the virtue and austerity of the Roman elite with a straight face? I am hesitant to use the term ‘hypocrisy’, but in some cases, the charge becomes difficult to defend. Studies of Roman morality are important, despite clear evidence that such morality was idealising and often went unfollowed. Roman orientalism, as a subtype, can be justified along the same lines. Regardless, no work to date has treated the reception of Easterners, effeminacy and unwarlikeness together. This work fills that gap. It is my overarching hope that this three-pronged approach, giving equal weight to the cultural construction of both ethnicity and gender, will elucidate the peculiarly Roman form of orientalism which permeates the extant descriptions in the primary literature.

I begin my discussion by analysing, over two chapters, a very specifically military context: training. I argue that Romans conceived of military training in extremely gendered terms, seeing it not as a niche activity undertaken by soldiers preparing for warfare, but instead as a masculinising process which prepared every male Roman body and mind for the kind of hardships they could expect to face. Improper or absent training could leave the individual hopelessly unprepared to suffer hardships, with thoroughly effeminising consequence. Roman authors readily imagined their own soldiers undertaking this appropriate preparation, but often expected that Eastern troops lacked such experiences. Crucially, the Greek *gymnasium* was not usually seen to be a place where masculinising training could

take place – indeed, though it may have seemed similar, it in many ways proved defective, becoming associated with luxury and subversive sexual activity.

In my third chapter, I analyse the gendered significance of arms and armour in Roman texts as symbols of martial prowess. Within, I show that the *materiel* of warfare was seen as inherently masculine and alien to women. Revealingly, the relationship of Easterners to these materials was also deemed troubled and problematic. Easterners were also thought to adorn and dress up their weapons in inappropriate ways, and this seems related to the idea that women were prone to adorn themselves. Similarly, Eastern rulers were thought to use adorned soldiers. My fourth chapter repeats this methodology with attention to naval vessels, arguing that adorned ships were also associated with the East, and with Hellenistic monarchs in particular. Here I explore ways in which this gendered discourse influenced portrayals of the battle of Actium– an element that has not been remarked upon previously in the historiography. I therefore discuss training, arms, and naval warfare. These constitute the ‘military contexts’ of my title.

Training Orientalism I:

The superficial correspondence of military training and athletics

Ideas of warlikeness were important for Roman self-construction. Consider, for example, Anchises' famous prophecy in Virgil's *Aeneid* that the Roman destiny was to conquer, rule, and to 'crush the proud'.¹⁴⁸ However, these martial qualities were not thought to be innate, nor inevitable, but instead required deliberate and concentrated nurturing. Roman masculinity, as constructed in extant texts, dictated that a man must either undertake military service or at least be willing to fight like a soldier.¹⁴⁹ However, this masculinity was not granted, but attained. A precarious socialisation process had to occur, in which desired personal qualities were to be promoted and honed. In short, training was required.

In this chapter, I explore the ideological connections between training and masculinity. Numerous previous works have sought to describe how Roman military training was carried out in practice – though such attempts have to contend with a serious lack of surviving ancient sources that discuss how it was actually conducted.¹⁵⁰ However, I argue that Roman authors were often more preoccupied with the end results of Roman training – characteristics such as discipline, hardiness, virtue, bravery, skill, and masculinity – than its actual practicalities.¹⁵¹ The ideological underpinnings were clearly often privileged over cold, hard, boring realities.

¹⁴⁸ Verg. *Aen.* 6.851-53. Anchises urges the Romans to be just rulers, but nevertheless articulates a destiny based upon conquest and warfare.

¹⁴⁹ McDonnell (2006a), Phang (2008) 92-100 and C. Williams (2010) 145-48 all discuss the connection between personal military qualities and masculinity. McDonnell argues that serving as a Roman soldier 'was the only way many Roman males could lay claim to being a man', 10-11. In the Early and Middle Republic, a large proportion of Roman men would have fought in Rome's armies, and ten years of military service was required for elite men to be considered for political careers.

¹⁵⁰ Horsmann's *Untersuchungen zur militärischen Ausbildung im republikanischen und kaiserzeitlichen Rom* (1991) is unparalleled in English. Other more general surveys can be found in Watson (1969) 54-74; Phang (2008) 37-70. R. Davies published extensively on the topic, and his most important works were collected posthumously in *Service in the Roman Army* (1989).

¹⁵¹ As I argue below, the Roman authors of my period were interested in training as an abstract concept, but show little interest in details. It is possible that detailed descriptions were written, but have not survived to the modern day.

The masculinity or effeminacy of men was always a serious matter for Roman authors, but in the military realm the consequences of poor training – mainly *imbellitas* and effeminacy – became a focus. Indeed, the fact that Roman authors seemed to care more about the ideological consequences of training than its mundane features suggests that debates around military training could be used as a vehicle to address wider cultural and moral issues that existed in Roman discourse. This is exactly what we find, as within this wider moral scope, ethnic contrasts were also often elaborated. In an environment in which Roman exceptionalism was often used to explain Roman imperial successes, the idea that certain peoples trained less effectively than others seems to have arisen easily. However, we find that ‘ethnic’ arguments did not overrule or supersede gendered constructions but rather these intersecting factors both that informed debates around training. Romans, it seemed, enjoyed constructing foreign ‘Others’ as feminine, and used these constructions to explain and justify imperial impositions.

The idea of ‘training’, therefore, provides an appropriate jumping-off point for this thesis. Structurally, I intend to discuss Roman training – both its practicalities and associations – before turning to training methods Romans considered ‘Greek’. I argue that athletics, as conducted in the *gymnasium* and *palaestra* (wrestling ground), were considered ethnically Greek, but were nevertheless seen as a kind of pseudo-martial training. I will address the associations of athletics, and discuss for each in turn why Roman authors might have deemed them problematic. Specifically, I hope to show how the reception of certain acts and institutions differed subtly in Greek and Roman contexts. This is not a neglected topic of study, but the novelty of my arguments involves a focus on how these activities were constantly viewed through a martial lens. I argue that there was an overall tendency to view Greek training as less warlike and therefore less effectively masculinising. This gendered, ethnicised, and militarised perspective is essential to the understanding of Roman criticisms of athletics.

My discussions of these themes takes place in both the present chapter and the following one. In the current chapter, I discuss how the rhetoric of training

interacted with Roman constructions of masculinity, and how ‘Greek training’ was seen to come up short in various ways, challenging its construction as a masculinising activity. Most of all, I argue that only Roman military training seemed to qualify as an endurance-building activity, an essential facet of character-building in Roman constructions. In my second chapter, I will move on to assess the role of sexuality in debates around Greek and Roman training types. However, before initiating a more thorough analysis of training practices that were considered ‘Roman’ and ‘Greek’, it will be beneficial to illustrate what kinds of criticisms Roman authors often made.

Roman Criticism of Athletics

A passage from Lucan’s *De Bello Civili* is illustrative to introduce these criticisms. Lucan has Julius Caesar attempt to persuade his troops of the inferiority of their opponents – soldiers of Pompey who have been recruited from Greece and further East. His criticisms of Greek troops, in particular, seem to revolve around their training:

...you will meet an army enlisted from the *gymnasia* of Greece, made spiritless by the practice of the *palaestra*, and hardly able to carry the weight of their arms.¹⁵²

Luc. 7.270-02.

Here, Caesar assesses the suitability of Greek athletic training through a military lens. His tone is mocking and jingoistic, and his conclusions are rather hyperbolic. He implies that athletic training cannot provide effective preparation for real warfare, and in fact leaves its proponents hopelessly underprepared. Instead, they have been rendered *ignavus* by these activities – ‘lazy’, ‘inactive’ or ‘spiritless’.¹⁵³ Gender is not referred to explicitly, but as I argued in my introduction, slothful

¹⁵² *Grais delecta iuventus | Gymnasiis aderit studioque ignava palaestrae | Et vix arma ferens...* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

¹⁵³ The word is the antonym of (*g*)*navus*, which means ‘diligent’, ‘assiduous’, ‘active’ – all qualities that Roman authors tended to appreciate in soldiers; cf. Juv. 14.105-06, in which the author mocks Jews for their laziness in resting upon the Sabbath using the same term.

unwarlike lifestyles were inherently feminised in Roman sources. However, the gendered point is made more explicitly in another epic poem from the second half of the first century CE, Silius Italicus' *Punica*. Here, the general Marcus Claudius Marcellus, commanding Roman soldiers against Sicilian Greeks during the Second Punic War (218-01 BCE), urges on his troops:

The general pressed on fast: in his eyes, delay in defeating Greek troops was as shameful as defeat. He flew all over the field – it seemed like a contest of men against women – and enriched with blood the fields that Ceres loves. [...] 'On, on!' he cried; 'mow down this unwarlike flock (*gregem [...] imbellem*) and lay them low with the steel'; and he pushed the laggards on with the boss of his shield. 'Spiritless youths (*ignava iuventus*) stand before you, men who have learnt to endure soft (*molle*) bouts of wrestling in the shade, and who delight to oil their limbs till they glisten; and those who conquer them in battle get little glory. To beat them at sight is the only credit you can gain.'¹⁵⁴

Sil. *Pun.* 14.127-39.

Again, the Greek army's training is used to explain their supposed unwarlikeness. Again they seem both mentally and physically weak, and indeed, these Greeks are apparently weakened to such an extent by the exercises of the *palaestra* that no glory is available to their conquerors. They consequently appear on the battlefield as women, and not men.¹⁵⁵ Again, the criticisms are based on the military consequences of athletic training. However, this time they are explicitly gendered.

¹⁵⁴ *instabat ductor, cui tarde vincere Graias | par erat ac vinci turmas. ruit aequore toto | (femineum credas maribus concurrere vulgum) | et Cereri placitos fecundat sanguine campos. |[...] 'ite, gregem metite imbellem ac succidite ferro,' | clamat, cunctantes urgens umbone cateroas. | 'pigro luctandi studio certamen in umbra | molle pati docta et gaudens splendescere olivo, | stat, mediocre decus vincendum, ignava iuventus. | haec laus sola datur, si viso vincitis hoste.'* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

¹⁵⁵ The idea that no glory is available to a Roman army facing soft Eastern opponents is a prevalent literary theme, cf. Livy 38.17.13; Luc. 7.279-80; Cass. Dio 50.28.6.

‘Superficial correspondence’ is an important concept for my argument. This is the idea that the activities of the *gymnasium* somehow belonged in the same category as – but were inferior to – Roman military training. This belief is commonly implicit in Roman sources, though this is not often discussed in the secondary literature on this topic. This is a problem, as the idea of correspondence goes some way towards explaining Roman criticisms of Greek athletics. In perhaps one of the clearest manifestations of this idea, in a fictional dialogue of his *De Re Publica*, Cicero has Scipio Aemilianus rail against Greek training methods:¹⁵⁶

What an absurd system of training (*exercitatio*) youth they do in their *gymnasia*! What frivolous (*levis*) military training for their ephebes!¹⁵⁷

Cic. *Rep.* 4.4.

Here, the hopelessly ineffective Greek training in the *gymnasium* is implicitly compared to Roman training via the placement of the criticism into the mouth of one of Rome’s most famous military commanders. The two activities are categorised into the same sphere of human activity, but one is inferior.

Plutarch goes even further, actually suggesting in his *The Roman Questions* (part of his *Moralia*) that through athletics the Greeks...

...have unconsciously lapsed from the practice of arms, and have become content to be called deft athletes and

¹⁵⁶ Famous for the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE, he is also known as Scipio Africanus Minor.

¹⁵⁷ *iuventutis vero exercitatio quam absurda in gymnasiis! quam levis epheborum illa militia!* Ephebes were those enrolled in the ‘ephebate’ official training programme for youths, much of which involved athletics. See below, 66.

handsome wrestlers rather than excellent swordsmen and horsemen.¹⁵⁸

Plut. *Mor.* 274e.

Plutarch seems keener to differentiate between athletics and military training. For him, they are worth discussing together, but the consequences for swapping the former for the latter are dire. The Greeks have become unwarlike by swapping real training for sport. He even goes as far as to say this type of training was directly responsible for the μαλακία ('softness' or 'effeminacy') of the Greeks, and even their enslavement to the Romans.¹⁵⁹ Horace, a poet of the first century BCE, relays a similar sentiment, but with the causality reversed – he alleges that the Greeks turned away from war first, and this then caused them to be more susceptible to trivial distractions like athletics. Here, another gendered insult is made explicit: he compares the Greeks to baby girls.¹⁶⁰ Clearly, in the minds of these authors, unwarlikeness and athletics are in some way causally linked.

The evidence clearly suggests that there was a military focus for these criticisms, informed by Roman ideological perspectives regarding the importance of military training. There are also tantalising suggestions that gendered constructions were at play too. This is enough to suggest some link with the kinds of martial and gendered orientalist constructions I outlined in my introduction. However, there is scope for a far deeper exploration of these themes, and that is the purpose of this chapter.

Roman Military Training: Practicalities

Before further addressing ideological discussions of military training, it will be worthwhile to attempt to describe some of the practicalities involved in Roman training. However, this is no easy task. Preston Bannard (2015) has recently made the case that the lack of literary evidence for mid-Republican military training actually

¹⁵⁸ ...ὅφ' ὧν ἔλαθον ἐκρυέντες τῶν ὀπλῶν καὶ ἀγαπήσαντες ἀνθ' ὀπλιτῶν καὶ ἰππέων ἀγαθῶν εὐτράπελοι καὶ παλαιστρίται καλοῖσι λέγεσθαι.

¹⁵⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 274d.

¹⁶⁰ Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.93-102. The other distractions include horses, statues, paintings, music, and actors.

indicates that systematic training was not an important part of military preparation at this time. His principal evidence for this is the lack of references in Polybius, who otherwise painstakingly describes the minutiae of standard Roman military practice – infantry classes, punishments etc.¹⁶¹ Polybius also describes how new recruits are usually sent home in the weeks before the beginning of campaigns – at a time when they would presumably be in dire need of some kind of intensive ‘boot camp’ if such a thing existed.¹⁶² The (very) few descriptions of training are described as ‘exceptions which prove the rule’ – specific training regimes constructed in response to specific circumstances, like extraordinarily lethargic troops or enemies engaging in new tactics.¹⁶³ Moreover, many of these training regimes are extremely basic – for example, when Tiberius Gracchus trains an army of newly-freed freedmen recruits merely to ‘follow the standards and to know their ranks in the battle.’¹⁶⁴ A statement in Livy also suggests Aemilius Paullus felt it was a soldier’s own responsibility to ensure they were agile enough to wield their arms effectively battle.¹⁶⁵ There was a traditional attitude, which lingered long in Roman literature, that every Roman man (except the poorest) had some obligation to protect the state militarily.¹⁶⁶ Did this perhaps extend to military (self) preparation? For the elite at least we have evidence that military training was conducted outside the context of specific armies, with sons instructed by their fathers. The location associated with these practices was the *Campus Martius*, the ‘Fields of Mars’ just outside the city limits, and Cicero, Marius and Cato the Elder were all said to have taken part in military training there.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Polybius does this over twenty-three entire chapters, 6.19–42.

¹⁶² Bannard (2015) 487.

¹⁶³ Bannard (2015) 487–88. He cites Livy 10.25.9, 26.4.4–10, 29.1, *Per.*57.1; Polyb. 10.20.1; Val. Max. 2.7.2.

¹⁶⁴ Livy 23.35.6.

¹⁶⁵ Livy 44.34.3.

¹⁶⁶ John Rich argues that the military was organised in the Early Republican period to ensure that all but the poorest citizen were obliged to fight in the Roman army, Rich (2007) 18. Gary Forsythe argues for the military character of the central and early Republican institution, the *comitia centuriata*, which was named after and based around a military unit of the legion, elected officials who could wield military power, and was convened only outside the sacred *pomerium*, on the *Campus Martius*, where soldiers trained ‘Since it was considered to be an army sitting as an assembly’, Forsythe (2006) 111. Even into the Late Republic, the idea of the ‘citizen-soldier’ was a well-defined (if idealised) concept.

¹⁶⁷ Cic. *Cael.* 11; Plut. *Mar.* 34, *Cat. Mai.* 20; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.8, *Ars P.* 156–78; Juv. 2.129. Being outside the *pomerium* meant weapons were not barred from being carried there. The *Campus* was used as a

One example of an 'extraordinary training response' is recorded by Polybius, who describes a full training regimen that Scipio Africanus arranged at Carthago Nova in 210 BCE, and this is worth discussing in more detail. Here Scipio apparently relayed a training regimen to his troops through his *Tribuni Militum* (Military Tribunes), that involved thirty-stade marches wearing full arms and armour, the cleaning of equipment, mock fights with training weapons, but also rest days for recovery.¹⁶⁸ Scipio simultaneously ensured his fleet trained off the coast, and that training and service weapons were produced in sufficient quantities. He also only left to continue the war once he felt all these procedures were 'sufficiently advanced'.¹⁶⁹ Bannard remarks that the passage has an air of the exceptional about it – Scipio needs to describe the regimen to his Tribunes, for one thing, and for another, a big point is made of the construction of wooden mock-weapons to train with, which suggests this was not part of the ordinary equipment of a legion. The entire regime is also explicitly a response to the awful lethargy he finds in the troops upon his arrival. The passage has formed a staple for studies of Roman training because of its detail – but Bannard calls into question how typical it truly is.

For Bannard, training did become more formalised into the Late Republic, in a change associated with the reforms of Marius. By 105 BCE the consul P. Rutilius Rufus had introduced training methods previously used only by gladiators. The intention, it seems, was to give soldiers greater agility in defence and attack:

mustering ground from the city's earliest era, possibly because it was prone to flooding and infestations of mosquitos, making it a problematic area to build permanently upon.

¹⁶⁸ Polyb. 10.20.1-7. He also describes 'wooden swords covered with leather and with a button at the end, others with javelins also buttoned at the end.'; cf. Livy 26.51.3-8.

¹⁶⁹ Polyb. 10.20.8.

...to plant in the legions a more sophisticated system of avoiding and giving a blow. He thus mingled valour with art and art in turn with valour (*artem virtuti miscuit*)...¹⁷⁰

Val. Max. 2.3.2.

This creative approach apparently earned Rutilius the praise of Marius, the pre-eminent Roman general of the era, who chose these soldiers even over his own, due to their superior training.¹⁷¹ Pompey the Great apparently drilled his troops personally, according to Appian, and Antony's troops were apparently so well trained that they continued their exercises even after defecting to Octavian.¹⁷² This perhaps had some impact upon Augustus, and from his period, it is clear that Roman soldiers were systematically trained. By the time of Trajan (early second century CE), it seems that professional military trainers were not uncommon – but Pliny mocks these and singles Trajan out for special praise for still training his troops personally, as per tradition.¹⁷³ Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century CE – with perhaps a complimentary eye on a potential Roman audience – nevertheless shows that Roman troops were associated with intensive training at this time.¹⁷⁴ He suggests that they never pause their training, train at peace just as vigorously as at war, and that 'it would not be wrong to describe their manoeuvres as bloodless combats and their combats as bloody manoeuvres.'¹⁷⁵ Josephus clearly considers the Roman focus on training a strong cause of their military success.¹⁷⁶

Bannard's reading of the evidence is both thought-provoking and provocative. However, there are source issues – for example, Bannard assumes that Appian is sufficiently well-versed in training methods from the end of the Republic to not be

¹⁷⁰...vitandi atque inferendi ictus subtiliorem rationem legi<oni>bus ingeneravit, virtutemque arti et rursus artem virtuti miscuit...

¹⁷¹ Marius: Frontin. *Str.* 4.2.2.

¹⁷² App. *B. Civ.* 2.49; 3.48.

¹⁷³ Plin. *Pan.* 13.4. Interestingly, he expects the training-master to be Greek.

¹⁷⁴ Josephus' audience is an area of historical debate, cf. Mason (2005).

¹⁷⁵ Joseph. *BJ* 3.72–75.

¹⁷⁶ He argues that 'as their opponents cannot match these qualities, victory is the invariable and certain consequence', 3.74, and 'the Romans owed their invincible strength above all to discipline and military training', 2.577.

influenced by his knowledge of contemporary, second-century methods. The same could be said of his use of Livy for the Middle Republic. There is another possible way to read the evidence, however, which requires less supposition based on gaps in literary evidence.¹⁷⁷ This is the important idea that the system of military training the Romans utilised under the Republic was necessarily *ad hoc*, an individualised system enacted by each Roman general according to his own interpretation of the requirements of the present situation. Nothing like a national ‘standing army’ existed, ensuring that the responsibility for training any particular group of soldiers seemed to be left to the commander who had recruited them, or who had taken over their command. Praise was often afforded to commanders who trained their troops particularly effectively, and reversely shame to those who neglected these duties, further emphasising the flexibility generals had in the way they conducted training. At the same time, the use of ‘training skill’ as a character insight ought to make us cautious – perhaps Roman soldiers were all trained at a baseline level, that historians ignored, concentrating only upon novel circumstances which provided a greater insight into the historical figures which made such good copy in their works.¹⁷⁸ The virtues (and vices) of great commanders were of central interest to many ancient writers, and it seems training fit into this system as a military virtue like any other, constructed along moral lines, in antithesis to useless lethargy.¹⁷⁹ As Sara Phang argues, ‘for the Romans, commanding an army was not a technical task; it was conceived of in moral and social terms.’¹⁸⁰

Nevertheless, it is likely that training became more codified as army organisation moved from the more *ad-hoc* Mid-Republican recruitment of landowning citizen-soldiers to a system in which soldiers had entire careers in the military, but, in all periods, it is the individual commander who seems to hold responsibility for

¹⁷⁷ Another of Bannard’s gaps involves the discussion of a lax army at Sall. *Iug.* 44.4 who are lax in every way Polybius describes was essential for Roman armies: camp fortification, watches, and security, but Sallust does not mention training as an issue, Bannard (2015) 487

¹⁷⁸ These novel circumstances could include both of Bannard’s categories: especially lethargic troops, or innovative enemy tactics that needed to be overcome.

¹⁷⁹ Such features rather problematise the idea of separating the ‘practical’ and ‘ideological’ details of Roman military training. The Romans would not have made such distinctions.

¹⁸⁰ Phang (2008) 7.

training. Generals simply had a large degree of freedom in the ways they went about training their troops. This is hinted when Valerius Maximus reacts to Rutilius' innovative gladiator-style training: he tells us that Rutilius was 'following the example of no previous general'.¹⁸¹ Bannard actually seems to come close to arguing this himself, contrasting how though Rutilius and Pompey seemed to drill their troops, their respective contemporaries Marius and Caesar instead show a preference for skirmishes to build skill instead.¹⁸²

For more specific elements of Roman military training regimes, many modern authors are forced into the unfortunate position of relying on Vegetius' late *De Re Militari*, that dates to the fifth century CE.¹⁸³ However, Vegetius claims to have used older sources, and the work is notably backwards looking, attempting to assess the military methods that made the Romans successful historically and may well reflect Imperial Roman practice.¹⁸⁴ Vegetius' descriptions, therefore, remain plausible, filling out some details that are not mentioned in less specific accounts. We are told that new recruits began their training by marching in heavy equipment, followed by other physical training which included running, jumping, and swimming.¹⁸⁵ Recruits then slowly progressed from wooden staves to wooden swords and finally to genuine service arms, 'buttoned' for protection.¹⁸⁶ Wooden posts were used as targets at first but were soon supplemented by mock battles against comrades.¹⁸⁷ Non-combat skills were also learned: soldiers were trained to construct camps, possibly by the construction of 'practice camps' which have been identified by some

¹⁸¹ Val. Max. 2.3.2.

¹⁸² Bannard (2015) 491, citing Sall. *Iug.* 87.1-2; App. *Mith.* 55.224.

¹⁸³ For example, Watson (1969) 54-74; Lendon (2006) 235; Rance (2007) 372; Sage (2008) 230; Phang (2008) 41-44.

¹⁸⁴ Amongst these was Celsus' (1st century CE) encyclopaedia, which was known to contain a large section on military matters, though only the medical section survives). Other sources he claims to use include Cato the Elder and Frontinus, *Veg. Mil.* 1.8

¹⁸⁵ *Veg. Mil.* 1.9-10.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Carter (2006).

¹⁸⁷ *Veg. Mil.* 1.11-16.

archaeologists at various sites.¹⁸⁸ This method of training, or something similar, probably constituted the regimes of Roman soldiers from the Late Republic onwards

Roman Military Training: Ethos

For Roman authors, training held more significance than a simple technical skill might. Instead, the moralised construction of training is readily apparent in many of the Roman sources that discuss the topic. This is especially true for the accounts of elite boys training on the *Campus Martius* mentioned above. For example, Cicero brings up his training on the *Campus* as part of his case for the defence of Caelius Rufus, against a charge of *vis* (illegal violence). Part of his case rests on the idea that Rufus was not a lifelong reprobate, but a good man who only became attached to the criminal Catiline later in life. Here Cicero articulates how the correct form of Roman training can contribute to a Roman man's reputation, just as he and his peers proved when young themselves:

When I was young, we usually spent a year 'keeping our arms in our toga' and, in tunics, undergoing our exercises and sports (*exercitatione ludoque*) on the *Campus*, and, if we began our military service at once, the same practice was followed for our training in camp and in operations.¹⁸⁹

Cic. *Cael.* 11.

Cicero goes on to say that additional *disciplina domestica* ('home training' or 'discipline') can help a Roman to become known as a *vir inter viros* ('a man among

¹⁸⁸ Veg. *Mil.* 1.21-24. Cawthorne, Yorkshire, was identified as a practice camp by Richmond (1932), who noted that a hillfort seemed long-abandoned at the time when two Roman siege camps were constructed underneath it – hence 'practice camp'. The sites interpreted in this way have invariably been located in Britain, and in particular, Wales, cf. R. Davies (1968); Horsmann (1991) 66-81, 164-71; R. Jones (2012) 27-28; cf. App. *Hisp.* 14.86.

¹⁸⁹ *Nobis quidem olim annus erat unus ad cohibendum brachium toga constitutus, et ut exercitatione ludoque campestri tunicati uteremur, eademque erat, si statim mereri stipendia coeperamus, castrensis ratio ac militaris.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

men').¹⁹⁰ Masculinity, morality and militarism are all clearly at stake here, as constructed via a public reputation. The keeping of a hand inside the toga is not important here, except that it refers to a restrictive practice that showed the good character of the individual – a parallel for military training.¹⁹¹

An anecdote from Plutarch also shows that training was thought to signify a person's good morals. This is shown by the fact that the famous general Marius returns to the *Campus Martius* in his old age in order to refute accusations of immoral luxury and excess via displays of training:

...Marius owned an expensive house, which had appointments more luxurious/effeminate (τροφᾶς) than became a man who had taken active part in so many wars and campaigns. [...] Marius, however, showing a spirit of keen emulation that might have characterized a youth, shook off old age and infirmity and went down daily into the *Campus Martius*, where he exercised himself with the young men and showed that he was still agile in arms and capable of feats of horsemanship, although his bulk was not well set up in his old age, but ran to corpulence and weight.¹⁹²

Plut. *Mar.* 34.2-3.

In two respects, Plutarch contrasts military and luxurious lifestyles. Firstly, he considers it incongruous that Marius owns such a luxurious or effeminate house

¹⁹⁰ Cic. *Cael.* 11.

¹⁹¹ The practice is of dubious historicity, and is mentioned nowhere else, but perhaps Cicero is referring here to the idea of restricting excessive gesturing during oratorical training specifically. The Elder Seneca argues that 'Among our ancestors, who invented forensic oratory, it was considered terrible for someone to remove his arm from his toga.', Sen. *Controv.* 5.6; cf. Quint. 12.10.21. Cicero clearly does not mean to say military training was conducted one-armed, as he specifically states that the arm was restrained in the toga, while exercises were undertaken in a simple tunic.

¹⁹² ὁ Μάριος πολυτελής οἰκία, τροφᾶς ἔχουσα καὶ διαίτας θηλυτέρας ἢ κατ' ἄνδρα πολέμων τοσοῦτων καὶ στρατειῶν αὐτουργόν. [...] οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ Μάριος φιλοτίμως πάνυ καὶ μεираκιωδῶς ἀποτριβόμενος τὸ γῆρας καὶ τὴν ἀσθένειαν ὁσημέραι κατέβαινεν εἰς τὸ πεδίον, καὶ μετὰ τῶν νεανίσκων γυμναζόμενος

when he had lived such a strong military life.¹⁹³ Secondly, and more importantly, Marius sought to regain his reputation, and win a new military command, via a spectacle of successful training. The very idea that military training can refute accusations of luxury is strongly indicative of the moral and ideological connotations of training in this period. Additionally, training is conceived as a matter of the mind, and not necessarily requiring of youth or fitness, when Marius shows he is still agile despite corpulence.¹⁹⁴ It is a clearly, therefore, a pseudo-moral quality. Marius later justifies his desire for a further military command by arguing that he wishes to train his son personally, and presumably, this justification was meant to resonate with his fellow Romans.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, this personal, dynastic role in the training of highborn youths is important. Cato the Elder, who was sometimes seen to personify ancient, austere Roman virtues, was said to have done the same:

...he taught his son not merely to hurl the javelin and fight in armour and ride the horse, but also to box, to endure heat and cold, and to swim lustily through the eddies and billows of the Tiber.¹⁹⁶

Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.4.

This seems to have involved a varied regime which included not only weapons training but also endurance building exercises, which along with other elements (including a legal and literary education) ensured his son was 'moulded and

ἐπεδείκνυε τὸ σῶμα κοῦφον μὲν ὄπλοις, ἔποχον δὲ ταῖς ἱππασίαις, καίπερ οὐκ εὐσταλῆς γεγωνῶς ἐν γῆρᾳ τὸν ὄγκον, ἀλλ' εἰς σάρκα περιπληθῆ καὶ βαρεῖαν ἐνδεδωκῶς.

¹⁹³ The word *τροφή* is usually described as denoting a soft, 'dainty' lifestyle especially associated with luxury, cf. Liddell et al. (1996). However, see Gorman and Gorman (2014), who argue that the word is often mistranslated and actually in the Classical period denoted only 'a psychological attitude of material entitlement, which is attended by, but not defined as, the physical paraphernalia of luxury', 2. They go on to argue that the idea of 'corrupting luxury' (which Plutarch clearly uses here) was elaborated only in the Roman period, 344-407.

¹⁹⁴ Cato apparently also kept training into 'hoary old age', keeping his mind sharp, Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 4.2.

¹⁹⁵ Plut. *Mar.* 34.4.

¹⁹⁶ οὐ μόνον ἀκοντίζειν οὐδ' ὀπλομαχεῖν οὐδ' ἱππεύειν διδάσκων τὸν υἱόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆ χειρὶ πύξ παίειν καὶ καῦμα καὶ ψυχὸς ἀνέχεσθαι καὶ τὰ δινώδη καὶ τραχύνοντα 5τοῦ ποταμοῦ διανηχόμενον ἀποβιάζεσθαι.

fashioned to virtue'.¹⁹⁷ Military training for the elite, male youths of Rome was apparently part of their continuing acculturation: this underpinned the Roman elite *ethos* of military training.

The idea of *ethos* is essential because this chapter is mainly concerned with the ideology of military training, and not the practicalities. In literary works, we can see individuals and authors using the connotations of Roman military training to demonstrate personal virtue. The Roman elite in many ways justified their own power through morality, and conspicuous displays of personal warlikeness and fortitude probably helped in this regard.¹⁹⁸ However, tantalising evidence indicates it could be a point of pride among lower status soldiers too, as a soldier's epitaph from the time of Hadrian suggests. The soldier brags about his own training prowess, saying that he swam the Danube in full armour, and that he hit his own arrow with another while it was still in the air. He even includes ethnic comparisons, arguing that he was the strongest of the Batavians, and that 'Neither Roman nor barbarian, no soldier with his javelin, no Parthian with his bow, could defeat me.'¹⁹⁹

Roman historians usually seem more interested in soldiers that train badly than those who train well. A common literary theme involves a group of undisciplined soldiers who are reinvigorated by a virtuous Roman commander, who dismisses their lethargy through hard training. This is exactly what Scipio Aemilianus is said by Appian to have done in Numantia in 132 BCE. First banning the luxuries to which the men had become accustomed – prostitutes, extravagant cooking equipment, food, even beds – and then:

In spite of this he did not venture to engage the enemy
until he had trained his army by many laborious exercises.
He traversed all the neighbouring plains and duly
fortified new camps one after another, and then

¹⁹⁷ Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.6. The following section demonstrates the effectiveness of this training, as his son produces a feat of great bravery at the battle of Pydna, 20.7-8.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Edwards (1993); Zanda (2011).

¹⁹⁹ ILS 2558, trans. Lendon (2006) 251. Presumably a friend or family member wrote the epitaph on the soldier's behalf.

demolished them, dug up trenches and filled them up again, constructed high walls and overthrew them, personally overseeing the work from morning until night...²⁰⁰

App. Hisp. 14.86.

The same event is also described by Livy, and one passage is particularly illuminative for the ideological construction of training:

He kept the soldiery at work daily and compelled them to carry thirty days' grain and seven stakes apiece. When someone had difficulty in marching because of his load, Scipio would tell him, 'When you know how to entrench yourself behind your sword, you may stop carrying your rampart with you.' To another who was having difficulty in carrying his shield, Scipio said, 'You are carrying a shield larger than the regulation; I don't blame you; you're better at managing a shield than a sword.'²⁰¹

Livy, Per. 57.1.

Here, Scipio acknowledges that among his ill-disciplined troops there are those who are subpar at swordsmanship, but his solution is to reassert all of the important aspects of discipline, and does not actually even mention sword training. The idea seems to be that the counterpoint to unwarlike, luxurious lethargy is hard work and self-betterment *in general*. In some ways, it was the hard work itself that was thought to improve soldiers.

²⁰⁰ Οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ὡς ἐτόλμα πολεμεῖν πρὶν αὐτοὺς γυμνάσαι πόνοις πολλοῖς. τὰ οὖν ἀγχοτάτω πεδία πάντα περιῶν, ἐκάστης ἡμέρας, ἄλλο μετ' ἄλλο στρατόπεδον ἤγειρέ τε καὶ καθήρει, καὶ τάφρους ὄρουσε βαθυτάτας καὶ ἐνεπίμπλη, τείχη τε μεγάλα ὠκοδόμει καὶ κατέφερεν, αὐτὸς ἐξ ἡοῦς ἐς ἐσπέραν ἅπαντα ἐφορῶν.

²⁰¹ *militem cotidie in opere habuit et triginta dierum frumentum ad septenos vallos ferre cogebat. Aegre propter onus incedenti dicebat: 'cum gladio te vallare scieris, vallum ferre desinito'. Alii scutum parum habiliter ferenti, amplius eum scutum iusto ferre, neque id se reprehendere, quando melius scuto quam gladio uteretur.*

Similar stories were told about Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo. Tacitus (first and early second century CE) goes to pains to describe how the Roman troops Corbulo finds in Armenia in c. 54 CE owned no arms or armour and had never stood watch in their lives. Corbulo remedies this by reasserting discipline, exposing the soldiers to the cold winter.²⁰² Additionally, Frontinus (first century CE) tells us that Corbulo made a certain group camp outside the walls 'until by steady work and successful raids they should atone for their disgrace.'²⁰³ Again and again, hard work is seen as the key way in which to dispel a subpar military reputation.

Sallust corroborates the idea that training, and a military life in general, should be difficult when he describes an idyllic, primitivist picture of ancient Roman days:

First of all, as soon as young men were capable of enduring military service, they learned practical lessons in soldiering through toil on campaign, and they took more delight in handsome arms and war horses than in harlots (*scortis*) and revelry.²⁰⁴

Sall. *Cat.* 7.4.

Sallust here naturally sees a martial lifestyle of military training and a dissolute one of prostitutes and partying to belong to opposed categories: two possible choices for youth – one moral and warlike, and the other immoral and luxurious. This is because military training was deeply embedded into the moral rhetoric of Roman society. As Phang argues, '*disciplina militaris* was also a highly moralistic and conservative ideology that sought to turn back the clock and reproduce an ideal social hierarchy.'²⁰⁵

I argue that a martial lifestyle, embodied in hard military training, was so embedded into the construction of 'Roman' morality that alternate practices presented

²⁰² Tac. *Ann.* 13.35.

²⁰³ Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.21-28.

²⁰⁴ *am primum iuventus, simul ac belli patiens erat, in castris per laborem usum militiae discebat magisque in decoris armis et militaribus equis quam in scortis atque conviviis lubidinem habebant*; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 9.603-20.

²⁰⁵ Phang (2008) 4.

significant consternation. I argue that the most significant of these alternate practices to emerge was the athletic training of the Greek *gymnasium*.

Greek Training

I argue that military concerns lay behind Roman responses to athletics. This has been noted in passing in literature on ancient athletics, but has not been granted the central importance I believe it merits.²⁰⁶ I argue that Roman attitudes to athletics can usefully be described as ‘orientalist’ given that Roman responses to Easterners, in general, were usually underpinned in the same way. It is, therefore, essential to explore the relationship between athletics and war. In every ancient era the two things were often discussed together, though the debate was somewhat more polarising for earlier Greek authors who occasionally advocated a role for athletics in military training. In later periods, and for Roman authors in particular, athletics was thought to cause unwarlikeness.

Athletics was a feature of the Archaic period. The Homeric epics included ‘epic games’, in both ritual funerary and recreational contexts, that were clearly a forum for the agonistic negotiation of masculinity and military prowess.²⁰⁷ The *gymnasium* – the ‘gymnasion’ (γυμνάσιον) in Greek – arose as an institution from the sixth century, often associated with temple complexes.²⁰⁸ The fifth century saw them spread explosively across the Greek world, and activities included the footraces, wrestling, discus, javelin, boxing, and equestrian events. Famously, these were mostly competed and practised naked – indeed the word *gymnasium* refers to nudity

²⁰⁶ For example, Zahra Newby refers to the idea in passing, Newby (2005), 40-41. Jason König explores the idea more thoroughly, but only in the course arguing that athletics was used as a vehicle to explore a plethora of social issues, and not only ideas of unwarlikeness. His main discussion of militarism and the criticism of athletics revolves around the author Lucian, making it rather specific, and late, for my purposes, König (2005), 24, and esp. 45-96; cf. Remijsen (2015) 268.

²⁰⁷ Hom. *Il.* 23; *Od.* 8.90ff; cf. Gardiner (1930) 18-27; Willis (1941); H. Harris (1964) 48-63; Willcock (1973); Dickie (1983). Kyle notes that athletics seem important in the Homeric epics even outside these ‘epic games’ – for example, Achilles’ men and Penelope’s suitors both do athletics to pass time, and distances are measured in terms of discus or javelin throws, Kyle (1993) 12.

²⁰⁸ Kyle (2015) 81; Winter (2006) 120; M. Scott (2013) 298-99.

itself.²⁰⁹ Competitive games were associated with religious festivals, with the winners honoured with pensions and prestige.

A traditional view was that the ‘hoplite revolution’ – the rise of phalanx warfare – and the rise of institutionalised athletics were roughly contemporary, and were perhaps even mutually supportive.²¹⁰ Under this assessment, athletics provided skills useful for hoplite warfare. This echoes a number of Classical Athenian authors, who sometimes argued that the activities of the *gymnasium* inculcated the kind of qualities that served young citizens well in the hoplite phalanx.²¹¹ Under this logic, athletics was militarily useful. This is exactly Xenophon’s (fifth- to fourth-century BCE) contention in his *Agesilaus*, as he argues that Spartan troops ‘trained themselves in warfare’ in the *gymnasium*. He also contrasts the fat, untrained Persian soldiers with fit Spartan ones, saying that after seeing their pathetic naked bodies the Greek soldiers consequently ‘believed that the war would be exactly like fighting with women.’²¹² For Xenophon, athletics promoted warlikeness and masculinity, and barbarians lacked both because they did not frequent *gymnasia*.

There are, indeed, some clear connections between athletics and the military, as races in armour, and javelin-hurling competitions (the javelin was a staple of ancient warfare) are attested. However, it has been noted more recently that hoplite warfare actually predated institutionalised athletics, and probably provided inadequate training, besides.²¹³ There are also many surviving sources that criticise athletics, declaring its use for military training limited, or useless, or even damaging. Critics usually questioned whether an athlete’s lifestyle and pursuits truly did prepare a man for war. As early as the late seventh century BCE, this could be the case, as the

²⁰⁹ The Greek γυμνάσιον comes from the word γυμνός – ‘naked’. However, like the latin *nudus*, the word could also refer to inappropriate clothedness or the state of being ‘semi-clad’. I discuss nudity more fully in my second chapter.

²¹⁰ The bibliographic debate is summarised in Christesen (2009) 60-61; cf. Delorme (1960) 24-30; Evjen (1986) 54-55.

²¹¹ Pl. *Prt.* 326b-c; Ar. *Ran.* 1069-73; *Nub.* 984-85, 1052-54. The sentiment is rather rarer than modern scholars suggest; these are the most cited examples.

²¹² Xen. *Ages.* 1.27-28.

²¹³ Christesen (2009) 60-61; Poliakoff (1987) 94-115; Mann (1998); Golden (1998) 25-27. The rise of hoplite warfare may date to the seventh century, Krentz (2007) 61-67.

Spartan poet Tyrtaeus states that he will not respect athletes unless they prove their bravery by killing an opponent in close combat.²¹⁴ Later, Plato expresses caution over the constancy of the conditions of the gymnasium, which leans too far towards luxurious dieting to be good preparation for war.²¹⁵ Euripides also has an unidentified character argue along similar practical lines, asking 'Do we go to war with the discus in hand? Do we repel invaders by running along the defences? The enemy at hand, we recognize the foolishness of this preparation.'²¹⁶ As Jason König argues, the relevance of athletics to warfare was 'constantly questioned'.²¹⁷ The evidence may seem contradictory, but, in fact, one thing can be said for certain: both critics and advocates strongly associated athletics with military training. They were *always* seen as comparable, even if athletic training was seen as inadequate. Where athletics was discussed, its suitability as military training was rarely far away as a topic.

Scholars have highlighted ways in which athletics could not have acted as adequate military training. For example, Mark Golden has argued that the skills required for hoplite fighting are different to those trained through athletics, and Donald Kyle has noted that *gymnasia* 'were not well designed for military training, and armies only occasionally used them as mustering sites'.²¹⁸ Indeed, Kyle argues that 'Some specialized events, such as the hoplite race, military dances, and the javelin throw, mimicked warfare or were related to military developments, but athletics were at best an indirect form of military training.'²¹⁹ The centrality of nudity in athletics, and not in warfare, also seems to separate the phenomena. Athletics did, however, perhaps coincide with hoplite warfare less directly as a means for individuals to acquire glory now warfare was more collectivised.²²⁰ Athletics, after all, provided an

²¹⁴ Tyrtaeus Fr. 12 W.

²¹⁵ Pl. *Rep* 3.404a-b.

²¹⁶ Eur. *Autolykos* Fr. 282 TGF. Xenophon records a Spartan soldier killing an enemy with his discus, but the story is clearly exceptional, Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.18.

²¹⁷ König (2005) 24. König also argues that athletics was often used as a vehicle to address wider cultural issues, and was never short of opponents for that reason, 4.

²¹⁸ Golden (1998) 25-28; Kyle (2015) 81.

²¹⁹ Kyle (2015) 81.

²²⁰ Poliakoff (1987) 115; Del Corno (2002) 20; Tyrrell (2004) 5. Contra. Christesen (2009) 61.

opportunity for elite display through conspicuous leisure. Winners at athletic games were honoured and rewarded, and the presence of athletic competitions in the Homeric epics ensured an enshrined association with the pursuit with the masculine, virtuous warrior. Robin Osborne has argued that the *palaestra* (wrestling-ground) in Greek cities 'was the primary context for the performance of elite masculinity.'²²¹ He argues they had more to do with status and fashion than militarism.²²² *Arete* was the principal quality of excellence fostered in the *gymnasium*, a clear indicator of cultural and social status.

The Hellenistic period is crucial, because in this era Roman-Greek contacts accelerated remarkably. It is, therefore, the institutions of this period that presumably most influenced Roman perception. It is also a time of significant change for Greek athletic practice. These were, roughly, threefold. Firstly, the number of festivals that included athletic events increased, and these became codified into 'crown' festivals, which provided cash prizes, and local festivals, which provided only prestige.²²³ This constitutes a sort of 'spectacle-isation', which was supported by the Hellenistic rulers (kings) who often founded and supported festivals in order to promote themselves.²²⁴ At the same time, training at the *gymnasium* became more formalised, and was organised at *polis* level by designated public officials, 'gymnasiarchs' (γυμνασιάρχαι).²²⁵ Secondly, *gymnasia* became far bigger, often taking the form of large complexes, which included both *palaestrae* and the *gymnasium*, along with spaces for literary and philosophical education.²²⁶ *Gymnasia* had long been places for informal philosophical discussion, but in the Hellenistic era this relationship was formalised. Stephen Miller describes the great complex of Nemea, built in the late fourth century BCE, which included a temple of Zeus, sleeping and eating rooms, baths with several rooms, a sculptor's workshop, and a

²²¹ Osborne (1998) 29.

²²² Kyle (2015) 81.

²²³ Van Nijf and Williamson (2015); Remijsen (2011).

²²⁴ Kyle (2015) 223-26; van Nijf and Williamson (2015) 3.

²²⁵ Pleket (2013) 100, cf. Chatzopoulos (1996) no. 60 = Austin (2006) no. 137 ('A gymnasiarchy law from Beroea').

²²⁶ Winter (2006) 115-34, esp. 115; Kyle (2015) 234; Stravrou (2016) 4-5.

large stadium.²²⁷ Similar complexes have been found elsewhere in the Greek world, too.²²⁸ For Kyle, 'the relative simplicity of earlier Greek athletic facilities gave way to expansion and elaboration with increased resources, interstate emulation and rivalry, and royal patronage.'²²⁹

The third major change into the Hellenistic period involves the founding, or refounding, of formal training/education programmes for different age groups of youths in the *gymnasia*. The most famous of these is the ephebate, initially of Athens but again spreading explosively in the Hellenistic period, as Kennell argues, 'From Babylon to Marseilles, from the Ukraine to North Africa'.²³⁰ From at least the time of Aristotle in the fourth century BCE (and probably from some time before) military training for youths aged eighteen to nineteen was organised through the institution, which provided citizen youths (*epheboi*) with mandatory military, physical and intellectual education.²³¹ Crucially, it was clearly considered both military and athletic in character. As well as engaging in races, boxing, and various other sports, and entering competitions on behalf of their organisation, *epheboi* trained in a large number of military skills, including *hoplomachia* (the martial art of spear and shield handling), javelin-hurling, archery, and even the handling of the *katapeltes*, a newly invented type of torsion catapult.²³² Weapons were also often given as prizes to *epheboi* in competitions, showing these military associations.²³³ However, this 'military role' was, in some ways, rather illusory. As Laes and Strubbe argue, *epheboi* may have trained like soldiers, but they did not actually enter combat, unlike the older age group institutions (which we know less about) the *neoi* and *neaniskoi*, who seemed to be used in the defence of cities in emergencies – but even then only occasionally.²³⁴ Instead, the training perhaps served an ideological purpose, as the identity of Greek citizens (in fact, most ancient citizenships) had irresistible martial

²²⁷ Birge, Kraynak, and Miller (1992).

²²⁸ Kyle (2015) 140.

²²⁹ Kyle (2015) 142-43.

²³⁰ Kennell (2009) 324.

²³¹ See Kennell (2015) for an overview; cf. Chankowski (2010).

²³² Kennell (2015) 179-80.

²³³ Laes and Strubbe (2014) 111; cf. D'amore (2007) 159.

²³⁴ Laes and Strubbe (2014) 111-2.

connotations.²³⁵ However, even these reasonably feeble military elements seemed to diminish quite considerably over time. They argue that ‘Evidence of military training [in the ephebate] in the imperial era is almost non-existent outside Athens.’²³⁶ Instead, sports and intellectual *paideia* gained even greater prominence.

It is important to contextualise Roman responses to athletics. Military training and athletics were always considered together – much of the time as uneasy bedfellows, perhaps – but they were always seen as corresponding, one forever reminding commentators of the other. The existence of a youth training programme that declined in military character, and that perhaps never really had a military function anyway, in the very period in which the Romans first came into deep contact with the Greeks, may be significant. This is the institution with which Romans from my period would have the most experience with, and Cicero clearly conflates athletics and the *ephebate* in his criticisms cited above, which discuss the ‘absurd system of training (*exercitatio*) youth they do in their *gymnasia*! What frivolous (*levis*) military training for their ephebes!’²³⁷ At the same time, vast, luxurious complexes were arising, placing athletics into context with both military training and pursuits that the Romans associated with leisure, like philosophy and bathing. The similarities of Vitruvius’ (the author of an architectural treatise in the first century BCE) ideal *gymnasium* and *palaestra* with the complexes of the East suggest a familiarity with these newer models.²³⁸ Additionally, athletics was undergoing a kind of ‘spectacle-isation’ that surely led to additional associations with leisure, and with the opulent self-presentation of Hellenistic kings. It should, therefore, be unsurprising that the Romans so constantly questioned the applicability of athletics to warfare when many Greeks also did so throughout the history of the tradition.

I suggest that a military-inclined perspective led Roman authors to these criticisms. However, more precisely, they actually relied upon the ideological dichotomisation

²³⁵ Laes and Strubbe (2014) 112; cf. Kah (2009) 69-74.

²³⁶ Laes and Strubbe (2014) 112; cf. Kennell (2015) 181-82, who concurs that Athens was exceptional in its retaining a military role for its *epheboi* as it declined in other cities. However, contra. Chankowski (2010) 319-82.

²³⁷ Cic. *Rep.* 4.4.

²³⁸ Winter (2006) 130.

of warlike and unwarlike lifestyles, associated with toil and leisure respectively. As I will argue next, athletics came to be categorised as a leisure activity, and was deemed, in essence, luxurious.

Athletics and Luxury

Roman constructions of warlikeness were strongly binarised. Either an individual engaged in moral, hardy and masculine activities like proper military training, which increased one's warlikeness, or one engaged in slothful, luxurious activities, which degraded it. This propensity to see warlikeness and pleasure as incompatible and opposing forces is underpinned by common stories of luxury infecting the troops, and the efforts of commanders to dispel it with hard work and training. This contrast is clear in the cited example where Marius dismisses accusations of luxury by training on the *Campus*, despite his old age. Marius clearly feels it's possible to train away a bad reputation. I argue that Roman authors placed Greek training much closer to the troubling 'pleasure' end of the spectrum than the warlike one.

Several Roman sources show this line of thinking by including athletics within general lists of luxurious leisure activities. Horace is one example:

From the day she dropped her wars, Greece took to trifling (*nugari*), and amid fairer fortunes drifted into vice (*vitium*): she was all aglow with passion, now for athletes, now for horses; she raved over workers in marble or ivory or bronze; with eyes and soul she hung enraptured on the painted panel; her joy was now in flautists, and now in actors of tragedy. Like a baby girl playing at its nurse's feet, what she wanted in impatience, she soon, when satisfied, cast off. What likes and dislikes are there that

you would not think easily changed? Such was the effect
of happy times of peace and prosperous gales.²³⁹

Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.93-102.

Horace mentions athletes only briefly, but the list reveals more than a precise, specific statement about athletics might. It clearly made sense to Horace to include a 'love of athletes' alongside the love of sculptors, musicians, actors, and painters, as the characteristic passions of an unwarlike people degraded by a prosperous peace. However the tone is unsympathetic at the same time: initially only trifling, the situation soon gets as bad as to qualify as a vice, or crime (*vitium*).

The Younger Seneca (first century CE) similarly equates interest in wrestling and in art.

Would you say that that man is at leisure who arranges
with finical care his Corinthian bronzes [...] and spends
the greater part of each day upon rusty bits of copper?
Who sits in a public wrestling-place (for, to our shame we
labour with vices that are not even Roman) watching the
wrangling of lads? Who sorts out the herds of his pack-
mules into pairs of the same age and colour? Who feeds all
the newest athletes?²⁴⁰

Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 12.2.

The passage is about the dangers of obsession, which ironically can make even leisure practices unrelaxing. Laying aside the odd example about mules, the others seem strongly Greek, with the collection of bronze sculptures placed alongside athletics, which is mentioned twice. Seneca firmly establishes spectating athletics as

²³⁹ *Ut primum positis nugari Graecia bellis | coepit et in vitium fortuna labier aequa, | nunc athletarum studiis, nunc arsit equorum | suspendit picta voltum mentemque tabella, | nunc tibicinibus, nunc est gauisa tragoedis; | sub nutrice puella velut si luderet infans, | quod cupide petiit mature plena reliquit. | Quid placet aut odio est, quod non mutabile credas? | Hoc paces habuere bonae ventique secundi.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

²⁴⁰ *Illum tu otiosum uocas qui Corinthia, [...] anxia subtilitate concinnat et maiorem dierum partem in aeruginosis lamellis consumit? qui in ceromate (nam, pro facinus! ne Romanis quidem utiis laboramus) spectator puerorum rixantium sedet? qui iumentorum suorum greges in aetatum et colorum paria diducit? qui athletas nouissimos pascit?*

both un-Roman, and a vice. Roman authors did allow that *otium* (leisure) was occasionally important even for upstanding Romans, but seemingly, athletics was still deemed inappropriate.

A third example comes from Justin, an author who probably wrote in the second century CE. He argues along similar lines, regarding the Athenians:

... [the Athenians] sank into sloth and torpor, and spent the public income, not, as formerly, upon fleets and armies, but upon festivals, and the celebration of games; frequenting the theatres for the sake of eminent actors and poets...²⁴¹

Just. *Epit.* 6.9.

Here Justin clearly illustrates my point: warlike activities are placed in the extreme opposite category to the leisure activities of Greeks, which involve athletics and other activities besides. For these authors, athletics was yet another leisure activity, ideologically distant to desirable warlike activities. It should also be noted that in all three sources, it is not participation in athletics that seems to be the problem, but spectating. This rather places the Imperial-era evidence in the context of the increased 'spectacle-isation' of athletics – as a show, and not necessarily a personal pastime. I will further discuss Roman unease with being placed on display below, in my second chapter.

However, other evidence suggests that personal participation in athletics was also deemed problematic. For example, Quintilian (first century CE) criticises 'people who spend half their lives rubbing themselves with oil and the other half drinking', which suggests that he considers the two activities similarly wasteful.²⁴² In another example, Livy reports how Scipio Africanus-Major was criticised in the senate in 204

²⁴¹ ...*in segnitiam torporemque resoluti non ut olim in classem et exercitus, sed in dies festos apparatusque ludorum reditus publicos effundunt et cum auctoribus nobilissimis poetisque theatra celebrant...*

²⁴² Quint. 1.11.15. He goes on to say that these individuals 'smother the mind' by their obsession, so the tone is clearly judgemental.

BCE for frequenting *gymnasia* and *palaestrae* wearing a *pallium* (a Greek-style cloak), while in Sicily.²⁴³ Importantly, these were behaviours which senators apparently argued were both non-military and non-Roman (*non Romanus modo sed ne militaris*).²⁴⁴ Cassius Dio repeats the allegations, and says ‘the Romans’ were affronted by his ‘adopting Greek manners.’²⁴⁵ The judgement could not be clearer: athletics was undesirable, foreign, and most importantly, unwarlike. Notably, Dio has Octavian criticise Marc Antony similarly for becoming a *gymnasiarch* in Alexandria – thereby symbolically forsaking his role as a Roman *imperator*.²⁴⁶ These examples suggest that Romans participating in athletics could be criticised for engaging in foreign and unmilitary behaviours.

The responses to Scipio’s behaviour are revealing for Roman attitudes, and provide a good jumping-off point for a more specific analysis of Roman criticisms of athletics. Livy writes of the senate’s additional accusations, on top of those already mentioned:

...that with equal softness (*molliter*) and self-indulgence (*segniter*) his entire retinue was enjoying the charms of Syracuse [...] that the entire army, being spoiled by lack of restraint [...] was more to be feared by allies than by the enemy.²⁴⁷

Livy 29.19.10-20.1.

Here, Livy clearly shows the importance of morality in Roman military command, but he also shows an association of athletics with a generalised view of luxury and leisure. For the Roman senators at the time, at least in Livy’s account from the

²⁴³ Wearing Greek clothes (especially the *pallium*) instead of the toga was commonly criticised in Roman invective, cf. Cic. *Verr.* 4.54.5; 5.40; 5.31; Dyck (2001); Heskell (1994).

²⁴⁴ Livy 29.19.10-20.1. Cicero mentions a statue Scipio set up in the Gymnasium of Tyndaris, Sicily in a speech some 130 years after the events described, giving some credence to Scipio’s patronage of such institutions, Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.185. Livy also makes sure to tell us ‘some of these taunts were true, some half-true and hence plausible.’, 29.20.1.

²⁴⁵ Cass. Dio 17.62.

²⁴⁶ Cass. Dio 50.27.

²⁴⁷ *aeque segniter molliterque cohortem totam Syracusarum amoenitate frui; [...] exercitum omnem licentia corruptum, [...] sociis magis quam hosti metuendum.*

Augustan era, the frequenting of *gymnasia* could be one sign of indolence, self-indulgence, and lack of restraint. The influx of luxury to Rome was blamed by many authors, including Livy, on the Greeks, who in some way ‘infected’ Rome with their attractive but pernicious luxurious lifestyles. Some interaction with that rhetoric is clearly at play here.

One further account of this episode is particularly illuminating. This is because the author, Valerius Maximus (early first century CE), dissents from the judgemental tone of Livy and Dio and instead says Scipio’s actions were justifiable. For Valerius, Scipio had difficult trials both ahead of him and behind him and had earned a little relaxation. Specifically, he ‘came to these [behaviours] only after he had wearied his shoulders and limbs much and long and made them prove their robustness in martial exertions.’²⁴⁸ Valerius’ attitude may seem entirely opposed to that of Cassius Dio and Livy, but all three sources actually testify to an attitude whereby athletics is in some way superfluous and trivial: a leisure activity more than anything else. Valerius may think that this behaviour was justified in light of Scipio’s military achievements, but, in fact, this merely reaffirms the ideological distance between military labour and leisured athletics. Valerius merely argues that people should forgive Scipio the transgression, while the other authors suggest that the behaviours were too disgraceful to accept.

This attitude can be seen elsewhere, as when Cicero criticises the levity (*levis*) of Greek training in his *De Re Publica*.²⁴⁹ In his *De Oratore*, Cicero has Crassus dismiss *gymnasia* as places of delightful enjoyment (*delectationis*) where no real philosophy can take place as Greeks will desert the lecturer while he is speaking, for the ‘trifling amusement’ (*levissimam delectationem*) of anointing themselves.²⁵⁰ For these authors, Greek athletic training was leisure, and Roman authors were consequently prone to problematise athletics as they did other leisure practices. An example is contained within a letter written by the Younger Pliny at the end of the first century CE. He

²⁴⁸ *ad quas tamen veniebat cum multum ac diutius fatigasset umeros et cetera membra <ac> militari agitatione firmitatem suam probare coegisset*, Val. Max. 3.6.1.

²⁴⁹ Cic. *Rep.* 4.4.

²⁵⁰ Cic. *De Or.* 2.5.21.

describes how the athletic games (*gymnicus agone*) at Vienne were to be abolished due to their ‘corrupting influence’ on habits (*mores [...] infecerat*). The author seems in favour of the ban, and wishes it was extended to Rome also: for him as well, athletics were a *vitium*.²⁵¹ Once again, spectacle-isation seems to be a problem, as is also shown in another passage from the same author:

But now the interest in arms is displayed in spectacle instead of personal skill, and has become an amusement instead of a discipline, since interest in soldiery has shifted from participating to viewing, from the strenuous (*labore*) to the pleasurable (*voluptatem*), since our military training is not led anymore by one of the veterans wearing the mural or civic crown, but instead by some petty Greek (*Graeculus*) teacher.²⁵²

Plin. *Pan.* 13.5.

Here Pliny really exemplifies the unease relayed in our sources with training methods designed to be pleasurable rather than strenuous. Pliny does not mention athletic training by name, but with reference to the above, the inference is clearly there: instead of hard training led by a Roman veteran, a *Graeculus* leads the soldiers in voluptuous spectacle. Overall, it’s clear that Roman authors categorised Greek-style training with other pleasurable leisure activities. This was problematic, because, for these authors, luxurious, enjoyable, endeavours were only thought to degrade one’s warlikeness yet further.

Athletics and Epic

Athletic games were a staple feature of epic poetry. They were present in the works of Homer, and so, when Roman authors ought to adapt epic form from the time of

²⁵¹ Plin. *Ep.* 4.22.7; cf. 1.22.6 where Pliny compliments a man who spends his leisure hours not at *gymnasia*, or lecturing his friends, but at business.

²⁵² *Postquam vero studium armorum a manibus ad oculos, ad voluptatem a labore translatum est; postquam exercitationibus nostris non veteranorum aliquis, cui decus muralis aut civica, sed Graeculus magister assistit.*

their earliest literature, treating both mythic and historical themes, games were again present.²⁵³ It is impossible to treat the relationship between epic and athletics in its entirety here, but a relevant aspect still demands discussion. Most important to assess is whether there are signs in Latin epic that the relationship between athletics and war was problematised, as in other Roman literature. I argue that this was the case, and that, more specifically, there seem to be suggestions that athletic training was inadequate for war.

In both Homeric and Latin epic, athletics often served to delineate and debate the boundaries between games and war. This is important, because, as König argues, in the *Iliad* peace and hostility, and the tension between them, is a prominent theme.²⁵⁴ Thus, during the athletic games of the *Iliad*, Achilles serves to police this boundary when the games threaten to spill over into open bloodshed.²⁵⁵ The *Odyssey's* games are further removed from warfare, but Odysseus triumphs quite easily over his peace-loving hosts the *Phaeacians*, and later engages in an agonistic contest with the suitors of his wife, whom he eventually massacres. Like in other genres of literature, warfare is never too far away when athletics is discussed.

This is no less true in Roman epic, which I will focus upon in this section, beginning with Lucan's *De Bello Civili*. The work contains no epic games, and actually only refers to athletics on two occasions. The first is Caesar's previously quoted mockery of Pompey's troops picked from the *gymnasia* of Greece. This is a potentially pointed reference, as Lucan must well have known of the expectation for the inclusion of athletics within works of the genre. He nevertheless includes a wrestling match in his narrative, but only via the retelling of a myth whereby Hercules fights the gigantic Antaeus in a deadly conflict. For König, this suggests a reminder, as befitting his civil-war narrative, of the 'ever-present potential for violence in the

²⁵³ In the *Iliad* Achilles organises a funerary athletic contest to honour Patroclus, Hom. *Il.* 23. The *Odyssey* has Alicinous, king of the Phaeacians, honour Odysseus in an act of guest-friendship, Hom. *Od.* 8. Early Latin epics include Gnaeus Naevnius' third-century BCE *Bellum Punicum* and Ennius' early second-century *Annales*. Early Latin epic seems to show a tendency to treat both recent historical and mythical themes in the same work – an innovation from the Greek models.

²⁵⁴ König (2005) 235.

²⁵⁵ Hom. *Il.* 23.823.

world'.²⁵⁶ The narrative is bleak, and there is perhaps no room for the distraction of games within.

However, Silius Italicus, who also has a character mock the masculinity and warlikeness of adherents of the *gymnasium*, does include epic games.²⁵⁷ These arrive near the end of the poem, after much warfare – for König, 'a chance to review the virtues' which led to victory.²⁵⁸ However, the games do not actually seem to include much athletics. Indeed, all the events bar the running seem to have some kind of martial theme. There is a horse race in which all of the horses have pointedly western origins, a javelin competition (a weapon Roman soldiers used), and a sword-fight with heavy gladiatorial connotations – especially given that the Spanish brothers competing fight to the death. A fight that goes too far, but which is stopped before fatal wounds can occur is a staple of ancient epic – but here Silius has the conflict bubble over into fatality, 'a spectacle befitting the soldier sons of Mars.'²⁵⁹ If the games are celebrating Roman virtues, then these are clearly warlike ones. Silius' replacement of heroic Greek athletics with martial Roman events is all the more striking for the fact that the commander orchestrating the events, Scipio Africanus, is the very same one accused historically of too much interest in the *palaestra* of Sicily, discussed above. Silius, therefore, had every opportunity to include faithful Greek games in his narrative, but did not. With that in mind, Silius' choices seem even more intentional. Does Silius also avoid true athletic events as they seem out of keeping for his Roman soldier characters?

Earlier in the narrative the contrast between games and war is made much more explicitly. A tale is told of an Aeolian boy, Podaetus, who dreams of war while excelling at athletics, who 'had not yet exited the ephebate, and was still unripe for glory in arms.'²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ König (2005) 238.

²⁵⁷ Sil. *Pun.* 14.127-39; see above, 48.

²⁵⁸ König (2005) 241.

²⁵⁹ Sil. *Pun.* 16.531-32. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

²⁶⁰ Sil. *Pun.* 14.493-95. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

Whether he hurled on high the shining discus, or threw the javelin above the clouds, or ran with flying feet that skimmed over the course, or covered with one swift leap a vast stretch of measured ground – each competition became him. There was enough, quite enough, of glory and praise to be won in bloodless strife: why was the lad ambitious of greater deeds?²⁶¹

Sil. *Pun.* 14.505-11.

The boy is described as an athletic prodigy, but perhaps only to signify an important contrast between games and war. It seems that an individual could be well-experienced in athletics, but this was not expected to truly prepare a man for war.

Statius, another epic poet of the first century CE, perhaps best explores the perceived contrast between athletics and warlike training. His *Thebaid* is set – uniquely for extant Latin epic – not in a Roman historical context, but in Greek Thebes. It nevertheless preserves the attitudes of its Roman author, and nowhere is this more apparent than his treatment of athletics.²⁶² Once again, the leisure connotations of athletics are foregrounded. One important example is the attitudes of the wrestler Tydaeus, who seems to use wrestling as some kind of escape from war:

He was wont to spend his leisure from war (*otia martis*)
and relax armed angers against giant opponents around

²⁶¹ *seu splendentem sub sidera nisu | exigeret discum, iaculo seu nubila supra | surgeret, aligeras ferret seu pulvere plantas | vix tacto, vel dimensi spatia improba campi | ransiret velox saltu, decuere labores. | sat prorsus, sat erat decoris discrimine tuto, | sat laudis: cur facta, puer, maiora petebas?*

²⁶² Cf. Lovatt (2005).

the shores of Achelous and the sports grounds happy in
the teacher god.²⁶³

Stat. *Theb.* 6.828-33.

Thus Statius defines athletics as an activity of *otium* – a word denoting leisure, usually contrasted with the world of civic and private business, *negotium*, of which war was a part. This was a concept explicitly contrasted with warfare, as can be seen in when Caesar describes the inhabitants of Utica as ‘a multitude of people unaccustomed to war owing to the long continuance of *otium*.’²⁶⁴ In another example of the ideological distance from real warfare in the *Thebaid*, a sword fight is cancelled during the games because it reminds the contestants too much of real war. The competitor Adrastus says they ought to save their courage and that there is a plentiful supply of death in real war without tempting it in games.²⁶⁵ Later on, Dryas insults a youth by saying he is only playing games, whereas real men are familiar with war.²⁶⁶ Statius is clearly happy to portray epic games – an expected feature of the genre he was writing within – but he also signals a clear disconnect between athletics and true war. In Statius, athletics can ‘foresweat’ war and help ‘set alight warlike virtues,’ but they are some distance off real war.²⁶⁷

The earliest extant Latin epic is Virgil’s *Aeneid*, written under Augustus in the twenties and early thirties CE. The *Aeneid*’s games, in honour of Aeneas’ father Anchises, serve to break the narrative, separating the ‘Odysseyan’ wandering and romantic entanglement of the earlier books and the ‘Iliadic’ warfare of books six to twelve. They, therefore, represent the contrast between peace and war both structurally as well as thematically, as is more traditional in ancient epic. The games

²⁶³ *sic otia Martis | degere et armiferas laxare assueverat irasr | ingentes contra ille viros Acheloia circum | litora felicesque deo monstrante palaestras.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

²⁶⁴ *Erat in oppido multitudo insolens belli diuturnitate otii,* Caes. *B. Civ.* 2.36; cf. Nep. 20.3.2; Verg. *Georg.* 4.563-64; Livy 3.32.5; Ter. *Eun.* 265. The concept did not always have negative connotations, but I argue that in the sphere of quasi-martial training the introduction of *otium* would be perceived as dangerous.

²⁶⁵ Stat. *Theb.* 6.911-19.

²⁶⁶ Stat. *Theb.* 9.784–86.

²⁶⁷ *sancire novo sollemnia busto | Inachidas ludumque super, quo Martia bellis | praesudare paret seseque accendere virtus,* Stat. *Theb.* 6.2-4.

include traditional competitions, such as the boxing and footrace, but also some novelties. As an analogue for the chariot race of the Iliad, Virgil substitutes a boat race. This again seems a pointed break with tradition, a clear reference to Augustus' great naval victory at Actium, which Augustus celebrated with the instigation of the Actian games, which included boat races.²⁶⁸ The final novelty is the replacement of the pyrrhic war dance finale of the Odysseus' games with a martial display manoeuvre, the *Lusus Troiae*, instead.²⁶⁹ Roman authors were commonly hostile to dancing, considering it an effeminate practice, which they associated with the East.²⁷⁰ With this in mind, the replacement choice seems deliberate.

Virgil's thematic choices also suggest problematisation. The games seem to be undertaken in a very intense spirit of enjoyment, and an audience forms along the shore, 'a happy crowd'.²⁷¹ Even in the dangerous naval race, the contestants laugh as a competitor falls into the water, even as he flounders and exhales water.²⁷² However, as the games continue, war and conflict encroach further, and Aeneas has to stop the boxing event early before real blood is spilled.²⁷³ War has arrived during the final display, but it still takes the form of enjoyable spectacle performed in front of an admiring crowd, with everything done 'in sport'.²⁷⁴

Outside of the main games of book five, athletics are again contrasted with war. In book six, for example, Aeneas finds a society of his Trojan ancestors in the underworld who have retained weapons, but have no use for them. Arms lie useless in the distance, spears pointed down into the ground, while war horses simply graze across the plain. The men instead 'Some flex their limbs in the grassy *palaestra*, |

²⁶⁸ They were actually revived from previous games undertaken in the area, Strabo 7.7.6. The earlier games may actually have involved boat races too, as is hinted by Stephanus of Byzantium, Gardner (1881) 90-97; Willis (1941) 405.

²⁶⁹ Lovatt (2005) 174; Verg. *Aen.* 5.588-603;

²⁷⁰ Hor. *Carm.* 3.6.17-32; Nep. *Pr.* 1-3; Gell. 1.5.2-3; Columella, *Rust.* 1.Pr.14-5; Cic. *Pis.* 22; Cic. *Cat.* 2.23; Stat. *Theb.* 9.476-80; Sen. *Contr.* 1.Pr.8-9; Verg. *Aen.* 9.614-20; ORF² Fr. 30 = Macrobius 3.14.6-8; cf. C. Williams (2010) 193-97.

²⁷¹ *laeto complerant litora coetu*, Verg. *Aen.* 5.107.

²⁷² Verg. *Aen.* 5.181-82.

²⁷³ Verg. *Aen.* 5.461-67.

²⁷⁴ *ludo indutus*, Verg. *Aen.* 5.674.

contending in sport, they grapple on the golden sands.²⁷⁵ Athletics is described here as a purely leisure activity, contrasted actively and consciously with the forgotten implements of real war. It is again placed alongside other leisure activities – dance, and music-playing – other activities taught in the Greek *gymnasium* that were seen as effeminate leisure activities in many Roman constructions.²⁷⁶

There are also suggestions in the immediate aftermath of the *Aeneid's* games that the games were merely a brief escape from the toil of reality. This is because as the men play at sport, the women lament their hardship and attempt to put an end to their wandering by burning the ships. This seems to snap Ascanius, the man who finds them, out of the fantasy world of games, as he rips off his 'useless', helmet, 'the one he donned when he played at war, acting out mock battles.'²⁷⁷ Virgil here sets out his store by asserting that though games are essential in works of epic, and might even be enjoyable, they solve nothing. If the women burning the ships was no solution to their clan's problems, neither were the toy helmets and drills of the *Lusus Troiae*. It is at this stage where soul-searching is required – are the Phrygians truly hardy and warlike enough to continue on to Italy, where the people have 'wild, rugged ways'?²⁷⁸

The idea of warlikeness was crucial for both Roman attitudes to athletics, and to Roman constructions of themselves. These two, related attitudes informed the responses of Latin epic poets. These authors were not slavish in their adherence to the themes of Greek epic: they knew it was appropriate to include games in their narratives, but also that good poetry treated themes critically, to relate to their

²⁷⁵ *pars in gramineis exercent membra palaestris, | contendunt ludo et fulva luctantur harena*, Verg. *Aen.* 6.642-43. Trans. Fagles, adapted.

²⁷⁶ Ovid clearly describes music as unwarlike when he has Pentheus ask 'Can clashing cymbals, can the pipe of crooked horn, can shallow tricks of magic, women's shrill cries, wine-heated madness, vulgar throngs and empty drums – can all these vanquish men, for whom real war, with its drawn swords, the blare of trumpets, and lines of glittering spears, had no terrors?', Ov. *Meta.* 3.531-37. Tacitus explicitly links athletic games and music, Tac. *Ann.* 14.20, cf. Ov. *Fast.* 5.667-68; M. West (1992) 13-38. For further negative responses to music in Roman literature, and association with the East, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 9.614-20; Plaut. *Truc.* 608-11; Cic. *Pis.* 22; Nep. *Pr.* 1-3; Plin. *HN* 16.66-67; Suet. *Aug.* 68; Stat. *Theb.* 9.476-80, 10.870-76; Plut. *Pomp.* 24; Livy 7-2.3-4; Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.93-102, *Epod.* 9; Gell. 1.11.6. For dance, see above, 78, note 270.

²⁷⁷ *galeam ante pedes proiecit inanem, qua ludo indutus belli simulacra ciebat*, Verg. *Aen.* 5.673-74.

²⁷⁸ *...gens dura atque aspera cultu | debellanda tibi Latio est*, Verg. *Aen.* 5.730-31.

audience. Latin epic poets clearly did this, including epic games in their works but using them as a vehicle to discuss the suitability of athletics for warfare, as Roman authors did in other genres. Greek epic had always used the games as a way to delineate and debate the boundaries between conflict and play, but crucially, Greek characters in Greek poems were Greek, whether they were warlike or athletic. For Roman authors, who associated warlikeness very strongly with Romanness, and athletics with Greekness, there was more at stake in these constructions.

Epic, like other genres of Roman literature, tended to assume and reinforce an ideological divide between athletics and proper, warlike training. In this way, the same problematisations evident in other genres of Roman literature are present. Warlikeness was, simply put, a fundamental way Romans categorised peoples and people: a way of organising the world into categories which encompassed ideas of virtue, ethnicity, and gender. Greeks, by virtue of inadequate training, were often placed on the wrong side of this important ideological divide. I have discussed how athletics was seen as an enjoyable activity, but it is also important to examine the other side of the equation. This is because for Roman authors, self-worth and worth in the eyes of peers came via backbreaking toil. This is also fundamental to the Roman dichotomisation of athletics and military training.

‘Men who think it glorious and worthy of a Roman to endure even the worst’: The Desirability of *Patientia*

The categorisation of athletics as leisure was troubling because of a Roman tendency to argue that only the endurance of pain or suffering – termed *patientia* – could foster personal warlikeness. *Patientia* was therefore deeply integrated into a masculinised worldview based on ideas of morality, toil, and luxury. Sallust makes the connection between these ideas clear in his *Bellum Catilinae*:

But when our country had grown strong through toil (*labore*) and the practice of justice, when great kings had been vanquished in war, savage tribes and mighty peoples subdued by force of arms, when Carthage, the rival of Rome's dominion, had perished root and branch, and all seas and lands lay open, then Fortune began to be savage and to throw all into confusion. Those who had easily endured toil (*labores*), dangers (*pericula*), and uncertain and difficult undertakings, found leisure (*otium*) and wealth, desirable under other circumstances, a burden and a curse.²⁷⁹

Sall. *Cat.* 10.1-4.

For Sallust *labor*, hardship, danger, and adversity were things that helped soldiers vanquish their enemies. In contrast, *otium* and wealth – though not intrinsically bad things – do not foster the desired qualities, and can actually be burdensome to the process. This is a widely prevalent theme in Roman historical literature, also present when Sallust recalls that young men in the mythical past ‘could endure the hardships of war...’.²⁸⁰ Plutarch tells us how the Roman commander Sulla avoided low morale amongst his troops when besieged by making them dig ditches and re-channel a river ‘in order that they might be worn out at their tasks and induced by their hardships to welcome danger.’ Their bravery was thus revived by hard work.²⁸¹ During the Roman civil war, Pompey apparently hid evidence that Caesar's

²⁷⁹ *Sed ubi labore atque iustitia res publica crevit, reges magni bello domiti, nationes ferae et populi ingentes vi subacti, Carthago aemula imperi Romani ab stirpe interiit, cuncta maria terraeque patebant, saevire fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit. Qui labores, pericula, dubias atque asperas res facile toleraverant, eis otium, divitiae, optanda alias, oneri miseriaeque fuere. Igitur primo pecuniae, deinde imperi cupido crevit; ea quasi materies omnium malorum fuere. Namque avaritia fidem, probitatem ceterasque artis bonas subvertit.* Trans. Loeb, adapted. Lucan blames the Civil War upon Roman prosperity, arguing that ‘...from all the earth was brought the special bane of each nation. Next they stretched wide the boundaries of their lands, till those acres, which once were furrowed by the iron plough of Camillus and felt the spade of a Curius long ago, grew into vast estates tilled by foreign cultivators.’, *Luc.* 1.166-70.

²⁸⁰ Sall. *Cat.* 7.4.

²⁸¹ Plut. *Sull.* 16.1-6. His contemporary Marius was known to have lessened Roman soldiers' reliance on pack animals and increased the size and weight of the soldier's pack; his soldiers were resultantly nicknamed ‘Marius' Mules’, Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.7.

troops had been resolutely surviving on bread made from only herbs 'for fear that the endurance (*patientia*) and resolution of the foe would break their spirit.'²⁸² The Romans famously endured catastrophic defeats against Hannibal but came back fighting; no less was expected of Roman individuals.

Generally, in Roman literature, privation and endurance was thought to foster desirable masculine qualities. Catharine Edwards notes that though the traditional philosophical school of Epicureanism specifically advocated the *avoidance* of pain, this was a position which many Roman authors disagreed with.²⁸³ A rival school, Stoicism, did not in its earlier Greek form particularly advocate the endurance of pain – only that everything was done with virtue – but its Roman adherent Seneca argued that one 'should accept pain, too, as an opportunity to exercise his qualities of character'.²⁸⁴ Crucially, in philosophical works, the metaphor of training was often deployed, showing how linked these ideas were. For example, the Younger Seneca states in his *De Providentia*:

I do not mean to say that the brave man is insensible to these [situations of adversity], but that he overcomes them, and being in all else unmoved and calm rises to meet whatever assails him. All his adversities he counts as mere training (*exercitationes*).²⁸⁵

Sen. *Prov.* 2.3.

Training is the method by which a brave man learns to remain unmoved in the face of adversity – it does not necessarily make adversity 'easier'. Indeed, ease would be contrary to the point.

Gender is very prominent in this discourse. For example, Seneca elsewhere asks who is willing to forgo reasonable toil, 'if he is a man and is intent upon the honour [to be

²⁸² Suet. *Iul.* 68.2.

²⁸³ Edwards (1999) 254, citing Cicero and Seneca.

²⁸⁴ Edwards (1999) 255.

²⁸⁵ *Nec hoc dico: non sentit illa, sed vincit et alioqui quietus placidusque contra incurrentia attollitur. Omnia adversa exercitationes putat.*

one.]'²⁸⁶ Similarly, Livy has a shamed soldier ask for a chance at redemption: 'It is for hardship and danger we are asking, that we may do the duty of men and soldiers.'²⁸⁷ Brave endurance was thus deeply integrated with ideas of masculinity, and was expected to be weaker in women.²⁸⁸ Indeed, from Rome's earliest literature, we can observe gendered insults towards those who cannot endure hard work or pain, as a fragment of Ennius makes clear when he links those who win victories without expending 'blood nor sweat' with a Greek myth in which a man is turned into a woman.²⁸⁹

There are numerous examples. Seneca reiterates his position in his *De Consolatione ad Polybium*, arguing that one must avoid bearing pain with softness and effeminacy (*molliter et effeminate*), and furthermore that it is 'not manly not to bear' (*non ferre non est viri*) it.²⁹⁰ Cicero echoes this quite closely, stating that during surgery to remove varicose veins, Marius became the first recorded example of a patient refusing to be tied down, and instead 'being a man [...] bore the pain.'²⁹¹ For Cicero, such endurance was a thing of the past:

We, on the contrary, cannot bear a pain in the foot, or a toothache (but suppose the whole body is in pain); the reason is that there is a kind of womanish (*effeminate*) and frivolous way of thinking exhibited in pleasure as much as

²⁸⁶ *vir modo et erectus ad honesta*, Sen. *Prov.* 2.3. Emphasis and translation my own; cf. Luc. 8.389-90; Cic. *Off.* 1.70.

²⁸⁷ *Laborem et periculum petimus, ut virorum, ut militum officio fungamur*, Livy 25.6.19. The soldier in question is a representative of a group who had suffered defeat among the Roman lines at Cannae, and is here begging for a chance to make up for it to their commander Marcus Claudius Marcellus.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Barton (2001) 38-47.

²⁸⁹ The fragment is preserved in Cic. *Off.* 1.61.

²⁹⁰ Sen. *Con. Polyb.* 17.12.

²⁹¹ Cic. *Tusc.* 2.22.53.

in pain, which makes our self-control melt and stream
away through softness (*mollitia*)...²⁹²

Cic. *Tusc.* 2.22.52.

Here, for Cicero, enduring pain is actually a principal signifier separating men from women. This seems to be the logic under which Lucan, at the start of his epic, calls poverty (*paupertas*) ‘the mother of manhood’ (*fecunda virorum*).²⁹³ He says that he lives in a time when men wear women’s clothing, and can no longer cope with privation, clearly associating effeminacy with weak endurance.²⁹⁴

Cicero states the case clearly for Roman soldiers in particular:

Look at the training (*exercitatio*) of the legions, the double, the attack, the battle-cry, what an amount of toil (*laboris*) it means! Hence comes the courage (*animus*) in battle that makes them ready to face wounds. Take a soldier of equal bravery, but untrained (*inexercitatum*), and he will seem a woman (*mulier*).²⁹⁵

Cic. *Tusc.* 2.16.37.

All familiar features are present here: the soldiers endure pain and wounds easily because they undergo training, but if they did not then they would fight no better than women. Fighting like women was implicitly understood to mean ‘fighting badly’, and moreover, they would *seem* like women – they would appear effeminate in the eyes of others. These two ideas – of effeminacy and poor endurance– occur together very regularly, as I will show throughout my thesis. This was a symptom of the extensive masculine associations given to ideas of bravery. Here, however, pure

²⁹² *ferre non possumus; opinio est enim quaedam effeminata ac levis nec in dolore magis quam eadem in voluptate, qua cum liquescimus fluimusque mollitia...*

²⁹³ Luc. 1.165.

²⁹⁴ Luc. 1.164-65.

²⁹⁵ *exercitatio legionum, quid? ille cursus, concursus, clamor quanti laboris est! Ex hoc ille animus in proeliis paratus ad vulnera. Adduc pari animo inexercitatum militem, mulier videbitur.*

bravery is not even enough – troops must be trained *and* disciplined in order truly to overcome the obstacles they face.

More often, however, training was thought to improve bravery. Valerius Maximus toes this more conventional line when he argues that bravery (*fortitudo*) and endurance (*patientiam*) are so close as to seem like family members.²⁹⁶ Sallust claims to preserve a speech of Marius that explores these ideas. His most prominent argument is that Rome's elite had become soft, inexperienced at war, and therefore unwarlike. He positions himself as a self-made man who could not rely on the reputation of his ancestors, but instead had to build his own:

... [I learned how] to strike down the foe, to maintain defences, to fear nothing except ill repute, to endure winter and summer alike, to sleep on the bare ground, to bear privation and toil at the same time.²⁹⁷

Sall. *Iug.* 85.33.

The speech is a remarkable attack upon the elite, with Marius referring to his own endurance – apparently legendary, as Cicero records it too – many times throughout. His contrast of elite luxury and leisure with his own warlike austerity is notable:

Well then, let them keep right on doing what gives them pleasure: carrying on love affairs, drinking, and passing their old age where they have spent their youth, in banquets, as slaves to their belly and the most shameful part of their body. Let them leave sweat, dust, and other

²⁹⁶ Val. Max. 3.3.Pr. More charitably than Cicero, Valerius grants that both men and women can exhibit signs of courage and endurance. Horace argues that training actually improves bravery: 'training develops innate powers, and the inculcation of what is right strengthens the heart.', Hor. *Carm* 4.4.

²⁹⁷ *hostem ferire, praesidia agitare, nihil metuere nisi turpem famam, hiemem et aestatem iuxta pati, humi requiescere, eodem tempore inopiam et laborem tolerare.*

such things to us, men who find those things more pleasurable than banquets.²⁹⁸

Sall. *Iug.* 85.41.

Gender and ethnicity also come into play. The gendered aspect is familiar and straightforward: Marius claims that ‘elegance is becoming to women, but toil to men.’²⁹⁹ This seems to be another suggestion that luxury is stereotypically feminine, and endurance stereotypically masculine. However, Marius also targets his opprobrium towards Greeks and Roman philhellenists, shaming elite Romans who learn military skills only through Greek military manuals *after* they are elected supreme commander. He contrasts this with his own efforts in building up his knowledge practically, in the field, preceding his own election as consul.³⁰⁰ The unwarlikeness of Greeks is present here, just beneath the surface. Marius goes on to say that he did not study Greek literature himself – arguing that ‘it held no allure for me to study it since it had not promoted virtue in its teachers.’³⁰¹ He makes it abundantly clear in his speech that the only virtues worth having are those that foster personal warlikeness, and the quality of *patientia* above all. Moreover, Cicero echoes this sentiment when he argues that though Greeks are brave in illness, they are cannot endure war.³⁰² Both sources suggest that Greeks, like women, were thought not to exhibit the endurance required for warfare.

I have shown that training was an important concept in Roman literature. It was seen as a vital remedy for weakness and cowardice, things that they associated with women, but that a man could avoid by his endurance of hardship and toil. It is in this light that ‘Greek training’ ought to be considered. There are hints that Greeks were thought to be unwarlike, and have poor endurance, anyway, and so athletics

²⁹⁸ *Quin ergo quod iuvat, quod carum aestumant, id semper faciant: ament, potent; ubi adulescentiam habuere, ibi senectutem agant, in conviviis, dediti ventri et turpissumae parti corporis. Sudorem, pulverem et alia talia relinquunt nobis, quibus illa epulis iucundiora sunt.*

²⁹⁹ *nam ex parente meo et ex aliis sanctis viris ita accipi: munditias mulieribus, laborem viris convenire, Sall. Iug. 85.40.*

³⁰⁰ Sall. *Iug.* 85.12.

³⁰¹ *parum placebat eas discere, quippe quae ad virtutem doctoribus nihil profuerant, Sall. Iug. 85.32-33.*

³⁰² Cic. *Tusc.* 2.28. This is contrasted with ‘uncivilised barbarians’ (*barbari immanes*) who are brave in combat but are ‘unable to behave like men’ in sickness.

was possibly at risk of disparagement simply for being Greek. However, athletics was also categorised as leisure, and this fact that made it problematic in the eyes of Romans who thought that only hard training could foster warlikeness and endurance. If this is true, then one might expect to find suggestions in Roman literature that athletes had insufficient endurance. As I will now detail, this is exactly what we find.

The Lacklustre Endurance of Athletes

Poor endurance was usually expected of athletes. This sentiment was not unheard of in literature from Classical Athens, but Roman authors pounced upon the idea and gave it a new lease of life – probably due to a greater cultural valourisation of endurance, and a propensity to denigrate the warlikeness of Greeks in any case.³⁰³

The reason for this poor endurance usually revolved around the constant, unchanging environment of the *gymnasium*, and the activities undertaken there which pointlessly tired the body out instead of helping it to persevere. Plutarch articulates this position in his *Philopoemen*, having his titular Philopoemen (sometimes called ‘The Last of the Greeks’) reject an athletic lifestyle in favour of a military one.³⁰⁴ Plutarch says that, in his youth, Philopoemen was talented at both soldierly pursuits and wrestling. However, his advisers inform him that any serious attempt at becoming an athlete would be ‘injurious to his military training’:³⁰⁵

They told him (and it was the truth) that the habit of body
and mode of life for athlete and soldier were totally

³⁰³ Plato writes ‘Don’t you see these athletes sleeping all their lives, and if those who train do veer slightly from their daily routine they fall very seriously ill. [...] those who train for warfare need a more refined kind of training and, like dogs, must be unsleeping and have the keenest possible sight and hearing, and on their campaigns not be vulnerable in their health to changes in water and the rest of their food, and summer heat and winter storms.’, *Pl. Resp.* 3.404a-b.

³⁰⁴ Philopoemen was a Greek military leader who helped gain power for the Achaean league during the Hellenistic Era. Mainland Greece was conquered by the Romans not long after his death, hence the title. Incidentally, many of Plutarch’s *Lives* show hostility to athletics along similar grounds to those espoused by Latin authors in the centuries previous. Kyle argues that Plutarch preserves a Roman aristocratic bias that elites should patronise athletic and artistic performers but not become spectacles themselves, Kyle (2006) 228.

³⁰⁵ Plut. *Phil.* 3.2.

different, and particularly that their diet and training were not the same, since the one required much sleep, continuous surfeit of food, and fixed periods of activity and repose, in order to preserve or improve their condition, which the slightest influence or the least departure from routine is apt to change for the worse; whereas the soldier ought to be conversant with all sorts of irregularity and all sorts of inequality, and above all should accustom himself to endure lack of food easily, and as easily lack of sleep.³⁰⁶

Plut. *Phil.* 3.3-4.

This readily persuades Philopoemen, who shuns athletics for himself, and bans them for his soldiers 'with every possible mark of reproach and dishonour, on the ground that they rendered useless for the inevitable struggle of battle men who would otherwise be most serviceable.'³⁰⁷ This contrast of lifestyles goes some way to showing us how these practices were received by some authors: again, military training can lead to glory, whereas athletics, though superficially similar, produces incompetent, unenduring soldiers. This seems related to the predictable environment of the *gymnasium*. In addition, Plutarch actually interrupts his historical narrative to tell the audience that yes, Philopoemen was right to be worried, with an extraordinary narrator's intervention ('and it was the truth'.) This was clearly an important issue for Plutarch.

Discussions of the dietary practices of athletes are common in similar criticisms. For one other example, Celsus, the medical writer of the early first century CE, argues that one should keep a varied routine for diet and exercise, unlike athletes. He

³⁰⁶ τῶν δὲ φαμένων, ὅπερ ἦν, ἀθλητικὸν στρατιωτικὸν σῶμα καὶ βίον διαφέρειν τοῖς πᾶσι, μάλιστα δὲ διαίταν ἐτέραν καὶ ἄσκησιν εἶναι, τῶν μὲν ὕπνω τε πολλῶ καὶ πλησμοναῖς ἐνδελεχέσι καὶ κινήσει τεταγμέναις καὶ ἡσυχίαις αὐξόντων τε καὶ διαφυλαττόντων τὴν ἔξιν ὑπὸ πάσης ῥοπῆς καὶ παρεκβάσεως τοῦ συνήθους ἀκροσφαλῆ πρὸς μεταβολὴν οὔσαν, τὰ δὲ πάσης μὲν πλάνης ἔμπειρα καὶ πάσης ἀνωμαλίας προσῆκον εἶναι, μάλιστα δὲ φέρειν ῥαδίως μὲν ἔνδειαν εἰθισμένα, ῥαδίως δὲ ἀγρυπνίαν...

³⁰⁷ Plut. *Phil.* 3.4.

suggests that any break in the strict diet and exercise routines of athletes proves ‘injurious’ to them, and that athletes ‘age very quickly and become infirm’ because of their unvarying lifestyle.³⁰⁸ This shows that the themes that Plutarch discusses were already present in Roman writings a hundred years before – and that the constancy of exercise and food in athletes was not believed to result in bodily vigour.

Horace, active at a similar time to Celsus, gives some perspective on this in his *Satirae*:

After hunting the hare or wearily dismounting from an unbroken horse, or else, if Roman army-exercises are fatiguing to one used to Greek ways, it may be the swift ball takes your fancy, where the excitement softly (*molliter*) beguiles the hard toil, or it may be the discus (by all means hurl the discus through the yielding air) – well, when toil has knocked the daintiness out of you, when you are thirsty and hungry, despise, if you can, plain food; refuse to drink any mead, unless the honey is from Hymettus, and the wine from Falernum [...] So earn your sauce with hard exercise.³⁰⁹

Hor. *Sat.* 2.2.8-21.

A number of elements from this passage are relevant to my arguments here. Foremost is Horace’s statement that Roman military exercises might fatigue one used to Greek training methods – here explicitly stated where elsewhere it has been implicit. Horace suggests that athletics was a softly pleasant (*molliter*) form of exercise, a leisure activity that masks a physical workout. This idea is corroborated

³⁰⁸ *Sed ut huius generis exercitationes cibique necessariae sunt, sic athletici supervacui: nam et intermissus propter civiles aliquas necessitates ordo exercitationis corpus adfligit, et ea corpora, quae more eorum repleta sunt, celerrime et senescunt et aegrotant*, Celsus, *Med.* 1.1.3

³⁰⁹ *leporem sectatus equove | lassus ab indomito vel, si Romana fatigat | militia adsuetum graecari, seu pila velox | molliter austerum studio fallente laborem, | seu te discus agit (pete cedentem aëra disco) – | cum labor extuderit fastidia, siccus, inanis | sperne cibum vilem; nisi Hymettia mella Falerno | ne biberis diluta. [...] tu pulmentaria quaere sudando.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

by Fronto (second century CE), who praises the emperor Lucius Verus for the fact that ‘sweating under arms he minded as little as sweating at athletics’. This suggests that the former was considered to require more endurance than the latter.³¹⁰

However, Horace does not condemn soft exercise, or even luxurious food (which he seems to associate with it) as many other Roman authors do. This is probably related to the conventions of the genre, as Horace and a number of other Augustan poets are known for their celebration of love and luxury, often revelling in practices that more ‘moralising’ Roman authors criticise intensely as Eastern luxury – things like prostitution, adultery, wine, and fine clothes.³¹¹ Horace seems to be doing something similar here, recognising the criticisms regarding the endurance of athletes, but subversively and satirically playing them up. He associates athletics not only with leisure but also flat-out luxury, and with the kinds of rich foods and drinks that the Romans banned several times in Roman history.³¹² Horace surely knew that many of his fellow Roman authors criticised athletics and luxurious eating, and thought that they fostered negative qualities. For example, Cicero argues that even old women would be able to endure a day without food better than athletes. Indeed, he claims that they would cry out in pain were they forced to fast, because ‘the force of habit is great’.³¹³ Implicit is probably the suggestion that athletes, in a leisure environment, can exercise hard but then eat a lot to compensate, while soldiers, in contrast, may be deprived at any time in the field should their precarious supply lines fail.³¹⁴ I have already described the important passage from Suetonius whereby Pompey fears

³¹⁰ Fronto, *Princ. Hist.* 13.

³¹¹ Cf. Prop. 3.10, 4.8; Catull. 37, 62, 12, 50; Hor. *Odes* 3.19.25; G. Williams (1962); Griffin (1976); Feldherr (2007); Bowditch (2012) 124-28.

³¹² On sumptuary legislation, see Zanda (2011) 49-69. Livy writes ‘For the beginnings of foreign luxury were introduced into the City by the army from Asia. [...] the banquets themselves, moreover, began to be planned with both greater care and greater expense. At that time the cook, to the ancient Romans the most worthless of slaves, both in their judgment of values and in the use they made of him, began to have value, and what had been merely a necessary service came to be regarded as an art. Yet those things which were then looked upon as remarkable were hardly even the germs of the luxury to come.’, Livy 39.6.7-9.

³¹³ Cic. *Tusc.* 2.27.

³¹⁴ Ancient writers may not have had any notion of a modern scientific ‘calorie deficit’, but athletes would certainly have found themselves hungrier after a workout. It seems likely that this explains a preoccupation with the food of athletes in our extant literary sources, though, of course, soldiers would have experienced the same thing.

Caesar's army more because he believes they have gone hungry.³¹⁵ In this instance, the fact they are underfed only demonstrates their strong exhibition of *patientia*, which makes them far more dangerous.

However, it is not only food that is used to explain the supposed lack of endurance in athletes. Dio Chrysostom, a Greek author of the first century CE, cites the *gymnasium* as a place of extreme training, where training can tire bodies out and 'weaken' them.³¹⁶ The propensity of Roman authors to use 'sports metaphors' in the course of discussing other things can be useful to establish evidence for this belief. Cicero, for example, talks about how philosophy makes him 'toil and sweat', but, unlike athletics, it does not make him lose his bodily strength.³¹⁷ Plutarch uses a similar metaphor when describing the famous 'Fabian tactics' used during the Second Punic War, saying that Fabius sought to wear Hannibal out 'like an athlete whose bodily powers have been overtaxed and exhausted.'³¹⁸ It seems that Roman authors were reluctant to accept that permanent strength could be built via Greek athletics – indeed, they were more likely to attribute weakness and enervation as its end results. This is clear in Lucan's *De Bello Civili* when Caesar explains that Pompey's soldiers 'are hardly able to carry their weapons' because of their patronage of *gymnasia*.³¹⁹ Here we see that the expected outcome of Greek training was bodily weakness and corresponding unwarlikeness.

Climatic Endurance

The constancy of the environment of the *gymnasium* was also a regular feature in Roman criticisms of athletics. This is probably related to the idea that Roman soldiers should be expected to endure extremes of cold and heat. Countless times,

³¹⁵ Suet. *Iul.* 67-68. See above, 82.

³¹⁶ Dio Chrys. *Or.* 18.5-6. In fairness, Dio seems to argue that is amateurs at athletics who are more likely to be prone to this than veterans, an argument that seems to suggest athletes could build endurance themselves in the *gymnasium*.

³¹⁷ Cic. *Amic.* 38.

³¹⁸ Plut. *Fab. Max.* 19.

³¹⁹ Luc. 7.229. A questionable relationship with arms and armour is an orientalising trope in itself - I discuss this at length in my third chapter.

Roman authors laud the climatic endurance of military commanders, as in Livy's explanation of what made Hannibal so dangerous – his inexhaustibility, and his equal tolerance of 'heat and cold' even when sleeping outside in only a cloak.³²⁰ More often, a Roman commander's endurance is contrasted with that of his weak troops, such as when Scipio re-established discipline in Numantia partly by making his soldiers become 'accustomed to enduring cold and rain'.³²¹

A luxurious lifestyle was often blamed in soldiers who lacked climatic endurance.³²² One example can be found in Cicero's descriptions of Catiline's followers. Cicero questions how they will be able to endure 'the Appennines, the frost and snow? Unless perhaps they think that they will be able to make it through the winter more easily because they have learned how to dance nude at parties!'³²³ Here, their partying provides inadequate training for climatic extremes. In a similar vein, Cicero criticises the dissolute Verres for choosing Syracuse for his winter base for its temperate climate – and, nevertheless, still never being seen out of bed.³²⁴

Poor climatic endurance could be attributed to other enemies of Rome, but more often, it was Easterners accused of these failings.³²⁵ Syrians, in particular, seem prone to this in our sources, as is the case in Corbulo's reassertion of discipline described above. Corbulo finds Syrian legionaries dying of frostbite and exposure in the Armenian winter but impresses them with his Roman endurance, going about them lightly clothed and bare-headed.³²⁶ Fronto – in a passage that closely echoes Livy's

³²⁰ Livy 21.4.5–8.

³²¹ Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.1.

³²² The concept has primitivist associations, as Lucretius, for example, argues that the earliest humans (before they became morally degraded) were capable of great feats of climatic endurance, *Lucret.* 5.929–30.

³²³ *quo autem pacto illi Appenninum atque illas pruinas ac nivis perferent? nisi id circo se facilius hiemem toleraturos putant, quod nudi in conviviis saltare didicerunt*, Cic. *Cat.* 2.23.

³²⁴ Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.26.

³²⁵ Livy has the consul Vulso denigrate the Gauls to his troops, arguing that 'if you bear up under their first onset, into which they rush with glowing enthusiasm and blind passion, their limbs grow lax with sweat and weariness, their weapons fall from their hands; their soft bodies, their soft souls (when passion subsides) are overcome by sun, dust, thirst, so that you need not use arms against them.' (Emphasis my own.) The Gauls Vulso is about to fight are Hellenised 'Gallogreeks' who are presented as having lost their traditional Gallic warlikeness in their move east, and are presented in extremely orientalisising terms, *Livy* 38.17.7.

³²⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 13.35.

praising of Hannibal – praises the emperor Lucius Verus in similar terms. We are told he left ‘his head exposed to sun and shower and hail and snow, and unprotected even against missiles’ – a good example to the effeminate Syrians under his command.³²⁷ Tacitus, too, mentions the outrage of Syrian troops who clearly feel they will miss the luxury of the East after their reassignment to the wintry climes of Germany.³²⁸ Furthermore, Herodian has Severus compare his Pannonian troops, who ignore ‘heat and cold’ and ‘cross frozen rivers on the ice’ to the luxury-loving Syrian troops.³²⁹ This contrast of lifestyles – this time for Eastern Romans and Western Romans – is repeatedly used rhetorically to delineate appropriate lifestyles for Roman soldiers.

Harsh weather provided Roman authors with the opportunity to showcase the endurance of their principal characters. A passage from Lucan’s *De Bello Civili* is illustrative, as the Younger Cato is heroised in his continued struggle against Caesar despite no chance of success. As part of this commitment, he promises to endure the heat of Africa in the strongest terms possible:

...prepare your minds for a high feat of valour and for utmost hardships. We march towards barren plains and the furnace of the world, where the sun's heat is excessive and water is seldom found in the springs [...] I seek as my companions men who are attracted by the risks themselves, men who think it glorious and worthy of a Roman to endure even the worst, with me to watch them. [...] Serpents, thirst, burning sand – all are welcomed by

³²⁷ Fronto, *Ep. Pr.* 13, cf. Livy 21.4.5–8. Both sources mention simple eating, climatic endurance, the providing of a role model to troops, the ability to sleep in the field, and the fact that the subject earns sleep through toil.

³²⁸ Tac. *Hist.* 2.80.

³²⁹ Hdn. 2.10.6. The Pannonians were a Balkan people.

the brave; *patientia* finds pleasure in hardship; virtue
(*virtutis*) rejoices when it pays dear for its existence.³³⁰

Luc. 9.380-407.

Here Cato channels the spirit of his grandfather, Cato the Elder, evoking a spirit of steadfastness in the face of climatic adversity clearly meant to illustrate his resolve in the face of political and military disaster. He is seen as a great role model, and Lucan goes on to say that this display ‘fired their frightened hearts with courage and love of hardship (*amore laborum*)’.³³¹ These were the ideological expectations placed upon, and celebrated in, hardy Roman soldiers.

Crucially, climatic endurance was yet another area for which athletics was thought to be deficient training. For example, Quintilian uses athletics in an instructive metaphor for trainee orators, saying that those with beautiful, over-trained voices will break down if asked to undertake unusual exertion:

‘...just as people whose bodies are accustomed to the *gymnasia* and the oil-treatments, however handsome and strong they are in their specialized sport, would soon give up and ask for their masseurs and a chance to sweat naked, if you ordered them to march with the troops, carry a full pack, and do guard duties. It would surely be intolerable if, in a work like this, I recommended avoiding exposure to sun and wind, and even cloudy or dry

³³⁰ ...conponite mentes | Ad magnum virtutis opus summosque labores. | Vadimus in campos steriles exustaque mundi, | Qua nimius Titan et rarae in fontibus undae [...] | Hi mihi sint comites, quos ipsa pericula ducent, | Qui me teste pati vel quae tristissima pulchrum | Romanumque putant. [...] | Serpens, sitis, ardor harenae | Dulcia virtuti; gaudet patientia duris; | Laetius est, quotiens magno sibi constat, honestum.

³³¹ Luc. 9.406-07.

weather. Are we to abandon our clients if we have to speak on a sunny, windy, wet, or warm day?³³²

Quint. 11.3.26-7.

Here, Quintilian is only referring to athletes and soldiers in passing, as a useful metaphor for oratorical students. However, this is revealing for the ways in which athletes and soldiers were proverbially constructed. We can observe that the leisurely, unchanging environment and exercises are expected to leave the athlete unable to cope with novel pressures and environments – especially those associated with Roman military service. He clearly connects this rhetoric to that of climatic endurance – simply one other environmental hardship an orator (and Romans in general) ought to be able to endure.

The idea of shade is also prevalent within this rhetoric. I have already cited one important example, when Silius Italicus has Marcellus mock the Sicilian army for their love of ‘easy bouts of wrestling in the shade’ rather than true Roman military training. Given that Roman authors valorised those who could endure the summer heat without flinching, it makes sense that the concept of shade might become associated with those with poor climatic endurance. This is exactly what we find.

Livy illustrates the integration of shade into this wider rhetoric in a speech of Appius Claudius, ostensibly from the late fifth century BCE, but which arguably preserves symbolic associations that date to his own time:³³³

...and shall not we use in the stress of war the same powers of endurance (*patientiam*) which even play and pleasure (*lusus ac voluptas*) are wont to call out? Do we think the bodies of our soldiers so effeminate (*effeminate*),

³³² *Alioqui nitida illa et curata vox insolitum laborem recusabit, ut adsueta gymnasiis et oleo corpora, quamlibet sint in suis certaminibus speciosa atque robusta, si militare iter fascemque et vigiliis imperes, deficient et quaerant unctores suos nudumque sudorem. Illa quidem in hoc opere praecipere quis ferat, vitandos soles atque ventos et nubila etiam ac siccitates? Ita, si dicendum in sole aut ventoso umido calidior die fuerit, reos deseremus?*

³³³ This Appius Claudius was the grandson of the famous *decemvir* of 451 BCE, Appius Claudius Crassus.

their hearts so soft (*molles*), that they cannot endure to be one winter in camp, away from home; that like sailors they must wage war with an eye on the weather, observing the seasons, incapable of withstanding heat or cold? They would certainly blush if anyone should charge them with this, and would maintain that manly endurance (*virilem patientiam*) was in their souls and bodies, and that they could campaign as well in winter as in summer; that they had given the tribunes no commission to protect softness and idleness (*mollitiae inertiaeque*); and that they were mindful that their grandfathers had not founded the tribunician power in the shade or under roofs.³³⁴

Livy 5.6.3-5.

Here the perils of weak endurance are laid bare. The gendered rhetoric is strongly articulated: soldiers who cannot endure extreme weather are effeminate and soft – and he expects such accusations to be strongly refuted by masculine soldier types. His discussion of ‘play’ seems to have much in common with Horace’s sentiments that leisure can actually distract from bodily toil. The preceding passage, and the word used (*lusus*, from *ludo*, ‘to play’) however, may suggest he is mainly talking about hunting, so we should not necessarily take this as evidence that he considers athletes to have strong endurance. Instead, it’s probably intended as a subversive insult: a hyperbolic accusation that these Roman soldiers are so enervated that they have less endurance even than those at play. This corresponds to the common Roman argument that Roman warlikeness is being eroded by an increasing interest in pleasure and leisure.

³³⁴ *belli necessitatibus eam patientiam non adhibebimus quam vel lusus ac voluptas elicere solet? Adeone effeminata corpora militum nostrorum esse putamus, adeo molles animos, ut hiemem unam durare in castris, abesse ab domo non possint? Ut tamquam navale bellum tempestatibus captandis et observando tempore anni gerant, non aestus, non frigora pati possint? Erubescant profecto si quis eis haec obiciat, contendantque et animis et corporibus suis virilem patientiam inesse, et se iuxta hieme atque aestate bella gerere posse nec se patrocinium mollitiae inertiaeque mandasse tribunis, et meminisse hanc ipsam potestatem non in umbra nec in tectis maiores suos creasse.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

Livy's discussion of shade, however, requires further exploration. Shade is clearly being used as a symbol for those of weak endurance, as those hiding in shade or under cover are contrasted with the hardy soldier who exhibits *patientia* through his endurance of heat and cold. This is a contrast exploited by other authors, as the Younger Cato is praised in Lucan for never 'seeking the shade of trees' in the desert.³³⁵ In Roman literature, shade is commonly associated with both cowardly pacifism and effeminacy in general. Plautus, for example, has a soldier call his rival in love 'a curly-haired, shade-dwelling, tambourine-beating adulterer, a man of no value'.³³⁶ The fact that the accuser was a soldier, and therefore more masculine according to the ideological precepts I have discussed, presumably gave the insult greater force and ideological power. Plautus also elsewhere has a character mock another for their white skin, caused by *Mollitia urbana atque umbra*, 'soft urban luxury'.³³⁷ Ovid uses a similar ideological contrast when citing shade as one cause of his soft (*mollis*) lifestyle, and uses a plethora of martial metaphors to describe the masculinising force that brings him back around again.³³⁸ Celsus warns against over-exercise in most cases, but recommends a walk in the sun over other options: 'it is better to walk in the open air than under cover; better, when the head allows of it, *in the sun than in the shade*; better under the shade of a wall or of trees than under a roof.'³³⁹ Shade was a potent gendered symbol in Roman literature.

³³⁵ Luc. 9.398-99. Of course, no human being could survive for long in the desert without shade and water. The valourisation of endurance is extreme in Roman literature, and we should not expect Roman soldiers and commanders to have followed such 'rules' practically.

³³⁶ *moechum mala cum, cincinnatum, umbraticulum, tympanotribam amas, hominem non naucis?*, Plaut. *Truc.* 609-10, trans. Loeb, adapted. The charge of being a 'tambourine-beater' has strong Eastern connotations.

³³⁷ Plaut. *Vidul.* 36.

³³⁸ *Ov. Am.* 1.9.41-6. The actual cause is his desire for his beloved: 'I myself was sluggish (*segnis*) and born for unbuttoned leisure; bed and shade had softened (*mollierant*) my spirits; love for a beautiful girl gave a push to the lazy one (*ignauum*) and ordered me to earn my pay in her camp. Therefore you see me active and waging nightly wars: whoever doesn't want to be lazy, let him love.' A very similar point is made by Horace, who accuses a woman of effeminising her lover Sybaris by her 'passion', and in consequence her formerly martial partner now avoids the 'sunny *Campus [Martius]*' and instead wears women's clothes, *Hor. Carm.* 1.8.

³³⁹ *melior autem est sub divo quam in porticu; melior, si caput patitur, in sole quam in umbra, melior in umbra quam paries aut viridia efficiunt, quam quae tecto subest*, Celsus, *Med.* 1.2.6-7. Emphasis my own.

This is important, as shade-providing trees and porticoes were prominent in Greek and Roman *gymnasia*.³⁴⁰ This was certainly the case for Classical Athenian *gymnasia*, as attested in visual depictions on Attic vases, and indeed, Aristophanes actually makes it clear that athletes ran in the shade.³⁴¹ The kinds of *gymnasia* that took hold in the later periods in Greece, and in Rome, usually included both trees and covered porticoes, which protected from both sun and rain.³⁴² Indeed, the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum's *gymnasia* reveal both.³⁴³ In the first century CE there were sufficient trees in the Athenian Academy for Sulla to cut them down for use in his siege engines – it is tempting, but perhaps stretching the evidence too far, to assume some disrespect towards their function was meant.³⁴⁴ Roman authors were also clearly aware of the association of *gymnasia* and shade. For example, plane trees were so archetypically associated with *palaestrae* that Vitruvius recommended them to all constructing one.³⁴⁵ Tellingly, the Younger Pliny too states that his *gymnasium* was the most sheltered place in his house.³⁴⁶

The Elder Pliny writes at length about trees and shade in his *Naturalis Historia*, and particularly focuses upon the plane tree. He recognises that the plane tree was

³⁴⁰ Cf. Bowe (2011) 274-78.

³⁴¹ For visual evidence, see Bowe (2011) 274. Semple also records archaeological evidence, stating that 'The ground plans of gymnasia excavated at Delphi, Priene, Epidaurus, and Pergamum indicate that landscape gardens occupied the peristyle enclosures. Even prosaic Sparta located its wrestling ground in the Plane-Tree Grove on an island in the Eurotas River.', Semple (1929) 432. Aristophanes writes 'you shall go, and under the sacred olive trees you shall crown yourself with white reed and have a race with a decent boy your own age, fragrant with woodbine and carefree content, and the catkins flung by the poplar tree, luxuriating in spring's hour, when the plane tree whispers to the elm.', *Ar. Nub.* 1005-08. Plutarch, additionally, says that the Athenian Academy has 'clear running tracks and shady walks', *Plut. Cim.* 13.8.

³⁴² Kennell (2009) 327; Bowe (2011) 278.

³⁴³ Conticello (1990) 11, 29; Jashemski and Meyer (2002) 145; Bowe (2011) 278.

³⁴⁴ *App. Mith.* 5.30. Sulla had just completed a successful siege of Athens, whose tyrant had sided with his opponent Mithridates. During the siege, Sulla had shown impatience with Athenians who had attempted to persuade him with tales of their city's former glory. It is therefore possible that the cutting down of trees in a site so clearly connected to Athens' glorious past was intended as a signal to the Athenians. There is no suggestion in the sources, however, that Sulla did so because the trees cause shade (indeed, no human can survive the summer in Greece without shade, of course.)

³⁴⁵ *Vitr.* 5.11.4. Although he previously says 'the building of the palaestra is not a usual thing in Italy...It [still] seems good therefore to explain it and show how the palaestra is planned among the Greeks...' he was only just ahead of his time: *palaestrae* soon became a common feature of private Roman palaces, 5.11.1.

³⁴⁶ *Plin. Ep.* 2.17.6-8.

associated with *gymnasia*, saying they first adorned the palace of the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius, and remained when it was converted into a *gymnasium*. The connection with Greek rulers is interesting, but actually connections are present with Persian kings too, as plane trees were a ‘quintessentially Asian tree’, Ann Kuttner states.³⁴⁷ Demonstrating an association with Persian luxury, the Lydian Pythios apparently gave his father Daruis a solid gold plane tree adorned with vines, and Xerxes was known to have a gold-ornamented plane tree, to which he granted a royal guard.³⁴⁸ In fact, Xerxes was said to have gone further, honouring a plane as if it were a female lover.³⁴⁹ The plane trees of the *gymnasium* therefore had clear and precise associations with eastern luxury.

Both Kuttner and Laurence Totelin have argued that Roman authors were aware of the arboreal inclinations of Eastern rulers, and were happy to interact with these associations in ways that which promoted themselves and their ideals. This often involved the parade of native Eastern trees in triumphs over Eastern peoples – a device useful for representing geographical regions, according to Totelin, because of the idea of ‘roots’ which tie a plant to its locality. Leading trees sacred to particular rulers in triumph was also a statement of Roman power and the subjection of said rulers: this seems to be the case for the balsam trees led in triumph of Vespasian and Titus over the Jews, where Totelin notes the trees are literally called slaves.³⁵⁰ In a similar vein, plane trees were a very prominent feature of the portico gardens of Pompey the Great, which celebrated learned Greek women, and which for Kuttner demonstrated the ‘configuration of intellectual activity as almost entirely female, as opposed to war and politics as male, and of Greekness itself as feminine in relation to Romanness as masculine.’³⁵¹ A poem of Propertius particularly highlights the shade the trees provide, and Kuttner also notes the similarity of a gold-plated

³⁴⁷ Kuttner (1999) 347.

³⁴⁸ Hdt. 7.3.1, 7.27.1.

³⁴⁹ Ael. *VH* 2.14, cf. Ael. *VH* 9.39; Hdt. 7.31.

³⁵⁰ Totelin (2012) 122, citing Plin. *HN* 12.112.

³⁵¹ Kuttner (1999) 349.

pyramid covered in vines said to be at the triumph with the story of Pythios' solid gold vined plane tree.³⁵²

Plane trees had further Eastern, effeminate associations. Pliny goes on to say the plane was popularised in Rome under an 'extremely wealthy' Thessalian eunuch, and Pliny importantly labels the import of these trees a 'vice' (*vitium*) because the only purpose of the tree is undesirable – 'warding off the sun in summer and admitting it in winter.'³⁵³ Eunuchs were associated with Eastern luxury, being more common in societies around the Middle East and Egypt, and especially in royal courts; they were also associated strongly with effeminacy due to their lack of male genitalia. Pliny clearly connects shade and plane trees to this rhetoric here. The eunuchs that represented the greatest Roman fear were the Galli, the Phrygian eunuch priests of Cybele (also known as *Magna Mater*) who castrated themselves intentionally, wore female clothes, and were associated with other effeminate behaviours, such as music playing.³⁵⁴

This all stands in great contrast to the positive connotations of the endurance of sun in Roman literature. Indeed, instead of the shady relief of the *gymnasium* or *palaestra*, the *Campus Martius* where Romans trained is described as sunny by Horace, and Varro states that the oppressive heat there was unbearable.³⁵⁵ The Romans clearly associated the trees and porticoes of the *gymnasium* with shade, and shade was a

³⁵² Prop. 2.32.7-16; cf. Kuttner (1999) 367. Kuttner also notes that 'when fighting Pompey soon afterward, Caesar planted a Dionysiac, vine-draped plane tree in a noble house in Spain, which is represented as an anti-Pompeian planting by the later poet of the *Porticus*, Martial', 367, citing Mart. 9.61.15-22.

³⁵³ Plin. *HN* 12.2-5.

³⁵⁴ Their negative representation in Roman literature is so strong that Shaun Tougher suggests their construction may have negatively influenced Roman attitudes to eunuchs in general, rather than the other way around, Tougher (2013) 52. They were particularly associated with transvestism (especially with bright clothing), womanising and sexual deviancy – exactly the kinds of behaviours our Roman authors associated with rampant effeminacy, cf. Catull. 63; Juv. 6.511-16; Suet. *Aug.* 68; Dion. Hali. 2.19.5-5; Mart. 3.81, 5.41; Lucr. 2.600-80 *Ov. Fast.* 4.179-37, *Met.* 3.531-37. A passage from Juvenal is illustrative for Roman attitudes to the Galli, and eunuchs in general. Complaining about effeminate, self-beautifying Roman men, he asks 'What are they waiting for? It's already time for them to use their knives to hack away their redundant "meat" in the Phrygian manner.', Juv. 2.115-16, Trans. Loeb, adapted. This suggests eunuchism could be seen as a kind of 'end game' in male effeminacy. For the Galli, see. Roscoe (1996); Roller (1997); Roller (1999) 292-309; Lightfoot (2002); Latham (2012); Tougher (2013) 51-54.

³⁵⁵ Hor. *Ars P.* 156-78; Varro, *Rust.* 3.2.1.

powerful symbol in Roman literature for those who could not endure. Additionally, the principal provider of shade in these localities happened to be a tree useless for anything else, and a favourite of opulent and effeminate Eastern rulers. This surely could not help but provide yet more ideological ammunition to those Romans who already sought to problematise Greek training.

Conclusions

I have shown that the connotations of military training in Roman literature went far beyond the practical realm of skills acquisition, and became imbued with moral and gendered significance. This fact – that military training was equated and conflated with the construction of masculinity – is the reason why ‘training rhetoric’ became used so extensively by our extant authors, who were often obsessed with these themes. This baseline argument, in a snap, provides an explanation for Roman criticisms of athletics. I have shown that Roman ideas of military training strongly valourised the endurance of hardship and suffering, and also that ‘Greek training’ – athletics – was instead considered an easy, luxurious leisure practice that was often listed with other such things. This is what made the designation of athletics as unwarlike and effeminate so easy, as only hard training was thought to produce warlikeness. Easy training could therefore only really produce effeminacy.

Endurance was a crucial facet of both Roman warlikeness and masculinity, and a crucial ‘test’ for my argument was whether athletes were thought to have high or low endurance. The evidence emphatically supports the idea that athletes had poor endurance, at great odds with the ideal of the Roman soldier. Indeed, the *gymnasium* was thought to have a constant and shady climate, which contrasted strongly with valourised military ideals. I argue that criticisms of athletics were based principally on a worldview that separated people and peoples into the categories of warlike and unwarlike. In this way, the criticism of athletics fits very firmly into my wider *schema* regarding the military underpinnings of orientalist rhetoric. This has not been recognised enough in the literature of this topic.

I have shown that gender was important for the reception of athletics in Roman literature. However, I have yet to discuss three important and related aspects to this association: pederasty, nudity, and self-beautification. These aspects were celebrated to varying extents in Greek athletic culture but were problematised more often by Roman authors. In the next chapter, I will seek to explain why this might have been the case, and how discussions of these particular aspects interacted with wider criticisms of athletics.

Training Orientalism II:

Nudity, sex and gender

I have discussed the ideological background connecting ideas of training to endurance in my first chapter. In doing so, I have shown that Roman authors had extensive justifications for their criticisms of athletics without explicit reference to sexuality. This is important to state, as although sexual explanations are an important part of the overall picture, they also have the potential to blinker the discussion of athletics. Indeed, this has been the case for discussions of Greek pederasty, and it has been all too easy to dismiss criticisms of Greek athletics as part of an essentially homophobic attitude on the part of Roman critics. I argue that sexuality does not define the criticism of athletics – instead, it is an important part of the cohesive whole, and deserves discussion at this stage, with a fuller understanding of the wider ideological context. Delving more deeply into the primary material, I argue that the specifically *military* consequences of pederasty were usually a focus for Roman authors. In other words, sexual criticisms of these acts actually fit into my wider schema of ‘military-orientalist’ rhetoric.

The concept of nudity must also be carefully considered. Our extant sources respond to nudity with a generally negative attitude, but though this often went together with sexual criticisms where athletics was concerned, there is also evidence that nudity was considered an immoral state without explicit reference to sexuality. Nudity, therefore, also benefits from an initial discussion in isolation from sexuality. These connotations – even outside the realm of sexuality – were also held to have military consequences, and contributed yet further to the unwarlike image of Greeks and athletes.

Nudity and the Greeks

Nudity is the iconic modern symbol of Greek athletics, and was no less ideologically important within ancient Greek athletic culture. Indeed, the Greek term *gymnasion*

(γυμνάσιον) comes from the word γυμνός, meaning ‘naked’.³⁵⁶ The celebration of male nudity was, therefore, a notable and remarkable feature of Greek athletics. In Classical Athens, the athletic male body was a symbol of beauty, and was also thought to signify excellence in spirit – both were denoted with the adjective κάλος. Conversely, ugliness was thought to correspond with moral repugnance.³⁵⁷ Various origins for athletic nudity have been suggested, but many modern authors have found ancient suggestions – often involving the accidental loss of *zoma* loincloths – unconvincing explanations for a tradition which broke step with elsewhere in the ancient world.³⁵⁸ Modern suggestions have stressed apotropaic, religious and/or sexual involvement in the practice, and Jean Paul Thuillier has even argued that nudity was only an artistic ideal, not followed in practice regularly until life imitated art at a later stage.³⁵⁹ Whatever the source, the practice was uniquely Greek, and in the Classical period, nudity could therefore be used as a cultural distinction that could separate barbarian and Greek, as David Potter argues.³⁶⁰ Greek authors were aware of the peculiarity of their athletic nudity, as shown when Herodotus has a Persian scout marvel at the naked Spartans on the eve of Thermopylae.³⁶¹ Xenophon, the Classical Athenian military writer, also shows that this could be a source of ethnic pride:

So when his soldiers saw them [captured Lydian soldiers],
white because they never stripped, and fat and lazy

³⁵⁶ γυμνός could also refer to the state of being inappropriately clad – or even ‘unarmed’, cf. Hom. *Il.* 16.815; Thuc. 3.23, 5.10.71, Pind. *Pyth.* 11.49; Bonfante (1989) 547.

³⁵⁷ Scanlon (2002) 205, citing the example of Thersites at Hom. *Il.* 2.212-19.

³⁵⁸ Thuc. 1.5.6; Dion. Hali. 7.72.3; Paus. 1.44.1.

³⁵⁹ Apotropaic function: Mouratidis (1985); contra. Golden (1998) 68. Religious function: Sansone (1992) 110-11; Bonfante (1989) esp. 550-51; Sexual function: Scanlon (2002) 96; M. Lee (2015) 179; Artistic ideal: Thuillier (1988).

³⁶⁰ Potter (2011) 77.

³⁶¹ Hdt. 7.208.3. Herodotus also writes ‘...since among the Lydians and most of the foreign peoples it is felt as a great shame that even a man be seen naked.’, Hdt. 1.10; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 5.452c.

through constant riding in carriages, they believed that the war would be exactly like fighting with women.³⁶²

Xen. *Ages.* 1.27-8.

This source is remarkable for several reasons. Not least is the closeness of the gendered rhetoric about ‘fighting mere women’ to Roman sources we have already seen, showing a similar propensity to gender warlikeness. Here we are reminded that Classical Greek authors also engaged in orientalist discourses which constructed ‘Easterners’ along similar lines to Roman authors.³⁶³ However, a crucial difference to Roman ideology is clearly exhibited here, as nudity and athletics are celebrated as masculinising activities; things which makes a soldier more warlike than his non-athletic, enervated opponents. Roman discussions of nudity were much more likely to be critical, and to integrate these themes strongly into the kinds of orientalist discourse I have already discussed.

Roman Athletic Nudity

Firstly, some historical context is required. The Romans were not suddenly exposed to Greek athletics upon their conquest of the East, but instead this was more gradual, in keeping with their general exposure to Hellenistic culture from an early date. Rome’s more Hellenised neighbours, the Etruscans, practised nude athletics, including boxing, running and wrestling in the sixth century BCE, but the use of loincloths and shorts is also attested.³⁶⁴ It seems nudity there became more popular over time, into the fifth century.³⁶⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus dates Rome’s first athletic games to 499 BCE, and specifically notes that these were performed clothed. Indeed, he states that the Romans still exercised clothed to his own day (at least 7 BCE).³⁶⁶ Several scholars have argued that his early date for Rome’s first games is

³⁶² ὄρωντες οὖν οἱ στρατιῶται λευκοὺς μὲν διὰ τὸ μηδέποτε ἐκδύεσθαι, πίονας δὲ καὶ ἀπόνους διὰ τὸ ἀεὶ ἐπ’ ὀχημάτων εἶναι ἐνόμισαν μηδὲν διοίσειν τὸν πόλεμον ἢ εἰ γυναίξει δέοι μάχεσθαι.

³⁶³ This ‘East’ was envisioned further east than for the Romans, naturally.

³⁶⁴ Crowther (1980) 119; Potter (2011) 180; cf. Thuillier (1985); Bevagna (2013).

³⁶⁵ Crowther (1980) 120.

³⁶⁶ Dion. Hal. 7.73.3-4.

erroneous, suggesting an origin in the third century instead, though this is an area of some debate.³⁶⁷ His downplaying of Roman athletic nudity may have suited his purpose of linking the Romans to the true, Homeric Greeks, who exercised in loincloths.³⁶⁸

Otherwise, the evidence for nude athletes at Rome is patchy, but seems to show an increase from the Middle Republic into the Imperial period. There is evidence of Romans competing at games in Greece – at the Isthmian games of 228 BCE, for example – and presumably they competed naked there.³⁶⁹ These developments perhaps took a little longer in Rome itself, however. Further Greek games are attested by Livy in Rome in 186 BCE, organised by a famous philhellene, Fulvius Nobilior, but he does not mention the clothing of the athletes.³⁷⁰ Sulla organised games in 80 BCE, and there is some plausible numismatic evidence that the Greek athletes competed naked but again, this is not attested in literary evidence.³⁷¹

Augustus held athletic games in 13 BCE, and banned women from them. Christopher Hallett has suggested that this may have been due to nudity, as Augustus allowed women to the gladiatorial games, but perhaps as a Greek import associated with luxury and leisure he simply deemed them inherently immoral.³⁷² However, evidence becomes far stronger later into the Early Imperial period, as Tacitus strongly links public athletic spectacle and nudity in his criticisms of Nero's *Neronia* games, but the evidence is not wholly unambiguous.³⁷³ Thereafter, however, it tends

³⁶⁷ Erroneous dating: Ogilvie (1970) 149; Crowther (1980) 120; Kyle (2006) 275. However, Eric Orlin argues in favour of the historicity of late sixth-century *ludi Romani*, Orlin (2010) 140.

³⁶⁸ Hom. *Il.* 23.685.

³⁶⁹ Polyb. 2.12.8.

³⁷⁰ Livy 39.22.1-2. The games involved a juxtaposition of athletic events with wild animal gladiatorial shows; König argues that early Roman athletic events involving Greek athletes often involved a similar 'significant distortion of traditional Greek practice', König (2005) 216.

³⁷¹ Numismatic evidence: The coins date to eight years later, in 72 BCE, Hallett (2005) 69. Sulla so monopolised athletes from Greece that there were only enough at Olympia that year to do a single race, App. *B. Civ.* 1.99. Crowther discusses the literary evidence, Crowther (1980) 121.

³⁷² Suet. *Aug.* 43.1; Strabo 5.3.8; Hallett (2005) 69. Augustus, after all, did sentence some men to death for appearing nude in front of his wife Livia, Cass. Dio 58.2.4. One does not have to assume they were athletes, as Hallett does, for it to lend credence to the idea that Augustus disapproved of male nudity in front of women.

³⁷³ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20. He presents public athletic nudity as a hyperbolic next step which Nero may force young elites to undertake – he does not however specifically say that athletic games were undertaken

to be assumed in the literature that athletes performed naked – for example, Martial (first century CE) expects nudity in the *Gymnasium*, *thermae* and the *stadium*.³⁷⁴

Such was the rise of athletic games in Rome. However, aside from these institutional spectacles, it seems that private, personal interest in athletic culture also arose among Romans – though perhaps only a little later, when public nudity at the spectacles was starting to become the norm. At the end of the Republic it was becoming popular for elite houses to contain *palaestrae*, as Cicero makes clear in his letters. In one, he suggests that a *palaestra* would improve his brother's house, and in another he carefully discusses statues to be placed in his own, in order to 'simulate *gymnasia*' in his own home.³⁷⁵ Varro, a contemporary author, complains about this current fashion:

These days, one *gymnasium* is hardly enough, and they do not think they have a real villa unless it rings with many resounding Greek names – places called *procoetion*, *palaestra*, *apodyterion*...³⁷⁶

Varro, *Rust.* 2.1.

As Amy Russell argues, Romans 'associated the cultural practices of the gymnasium not with public, but with private life.'³⁷⁷ These included things like exercise and, more so, philosophy, which elite Romans associated with domestic life. Indeed, Cicero named his own *gymnasium* the Lyceum, after Aristotle's famous school, and it contained a library.³⁷⁸ We should probably see the *gymnasia* and *palaestrae* of Roman houses as private places of learning, above and beyond places for Greek athletic exercise.

naked in this era, cf. Lovatt (2005) 42. Crowther, in contrast argues that the evidence points unambiguously to athletic nudity for the period, Crowther (1980) 121.

³⁷⁴ Mart. 3.68.3-4, cf. Crowther (1980) 121.

³⁷⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 3.1.3; 7.23.2; cf. 3.7.7.

³⁷⁶ *Quae nunc vix satis singula sunt, nec putant se habere villam, si non multis vocabulis retinniat Graecis, quom vocent particulatim loca, procoetona, palaestram, apodyterion...* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

³⁷⁷ Russell (2015) 14.

³⁷⁸ Cic. *Div.* 2.5.8, cf. Plin. *Ep.* 17.7.

The lines separating bathing establishments and *gymnasia* also became blurred in this period. Bathing had always formed a part of the regimen at *gymnasia*, but in the Hellenistic period the diversification of *gymnasia* also led to far more extensive bathing facilities.³⁷⁹ Indeed, Fikret Yegül argues that the bathing practices of the Greeks had an strong influence upon the Roman tradition.³⁸⁰ During the Late Republic and Early Imperial period, baths almost always included *palaestra* for light exercise, and distinctions between the two types of institution started to erode during this period.³⁸¹ Yegül shows how several different authors referred to Nero's bath-gymnasium complex interchangeably as a *gymnasium* or *therma*, showing conflation by this era.³⁸² Indeed, Martial twice describes how close the bathing and athletics sections were at a baths.³⁸³ Archaeological remains also show a convergence of these building types in both the East and West from this time.

Evidence also shows that athletics was of increasing personal interest to elite Romans. Authors in the late first century talk of personal athletic trainers, and visual evidence from Roman sarcophagi from the second century show athletic scenes.³⁸⁴ Zahra Newby argues that 'both literary and visual evidence thus suggest a gradual increase in Greek-style athletic training throughout the period of the first three centuries CE.'³⁸⁵ It is difficult to be certain whether Romans interested in athletics exercised naked themselves – Martial hints that he did himself – but Roman authors do strongly and unambiguously associate nudity and athletics in general.³⁸⁶ This was a problematic association, as I will relay in the next section.

³⁷⁹ 'During the Hellenistic period the renovation of gymnasia to include facilities for hot bathing spread like an epidemic across the eastern Mediterranean', Yegül (1995) 23.

³⁸⁰ Yegül (1995) 7.

³⁸¹ Yegül argues that this only took place after exposure to Greek athletics, Yegül (1995) 55. Vitruvius argues that *palaestra* were not usual features of Italian cities, but he conceives of the building as a separate entity, and not connected to a bath complex or private house, Vitr. 5.11.1. It is possible he was referring only to separate buildings.

³⁸² Yegül (1995) 138, citing Suet. *Ner.* 12.27; Tac. *Ann.* 14.47; Cass. Dio 62.21; Mart. 7.34.

³⁸³ Martial states that athletes were close enough to be watched by those bathing, 1.96.10-13; cf. Mart. 3.68.

³⁸⁴ Trainers: Mart. 7.67; Juv. 3.68, 3.76; Plin. *Pan.* 13.5; Petron. *Sat.* 29; cf. Bond (2015) 394-97.

Sarcophagi: Newby (2005) 24. Pliny discusses depictions of wrestlers in private anointing-rooms, Plin. *HN* 35.2.

³⁸⁵ Newby (2005) 42. For an overview of the rise of athletics in Rome, see H. Lee (2013).

³⁸⁶ Mart. 1.96.10-13, 3.68.

Roman Criticisms of Nudity

The nudity of athletes is important because nudity was considered an immoral state of being in Roman literature. This once again placed athletics ideologically at odds with Roman military training, which was strongly associated with virtue.

The negative associations of (public) nudity can be observed in Roman invective. Cicero – who provides our largest corpus of Roman invective – uses this theme regularly, most often juxtaposed with other types of immoral excess. Particularly notable examples occur in his criticisms of Marc Antony’s conduct in an incident where the politician allegedly gave a public speech and tried to place a diadem upon Caesar’s head, naked and drunk. Cicero returns to the tale repeatedly throughout his *Philippicae* – quite uncharitably, in this instance, as Marc Antony was giving his speech at the Lupercalia festival in which nudity was an expected feature of social reversal.³⁸⁷ Cicero nevertheless must have seen his nudity as a pressure point in light of the attitudes of the Roman public. In another case, Cicero may have found himself defending a client, King Deiotarus of Galatia, on a very similar charge, but in that case Cicero denies the event without trying to defend it, further suggesting nudity was disapproved of. Indeed, he defends the king, accused of dancing naked and drunk at a banquet, by stressing his sobriety and morality – factors which precluded the event from ever actually occurring.³⁸⁸ Roman authors clearly considered nudity to be an immoral state, expected in dissolute individuals, but not in upstanding ones.

Of course, one great Roman institution – the baths – involved nudity. Can the Romans have really held such negative attitudes towards nudity, in that case? The question is difficult to answer, because different types of evidence tend to paint very different pictures of bathing. However, negative responses towards bathing can

³⁸⁷ *Philippicae*: Cic. *Phil.* 2.86, 3.12, 13.31. Lupercalia: Livy 1.1.5; Just. *Epit.* 43.1.7; Ov. *Fast.* 2.267-380; Dion. Hal. 1.80. The Latin *nudus* probably didn’t always refer to full nudity, either, but perhaps also to simple toplessness, cf. Sturtevant (1912); Fagan (2002) 24-25; Graf (2015) 165.

³⁸⁸ Cic. *Deiot.* 26.

certainly be found. For example, fathers were apparently not permitted to bathe with their sons, and mixed-sex bathing, though well attested, was also criticised.³⁸⁹ These show some concern with the nudity of bathers. The great *thermae* bath complexes were depicted as very luxurious (and the archaeology attests to their splendour), and the use of baths was thought to affect the discipline of soldiers negatively.³⁹⁰ As with athletics, some tension between literary moralising and reality is clearly involved: Hadrian's banning of mixed-sex bathing, for example, shows perhaps that this was both widespread, and problematic, at the same time.³⁹¹

However, there were also some important differences between the nudity of the *gymnasium* and the *thermae*. For example, it seems nudity was not a prerequisite for bathing, as coverings and bathrobes are attested.³⁹² This is especially the case for exercises outside, in the bath *palaestra*, which suggests that the baths, though technically public, provided a more private atmosphere than Greek *gymnasia* where athletes ran and wrestled naked outside.³⁹³ More fundamentally, the exercises undertaken at baths were very light, and were probably only undertaken as a prelude to bathing.³⁹⁴ Bathing never claimed to involve anything other than *otium*, whereas *gymnasia* claimed to be schools of excellence and – in the Roman mind at least – have a pseudo-military function.

It is important to note that nudity among and in front of the young was deemed particularly problematic. For example, the famous moralist Cato stated that he never

³⁸⁹ Father/son bathing: Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20; Cic. *Off.* 1.129; Val. Max. 2.1.7. Mixed-sex bathing: Vitr. 5.10.1; Varro 9.41.68; CIL 2.5.181.

³⁹⁰ Luxurious *thermae* complexes: The Younger Seneca compares the great baths of his day, decked out with Alexandrian marble, with the austere baths of the days of the Scipiones, Sen. *Ep.* 86; cf. Suet. *Calig* 37.2. Fagan (2002) 176; Yegül (2013) 16. Baths and military discipline: Plut. *Luc.* 7.5; *Alex.* 20.10-12; Cass. Dio 27.94.2.

³⁹¹ CIL 2.5.181. Fagan also notes, regarding arguments that baths caused ill-discipline in soldiers, that 'Despite this widely attested belief among ancient writers, bathhouses fully equipped with heated sections are found attached to Roman military installations of all kinds, from Syria to Scotland. The opinions of certain members of the elite cannot therefore be used to circumscribe mass behavior', Fagan (2002) 214.

³⁹² This is not to deny that nudity was a feature of Roman bathing. Martial's vivid descriptions of genitalia attest to the fact that some bathers at some baths were certainly nude.

³⁹³ Mart. 7.67, 4.19.

³⁹⁴ Yegül (2013) 18-19. It seems bathing and light exercise were advocated in terms of preventive medicine, Celsus, *Med.* 1.2.6-7; cf. Yegül (2013) 17; Bond (2015) 397-99.

bathed nude among his sons, and Cicero and Valerius Maximus actually suggest that this was a general rule for Roman men.³⁹⁵ 'Lewd' nudity in front of the young was sanctioned even more harshly, as Cicero shows in his famous prosecution of the Sicilian governor Gaius Verres, claiming that that Verres' associate Apronius danced naked at a party in front of Verres' young son.³⁹⁶ Similarly, Cicero accuses Catiline of corrupting *pueri* (boys) so much that they 'danced naked at parties' too.³⁹⁷ Issues of morality were always heightened in Roman rhetoric regarding the young, so criticism along these lines is perhaps not altogether surprising.³⁹⁸ The clothing of children also seems important, as prepubescent, elite children wore a special kind of toga, the *toga praetexta*, which according to Judith Sebesta served a kind of symbolic, apotropaic function, protecting the wearer from moral and sexual danger.³⁹⁹ Lewd behaviour (like nudity) in front of the young *praetextati* was, therefore, heavily censured. This seems to be the line which Apronius crosses, as he is shamefully violating a boy described as *praetextato*.⁴⁰⁰ Athletes were usually expected to be *iuvenes* – young men – and thus were presumably considered particularly at risk for the immoral dangers associated with nudity.⁴⁰¹ This is yet another aggravating factor for the reception of athletics at Rome.

The moral rhetoric regarding nudity also interacted with militaristic ideology. The Elder Pliny does this when discussing silk. He states that a woman named Pamphile, who 'devised a plan to reduce women's clothing to nakedness', invented silk on the Greek isle of Cos.⁴⁰² He goes on to argue this Eastern novelty has had a deleterious impact upon Roman men, as well:

³⁹⁵ Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20; Cic. *Off.* 1.129; Val. Max. 2.1.7.

³⁹⁶ Cic. *Verr.* 2.23.

³⁹⁷ Cic. *Cat.* 2.23.

³⁹⁸ This is the principle argument of my unpublished Masters dissertation, cf. McAvoy (2012).

³⁹⁹ Sebesta (2005); cf. Harlow and Laurence (2002) 169.

⁴⁰⁰ Sebesta recognises the religious connotations of the garment – it was also worn by Vestal Virgins, priests and magistrates – and these religious connotations probably heightened the moral force, Sebesta (2005) 116. Indeed, Valerius Maximus considered it especially bad for one to be naked in a consecrated place, 2.1.7.

⁴⁰¹ Cic. *Inv. Rhet.* 1-2; *Rep.* 4.4; Plut. *Mor.* 751-52; Quint. 1.12.19; Tac. *Ann.* 14.20; Verg. *Aen.* 7.161-64.

⁴⁰² *non fraudanda gloria excogitatae rationis ut denudet feminas vestis*, Plin. *HN* 11.27.78.

Nor have even men been ashamed to make use of these dresses, because of their lightness in summer. Our habits have departed so far from wearing a leather cuirass that even a robe is considered a burden.⁴⁰³

Plin. *HN* 11.27.78.

This particular luxury, like many others, is an Eastern import. However, Pliny specifies why he thinks it is immoral: because the purpose of silk garments was to make women – and even men – closer to nakedness. This clearly describes silk as a kind of feminine luxury which seeps into even men’s lives, and takes them, symbolically, further away from their rightful place performing military duties in military cuirasses. Worse still, men apparently make this sartorial choice for reasons of climatic comfort in summer – so they lack endurance too. Silk, therefore, steals men away from rightful warlikeness, and women away from sexual modesty, via a kind of pseudo-nudity.⁴⁰⁴

Juvenal argues along similar lines. He criticises a lawyer who wears gauzy feminine clothing while pleading legal cases in the forum, again for climatic reasons. Juvenal argues hyperbolically that in this instance nudity would have been preferable, even if the idea was ‘insane’ (*insania*).⁴⁰⁵ He even stops to imagine what an audience ‘consisting of the populace fresh from victory with their wounds still raw’ would think if exposed to a nude or pseudo-nude advocate in the forum. This clearly contrasts effeminate and warlike lifestyles.⁴⁰⁶

Nudity in the forum would be insane because the toga (the *praetexta* included) was imbued with significant civic meaning.⁴⁰⁷ The rejection of these sartorial symbols, therefore, indicated a rejection of the ideals it signified. The special focus upon the

⁴⁰³ *nec puduit has vestes usurpare etiam viros levitatem propter aestivam: in tantum a lorica gerenda discessere mores ut oneri sit etiam vestis.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁴⁰⁴ Similarly, the Younger Seneca writes ‘I see there raiments of silk – if that can be called raiment, which provides nothing that could possibly afford protection for the body, or indeed modesty, so that, when a woman wears it, she can scarcely, with a clear conscience, swear that she is not naked.’, *Sen. Ben.* 7.9.5.

⁴⁰⁵ *Juv.* 2.71-72.

⁴⁰⁶ *Juv.* 2.73-74.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Stone (1994); Heskell (1994); George (2008); Edmondson (2009).

nudity of elite magistrates, and those who are naked in front of elite ‘praetextate’ children in our sources, show that status was clearly at stake when clothes were disregarded. Christian Mann explains this by positing a ‘radically different relationship’ with the (male) body in the public sphere in Roman culture than in Greek. He argues that, in Greek culture, a strong male physique was an important indicator of superiority and leadership, fundamental to *aretê*, while physical weakness was shamed.⁴⁰⁸ In Roman society, on the other hand, it was ‘not the body itself but symbols worn on the body that conveyed rank and differentiation’.⁴⁰⁹ This can be seen manifested in the *toga praetexta* of children and magistrates, the *stola* of married women, and the gold rings of elite men.⁴¹⁰ The absence of these status symbols upon the nude body was thus actually tantamount to a declaration of low status. As I will articulate below, nudity was strongly associated with slaves and criminals.

Christian Mann has also recognised that Roman criticisms of athletics tended to concentrate on two areas: ‘athletic nudity’ and ‘participation by members of the elite’.⁴¹¹ However, the two phenomena are probably more related than he anticipates: research has shown that both public nudity and performance in general were generally elided in Roman moralising conception, as argued by Catharine Edwards in her *The Politics of Immorality in Republican Rome*. Edwards argues that professionals who placed themselves on display were equated with prostitutes, as they provided enjoyment to others via their visual exposure – something which was considered degrading. Actors and gladiators were reviled and politically subjugated for this reason.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Mann (2014) 175-76.

⁴⁰⁹ Mann (2014) 176.

⁴¹⁰ *Toga praetexta*: Sebesta (2005). *Stola*: Sebesta (1994). Gold rings: Livy 9.7.9, 9.46.12, 23.12.1-2; cf. Stout (1994) 77-78. It seems that non-elite freeborn men wore an iron ring, App. *Pun.* 104.

⁴¹¹ Mann (2014) 151.

⁴¹² Edwards (1993) 98-136; Edwards (1997). For Actors, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 114.46; Gell. 1.5.2-3; Hor. *Ars P.* 275-94; *Epist.* 2.1.93-102; Nep. *Pr.* 5.; Livy 24.2.2; Sen. *Ben.* 7.20.1-5; Just. *Epit.* 6.9; Juv. 8.195-210. For gladiators, cf. Strabo 5.4.13; Juv. 8.195-210; 4.99-102; 6.246-267; Wiedemann (2002) 28-30.

This presumably also placed professional athletes in a similarly precarious social position, as they too placed themselves on display in the course of their activities. Cicero subtly links actors and frequenters of the *palaestra* in his *De Officiis*:

Again, there are two orders of beauty: in the one, loveliness (*venustas*) predominates; in the other, dignity (*dignitas*); of these, we ought to regard *venustas* as the attribute of woman, and *dignitas* as the attribute of man. Therefore, let all finery not suitable to a man's dignity be kept off his person, and let him guard against the like fault in gesture and action. The manners taught in the *palaestra*, for example, are often rather objectionable, and the gestures of actors on the stage are not always free from affectation; but simple, unaffected manners are commendable in both instances.⁴¹³

Cic. *Off.* 1.36.130.

In this passage, Cicero is debating methods for training oratory. However, his touchstone for the debate is gender – just as women are lovely, and men are dignified, oratorical gestures can correspondingly seem feminine or masculine.⁴¹⁴ In his estimation, *palaestra*-trained gestures are effeminate, and so are those of actors.

The criticism of elites engaging in athletics in particular surely ties into the moral system that linked actors and athletes. This is because the elite man engaging in athletics has rejected his moral prerogative twofold by embracing both nudity and self-spectacle. Juvenal seems to be arguing this point when he criticises elites who engage in nude gladiatorial displays, saying that they're engaging in 'patrician tricks' (*artes patricia*).⁴¹⁵ Suetonius also criticised Nero for wanting to be an actor,

⁴¹³ *Cum autem pulchritudinis duo genera sint, quorum in altero venustas sit, in altero dignitas, venustatem muliebrem ducere debemus, dignitatem virilem. Ergo et a forma removeatur omnis viro non dignus ornatus, et huic simile vitium in gestu motuque caveatur. Nam et palaestrici motus sunt saepe odiosiores, et histrionum non nulli gestus ineptiis non vacant, et in utroque genere quae sunt recta et simplicia, laudantur.*

⁴¹⁴ On gendered gesture in Roman oratory, see Gleason (1995); Gunderson (2000).

⁴¹⁵ *Juv.* 4.99-102.

athlete and nude gladiator at the same time.⁴¹⁶ Nero also allegedly pushed his fellow elites in this direction, much to the chagrin of Tacitus, who again links acting and athletics to make this point:

But the morality of the fatherland (*patrios mores*), which had gradually fallen into oblivion, was being overthrown from the foundations by this imported licentiousness (*accitam lasciviam*); the aim of which was that every production of every land, capable of either undergoing or engendering corruption, should be on view in the capital, and that our youth, under the influence of foreign tastes, should degenerate into votaries of the *gymnasia*, of *otium*, and of dishonourable love-affairs (*turpis amores*) – and this at the instigation of the emperor and senate, who, not content with conferring license upon vice (*vitiis*), were applying compulsion, in order that Roman nobles should pollute themselves on the stage under pretext of delivering an oration or a poem. What remained but to strip to the skin as well, put on the gloves, and practise that mode of conflict instead of the profession of arms?⁴¹⁷

Tac. *Ann.* 14.20.

Here Tacitus suggests that the public, spectacular nudity of elites is simply the next step on the immoral journey Nero has been forcing upon prominent Romans. Crucially, however, Tacitus links this back to the theme of unwarlikeness: it is indicative of a moral move away from martial, armed Romanness. He indicates this quite explicitly, arguing that acting and athletics are in defiance of Roman *mores*. He

⁴¹⁶ Suet. *Ner.* 40.4.

⁴¹⁷ *Ceterum abolitos paulatim patrios mores funditus everti per accitam lasciviam, ut quod usquam corrumpi et corrumpere queat, in urbe visatur, degeneretque studiis externis iuventus, gymnasia et otia et turpis amores exercendo, principe et senatu auctoribus, qui non modo licentiam vitiis permiserint, sed vim adhibeant, ut proceres Romani specie orationum et carminum scaena polluantur. Quid superesse, nisi ut corpora quoque nudent et caestus adsumant easque pugnas pro militia et armis meditentur.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

also articulates his fear that this will influence the youth in particular, and he heavily links the *gymnasia* with *otium* in this unwarlike ideological space.

The differences in responses to elite nudity between Romans and Greeks are clearly important. However, nude statuary – of heroes and of contemporary and historical Romans – was not unknown in Roman practice. Like many aspects of my research, some ambivalence characterises the evidence. Evidence from Roman visual culture shows that despite Roman literary concern over the influx of Greek art into Rome, it actually became embedded deeply in Roman elite society.⁴¹⁸ Greeks had long used nude statuary to honour athletes, heroes, and then Hellenistic rulers. Roman examples, depicting Romans, could be found in the West dated from around the early first century BCE. It thereafter became a popular way to present Roman politicians and generals – possibly only posthumously at first – and eventually, emperors.⁴¹⁹ So why was this acceptable?

There were some differences with common Greek practice. For example, it was popular to present subjects with idealised bodies but with mature – wizened even – heads in ‘veristic’ style.⁴²⁰ This is probably related to Roman attitudes to age and experience in the civic sphere, and certainly emphasises the fact that these works were constructed with some deliberate intentionality with regards to message. Indeed, it has been argued that this more haggard representation aimed to suggest that Roman state service was ‘strenuous’ – suggesting some interaction with the rhetoric of *patientia*.⁴²¹ However, there were perhaps other modifications. For example, the Elder Pliny tells us that ‘the Greek practice is to leave the figure entirely nude, whereas Roman and military statuary adds a breastplate.’⁴²² Petersen argues that additional items were often added to Roman nude statuary, like the ‘military cloak (*chlamys*), sandals and a sword held in a parade grip.’⁴²³ These features were

⁴¹⁸ Indeed, the literary concern suggests that this had become common practice. See below, 190.

⁴¹⁹ Smith (1989); Zanker (1990) 5-11; Gruen (1992) 152-82; Hallett (2005); Fejfer (2008) 200-11.

⁴²⁰ Cf. J. Small (1982); Zanker (1990) 5-11; Stevenson (1998) 47.

⁴²¹ Gruen (1996) 220; Stevenson (1998) 47.

⁴²² Plin. *HN* 34.10.18.

⁴²³ Petersen (2009) 195. Non-military items of clothing could also be added, for example a mantle upon the hip, or drapery about the shoulder.

presumably added to mitigate the nudity, and to add the essential sartorial status symbols upon which Romans fixated, as I have discussed. In effect, military symbols added crucial warlike connotations to a picture that may otherwise have signified immoral unwarlikeness.

Hallett also argues that nude portraiture in practice took the represented individual outside of the realm of ordinary life and placed them into the mythical world of heroes. He argues that mythical heroism was so steeped in Hellenic ideas that Greek-style portrayal in this context was acceptable, or even useful.⁴²⁴ This seems the crux of the matter, as Tom Stevenson argues, ‘certainly there were naked athletic contests at Rome, “Greek games”, but these were not the point. The reference is not to life; it is to Greek modes of representation and the evolving ideas behind them. The nudity of a statue is obviously different to that of a living man.’⁴²⁵ Nude portrait statues were a very specific form of engaging in a popularised and effective mode of representation in the ancient world, but, tellingly, in other statuary contexts nudity was often avoided, with ‘skimpy clothing’ standing in for total nudity in depictions of low-status athletes, actors, gladiators and the like.⁴²⁶ At the same time, no Roman author ever directly criticises nude statuary, despite aversion to the public nudity of live Romans.⁴²⁷ This provides an important reminder of the tensions between different types of evidence on this topic.

Even outside the context of athletics, attitudes to real, human, public nudity in Roman literature seem almost wholly negative. Nudity had lewd connotations, and these connotations meant that it became an expected feature of those supposedly living immoral lifestyles – especially in those constructed by moralising Roman orators and authors. The exposure of the young to nudity was deemed particularly problematic, probably because of the enshrined right of Roman children to be protected from sexual harm, as symbolised in their wearing of the toga *praetexta*. Indeed, Roman clothing was imbued with intense symbolic significance and this

⁴²⁴ Hallett (2005), esp. 222.

⁴²⁵ Stevenson (1998) 48.

⁴²⁶ Olson (2008) 205-08.

⁴²⁷ Stevenson (1998) 52.

must have contributed to the unease towards nudity. Immoral behaviours and unwarlikeness were always thought to have gone hand in hand in Roman literature, and therefore nudity was surely already problematic in this regard. However, it also had more direct associations with military failure, as I will discuss next.

Nudity, Defeat and Slavery

I argue that Roman authors found several elements of athletic culture distasteful. These elements more often than not contributed to an understanding that athletics was unwarlike or somehow fostered unwarlike qualities. I have described in my first chapter how the very ‘enjoyableness’ of athletics contributed to such an understanding via a conflation with luxury. I have articulated how nudity contributed to these ideas via an association with luxurious, immoral lifestyles unsuited to upstanding elites. However, nudity also had connotations more directly related to the conduct of war in the Roman period. This is because the reception of nudity was also wrapped up in ideas of defeat and slavery.

Some connection between nudity and defeat should not come as a surprise. As Bonfante argues in her article *Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art* (1989), nudity in the ancient Near East was also a sign of defeat – ‘bound prisoners were paraded in the king's victory celebration, and are thus represented on innumerable monuments.’ In the Old Testament, nakedness, therefore, signified ‘poverty, shame, slavery, humiliation.’⁴²⁸ For Bonfante, it was the Greeks who did something exceptional when they reversed the iconography and depicted themselves in glorious nudity in contrast to their insecure, clothed enemies.⁴²⁹ Outside of nude statuary, the Romans resorted to this ancient status quo and imposed nudity upon

⁴²⁸ Bonfante (1989) 546.

⁴²⁹ Bonfante (1989) 543. However, see Hurwit (2007) for a discussion of the ‘Dexileos relief’, a funerary monument which presented its heroic warrior clothed and mounted, while his impaled victim is naked. Hurwit concludes that both heroic nudity and a more traditional ‘shaming’ nudity were available to Greek artists, depending on the context. However, the example is rather anomalous and must be contrasted with a lack of Roman examples that contrast victorious naked Romans with clothed, foreign, defeated adversaries.

slaves and defeated enemies as humiliation. Romans did this in two related contexts: when slaves were sold at market, and when defeated enemies went ‘under the yoke.’

Nudity was a prominent feature of Roman slave sales. This was so that slaves could be checked for physical defects, in the manner of cattle. The Younger Seneca describes how ‘you pull the clothing off slaves that are advertised for sale so that no bodily flaws may escape your notice.’⁴³⁰ Juvenal additionally attests to the sale of naked female slaves in the brothels of Rome.⁴³¹ This is probably what Suetonius alludes to when he accuses Augustus of having friends who selected women for him to sleep with, who ‘stripped and inspected matrons and well-grown girls, as if Toranius the slave-dealer were putting them up for sale’.⁴³² Here, Augustus is accused of perverting status via this enforced nudity: he is treating high-status women just like slaves. The evidence for Greek slave markets is scarcer, but the responses to the stripped barbarian captives of Agesilaus during the Persian Wars perhaps suggests that Greek slaves might be clothed at market.⁴³³ Regardless, without the heavy Greek cultural counterweight which celebrated elite nudity, and given the Roman use of clothing to articulate status, nudity was really only left with negative associations in Rome.

There is one piece of evidence that may directly compare slave markets – or perhaps, more likely, slave punishment – and the *gymnasium*, via nudity. This comes from Plautus’ early (probably late third century BCE) *Asinaria*:

⁴³⁰ Sen. *Ep.* 80.9; cf. Prop. 2.27-28; Westermann (1955) 99, note 75. For visual evidence, see. Fögen and Lee (2009) 192-93.

⁴³¹ Juvenal talks of ‘the naked slave standing for sale in the stinking brothel’, Juv. 11.172-73.

⁴³² Suet. *Aug.* 69.1. Toranius was a famous slave-trader, once said to have scammed Marc Antony over a fake pair of identical twin slaves, Plin. *HN* 7.56.

⁴³³ Xen. *Ages.* 1.28; *Hell.* 3.4.19.

Leonida: Greetings to you, *gymnasium* for the whip.

[...]

Leonida: How many pounds do you think you weigh
naked?

Libanus: I really don't know.

Leonida: I knew you didn't know, but I know, who
weighed you: naked and tied you're a hundred
pounds, when you're being weighed hanging from
your feet.⁴³⁴

Plaut. *Asin.* 297-301.

The joke in the first line seems to revolve around the fact that Libanus inspires both nudity and strenuous physical activity through his disobedience, in that he forces his master to strip and whip him.⁴³⁵ The final line perhaps evokes the slave market (the naked weighing gives the impression) but perhaps otherwise (or also) refers to punishment techniques.⁴³⁶ The association of nudity with the punishment of slaves in general seems strong, as Cicero quips that Marc Antony's public nudity was tantamount to his asking for a slave's punishment.⁴³⁷ Nevertheless, Plautus links the humiliating nudity of slaves with that of athletes.

Crucially, soldiers could also be punished by enforcing their nudity. Most famously, there existed a ritual of subjugation known as 'passing under the yoke' (*passum sub iugum*) that was performed immediately after defeat in battle. This involved the defeated enemy, made *nudus* or *seminudus*, walking under spears fixed into the

⁴³⁴ Leo: *gymnasium flagri, salueto.*

[...]

Leo: *quot pondo ted esse censes nudum?*

Lib: *non edepol scio.*

Leo: *scibam ego te nescire, at pol ego qui ted expendi scio: nudus uinctus centum pondo es, quando pendes per pedes.*

⁴³⁵ Plautus makes another joking comparison of a sports ground – the *palaestra* this time – to a place of nudity in his *Bacchides*, this time a brothel, Plaut. *Bacch.* 65-75.

⁴³⁶ Leonida is referred to as a jailer (*custos carceris*) and references are made to weights being tied to the slave, a common slave punishment, 297, 302-04. However, there seems to be a double metaphor at play as the weights were used to punish the slave, and also to weigh things.

⁴³⁷ Cic. *Phil.* 2.86.

ground for this purpose.⁴³⁸ Occasionally, the situation was reversed and an enemy forced Roman soldiers under it after their defeat, as the Samnites did famously at the Caudine Forks.⁴³⁹ Stripped of armour and most of their clothes, the ceremony involved a kind of symbolic, comparative nudity: a state of utter, disgraceful shame. By returning in such a state to their allies the Capuans, the Romans were apparently humiliated.⁴⁴⁰ Livy specifically highlights the loss of the consuls' special cloaks, again reinforcing the idea that Romans articulated status through clothing.⁴⁴¹ In Roman martial tradition, stripping pronounced shame.

Individual soldiers and generals could also be punished in similar ways. The very consuls that surrendered to the Samnites at the Caudine Forks were supposed to be handed over to the enemy naked and bound after the Roman people refused to ratify the terms the consuls had granted upon their earlier surrender.⁴⁴² The general Corbulo also used nudity as punishment to reinforce discipline in first-century CE Armenia, after a rumour that a Roman army had been forced to go under the yoke caused chaos. According to Frontinus he made a soldier stand 'with the belt of his toga cut and his tunic undone until the night guards came.'⁴⁴³ He apparently went further with a cavalry captain, having every item of clothes cut off.⁴⁴⁴ Very similar

⁴³⁸ The typical example is described by Livy, when the Aequi were apparently sent under the yoke in 459 BCE, 3.23.5. In this instance, all arms and all but one piece of clothing were apparently stripped. Other references to the tradition in Livy can be found at 3.28.11, 3.67.5-6, 4.10.4, 9.4.3, 10.36.14; cf. Caes. *B. Gall.* 1.7, 1.12; Cic. *Off.* 3.30.109. Livy actually imagines the tradition dating back to the earliest days of Rome, 1.26.13. The ritual is also used in metaphor in other genres of literature, cf. Tib. 1.4.16; 1.10.46; Hor. *Carm.* 1.33.11; Verg. *Aen.* 8.148.

⁴³⁹ Livy 9.4.3. Again, this doesn't seem to have been undertaken fully nude, as Livy refers to the consuls as 'nearly half-naked' (*prope seminudi*) and the soldiers were garbed only in a single garment – perhaps only their tunics, 9.6.1, 9.5.12. The nudity was symbolic and ritual, and later the word *nudos* is used, 9.8.9. However, the word *nudos* itself could also probably refer to half-nakedness/toplessness, as with Marc Antony at the Lupercalia and Cincinnatus at his plough, Cic. *Phil.* 2.85, 3.12, 13.31; Plin. *HN* 18.4.20. Cincinnatus was nevertheless told by the messenger that he must put on his toga in order to address the people and senate, Plin. *HN* 18.4.20.

⁴⁴⁰ Livy 9.6.9.

⁴⁴¹ Livy 9.5.13-14.

⁴⁴² Livy 9.10.7-8. The Samnites apparently refused the offer. A similar incident is recorded by Velleius Paterculus with the Numantines: 'As for Mancinus his sense of shame, in that he did not try to evade the consequences, caused him to be delivered to the enemy by the fetial priests naked, and with his hands bound behind his back', 2.1.5.

⁴⁴³ Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.26.

⁴⁴⁴ Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.28.

punishments are also recorded by Suetonius and Valerius Maximus.⁴⁴⁵ It seems criminals outside of the military realm were also stripped: disturbingly juxtaposed to Verres' own nudity at parties was his stripping of Roman citizens for execution – a gross injustice, according to Cicero.⁴⁴⁶ The Younger Seneca also makes it clear that stripping was part of the ritual of criminal execution in his *Controversiae*.⁴⁴⁷

It is probably impossible to tell whether Romans found nudity distasteful because they traditionally humiliated shamed individuals by stripping them, or whether the reverse is true. Nevertheless, the association was manifest in Roman culture. The shamed individuals were always low-status individuals like slaves, or those who had suffered a military defeat (and were thus perhaps lucky not to be enslaved themselves). Such individuals had already had their masculinity compromised, as had soldiers who had proven themselves unwarlike by poor discipline. Thus, unwarlike armies and unwarlike soldiers were both stripped as punishment, divesting them of their military uniforms and armour. With these associations in place, it is not surprising that Roman authors were distrustful of those who heralded nudity as a prestigious state, as in Greek athletics. Nudity crops up again and again in Roman criticisms of athletics, as Tacitus mentions ('what remains but to strip...') and Quintilian ('[athletes] would soon give up and ask for their masseurs and a chance to sweat naked...').⁴⁴⁸ It was an unfathomable feature which sent out all the wrong cultural messages.

However, nudity also had a further raft of potential associations. This is because in the Roman mind at least, the nudity of the *gymnasium* was strongly related to the alleged sexual practices which took place therein. This is another important factor in Roman criticisms of athletics.

⁴⁴⁵ 'For faults of other kind [in Centurions] he imposed various ignominious penalties, such as ordering to stand all day long before the general's tent, sometimes in their tunics without their sword-belts...', Suet. *Aug.* 24.2. '[The consul Lucius Calpurnius Piso] ordered him to be on duty at headquarters for the whole period of his military service, dressed in a toga which had had its hems cut off, wearing an ungirt tunic, and barefoot, from morning until night.', Val. Max. 2.7.9.

⁴⁴⁶ Cic. *Verr.* 1.62.161, 1.40.86-87.

⁴⁴⁷ Sen. *Controv.* 9.2.21.

⁴⁴⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20; Quint. 11.3.26.

Pederasty and the *Gymnasium*

The *gymnasia* of Classical Greece were clearly loci for male-male sex acts and relationships. Plato makes this clear in his *Laws*, where he has a speaker articulate how pederasty first arose in Sparta, Crete ‘and other cities that are especially devoted to *gymnasia*.’⁴⁴⁹ As Andrew Lear argues in his *Eros and Greek Sport*, ‘courtship of athletes in the *gymnasion* was a respectable activity for an elite Greek man.’⁴⁵⁰ Like other aspects of Greek athletics, pederasty was problematised often enough by Greek authors, but it was at least generally viewed ‘in a highly idealizing and idealistic fashion.’⁴⁵¹ Within this sexual context, nudity clearly played a role in the eroticisation of youths.⁴⁵²

However, the Roman responses to these activities can be difficult to map. This is because while some authors vilify such activities – especially those in the context of the *gymnasium* – others clearly show significant sexual interest in pubescent boys in other contexts. Early and mid-twentieth century scholarship tended to ignore these confounding latter examples, and instead suggested that the Romans were simple homophobes, in a way that explained their criticism of ‘Greek Love’ (i.e. homosexuality). More recent attempts, however, have nuanced and reconciled these arguments, arguing that modern conceptions of sexual identities and activities have clouded academic judgement with regards to the differences in these accounts.⁴⁵³

Certainly, Greeks could be accused of breaking sexual taboos more generally. For example, Juvenal mockingly describes the behaviour of Greek *gymnasium*-goers:

...nothing is sacred to him [the *Graeculus*] or safe from his
crotch – not the lady of the house, not the virgin daughter,
not even her fiancé, still smooth-faced, and not the son,

⁴⁴⁹ Pl. *Leg.* 636b-c.

⁴⁵⁰ Lear (2013) 246.

⁴⁵¹ Lear (2013) 247.

⁴⁵² Dover (1978) 54-55; Scanlon (2002) esp. 83, 96; Scanlon (2005) 80-82.

⁴⁵³ Discussed above, 33-34.

uncorrupted till then. If none of these is available, he gets his friend's grandmother on her back.⁴⁵⁴

Juv. 3.109-15.

The passage is clearly satirical, but the joke involves the dissolute Greek progressing through the male fiancé, young son, and even the grandmother of the house.⁴⁵⁵ Here Juvenal suggests that Greeks have a runaway and uncontrollable sexual obsession – apparently indiscriminate with regards to age, status or gender.

However, an example that seems more specifically concerned with pederasty comes from Cicero:

Why is it no one is in love with either an ugly young man or a beautiful old man? I think this practice originated in the *gymnasia* of Greece, where that kind of intercourse was free and permitted. Ennius said it well:

'Disgrace begins when citizen men (*civis*) strip openly.'⁴⁵⁶

Cic. *Tusc.* 4.33.70.

Cicero can only be talking here about some kind of male-male sex act associated with the *gymnasium*. This is clear for a number of reasons: he mentions beautiful young men in the first section, and links his statement specifically to the *gymnasium*, which only let men in. He also intimates that, in Rome, these acts were categorically not 'free' nor 'permitted', something about which he is correct if he is referring to

⁴⁵⁴ *Praeterea sanctum nihil illi et ab inguine tutum, non matrona laris, non filia virgo, nec ipse sponsus levis adhuc, non filius ante pudicus. horum si nihil est, aviam resupinat amici.* The reference to the *gymnasium* occurs a few lines further down: 'And since I've started on the Greeks, let's leave the subject of the *gymnasium* and listen to something even worse', 3.114-15.

⁴⁵⁵ Old women were deemed sexually disgusting in much of Roman literature, cf. Richlin (1984) 69-72; Cokayne (2013) 141-44.

⁴⁵⁶ *Cur neque deformem adolescentem quisquam amat neque formosum senem? Mihi quidem haec in Graecorum gymnasiis nata consuetudo videtur, in quibus isti liberi et concessi sunt amores. Bene ergo Ennius: 'Flagiti principium est nudare inter civis corpora.'* Trans. Loeb, adapted. It must be significant that Ennius, who once said he had 'three hearts' for his identification and experience with the Oscan, Latin and Greek languages, nevertheless despised nudity, Gell. 17.17.1.

pederasty. Additionally, he co-opts a statement from the now-lost author Ennius and agrees with him that nudity among citizens is responsible for disgrace (*flagitium*).⁴⁵⁷ For Cicero, nudity in the *gymnasium* was associated with, and perhaps responsible for, disgraceful male-male sexual acts.

Roman texts are littered with references which associate athletics with male-male sex acts. In this light, the phrase in Silius Italicus that Greek soldiers were feminised by 'easy bouts of wrestling in the shade' seems likely to be a double entendre: submission (*pati*) and softness (*molle*) giving a strong sense of receptive male-male sex.⁴⁵⁸ This seems yet more likely given that other authors were prone to equate wrestling and male-male sex, as Martial does in an epigram entitled *Palaestrita* – 'Wrestler'. Martial writes 'I like him, not because he wins, but because he knows how to lie low (*succumbere*) and has better learned 'on-the-bed' (ἐπικλινοπάλην) wrestling.'⁴⁵⁹ The epigram contains more double entendres, as *succumbere* can mean 'to lie under' but also 'to submit', so both literal and sexual meanings are clearly present. Pointedly, the punchline is delivered in Greek: κλίνη ('bed') contracted with πάλη ('wrestling') to equate Greek wrestling and male-male sex.⁴⁶⁰

The athletic activities which demanded the closest personal contact between athletes – wrestling and boxing – seem to have attracted the most sexualised depictions within Roman criticism. Such intimate contact between two naked males may well have elicited sexual connotations in any case, but in fact Greek literary sources too stress that wrestling was most likely to lead to sex between *erastês* (the older, insertive sexual partner) and *erômenos* (the younger, receptive one). The expectation that the physical touching of wrestling, in particular, might lead to sex between male pederastic partners is expressed in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Plato writes of a certain

⁴⁵⁷ We have no way of telling whether Ennius was talking about nudity in the context of the *gymnasium*, as this is the only extant citation of this passage. Given the general Roman hostility to nudity, there is no real need to posit such a suggestion.

⁴⁵⁸ Sil. 14.136-39. For receptive sexual connotations of *pati*, see Walters (1997) 30-31.

⁴⁵⁹ *Non amo quod vincit, sed quod succumbere novit et didicit melius* τὴν ἐπικλινοπάλην, Mart. 14.203.

⁴⁶⁰ Suetonius says that the emperor Domitian used the same word, latinised to *clinopalen*, Suet. *Dom.* 22. Suetonius says, rather judgementally, that this was its own kind of disgraceful equation of exercise and sex (this time with women.)

Alcibiades, who is disappointed after a private wrestling lesson with a young Socrates that he 'got nothing more from it'.⁴⁶¹ Interestingly, a graffito from the *palaestra* of (Hellenised) Pompeii reads 'Quintus Postumius invited Aulus Attius for a fuck (*pedicarim*)', providing rare epigraphic evidence for male-male sexual contact (or attention at least) in an athletic context.⁴⁶² It is possible that the combative nature of these sports made them particularly subversive for moralising Roman authors – appropriately agonistic, but in reality far too close to dangerous sexual contact.

Plutarch, who often criticises athletics, makes a forceful sexual point in his *Moralia*, in a long criticism of athletics:

For the Romans used to be very suspicious of rubbing down with oil, and even today they believe that nothing has been so much to blame for the enslavement and effeminacy of the Greeks as their *gymnasia* and wrestling-schools, which engender much listless idleness and waste of time in their cities, as well as pederasty and the ruin of the bodies of the young men with regulated sleeping, walking, rhythmical movements, and strict diet; by these practices they have unconsciously lapsed from the practice of arms, and have become content to be termed nimble athletes and handsome wrestlers rather than excellent men-at-arms and horsemen. It is hard work, at any rate, when men strip in the open air, to escape these

⁴⁶¹ Pl. *Phdr.* 217c, cf. 255b-6d.

⁴⁶² CIL IV.8805 = Varone (2002) no. 136, cf. Younger (2004) 155. Without further context we are left in the dark regarding the relative ages and statuses of the two individuals. *Pedico* (a contraction of the also attested *paedico*) meant 'to anally penetrate', as can be clearly seen in Mart. 2.47 which also refers to the buttocks (*natibus*). For other examples of its use, cf. Mart. 11.78; Catull. 21.4, 26.1; Suet. *Iul.* 49.1. The word is linked etymologically to children via the Greek παις.

consequences; but those who anoint themselves and care for their bodies in their own houses commit no offence.⁴⁶³

Plut. *Mor.* 274d-e.

Here, Plutarch repeats many of the common arguments that I have already highlighted: bodies are ruined, the men become effeminate, and so on. Notably, after mentioning pederasty once, Plutarch goes on to say that these consequences are hard to avoid given the open nudity involved – i.e. that nudity causes pederasty, and pederasty causes other problems. Crucially, an unwarlike outlook is included prominently among these problems. Why is nudity so strongly associated with pederasty, then? The answer seems to be that, rather than abhorring all and any homosexual inclinations, moralising Roman authors were acutely aware of the capability of fit young men and boys to arouse sexual feeling in older men. The main difference, then, lay in the moralising Roman assessment of who was permitted to have sex with whom. For this, constructions of status were key.

The free/slave status of the individuals involved was clearly an important factor in Roman sexuality. Seneca the Elder shows this in a speech for a man charged with being a receptive sexual partner – a *concupinus* – to his former owner. His defence seems to be that the accused was obligated to engage in these acts because he was the man's freedman. Seneca actually describes how *inpudicitia* (in this context, probably engaging in receptive sex) 'is a crime in the free-born, a necessity in a slave, and a duty for the freedman.'⁴⁶⁴ Seneca thus assumes the impossibility – perhaps more accurately, inapplicability – of sexual consent for the slave, and a pressure to

⁴⁶³ τὸ γὰρ ξηραλοιφεῖν ὑφεωρῶντο Ῥωμαῖοι σφόδρα, καὶ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν οἴονται μηδὲν οὕτως αἴτιον δουλείας γεγενῆσθαι καὶ μαλακίας ὡς τὰ γυμνάσια καὶ τὰς παλαιστράς πολλὴν ἄλυν καὶ σχολὴν ἐντικτούσας ταῖς πόλεσι καὶ κακοσχολίαν καὶ τὸ παιδεραστεῖν καὶ τὸ διαφθεῖρῖν τὰ σώματα τῶν νέων ὕπνοις καὶ περιπάτοις καὶ κινήσεισιν εὐρύθμοις καὶ διαίταις ἀκριβέσιν, ὑφ' ὧν ἔλαθον ἐκρυέντες τῶν ὀπλῶν καὶ ἀγαπήσαντες ἀνθ' ὀπλιτῶν καὶ ἰππέων ἀγαθῶν εὐτράπελοι καὶ παλαιστρίται καλοὶ λέγεσθαι. ταῦτα Εγοῦν ἔργον ἐστὶν ἀποφυγεῖν εἰς ὑπαιθρον ἀποδυομένους· οἱ δὲ κατ' οἰκίαν ἀλειφόμενοι καὶ θεραπεύοντες ἑαυτοὺς οὐδὲν ἀμαρτάνουσι.

⁴⁶⁴ *inpudicitia in ingenuo crimen est, in seruo necessitas, in liberto officium*, Sen. *Controv.* 4.Pr.10. Seneca says that the orator was ridiculed for the statement – seemingly for the hilarity of the metaphor of 'duty' as sexual passivity, not because the statement was untrue.

submit even for the freedman, who in Roman society retained a duty to their former owner after manumission.

The fact that slaves were subject to the sexual wishes of their masters in Rome informs this entire debate. Craig Williams has catalogued references to male-male sex acts in Roman literature, and notes that those detailed in Roman texts most often involved slave boys.⁴⁶⁵ There was a Roman law, the *Lex Scantinia* which seems to have legislated against certain male-male sex acts. However, rather than being the ‘law against homosexuality’ as posited by MacMullen and others, it is far more likely to have protected specifically freeborn children – the *praetextati* – from sexual harm.⁴⁶⁶ It also perhaps additionally forbade free citizens from allowing themselves to be penetrated.⁴⁶⁷ The fact that it is the freedman, and not the former owner, who is prosecuted in the case above seems to suggest this. The citizen himself could probably have penetrated any non-freeborn individual without legal reproach, but even public reproach was almost exclusively reserved for the man who allowed himself to be penetrated – the receptive partner in these exchanges. The key idea is that the freeborn male was not to be subject to homosexual attention or penetration. This was the sexual combination which surely contributed to the huge moral problematisation of the *gymnasium*. This is because *gymnasia* were places where male citizen youths – presumed to be sexually attractive in a huge variety of Roman texts – exercised openly. Moreover, they were naked, a state which both heightened sexual interest in onlookers and obscured their differentiation from slaves, which was articulated via symbolic clothing. Inevitably, the *gymnasium* came to be seen as a place where transgressions of this key moral tenet were all too likely.

⁴⁶⁵ C. Williams (2010) 20-29, and esp. 31-40. Examples include Petr. *Sat.* 75.11; Val. Max. 8.1.*Damn.*8; Plin. *HN* 8.180; Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.114-19. Williams also writes that ‘The epigrams of Martial give us a clear view of a cultural landscape in which the availability of beautiful slave-boys as sexual companions for their masters was a prominent feature, C. Williams (2010) 33, citing Mart. 1.58, 2.43, 3.65, 11.26.1-2, 11.58.1-4.

⁴⁶⁶ Just as wider cultural norms protected them from witnessing sexual or immoral behaviour, Quint. 1.2.8. On the *Lex Scantinia* as a ‘law against homosexuality’, see Wilkinson (1978) 136; MacMullen (1982) 488; contra. Boswell (1980) 66-68; Cantarella (2002) 111-13; C. Williams (2010) 130-36.

⁴⁶⁷ Richlin (1993) 530.

The reality of anal penetration in Classical Greece pederastic practice is contested, but in some ways this is irrelevant for my purposes. For one thing, Roman critics seem to deem any sexual activity between freeborn men disgraceful, for example when Cicero uses the term *stuprum*, which Craig Williams has identified as describing ‘the offense consisting in the violation of the sexual integrity of freeborn Romans’⁴⁶⁸ The absolute mapping of such terms into our own sexual vocabulary is fraught with difficulty, but it seems that whether full penetration was involved, or ‘intercrural’ sex as advocated by some scholars, both acts would have constituted *stuprum*.⁴⁶⁹ Anal penetration is attested with masters and slaves in Roman literature, however, and this is probably what Roman authors associated with Greek pederasty.⁴⁷⁰

Some authors recognised that differences in sexual attitudes were an important point of departure between Roman and Greek cultures. Cornelius Nepos, a Roman author of the first century CE, remarks that though Romans may think it odd, in Greece it was normal for a young man to be encouraged to take male lovers (*amatores*), and also for a man to attain honour competing in athletics at Olympia. Even acting ‘was never regarded as shameful by those nations’, he tells us, presumably expecting surprise from his Roman audience.⁴⁷¹ He seems to worry that some of his Roman readers will call his work trivial because one of his biographical subjects, the Greek general Epaminondas, played music and danced.⁴⁷² Pederasty, dancing, music and athletics – these are the things Nepos jumps for to explain to his ethnocentric Roman audience that others must be judged based on their own societal norms, and not those of the onlooker. After all, he argues, the Greeks would have baulked at the

⁴⁶⁸ Cic. *Tusc.* 4.33; C. Williams (2010) 103.

⁴⁶⁹ Intercrural sex: Percy (1998) 7-8. Dover argues that though works of Athenian comedy suggested anal sex occurred, most vase paintings depicting pederastic scenes depict intercrural sex, Dover (1978) 98-99. However, in his the postscript to the second edition of the same work, he admits that this may not have reflected actual practice, Dover (1978) 204. Cantarella (2002) argues for the practice of anal sex in Classical Athenian pederasty, 24-25. Ludwig (2002) argues for a mixture of practice, with intercrural sex an available option for older partners who needed immediate release, 233-34.

⁴⁷⁰ Mart. 2.47, 11.43.11-12; Lucil. Fr. 1186 Marx.

⁴⁷¹ Nep. *Pr.*5, cf. Livy 24.3.2; Cic. *Rep.* 4.13.

⁴⁷² Nep. *Pr.*1.

Roman inclusion of wives at their dinner parties.⁴⁷³ In a work celebrating the lives of military men, both Roman and Greek, Nepos felt a disclaimer about the sexual, sport and leisure practices of the Greeks was necessary.

Music-playing and singing played an important role in elite Greek education, and even featured in great Hellenic competitions, alongside athletics.⁴⁷⁴ Dancing was also present in Greek education, and indeed, Plato advocates the teaching of music, dancing and athletics together to teach young children the 'rhythm and harmony' they require.⁴⁷⁵ To Roman authors, athletics at least seemed similar to Roman military training, but music and dancing were something else entirely.⁴⁷⁶ This was a big component of the criticisms of Nero: he encouraged not only athletics but the other kinds of Greek activities – singing, dancing and acting, all performed by the most powerful Romans.⁴⁷⁷ A fragment supposedly preserved from a speech of Scipio Aemilianus in 133 BCE shows a discernible concern that high-status boys – senator's sons, wearing the symbol of freedom, the *bullae*, even – were learning to sing, dance and play musical instruments, like 'shameless little slaves'. He even calls them *cinaeduli* – the diminutive form of a grave sexual insult referring to men who enjoy receptive sex and who dance suggestively – and says he weeps for the Republic.⁴⁷⁸ This provides is a perfect demonstration of the status and sexual implications of music and dance for moralising Roman authors and orators.

In many ways the activities of the *gymnasium* existed in a perfect 'sweet spot' for Roman anxieties. This is because the institution was not only seen to encourage

⁴⁷³ Nep. *Pr.* 6.

⁴⁷⁴ Music: M. West (1992) 16-21; Price (1999) 43-45; Landels (2002) 3-5; Mavroulides (1974) 43-45. Dance: CEG 432, described in Henrichs (2003) 45-46; Lonsdale (1993); Wilson (2003).

Christesen writes that 'By the end of the sixth century, a single Athenian religious festival, the Great Dionysia, included competitions in choral dance in which more than 1,000 males of all ages participated.', Christesen (2012) 147.

⁴⁷⁵ Pl. *Leg.* 2.653e.

⁴⁷⁶ Quintilian seems to make exactly this distinction, arguing that an orator's movements should be modelled upon armed military training, or *perhaps* the athletics of the *gymnasium* – but never on dance, Quint. 1.12.19.

⁴⁷⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20; cf. Suet. *Ner.* 20-21, 54; Cassius Dio has Boudicca declare that 'Nero, who, though in name a man, is in fact a woman, as is proved by his singing, lyre-playing and beautification of his person.', 62.6.3

⁴⁷⁸ Fr. 30 ORF² = Macrobius 3.14.7. *Cinaeduli* is derived from *cinaedus*, cf. Petron. *Sat.* 23.3; Plin. *Epist.* 9.17; Richlin (1993); C. Williams (2010) 193-200.

behaviours Romans considered effeminate – being on display, dancing, and music – but actual, literal elite pederasty too. This combination was therefore in many ways self-reinforcing. The *gymnasium* included elements which reminded of proximate causes, mid-term effects, and the expected ultimate end-game of Roman effeminacy. It therefore really had no chance of a positive reception by traditionally minded authors who lauded martial characteristics for their citizens.

Spectacle and the ‘Male Gaze’

Roman ‘primitivist’ discourse argued that collective Roman morals were always degrading, forever falling further from the heights of their heroic, golden-age past. The Roman youth came to symbolise this degradation, and were often lambasted in Roman literature as somehow both cause and effect of current immorality.⁴⁷⁹ Roman authors often argued that they needed to protect the elite young men of Rome from themselves – indeed, that it could actually be a public service to ‘correct’ the wicked ways of this group.⁴⁸⁰ However, it was also assumed that these youths should be protected, especially from sexual predation. This is because Roman authors assumed boys would be of sexual interest to grown men.

Roman authors seem aware that attractiveness made youths vulnerable. For example, Tacitus shows particular concern for the Roman youth (*iuventus*), suggesting that spectating athletics, among other corrupting things, would lead the youth towards athletics themselves and consequent ‘dishonourable love-affairs’ (*turpis amores*).⁴⁸¹ Similarly, Plutarch lists pederasty as an unwelcome consequence of athletics, something inescapable ‘when men strip in the open air’.⁴⁸² It is also relevant that, when Juvenal mocks hypersexual Greeks, he only shows specific concern for the young men: the ‘smooth-faced’ fiancé and the son ‘uncorrupted till

⁴⁷⁹ Sall. *Cat.* 13; Diod. Sic. 37.3.1-5; Gell. 6.12.5; Sen. *Controv.* 1.Pr.8-9; Polyb. 31.25.4-5; cf. Eyben (1993).

⁴⁸⁰ ‘For the man that does good service to the state is not merely he who brings forward candidates and defends the accused and votes for peace and war, but he also who admonishes young men.’, Sen. *Tranq.* 3.3.

⁴⁸¹ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20.

⁴⁸² Plut. *Mor.* 274d-e.

then.⁴⁸³ A passage from Gaius Petronius – a close advisor to Nero and an ‘artist of extravagance’ (*erudito luxu*) who had ‘idled to fame’, according to Tacitus – rather justifies this Roman wariness over the sexual protection of their children.⁴⁸⁴ In his *Satyricon* a Roman character, Encolpius, visits friends in Pergamum and falls in love with his friend’s young son. What follows can only be described as ‘grooming’, as Encolpius attempts to seduce the boy partly via gifts, but also by accompanying the boy to the *gymnasium*. He hides his intents from the parents, presumably in the knowledge that his actions would not be welcome.⁴⁸⁵ Martial also cites an example that seems to suggest a kind of underhand seduction, when he accuses a certain Chrestus of seeking out young athletes ‘just freed from their teacher’s care’, to fellate.⁴⁸⁶ These are works of satire, but, nevertheless, they notably associate the *gymnasium* with the sexual grooming of young men.

Roman authors often responded to athletics with reference to their post-Hellenistic, ‘spectacle-ised’ form as public, mass-entertainment events. This also explains some of the sexual criticisms Romans made, as the public focus placed the performers within the problematic, pseudo-sexually receptive category of public display, as argued by Catharine Edwards.⁴⁸⁷ These performers were therefore at risk of being exposed to a penetrating ‘male gaze’. As Holt Parker argues, people such as actors and gladiators who placed themselves on display were declared *infames* – a legal designation which stripped these individuals of their rights to bodily inviolability. This placed these individuals in a precarious sexual position, as Cicero shows when he declares that a woman could not complain about being raped as she was a mime

⁴⁸³ Juv. 3.109-15.

⁴⁸⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 16.18. There is some debate regarding whether Gaius Petronius truly wrote the *Satyricon*, as the manuscript tradition instead identifies a certain Titus Petronius. Nevertheless, the work is probably Neronian in date; cf. K. Rose (1971); Vout (2009).

⁴⁸⁵ ‘Whenever at table we happened to discourse of amours with young male beauties, I fell into a passion, and pretended my modesty suffered so much by obscene talk, that the boy’s mother in particular looked on me as a philosopher above the sensual pleasures of the world. Soon I proceeded to escort the boy to the *gymnasium*, to arrange his studies, to be his teacher and to warn his parents to admit no preyer on his body into the house...’, Petron. *Sat.* 85.

⁴⁸⁶ Martial 9.27.

⁴⁸⁷ Edwards (1993) 98-136; cf. above, 113; Barton (2002). Petronius calls actors *scaenae ostentatione tractus*, ‘degraded by the stage’, Petron. *Sat.* 126.

artist and, therefore, had no right to resist.⁴⁸⁸ The ideological logic behind such arguments seems to be that those who allowed themselves to be publically looked upon invited sexual contact by doing so. Parker argues that ‘the elite Roman, as object of the gaze, runs the danger of assimilation to the penetrated body of the woman. Accordingly, the *infamis* – actor, gladiator, or whore – are those who are and can be penetrated; left open to the weapons, touch, gaze of others.’⁴⁸⁹ Parker makes the case for actors and gladiators, but the concept is easily extended to athletic spectacle too – as Tacitus clearly does himself. I argue that this idea contributed to negative attitudes towards athletics. However, the rhetoric was actually heightened in these contexts due to the latent sexual associations of fit, exercising youths.

Roman authors clearly understood that boys were often watched while exercising. For example, Statius calls a boxer *spectate palaestris omnibus*, ‘watched by all at the *palaestra*’.⁴⁹⁰ It seems Roman authors were also aware that this could at times constitute a sexually interested ‘male gaze’. This was deemed problematic, Roman authors saw this a warning sign that seduction may be attempted. For example, it is worth revisiting a passage from The Younger Seneca, who describes a man ‘who sits in a public wrestling-place (for, to our shame! we labour with vices that are not even Roman) watching the wrangling of lads?’⁴⁹¹ Firstly, Seneca clearly thinks there is something immoral about the obsessive spectating of wrestling boys, and by juxtaposing this interest with obsessions over Corinthian bronzes, Seneca perhaps suggests that Greek culture was a particularly addictive attraction. Furthermore, there is perhaps a subtle sexual element. This is because he goes on to link such people to effeminacy and luxury via suggestions that they would also enjoy depilation and ‘pretty slave boys’.⁴⁹² Cicero also refers to a man watching wrestlers,

⁴⁸⁸ Cic. *Planc.* 30-31.

⁴⁸⁹ H. Parker (1999) 166.

⁴⁹⁰ Stat. *Theb.* 10.498-99.

⁴⁹¹ Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 12.2-3.

⁴⁹² Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 12.5.

describing a man who seeks out the most beautiful men of Croton at the *palaestra*, and spends time there ‘greatly admiring the handsome bodies.’⁴⁹³

In his *Moralia*, Plutarch is even less subtle. He criticises men who find other men more attractive than women, and especially mocks those who ‘fix their gaze on hams and haunches (μηρία καὶ τὴν ὀσφύν) like priests bent on sacrifice.’⁴⁹⁴ He seems to be referring to the sexual objectification of the muscles of young men, of a kind that elicits sexually interested gazing. Yet more explicit, however, is Martial’s crude condemnation of a certain Maternus:

...He will ask how I come to suspect the man of effeminacy (*mollem*). We bathe together. He never looks up, but watches the athletes with devouring eyes and his lips work as he gazes at their cocks.⁴⁹⁵

Mart. 1.96.10-13.

Maternus is not considered effeminate because he finds athletes attractive *per se*, but specifically because he desires oral sexual contact with them – an act considered degrading by most Roman authors.⁴⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the idea of the sexually interested gaze placed upon athletes is clearly present. The context is intended to be humorous, but still testifies to the sexual arousal that could be elicited by watching athletes. To those who sought to protect citizens from male sexual interest, this made athletics dangerous.

These examples do seem to complement more positive examples from the East, where pederasty continued to be associated with the *gymnasium*. Xenophon of

⁴⁹³ *Cum puerorum igitur formas et corpora magno hic opere miraretur*, Cic. *Inv. Rhet.* 2.1-2.

⁴⁹⁴ Plut. *Mor.* 751c-d.

⁴⁹⁵ *rogabit unde suspicer virum mollem. | una lavamur: aspicit nihil sursum, | sed spectat oculis devorantibus draucos | nec otiosis mentulas videt labris.*

⁴⁹⁶ Cat. 88.78, 99.10; Mart. 2.33, 2.28, 2.50, 11.61.2-5, 11.95; Hor. *Epod.* 8. Williams writes ‘The existence of the verb *irrumare*, denoting the act of penetrating someone’s mouth, meant that a person who actively performed fellatio (*fellat*) could also be said to be passively irrumated (*irrumatur*). And if the fellator was male, by being orally penetrated he could also be said to have violated his sexual integrity, his impenetrability (*pudicitia*).’, 218; cf. Richlin (1983) 26; Clarke (2002) 161-65; C. Williams (2010) 218-24.

Ephesus declared in the second century CE, for example, that he first fell in love with a boy 'when I saw his tenacious wrestling in the *gymnasium*, and I lost control of myself.'⁴⁹⁷ In the same period, Lucian talks of his 'delight' (ἡδύς) watching beautiful young men dance at the *gymnasium* – more so than watching them box or wrestle, even.⁴⁹⁸ The links between pederasty and athletics were long and enduring.

The idea that athletes were subject to a sexually charged gaze was not only restricted in Roman sources to same-sex encounters. Instead, we also have evidence of male observers ogling female athletes, and vice versa. This is in contrast to the sources from Classical Athens, in which the eroticisation of athletes overwhelmingly involved male rather than female athletes or onlookers.⁴⁹⁹ In one example, Propertius expresses envy towards Spartan men who are allowed to exercise nude alongside women – apparently out of a simple desire to see naked women.⁵⁰⁰ Reversing the situation somewhat, a regular joke of Juvenal's involves the sexual interest Roman wives had in male athletes; in one case a woman gives all of her family heirlooms to 'smooth skinned' athletes.⁵⁰¹ Martial also warns a promiscuous woman that it would be inappropriate for her to watch the narrator exercise naked at the *gymnasium*.⁵⁰²

Roman authors were evidently aware that young people in places of athletic activity were likely to prompt sexually interested gazing – a dangerous indicator of desire and intent, no matter the gender of the observed. This perceived danger is important, because Romans youths undertaking proper military training were also considered vulnerable to such attention. They too were young, fit men training in the wide open, but these young men also symbolically represented the military protection of the Roman state. This made their violation even worse, and ensured that the ideological rhetoric protecting them was articulated yet more insistently. In

⁴⁹⁷ Xen. Ephes. 3.2.2.

⁴⁹⁸ Lucian, *De Saltatione* 71.

⁴⁹⁹ Lear (2013) 247.

⁵⁰⁰ Prop. 3.14.1-10.

⁵⁰¹ Juv. 6.355-7.

⁵⁰² Mart. 3.68.

the next section I will describe how Romans considered soldiers a sexually precarious category of citizen, at risk for this forbidden sexual activity.

The fact that even Roman military training was considered a risk factor for pederastic activity is important. Romans felt these were severe, consequential risks when youths trained together anyway – but ‘Greek training’ actually proved that these activities could become mainstream should traditional moralising rhetoric fail. In Greek athletics, Roman authors had all the evidence they would need to show that these dangers were real.

The Sexual Precariousness of Roman Soldiers

The fervour with which Romans identified the moral dangers to soldiers shows that they were considered vulnerable. Part of this was perhaps the fact they too could be publically observed. Eleanor Leach has argued that, among his many reforms, Augustus particularly stressed the importance of *public* military training for the Roman youth. This could be equated with a return to old Republican values with the ‘eyes of the nation upon them’, just as Polybius hints that in the Middle Republic, the youth were placed in front of older soldiers in the lines of battle so that they could be judged by them.⁵⁰³ Leach also argues that the lines between military training and athletics were becoming blurred at this time. For example, Strabo records equestrian training occurring on the *Campus Martius*, but also ‘ball-playing, hoop-trundling, and wrestling’, all talked about together.⁵⁰⁴ This echoes Horace, who links the sword-training and equestrian events of the *Campus* with oil-covered wrestling, discus, and javelin throwing.⁵⁰⁵ Augustus, in any case, reintroduced the *Lusus Troiae*, an equestrian display for the Roman youth which involved no contests, and was therefore purely spectacle, possibly even involving Eastern dress.⁵⁰⁶ This does

⁵⁰³ Polybius states that younger soldiers fought in front of older soldiers, 6.21, and that the young were encouraged to face danger by the expectation of prizes should they distinguish themselves, 6.39; cf. Livy 8.8.6-10.

⁵⁰⁴ Strabo 5.3.8.

⁵⁰⁵ Hor. *Carm.* 1.8.

⁵⁰⁶ Du Quesnay (1995) 142; cf. C. Rose (2005).

suggest some departure from the military training depicted in Late Republican sources. However, it is possible that ideas of 'Roman' and 'Greek' training were not in fact delineated in common practice at this time as much as our moralising, ethnically-inclined sources suggest, just as baths and *gymnasia* were likely converging at this stage also.⁵⁰⁷

Regardless, Leach is correct to observe that, in certain cases, soldiers too could be the subject to the gaze of the public. Could this gaze also be constructed as pseudo-sexual? Actually, it seems so. For example, Cicero alleges that the socialite Clodia Metella bought gardens near the Tiber only to gaze upon and socialise with men where they bathed in the river. This may well have been part of their military training, as strong swimming was a celebrated training activity in the Roman world; a classic component of heroic stories and masculine boasting.⁵⁰⁸ However it also lay symbolically close to the erotically charged mythical scenario in which nude bathers in lakes and rivers were spied upon.⁵⁰⁹ Cicero leaves no doubt regarding the way Clodia looks at men:

A young (*adulescentulum*) neighbour caught your eye; his
beauty, his tall figure, his looks and eyes took you by
storm; you wanted to see him often.⁵¹⁰

Cic. *Cael.* 36.

Here we can see that her viewing is inherently sexually charged. This also seems to be the case when Plutarch has Cleopatra observe Antony's sword training, turning him into a personal spectacle for her enjoyment.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ See above, 108.

⁵⁰⁸ e.g. Suet. *Iul.* 57, 64; Dion. Hali. 25.5.3; ILS 2558; Livy 2.10; cf. Horsmann (1991) 127-32.

⁵⁰⁹ See, for example, the myth of Actaeon's encounter with a bathing Artemis in the woods, Callim. *Hymn* 5; Ov. *Met.* 3.13. Another example is the myth of Hermaphroditus, who is observed bathing by the water nymph Salmacis, and the two become merged into androgynous form, Ov. *Met.* 4.274-388. The myth became a kind of foundation-story for intersex people, and of emasculating forces, cf. Brisson (2002).

⁵¹⁰ *Vicinum adulescentulum aspexisti; candor huius te et proceritas, vultus oculique pepulerunt; saepius videre voluisti.*

⁵¹¹ Plut. *Ant.* 29.

These sources are important because they show that both Roman and Greek training exposed young, fit bodies to those who may have had sexual interest in them. This was problematic for Roman authors for two reasons. Firstly, because elites could, through this, become spectacles for the enjoyment of others, which was considered degrading by Tacitus and a number of other authors. Secondly, because the Roman youth could also be exposed to problematic sexual attention, the consequences of which varied according to where this attention came from. For example, attention from women might be seen as hazardously distracting. However, attention from older men willing to consummate their interest seems to have been considered far more dangerous, as this act was considered degradingly feminising. Cicero is well aware of the dangers of sexuality in this regard:

And this time of life [*adulescentis*, i.e. youth] is above all to be protected against lust (*libidinibus*) and trained to toil and endurance of both mind and body (*labore patientiaque et animi et corporis*), so as to be strong for active duty in military and civil service. And even when they wish to relax their minds and give themselves up to enjoyment they should beware of excesses and bear in mind the rules of modesty. And this will be easier, if the young are not unwilling to have their elders join them even in their pleasures.⁵¹²

Cic. *Off.* 1.122.

Thus, for Cicero, training to increase both bodily and mental endurance is paramount for Roman youths, but so too is their protection from lust. It is unclear whether the lust they require protection from is their own, each other's, or that of other older people, but this ambiguity only further highlights the sexual dangers this

⁵¹² *Maxime autem haec aetas a libidinibus arcenda est exercendaque in labore patientiaque et animi et corporis, ut eorum et in bellicis et in civilibus officiis vigeat industria. Atque etiam cum relaxare animos et dare se iucunditati volent, caveant intemperantiam, meminerint verecundiae, quod erit facilius, si ne in eius modi quidem rebus maiores natu nolent interesse.*

age group were believed to have faced. Common stereotypes for young men included ideas of their gullibility and excess, though they also held a symbolic role as the military protectors of the city.⁵¹³ These ideas, along with the belief that they were easily and commonly found sexually attractive by older men, worked together to build fear of anything perceived to threaten the 'sexual integrity' of young men and soldiers.

The possibility that superior officers might try to seduce or rape the young soldiers under their command was a major fear. Our sources attest that superior officers might have sexual interest in their young soldiers, and the coercive potential of this power dynamic was clearly deemed problematic by Roman authors. An oft-repeated story in antiquity involves a soldier who is charged with the murder of an officer. However, the killer is forgiven by his commander, Marius, after it becomes apparent that he was only protecting himself from rape. Plutarch has the most detailed account in his *Life of Marius*, in which he makes clear that the attempted rapist, Caius Lusius, though a man of good reputation 'had a weakness for beautiful youths'.⁵¹⁴ We're told that Lusius had attempted the seduction of Trebonius previously, but had been rebuffed, but Trebonius, when summoned, had felt he had no option but to obey as Lusius was his commanding officer. Nevertheless, upon being sexually attacked, Trebonius kills Lusius, and later successfully defends himself in court on the basis of self-defence.⁵¹⁵ Interestingly, however, Trebonius has to bring 'witnesses to show that he had often refused the solicitations of Lusius and that in spite of large offers he had never prostituted himself to anyone.'⁵¹⁶

Valerius Maximus, Quintilian and Cicero also report the story, and Cicero even uses the case as an *exemplum* for how homicide in self-defence was often 'not merely justifiable but inevitable.'⁵¹⁷ This was clearly seen to be a danger in Roman military

⁵¹³ Gullibility: Hor. *Ars P.* 156-78; cf. Eyben (1993) 37. Excess: Cic. *Att.* 1.18.2; Polyb 31.25.4; Quint. 2.4. 3-8; cf. above, 131. Symbolic military role: Eyben (1993) 41-50.

⁵¹⁴ μειρακίων καλῶν, Plut. *Mar.* 14.3.

⁵¹⁵ Plut. *Mar.* 14.4-5.

⁵¹⁶ Plut. *Mar.* 14.5.

⁵¹⁷ Val. Max. 6.1.12; Quint. 3.11.1.14; Cic. *Mil.* 9. There is some confusion regarding the name of the victim who killed in self-defence: he went by the name Gaius Plotius according to Valerius Maximus,

life: an occurrence to be legislated against and punished heavily. Lusus happened to be Marius' nephew, but apparently even this did not stop Marius from acquitting his killer, such was the importance of protecting the sexual integrity of the young. Indeed, Plutarch even says that his good handling of the trial 'helped in no small degree to secure for Marius his third consulship.'⁵¹⁸ Presumably placing the protection of young soldiers above nepotistic revenge was a popular move.

Further examples show that Roman authors considered such seductions common. For example, Valerius Maximus writes that the military tribune Marcus Laetorius Mergus was summoned 'to trial before the people for having tried to seduce his adjutant.'⁵¹⁹ In addition, Livy tells us that Hannibal was prohibited from a military life in his youth precisely because his brother wanted to protect him from 'the concupiscence of our generals.'⁵²⁰ This might well preserve a Roman attitude of the grave sexual risk young men were exposed to under military command.

A passage from Cicero's *De Officiis* illuminates these ideas, reporting an anecdote of the Athenian general Pericles and playwright Sophocles:

When Pericles associated with the poet Sophocles as his colleague in command and they had met to confer about official business that concerned them both, a handsome boy chanced to pass and Sophocles said: 'Look, Pericles; what a pretty boy!' How pertinent was Pericles's reply: 'Hush, Sophocles, a general should keep not only his hands but his eyes under control.' And yet, if Sophocles had made this same remark at a trial of athletes, he would

Trebonius according to Plutarch, and Arruntius according to Quintilian. Cicero does not name either party.

⁵¹⁸ Plut. *Mar.* 14.6.

⁵¹⁹ Val. Max. 6.1.11.

⁵²⁰ Livy 21.3.2-4.

have incurred no just reprimand. So great is the significance of both place and circumstance.⁵²¹

Cic. *Off.* 1.144.

Here Cicero is clearly arguing that sexual self-control is important for military commanders. For Cicero, athletes may be sexualised without censure (at least in Classical Athens), but the sexualisation of soldiers by commanders would demonstrate a heinous lack of self-control. Commanders might very well find young men attractive, but they must not act upon it, as those who watch athletics might. Athletes are fair game, but soldiers are not. Additionally, the very act of *watching* – with sexual intent – is deemed almost as bad as acting upon one’s sexual feelings physically. This further demonstrates the power of being watched in Roman literary conception. Interestingly, Plutarch also mentions the anecdote, but makes no mention of athletes. Cicero, therefore, seems to have added the judgement concerning athletes himself.⁵²²

The idea that the sexually assaulted Trebonius had to defend himself from charges of prostitution is also important. This indicates that the sexual dynamics of wider Roman society were also at play here – like Cicero’s mime artist, his ability to withdraw consent would have been severely impacted had he prostituted himself previously.⁵²³ Polybius notes that flogging was allowed as punishment for soldiers ‘who have abused their body’ (κᾶν τις τῶν ἐν ἀκμῇ παραχρησάμενος εὐρεθῆ τῷ σώματι).⁵²⁴ This cryptic sentiment has been understood to mean various things – often with reference to ‘homosexuality’, or even masturbation – but it seems to make

⁵²¹ *Bene Pericles, cum haberet collegam in praetura Sophoclem poetam iique de communi officio convenissent et casu formosus puer praeteriret dixissetque Sophocles: "O puerum pulchrum, Pericle!" "At enim praetorem, Sophocle, decet non solum manus, sed etiam oculos abstinentes habere." Atqui hoc idem Sophocles si in athletarum probatione dixisset, iusta reprehensione caruisset. Tanta vis est et loci et temporis.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁵²² Plut. *Per.* 8.5. This is presuming that both Cicero and Plutarch knew the anecdote from an earlier, perhaps contemporary, source. It is also possible that Plutarch knew the tale only from Cicero, but removed the mention of athletes.

⁵²³ Above, 132; cf. Cic. *Planc.* 30-31.

⁵²⁴ Polyb. 6.37.9.

sense most as a punishment for consenting to a receptive sex role.⁵²⁵ There is strong evidence of unpunished and unopposed male-male sexual activity of soldiers in insertive roles with male prostitutes and slaves, but this is in grave contrast to the attitude to soldierly receptivity.⁵²⁶

The idea that a male soldier who was also a prostitute had less right to object to rape is, of course, troubling, but these were common Roman attitudes. Indeed, Valerius Maximus records another trial in which a man accused of rape accuses his victim of being a male prostitute.⁵²⁷ This is the double edged attitude towards male-male citizen sex at Rome: the insertive partner was blamed for seeking to degrade his partner, but so too was the receptive partner for failing to protect his own honour and chastity. Male prostitutes who were citizens had their rights restricted in Rome, or were often slaves and so were of degraded status already. It was *infames* and slaves who were expected to seek or tolerate a receptive role in sex at Rome. An anecdote from Suetonius is illuminative for these attitudes, in which he describes two junior officers who are arrested for stirring up a rebellion in the ranks. However, they successfully argue that because they were both *impudici* (i.e. people who sought receptive intercourse with other men), it is impossible that their fellow soldiers would have followed them or even listened to them enough to have led a rebellion.⁵²⁸ This is apparently how such individuals were treated in the army.

Jonathan Walters has convincingly explained why the rhetoric against male-male sex between soldiers was so strong. He argues that soldiers already, in some ways, shared characteristics with slaves. These included the fact that they could be beaten,

⁵²⁵ Sara Phang summarises the historiographical debate, Phang (2001) 262, 282. 'Homosexuality': Lilja (1983) 129; McGinn (1998) 40; Southern (2006) 146. Masturbation: Bailey (1955) 66; Lilja (1983) 111. Consenting to receptive intercourse: Phang (2001) 282; Fantham (2011) 131-32.

⁵²⁶ Soldiers in insertive roles with non-citizens: Plaut. *Pseud.* 1180-81; Val. Max. 6.1.10; Sall. *Cat.* 51.9; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.116; Livy 26.13.15; Tac. *Hist.* 4.14; Mart. 1.31. Hostility to soldiers in receptive roles: Polyb. 6.37.9; Plut. *Mar.* 14.4-5; Suet. *Dom.* 10.5. See Phang (2001) 262-96 for discussion and further examples.

⁵²⁷ Val. Max. 6.1.10. This suggests, at the very least, that Polybius' view that Roman soldiers who engaged in receptive sexual intercourse was not correct by the early imperial period – or the soldiers in this story would have been admitting a charge for which the consequences were death.

⁵²⁸ Suet. *Dom.* 10.5.

unlike other Roman citizens, who held strong legal protections against both sexual and physical assault.⁵²⁹ This, Walters argues, placed soldiers in a precarious position with regards to their sexual penetrability too via an equation with slaves, who had no choice but to submit to sexual as well as physical assaults. As Walters argues, ‘if we bear in mind the Roman protocol that conceptualized sexual activity as being about the penetration of the less powerful partner by the more powerful one, the act of beating [...] comes into focus as being very similar.’⁵³⁰ The answer to the conundrum seemingly lay in the absolute enshrining of the soldier’s right to sexual inviolability, as evoked in the repeated stories of rape defence killings. I argue that pederasty in training situations reminded Romans of slavery, because, for whatever reason, Roman authors had more forceful ideas about the optimum power imbalance between sexual partners than occurred in earlier Greek literature. By penetrating a freeborn citizen, one turned them symbolically into slaves. In this light, Plutarch’s remarks on how athletics and pederasty were the causes of Greece’s enslavement to the Romans take on even further importance.

The disruption of a man’s masculine integrity by his penetration was also expected to impact his martial ability by feminising him. This is because Roman authors expected effeminacy in men who sought receptive male-male sex, and as I have established, effeminacy and unwarlikeness were expected to go hand in hand. For example, Nepos records an incident where a man had his enemy’s son brought up effeminate in order to soften the danger to himself of the inherited feud; Seneca also makes a similar point in the hypothetical.⁵³¹ I argue that behind the fears of the spread of Eastern effeminacy to the Roman youth and army was the idea that they would fight less well after this process was complete. This was, ultimately, what was at stake in this rhetoric of condemnation: allowing soldiers to undertake receptive male-male sex was tantamount to accepting that Roman soldiers may become like

⁵²⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1.23.4; Cic. *Verr.* 2.24.59-60, 2.42.109-10; Livy 2.55.5, 10.9.4; Cic. *Rab. Post.* 12; cf. Crook (1967) 250ff.

⁵³⁰ Walters (1997) 37.

⁵³¹ Nep. *Dion* 4.3; Sen. *Ben.* 7.20.1-5.

women or slaves in warfare. The *gymnasium*, for these reasons among others, came to represent this unacceptably grave danger.

Self-Beautification

One further aspect demands discussion. The idea of 'self-beautification' is important because part of the stereotype of effeminate men involved their doing so in order to seduce other men. Crucially, however, this was yet another aspect of effeminacy which body-obsessed athletes could be accused of.

There are clear associations between self-beautification, effeminacy and unwarlikeness. Juvenal makes these connections clear, and also links them to the East, when he mocks both Eastern cultists – the Baptae and the Galli – and the emperor Otho, by comparing them:

Another [cultist] holds a mirror, the accessory of the *pathici* Otho, "spoils of Auruncan Actor," in which he used to admire himself when he'd put on his armour, while giving orders to advance into battle. It's a matter that deserves its mention in recent annals and modern history, that a mirror was part of the kit for civil warfare. It's the mark of the supreme general, I suppose, to slaughter Galba while pampering his skin, to aspire to the Palatine throne while plastering his face with a face mask of dough. That's something not attempted by quivered

Semiramis in her Assyrian city, or Cleopatra grieving in
her ship at Actium.⁵³²

Juv. 2.99-109.

Pathicus has a clear translation in Latin: it refers to ‘the penetrated man’.⁵³³ Here Otho is being painted as a typical ‘stock effeminate’, deeply interested in personal grooming. Military themes highlight the abomination of his obsession, as his mirror is mockingly compared to warlike Turnus’ glorious spear in the *Aeneid* (*Actoris Aurunci spoliium* is a direct quote from Virgil).⁵³⁴ The juxtaposition of his military role and self-beautification is thoroughly mocked, in keeping with one of Juvenal’s favourite themes, hypocrisy. Otho is also compared to two famous Eastern queens, Semiramis and Cleopatra, but he is hyperbolically accused of being worse than either of them. Indeed, the Queens appear far more warlike than he does, as Semiramis the Assyrian wears her quiver, and Cleopatra mourns a recent naval loss.⁵³⁵ Interestingly, Nero, too, is mocked by Cassius Dio’s Boudicca, ‘in name a man, [but is] in fact a woman, as is proved by his singing, lyre-playing and beautification of his person.’⁵³⁶ In fact, Dio also links his chosen effeminate emperor with Cleopatra, Semiramis and other Eastern queens.⁵³⁷ References to the East abound in many of the sources discussing female adornments, and it seems that self-beautification was deeply integrated into Roman orientalist rhetoric.⁵³⁸

⁵³² *ille tenet speculum, pathici gestamen Othonis, | Actoris Aurunci spoliium, quo se ille videbat | armatum, cum iam tolli vexilla iuberet. | res memoranda novis annalibus atque recenti | historia, speculum civilis sarcina belli. | nimirum summi ducis est occidere Galbam | et curare cutem, [summi constantia civis | Bebriaci campis] solium adfectare Palati | et pressum in faciem digitis extendere panem, | quod nec in Assyria pharetrata Sameramis urbe | maesta nec Actiaca fecit Cleopatra carina.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁵³³ For the relevant Latin sexual terminology, see C. Williams (2010) 241-45; Adams (1982).

⁵³⁴ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 12.94.

⁵³⁵ My fourth chapter, below, is dedicated to the orientalist connotations of naval vessels, and orientalist themes in the description of Actium in particular.

⁵³⁶ Cass. Dio 62.6.3.

⁵³⁷ Cass. Dio 62.6.2.

⁵³⁸ Juv. 6.184-200; Prop. 1.2; Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.101-02; Mart. 2.29, 10.68; Plin. *HN* 9.59.119-21, 19.5.22; Tac. *Ann.* 3.53; Luc. 3.238-40; Ov. *Am.* 1.14; Petr. *Sat.* 55; Sen. *Phaedra* 388-403; cf. Wyke (1994) 140-41; Bowditch (2012) 124-28; Olson (2008) 88. Trade with the East for luxury products was not mere literary fantasy, cf. Young (2003) 13-14; McLaughlin (2010) 141-78.

The use of adornment, perfume or depilation by a man was usually seen as an intentional act of feminisation. This identifies self-beautification as the realm of women – and non-ideal women at that.⁵³⁹ Plautus mocks the self-beautification of two women in his *Poenulus*: incessant from their very waking moment and tiring out two water-carriers and maids in the process.⁵⁴⁰ Self-beautification was often linked with less-than-respectful women like prostitutes and adulterers, as Juvenal suggests when he writes that ‘a woman buys scents and lotions with adultery in mind.’⁵⁴¹ The fact that male beauty was such a celebrated feature of Greek athletics, as enshrined in the inside-and-out beauty described as καλός, makes it worth investigating whether Roman authors also held these associations. Male beauty was celebrated and eroticised by many Greek authors, and indeed, competitions at athletic events were even held to select the most beautiful youth present.⁵⁴² Aristotle cites a popular poem which illustratively celebrates the beauty of Chalcidian youths, who are encouraged not to begrudge older men love.⁵⁴³

However, at Rome, to be a beautiful citizen boy was dangerous. This is why Juvenal writes that ‘a son with a remarkable body always makes his parents miserable and nervous, since beauty so rarely coincides with chastity.’⁵⁴⁴ The implication seems to be that the sexual attention a beautiful boy is subject to makes his protection more difficult. I have already shown that Cicero delineates two types of beauty – one male, and one female; one natural and dignified and the other dangerous. Anthony Corbeill argues that ‘a male exhibiting “feminine beauty” (*venustas*) threatens to overlook native sensibilities in favor of a foreign aestheticism...’⁵⁴⁵ These ‘native

⁵³⁹ Cf. Olson (2008) 88-89. Plautus has a character state ‘Purple is there for concealing old age, jewelry for concealing an ugly woman. A beautiful woman will be more beautiful naked than dressed in purple. What’s more, if a woman has a bad character she’s adorned for nothing. An ugly character besmirches beautiful adornment worse than dung. Yes, if she’s beautiful she’s adorned more than enough.’, Plaut. *Most.* 289-92.

⁵⁴⁰ Plaut. *Poen.* 210-33.

⁵⁴¹ Juv. 6.O21-24, part of the so-called ‘Oxford fragment’ of Juvenal which might be a later insertion.

⁵⁴² Crowther (1985).

⁵⁴³ Plut. *Mor.* 761b.

⁵⁴⁴ *filius autem corporis egregii miseros trepidosque parentes semper habet: rara est adeo concordia formae atque pudicitiae*, Juv. 10.295-98. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁵⁴⁵ Corbeill (2006) 446. The term derives from the goddess Venus.

sensibilities' involve a particularly prevalent idea in Roman sources that beauty should be natural, and not adorned nor ornamented, something which was considered deceitful, or even fraudulent.⁵⁴⁶ Livy has the general Papirius exhibit this attitude for soldiers in particular, stating that 'a soldier should be rough to look on, not adorned with gold and silver but putting his trust in iron and in courage.'⁵⁴⁷ Plutarch even has Pompey lose the battle of Pharsalus partly because his troops balked at having their faces targeted by Caesar – 'for these blooming and handsome war-dancers (he said) would not stand their ground for fear of having their youthful beauty marred'.⁵⁴⁸ For these authors, an interest in personal beauty was unwarlike.

Crucially, athletes were also thought to be overly concerned with their appearances. For example, Martial has a wrestler worry about getting mud in his 'shining hair.'⁵⁴⁹ Additionally, Cicero's argues that single-mindedly obsessed athletes seek not only health and musculature but also an 'attractive tan'.⁵⁵⁰ Indeed, Cicero argues that however much philosophers laud male-male love as a 'love involving friendship' and deny it is *stuprum*, in reality the only ones to gather sexual interest in Greek *gymnasia* are the beautiful and the young, and never the ugly old ones.⁵⁵¹ He also tells a story in which all the most beautiful boys of Croton were to be found at the *palaestra*.⁵⁵² Athleticism and beauty were strongly linked. But did Roman authors believe that beautification was an important aim for athletes? Mireille Lee has reframed the debate in this regard, arguing that Greek 'body culture' did not celebrate a natural body, but one intentionally constructed through exercise. For Lee, the strict dieting and exercise regimes often mentioned by critics of athletics actually

⁵⁴⁶ Plaut. *Most.* 289-92; cf. Olson (2008) 80-95; Richlin (1995).

⁵⁴⁷ Livy 9.40.4-5.

⁵⁴⁸ Plut. *Pomp.* 69.3. Pompey's army was often constructed as Eastern (and indeed did contain many Eastern contingents), Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.4, 3.13; Luc. 7.270-79; App. *B. Civ.* 2.10.70-71, 2.11.75. For further discussion, see below, 213.

⁵⁴⁹ Mart. 14.50.

⁵⁵⁰ Cic. *Opt. Gen.* 2.8.

⁵⁵¹ Cic. *Rep.* 4.4.

⁵⁵² Cic. *Inv. Rhet.* 1-2.

constitute intense and intentional ‘body-modification’.⁵⁵³ I argue that Roman sources show some awareness of this distinction.

One common criticism in Roman sources involve the big muscles of athletes. Roman authors seemed to think that athletes sought these at expense of the cultivation of their minds. For example, the first century BCE architect Vitruvius argues that athletes can only make their own bodies stronger, while literary authors can make the minds of themselves and even their wider readers stronger. The effect also lasts longer – while the works of authors can last into the future, an athlete’s body soon passes.⁵⁵⁴ Cicero echoes this sentiment, mocking an elderly athlete who laments his shrunken muscles: ‘for you never gained renown from your real self, but [merely] from brute strength of lungs and limb.’⁵⁵⁵ We clearly see here a vastly different reception of the strong male body – in Greece a symbol of heroic, elite excellence, but for Roman authors a sign of self-indulgence instead. The Younger Seneca goes even further in this regard:

It is indeed foolish, my dear Lucilius, and very unsuitable for a cultured (*litterato*) man, to work hard over-developing the muscles and broadening the shoulders and strengthening the lungs. For although your heavy feeding produces good results and your sinews grow solid, you can never be a match, either in strength or in weight, for a first-class bull. [...] In the first place, they [athletes] have their exercises, at which they must work and waste their life-force (*spiritum exhaurit*) and render it less fit to bear a

⁵⁵³ M. Lee (2009) 155.

⁵⁵⁴ Vitr. 9.1.

⁵⁵⁵ Cic. *Sen.* 9.27. Cicero also references the seeking of muscles by athletes at Cic. *Opt. Gen.* 2.8.

strain or the severer studies. Second, their keen edge is dulled by heavy eating.⁵⁵⁶

Sen. *Ep.* 1.15.2-3.

The comparison to bulls is a trivialising one, and Seneca clearly sees over-exercise as a distraction from more important matters. 'Whatever you do', he goes on, 'come back soon from body to mind.'⁵⁵⁷ He also sees athletic exercise as exhausting, and not endurance-building. Martial, too, mocks an athlete who 'makes his neck big by futile toil.'⁵⁵⁸ There is clearly an aesthetic element at play here – these athletes are frivolously modifying their bodies.

There are also indications that this strength was seen to be of only aesthetic value, or was considered to be in some way illusory. Quintilian, for example, in rhetorical metaphor argues that 'it is not the athlete's bulging muscles that we need but the soldier's strong arm.' He goes on to use another metaphor to make the same point: 'the coat of many colours which Demetrius of Phalerum was said to wear is not much protection against the dust of the forum.'⁵⁵⁹ Here, the author is articulating the difference between adorned pretention and austere robustness. For Quintilian, big athletic muscles are like a gaudy, effeminate, Easterner's cloak.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁶ *Stulta est enim, mi Lucili, et minime conveniens litterato viro occupatio exercendi lacertos et dilatandi cervicem ac latera firmandi; cum tibi feliciter sagina cesserit et tori creverint, nec vires umquam opimi bovis nec pondus aequabis. [...] primum exercitationes, quarum labor spiritum exhaurit et inhabilem intentioni ac studiis acrioribus reddit. Deinde copia ciborum subtilitas impeditur.*

⁵⁵⁷ Sen. *Ep.* 15.5.

⁵⁵⁸ Mart. 14.48. In the next epigram, he writes 'Why do stout arms go to waste on the silly dumbbell? Digging a vineyard is better exercise for men.', Mart. 14.49.

⁵⁵⁹ *um in iis de quibus erit quaestio meminerimus non athletarum toris sed militum lacertis opus esse, nec versicolorem illam qua Demetrius Phalereus dicebatur uti vestem bene ad forensem pulverem facere.,* Quint. 10.1.33.

⁵⁶⁰ Quintilian seems to hold slightly contradictory views of athletes throughout his *Institutio Oratoria*. He repeats a similar sentiment about the uselessness of muscles at 2.15.25-6, but then also seems to go against it at 8.3.10-11, writing that 'an athlete whose muscles have been developed by exercise may be good to look at; he is also more ready for the fray (*certamini*). True beauty is never separated from usefulness.' *Certamen* can mean a contest of sport or war, with the context including athletes perhaps pointing towards the former. The passage nevertheless attests to a usefulness to muscles lacking in his other statements on this topic. One has to assume Quintilian is picking his metaphors for their use in teaching rhetoric, and not for consistency in attitude to athletes.

The material products used in the *gymnasium* are also important. This is because some of these products – oil, foremost – shared many qualities with self-beautifying products like cosmetics and perfume. Pliny the Elder, in particular, focuses upon one of these products:

I shall not say more about this part of the subject any more than, by heaven, I shall about those preparations of earth and wax of which the *ceromata* are made, so much employed by our youth in their exercises of the body, at the cost of all vigour of the mind (*perdit animorum*).⁵⁶¹

Plin. *HN* 35.47.18.

Ceroma was a mixture of oil, wax and mud that coated the floor of the *palaestra* for wrestling. He suggests this oily material is to blame for the degeneration of the youth, and not the exercise directly. This seems to tie into his later complaint that ‘the Greeks have diverted the use of olive-oil to serve the purpose of luxury by making it a regular practice in their *gymnasia*.’⁵⁶² Seneca also makes this link with luxury, criticising athletes who take commands from slaves who have the wine-flask in one hand and the oil-flask in the other.⁵⁶³ Ovid, too, talks of the ‘delight’ of those glistening with oil in the *palaestra*, and compares it to the enjoyment of music.⁵⁶⁴ Quintilian says that handsome bodies, accustomed to oil-treatments, would never be able to cope with a soldier’s life.⁵⁶⁵

There are a number of reasons for the specific association of *gymnasia* oil with Eastern luxury and effeminacy. Firstly, and most simply, these authors may have known that the expenses involved in maintaining the oil supply for such facilities was prodigious; easily one of their biggest running costs.⁵⁶⁶ Tacitus does, after all,

⁵⁶¹ *plura de hac parte non dicturus, non, Hercules, magis quam de terrae usu in ceromatis, quibus exercendo iuventus nostra corporis vires perdit animorum.*

⁵⁶² Plin. *HN* 15.5.19.

⁵⁶³ Sen. *Ep.* 15.3; cf.

⁵⁶⁴ Ov. 5.667.

⁵⁶⁵ Quint. 11.3.26.

⁵⁶⁶ Kennell (2001) 123-24; McLean (2002) 317; Zuiderhoek (2009) 59.

criticise Nero for consecrating a *gymnasium* for the Roman elite and supplying them with oil – ‘a Greek form of liberality.’⁵⁶⁷ However, I argue that an association with cosmetics and perfume may also have been involved. I have already established that Romans could see athletics as an act of self-beautification done at expense of the mind. However, athletic uses of oil must also have raised danger signs in this regard. This is because many perfumes and cosmetics in the ancient world were also based on olive oil.⁵⁶⁸ The application of such similar material to the body must therefore have had the potential to be confused, ideologically. Indeed, Quintilian actually cites a passage from Aristotle in which he argued that athletes used cosmetics: ‘paint to fake colour and useless fat to fake real strength.’⁵⁶⁹

More often it is oil, and not paint, that seems to remind critics of cosmetics. For example, when Martial suggests that a wrestler does not want his hair ruined by the mud of the *palaestra*, the language used (*nitidos*) suggests pre-oiled hair.⁵⁷⁰ Oiled hair was a popular feature of effeminate Eastern caricature, for example when Aeneas is insulted by his opponent Iarbas in the *Aeneid* for his ‘dripping hair’ (*crinemque madentem*).⁵⁷¹ In a passage from Persius, an effeminate sunbather is criticised for having an oiled and perfumed beard – meanwhile having his crotch and anus depilated.⁵⁷² Furthermore, his depilation is (satirically) expected to have been undertaken by ‘five wrestling-trainers’ (*palaestritae*) – as if part of the training regime. This source speaks to a Roman association of the *palaestra* with effeminate perfuming and depilation. These were all self-beautifying behaviours.

⁵⁶⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 14.47; cf. Cass. Dio 50.27.1, where Antony is mockingly called a *gymnasiarch* rather than an *imperator* by Octavian.

⁵⁶⁸ Chemistry of ancient perfume: Salisbury (2001) 74; Forbes (1955) 1-50. Gendered connotations of perfume: Juv. 6.462-69; Gell. 6.12.5; Verg. *Aen* 12.97-100; Juv. 8.113-15; cf. Colin (1955); Edwards (1993) 89; C. Williams (1999) 141; M. Lee (2009) 170-73 (in Classical Athens).

⁵⁶⁹ Quint. 2.15.25-6.

⁵⁷⁰ Mart. 14.50.

⁵⁷¹ Verg. *Aen.* 4.216. His hair is later accused of being perfumed with Myrrh: 12.97-100.

⁵⁷² Pers. 4.35-3. Depilation was considered effeminate, cf. Plaut. *Aul.* 401-02; Plin. *HN* 29.8.26; 32.47.135; Mart. 2.29, 2.36, 9.27, 9.47; Juv. 2.8-13, 8.111-20; Suet. *Aug.* 68; Pers. 4.23-52; Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.505-08; cf. Gleason (1995) 67-76. The second edition of Williams’ *Roman Homosexuality* contains an expanded section on depilation, C. Williams (2010) 141-44.

Roman authors also often explicitly censure oiled hair as incompatible with a martial lifestyle. This is usually understood in its role as a vehicle for perfume. For example, Ovid has Pentheus, king of Thebes, talk about an effeminate boy, 'unarmed, who takes no pleasure in fighting, or weapons, or the use of horses, but in myrrh-drenched hair'.⁵⁷³ Cicero uses the idea similarly, saying Catiline's soldiers are nothing to worry about as they 'shine with ointment', while the Elder Pliny feigns surprise that even soldiers these days 'are using hair-oil under a helmet!'⁵⁷⁴ The same author suggests that perfume was first brought west by Alexander the Great, who found it in Darius' camp, but that he apparently saw no use for it, since he was 'a warrior soiled with warfare'.⁵⁷⁵ Furthermore, Horace explicitly states that though he enjoys perfumed hair at parties, he would never do so on military duty.⁵⁷⁶ Iarbas' insult serves the same unwarlike characterisation. Perfumed hair was a symbol of unwarlikeness, perhaps more clearly than any other. On this our sources are adamant.

Bodies were also treated with oil-based perfumes, and our sources are no less censorious regarding these. For example, Vespasian apparently dismissed a junior officer who came to him smelling of perfume, informing him 'it would have been better if you had come to me smelling of garlic' – clearly preferring a rough smell to a soft one, just as a soldier's lifestyle ought to be rough rather than soft.⁵⁷⁷ Caesar also has to subversively defend his troops from charges of effeminacy by declaring that they fight well despite being perfumed – suggesting that usually perfume would seem incongruous with warlikeness.⁵⁷⁸ Finally, Juvenal contrasts *inbellis Rhodios unctamque Corinthon* – unwarlike Rhodes and perfumed Corinth – with hairy Spaniards and Gauls, saying that the latter are much more dangerous in war.⁵⁷⁹ The sources strongly suggest that perfume was seen as unwarlike.

⁵⁷³ ...*quem neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum, sed madidus murra crinis...*, Ov. *Met.* 3.554-55:

⁵⁷⁴ Cic. *Cat.* 2.5; Plin. *HN* 8.4.23.

⁵⁷⁵ *quando taedebat unguenti bellatorem et militia sordidum*, Plin. *HN* 7.29.108.

⁵⁷⁶ Hor. *Carm.* 2.7.6-8.

⁵⁷⁷ Suet. *Vesp.* 8.3.

⁵⁷⁸ Suet. *Iul.* 67.

⁵⁷⁹ Juv. 8.113-15.

Classical Athenian literature also associated perfume with women and effeminate Eastern foreigners – most often Persians, Lydians and Egyptians.⁵⁸⁰ Polybius, writing and living in Rome, relates that the Seleucids heavily scented their *gymnasium* oil – with saffron, cinnamon, spikenard, fenugreek, marjoram and orris, ‘all of exquisite perfume.’⁵⁸¹ Polybius relates no particular surprise that they should be doing this – though it must be noted the specific event he is describing occurred in the Greco-Persian Seleucid Empire, ‘Eastern’ even for the Greeks.

In Classical Athens, it seems that certain kinds of perfume were acceptable, for men, in certain situations – for example, during *symposia*, for their ‘luxurious and erotic qualities.’⁵⁸² Xenophon shows this ambivalence to perfume when he has Socrates state:

For just as one kind of clothing looks well on a woman and another kind on a man, so the scents appropriate to men and to women are different. No man, surely, ever puts on perfume for a man’s sake. [...] But to women the odour of the olive oil used in the gymnasium is more delightful when you wear it than perfume, and more missed when you don’t.⁵⁸³

Xen. *Symp.* 2.3-4.

This passage further shows the material closeness of perfume and anointing oil and tells us that though stronger smells were considered effeminate, the smell of olive oil of the *gymnasium* could be considered pleasurable too. The Elder Pliny tells us, however, that *gymnasium* oil in his day – presumably in Roman *gymnasia* – was

⁵⁸⁰ Xenophanes of Colophon, Fr. 3 DK = J. Skinner (2012) 2.8; Hdt. 1.195; Xen. *Cyr.* 8.8.20; *Oec.* 4.23; Eur. *Or.* 1105-17; *Bacch.* 253; Ath. 4.129a; cf. M. Lee (2009) 169-70; Forbes (1955) 25-26. Assertions, like the Elder Pliny’s, that the Greeks first learned how to make or use perfume from the Achaemenid Persians are ahistorical, as perfume is clearly referenced by earlier poets, cf. Forbes (1955) 25.

⁵⁸¹ Polyb. 30.26.1.

⁵⁸² M. Lee (2009) 171.

⁵⁸³ ὥσπερ γάρ τοι ἐσθῆς ἄλλη μὲν γυναικί, ἄλλη δὲ ἀνδρὶ καλή, οὕτω καὶ ὀσμὴ ἄλλη μὲν ἀνδρὶ, ἄλλη δὲ γυναικί πρέπει. καὶ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς μὲν δήπου ἔνεκα ἀνὴρ οὐδεὶς μύρω χρίεται. [...] αὐταὶ γὰρ τοῦτου ὄζουσι: ἐλαίου δὲ τοῦ ἐν γυμνασίοις ὀσμὴ καὶ παροῦσα ἡδίων ἢ μύρου γυναιξὶ καὶ ἀποῦσα οἰκονομότερα.

perfumed. He states that oil used in *gymnasia* 'is also perfumed with scents, though of a very poor quality.'⁵⁸⁴ If this was generally true in Roman *gymnasia*, then the perfumed oil was at grave risk of holding all the negative, unwarlike, effeminate associations I have described.

Silius Italicus does seem to discuss the use of oil by athletes in this negative way. I have already cited the passage where Marcellus tells his Roman soldiers that they are fighting 'cowards [...] who delight to oil their limbs till they glisten (*splendescere*).'⁵⁸⁵ The passage has clear sexual connotations in terms of wrestling and sexual receptivity – but '*splendescere*' suggests a kind of glittering beauty, an unwarlike aesthetic.⁵⁸⁵ Importantly, oil was also the principle sexual lubricant for the Ancient World, giving it increased sexual charge – especially in anal intercourse, for which it is more important mechanically. Martin Kilmer has highlighted the importance of olive oil jars in pederastic scenes on vases from Archaic and Classical Greece, while the Greek-speaking pseudo-Lucian, probably writing in describes a sexual encounter involving oil rub-downs with a girl pointedly named *palaestra*.⁵⁸⁶ Plato's expectation that private wrestling matches could easily flow into sex might also support the idea that the use of oil in such a homoerotic environment as the *gymnasium* and the use of olive oil as sexual lubricant were not disassociated.

These features contributed to the negative associations of the *gymnasium*. The general corporality of the endeavour was clearly received by some Roman authors as trivial body-modification – an act which signified the neglect of mental attributes. Roman military training – despite presumably similar activity levels – did not suffer the same associations, due to its valourisation as a method for instilling virtue. Athletic training was too specialised, leisurely and foreign to gain similar recognition, and besides, literature from Greece made clear that the beauty of athletes was part of the game. It also in no way helped that gymnasium oil shared many qualities with

⁵⁸⁴ Plin. *HN* 15.7.29.

⁵⁸⁵ Philostratus, a Greek of the second and third centuries CE relates a less critical, but similar sentiment: 'yellow dust also adds glisten and is a delight to see on a nice body which is in good shape.', Philostr. *Gymnasticus* 56.

⁵⁸⁶ Kilmer (1993); Pseudo-Lucian, *Asinus* 51.

cosmetics, hair and body perfume (already considered effeminate, unwarlike and Eastern) and sexual lubricants. Any attempt to disentangle athletics from orientalist stereotyping was bound to fail, for these reasons.

Conclusions

In Roman criticisms of athletics, constructions of 'military masculinity' were never very far away. Indeed, I assert that they were central. Roman constructions of 'other' ethnicities tended to revolve around ideas of collective warlikeness, and athletics simply touched too many cultural buttons to be received in any other way. This is true when focusing on smaller associated elements. Nudity, for example, reminded of conquered slaves, oil reminded of perfume, and body-modification could seem like a form of self-beautification. These were all behaviours which threatened the constructed masculinity of the user, which in turn threatened the military potential of the individual and group. These elements reminded Roman authors of the 'unwarlike' lifestyle that they contrasted with an exemplary, illusory, but ideologically important Roman, martial one. Roman authors dichotomised effeminate and warlike lifestyles, and had a robustly constructed notion of which behaviours could lead to either one. Tough, enduring military training was required to build a hardy, virtuous and masculine Roman soldier, but apparent similarities between 'Greek' and 'Roman' training methods forced an even more intense spotlight onto the all-important differences between them. Greek training was seen to be superficially corresponding, but inferior, with a few extremely problematised elements.

The masculinity of soldiers was deemed especially precarious for various reasons – not least because of the idea that effeminate soldiers could not defend the state, therefore making the state itself prone to penetration. This was a process that was understood to have happened in Greece, and to be a risk for Rome itself; any move towards Greek training thus risked invasion. Worse still, the most fearsome Roman bogeymen were those who lived an effeminate lifestyle and sought penetration by other men. Pederasty was a behaviour inextricably associated with the *gymnasium*,

and this provided final confirmation that Roman suspicions that the activities of such places might lead Romans astray. This danger was further amplified by a Roman understanding that it was ordinary for older men to find young, fit men sexually attractive. Athletes were publically exposed to the views of sexually interested gazers – but in many ways so were training Roman soldiers. This further solidified the idea that soldiers should be protected from sexual interest, and as part of this defence Roman authors strongly articulated the ideological distance between athletics and military training. All in all, the associations of athletics – the smaller ones and the larger – came together in a kind of ‘perfect storm’ which encompassed many Roman authors’ greatest ideological fears. This is how something which might have been considered a harmless leisure activity could, moved through the ideological apparatus of Roman authors, rhetorically become a seditious, gendered danger to the entire Roman state.

Arma and Orientalism

Arma virumque cano, 'of arms and the man, I sing.'⁵⁸⁷ So begins Virgil's famous *Aeneid*, the seminal text so often studied in the search for Roman identity.⁵⁸⁸ The literal (and literary) primacy given to arms in this text pays further testament to Roman warlike ideology and the use of martial themes in Roman self-construction.⁵⁸⁹ This interest in arms extends from the first line to the last of that work, and is replicated in literature far beyond the *Aeneid*. It is apparent that in much of Roman literature, arms were not often presented as workmanlike military tools but were instead imbued with intense symbolic significance. In Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, the sword's power to change personal and national destinies is regularly stressed, and, in the poem, arms represent valourised, masculine modes of behaviour, and expertise in their use sets individuals and ethnicities apart. At others, they are perverted by civil war and are converted into barbaric tools of reckless destruction.

A passage from book four illustrates these ideas, as Lucan describes the heroic suicide of hopelessly outnumbered Caesarian soldiers:

...even after the example set by these heroes, spiritless peoples without such lofty *virtus* will not understand how simple a feat it is to escape slavery by suicide. The tyrant (*regna*) is dreaded for his sword, and freedom is weighed

⁵⁸⁷ Verg. *Aen.* 1.1. *Arma* refers to implements of war, and particularly those used at close quarters: shields, swords, and body armour. 'Arms' is the usual English translation, which slightly neglects the necessarily incorporated ideas of armour, shields etc.

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Toll (1997); Syed (2005); Reed (2009).

⁵⁸⁹ The line appears repeatedly in Pompeian graffiti, affirming the popular appeal of this line in particular, Milnor (2009) 291; Milnor (2014) 233-72.

down by cruel weapons, and men are ignorant that the purpose of the sword is to save every man from slavery.⁵⁹⁰

Luc. 4.575-79.

Lucan is clearly utilising the semiotics of swords here for ethnographic purposes. The associations mark out the suicidal Romans as heroic, republican and brave, knowledgeable in both the use of the sword and what it represents. Swords and bravery, in conjunction, allow Romans to escape situations which more cowardly peoples could not. Under tyrannies, it is suggested, tyrants have a monopoly on martial force, and slave-like cowards permit them. Not so for the Romans, according to this martial self-construction.⁵⁹¹

Despite clear literary significance, the symbolic representation of swords in Roman literature is a neglected area of academic study. Literature has been used to assess their practical use and design history, and archaeological studies in the same vein are also more commonplace.⁵⁹² One of the very few studies to devote some attention to literary portrayals is Simon James' *Rome and the Sword* (2011), which acknowledges their symbolic importance within constructions of Roman masculinity. For James, this goes beyond literary significance and actually constitutes a program of 'indoctrination' that constructively contributed to Roman military success.⁵⁹³ James' work is therefore one step forward. However, the work is focused quite traditionally upon narrative military history interspersed with mainly archaeological discussions of sword designs. A work focusing purely on the

⁵⁹⁰ *Non tamen ignavae post haec exempla virorum | Percipient gentes, quam sit non ardua virtus | Servitium fugisse manu. Sed regna timentur | Ob ferrum, et saevis libertas uritur armis: | Ignoratque datos, ne quisquam serviat, enses.* Trans. Loeb, adapted. Silius Italicus relays a similar idea, writing 'New-found freedom brandished the sword and threw off the yoke', Sil. 14.99-107.

⁵⁹¹ The Romans described here are of the Caesarian faction, presented throughout the text as a mixture of Italians and Gauls. This is in contrast to the presentation of Pompey's troops as an Eastern multitude. The 'cowardly peoples' depicted elsewhere in the text are overwhelmingly Eastern, Luc. 3.297-306, 7.525-57, 8.363-90.

⁵⁹² Christian Mik's *Studien zur Römischen Schwertbewaffnung in der Kaiserzeit* (2007) is particularly noteworthy, as Miks combines literary and archaeological evidence. The work of Summer and D'Amato (2009) highlights the usefulness of 'representational' evidence from monuments and funerary inscriptions along with archaeological and literary evidence; Feugere (2002) and Bishop and Coulston (2006) are archaeologically grounded; Zhmodikov (2000) focuses on literary representations; Goldman (2013) provides a useful summary.

⁵⁹³ James (2011) 69.

semiology of the sword is necessary. Such a project is far beyond the scope of this thesis, but I intend to show in this chapter that Romans used arms as a way to critique the warlike characteristics of Eastern peoples. This is using such rhetoric as a kind of 'negative evidence' – i.e. assessing the meaning of arms by analysing their use in discussions of those considered less worthy of/experienced with swords. I argue that Easterners were feminised via an ideological tradition that questioned their relationship with swords, weaponry and armour.

Arma Aliena: Gender and Arms

In Roman literature, femininity was thought to be antithetical to masculine, military power. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that arms were utilised symbolically in such discourses. Cicero shows the association with masculinity quite clearly in this fuller passage from his *Tusculanae Disputationes*:

For shield, sword, and helmet are reckoned a burden by our soldiers as little as their shoulders, arms and hands; for weapons they say are the soldiers' limbs, and these they carry handy so that, should need arise, they fling aside their burdens and have their weapons as free for use as their limbs. Look at the training (*exercitatio*) of the legions, the double, the attack, the battle-cry, what an amount of toil (*laboris*) it means! Hence comes the courage (*animus*) in battle that makes them ready to face wounds. Take a soldier of equal bravery, but untrained (*inexercitatum*), and he will seem a woman (*mulier*)⁵⁹⁴

Cic. *Tusc.* 2.16.37.

Ideas of *patientia* and military training are clearly referenced here, but the imagery plainly masculinises *arma* too. Appropriately masculine soldiers carry *arma* without

⁵⁹⁴ *nam scutum, gladium, galeam in onere nostri milites non plus numerant quam humeros, lacertos, manus; arma enim membra militis esse dicunt; quae quidem ita geruntur apte, ut, si usus ferat, abiectis oneribus,*

complaint, and their use is as natural as the use of their (actual, biological) arms.⁵⁹⁵ Good use of *arma* is a result of strong training, and those less trained – even the brave – seem more like women, who are not naturally suited to using weapons. This is quite straightforwardly gendered.

This gendered dichotomy is also apparent in Statius' *Thebaid*. Statius describes an uprising of the women of Lemnos, who kill their husbands, fathers and sons in their beds.⁵⁹⁶ Importantly, the imagery of the sword is used extensively in Statius' depiction of the event. Venus appears to a woman named Polyxo in a dream, materially gifts her a sword, and incites her to begin the androicide.⁵⁹⁷ The idea that militarism is contrary to female nature is heavily and explicitly stressed, as Polyxo encourages her fellow women to 'take courage and banish your sex (*pellite sexum*)!'⁵⁹⁸ Later, spooked by an approaching ship, their *furor* disappears, their gender returns, and their ability with arms – once so deadly – also disappears: '[we] scatter from above with our feeble arms our wobbling missiles against Telamon and Peleus'.⁵⁹⁹ Later, 'hearts froze, hands relaxed in a shudder, alien weapons (*arma aliena*) fell, their sex returned to their hearts.'⁶⁰⁰ For Statius, women with swords are unnatural.

The temporary banishment of femininity apparently required for successful armed operations is a strong indication of the masculine associations of martial activity. The swords also clearly exhibit the same associations. They are *arma aliena*, something that the fourth-century CE commentator Lactantius Placidus explains to mean 'not

expeditis armis ut membris pugnare possint. Quid? exercitatio legionum, quid? ille cursus, concursus, clamor quanti laboris est! Ex hoc ille animus in proeliis paratus ad vulnera. Adduc pari animo inexercitatum militem, mulier videbitur. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁵⁹⁵ I note that the words are confusingly identical in English. This is not the case in Latin, which uses *brachium* or *lacertos* to denote the arm limb. The English 'arm' has origins in Proto-Germanic.

⁵⁹⁶ The women are incited to epic fury (*furor*) by Venus. *Furor* was a reoccurring feature of Latin epic and is itself a gendered notion. The Younger Seneca writes that *muliebre est furere in ira*, 'it is for a woman to rage in anger', Sen. *Clem.* 1.5.5. Fratantuono (2007a) identifies *furor* as the driving force of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

⁵⁹⁷ Stat. *Theb.* 5.135-40.

⁵⁹⁸ *firmate animos et pellite sexum!*, Stat. *Theb.* 5.105. '*Sexus*' refers to gender here (i.e. the cultural connotations of the separation of humanity into men and women) and not to sexual intercourse.

⁵⁹⁹ *desuper invalidis fluitantia tela lacertis (quid non ausa manus?) Telamona et Pelea contra spargimus*, Stat. *Theb.* 5.378-80.

⁶⁰⁰ Stat. *Theb.* 5.396-97.

the weapons belonging to their husbands, but weapons not their own, that is belonging to the other sex.’⁶⁰¹ Juvenal’s description of a woman who trains with swords seems to contain the same attitude – within, he asks ‘What sense of modesty can you find in a woman wearing a helmet, who runs away from her own gender?’⁶⁰² For these authors, women using *arma* are temporarily rejecting the gender status quo by doing so. This temporary, martial masculinisation can tell us much about ancient gender construction.

In general, ancient discussions which involve gender liminality can often reveal more than other sources. This is because they can function as problematisations, negotiations and reinforcements of gender identities. A relevant example occurs in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, when the author relates a tale about Caeneus of Thessaly who had the epic ‘superpower’ of literal impenetrability: weapons could miraculously not penetrate his body. However, the way in which he was said to have received this power delves very deeply into ideas of how Romans could gender ideas of warlikeness, penetrability and weaponry. This is because Caeneus was once Caenis, a woman raped by Neptune and given a wish as compensation, who chose to become a man so that she may never be raped again.⁶⁰³ Sexual and military penetrability are clearly conflated here, relying on culturally persistent uses of sword-words as metaphors for phalluses.⁶⁰⁴ This conflation suggests that women were seen as more legitimate targets of sexual penetration than men, and that this was considered a factor in their unwarlikeness. Take, for example, Nestor’s statement that Caeneus’ impenetrability was ‘all the more amazing in him, because he had been born a woman.’⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰¹ Lactantius Placidus, Trans. Keith (2000).

⁶⁰² *quem praestare potest mulier galeata pudorem, quae fugit a sexu?*, Juv. 6.252-53. Juvenal seems to hint that she wanted to become a gladiator, a common jibe aimed at the elite in his *Saturae*. Similarly, Velleius Paterculus mocks the wife of Marc Antony, Fulvia, by saying that she had ‘nothing of the woman in her except her sex’ because she was interested in armed violence, Vell. Pat. 2.74.

⁶⁰³ Men were certainly seen as sexually penetrable, but this tale suggests they were seen, by Ovid at least, as less so. This is probably mitigated by the fact that Caenis is turned into an extremely masculine, martial warrior, not an effeminate *cinaedus* type associated with sexual receptivity. The myth is mentioned by Plato, Pl. *Symp.* 189e.

⁶⁰⁴ See below, 164.

⁶⁰⁵ *...quoque id mirum magis esset in illo, femina natus erat*, Ov. *Met.* 12.174-75.

Later in book twelve, Ovid explores the idea further. A centaur mercilessly mocks Caeneus for his female past:

‘For you are still a woman in my eyes. Have you forgotten your birth, or how you disgracefully won this award – at what price you got the false appearance of a man?! Consider both your birth, and what you have submitted to! Take up a distaff, and wool basket! Twist your threads with your practiced thumb! Leave warfare to your men!’⁶⁰⁶

Ov. *Met.* 12.470-76.

The insults speak for an understanding that a warrior who has been penetrated (raped, no less) should be considered weak; but also that the proper implements of such an individual ought to be feminine sewing and weaving equipment. Implicit is the suggestion that weapons are only appropriately wielded by men. However, by force of arms and sheer impenetrability (his body blunts their swords like marble), the centaur is forced to change his tune, and cries ‘Our mighty host – our people – are defeated and defied by one who hardly is a man (*vixque viro*). Although he is a man, and we have proved, by our weak actions, we are what he used to be!’ [i.e. a woman].⁶⁰⁷ Caeneus’ masculinity, though questioned, is proved definitively by his skill with weapons and his impermeability – and this necessarily has to call into question the masculinity of those whom Caeneus, in turn, defeats.⁶⁰⁸ Here, military masculinity is a zero-sum game.

In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, written at around the same time, the Etruscan commander Tarchon articulates similar sentiments. Tarchon is witnessing his soldiers retreating

⁶⁰⁶ ...*nam tu mihi femina semper, | tu mihi Caenis eris. nec te natalis origo | commonuit, mentemque subit, quo praemia facto | quaque viri falsam speciem mercede pararis? | quid sis nata, vide, vel quid sis passa, columque, | i, cape cum calathis et stamina pollice torque; | bella relinque viris.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶⁰⁷ *populus superamur ab uno | vixque viro; quamquam ille vir est, nos segnibus actis, | quod fuit ille, sumus,* Ov. *Met.* 12.499-501. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶⁰⁸ The myth is also mentioned by Plato, who adds that the only fitting punishment for those who abandon arms on battlefield is to be turned into women, Pl. *Symp.* 189e.

in the face of a similarly (but less literally) masculinised warrior woman, Camilla, when he tries to return them to order:

What's your fear, you Tuscans forever deaf to shame?
 Always slacking off (*semper inertes*)! What cowardice saps
 your courage?
 What, is a woman routing squadrons as strong as ours?
 Why have swords or useless lances gripped in our fists?
 But you're not slow when it comes to nightly bouts of
 love,
 when the curved flute strikes up some frantic Bacchic
 dance!
 Linger on for the feasts and cups at the groaning board
 (That's your love, your lust) till the seer will bless and
 proclaim the sacrifice
 and the rich victim lures you into the deep groves!⁶⁰⁹

Verg. *Aen.* 11.732-40.

Many similarities are present. Firstly, a martial woman is threatening the masculinity of those she faces, and especially those she defeats. Secondly, there are again clear sexual metaphors at play. Talk of impotent swords is perhaps subtle; a comparison to love's unwarlike 'nocturnal battles' (*nocturnaque bella*) under Venus and Bacchus is more clearly sexually charged. We can see that swords are being used metaphorically to make strong statements as to how masculinity is constructed. 'Nocturnal battles' are not warlike battles at all – they cannot contribute to the construction of masculinity, and indeed they threaten it, because they are too pleasurable and contribute only to softness. The same contrast of lifestyles seems to be exhibited in Propertius 4.3, where a lover seems to argue that her beloved, a

⁶⁰⁹ *quis metus, o numquam dolituri, o semper inertes | Tyrrheni, quae tanta animis ignavia venit? | femina palantis agit atque haec agmina vertit? | quo ferrum quidve haec gerimus tela inrita dextris? | at non in Venerem segnes nocturnaque bella, | aut ubi curvo choros indixit tibia Bacchi. | expectate dapes et plenae pocula mensae | (hic amor, hoc studium) dum sacra secundus haruspex | nuntiet ac lucos vocet hostia pinguis in altos!* Trans. Fagles.

soldier, is more suited to lovemaking than warfare. Indeed, she particularly worries about his use of *arma*, asking ‘does not the breastplate blister your delicate shoulders, and the heavy spear chafe your unwarlike hands?’⁶¹⁰ *Arma* were not seen as compatible with the lifestyle of soft or effeminate men.

As in English, weapon-words in Latin could also be used in sexual metaphors. Just as ‘idle weapons’ seem like metaphors for sexual impotence, James Adams has collated similar double-entendres in *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (1982), and Adams writes that weapon-metaphors are ‘the largest category of metaphors of our general type.’ He actually argues that ‘no single word for a weapon seems to have become a banal term for the penis in Latin,’ suggesting a more general conflation is occurring, not just a kind of semi-conscious nicknaming.⁶¹¹ With this in mind questions like ‘why do we bear swords and spears idle in our right hands?’ demand discussion. I suggest that not only were men the intended owners and users of swords, but also that, in discussions of gender, swords could represent the power disparity between men and women. This is perhaps hinted at by Horace, who talks of Cleopatra’s surprising lack of a ‘womanish fear of the sword’ and perhaps too by the usage of scabbard metaphors for the vagina (indeed, the English word ‘vagina’ itself originated in this way.)⁶¹² The sheer disbelief our narrators express when facing powerful warrior women who render swords impotent is also important. Again, the sword represents the physical force advantage men held over women, and in turn, that held by masculine men over effeminate ones. This puts into perspective the use of accusations of effeminacy: they aim to suggest this power disparity.

It is clear that, in Roman literature, swords had such strong masculine connotations that they could be described as *aliena* to women. Though this should perhaps not come as a great surprise – it was overwhelmingly men who engaged in armed conflict in the ancient world, after all – this has been remarked upon infrequently in classical scholarship. This is despite the fact that such associations were used so

⁶¹⁰ *dic mihi, num teneros urit lorica lacertos? | num gravis imbellis atterit hasta manus?* Prop. 4.3.23-24.

⁶¹¹ Adams (1982) 19.

⁶¹² Hor. *Carm.* 1.37. *Vagina* refers to a sword scabbard in Latin.

readily to discuss and negotiate ideas of proper conduct and virtuous qualities in both men and women. As I will now argue, these gendered associations were important for the ways in which Roman authors discussed and constructed the warlikeness of other peoples.

Easterners and *Arma*

An example of the way in which *arma* could be implicated in discussions of ethnicity can be found in the opening quotation of this thesis, in which Lucan has Lentulus discuss the Parthians. It is worth revisiting, as Lentulus mocks the Parthians who constantly retreat with empty quivers, and rely on poison instead of the ‘strong hand’.⁶¹³ This is bad, Lentulus explains, because ‘strength belongs to the sword, and all manly peoples (*gens quaecumque virorum*) wage war with *gladiis*.’⁶¹⁴ Most revealingly, Lentulus rhetorically asks ‘Do you count those as men, Magnus, who are not content to face the risk of battle with the steel (*ferro*) alone?’⁶¹⁵ Here, ethnicity is seamlessly incorporated into the gendered rhetoric. The symbolism of the sword is used, in a familiar way, to separate peoples into masculine and feminine via discussions of their warlikeness. Parthian weapon choices make them fail this gendered test, and the comparison with Roman choices is clear. Though Lucan uses three different words for sword here, he saves the most Roman word of all for his most adamant statement: manly peoples wage war with *gladiis* – the ‘Spanish’ short-sword which the Romans had made their own.⁶¹⁶ Tarchon’s jibes in the Aeneid seem to contain similar ethnicising rhetoric, too, when his accusations that they are *semper inertes* and have *tanta animis ignavia* are linked with the ethnic identifier *Tyrrheni*, ‘Etruscans’, suggesting he is saying something about their ethnic character.⁶¹⁷ He

⁶¹³ Luc. 8.388.

⁶¹⁴ *Ensis habet vires, et gens quaecumque virorum | Bella gerit gladiis*, Luc. 8.385-86. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶¹⁵ *Credis, Magne, viros, quos in discrimina belli | Cum ferro misisse parum est?*, Luc. 8.389-90. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶¹⁶ The other words used are *ensis* and *ferrum*. The Romans used *ferrum* to refer to both iron and steel (an iron-carbon alloy), cf. Veg. *Mil.* 4.8

⁶¹⁷ The term is of Greek origin, but at this stage served as a synonym in Latin for the Etruscans, Strabo 5.2.2. On the othering of the Etruscans, with reference to their wealth, see Becker (2016).

goes on to stress their preference for pipe-music, feasting and sex over swords and war. These are clear references to ‘luxurious’ modes of behaviour, and a lifestyle considered at odds to a martial, masculine one.

Ethnicity is, therefore, implicated in these debates. Importantly, the Etruscans in the *Aeneid* are said to be of Lydian origin and they are regularly referred to as Lydian throughout, following a Herodotean tradition.⁶¹⁸ Lydia was a kingdom located in western Anatolia, making Virgil’s Etruscans an Eastern immigrant people, just like Aeneas’ Phrygians. Lydians were also proverbially wealth-loving and luxurious, most notably their famous King Croesus, and they had held this ethnic stereotype since at least the fifth-century BCE.⁶¹⁹ One of the two Early Imperial-era poems falsely ascribed to Virgil, *Elegiae in Maecenatem*, specifically uses the language of effeminacy to describe Lydia – the author details the enslavement of Hercules by the Lydian woman Omphale, who forces him to wear ‘loose-flowing robes among her spinning-maids’.⁶²⁰ His weapon and lion-skin are discarded, and are danced upon by the god of love, Amor.⁶²¹ The replacement of *arma* with loose-flowing robes clearly exhibit the associations with eastern unwarlikeness and effeminacy. Earlier in the *Aeneid* Virgil more directly references this tradition by saying that the Lydians water their farmlands with gold.⁶²² This surely heightened the force of Tarchon’s jibes, as he is accusing a proverbially unwarlike, luxurious people of preferring music and feasting to swords. Perhaps the entire scenario, of a warlike Italian woman besting unwarlike ‘Lydian’ men, was even constructed to make an ethnic argument about martial Italians and effeminate Easterners.

⁶¹⁸ Virgil describes the city of Agylla, ‘founded on age-old rock by Lydian people...’, Verg. *Aen.* 8.480; cf. 2.780-01, 9.11, 10.141-42, 11.769; Hdt. 1.94.1-7.

⁶¹⁹ cf. Hdt. 1.71; Xenophanes of Colophon writes ‘And learning useless luxury from Lydia, While they were free from hateful tyranny, They’d go to the piazza in full purple robes, A thousand of them at the very least, Proud in the splendour of their finely coiffured hair And sleek with unguents of the choicest scent.’, DK Fr. 3 = J. Skinner (2012) 2.8; cf. Dalby (2000) 162-63; J. Skinner (2012) 89-94.

⁶²⁰ *Lydia te tunicas iussit lasciva fluentis | inter lanificas ducere saepe suas.*, [Virgil], *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.77-78. The ascription to Virgil is not tenable, as Virgil died eleven years before Maecenas, who the poem is dedicated to.

⁶²¹ [Virgil], *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.79-80.

⁶²² Verg. *Aen.* 10.141-42.

However, the ethnic stereotypes of Virgil's *Aeneid* are notoriously difficult to map.⁶²³ Elsewhere, the poet refers to the original Lydian colonists as a 'warrior people', for example.⁶²⁴ However, it is clear that 'taunts' spoken by either enraged or boasting Westerners in the *Aeneid* often contain quite bluntly orientalist, and gendered, insults. This tradition is probably a reflection of Roman rhetorical practices, which involved a culture of invective which often utilised accusations of effeminacy, receptive male-male sex and philhellenism. A speech from the Latin warrior Numanus Remulus in book seven treats *arma* in this way. The *Aeneid* is ultimately a foundation-myth epic: a description of the founding of Rome by the fusion of Latin and Phrygian elements.⁶²⁵ The Phrygians - an Asian people, and allies of Troy - are led by Aeneas to war in Italy against the Latins and Italians in an effort to find a new home. The Phrygians are, therefore, not ethnically Greek, but they were firmly an Eastern people in Roman eyes.⁶²⁶ This ethnic contrast is exploited by Virgil in Numanus' taunts:

⁶²³ Studies of ethnicity and identity in the *Aeneid* include Maier (1996); Toll (1997); Ando (2002); Syed (2005); Whitehorne (2005); Reed (2009); Gruen (2010a) 134-37.

⁶²⁴ Verg. *Aen.* 8.480.

⁶²⁵ However, Virgil assures the reader that Phrygian characteristics will be subsumed by Latin ones; bravery most of all: 'let Roman stock get its strength from Italian concepts of courage', Verg. *Aen.* 12.831-40.

⁶²⁶ Greeks and Trojans in the *Iliad* speak the same language and worship the same gods. However, warlikeness is perhaps one area in which they are differentiated, in that certain Trojans are criticised for effeminacy/unwarlikeness (11.385-89, 24.253-62), the Trojan leader Priam does not take part in the fighting, and the Trojans are more likely to use bows than the Greeks. It is only really after the Persian Wars that the Trojan War seems to be interpreted in an orientalising way as an early battle between the West and East, cf. Hall (1989) 19-55; Taplin (1992) 110-15; Heath (2005) 62-79 and especially 72-73 which provide a useful summary of the historiography on this topic.

We're rugged stock, from the start we take our young
 ones
 down to the river, toughen them in the bitter icy streams.
 Our boys – they're up all night, hunting, scouring the
 woods,
 their sport is breaking horses, whipping shafts from bows.
 Our young men, enduring (*patiens*) of toil and accustomed
 to austerity (*parvoque*),
 tame the earth with mattocks (*rastris*) or shatter towns
 with war.
 All our lives are honed to the hard edge of steel (*ferro*),
 reversing our spears (*hasta*) we spur our oxen's flanks.
 No lame old age can cripple our high spirits,
 sap our vigour, no, we tamp our helmets (*galea*) down
 on our grey heads, and our great joy is always
 to haul fresh booty home and live off all we seize (*rpto*).
 But you, with your saffron braided (*picta croco*) dress, your
 flashy purple (*fulgenti murice*),
 you live for lazing (*desidiae*), lost in your dancing, your
 delight,
 blowzy sleeves on your war-shirts, ribbons on bonnets.
 Phrygian women – that's what you are – not Phrygian
 men!
 Go traipsing over the ridge of Dindyma, catch the songs
 on the double pipe you dote on so! The tambourines,
 they're calling for you now, and the boxwood flutes
 of your Berecynthian Mother perched on Ida!
 Leave *arma* to men. Lay down your swords (*ferro*)!⁶²⁷

Verg. *Aen.* 9.603-20.

The same contrast between warlike and unwarlike (or masculine and effeminate) lifestyles is clearly described here, even more strongly expressed. The lifestyles are hyperbolically, diametrically, and ethnically opposed. The Italian lifestyle involves rough work and deep, cultivated endurance via heavy training from early childhood; a description of the full 'life-cycle' from infancy to senescence ensures an understanding that this was the lifestyle of all Latins. More importantly, this lifestyle is framed mainly via their relative experience with various metal implements – foremost, *arma*. Arms and farming equipment are interspersed (reflecting Roman primitivist ideas about the equivalency of agricultural and martial lifestyles) – mattocks, edges of steel and helmets.⁶²⁸ They are even directly conflated, with spears being used for animal husbandry.⁶²⁹ In stark contrast, for the Phrygians Numanus reels off a laundry list of stereotypically effeminate behaviours and items. He evokes a world of carefree dance and music, and gaudy, feminine clothes.⁶³⁰ These are the 'materiel' of the Phrygians: musical instruments and bonnets. Virgil creates a striking image.

Importantly, the list of effeminate behaviours and associations seems to disqualify the Phrygians from two related areas. Firstly, they do not qualify as men. Numanus

⁶²⁷ *durum a stirpe genus natos ad flumina primum | deferimus saevoque gelu duramus et undis; | venatu invigilant pueri silvasque fatigant, | flectere ludus equos et spicula tendere cornu; | at patiens operum parvoque adsueta iuventus | aut rastris terram domat aut quatit oppida bello. | omne aevum ferro teritur, versaque iuvenum | terga fatigamus hasta, nec tarda senectus | debilitat viris animi mutatque vigorem: | canitiem galea premimus, semperque recentis | comportare iuvat praedas et vivere raptu. | vobis picta croco et fulgenti murice vestis, | desidiae cordi, iuvat indulgere choreis, | et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae. | o vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta | Dindyma, ubi adsuetis biforem dat tibia cantum. | tympana vos buxusque vocat Berecynthia Matris | Idaeae; sinite arma viris et cedite ferro.* Trans. Fagles, adapted.

⁶²⁸ Cato writes in his *De Agri Cultura* that 'it is from the farming class that the bravest men and the sturdiest soldiers come, their calling is most highly respected, their livelihood is most assured and is looked on with the least hostility, and those who are engaged in that pursuit are least inclined to be disaffected', Cato, *Agr. Pr.4*.

⁶²⁹ For the primitivist association between agriculture and militarism, cf. Cato, *Agr. Pr.4*; Ov. *Fasti*. 1.699–700; Val. Max. 4.4.5; Hor. *Carm.* 3.6; Livy 5.4.5–7; cf. Evans (2007) 171–9.

⁶³⁰ The passage is also undoubtedly equating the Phrygians with the priests of that region, the Galli, who were associated with eunuchism, music-playing, and gaudy effeminate clothes. The reference to the 'Berecynthian Mother' of Mount Ida is a clear reference to Magna Mater, the Phrygian goddess of the Galli. The direct accusation of femininity fits into ways in which eunuchs were constructed in Roman literature, see above, 100. Ovid describes how the Galli's first drums and beaters were shields and swords, perhaps suggesting that some effeminising process was turning the masculine implements of war into more feminine musical instruments, Ov. *Fasti*. 4.207–14.

is very explicit in this regard: 'Phrygian women – that's what you are – not Phrygian men!' Secondly, they are also disqualified from holding swords: 'Leave *arma* to men. Lay down your swords!' Numanus argues that only martial peoples have the right to the implements of warfare, and only martial peoples qualify as masculine. The imagery actually reoccurs later in the *Aeneid* as Turnus speaks directly to his spear, asking it to empower him to rip the *semiviri* Aeneas, replete with effeminate oiled and ironed hair, to shreds.⁶³¹ Swords and other *arma* in the *Aeneid*, therefore, appear in an ethno-gendered way.⁶³² This is echoed in Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, when the author has Caesar clearly reject the worth of Greek *gymnasium* training. For him, the consequences involve an ethno-gendered disassociation with *arma*: the soldiers are rendered so spiritless (*ignava*) that they 'are hardly able to carry their weapons.'⁶³³ Masculinity, ethnicity and the ability to bear arms are, here, intertwined.

These themes are apparent in historical works, too. For example, Livy has a Roman general of 189 BCE, Gnaeus Manlius Vulso, describe a group of Gauls who had migrated at some stage to Asia Minor. Vulso describes how this characteristically warlike people had become corrupted and softened by their rich environment, to such an extent that they had apparently 'become Phrygians' and will be as easily defeated as the Phrygians fought recently at the battle of Magnesia in 190 BCE.⁶³⁴ More importantly, they are still 'burdened (*oneratos*) with the weapons of Gauls', which is clearly meant to indicate a disadvantage for this newly softened people.⁶³⁵

⁶³¹ "Now, my spear" he cries, | "you've never failed my call, and now our time has come! | Great Actor wielded you once. Now you're in Turnus' hands. Let me spill his corpse on the ground and strip his breastplate, | rip it to bits with my bare hands – that Phrygian eunuch (*semiviri*) – | defile his hair in the dust, his tresses crimped | with a white-hot curling-iron dripping myrrh!"', Verg. *Aen.* 9.95-100. Trans. Fagles.

⁶³² Numanus' assertions are immediately problematised by his own immediate death at the hands of the Phrygian Ascanius by arrow, although it must be noted that, in the *Iliad*, Diomedes declares Paris' use of the bow cowardly and effeminate, Hom. *Il.* 11.385-89; cf. Prop. 2.10.13-14; 4.3.66; Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.209-12.

⁶³³ Luc. 7.269-71. Caesar describes how Pompey's soldiers dropped their weapons as they fled the battlefield at Pharsalus, Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.95.3-4.

⁶³⁴ Livy 38.17.13. Livy is referring to a particular contingent within Antiochus' battle lines at Magnesia, not the entire force, which was a mixed assembly of peoples allied or subject to the Seleucid Empire, a Hellenistic Kingdom which spread over Asia Minor, Persia and Mesopotamia. I discuss Livy's account of Magnesia below, 206.

⁶³⁵ *Phrygas igitur Gallicis oneratos armis, sicut in acie Antiochi cecidistis*, Livy 38.17.13.

Livy here, and Roman authors more generally, go to great pains to describe the difficulty involved in bearing arms, along with the masculinity required.⁶³⁶ The feminine, undisciplined or oriental – the ‘Gallogreeks’ are all three – are thus disqualified, and are often pictured struggling under the physical weight of *arma*.

Livy also problematises the relationship of Greeks and Easterners with *arma* elsewhere. He earlier describes the wider Seleucid force which fought at Magnesia, and these soldiers are also portrayed as incompetent with *arma*. He describes how their king Antiochus’ luxurious lifestyle (as if at peace, not at war) set a bad example for his commanders and his troops, who emulate him. Crucially, their consequent unwarlikeness is described at least partly via their relationship with *arma*: ‘not one of them put on his armour or walk his post or perform sentinel-duty or do anything else which pertained to the tasks and duties of a soldier.’⁶³⁷ In another example from Livy, the author describes how Scipio Africanus Major managed, in 205 BCE, to gain weapons for his poorly equipped Roman soldiers by allowing cowardly Sicilian Greeks to avoid enlistment if they provided their *arma* and horses to those Romans brave enough to wield them.⁶³⁸

Cassius Dio recreates Octavian’s speech on the eve of the battle of Actium, and he has Octavian dismiss Antony’s martial credentials in a similar way. In a long speech, Octavian contrasts Antony’s old Roman life with his new Eastern one, saying that he should now be called Serapion, and is now more of a *gymnasiarch* or cymbal player than an *imperator*. Octavian allows that Antony might once have ‘attained some valour’ through campaigning for Rome, but has now ‘spoiled it utterly’ by his ‘changed manner of life’ of ‘royal luxury’. He goes on to say that it’s impossible for

⁶³⁶ This imagery relies on an understanding that handling weapons involved masculine *patientia*. Other passages that describe individuals deficient in masculinity dropping or struggling with *arma* include Livy *Per.* 57; Luc. 7.269-71; Cic. *Tusc.* 2.16.37; Stat. *Theb.* 5.396-97; Fronto, *Princ. Hist.* 12; Fronto, *Ep. ad Verum* 2.1.19.

⁶³⁷ *nec quisquam eorum aut arma induit aut stationem aut vigiliis seroavit aut quicquam, quod militaris operis aut muneris esset, fecit*, Livy 36.11.3-4. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶³⁸ Livy 29.1.1-11.

one who ‘coddles himself like a woman to have a manly thought or manly deed’.⁶³⁹

He continues:

if any one of us were called upon to execute a ridiculous dance or to cut a lascivious fling, such a person would surely have to yield the honours to him, since these are the specialities he has practised, but now that the occasion calls for arms (ὄπλων) and battle, what is there about him that anyone should dread? His physical fitness? But he has passed his prime and become effeminate. His strength of mind? But he plays the woman and has worn himself out with unnatural lust.⁶⁴⁰

Cass. Dio 50.27.6.

The source is quite late, dating to the early third century CE, but its themes are illustrative, and reflect the lingering influence of the so-called Augustan ‘propaganda’ which emerged following the Actian war against Cleopatra and Antony.⁶⁴¹ For my purposes, however, it is clear that an ‘Eastern’ lifestyle is being rhetorically constructed; simultaneously both Egyptian (Serapaion) and Greek (*gymnasiarch*), just like the Ptolemies, with which he enjoys ‘royal luxury’. Like Virgil’s Phrygians, this lifestyle involves dancing and music-playing, and again, this renders him useless when the time comes ‘for arms and battle’. However, unlike the Phrygians, and more like the Gallogreeks, Antony is a convert: a betrayer of Rome and Roman culture. Ethnicity alone is not enough – without a warlike lifestyle, effeminacy strikes, and disrupts a man’s armed ability.

⁶³⁹ Cass. Dio 50.27.1-5.

⁶⁴⁰ ὥστ’ εἰ μὲν γελοίως πως ὀρχεῖσθαι καὶ κορδακίζειν τινὰ ἡμῶν ἐχρῆν, πάντως ἂν ἔλαττον αὐτοῦ ἠνέγκατο (ταῦτα γὰρ μεμελέτηκεν): ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὄπλων καὶ μάχης δεῖ, τί τις ἂν αὐτοῦ φοβηθεῖ; τὴν ἀκμὴν τοῦ σώματος; ἀλλὰ παρήβηκε καὶ ἐκτεθήλυνται. τὴν ῥώμην τῆς γνώμης; ἀλλὰ γυναικίζει καὶ ἐκκεκιναιδίσταται.

⁶⁴¹ The term reflects the tendency for Augustan authors to characterise both Antony and Cleopatra in aggressively orientalisising terms, cf. Prop. 3.6, 3.11; Hor. *Carm.* 1.37, *Epod.* 9; Verg. *Aen.* 8.678-706. There is no strong evidence to confirm that such depictions were directly ordered by Augustus, but they may have been produced to curry his, or Maecenas’, favour.

Once again, the zero-sum game of constructed masculinity rears its head, as for Romans to appear more martial and masculine – to win the game – there must also be losers. It becomes apparent that just like with Numanus’ and Octavian’s insults, these denigrations served to reinforce Roman ideas of their own positive qualities. The rhetoric therefore serves to negotiate Roman ideals via the disparagement of others. A revisit to a passage in Silius Italicus is illustrative in this regard:

The general pressed on fast: in his eyes, delay in defeating Greek troops was as shameful as defeat. He flew all over the field – it seemed like a contest of men against women – and enriched with blood the fields that Ceres loves. The enemy fell in heaps, and the speed of battle made it impossible for any to escape death by flight. For whenever a fugitive hoped to save his life, Marcellus was before him and barred the way with his sword (*ense*). ‘On, on!’ he cried; ‘mow down this unwarlike (*imbellem*) folk and lay them low with steel (*ferro*)’ and he pushed the laggards on with the boss of his shield (*umbone*).⁶⁴²

Sil. 14.127-35.

The ethno-gendered argument is made very bluntly: Greeks are more women than men in combat. But here their use of arms is not directly denigrated, they are just generally deemed inadequate at fighting and are depicted as cowards. Instead, it is the Romans who have a deep connection with their *arma*: Marcellus’ sword is always there to stop fleeing Greek soldiers, he urges his troops to kill the unwarlike with steel, and he compels them forward with his shield. The Greeks are only implicitly, comparatively, bad.

⁶⁴² *instabat ductor, cui tarde vincere Graias | par erat ac vinci turmas. ruit aequore toto | (femineum credas maribus concurrere vulgum) | et Cereri placitos fecundat sanguine campos. | sternuntur passim; pedibusque evadere letum | eripuit rapidus Mavors; nam ut cuique salutem | promisit fuga, praeveniens dux occupat ense. | ‘ite, gregem metite imbellem ac succidite ferro,’ | clamat, cunctantes urgens umbone cateroas.*

The special connection between a Roman and his sword is a repeated theme in Roman literature. Plutarch relays a similar attitude when he alludes to a conversation between a Roman Centurion and his general, Marc Antony, on the eve of Actium. Showing distaste for Antony's decision to fight a sea battle, he shows Antony his scars and asks 'why do you distrust these wounds and this sword and put your hopes in miserable logs of wood?'. He suggests that naval warfare was an Egyptian or Phoenician method of fighting, whereas Romans prefer 'land, on which we are accustomed to stand and either conquer our enemies or die.'⁶⁴³ The implication seems to be that Romans have a special connection to their swords, and that this contrasts with Easterners, who have their own methods of fighting.⁶⁴⁴

This kind of 'practical' comparison is alluded to by Livy. The Romans used the famous Spanish short-sword which could be used for 'thrusting' as well as the more common 'slashing' technique of ancient warfare.⁶⁴⁵ This rather contrasted to the traditional Greek use of hoplites in Phalanx warfare, who used long spears, and large shields collectively to protect the unit. Livy describes these two systems coming into conflict during the Macedonian war between Philip V and the Romans in around 200 BCE.⁶⁴⁶ In the narrative, Philip believes his troops will be inspired by their glorious dead, but instead it instils them with fear:

What he thought would make them more ready to enter
any conflict caused, instead, reluctance and fear; for men
who had seen the wounds dealt by javelins and arrows

⁶⁴³ Ὁ αὐτόκρατορ, τί τῶν τραυμάτων τούτων ἢ τοῦ ξίφους καταγνοῦς ἐν ξύλοις πονηροῖς ἔχεις τὰς ἐλπίδας; Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ Φοίνικες ἐν θαλάσῃ μαχέσθωσαν, ἡμῖν δὲ γῆν δός, ἐφ' ἧς εἰώθαμεν ἐστώτες ἀποθνήσκειν ἢ νικᾶν τοὺς πολεμίους., Plut. *Ant.* 64.1-2. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶⁴⁴ The idea is odd, as swords were still necessary in ancient naval battles, in which boarding of enemy ships was usually necessary. Plutarch seems to quote this common soldier in order to blame Cleopatra for persuading Antony to fight a sea battle instead of a land battle with which he had more experience: yet another way in which she was said to have orientalised Antony. I discuss the orientalisising connotations of seafaring and naval battles in my next chapter.

⁶⁴⁵ Thrusting: Veg. *Mil.* 1.12; Tac. *Ann.* 14.36-37. Slashing is certainly attested too, however, and the gladius was perfectly suited for this too: cf. Goldsworthy (1998) 217-18; Connolly (1991).

⁶⁴⁶ Plutarch also describes the clashing of the Roman manipule with the phalanxes of Pyrrhus of Epirus, Plut. *Pyrrh.* 21. In that instance he describes the Romans beating off the spears of the Romans with their swords, but finding it difficult to manoeuvre otherwise. Polybius describes the differences between the systems, favouring the Roman manipular one, Polyb. 18.29-32; cf. Livy 9.19.7. Lucan clearly considers Roman arms far superior, Luc. 10.47-48.

(*hastis sagittisque*) and occasionally by lances (*lanceis*), since they were used to fighting with the Greeks and Illyrians, when they had seen bodies chopped to pieces by the Spanish sword, arms torn away, shoulders and all, or heads separated from bodies, with the necks completely severed, or vitals laid open, and the other fearful wounds, realized in a general panic with what weapons and what men (*quae tela quosque viros*) they had to fight. Fear seized the king as well, who had never met the Romans in ordered combat.⁶⁴⁷

Livy 31.34.3-6.

The passage is frequently quoted to articulate exceptional Roman warlikeness, but several other elements here are worth considering.⁶⁴⁸ For example, Livy elides the swords and the men, showing ethnographic interest in the weapons of the Romans. Livy tells us that Roman reliance on their swords in warfare stood in stark contrast to Eastern fighting styles. The ferocity of warriors and their weapons here are elided, and the Macedonians can only cower in fear at the prospect. That, at least, is how Livy chose to present matters to his own people.⁶⁴⁹ Whether Livy's account is a faithful report of Philip's feelings on the matter is impossible to say with any certainty. However, we do have some more direct evidence from an author who was once an enemy of Rome regarding the Roman connection to *arma*. This comes from the Jewish author Josephus:

⁶⁴⁷ *Quod promptiores ad subeundam omnem dimicationem videbatur facturum, id metum pigritiamque incussit; nam qui hastis sagittisque et rara lanceis facta vulnera vidissent, cum Graecis Illyrisque pugnare adsueti, postquam gladio Hispaniensi detruncata corpora, brachiis cum humero abscisis, aut tota ceruice desecta divisa a corpore capita patentiaque viscera et foeditatem aliam vulnerum viderunt, adversus quae tela quosque viros pugnandum foret, pavidi vulgo cernebant. Ipsum quoque regem terror cepit nondum iusto proelio cum Romanis congressum.* The loss of limbs in this passage rather suggests wounds from slashing, and not thrusting.

⁶⁴⁸ W. Harris (1979) 52; Isaac (2004) 216; Hoyos (2012) 125. Contra. Eckstein (2006) 201.

⁶⁴⁹ Diodorus Siculus, a Sicilian historian who wrote in the first century BCE in Greek, recounts the same story, but in his version Philip himself is unfazed and tries to reassure his troops, who are scared, Diod. Sic. 28.8. Francisco Simón argues that the described wounds are compatible with those found on the bones of victims of a probable Roman attack in Cerro de la Cruz, Spain, Simón (2015) 238-39.

For their nation does not wait for the outbreak of war to give men their first lesson in arms (ὅπλων); they do not sit with folded hands in peace time only to put them in motion in the hour of need. On the contrary, as though they had been born with weapons in hand, they never have a truce from training, never wait for emergencies to arise.⁶⁵⁰

Joseph. *BJ* 3.72-73.

Here, Josephus articulates how the Romans have a life-cycle familiarity with weapons, quite like Numanus' description of the Italian life-cycle cited above.⁶⁵¹ It is tempting to see parallels with King Philip's fear in Livy, as here an Eastern opponent of Rome marvels at the extraordinary interplay between Romans and their swords. Josephus even goes on to say that the Romans unbeatable because of this connection.⁶⁵² However, there are also reasons to be cautious, as Josephus had defected to Rome and scholars have argued that the audience for his histories were the Romans themselves.⁶⁵³ Is it any wonder, then, that the militaristic rhetoric which he transmits echoes how Romans described themselves? It also arguably serves a Polybius-style purpose in maintaining that his people were defeated by the best, and that there is no shame in that. However, Josephus is echoed by another Jewish writer, the anonymous author of a Dead Sea Scroll, who argues that the Romans 'sacrifice to their standards and worship their weapons of war.'⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁰ οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀρχὴ τῶν ὅπλων [ὁ] πόλεμος, οὐδ' ἐπὶ μόνας τὰς χρείας τῷ χεῖρε κινουῦσιν ἐν εἰρήνῃ προηρηγότες, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ συμπεφυκότες τοῖς ὅπλοις οὐδέποτε τῆς ἀσκήσεως λαμβάνουσιν ἐκεχειρίαν οὐδὲ ἀναμένουσιν τοὺς καιροὺς.

⁶⁵¹ Josephus moved to Rome in the late sixties CE. It is therefore not unlikely that he was familiar with the *Aeneid*, which was wildly popular and published only eighty years previously.

⁶⁵² 'Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle: no confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyses, no fatigue exhausts them; and as their opponents cannot match these qualities, victory is the invariable and certain consequence', 3.74.

⁶⁵³ The surviving accounts are in Greek, though he also wrote an account in his native 'paternal tongue', probably Aramaic, Joseph. *BJ* 1.3. For Josephus' audience, see Sievers and Lembi (2005); Mason (2008) 45-68.

⁶⁵⁴ 1QpHab 6.2-5; cf. Beall (2004) 103.

However, it is not necessary to suggest that the glorification of arms in Roman culture was truly exceptional for the ancient world. For my purposes, it is sufficient to say that Romans believed that this was the case, and could consequently use arms in their literary self-construction in interesting ways. This sometimes included the denigration of other peoples using the symbolic associations of arms – including a strong association with masculinity. A fuller assessment of the Roman belief in their association with arms will therefore follow.

Romans and *Arma*

The significance of swords in martial societies, like Rome, is difficult to understate. As Simon James argues, swords were symbolically important because they were more technically demanding to make than other weapons, did not have alternative functions like axes or bows, and incorporated hilts and scabbards which could be decorated.⁶⁵⁵ The late Regal ('Servian') and early Republican army was socially stratified, and it seems this was related to the fact that soldiers were responsible for purchasing their own equipment, as was common in the ancient world. According to John Rich, the surviving descriptions of early Roman army organisation (from Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus) are of dubious historical value, but generally suggest that heavy arms like swords (the most expensive arms to produce) were the preserve of the wealthier classes, with poorer soldiers using cheaper spears or slings.⁶⁵⁶ This separation, into *centuriae*, actually formed the voting blocs in the most important of Roman Republican assemblies, showing the significance of these classes. It is difficult to ascertain the exact connection, but certainly the ability to buy arms and the accumulation of political power were correlated in early Rome. These distinctions clearly still held importance long after the practical realities had evaporated after the Marian reforms of 107 BCE introduced professionalism (and government-issued equipment) into the army. This can be seen in Fronto's shock at

⁶⁵⁵ James (2011) 19. Axes were used for chopping wood and bows for hunting. Swords were also the weapon with the highest likelihood of instantly killing an opponent.

⁶⁵⁶ Rich (2007) 18; cf. Cornell (1995a) 173-97; Livy 1.44; Dion. Hali. 4.16-19.

seeing Legionaries ‘half-naked like skirmishers and slingers’ in the second century CE.⁶⁵⁷

The sword was associated with an ancestral elite ethos concerned with the expression and articulation of personal military virtue. This is reflected in Roman military histories, and in particular on the focus in those works on personal duels between combatants. There are countless examples of Roman authors celebrating Roman military successes won in single combat in exhibitions of personal *virtus*.⁶⁵⁸ Traditionally, Romulus himself was the first Roman to enter single combat in this fashion, and Valerius Maximus’ *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* features the tale prominently in a section entitled *Fortitudine* (‘bravery’). He records how Romulus defeated Acro, king of Caenina, despite knowing he had more numerous and braver soldiers than his opponent and thus could have won more easily with a conventional battle.⁶⁵⁹ By defeating Acro, Romulus also won the *spolia opima*. These were the arms a soldier won by stripping them off an enemy commander he had personally killed in single combat. They were considered the most prestigious battle trophy a Roman could win, with only a handful of occurrences recorded throughout Roman history.⁶⁶⁰ The valourisation of this trophy exemplifies the Roman treatment of single combat.

Another example of single combat occurs in Livy, perhaps the most celebrated *exemplum* of this type.⁶⁶¹ Within, a Roman soldier of 361 BCE accepts single combat with an oversized and vocal Gaul who challenges Rome to send her best man. A youth, Titus Manlius, volunteers and he is entirely encouraged by his commander: ‘Success attend your *virtus*, Titus Manlius, and your loyalty to father and to your

⁶⁵⁷ Fronto, *Princ. Hist.* 12.

⁶⁵⁸ Oakley (1985) provides exhaustive examples; cf. Feldherr (1998); Ward (2016).

⁶⁵⁹ Val. Max. 3.2.3. Livy records that Romulus killed the king, but in the context of a battle, 1.10.

⁶⁶⁰ There are three secure (if partly mythical) accounts of Roman warriors winning the *spolia opima*, Romulus in the mythical past, Aulus Cornelius Cossus in the fifth century BCE, and Marcus Claudius Marcellus in 222 BCE. Romulus: Festus 202-204l; Cic. *Rep.* 2.7-10; Dion. Hali. 2.34.4; Plut. *Rom.* 16; Val. Max. 3.2.3; Flor. 1.1.11. Cossus: Livy 4.19-20, Dion. Hali. 12.5, Festus 204L, Val. Max. 3.2.4; Plut. *Rom.* 16. Marcellus: Polyb. 2.34.5-9; Livy *Per.* 20; Val. Max. 3.2.5; Festus 204l; Plut. *Marc.* 7-8. On the *spolia opima*, see Rich (1996); Rich (1999); Flower (2000); McDonnell (2006a) 201-05.

⁶⁶¹ Livy 7.10.1-14.

fatherland! Go, and with Heaven's help fulfil the unconquerable Roman name.'⁶⁶² Clearly, an individual was thought to bring honour to himself, and to Rome, by succeeding in single combat. Livy also specifically points out that the short 'Spanish-sword' he is armed with was a boon, as it was 'convenient for close fighting.'⁶⁶³ It proves suitable, as in characteristic (and probably anachronistic) Roman style he uses short thrusts underneath the shield to win his duel, and to win the name Torquatus (he steals the dead Gaul's 'Torc' necklace) for his descendants. The tale typifies the potential respect an individual could win in single combat, but also the supposed effectiveness of the typical Roman sword in support of this celebrated ethos. The two things are inextricable – Roman militaristic ethos demanded personal glory in duels, and the famous Roman sword was – in the eyes of Roman authors, at least – suited to close combat and consequently constituted a perfect symbol for this ethos.

Sallust talks about the Roman soldiers of old, saying that 'their greatest contest for glory was with each other: each hastened to be the first to strike down a foe, to climb a wall, to be witnessed while doing such a deed.'⁶⁶⁴ By describing this competitive, individualistic streak, Sallust joins his fellow Roman authors in painting a picture of a fiercely warlike people. However, it is important to reiterate that my arguments here are based on representation, as transmitted through ancient sources, and not objective reality. It was once uncontroversial to argue that Rome was militarily successful *because* of its exceptional bellicosity, and Roman interest in duelling was often argued to be symptomatic of this warlikeness.⁶⁶⁵ However, this argument has effectively challenged by Eckstein's articulation of evidence of interest in duelling throughout the ancient Mediterranean.⁶⁶⁶ For example, Homer's *Iliad* is filled with duelling aristocratic warlords, but the celebration of successful duellists can be

⁶⁶² ...*macte virtute*' inquit '*ac pietate in patrem patriamque, T. Manli, esto. perge et nomen Romanum invictum iuvoantibus dis praesta*, Livy 7.10.4-5.

⁶⁶³ Michael Carter argues that its use by a fourth-century Roman soldier is anachronistic, Carter (2006) 155. The uptake of the sword by the Romans is an area of historical debate, but if present at all, they would have been very rare in this period, cf. Bishop (2016) 8-11.

⁶⁶⁴ Sall. *Cat.* 7.6.

⁶⁶⁵ W. Harris (1979) 38-39; Oakley (1985) 402-03.

⁶⁶⁶ Eckstein (2006) 197-200.

found just as easily in Persian and Hellenistic settings.⁶⁶⁷ It seems unfair to credit the Romans with exceptional warlikeness because of their interest in duelling if even peoples they defeated show the same interest. It is a reoccurring theme in this thesis that the role of factual truth in Roman self-construction, and in their construction of other peoples, could be quite minimal. Instead, one can argue that Roman and Roman-era authors *assert* that single combat was a characteristic feature of Roman military performance, for reasons of identity. Polybius, for example, seems to suggest that it is a distinctively Roman way of fighting, stating that ‘many Romans have voluntarily engaged in single combat in order to decide a battle, not a few have faced certain death, some in war to save the lives of the rest, and others in peace to save the republic.’⁶⁶⁸

An important part of the Roman interest in personal *virtus* was the respect granted to arms. Polybius, for example, describes how the abandonment of arms on the battlefield was grounds for severe punishment in the Roman army, including the decimation of the unit, even.⁶⁶⁹ In particular, he highlights how ‘men who have lost a shield or sword or any other arm often throw themselves into the midst of the enemy, hoping either to recover the lost object or to escape by death from inevitable disgrace and the taunts of their relations.’⁶⁷⁰ Plutarch, too, places the desire to avoid dishonour in this regard at the centrepiece of his description of the battle of Pydna, fought in 168 BCE. The author describes how, at first, Macedonian combat techniques terrified the Romans, as they used interlocked shields and long spears to ensure they were out of range for sword attacks. However, the Roman then used their flexibility to seize the initiative by exploiting gaps exposed by the uneven ground.⁶⁷¹ A sword lost by Marcus Cato soon becomes central:

⁶⁶⁷ Homeric: Van Wees (1988). Eckstein has collated the evidence, Persian: Eckstein (2006) 197; cf. Plut. *Artax.* 14.1.1-16; Diod. Sic. 17.6, 17.20.1; Just. *Epit.* 10.3; Curt. 7.4.32-38. Hellenistic: Eckstein (2006) 198; cf. App. *Syr.* 55; Plut. *Eum.* 7.3, *Pyrrh.* 28.2-3; Just. 23.4.12; Paus. 6.3.2; Diod. Sic. 17.20.1.; Curt. 7.4.32-38; Polyb. 10.49; Livy 27.32-33.

⁶⁶⁸ πολλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἔμονομάχησαν ἑκουσίως Ῥωμαίων ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν ὅλων κρίσεως, οὐκ ὀλίγοι δὲ προδήλους εἶλοντο θανάτους, τινὲς μὲν ἐν πολέμῳ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων ἕνεκεν σωτηρίας, τινὲς δ' ἐν εἰρήνῃ χάριν τῆς τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων ἀσφαλείας, Polyb. 6.54.4.

⁶⁶⁹ Polyb. 6.37.10-13.

⁶⁷⁰ Polyb. 6.37.13.

⁶⁷¹ Plut. *Aem.* 19.

Since he was a young man of the most generous education and owed to a great father proofs of great valour, he thought life not worth the living if he abandoned such spoil of his own person to the enemy, and ran along the ranks telling every friend and companion whom he saw of his mishap and begging them for aid.⁶⁷²

Plut. *Aem.* 21.2-3.

Here, Cato's individualistic desire to avoid dishonour, centred on his sword and the honour its retention represented, provides the impetus for the overall success in the battle. Furthermore, it is made clear that it is his ancestral honour which is at stake, and that his acculturation can be credited for his virtue in this regard. For Plutarch, this is something with which the Macedonians simply cannot compete.

Importantly, Plutarch and other Greco-Roman authors seems to contrast the close relationship of the Roman soldiers with *arma* with a corresponding unease with arms on the Macedonian side. For example, Plutarch has the Macedonian commander Milo cowardly retreat without his armour, and alternative versions of the story had King Perseus either flee instantly or become injured as he joined the phalanx without his breastplate.⁶⁷³ While the Macedonian arms initially prove effective – their long spears at first stick in Roman shields, and then shatter through them – they ultimately prove completely ineffective at close quarters, as Plutarch relays that the Macedonians 'could only hack with their small daggers against the firm and long shields of the Romans, and oppose light wicker targets to their swords, which, such was their weight and momentum, penetrated through all their armour to their bodies.'⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² οἷα δὲ νεανίας ἐντεθραμμένος πλείστοις παιδεύμασι καὶ μεγάλῳ πατρὶ μεγάλης ἀρετῆς ἀποδείξεις ὀφείλων, οὐ βιωτὸν ἡγησάμενος εἶναι προεμένῳ σκῦλον αὐτοῦ ζῶντος τοῖς πολεμίοις ἐπέδραμε τὴν μάχην, εἴ τινα ποῦ φίλον καὶ συνήθη κατίδοι, φράζων τὸ συμπεσὸν αὐτῷ καὶ δεόμενος βοηθεῖν.

⁶⁷³ Milo: Plut. *Aem.* 16.2-3. Perseus: Plut. *Aem.* 19. Plutarch later says that Aemilius appears too without his breastplate, though crucially he does it to show his confident abandon, and he is not injured in the process, 19.3. To come unarmoured to a phalanx, however, was to risk the entire collective system falling apart.

⁶⁷⁴ μὲν ἐγχειριδίοις στερεοῦς καὶ ποδήρεις θυρεοῦς νύσσοντες, ἐλαφροῖς δὲ πελταρίοις πρὸς τὰς ἐκείνων μαχαίρας ὑπὸ βάρους καὶ καταφορᾶς διὰ παντὸς ὅπλου χωρούσας ἐπὶ τὰ σώματα, Plut. *Aem.* 20.10.

Roman authors clearly attribute their own success not only to superior mental strength, but also to a superior relationship with arms than their rivals. In this sense, the Roman relationship with arms was granted ethnic significance. However, it is important to differentiate between a believed superior *relationship* with arms and the belief of having superior arms in a technical capacity. In fact, the Romans were famous for borrowing the best military equipment of those they faced, including, of course, the ‘Spanish sword’, the *gladius hispaniensis*.⁶⁷⁵ Polybius describes how the Romans borrowed cavalry equipment from the Greeks, stating that the Romans ‘soon learned to copy the Greek arms; for they are as good as any others in adopting new fashions and instituting what is better.’⁶⁷⁶ It seems that, in the main, it was the attitude of the men wielding the weapons which was ethnically significant, and not the equipment itself that mattered.⁶⁷⁷ This is suggested by Tacitus when, describing Roman allies on the Black Sea at Trapezus, he states that ‘while they carried their arms and banners in Roman fashion, they still retained the indolence and license of the Greeks’.⁶⁷⁸ This suggests that it was not enough to merely own Roman-style weapons, but one needed a Roman-style attitude to go with it. Similarly, when Scipio Africanus Major tricked Sicilians into providing arms for his Roman soldiers, the weapons proved perfectly suitable for Roman soldiers, and so the only difference was, presumably, the attitudes of the wielders.⁶⁷⁹

The Roman relationship to *arma* loomed large Roman literature, and this was used extensively to self-construct Roman warlikeness. The idea that a Roman soldier must be both mentally and materially prepared to endure warfare is therefore an important one. In this section I have mainly focused upon accounts which celebrated

⁶⁷⁵ This is discussed in the third chapter of the *Ineditum Vaticanum*, which can be found in the FGrHist, 839.

⁶⁷⁶ Polyb. 6.25.11; In fact, the Romans were famous for borrowing not only arms but also institutions where they saw benefit, a phenomenon described as *imitatio*, cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.16.30; Sall. *Cat.* 51.

⁶⁷⁷ Lucan does describe it as a shame that Persians were once afraid of the Macedonian *sarisa*, but were not now afraid of Roman *pila*, but this is probably not a commentary on the relative effectiveness of the weapons, but on the boldness of the Parthians, Luc. 10.47-48. An exception to this ‘rule’ perhaps involves adorned *arma*, as described below, 190. However, these too were thought to be a window into the character of those who wielded them, and were probably exaggerated in Roman accounts of Rome’s Eastern enemies.

⁶⁷⁸ *Romana signa armaque in nostrum modum, desidiam licentiamque Graecorum retinebant*, Tac. *Hist.* 3.47.

⁶⁷⁹ Livy 29.1.1-11.

the closeness of Romans to their weapons, but, importantly, the relationship can also be seen in reverse in accounts criticising Roman soldiers who do not exhibit the expected familiarity. Furthermore, I will show in the next section that these critical accounts very often involved soldiers who are either from, or were argued to have been infected by, the East. This further ethnicises a deep and warlike familiarity with arms as Roman and shows how embedded these ideas were within orientalist rhetoric.

‘Men without helmets, without breastplates’:

Eastern Roman Soldiers and *Arma*

Orientalist rhetoric was often used by Roman authors in the course of ‘cautionary tales’ that suggested Romans would become like Easterners should they not exhibit enough control over their deficient behaviour. In a similar vein, Roman authors were also quite capable of wielding orientalist stereotypes against nominal ‘Romans’ themselves. This can be seen in a passage from Livy discussing the ‘Bacchanalia’, an indulgent Eastern festival cult popular (but criminalised) in Rome in 186 BCE. The rites involved are described in familiarly gendered terms, as the collusion of men to meet women and get drunk degrades their masculinity, making them ‘very like the women, debauched and debauchers, fanatical, with senses dulled’.⁶⁸⁰ The consequences, however, are summed up in terms of Rome’s military manpower base and armed potential:

Do you think, citizens, that youths initiated by this oath should be made soldiers? That *arma* should be entrusted to men mustered from this foul shrine? Will men covered with the signs of their own debauchery (*stupris*) and that

⁶⁸⁰ *deinde simillimi feminis mares, stuprati et constupratores, fanatici, vigiliis* Livy 39.15.9. They are also called *effeminati*, 39.16.1.

of others fight to the death on behalf of the chastity
(*pudicitia*) of your wives and children?⁶⁸¹

Livy 39.15.13-14.

The passage perfectly encapsulates the conflation of morality and warlikeness in moralising Roman literature, in that immorality seems to automatically disqualify individuals from using *arma*. There is some scholarly disagreement on whether the foreignness of the *Bacchanalia* contributed to its eventual clampdown, but the specific references here to drunkenness, luxury, effeminacy, military weakness and the risk of alienation from *arma* surely suggest Livy, at least, saw things in those terms.⁶⁸² As I will argue in this section, orientalist arguments were used to articulate the dire consequences of Roman soldiers taking up 'Eastern' lifestyles. Consequently, Roman soldiers could also be criticised for a subpar relationship to *arma*. I argue that, though the criticism of ill-disciplined Roman troops was a popular literary trope, a particular focus on the *arma* of Roman soldiers tends to be overrepresented in accounts of soldiers hailing from or stationed in the East.

If Roman criticisms of Easterners' use of *arma* were meant to hold up a mirror to supposed Roman superiority, comparisons could also be used to expose those supposedly falling short of these standards. The unwarlikeness of Eastern soldiers compared to Western ones, as described in our sources, has been read quite uncritically in much of the historiography of this topic. Indeed, much of the early literature has traditionally assumed it to be a factual truth.⁶⁸³ However, Everett

⁶⁸¹ *Hoc sacramento initiatos iuvenes milites faciendos censetis, Quirites? His ex obsceno sacrario eductis arma committenda? Hi cooperti stupris suis alienisque pro pudicitia coniugum ac liberorum vestrorum ferro decernent?*

⁶⁸² Adrien Bruhl explained the *bacchanalia* affair in terms of anti-Greek prejudice, Bruhl (1953) 115-16. However, Gruen argues that 'anti-hellenic' motives were not to blame, and that the clampdown was actually the product of a conspiracy to bolster Roman authority over Italy, Gruen (1996) 5-33, esp. 56; John North thought the cult was considered dangerous because it disrupted social hierarchies, not because it was considered 'alien' (though its alienness was emphasised after the decision was made to suppress it), North (1979) esp. 86. Gruen describes the bibliographic debate in the course of his chapter on the subject, Gruen (1996) 5-33.

⁶⁸³ Ronald Syme wrote, of Syrian legions, that 'the troops were not well thought of, living at ease and seldom molested by war or discipline.', Syme (1958) 15; cf. Mommsen (1885) 383, 398; MacMullen (1967) 84-85; Horsmann (1991) 182-83; Isaac (1992) 24-25. See Wheeler (1996) for further examples, 229.

Wheeler, in his 1996 chapter 'The Laxity of Syrian Legions' instead revealed the clear, demonstrable influence of Roman orientalist rhetoric upon descriptions of Eastern Roman soldiers.⁶⁸⁴ Wheeler connects these criticisms to the elements which our sources blame for this Eastern 'laxity': the climate and urban environment of Eastern cities. These are important and correct points, strongly alluded to in the primary evidence. For example, Livy contrasts the 'pleasantness' of Asia, with its 'abundance of treasure' and feeble enemies, with Liguria, in which the soldiers had to live simply. In such rugged climes 'there was nothing except arms and men who placed all their trust in their arms.'⁶⁸⁵ This constitutes a strong delineation of warlike and unwarlike lifestyles. However, Wheeler misses quite how focused around *arma* these criticisms are, and, additionally, misses the general trend in Roman literature to describe Easterners as unsuited to using *arma*. These are ideas which fuelled the rhetoric about Eastern legionaries in Roman literature.

In a discussion of Roman soldiers transferred from Syria to Armenia, Tacitus describes Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, the commander with incredible climatic endurance discussed above:

But Corbulo had a greater struggle against the soldiers' lack of spirit (*ignaviam*) than the enemy's treachery, seeing that the legions transferred from Syria, sluggish from a long period of peace, endured their camp duties with the greatest difficulty (*aegerrime tolerabant*) [...] men without

⁶⁸⁴ 'It has escaped detailed examination, however, that the topos of Syrian legionary laxity is the direct heir of this cultural debate on the corrupting influence of the East', Wheeler (1996) 238.

⁶⁸⁵ Livy 39.1.3-8.

helmets, without breastplates, sleek and prosperous from military service performed in towns.⁶⁸⁶

Tac. *Ann.* 13.35.

Here their lack of arms is intended to alarm. For what is a Roman soldier without *arma*? Recall that Cicero argues *arma* should ideally be treated by soldiers like their own limbs. This unwarlike, unarmed state is seen as a consequence of their luxurious city-living: a lifestyle choice, favouring luxury over arms.

Fronto goes further, writing in the second century CE about the state of the army Hadrian had inherited from Trajan:

Truly the most corrupt of all were the Syrian soldiers, mutinous, insolent, rarely at their posts, leaning on their weapons (*freti armis*), wandering off from their garrisons, dispersed like scouts, drunk from noon till the next day, untrained at enduring even their *arma*, but, by taking off their *arma* piece by piece in their intolerance of the hardship (*impatientia*), half-naked (*seminudi*) like skirmishers and slingers. Besides disgraces of this sort, they were so unnerved by defeats that at the first sight of the Parthians they fled; they heard the trumpets blaring as if a signal for flight.⁶⁸⁷

Fronto, *Princ. Hist.* 12.

The misuse of arms – both weapons and armour – is seen in the wider context of a dissolute, unwarlike lifestyle which involves ease and luxury. It's also said to give them poor endurance – *impatientia*. Ultimately this leaves these soldiers unprepared

⁶⁸⁶ *Sed Corbuloni plus molis adversus ignaviam militum quam contra perfidiam hostium erat: quippe Syria transmotae legiones, pace longa segnes, munia castrorum aegerrime tolerabant [...] sine galeis, sine loriceis, nitidi et quaestuosi, militia per oppida expleta.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Corruptissimi vero omnium Syriatici milites, seditiosi, contumaces, apud signa infrequentes, freti armis, praesidiis vagi, exploratorum more palantes, de meridie ad posterum tenui- lenti, ne armatu quidem sustinendo adsueti, sed impatientia laboris armis singillatim omittendis in velitum atque funditorum modum seminudi. Praeter huiusce modi dedecora malis proeliis ita percussi fuerunt, ut ad primum Parthorum conspectum terga verterent, tubas quasi fugae signum canentis audirent.* Trans. Wheeler (1996) 230, adapted.

to fight the Parthians, and their cowardice and unwillingness to be armed are thus deemed inextricable. This is couched in more explicitly gendered terms in a letter to the emperor Lucius Verus by the same author:

The army you took over was corrupted (*corruptus*) with luxury, immorality (*lascivia*) and prolonged *otium*. The soldiers at Antioch were used to spending their time clapping actors, and were more often found in the nearest cafe-garden than in the ranks. Their horses were shaggy from neglect, but every hair was plucked from their riders: a rare sight was a soldier with hairy arms or legs! The men were better clothed than armed, so much so that Pontius Laelianus, a serious man and a disciplinarian of the old school (*vir gravis et veteris disciplinae*), in some cases ripped up their cuirasses with his fingertips; he found horses saddled with cushions [...] hardly any could make their spears hurtle, and most tossed them like light lances without verve and vigour.⁶⁸⁸

Fronto, *Ep. ad Verum* 2.1.19.

Treating war horses as a kind of armament, Fronto ironically accuses these soldiers of effeminate depilation while neglecting their 'weapon'.⁶⁸⁹ He accuses them of preferring extravagant clothing to arms, and their armour is simply not fit for purpose – it can be ripped with a single finger. This evokes the protection employed by the armies of Xerxes and Alexander the Great, who sometimes utilised linen armour.⁶⁹⁰ The most telling passage comes at the end, when the soldiers are too

⁶⁸⁸ *Exercitus tibi traditus erat luxuria et lascivia et otio diutino corruptus. Milites Antiochiae adsidue plaudere histrionibus consueti, saepius in nemore vicinae ganeae quam sub signis habiti. Equi incuria horridi, equites volsi: raro brachium aut crus militum hirsutum. Ad hoc vestiti melius quam armati, adeo ut vir gravis et veteris disciplinae Laelianus Pontius loricas partim eorum digitis primoribus scinderet; equos pulvillis instratos animadverteret [...] haud multi vibrantes hastas, pars maior sine vi et vigore tamquam lanceas iacere.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁶⁸⁹ For effeminacy and depilation, see above, 151, note 572.

⁶⁹⁰ Herodotus seems to associate Linen armour with Egyptians and Assyrians, *Hdt.* 1.135, 2.182, 3.47, 7.63; cf. *Xen. An.* 4.7.15, 5.4.13, *Cyr.* 4.4.2. For Alexander's use, see Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4.2.10; *Plut. Alex.*

enervated to even throw their spears, in a passage recalling the armed abilities of the Lemnian women in Statius' *Thebaid* after their 'sex had returned to their breasts.' These elements strongly remind of orientalist descriptions of Rome's Eastern enemies.

The similar treatments of Eastern Roman soldiers and enemy Easterners are important, because they problematise the idea that simple 'ethnic prejudice' can be to blame for the constructed effeminacy of Eastern soldiers. This cannot straightforwardly be the case, as Roman soldiers were often stationed far away from their true homelands, and often no clear reference is made to the idea that the soldiers mentioned are explicitly 'Syrian'. Indeed, Herodian describes how soldiers in Syria almost revolted after learning they were to be moved away from their 'profitable and easy service' to Germany, where soldiers endure a 'wintry climate and laborious duties'. Indeed, the soldiers in Germany were to be moved to Syria, and so garrison transfers were clearly a realistic prospect for Roman soldiers.⁶⁹¹ These criticised soldiers did not necessarily hail from the East – but they had, allegedly, been infected by it.

Instead, the corrupting influence of Syrian cities is stressed. Some combination of the place and the local culture is blamed for producing their unwarlike lifestyles – just as Gauls who move east are made unwarlike. Roman authors clearly believed this could be the case for Roman soldiers too, as Caesar suggests when discussing Roman soldiers who had been too long in Egypt. He states that these 'had habituated themselves to Alexandrian life and licence and had unlearned the name and discipline of the Roman people' and had married local women and had children by them.⁶⁹² The laying down of roots by marrying local women seems to be an

32.5; cf. Matthew (2015) 114-17. However, it seems the Etruscans used them as well, Livy 4.20.8; cf. Gleba (2011). Linen armour was more effective than it sounds against all but blunt force, cf. Aldrete, Bartell, and Aldrete (2013).

⁶⁹¹ Tac. *Hist.* 2.80. For the movements of Eastern legions during the Principate, see Keppie (1986);

⁶⁹² *qui iam in consuetudinem Alexandrinae vitae ac licentiae venerant et nomen disciplinamque populi Romani dedidicerant uxoresque duxerant, ex quibus plerique liberos habebant*, Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.110.

important factor, a practice which was nominally banned but common in practice.⁶⁹³ Horace recounts a similar example, concerning the soldiers of Crassus who had been taken captive by the Parthians following the Roman defeat at Carrhae. He asks if it is possible that these soldiers are still alive, in service to the Parthian king, in ‘disgraceful wedlock with barbarian wives’, the daughters of Rome’s triumphant enemies. Horace laments ‘the change in our senate and in our national character’ that is emblematic of a preference for an easy life in captivity over dying for the fatherland, and this is evocatively summed up in their placing aside of quintessential symbols of Roman morality, the Roman name, toga, but also *arma*, in the shape of the sacred shield (*anciliorum*).⁶⁹⁴

Reports of the poor relationship Eastern Roman soldiers had with *arma* serve to emphasise the reasons why Roman authors engaged in orientalist rhetoric in the first place. Roman authors wanted to articulate the consequences of the moral failure of the Roman people, by emphasising the peril that could be caused by the failure of the Roman war machine. Authors like Fronto and Tacitus do not describe Syrian soldiers in these terms to insult them. Instead, they are attempting to highlight the severe *consequences* of effeminacy in military contexts. Arms were not strictly central to this ideology, but they were important, as a sort of ‘litmus test’, or short-hand symbol, for warlike lifestyles. Such rhetoric could be well utilised to denigrate Eastern enemies of Rome, but it was tellingly ramped up when it concerned the impact of such lifestyles on Roman soldiers themselves.

⁶⁹³ I have touched upon the idea that women were thought to be inherently distracting to warlike men. Ovid specifically states that arms inspire battle, and battle is alien to marriage (*arma movent pugnas, pugna est aliena maritis*), *Ov. Fast.* 3.395. The theme is also prominent in the *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas chooses future war over safe matrimony with Dido. For the marriages and pseudo-marriages of Roman soldiers in practice, see Phang (2001).

⁶⁹⁴ *milesne Crassi coniuge barbara | turpis maritus vixit et hostium – | pro curia inversique mores! – | consenuit socerorum in armis | sub rege Medo Marsus et Apulus, | anciliorum et nominis et togae | oblitus aeternaeque Vestae, | incolumi Iove et urbe Roma? | hoc caverat mens provida Reguli*, *Hor. Carm.* 3.5.5-12. The *ancile* refers to a shield said to have fallen from heaven during the reign of Numa, which was hidden alongside eleven replicas which were protected by the Salian priesthood, cf. *Livy* 1.20.4; *Verg. Aen.* 8.663-64; *Ov. Fast.* 3.361-92.

Adorned *Arma*

I have made the case that *arma* came to represent austere, difficult, warlike lifestyles, and was regularly contrasted with the gaudy trappings of effeminate, luxurious and unwarlike lifestyles. However, moralising Roman authors also seem aware that arms themselves could go beyond appropriate austere simplicity, and could even be ornately or exquisitely adorned. This was challenging, because it blurred the lines between rugged *arma* and art, which was heavily problematised and strongly associated with Eastern modes of luxurious living. Virgil distinguishes between Roman warlikeness and unwarlike Greek artistry in his *Aeneid* when he has Anchises prophesise the future Roman destiny, to ignore those who forge more lifelike shapes in soft (*mollius*) bronze and marble – clearly the Greeks – and instead, in keeping with Roman art (*artes*), to ‘rule with all your power | the peoples of the earth [...] to spare the defeated, break the proud in war.’⁶⁹⁵ Here Anchises advocates Roman militarism over Greek visual artistry.⁶⁹⁶

The comparison is resonant because the influx of new types of art was heavily implicated in orientalist rhetoric.⁶⁹⁷ Greek-style art was popular among the Etruscans, and was of course wildly so from the Mid-republic at Rome – this is why it was so problematised in the literature. However, Roman authors especially debated the somewhat paradoxical impact that a conquered people’s culture could have upon the culture of their conquerors. Horace’s pithy line is probably the most famous, stating that ‘Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium.’⁶⁹⁸ The impact of Greek art on Roman culture was therefore constructed as an ironic reversal itself, leaving Rome itself conquered.

⁶⁹⁵ *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento | (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, | parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, Verg. *Aen.* 6.846-53, Trans. Fagles.

⁶⁹⁶ In effect, Anchises is repeating a theme of the *Aeneid* whereby the ‘Easternness’ of the Phrygians must be discarded and subsumed under the traditional Italian warlikeness of their new neighbours.

⁶⁹⁷ For the problematisation of (Greek) art by Roman authors, cf. Gruen (1986) 265-66; Lapatin (2015) 1-18; McDonnell (2006b). For the influence of Greek art upon Roman styles, cf. Pollitt (1978); Zanker (2010) 1-47; Kousser (2015).

⁶⁹⁸ *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis intulit agresti Latio*, Hor. *Epist.* 2.156-67.

Horace here suggests a subtle link between pernicious lifestyles, and the vulnerability of the unwarlike nation they produce.

The informal ‘triumph’ of Marcellus after his sacking of Syracuse in 212 BCE was seen as a kind of watershed in this regard, supposedly bringing Greek art into Rome for the first time.⁶⁹⁹ Our sources have much to say regarding the incident, and all three of our main accounts – from Polybius, Livy, and Plutarch – seem to agree that it represented a similar kind of paradox to the one Horace constructs. It is intimated that warlike conquest brought items back to Rome that were thought to have made the conquered people unwarlike in the first place. This is the ‘paradox’ of Roman imperialist rhetoric: that brutal acts of war could actually introduce luxury products that could make a people unwarlike. For example, Livy seems baffled that things rightly acquired by the ‘laws of war’ could lead to a dangerous passion for art among Romans.⁷⁰⁰ Importantly, he juxtaposes and contrasts the plundered, warlike *arma* – captured catapults and ballistae of Syracuse’s earlier rearmament period – with the more dangerous ‘adornments of a long peace and of royal wealth’ – silver, bronze, furnishings, and most of all statues.⁷⁰¹ Here, art and *arma* are opposed.

Plutarch also focuses on arms. He says that Rome, before the triumph, was ‘a precinct of much-warring Ares’, filled with ‘barbaric arms and bloody spoils.’⁷⁰² It was also satisfyingly ugly, ‘not a gladdening or a reassuring sight, nor one for cowardly (δειλῶν) and luxurious (τροφόντων) spectators.’⁷⁰³ But this does not last, and Plutarch blames Marcellus for leading images of gods around in triumph, and for making a people who previously knew only war and agriculture ‘full of glib talk about art and artists’.⁷⁰⁴ This cultural shift – displaying art instead of arms – is considered a dangerous, unwarlike one. However, the true irony is that through being strong, the Romans had gained the very resources which had made their

⁶⁹⁹ He was refused a formal triumph by the senate and had to make do with a mere ‘ovation’. However, the grandeur of the procession suggests it was a triumph in everything but name.

⁷⁰⁰ Livy 25.40.1-3.

⁷⁰¹ Livy 26.21.8-9.

⁷⁰² Plut. *Marc.* 21.2. ‘A precinct of much-warring Ares’ is a quote from Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.1.

⁷⁰³ Plut. *Marc.* 21.2.

⁷⁰⁴ Plut. *Marc.* 21.5.

enemies weak. This attitude is articulated most explicitly by Polybius, one-time Greek hostage of Rome:

...while leading the simplest of lives, very far removed from all such superfluous magnificence, they were constantly victorious over those who possessed the greatest number and finest examples of such works, must we not consider that they committed a mistake? To abandon the habits of the victors and to imitate those of the conquered [...] is surely an incontestable error.⁷⁰⁵

Polyb. 9.10.5-7.

Here, Polybius actively discourages the taking up of Greek customs, like the appreciation of art, in case these habits actually contributed to the 'warlikeness deficit' which caused the defeat of the Greeks in the first place.

The idea of superficial correspondence returns in these passages. In Plutarch, arms and 'bloody spoils' – presumably battlefield-captured armour – are in some way comparable to art, or in some way serve the same purpose for warlike peoples as art does for the unwarlike. Sallust has Marius echo the same idea, with gendered implications: 'for this is what I have learned from my father and other upright men: that elegance of appearance (*munditias*) is becoming to women but toil (*laborem*) to men, that all good men ought to have more glory than riches, that *arma*, not furniture, confer distinction.'⁷⁰⁶ This is similar to the ideological separation between 'real' military training and athletic training, as articulated in my first chapter: I argue that a similar separation was articulated for art and arms. Swords could be adorned with precious metals and gems, and shields and armour could be painted or

⁷⁰⁵ εἰ δ' ἀπλουστάτοις χρώμενοι βίοις καὶ πορρωτάτω τῆς ἐν τούτοις περιττότητος καὶ πολυτελείας ἀφροσύνης ὁμῶς ἐπεκράτουν τούτων αἰεὶ παρ' οἷς ὑπῆρχε πλεῖστα καὶ κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα, πῶς οὐ νομιστέον εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀμάτημα; τὸ γὰρ ἀπολιπόντας τὰ τῶν νικόντων ἔθη τὸν τῶν ἠττωμένων ζῆλον ἀναλαμβάνειν, προσεπιδραττομένους ἅμα [...] εἶποι τις εἶναι τῶν πραττόντων παράπτωμα.

⁷⁰⁶ *nam ex parente meo et ex aliis sanctis viris ita accipi: munditias mulieribus, laborem viris convenire, omnibusque bonis oportere plus gloriae quam divitiarum esse; arma, non suppellectilem decori esse*, Sall. *Iug.* 85.40, Trans. Loeb, adapted. Ornate furniture tended to be categorised similarly to other forms of art, cf. Livy 39.6.7, *Per.*57; Polyaeus, *Strat.* 16.2; Plut. *Pomp.* 72.4.

adorned similarly. Should these be considered art or *arma*? Was adornment appropriate or superfluous? Roman authors asked these questions, and orientalist rhetoric was as prominent in these debates as it was for art proper.

I have been unable to find any scholarly works devoted to adorned arms as a moral problem in Roman literature, or which discuss their ethnic implications in depth. Kate Gilliver's 'Display in Roman Warfare' (2007) perhaps comes closest, in which Gilliver describes the ways in which Roman armies and soldiers could use appearance and display to achieve military aims, most notably to intimidate enemy forces. She includes a section on Roman ideals that weapons should go unadorned, but, inevitably, her focus is on military effectiveness. Here, I hope to discuss Roman attitudes to adorned arms in the context of attitudes to art and Easterners.

However, it is clear that orientalism need not be implicated in every critical discussion of adorned arms. This is because the most famous example of adorned arms in Roman history involves Rome's early conflict with the Samnites, an Italian people from a mountainous region, often described as warlike.⁷⁰⁷ Livy describes the Samnites in battle in 308 BCE:⁷⁰⁸

The enemy, besides their other preparations for war, had made their battle-line to glitter with new and splendid arms. There were two corps: the shields of the one were inlaid with gold, of the other with silver [...] their helmets were crested, to make their stature appear greater. The tunics of the gilded warriors were particoloured; those of the silver ones were linen of a dazzling white. The latter had silver sheaths and silver baldrics: the former gilded

⁷⁰⁷ Horace refers to the wider group of *Sabelli* as 'the manly children of peasant soldiers', Hor. *Carm.* 6.37-38. cf. Livy 7.29.1-7, 9.13.7, 10.38; Salmon (1967) 30; Scopacasa (2015) 41-44.

⁷⁰⁸ Livy's moral reflections upon the event are likely representative of his own time, the first century CE. This justifies its inclusion in this work despite the early date.

sheaths and golden baldrics, and their horses had gold - embroidered saddle-cloths...⁷⁰⁹

Livy 9.40.1-3

The adornment of the Samnite arms is described in exquisite detail, with precious metals or bright colours on almost every conceivable item. In Livy's description, aesthetics is a principle consideration in Samnite choices of *arma*. However, he goes on to describe the Roman response in very moralising terms:

The Romans had already learned of these splendid accoutrements, and their generals had taught them that a soldier should be rough to look on, not adorned with gold and silver but putting his trust in iron and in courage: indeed those other things were more truly spoil than arms, shining bright before a battle, but losing their beauty in the midst of blood and wounds; *virtus* they said, was the adornment of a soldier (*virtutem esse militis decus*); all those other things went with the victory, and a rich enemy was the prize of the victor, however poor.⁷¹⁰

Livy 9.40.4-6.

The self-aggrandising rhetoric is clearly stated: while others may adorn their weapons, a Roman's only adornment is virtuous masculinity. In fact, a Roman should look *horridus* – rough, or rugged. For swords, only courage on the part of the wielder makes them effective, and adornment only makes them more suitable in defeat as spoils. This is crucial, as Livy does not indicate that adornment actually makes the sword or its wielder any less effective – he simply has the Romans make

⁷⁰⁹ ...qui praeter ceteros belli apparatus, ut acies sua fulgeret novis armorum insignibus fecerunt. Duo exercitus erant; scuta alterius auro, alterius argento caelaverunt; [...] galeae cristatae, quae speciem magnitudini corporum adderent. Tunicae auratis militibus versicolores, argentatis linteae candidae. His vaginae argenteae, baltea argentea: auratae vaginae, aurea baltea illis erant, et equorum inaurata tapeta. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁷¹⁰ Notus iam Romanis apparatus insignium armorum fuerat doctique a ducibus erant horridum militem esse debere, non caelatum auro et argento sed ferro et animis fretum: quippe illa praedam verius quam arma esse, nitentia ante rem, deformia inter sanguinem et volnera. Virtutem esse militis decus et omnia illa victoriam sequi et ditem hostem quamvis pauperis victoris praemium esse. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

moral judgements against the wielders. In showing off their wealth, the generals argue, the Samnites were in fact only displaying unwarlikeness.

Indeed, the wealth associated with the Samnites is important, and Rafael Scopacasa even goes so far as to say that there was a ‘parallel’ tradition to Samnite warlikeness that places the Samnites ‘firmly within the stereotype of the opulent barbarian’, like Classical Greek images of the Medes and Persians.⁷¹¹ This is evidenced by repeated tales of Samnites who attempt to bribe Roman generals with gold, silver, and slaves, and also by their adorned arms, which recall Herodotus’ description of the Persian battle array.⁷¹² Furthermore, Strabo perhaps even describes a vector for the orientalisation of the Samnites, describing how the people of Campania, a thoroughly Hellenised part of southern Italy, were conquered by the Samnites after becoming soft by luxurious living. He then pointedly says that the Romans quickly overcame the Samnites after that, perhaps suggesting the Samnites had been softened themselves somewhat.⁷¹³ The Samnites were also probably related in some way to the Sabines, who Hyginus, a freedman of Augustus, says were descended from the Persians themselves.⁷¹⁴ I am reluctant to unhesitatingly use the term ‘orientalism’ for such descriptions, but it is clear that many of the same themes are being utilised by our authors, for clearly similar purposes.

Regardless, a few books later the General Papirius, son of the victorious commander of the previous battle, makes the case even more strongly:

Papirius [...] said many things of war in general and much regarding the present equipment of the enemy, more vain and showy than effective. For crests, said he, dealt no wounds, and painted and gilded shields would let the Roman javelin through, and their battle-array, resplendent

⁷¹¹ Scopacasa (2015) 44-45.

⁷¹² Bribery: Scopacasa (2015) 44-45; cf. Cic. *Sen.* 55; Val. Max. 5.3.5-6; Plin. *HN* 19.86-87; Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 2.1-2; Flor. 1.13-21-23. Herodotus: Hdt. 7.61-96.

⁷¹³ Strabo 5.4.3.

⁷¹⁴ Fragment from Servius, *ad Aen.* 8.638, cf. Salmon (1967) 30.

in white tunics, would be stained with blood when sword
met sword.⁷¹⁵

Livy 10.39.11-12.

Here the rhetoric seems even more forceful. Papirius seems adamant that vain and showy arms and armour will actually prove ineffective – indeed, that their painted shields will fail and let Roman arms through. This idea is echoed by Seneca the Younger, who argues that ‘you will speak of a sword as good, not when its sword-belt is of gold, or its scabbard studded with gems, but when its edge is fine for cutting and its point will pierce any armour.’⁷¹⁶ Similarly, Quintilian espouses rust-free – perhaps even shining – weaponry, but with no more ornamentation than that, and especially not ‘the gleam of gold or silver, which has no warlike efficacy and is even a positive peril to its wearer.’⁷¹⁷ Frontinus also has Scipio Africanus Minor criticise a soldier with an ‘elaborately decorated’ shield.⁷¹⁸ These are arguments to prioritise utility over showy aesthetics.

The Roman tradition of displaying captured enemy arms in public is also relevant. Indeed, Livy goes on to describe how the captured Samnite arms were considered so impressive that they were used to ‘strikingly adorn’ even the public places of Rome.⁷¹⁹ From then on this apparently became custom among the *aediles*, the officers responsible for maintaining the public buildings and areas of Rome. There is an abundance of evidence for the adornment of temples, and even private homes with the arms of conquered enemies.⁷²⁰ The Greek practice of erecting *tropaia* – trophies

⁷¹⁵ *Papirius [...] multa de universo genere belli, multa de praesenti hostium apparatu, vana magis specie quam efficaci ad eventum, disseruit: non enim cristas volnera facere, et per picta atque aurata scuta transire Romanum pilum, et candore tunicarum fulgentem aciem, ubi res ferro geratur, cruentari.*

⁷¹⁶ Sen. *Ep.* 76.13-14.

⁷¹⁷ Quint. 10.1.30.

⁷¹⁸ Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.5.

⁷¹⁹ Livy 10.39.14; cf. 9.40.15-17.

⁷²⁰ Ostenberg has collected an extensive array of evidence, Ostenberg (2009) 19-46. However, some examples include, for temples: Verg. *Aen.* 3.286-88, 11.778-79; Hor. *Carm.* 4.15.6-8; Sil. *Sil.* 14.649. Private homes: Cic. *Phil.* 2.28.68; Livy 10.7.9, 38.43.10; Verg. *Aen.* 2.504 ; Prop. 3.9.26; Plin. *HN* 35.2.7. Virgil describes the Latin city of Laurentum in the *Aeneid*: ‘Many weapons, too, hang on the hallowed doors, | captured chariots, curved axes, crested helmets, | enormous bolts from gates, and lances, shields | and ramming beaks ripped from the prows of ships’, Verg. *Aen.* 7.183-88; cf. Rutledge (2012).

on which enemy arms were hung – on battlefields was adapted by the Romans, who tended to return captured arms to Rome for display.⁷²¹ Additionally, captured arms were very prominent, alongside captured artworks, in Roman triumphs.⁷²² This seems to be another aspect which ensured they were treated as superficially similar. Plutarch clearly considered arms and art to be similar, because they were believed to have once held this same public function of adorning public areas like the Roman forum. Under this constructed historical narrative, the influx of Greek-style statuary replaced the use of arms as decoration in Rome.⁷²³

The gendered connotations of adorned arms – perhaps implied in the Samnite narratives – are apparent in a number of sources. For example, Suetonius has Caesar boast about how his army could fight well even though ‘reeking of perfume’ and goes on to describe how Caesar decked his soldiers out ‘with arms inlaid with silver and gold, both for show and to make them hold them closer in battle, through fear of the greatness of the loss.’⁷²⁴ The juxtaposition of perfume – certainly effeminate – with the adornment of arms suggests some ideological conflation. It should also be noted that Caesar seemed elsewhere to occasionally embrace things usually considered effeminate, perhaps to illustrate his distance from the traditional establishment.⁷²⁵ Artificially inflating the value of arms to ensure soldiers held on to them is surely intended to be taken as luxurious decadence, and a sign of the times.

⁷²¹ The Elder Pliny describes a large statue of Jupiter made from captured Samnite arms, Plin. *HN* 34.18.43. Mary Beard notes that adorned arms could come to represent ‘objects of luxury and wonderment in their own right’ and cites an example from Lucullus’ triumph 63 BCE of a shield studded with jewels, Beard (2007) 175; cf. Plut. *Luc.* 37.3; Diod. Sic. 31.8.11-12; Livy 34.52.5-7.

⁷²² Arms: Livy 34.52.4-12, 36.40.11-14; Diod. Sic. 31.8.10-12; Dion. Hal. 6.17.2; cf. Beard (2007) 175-78; Ostenberg (2009) 19-46. Art: Livy 25.40.1-3, 34.52.4-5, 39.5.13-16; Plut. *Aem.* 32-33, *Marc* 21.1; Plin. *HN* 37.14; cf. Ostenberg (2009) 79-90.

⁷²³ This perhaps too explains Sallust’s claim that early Romans ‘took more pleasure in handsome arms (*decoris armis*) and war horses than in harlots and revelry’ – the handsome arms could be, potentially, the spoils of their enemies, Sall. *Cat.* 7.4. It is perhaps equally likely that Sallust is dissenting from the more common Roman opinion that adorned arms are superfluous or somehow un-Roman. The juxtaposition with war horses perhaps suggest he is talking about Roman implements of war. Sallust tends to emphasise the degradation of the Roman martial spirit quite extensively, so perhaps he felt that any interest in arms – even adorned arms – showed greater martial spirit than his posited feminised contemporaries.

⁷²⁴ Suet. *Iul.* 67-68, Trans. Loeb, adapted. *De Bello Hispaniensi*, a work traditionally (but probably erroneously) attributed to Caesar himself describes two Caesarian soldiers with ‘the inwrought work of their shields – emblems of their fame – flashing in front of them’, 25.7.

⁷²⁵ Edwards (1993) 63, 90-92.

A similar juxtaposition occurs in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*:

But what is the point of collecting these instances, when our soldiers' sword hilts (*capuli*) are made of chased silver, and even ivory is not thought good enough? When their scabbards (*vaginae*) jingle with little silver chains and their belts with silver tabs, and nowadays our schools for those just at the point of adolescence wear silver badges as a safeguard? And women use silver to wash in and scorn sitting-baths not made of silver, and the same substance does service both for our food and for our baser needs?⁷²⁶

Plin. *HN* 33.54.152.

Pliny's conflation of the immoral adornment of arms and the immoral adornment of women is striking, as he discusses the use by women of silver facilities to help them wash.⁷²⁷ Through this conflation, *arma* are discussed in an unambiguously moralised way. The phenomenon is implicated heavily in the wider debate around luxury, a popular theme for the author, and he mentions all three demographic groups usually considered most vulnerable in this regard: soldiers, the youth, and women. The East is not directly implicated, but there is, perhaps, circumstantial evidence of links to the rhetoric of unwarlikeness and luxury. However, the quoted passage does occur immediately after Pliny says Pompey was the first to bring silver statues to Rome – statues of Mithridates and Pharnaces, the Eastern kings, displayed in triumph. He additionally notes Pompey uses adorned military hardware in his

⁷²⁶ *et quid haec attinet colligere, cum capuli militum ebore etiam fastidito caelentur argento, vaginae catellis, baltea lamnis crepitent, iam vero paedagogia in transitu virilitatis custodiantur argento, feminae laventur et nisi argentea solia fastidiant, eademque materia et cibus et probris serviat?* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁷²⁷ Ovid uses similar language to criticise the self-beautification of men, 'you should not take pleasure in curling your hair with an iron, nor should you rub your legs with the biting pumice stone: leave such things for those who sing hymns to the mother-goddess Cybele in their Phrygian modes. An unkempt beauty befits men. Theseus carried off the Minoan Ariadne, but his head was adorned by no hair-pin; Phaedra loved Hippolytus, and he was not particularly refined.', Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.505–24.

procession, in the form of gold and silver chariots.⁷²⁸ The East never seems far away from these discussions.

This link is more clearly present in Virgil's *Aeneid*, though there are some ambiguities. Homer's epics had, for the most part, celebrated and praised beautiful adorned arms, and so expectations of genre may have dictated that Virgil do so too.⁷²⁹ Whatever the inspiration, Virgil certainly does so, and Aeneas himself is granted stunning adorned *arma* by Venus: 'blood-red', with plumed helmet and gold and electrum elements, reminiscent of fire. 'No words can tell its power', Virgil writes, and it leaves Aeneas in awe.⁷³⁰ Venus states that she is granting him the armour so he should 'show no further reluctance to challenge either proud Laurentines or even Turnus.'⁷³¹ In other words, it was required to give him the martial capability to face his foes. It serves a warlike purpose, with a prestige element, perhaps, too.⁷³² Blunt efforts to force some association between the adorned armour and Aeneas' Easternness ought to be avoided, as the adorned armour is given little moral or detrimental significance, and Western warriors wield adorned arms in the *Aeneid* as well.⁷³³ The epic genre simply demanded a literary landscape in which heroic warriors wield suitably ornate arms.

This makes it all the more striking when Virgil problematises adorned arms in his eleventh book. The relevant scene again concerns Camilla, the Italian warrior-woman mentioned above who causes havoc in the Etruscan ranks. She is explicitly said to lead a warlike lifestyle, at odds with her sex, as her hands are more used to the 'rough work of battle' at a 'lightening pace' than the more usual 'spools of

⁷²⁸ Plin. *HN* 33.54.152.

⁷²⁹ Hom. *Il.* 3.361, 4.132-37, 11.17-31, 16.130-34, 18.468-617; cf. Everson (2004) 36-67; Johnston (2005). However, Homer does seem to pour scorn upon the Carian commander Nastes for coming to battle 'all decked with gold, like a girl, fool that he was'. His gold soon becomes the booty of Achilles, showing an early precursor of the rhetoric from Livy, Hom. *Il.* 2.872-875.

⁷³⁰ Verg. *Aen.* 8.619-25.

⁷³¹ Verg. *Aen.* 8.613-14.

⁷³² Earlier, Aeneas gives adorned armour as a prize in Anchises' funeral games: 'glinting with burnished links | and triple-meshed in gold [...] this armour he gives Mnestheus, a fighter's badge of honour to shield him well in war', Verg. *Aen.* 5.258-62.

⁷³³ For example, Aeneas' nemesis Turnus wears a triple-crested helmet and wields a shield with a golden representation of Io, an 'awesome emblem', Verg. *Aen.* 7.783-92; cf. S. Small (1959).

Minerva' and 'baskets filled with wool'.⁷³⁴ Here, again, feminine items are contrasted with warlike ones. Her eventual Phrygian opponent, Chloreus, is also in some ways gender-bending, in that he is almost certainly a eunuch: an ex-priest of Cybele. As I have already stated, eunuchs in Roman literature were usually considered effeminate anyway, but the Galli were considered dangerously so, and were associated with cross-dressing, dancing, music and receptive male-male sex.⁷³⁵

Importantly, their *arma* seem to correspond to their relative warlike status – even though their genders are reversed from their conventional associations. We are told earlier that Camilla and her fellow female warriors wear gold in their hair, but otherwise their equipment seems plain: mere bronze breastplates, and a shepherd's staff roughly transformed into a spear.⁷³⁶ Chloreus' gear, in contrast, is extraordinarily described. Virgil devotes nine lines to its intricate ornamentation:

...gleaming in Phrygian armour,
spurring a lathered warhorse decked with coat of mail,
its brazen scales meshing with gold like feathers stitched.
He himself, aflame in outlandish reds and purples,
shot Gortynian shafts from a Lycian bow, a bow
of gold slung from the priest's shoulders, gold
his helmet too, and he'd knotted his saffron cape
and flaring linen pleats with a tawny golden brooch,
his shirt and barbarous leggings stiff with needled
braid.⁷³⁷

Verg. *Aen.* 11.769-77.

Chloreus' ornamented *arma* is easily the most extravagant in the *Aeneid*, and includes a gold helmet, multi-coloured armour, red cape, and horse armour made from both

⁷³⁴ *bellatrix, non illa colo calathisve Minervae | femineas adsueta manus, sed proelia virgo | dura pati cursuque pedum praevertere ventos*, Verg. *Aen.* 7.805-07.

⁷³⁵ For the Galli, see above, 100.

⁷³⁶ Verg. *Aen.* 7.814-16.

⁷³⁷ *Phrygiis fulgebat in armis | spumantemque agitabat equum, quem pellis aënis | in plumam squamis auro conserta tegebat. | ipse peregrina ferrugine clarus et ostro | spicula torquebat Lycio Gortynia cornu; | ureus ex*

bronze and gold. The description also roots Chloereus more firmly in the East than even the rest of the Phrygians, as Lycia (southern Asia-Minor) and Gortynia (in Macedonia, near Thrace) are named as places of origin for his weapons, and his clothes are explicitly described as *barbara*, one of only four usages of the word in the *Aeneid*, used with orientalist connotations in the majority of cases.⁷³⁸ The multicolours also reaffirms a connection to the Galli, who were famous for their brightly coloured clothes, as described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.⁷³⁹

As the narrative develops, Camilla is entranced by this ornamentation, and she completely devotes her attention towards defeating him and capturing it: 'She stalked him wildly, reckless through the ranks | afire with a women's lust for loot and plunder (*femineo praedae et spoliolum ardebat amore*)...'⁷⁴⁰ Her 'natural' female love of adornment, therefore, betrays her.⁷⁴¹ Distracted, she is dispatched via javelin by Arruns, who had honourably pledged in advance not to claim her armour as spoils.⁷⁴² It also strikes her in her breast, emphasising the role of her sex in her defeat. Here, adorned armour clearly has moral implications. Like in the Samnite narratives, adorned armour serves to distract, and only encourages opponents to plunder it. However, the plundering is also problematised, as in the Marcellus triumph narratives, as adorned arms can also represent plundered art, and in turn Eastern luxury. It can therefore tempt those who covet luxurious things away from

umeris erat arcus et aurea vati | cassida; tum croceam chlamydemque sinusque crepantis | carbases fulvo in nodum collegerat auro | pictus acu tunicas et barbara tegmina crurum. Trans. Fagles, adapted.

⁷³⁸ Another occurrence describes the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium on the shield of Aeneas, *Aen.* 8.685. A description of a door at Troy, made of 'barbaric gold' perhaps also elicits the idea that the Trojans had conquered other Eastern peoples to gain it, *Aen.* 2.504. In the final example, without reference to the East, the Trojan Ilioneus asks Dido rhetorically whether the Carthaginians are so barbarous as to deny the shipwrecked Trojans safety, *Aen.* 1.539.

⁷³⁹ 'But according to law and the Senate's decree, no native Roman may go about through the city decked out in a brightly coloured robe and playing the flute while begging alms, or celebrate the goddess's orgies in the Phrygian manner. So careful is the city about religious customs other than its own; so ominously does it regard all unseemly nonsense', Dion. Hali. 2.19.5.

⁷⁴⁰ Verg. *Aen.* 11.781-82.

⁷⁴¹ In book nine, two men of Aeneas, lovers Nisus and Euryalus, are killed after a beautiful helmet taken as booty reflects light during a night-time raid, *Aen.* 9.359-85. This suggests men could be compromised by their love of booty also, but Camilla's own desire is thoroughly and explicitly gendered in line with her sex. On the taking of armour as spoils and subsequent deaths in the *Aeneid*, see Hornsby (1966).

⁷⁴² Verg. *Aen.* 11.783-804.

their martial lifestyles, turning the bellicose into the unwarlike, converting the masculinised into the feminised, and the Western into the Oriental.⁷⁴³

Adorned Armies in the East

I have shown that Roman authors of the period I study heavily criticised ornamented *arma*, and heaped heavy scorn upon any who wielded them. So far, in my examples, these wielders have come from a variety of backgrounds. Some were Samnite warriors, others were rhetorically invented Roman soldiers, another was a Phrygian priest. Connections to the ideology of luxury have perhaps suggested subtle links to the rhetoric of orientalism, but in this section I argue that, in historical works, a far more concrete connection with adorned weapons and the East is present. Indeed, I argue that the most likely wielders of ornamented weapons in works of history were thought to come from the East. This was perhaps for three reasons. Firstly, because this rhetoric was deeply embedded within the moralised discourse regarding luxury and wealth with which the East was associated. Secondly, and relatedly, because there was a pre-existing literary tradition which involved descriptions of the ornamented arms of Eastern armies. Thirdly, because there is some evidence that magnificent ornamented arms were used in certain contexts in the Hellenistic East.

In ancient works of history, the most prominent descriptions of adorned arms tend to come in the long catalogues of the 'battle arrays' of enemy armies. Adorned *arma*, therefore, regularly take centre stage in passages that describe Eastern armies in battle-array as a multi-coloured, varying multitude comprising of a vast number of distinct ethnic contingents distinguishable by their traditional arms. I will detail some Roman examples below, but it is first important to state that the tradition's most likely prototype is Herodotus' remarkable thirty-five chapter, two-thousand

⁷⁴³ Were Chloereus to have killed Camilla himself, this message might have been subverted. As he merely functioned as a distraction, his unwarlike characterisation remains intact. For this particular conflict, see G. West (1985). For Camilla, see Knapp (1997) 111-39; Fratantuono (2007b); Basson (1986).

word description of Xerxes' Persian army in his *Histories*.⁷⁴⁴ He describes adorned arms in similar ways, including the multi-coloured tunics of the Persians themselves, the 'outlandish' and difficult to describe bronze helmets of the Assyrians, the animal skins of the Ethiopians, the 'plaited helmets' of the Paphlagonians, the wooden helmets of the Moschi, and too many other diverse weapons to mention.⁷⁴⁵ In contrast, his descriptions of Greek battle arrays at both Thermopylae, in the same book, and later at Plataea, are far shorter, listing the far fewer Greek contingents, often with their generals, and he shows no real interest in their differing ethnic armaments.⁷⁴⁶ It can certainly be argued that the Persian army was more ethnically diverse than Greek armies, but nevertheless, Herodotus seems to exploit the contrast between diverse Easterners and the Greek forces to construct a narrative of plucky panhellenists fighting an overwhelming empire.

Achaemenid Persia was strongly associated with adorned *arma* into the Roman period as well. For example, Plutarch has Aristides, the Athenian general of the Persian Wars, denounce Persian arms during the battle of Plataea (479 BCE), saying that they still used archery, but also 'variegated vesture and gold adornments to cover soft bodies and unmanly spirits.'⁷⁴⁷ Quintus Curtius, a Latin chronicler of Alexander of probably the first century CE, actively and prominently uses attitudes to adorned arms to demonstrate the differing attitudes to war of the Macedonians and the Persians during Alexander's invasion. He draws a great contrast between the warlike Macedonians and the rather less-so 'splendidly equipped', multicultural, Persian army:

This throng of so many peoples and of the whole Orient
(*Orientis*), called forth from their homes, may be a cause of
terror to their neighbours; it gleams with purple and gold,
is resplendent with arms and with riches so great that

⁷⁴⁴ The more precise figure is two-thousand, two-hundred and forty-four, Hdt. 7.61-96. The description is of the army as it was in 480 BCE. On this ethnic 'catalogue', see Armayor (1978); Provencal (2015) 115-16.

⁷⁴⁵ Hdt. 7.61, 63, 69, 72-73, 78-79.

⁷⁴⁶ Hdt. 7.202-04, 9.28-29.

⁷⁴⁷ Plut. *Arist.* 16.4.

those who have not seen them with their own eyes cannot imagine them.⁷⁴⁸

Curt. 3.2.12.

The Macedonian army, in contrast, is 'grim [...] and unkempt-looking' and it more practically 'covers with its shields and spears immovable wedges and serried power of men.'⁷⁴⁹ An Athenian exile in Darius' service continues in this manner, articulating how (in familiar terms) the Macedonians rely on warlikeness and toil, do not care for money, and that the Persian silver and gold would have been better spent on soldiers' wages rather than on ornamented equipment.⁷⁵⁰ A long description of the Persian march follows, with yet more extravagant *arma*, and this is again contrasted with the Macedonians, who have 'men and horses gleaming, not with gold and parti-coloured garments, but with steel and bronze.'⁷⁵¹ The Macedonians are quite clearly representing traditional, austere, warlike values, in a way representing the position more usually reserved for the Romans themselves in Roman literature. Regardless, the orientalist rhetoric is strongly articulated, and adorned arms take centre-stage in the contrasts drawn. For Quintus Curtius, adorned *arma* are a key difference between (relative) West and East.

This is important, because in his narrative, Curtius records the Macedonian attitude to adorned *arma* changing, and he blames the East. The change occurs after the invasion of Persia, when Alexander learns of the adorned arms of those even further East. In India, there were apparently arms which 'gleamed of gold and ivory' and consequently, Alexander, 'not to be outdone in anything, since he surpassed all other men, added silver plates to the shields and put golden bits on his horses, and

⁷⁴⁸ *haec tot gentium et totius Orientis excita sedibus suis moles, finitimis potest esse terribilis; nitet purpura auroque, fulget armis et opulentia, quantam qui oculis non subiecere animis concipere non possunt.* Trans. Loeb, adapted; cf. Curt. 3.3.8.

⁷⁴⁹ Curt. 3.2.13.

⁷⁵⁰ Curt. 3.2.11-19. The Athenian, Charidemus, is executed for his candour but Quintus tells us that 'Afterwards, too late, the king repented, and admitting that the Greek had spoken the truth', Curt. 3.2.19.

⁷⁵¹ Curt. 3.3.8-27.

adorned the cuirasses also, some with gold, others with silver'.⁷⁵² The argument lacks a bit of internal consistency, as the great adornment of Persian arms did not prompt the same response in Alexander earlier; however, Curtius is perhaps suggesting that Alexander is undergoing some negative personal changes in the East, as the next passage immediately chastises him for wanting to be known as the son of a god.⁷⁵³ Nevertheless, Curtius articulates the idea that the adornment of arms and armour was an Oriental, unwarlike folly, and one which could potentially infect those exposed to Eastern attitudes.

The idea of the 'Persianisation' of Alexander and the Macedonians was clearly resonant for Roman authors, probably due to their own constructions of the 'infectiveness' of Eastern attitudes. In one important example, Livy shows great scorn for the Persianisation of the Macedonian army under Alexander the Great. In a remarkable 'counterfactual' passage in which Livy imagines Alexander attempting to invade Italy had he not died young, Livy makes it clear that 'he would have come into Italy more like Darius than Alexander, and would have brought with him an army which had forgotten its native Macedonia and was rapidly becoming Persian in character.'⁷⁵⁴ Livy makes clear what 'becoming Persian' entails, as he describes how Darius came to battle 'dragging after him a train of women and eunuchs, wrapped up in purple and gold, encumbered with all the trappings of state'.⁷⁵⁵ Adornment is therefore implicated, and Alexander is also compared unfavourably to great Roman heroes, and is dismissed for only having fought 'effeminate Asiatics' and 'women' previously.⁷⁵⁶ Livy is clearly suggesting that the Macedonians became less warlike after their invasion of Persia – just as in his own narrative Rome

⁷⁵² *itaque, necubi vinceretur, cum ceteris praestaret, scutis argenteas laminas, equis frenos aureos addidit, loricas quoque alias auro, alias argento adornavit*, Curt. 8.5.4; cf. Just. *Epit.* 12.7.5; Arr. *Anab.* 7.11.3.

⁷⁵³ Curt. 8.5.10-12.

⁷⁵⁴ Livy 9.18.2. Alexander was rumoured to have been planning the invasion of Rome before his death, Arr. *Anab.* 7.1.1-6.

⁷⁵⁵ Livy 9.17.16.

⁷⁵⁶ Livy 9.17.7-8, 19.10.

supposedly became more unwarlike after conquering the Hellenistic kingdoms, ruled by the Macedonians, which replaced them.⁷⁵⁷

The supposed Persianisation – the process seems little different than orientalisation – of the Macedonians is important, because Roman authors like Livy often represented the battle arrays of the Hellenistic successor kingdoms very similarly to Herodotus and Quintus Curtius. Indeed, Livy makes it clear that he considers the Macedonians, post-conquest, as successors to Persia. Beyond this explicit suggestion, the connection is made clear in his descriptions of Hellenistic armies, which also focus upon the adorned arms of their multicultural forces.

Livy's account of the battle of Magnesia (190 BCE), which the Romans fought against the Seleucid empire under Antiochus III, is an important example. Occupying the Persian parts of Alexander's empire, and much of the territory of the Achemenids, an association with adorned arms is preserved in Livy's account, despite being ruled by a Macedonian elite. In this battle, Livy tells us that 'the king's line was more chequered with troops of many nations, dissimilar both in their persons and armour.'⁷⁵⁸ Additional descriptions show some of these distinctions: included are men with Macedonian pikes, Medes with full-armoured 'Cataphract' horses, a contingent of the famous *Argyraspides* ('Silver Shields'), Arabs with long thin swords; the list goes on. Livy particularly focuses upon Antiochus' elephants, especially emphasising their utility and ornamentation, describing how four-manned castles sit atop them, alongside caparisons and crests, causing great terror from their appearance.⁷⁵⁹ Here, the adornment and arms of the different ethnic contingents is given a central importance. Livy shows a clear subscription to an orientalist literary tradition concerning the adorned *arma* of Eastern armies, easily transmitted to descriptions of Hellenistic forces.

⁷⁵⁷ Livy 34.4.1-3. Plutarch too states that after their first Persian victories, 'Then for the first time the Macedonians got a taste of gold and silver and women and barbaric luxury of life, and now that they had struck the trail, they were like dogs in their eagerness to pursue and track down the wealth of the Persians', Plut. *Alex.* 24.3.

⁷⁵⁸ Livy 37.40.1.

⁷⁵⁹ Livy 37.40.1-13.

Another army from the Hellenistic East is described in similar terms by Plutarch – and again, there are Persian links. The kingdom of Pontus had been founded by the Persian Mithridatic dynasty, but its armies were led by the aggressively Hellenising Mithridates VI at the battle of Chaeronea against the Romans in 86 BCE.⁷⁶⁰ The author informs us that their armour was ‘magnificently embellished with gold and silver’, their Median and Scythian vests forming ‘rich colours’, and their armour flashed bright in the sun. Plutarch relays that ‘the air could not contain the shouts and clamour of so many nations forming in array.’⁷⁶¹ However, Plutarch shows the transferability of these ideas by having the Macedonian forces of King Perseus – far less directly linked to the Persians – again described similarly, at the battle of Pydna (168 BCE). Again, Perseus has variously armed ethnic contingents, which include the ‘terrible’ appearance of the Thracians in gleaming white shields and greaves and Macedonians ‘gleaming with gilded armour and fresh scarlet coats’.⁷⁶² In the case of the Greek mercenaries, Plutarch simply glosses over them, only saying that their ‘equipment was of every variety.’⁷⁶³ Neither are these details merely reflecting Plutarch’s proclivities, as though Livy’s account of the battle is less detailed, the earlier, Latin, author still remarks upon the distinctive adornment of Perseus’ soldiers, one set called the Bronze Shields, and one set the White Shields.⁷⁶⁴ Eastern armies were, therefore, clearly associated with ornamented arms.

But to what extent did Hellenistic armies genuinely use adorned arms? Though this thesis, and my arguments within this chapter, are rooted only in the representations of the East in Roman literature, the case for the historical association of Hellenistic kingdoms with adorned arms does seem relatively strong. They certainly seem prominent in the descriptions of two processions in Hellenistic kingdoms preserved

⁷⁶⁰ Mithridates was not present at the battle, which was fought under the command of his general, Archelaus. Pontus was not technically Hellenistic, having been founded by the Persian Mithridatic dynasty. However, the empire was thoroughly Hellenised, culturally. Indeed, Walter Koester writes about Mithridates VI, the last king of Pontus, ‘This Hellenized Iranian made himself the advocate of the Greek inheritance, trying to establish a Hellenistic empire in the east...’, Koester (1995) 23; cf. McGing (1986) 21-24.

⁷⁶¹ Plut. *Sull.* 16.2.

⁷⁶² Plut. *Aem.* 20.7.

⁷⁶³ Plut. *Aem.* 20.6.

⁷⁶⁴ Livy 44.41.2.

by Athenaeus.⁷⁶⁵ Athenaeus describes processions of both Antiochus IV of Seleucia and Ptolemy II of Egypt, and both describe adorned or distinctive armour.⁷⁶⁶ However, interestingly, the Seleucid parade focuses far more strongly on adorned – particularly gilded – *arma*, further suggesting a special association between that empire and ornamented arms.⁷⁶⁷ The Macedonians did apparently first create their elite ‘Argyraspides’ unit of elite bodyguards, named after their silver shields, in the East, and these continued to be used in the successor armies of both the Antigonids and Seleucids, as numerous authors from my period of study attest in passing, without reference to supposedly related immorality or unwarlikeness. Indeed, Polybius rather matter-of-factly calls forces from all over the Seleucid empire who were equipped mainly with silver shields ‘armed in the Macedonian manner’.⁷⁶⁸ Furthermore, Diodorus Siculus calls them ‘distinguished for the brilliance of their armour and the valour of the men’, which rather precludes an unwarlike characterisation.⁷⁶⁹ It seems precious metals were incorporated into the arms of Hellenistic armies.

Of course, in practice Roman armies were also visually vibrant, utilising arms and armour with no small amount of adornment themselves. The crested helmet is the great modern symbol of the Roman legionary, and was clearly designed to present the soldier as taller and more intimidating.⁷⁷⁰ The wolf-skin headdress is also well attested, as is the ‘muscle cuirass’.⁷⁷¹ Legions had their own insignia and it was often marked clearly upon shields, and this visual distinctiveness enabled soldiers who dressed up as their enemies to go about behind enemy lines disguised.⁷⁷² Even gold

⁷⁶⁵ Ath. 5.196a-203b, 5.194c-196a. Athenaeus preserved many fragments of Hellenistic historians, in these instances Callixeinus of Rhodes (probably second-century BCE) for the Ptolemaic procession, FGrH 627 F2, and Polybius for the Seleucid, following Polyb. 30.25-26; cf. Walbank (2002) 79-90; Erskine (2013).

⁷⁶⁶ Ath. 5.196f, 202f-203a.

⁷⁶⁷ Ath. 5.194c-195a.

⁷⁶⁸ Polyb. 5.79.4.

⁷⁶⁹ Diod. Sic. 17.57.2. He later calls them ‘undefeated troops, the fame of whose exploits caused much fear among the enemy’, 19.28.1.

⁷⁷⁰ Polyb. 6.23.13.

⁷⁷¹ Wolf-skin: Polyb. 6.22.3. Muscle cuirass: Robinson (1975) 147-78; Travis and Travis (2012) 136-44.

⁷⁷² [Caes.] *B. Hisp.* 25.7; Veget. 2.19; Tac. *Hist.* 3.23; cf. Rossi (1971) 108-18; Polito (1998) 121-26.

and silver plate – the materials most despised in the literature – are not unheard of in sword hilts and cavalry equipment, and were perhaps even common in the chin straps of Roman helmets.⁷⁷³ Nevertheless, Roman authors often found it easy to suppress these ornamentations in their descriptions, in order to morally construct their Eastern opponents. This ‘hypocrisy’ should come as no great surprise to students of Roman orientalism.

Roman authors clearly treat adorned arms in moralised terms, and it is that subject which mainly interests me here. In this regard, it is important to look at the alleged intentions and motives of Hellenistic monarchs who use adorned arms in Roman literature. Why did Roman authors *think* Eastern rulers used adorned equipment? The intent to visually dazzle and amaze seems important, as explained by Diodorus, who describes how the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius (of the fourth century BCE) used mercenaries from all over the Mediterranean, ensuring each group were issued with the armour of their own people. This was for two reasons: firstly, to ensure they were armoured with familiar equipment, but also, critically, to intimidate the enemy.⁷⁷⁴ Plutarch seems to have this intent in mind in his description of Chaeronea too, as we are told ‘the pomp and ostentation of their [Mithridates’ army] costly equipment was not without its effect’ and apparently the Romans duly became terrified and huddled into their trenches.⁷⁷⁵

Indeed, in his *Moralia* Plutarch actually explores the motives of a Hellenistic King in dressing up his army, as he has Antiochus III admit that his troops were not truly so diverse, but were simply equipped that way to visually impress. He argues, in metaphor, that ‘all these are pork, only in dressing and sauces they differ.’⁷⁷⁶ This perhaps suggests a cynical overplaying of the diversity of troops for effect. As I will discuss below, Pompey, too, seems to fall victim to this characterisation, as his use of

⁷⁷³ Feugère (2002) 106-07; MacMullen (1960) 38, cf. Plin. *HN* 8.82.221, 33.12; SHA *Hadr.* 10.5.

⁷⁷⁴ Diod. *Sic.* 14.41.5. Dionysius I died around a decade before Alexander was born, stretching the definition of ‘Hellenistic’ somewhat, but Diodorus’ discussion, which involves a Greek king’s diverse ethnic contingents, nevertheless seems to fit into the relevant literary tradition.

⁷⁷⁵ Plut. *Sull.* 16.

⁷⁷⁶ Plut. *Mor.* 197d-e.

various Eastern ethnic troops in the Civil Wars was one way in which he was 'orientalised' in Roman literature after his death. In Appian's *Bellum Civile*, Pompey is said to rely on his Italian troops for combat, but uses Macedonians, Peloponnesians, Boeotians, and Athenians 'rather for show than for use.'⁷⁷⁷ This clearly speaks to the use of varied Eastern troops (presumably with different arms) for aesthetic reasons.

However, the most revealing exploration of a Hellenistic king's motivations for using adorned arms comes from Plutarch – the Roman author most interested in the subject. Plutarch imagines Mithridates ruminating on his failures from his first conflict with Rome:

Mithridates, boastful and pompous at the outset, like most of the Sophists, had first opposed the Romans with forces which were really unsubstantial, though brilliant and ostentatious to look upon. With these he had undergone a ridiculous fiasco and learned a salutary lesson. When therefore, he thought to go to war the second time, he organized his forces into a genuinely effective armament. He did away with Barbarous hordes from every clime, and all their discordant and threatening cries; he provided no more armour inlaid with gold and set with precious stones, for he saw that these made rich booty for the victors, but gave no strength whatever to their wearers; instead, he had swords forged in the Roman fashion, and

⁷⁷⁷ App. B. Civ. 2.11.75.

heavy shields welded; he collected horses that were well trained rather than richly caparisoned...⁷⁷⁸

Plut. *Luc.* 7.3-4.

Here, Mithridates rejects his archetypical proclivity for adorning arms for effect, instead focusing on the basics of warfare, constructed by Plutarch in a clearly ethnocentric way: Roman-style swords, well-trained horses and far fewer Eastern ethnic contingents. Plutarch, therefore, is articulating a kind of orientalism-in-reverse, whereby an orientalised army, exposed to western modes of warlikeness, actually changes its ways and becomes more effective as a result. Gellius, a second-century CE author, similarly explores (again) Antiochus III's choices concerning adorned arms in an anecdote in which Antiochus asks the exiled Hannibal whether his 'army glittering with gold and silver ornaments' would be enough for the Romans. Hannibal, 'deriding the worthlessness and inefficiency of the king's troops in their costly armour' replies 'I think all this will be enough, yes, quite enough, for the Romans, even though they are most avaricious.'⁷⁷⁹ Hannibal, therefore, twists the question to imply Antiochus has merely provided booty for the Romans. These kinds of passages are important, because they go far beyond simple descriptions of Eastern adorned *arma* and instead explore and problematise the thought-world of the Eastern ruler and his choices. This is symptomatic of a strongly articulated moralised discourse about adorned arms.

The autocracy of Hellenistic kings meant that their decisions to adorn their armies could be meant to reflect their personal unwarlikeness and immorality. However, these rulers were also recorded using adorned *arma* themselves. In one example, Florus describes how the brother of Cleopatra, Ptolemy XIII, who is misled by

⁷⁷⁸ Μιθριδάτης, ὡπερ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν σοφιστῶν, κομπῳδῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ σοβαρὸς ἐπὶ Ῥωμαίους ἀναστὰς διακένῳ δυνάμει, λαμπρᾷ δὲ καὶ πανηγυρικῇ τὴν ὄψιν, εἴτ' ἐκπεσὼν καταγελάστως καὶ νουθητηθεὶς, ὅτε τὸ δεῦτερον πολεμεῖν ἐμελλεν, εἰς ἀληθινὴν καὶ πραγματικὴν συνέστελλε τὰς δυνάμεις παρασκευῆν. ἀφελῶν γὰρ τὰ παντοδαπὰ πλήθη καὶ τὰς πολυγλώσσους ἀπειλὰς τῶν βαρβάρων, ὅπλων τε ἰ διαχρύσων καὶ διαλίθων κατασκευάς, ὡς λάφυρα τῶν κρατούντων, οὐκ ἀλκίην τινα τῶν κεκτημένων ὄντα, ξίφη μὲν ἠλαύνετο Ῥωμαϊκὰ καὶ θυρεοὺς ἐμβριθεὶς ἐπήγγυτο καὶ γεγυμνασμένους μᾶλλον ἢ κεκοσμημένους ἤθροιζεν ἵππους...

⁷⁷⁹ Gell. 5.5.2-7.

eunuchs who are ‘not even men’ and whose people are described as ‘unwarlike (*inbelli*) and treacherous’, was found buried in the mud, dead and distinguishable only by his golden armour.⁷⁸⁰ Similarly, Plutarch describes the adorned armour of Mithridates – who the Romans defeat easily, Plutarch claims.⁷⁸¹ Pompey, upon finding the armour, was apparently amazed at the ‘size and splendour of the arms and raiment which Mithridates used to wear’ and a four-hundred talent gemmed sword-belt is later stolen from the stash.⁷⁸² Plutarch here paints a picture of *arma* ornamented with no expense spared, as four-hundred talents was a huge sum, and this was after Mithridates’ supposed rejection of adorned arms for his army. The equipment also does Mithridates no good, as he is roundly defeated. The entire tale, therefore, expresses his hubris and moral failings.

Another example from Plutarch is in his life of Pyrrhus of Epirus, a king who invaded and greatly troubled Roman territories in the third century BCE. At the beginning of the Battle of Heraclea (280 BCE), Pyrrhus ‘was conspicuous at once for the beauty and splendour of his richly ornamented armour’, but after being stalked by an Italian soldier determined to kill the king, he gives his armour to his aide Megacles.⁷⁸³ Plutarch seems ambivalent about the exchange: he claims it almost loses Pyrrhus the battle, as the Romans soon kill Megacles and parade the armour around, thinking that they had killed the king. This, for a time, convinces the Epirots they had lost. However, Pyrrhus returns to lead a cavalry charge and wins the battle, and Plutarch describes the king as generally brave.⁷⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the incident must be considered yet another morally ambiguous occurrence of adorned *arma* involving a Hellenistic king. Whether for their personal use, or for their armies, the usage of

⁷⁸⁰ *undique simul hostes adortus de inbelli ac perfida gente iusta generi manibus dedit. Quippe et Theodotus magister auctorque totius belli, et ne virilia quidem portenta, Pothinus atque Ganymedes diversa per mare et terras fuga morte consumpti. Regis ipsius corpus obrutum limo repertum est in aureae loricae honore*, Flor. 2.13.60.

⁷⁸¹ Mithridates actually caused the Romans significant consternation during the early first century CE, but Pompey was accused in some quarters of only finishing up a job that had already been half-completed by others, including Lucullus. Plutarch is perhaps referencing that debate.

⁷⁸² Plut. *Pomp.* 42.3.

⁷⁸³ Plut. *Pyrrh.* 16.7-17.1.

⁷⁸⁴ Plut. *Pyrrh.* 17.2-3.

adorned arms by Hellenistic kings was clearly, in Roman literature, intended as a window into their morality.

One further individual associated with battlefield display is not a Hellenistic ruler at all, but a Republican commander otherwise known for his subscription to austere Roman values, Pompey the Great. I have already recounted how Appian thought he used Eastern troops for their aesthetic impact, but his characterisation actually goes further than this. For example, Appian also tells us that Pompey trusted his most Eastern contingents very little, holding them in reserve to only ‘do what damage they could’ and to plunder Caesar’s defenceless camp.⁷⁸⁵ There is a clear ethnic hierarchy at play, organised by warlikeness. Pompey was also associated with the adornment of *arma*, and Plutarch says that his Greek troops during the civil war alarmed Caesar by ‘their brilliant array’.⁷⁸⁶ Plutarch actually describes this interest in battlefield display as characteristic of Pompey, detailing how he apparently made a name for himself as a young commander by presenting ‘a very fine and brilliant appearance to the imperator’ Sulla with his troops.⁷⁸⁷ This is not described without ramification, either, as we are told that in Spain he only escaped a battlefield as his opponents were so focused on looting his horse ‘which had golden head-gear and ornamented trappings of great value’.⁷⁸⁸ Furthermore, all three of our main sources on the battle of Pharsalus focus on his diverse, Eastern ethnic contingents, strongly reminiscent of both Herodotus’ description of Persian forces, and Roman authors’ descriptions of Hellenistic ones.⁷⁸⁹ Indeed, for Appian, the cowardice and mutual unintelligibility of these Eastern troops causes Pompey’s loss, and for Lucan they are *barbaries* and ‘spiritless peoples’.⁷⁹⁰

Why might this particular Roman be described in terms so reminiscent of Persian and Hellenistic kings? There are plausible answers. Pompey, presented in most

⁷⁸⁵ App. *B. Civ.* 2.11.75.

⁷⁸⁶ Plut. *Pomp.* 69.2-3. These are the same troops that lost at Pharsalus because they feared the loss of their personal beauty, according to Plutarch, Plut. *Pomp.* 69.3.

⁷⁸⁷ Plut. *Pomp.* 8; cf. Gilliver (2007a) 11.

⁷⁸⁸ Plut. *Pomp.* 19.

⁷⁸⁹ Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.4; Luc. 7.270-9; App. *B. Civ.* 2.11.66, 70-71.

⁷⁹⁰ App. *B. Civ.* 2.11.75, 80; Luc. 7.273-77.

accounts as Republican and austere in his private life, seemed to be associated with Eastern practices in terms of his military style and choices, and especially so in later literature. Plutarch is possibly retrojecting this characterisation into his earlier life when he describes his impressing of Sulla. This is also particularly manifest in his relationships with Eastern kings and despots, many of which he allied with after his flight from Italy after Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon. Indeed, he seems to have intentionally taken the civil war into the East, where he had a strong power base. Both Appian and Plutarch record how Pompey was labelled 'Agamemnon' and 'king of kings' by his Roman advisors, equating him with those most famous commanders of Eastern kings.⁷⁹¹ Plutarch also describes how Pompey exaggerates his successes to yet more distant Eastern kings.⁷⁹² Appian emphasises the resources in men and material Pompey has been granted by these kings, and indeed, both Caesar and Plutarch compare the poverty of Caesar's camp to the furniture-laden luxury of Pompey's, in a scene strongly reminding of the sack of Persian camps in Herodotus and Curtius.⁷⁹³ Pompey, through his use of Eastern forces against Western ones in a civil war in which he lost, was simply too tempting a target for orientalist rhetoric, despite his previously good Roman name.⁷⁹⁴ Such was the prominence of the Roman literary tradition regarding Eastern armies.

Conclusions

It is important to note, in conclusion, that I am describing a vibrant and popular literary tradition, which did not necessarily have a strong bearing on the realities of Roman military experience. As Gilliver notes, in practice Romans knew the benefits of the adornment of equipment and examples are well attested.⁷⁹⁵ Additionally, the

⁷⁹¹ App. *B. Civ.* 2.67; Plut. *Pomp.* 67.2-3. Agamemnon led the Greek forces in the Trojan War, 'king of kings' is a Persian title.

⁷⁹² Plut. *Pomp.* 66.1.

⁷⁹³ App. *B. Civ.* 2.66; Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.96, Plut. *Pomp.* 72.4. Hdt. 9.80; Curt. 3.11.20-23.

⁷⁹⁴ For later authors, Pompey's civil war must also have reminded of Antony's, who was treated with great orientalist force in Roman literature. Both were Roman commanders who allied with Eastern forces against a man with the name Caesar, and both lost their definitive battles in the East. On the battle of Actium, see below, chapter four.

⁷⁹⁵ Gilliver (2007a) esp. 9-12.

idea that the Roman army was comprised only of citizens of the city of Rome is another fiction. In the early and middle Republic, different Italian allies would not have even spoken the same language, and it was unlikely that they used the same equipment. In the Imperial period, equipment may have been more standardised, but the soldiers still may have come from any part of their diverse empire. Describing Magnesia, Livy writes that 'the Roman line was nearly uniform throughout with respect to both men and armour.'⁷⁹⁶ He is almost certainly wrong on this point, but his interest in depicting the enemy forces in such a different way must be important. Roman authors were hypocrites in this regard, but their hypocrisy is intricate and fascinating.

It is important to note that in almost every example of adorned or conspicuously displayed armies, the adorned are defeated in battle by the Romans. These include the Samnites, Pompey, Perseus, Antiochus, and Mithridates; all adorn their arms or armies and all are defeated by the Roman faction. Only Camilla, Dionysius of Syracuse, Darius' Achaemenids and Caesar are exceptions, but the first three did not fight battles against the Romans, and besides, Camilla is defeated by her love of ornamented armour, and Darius is defeated by a more warlike people to his west who at that stage scorned adorned *arma*. Caesar, then, stands alone, and he was a Roman statesman himself. This is important, as is the repeated theme of Romans fearing dramatically presented arms, but then fighting on towards victory anyway. This theme underpins the symbolic connotations of adorned arms in Roman literature – that they were superfluous, and that ostentatious display can only work for so long before true, masculine, Roman *virtus* wins through. These can be dubbed the 'moral consequences' of ignoring more important aspects of military preparation. The idea that people who adorn arms are usually bad at using them is what links this ideology to that detailed above.

The links to orientalist discourse are therefore tangible. Gilliver notes this relationship; especially an emphasis in our sources on how the diverse elements of Hellenistic armies actually impeded its cohesion. However, she problematises the

⁷⁹⁶ Livy 37.39.

idea that orientalist ideas are securely involved in rhetoric around adorned arms, particularly by citing the battle displays of the Westerner Samnites and Gauls.⁷⁹⁷ I concede the general point that when making their rhetorical points about adorned arms, Romans did not require their ornamented opponents to be Easterners. However, I note that in the most conspicuous description of Gallic battle display, Polybius 2.29, the author focuses mainly on their loudness, nudity and bodily physiques, not their adornment, diversity or arms.⁷⁹⁸ Livy's description of the battle of Zama clearly does focus upon the diversity of Hannibal's troops, and shows clear signs of intertextuality with Herodotus' Persian battle arrays, but crucially, Livy focuses upon the diverse ethnicities, languages and motivations of these mostly Western troops, without reference to armaments or adornment. In great contrast, Livy's descriptions of ethnic contingents in battles with Eastern forces show a strong interest in armament, just like Herodotus does. This further suggests that armed diversity was associated mainly with the East.

Furthermore, adorned arms are yet more prominent in accounts of Achaemenid Persia and its successor kingdoms, the Seleucid empire and the kingdom of Pontus, showing that perhaps the association arose from Herodotus, continued with its replacement, and then perhaps bled across to become associated with other Hellenistic empires. Neither did these associations go away in the Imperial period, as Tacitus records the Parthians familiarly, as 'Median columns in their embroidery of gold.'⁷⁹⁹

The Samnites are more problematising, but they are only one example, and even they have possible orientalist connections. I posit that Roman authors utilised the rhetoric about adorned arms to make points about Roman sensibilities and virtues. To do this they mobilised effective ethnicising arguments about what 'other' people did and how these things compared unfavourably to Roman behaviours. In this sense, the focus was on Roman behaviours, not truly on the particular foreigners

⁷⁹⁷ Gilliver (2007a) 7.

⁷⁹⁸ Polybius does mention their 'gold torques and armlets' though moral consequences appear absent and instead the Gauls are defeated mostly via their nudity and inferior equipment.

⁷⁹⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 6.34.

which they were ostensibly discussing. These authors *could* make their point using any other people as a 'mirror to the self', to expose Roman characteristics. But tellingly, they used Easterners most often, peoples whose wider characterisations in Roman literature made them far more suited to such characterisations. These were a people already regarded as unwarlike, luxurious and whose monarchs presented themselves ostentatiously. The idea that they might focus on aesthetics over practicality in warfare therefore 'made sense' and reinforced existing stereotypes. This is what we see in examples of Romans fighting Easterners. I argue that Roman authors considered these types of battlefield display and ornamentation peculiarly oriental.

Ultimately, the comparison of a monolithic, identically armed Roman army with an Eastern polyglot rabble became an effective tool for Roman self-construction, and a powerful literary tradition. It also surely granted Roman authors intertextual comparisons with the Achaemenid Persian forces of the Persian Wars. This trope allowed Roman authors to tap into pre-existing, orientalist descriptions of enemy forces, reworking them to include Greek and Hellenistic troops but maintaining the connotations of a divided, servile and oddly equipped army with little in common versus the united forces of Rome. In this way, Roman authors contrasted a characteristic Eastern focus on superfluous aesthetics and strange alliances over the warlike basics of *virtus*, *Romanitas* and utilitarian equipment.

Furthermore, these novel findings are made possible by my analysis of the representational significance of arms in Roman literature. This has been useful for my project, as I have shown here that arms were seen as *aliena* to women, and that Easterners could be presented as ineffectual with arms to feminise them via this association. Roman authors were obsessed with war and warfare, and for this reason Roman constructions of arms are illuminative. It is my hope that further studies on the symbolic associations of arms may follow.

Naval Ostentation and Orientalism

According to Polybius, naval warfare was first thrust upon the Roman Republic during the first Punic war, in the 260s BCE.⁸⁰⁰ From relative inexperience, the Romans quickly brought their shipbuilding skills up to scratch after the capture of a modern Carthaginian *quadrireme* warship. Thereafter, this ship model, and the Roman navy itself, made significant contributions to Roman military success until the end of the Republic.⁸⁰¹ Indeed, Roman naval vessels played a decisive role in the end of the Roman Republic, and in the battle that drew it to a close in 31 BCE, Actium, they were used on both sides. I will pay particular attention to that battle, because Augustan authors famously used orientalist imagery in their depictions of both Cleopatra and Antony in its aftermath. I have shown how arms and armour could be given ethnic and gendered significance by Roman authors who sought to reinforce Roman moral and military superiority, but, in this chapter, I argue that the same can be said for naval vessels too.

As the Romans built their first *quadrireme*, the Hellenistic kings of the East could deploy vessels far more advanced than anything in the West. The Carthaginians had presumably retained the famed naval traditions of their Eastern antecedents, the Phoenicians, and meanwhile, a naval arms race in the East was producing ever bigger ships. However, we have no evidence of coherent efforts to denigrate naval warfare as Eastern, or even foreign. Instead, Rome absorbed the best practices of its Carthaginian rivals, and even introduced its own creative innovations, such as the

⁸⁰⁰ Polyb. 1.20-21, cf. Diod. Sic. 23.2.1-3. Though this was certainly seen as a watershed in Roman naval sophistication, Rome probably had some naval experience beforehand. Ships may have been used during the early fourth-century 'Third Veientine War', and must have been used for the contemporaneous embassies to the Delphic oracle, Livy 4.34.6-7, 5.15.2, 5.28.1-5, Diod. Sic. 14.93. The first *rostra* – a speaking platform in the forum – was apparently built using the beaks of enemy ships in 338 BCE, Livy 8.14.11. Livy also records naval action against the Nucernians in 308 BCE, 9.38.2. For the early Republican navy, see Steinby (2007); Thiel (1954).

⁸⁰¹ For an explanation of ancient ship classifications, see below, 239. For the middle and late Republican navies, see Thiel (1946); Steinby (2007); Meijer (1986) 147-85. For the less extensive role of naval warfare under the empire, see Casson (1971) 141-8; Meijer (1986) 211-35; Gilliver (2007b) 143-47.

corvus spiked boarding ramp.⁸⁰² Rome was situated such that to succeed in any of its geopolitical ambitions, a navy was going to be required. However, I argue that the naval traditions of the East did not escape orientalist treatment. Instead, a familiar dichotomy was constructed based around Roman utilitarianism and oriental ostentation. Useless luxury ships and gaudily ornamented warships came to be strongly associated with Eastern unwarlikeness.

Cleopatra's ships

In Augustan and post-Augustan literature, Cleopatra looms large as a decadent symbol of orientalism, made more potent by her supposed corruption of the famous Roman statesman, Antony. Such characterisations have been deemed 'propaganda', perhaps constructed in order for Octavian to 'de-civilise' the civil war he fought into a more general conflict with an oriental Hellenistic monarch – something with far safer precedent.⁸⁰³ However, the fact that 'Rome' (at least the part controlled by Italy) was at war with Cleopatra should not be forgotten, as trivial a point as it seems to make. Orientalism always presented itself most strongly when there was opportunity to denigrate the wartime practices, and general warlikeness, of the eastern subjects of the discourse. Little in the presentation of Cleopatra was truly new, and much of the descriptions of the battle draw inspiration from previous conflicts with Easterners, as presented by authors such as Herodotus. My contribution to this topic is the idea that Cleopatra's characterisation, the battle narratives of Actium, and the representation of her ships were not unique, but instead fit into a common pattern of representation for Hellenistic monarchs in

⁸⁰² This was used to great effect in the first Punic war, Polyb. 1.22.1-10; cf. Sabin and De Souza (2007) 438-89; Wallinga (1956).

⁸⁰³ For example, Burstein writes 'The Roman image of Cleopatra originated in the virulent propaganda campaign Octavian mounted against her as part of his preparation for his war against Antony. Octavian's motives in developing his propaganda campaign were tactical. Rome had endured decades of civil war. As a result, he had at all costs to avoid conveying the impression that his struggle with Antony meant that Romans were to fight Romans yet again, especially since Antony still commanded a wide following in Italy. His solution was to ignore Antony and focus Roman suspicion and hostility on Cleopatra instead', Burstein (2007) 65; on the supposed propaganda war, and depictions of Antony and Cleopatra, cf. Kleiner (2009) 25, 38, 112; Reinhold (1981); Johnson (1967); Gurval (1998) esp. 149-56; Pelling (2001); J. Williams (2001); Wyke (2009).

Roman literature. More specifically, I argue that the importance of the appearance and utility of vessels has not been highlighted enough.

The most famous passage describing Cleopatra at the battle of Actium bears these hallmarks. Despite the fact that his narrative was set almost a millennium before the battle, Virgil nevertheless finds room in his *Aeneid* for Cleopatra in a premonitory sequence describing the decoration upon Aeneas' shield. He presents the battle as a culmination of Roman successes, and an opportunity to present Augustus as leading the best of Italian might and morality against the immoral decadence of the East. Though the literary precedent for the orientalist presentations of battle-arrays mostly involved land-battles, Virgil's description nevertheless shows the influence of previous tradition.

The *Aeneid*'s Actium description takes the form of a series of dichotomised opposites, Western and Eastern, much like the insults of Numanus Remulus a book later.⁸⁰⁴ Thus, while Augustus appears 'leading Italians to combat [...] backed by the senate and people', Antony, in contrast 'brings with him Egypt, the Middle East's strength, and remotest Bactria. Following him (what a crime!) is his wife, who's Egyptian.'⁸⁰⁵ There are also behavioural parallels with Numanus' insults, as Cleopatra plays a *sistrum*, a percussive musical instrument associated with Egypt, and the allied Eastern troops – Indians, Arabs, and Sabaeans – behave in an unwarlike way, as they are 'terrified', they 'defect', and they 'turn tail'.⁸⁰⁶ There are also clear parallels with other battle narratives from Roman literature, as described previously, where a monocultural, Western force contends with an Eastern force comprised of a vast, varying multitude. Again, where Octavian brings only Italians, Antony has co-opted a vast amount of allies from all over the East. The idea that Indians were fighting at Actium is otherwise unattested and is surely hyperbolic, but Virgil is not the only author to characterise the forces in this way. Florus, for

⁸⁰⁴ 'Our young men [...] shatter towns with war [...] But you, with your saffron braided dress...', Verg. *Aen.* 9.603-20; discussed above, 168.

⁸⁰⁵ Verg. *Aen.* 8.678, 686-87.

⁸⁰⁶ Verg. *Aen.* 8.696, 705-06.

example, also refers to Arabs, Sabaeans ‘and a thousand other Asiatic peoples’ in his description of Actium. For Florus, this at once exposes the un-Romanness of the enemy army, as ‘the multitude of enemy troops was never more obvious.’⁸⁰⁷

As I will describe below, the ornamentation of Antony and Cleopatra’s vessels is a focus in ancient accounts.⁸⁰⁸ However, Virgil’s account shows little explicit interest in this topic. There are perhaps subtle allusions to the idea, as Virgil describes waves ‘flashing white against gold-plate.’⁸⁰⁹ However, the whole scene occurs as ornament itself upon a gold-plated shield, making the description rather ambiguous – was it the ship itself or only the material in which it was depicted that was gold?⁸¹⁰

Outside of the *Aeneid*, Cleopatra is unambiguously associated with ornamented vessels. Examples of her naval ostentation abound in ancient sources, and have long captured the popular imagination, from Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* to Mankiewicz’ sword-and-sandal of 1963, *Cleopatra*.⁸¹¹ Plutarch’s description in his *Life of Antony* contains one of the most extensive (and popularly utilised) descriptions:⁸¹²

Though she received many letters of summons both from Antony himself and from his friends, she so despised and laughed at the man that she sailed up the river Cydnus in a barge with a gilded deck, its sails spread purple, its rowers urging it on with silver oars to the sound of the flutes, pipes and lutes. She reclined beneath a canopy spangled with gold, adorned like Venus in a painting,

⁸⁰⁷ Flor. 2.21.7-9.

⁸⁰⁸ Unusually, there are numerous surviving accounts.

⁸⁰⁹ Verg. *Aen.* 8.677.

⁸¹⁰ A straightforward reading suggests nothing more than white waves depicted upon a gold shield; an intertextual reading perhaps that this is a reference to ship ornamentation, as so many other authors discuss Cleopatra’s gold ship. A preoccupation with Cleopatra’s sail is present, however, joining such authors as Plut. *Ant.* 26.1-3; Plin. *HN* 19.5; Prop. 4.7; Flor. 2.21.4–9.

⁸¹¹ Shakespeare’s tragedy contains an extensive description of Cleopatra’s ornamented flagship, 2.2.192-206, and the Mankiewicz film *Cleopatra* (1963) included among its props a fully constructed, elaborately decorated and ostensibly gilded flagship.

⁸¹² Plutarch was the principal source inspiration for both Shakespeare and the screenwriters of Mankiewicz’s film.

while boys like Cupids in paintings stood on either side and fanned her [...] a rumour spread everywhere that Venus had come to revel with Bacchus for the good of Asia.⁸¹³

Plut. *Ant.* 26.1-3.

Though it seems that the ship is foregrounded, the account is clearly intended to reflect upon Cleopatra's character via her ostentation. The presence of music only draws further attention to the ostentatious decoration of her vessel's golden deck, silver oars and Tyrian purple sail.

Plutarch describes the ship as a πορθμῆιον, a term which usually refers to ferry-boats, and gives the sense of a river-going 'barge'.⁸¹⁴ However, several authors attest to the presence of a ship very much like this one at the Battle of Actium. This requires some unpacking, as the river Cydnus (Tarsus) is located in southern Asia Minor, near Syria, so to believe this is the same ship we must believe that Cleopatra's state river-barge was transplanted from Egypt somehow, perhaps transported aboard her flagship.⁸¹⁵ She therefore either cared enough to transport her barge 500 miles, or Plutarch invented this detail, or he confused her barge with a similar seagoing flagship. Every option suggests that Cleopatra had an actual or presumed preoccupation with transmitting her royal image via ostentatious ships.

This and more is hinted at in the preceding paragraph of Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. Plutarch tells us that Cleopatra's motivation for this great display was nothing other

⁸¹³ πολλά δὲ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ τῶν φίλων δεχομένη γράμματα καλούντων, οὕτω κατεφρόνησε καὶ κατεγέλασε τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ὥστε πλεῖν ἀνὰ τὸν Κύδνον ποταμὸν ἐν πορθμείῳ χρυσοπρύμνῳ, τῶν μὲν ἰστίων ἀλουργῶν ἐκπεπετασμένων, τῆς δὲ εἰρεσίας ἀργυραῖς κώπαις ἀναφερομένης πρὸς αὐλὸν ἅμα σύριγξι καὶ κιθάραις σνηρημοσμένον. αὐτὴ δὲ κατέκειτο μὲν ὑπὸ σκιάδι χρυσοπάστῳ κεκοσμημένη γραφικῶς ὥσπερ Ἀφροδίτη, παῖδες δὲ τοῖς γραφικοῖς Ἔρωσιν εἰκασμένοι παρ' ἑκάτερον ἐστῶτες ἐρριπίζον. [...] καὶ τις λόγος ἐχώρει διὰ πάντων ὡς ἡ Ἀφροδίτη κωμάζοι παρὰ τὸν Διόνυσον ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ τῆς Ἀσίας. Trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁸¹⁴ Xenophon contrasts triremes (τριήρης), fishing boats (πλοῖον ἀλιευτικός) and ferry-boats (πορθμῆϊα), Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.23.

⁸¹⁵ This hardly seems impossible, as Plutarch makes no mention of the vessel's size, and the Tarsus river was of no comparable size to the Nile (which incidentally rules out the idea that her seagoing flagship temporarily entered the river). She may also have borrowed the barge from a local, or Plutarch may have made the incident up.

than the seduction of Antony. Indeed, she does so after receiving advice from an associate to come to Antony εὖ ἐντόννασαν ἔ αὐτήν, 'decked out in fine array', like Hera in the *Iliad*. This is a reference to Hera's self-beautification – presumably with adorned clothes and cosmetics – undertaken to distract Zeus from the ongoing war.⁸¹⁶ This reframes Cleopatra's supposed behaviour and presentation on the Cydnus as archetypal, and cynical, feminine self-beautification, of the type usually associated with adulteresses and prostitutes in Greco-Roman literature.⁸¹⁷ More importantly, this places the adornment of her ship within a similar ideological and gendered context, associating adorned ships with cynical seduction and creating a sense that they were unbecoming the masculine world of politics.⁸¹⁸

A river cruise was also allegedly involved in Cleopatra's seduction of Julius Caesar. This shows a further entanglement of sexuality, luxury and geopolitics in discussions of Cleopatra, though it is important to note that the supposed cruise is only securely present in later accounts. Suetonius, writing in the second century CE, rather ambiguously says that Caesar 'would have entered (*penetravit*) Egypt with her in her state barge (*nave thalamego*) almost to Aethiopia, had not his soldiers refused to follow him.'⁸¹⁹ The language is ambiguous as to whether Caesar went only a certain distance but not all the way to Aethiopia, or never went at all. The former perhaps seems more likely, and by the time of Appian, who wrote slightly later in the second century CE, this is claimed more concretely. Caesar apparently 'ascended the Nile with four hundred ships, exploring the country in company with Cleopatra

⁸¹⁶ Hom. *Il.* 14.162.

⁸¹⁷ Olson (2008) 80-95, 115.

⁸¹⁸ Plautus uses a similar metaphor in his *Poenulus*, whereby a woman compares the expensive self-beautification of women to the decking out of a ship: 'A man who wants to create a lot of trouble for himself should get himself a ship and a woman, these two: no two things are more troublesome if you happen to start fitting them out, [nor are those two things ever sufficiently fitted out,] nor do they ever have a sufficient sufficiency of fitting out.', Plaut. *Poen.* 210-15. Ship metaphors used more generally for sexual acts are more common in Roman literature, usually involving the equation of the vagina/womb and the hollowness of ships, Macrob. 2.5.9; Ov. *Ars. Am.* 2.725-32; cf. Adams (1982) 167.

⁸¹⁹ *eadem nave thalamego paene Aethiopia tenus Aegyptum penetravit, nisi exercitus sequi recusasset*, Suet. *Iul.* 52.1, trans. Loeb, adapted. One must be cautious in suggesting a sexual double-entendre for *penetravit*, as Adams notes that '*Penetrare* does not occur in a sexual sense in the Classical period', Adams (1982) 151. Nevertheless, it remains a possibility.

and generally enjoying himself with her.⁸²⁰ The evidence is not conclusive, although the claim is hardly implausible, as Ptolemaic rulers were known for their luxurious river barges. Indeed, the word *thalamegus*, from the Greek θαλαμηγός, refers only to Egyptian barges, as additionally described by Athenaeus, Appian and Strabo.⁸²¹ The story is not so unbelievable, as Caesar certainly dallied in Egypt even when needed in Rome, producing a son with Cleopatra. Additionally, Propertius, writing contemporaneously, specifically links Cleopatra to river barges:

To be sure, the harlot queen (*meretrix regina*) of unchaste Canopus, the one disgrace branded on Philip's line, dared to pit barking Anubis against our Jupiter and to force the Tiber to endure the threats of the Nile, to drive out the Roman trumpet with the rattling *sistrum* and with the poles of her barge (*baridos et contis*) pursue the beaks of our Liburnian galleys, to stretch disgraceful (*foedaque*) mosquito-nets on the Tarpeian rock and give judgement amid the statues and arms of Marius!⁸²²

Prop. 3.11.39-46.

The orientalist content of the passage is clear. The rhetoric is clearly misogynistic and sexualised, as instead of being the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra is the 'harlot queen', and her Egyptian god Canopus is *incestus* – 'unchaste'. The passage also, again, mainly takes the form of a series of opposed descriptions, Western and Eastern, warlike and unwarlike. Propertius describes several martial Roman institutions and the ways in which Cleopatra would like to corrupt them, by replacing the Nile with the Tiber and the Roman war trumpet with the *sistrum*. The disgrace of a woman

⁸²⁰ App. B. Civ. 2.90, trans. Loeb, adapted.

⁸²¹ Ath. 204d-206d contains a long passage describing the original θαλαμηγός of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 BCE), cited from the Hellenistic historian Callixeinus of Rhodes (FGrH 627 F 1); cf. App. Pr.10; Strabo 17.15; Diod. Sic. 1.85.2-3.

⁸²² *scilicet incesti meretrix regina Canopi, | una Philippeo sanguine adusta nota, | ausa Iovi nostro latrantem opponere Anubim, | et Tiberim Nili cogere ferre minas, | Romanamque tubam crepitanti pellere sistro, | baridos et contis rostra Liburna sequi, | foedaque Tarpeio conopia tendere saxo, | iura dare et statuas inter et arma Mari!* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

making judgements when surrounded by the warlike *arma* of Republican military general Marius is also imagined. Crucially, however, Cleopatra's poled barge is referenced, as a disgraceful stand-in for Roman 'Liburnian' warships.⁸²³ For Propertius, river barges are both unwarlike and associated with Cleopatra.

Ultimately, we can see how unwarlike ships and cruises became part of the literary tradition concerning Cleopatra, inseparable from her wider characterisation. In that case, the fact that Caesar wants to go in Suetonius serves the same purpose as Caesar actually going in Appian, and of her presentation involving the barge to Antony in Plutarch. Cleopatra's political ambitions were clearly furthered by her relationships with powerful Roman statesmen, but in the literary tradition her seductions are emphasised. These involved the distraction of Roman commanders away from their lives of business and responsibility towards an easier, unwarlike life of luxury, pleasure and leisure. For Roman authors, luxurious ships served as powerful symbols of her inclinations in this regard.

Actium

It is clear that Cleopatra could be associated with adorned, luxurious vessels without reference to the battle of Actium. However, these unwarlike and orientalist connotations are certainly present in narratives of that battle. These mostly involve references to gilded decks and purple sails upon her Actium flagship, as described by various historians.⁸²⁴ Her unwarlikeness was further underlined by her decision to flee the battle, allegedly long before defeat became inevitable, and most ancient commentators highlight her typical oriental 'flight'.⁸²⁵ These judgements upon her were not helped by the fact she had sails ready in the first place, as ancient sea battles utilised oar-power to build up speed to ram their opponents' ships, so masts were often left ashore. Cleopatra's sails were therefore not only luxuriously gaudy –

⁸²³ I note that this is yet another example of a martial Roman institution being compared with its unwarlike Eastern analogue – 'superficially corresponding.'

⁸²⁴ Plin. *HN* 19.5; Prop. 4.7; Flor. 2.21.4–9.

⁸²⁵ Plut. *Ant.* 63.5, 66.3–5; Verg. *Aen.* 8.705–13; Plin. *HN* 19.5; Hor. *Epod.* 9; Flor. 2.21.8.

risking unwarlike associations – but their very presence on board betrayed a premediated cowardice.⁸²⁶

Other accounts seem to explore the idea of ornamentation, and even extend it to the whole fleet. Florus describes the queen at Actium, who ‘led the retreat’, again with purple sail and gilded deck.⁸²⁷ He also describes the wreckage of the beaten fleet she leaves in her wake, ‘the purple and gold-bespangled spoils of the Arabians and Sabaeans and a thousand other Asiatic peoples’.⁸²⁸ The references to purple and gold are particularly reminiscent of Cleopatra’s ship as described by Plutarch, but the details are vague. Probably Florus refers to the treasure supposedly on board the fleet, to which several ancient authors attest, probably in an effort to depict the fleet as an Eastern mercenary army, rather than a Roman one. Indeed, Propertius mentions ‘broken sceptres’ floating in the Ionian sea, and Plutarch refers to ‘costly equipment for household use’ captured from one of the ships of Cleopatra’s squadron.⁸²⁹ Cassius Dio paints a moral picture of the risks taken by Octavian’s sailors to gather the enemy treasure, risking themselves in the fires they had started themselves, with some looters ‘destroyed by the flames and by their own greed’.⁸³⁰ A surviving Sibylline oracle, regarding an Eastern widow queen who has been identified with Cleopatra, imagines her victorious, celebrating by throwing ‘gold and silver into the mighty sea’, probably to stress her luxurious wastefulness.⁸³¹ It therefore seems more likely that Florus is referring to treasure, rather than broken-up ship adornments when he describes the wreckage of the fleet. Nevertheless,

⁸²⁶ Goldsworthy argues that it is likely the plan was for the whole fleet to escape, though concedes it is possible Cleopatra and Antony had only concern for themselves. Contrary to ‘Roman propaganda’ he suggests that Cleopatra showed an incredibly cool head in waiting for gaps in Augustus’ battle lines to make her escape, Goldsworthy (2011) 423-24; cf. Murray and Petsas (1989) 133. Plutarch records Antony ensuring every ship in the fleet had masts on board, contrary to the wishes of his captains, *Plut. Ant.* 64.

⁸²⁷ *Flor.* 2.11.8.

⁸²⁸ *Arabumque et Sabaeorum et mille Asiae gentium spolia purpura auroque inlita adsidue mota ventis maria revomebant*, *Flor.* 2.11.7-8.

⁸²⁹ *Prop.* 4.6.58; *Plut. Ant.* 67.3.

⁸³⁰ *Cass. Dio* 50.34.

⁸³¹ *Oracula Sibyllina* 3.77-80, *Trans. Wyke* (2007) 204. Wyke notes that the dating is insecure, but that there are reasons to believe material from the collection was circulating in the first century BCE. cf.

whether the vessels were adorned with gold, or were merely packed with gold treasure, either depiction gives off strong unwarlike signals to the reader.

In Propertius' account, the adornment of Antony and Cleopatra's vessels at Actium is more elaborate. In Propertius' poetic treatment, they have mythic scenes – threatening centaurs, apparently – painted upon their sides. Mythical allusions were a mainstay of the genre, love elegy, but here Propertius has Apollo himself appear and declare the uselessness of the decoration: 'Though their prows carry Centaurs with threatening stones, you'll find they are merely hollow timber (*tigna caua*) and painted terrors (*pictos metus*).'⁸³² Propertius contrasts this unhelpful adornment with the equivalent 'decoration' on Octavian's side: only a metaphorical painting (*picta*) of the sea by the glittering of soldiers' weapons on deck.⁸³³ The only mention of weapons among Octavian's enemies are the 'shameful javelins fit for a woman's hand' – clearly problematising the role of women in warfare, and their relationship with *arma*. The side led by Cleopatra is thus presented as feminine.⁸³⁴ Cleopatra's sails are again mentioned, and Propertius particularly focuses upon the shame due to Rome's leaders should they ever appear in 'Latium's waters' again.⁸³⁵

Propertius' characterisations are clearly orientalist, contrasting the pointless adornment of Cleopatra's ships with the martial, armed appearance of Octavian's marines. However, other authors also discuss the pointlessness of ship decoration. For example, Horace, in a poem about the risks of the sea rhetorically asks 'can painted timbers quell a seaman's fear?', essentially suggesting that ship paint is no defence against the horrors of the sea. Incidentally, the painted ship he discusses is

⁸³² *quodque uehunt prorae Centaurica saxa minantis, tigna caua et pictos experiere metus*, Prop. 4.6.49-50. Trans. Loeb, adapted. For mythological references in Latin elegy, see Whitaker (1983); Griffin (1985); Veyne (1988) 116-31;

⁸³³ *armorum et radiis picta tremebat aqua*, Prop. 4.6.26.

⁸³⁴ *pilaque feminea turpiter acta manu*, Prop. 4.6.22.

⁸³⁵ Prop. 4.6.45-6. Cleopatra was on a state visit in Rome when Caesar was assassinated. Propertius is intimating that Cleopatra would have been free to return with an invading navy, should Augustus have lost at Actium.

from Pontus, and the wreck occurs around the Cyclades. This is, therefore, another Eastern ship.⁸³⁶

There are parallels between the depictions of adorned ships and adorned arms in Roman literature. It seems that the rationale was similar in both instances, as unnecessarily adorned military hardware was considered too close to feminine 'self'-beautification, subverting the masculine symbols of warfare. Indeed, the Younger Seneca highlights these comparisons explicitly:

A ship is said to be good not when it is painted with costly colours (*pretiosis coloribus picta est*), nor when its prow is covered with silver or gold or its figurehead embossed in ivory, nor when it is laden with the imperial revenues or with the wealth of kings (*opibus regiis*), but when it is steady and staunch and taut, with seams that keep out the water, stout enough to endure the buffeting of the waves' obedient to its helm, swift and caring naught for the winds. You will speak of a sword as good, not when its sword-belt is of gold, or its scabbard studded with gems, but when its edge is fine for cutting and its point will pierce any armour.⁸³⁷

Sen. *Ep.* 76.13-14.

Seneca stops short of saying the adornment of weapons and ships is literally encumbering. Instead, it is at best an irrelevant feature and, at worst, is distracting. The entire piece is a metaphor intended to promote an austere lifestyle, but it is clear that Seneca considers the adornment of *arma* and ships to be at odds with such a lifestyle. Seneca even links such artifice with the 'wealth of kings.' The reference is

⁸³⁶ Hor. *Carm.* 1.14. I note that for the majority of adorned vessels I have found literary evidence for, the ships have had strong associations with the East.

⁸³⁷ *Navis bona dicitur non quae pretiosis coloribus picta est nec cui argenteum aut aureum rostrum est nec cuius tutela ebore caelata est nec quae fiscis atque opibus regiis pressa est, sed stabilis et firma et iuncturis aquam excludentibus spissa, ad ferendum incursum maris solida, gubernaculo parens, velox et non sentiens ventum. Gladium bonum dices non cui auratus est balteus nec cuius vagina gemmis distinguitur, sed cui et ad secandum subtilis acies est et mucro munimentum omne rupturus.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

quite general, alluding to any *rex*, but proverbially the richest kings were always thought to come from the East.

As I will now argue, there is enough evidence to suggest an ideological connection between luxurious, adorned vessels and Hellenistic royals in particular. Indeed, I argue that Roman authors were well aware of these associations. I argue that Augustan authors did not simply invent the themes associated with Cleopatra's fleet, but instead leaned on a pre-existing reputation Hellenistic rulers had for presenting themselves using grandiose and extravagant vessels.

The Elder Pliny suggests at such a connection when he links Cleopatra's ship with wider Hellenistic naval tradition:

An attempt has been made to dye even linen (*tingui linum*) so as to adapt it for our mad extravagance in clothes. This was first done in the fleets of Alexander the Great when he was voyaging on the river Indus, his generals and captains having held a sort of competition even in the various colours of the ensigns of their ships; and the river banks gazed in astonishment as the breeze filled out the bunting with its shifting hues. Cleopatra had a purple sail when she came with Mark Antony to Actium, and with the same sail she fled.⁸³⁸

Plin. *HN* 19.5.22.

The anecdote is only provided in an effort to explain the origins of the dyeing of linen. This fits into Pliny's wider purpose, which was to catalogue the natural world and its luxuries. Here, Pliny does two things when describing extravagant dyes: he labels them an Eastern import, and he heralds them as corrupting and degrading.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁸ *Temptatum est tingui linum quoque, ut vestium insaniam acciperet, in Alexandri Magni primum classibus Indo amne navigantis, cum duces eius ac praefecti certamine quodam variassent insignia navium, stupueruntque litora flatu versicoloria pellente vela. purpureo ad Actium cum M. Antonio Cleopatra venit eodemque fugit. hoc fuit imperatoriae navis insigne.*

⁸³⁹ Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1990), especially 92-96; Murphy (2004) 95-121.

Pliny's dry remark regarding Cleopatra's flight also surely implies that aesthetics is no substitute for grit and utility, as the sail only allows her to flee, and not to fight. Pliny's conceptual links are also interesting, as he seems to hold extravagant clothes and extravagant ships in similar ideological regard. More importantly, for Pliny, any discussion of extravagant purple dye must be linked back to Hellenistic rulers and their ships. He clearly associates these rulers with flamboyant naval presentations.⁸⁴⁰

Adorned vessels clearly play a part in the battle narratives of Actium, too. For example, Plutarch explains that Antony's fleet was familiarly 'adorned magnificently and festively', in a way generalising Cleopatra's association with an adorned flagship to her entire fleet.⁸⁴¹ However, another detail regularly crops up in descriptions of Actium regarding the relative sizes of the vessels on either side. Murray and Petsas label this the 'Heavy Fleet vs. Light Fleet' tradition, referring to the understanding that Antony's vessels were too big and heavy, and were outmanoeuvred by Octavian's sleek, light vessels.⁸⁴² However, as I will argue below, this tradition was not isolated from the wider orientalisating narratives of the literary tradition.

Actium and the 'Heavy Fleet vs. Light Fleet' Tradition

I argue that the descriptions of oversized ships at Actium bear thematic similarities with debilitating ship ornamentation. In one example, Plutarch suggests that Antony built his ships 'ostentatiously' for height or mass, which made them unwieldy

⁸⁴⁰ Additionally, Ptolemy I Soter, the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty of which Cleopatra was a descendent, accompanied Alexander on his Indian expedition and he is likely one of the unnamed generals mentioned. The Ptolemies instantly became a naval power upon their seizing of Egypt after Alexander's death, suggesting that Ptolemy I had inherited or seized much of Alexander's naval forces, Meijer (1986) 132.

⁸⁴¹ Plut. *Ant.* 61.1. Murray and Petsas (1989) usefully summarise arguments from various authors for the relative sizes of the fleets at Actium, 133-45. Most authors agree Antony was short on manpower and burnt a large section of his fleet before the battle lest the ships be captured and used against him. His ships were probably outnumbered at Actium in the end.

⁸⁴² Murray and Petsas (1989) 143-52.

compared to Octavian's, fitted for 'manoeuvrability and speed'.⁸⁴³ This gives a sense that they were designed to impress. Velleius Paterculus, a historian of the early first century CE, echoes this sentiment, going further by calling Antony's ships 'of a size that made them more formidable in appearance only.'⁸⁴⁴ These authors are united by a belief that Antony's ships were made large only to impress visually, making their large size actually, in some ways, a type of ornamentation. Additionally, as I will relay below, oversize and ostentatiously ornamented vessels were a mainstay of Hellenistic royal ships anyway, arguably making the rhetoric around oversized vessels in Actium narratives part of wider orientalist rhetoric. However, first I will analyse the evidence for Actium.

There is some evidence that the tradition may have come to fruition in the propaganda of Augustus, though it is inconclusive. William Murray argues that Octavian had just won a decisive victory against Sextus Pompey's light galleys using *heavy* ships, and if he genuinely built a new, lighter, fleet only for Actium then he was abandoning both a winning strategy and an expensive and successful navy.⁸⁴⁵ This does not only defy military logic, but it also contradicts Dio, who states that Octavian was using the very same ships. Indeed, Dio is very specific in this regard, having Antony declare that '[no one] should reasonably fear Caesar's armament, which is precisely the same as before and has grown neither larger nor better.'⁸⁴⁶ Dio in turn contradicts himself, however, and elsewhere shows a strong subscription to the 'Light vs. Heavy' tradition.⁸⁴⁷ In general, the ship size disparity seems to become more exaggerated as time progresses, with earlier accounts assuming either size parity, or a slight mismatch, and with later accounts emphasising a huge and consequential disparity. It is quite clearly a literary tradition, and we ought not to assume any direct correlation with the historical size of Antony's ships. However,

⁸⁴³ Plut. *Ant.* 62.2.

⁸⁴⁴ Vell. Pat. 2.81.4

⁸⁴⁵ Murray and Petsas (1989) 143-44, citing App. *B. Civ.* 5.98-99, 106.

⁸⁴⁶ Cass. Dio 50.19.3.

⁸⁴⁷ Cass. Dio 50.29.1-2.

the development of the tradition itself and how it developed can be revealing and is worth going into in detail.

The battle of Actium took place in 31 BCE, and in the fifteen years afterwards several surviving works were written that mention the battle. Virgil's *Aeneid*, still unfinished upon his death in 19 BCE, seems to suggest size parity among the vessels at Actium, comparing the ships of both sides to the Cyclades islands.⁸⁴⁸ This perhaps suggests that Virgil understood the vessels to be large on both sides – though it is also quite possible he was merely taking poetic liberties to underscore the importance of the battle. Propertius, who wrote the relevant poems in c. 16 BCE, mentions no size disparity, and in fact actually describes Cleopatra's ships as 'swift' (*fugaci*). However, this may be referring only to Cleopatra's squadron, which successfully fled the battle and so must be credited with some speed.⁸⁴⁹

Propertius does mention 'Liburnian' vessels in Octavian's fleets.⁸⁵⁰ These were small vessels: light, mobile 'biremes' which became a mainstay of the Imperial Roman fleet, along with triremes, after larger ships were abandoned in the centuries after Actium.⁸⁵¹ Horace also mentions this classification, in an ode to Octavian's aide Maecenas, and crucially he actually compares them to the bigger ships they will sail among: 'You will go in Liburnian craft among the high turrets of their ships'.⁸⁵² The context, however, seems to indicate that the poem was written in the months before Actium, and it makes no mention of the actual battle.⁸⁵³ It seems possible that it refers to, as Murray and Petsas argue, the idea of Roman commanders reviewing their own fleet's deployment from a small ship before switching to a larger ship for battle.⁸⁵⁴ Propertius also does not explicitly state they were at Actium. These passages provide inconclusive evidence at best, and more likely indicate that ship size disparity was not a prominent theme in early discussions. Even if we charitably

⁸⁴⁸ Verg. *Aen.* 8.691.

⁸⁴⁹ Prop. 4.6.63.

⁸⁵⁰ Prop. 3.11.43.

⁸⁵¹ Cf. Casson (1971) 141-9; Erdkamp (2011) 202; Blackman et al. (2014) 85;

⁸⁵² Hor. *Epod.* 1.1-2.

⁸⁵³ Murray and Petsas (1989) 145. They concede that Horace might have been aware of reports of Antony's ship sizes – whether fictitious or true.

⁸⁵⁴ Murray and Petsas (1989) 145.

accept Horace's remarks as evidence for a size disparity, making this source anomalous amongst the earliest passages, it still lacks a feature present in every surviving Actium account after Propertius: consequence. For every later author, a size disparity was the ultimate cause of Antony's defeat.

Velleius Paterculus is the first extant author to describe a consequential disparity, in c. 30 CE. He states, as one reason for Octavian's success, that 'on the one side ships of moderate size, not too large for speed, on the other vessels of a size that made them more formidable in appearance only.'⁸⁵⁵ However, by the time of Florus, writing in perhaps the early second century CE, this rhetoric had become elaborated further:

... [Antony's vessels] had between six and nine banks of oars⁸⁵⁶ and stood tall with towers and platforms that gave the impression of fortresses or cities and caused the sea to groan and the winds to labour as they were carried along. Their massive size, however, was their downfall (*exitio fuit*).⁸⁵⁷

Flor. 2.21.5.

Octavian's ships, in contrast, were 'equipped with between two and six banks of oars at the most', suggesting that most were actually even smaller than a few flagship 'Sixes'. Therefore, for Florus, Octavian's biggest ships were only as big as Antony's smallest. It is also important to note here that where Velleius includes ship

⁸⁵⁵ Vell. Pat. 2.84.1.

⁸⁵⁶ Greco-Roman ships were classified in size in terms of their 'oar-systems.' The numbers involved probably indicated the numbers of rowers on each side, not number of oars. In my own usages I have used the English designations (a 'Six' was known as a *hexaremis*) as the numbers get large when talking about oversize vessels. Older translations tend to use 'galley with *x* banks of oars' but this is not meant to be taken literally – a 'Thirty' did not have 30 oars stacked on top of each other, but instead probably shared 30 oarsmen across each bank. For a more detailed explanation, see below, 239.

⁸⁵⁷ *Quippe a senis novenos remorum ordines, ad hoc turribus atque tabulatis adlevatae castellorum vel urbium specie, non sine gemitu maris et labore ventorum ferebantur; quae quidem ipsa moles exitio fuit.*

size disparity among a number of reasons for Antony's loss, for Florus it is the only cause that matters – Antony's *exitio fuit*.⁸⁵⁸

Slightly later accounts, such as those of Plutarch (perhaps 110-15 CE) and Cassius Dio (c. 202 CE) are the most detailed, and follow a very similar pattern. Plutarch, too, compares Antony's ships, 'constructed ostentatiously for height or mass' with Octavian's, built for 'manoeuvrability and speed.' He describes the huge timbers of Antony's ships, and also uses the same metaphor as Florus: it was more like storming a walled town than a sea battle.⁸⁵⁹ During the retreat, Octavian's Liburnians harry Cleopatra's escaping flagship, and so were presumably even faster than those depicted as fast in earlier accounts.⁸⁶⁰ Cassius Dio again uses the fortified town metaphor, and invents an additional one: Octavian's ships were like manoeuvrable cavalry, while Antony's were like immobile hoplites. His account exudes a sense of size disparity throughout, as in every encounter Octavian's troops attack 'from below', even destroying oars and rudders from close to sea level, as Antony's forces launch missiles down on the enemy 'below'. In an unprecedented, but not unrealistic addition, we are told that, while fleeing, Antony's sailors 'tossed their towers and other items into the sea in order to be lighter as they fled' – perhaps suggesting, in moral terms, that at the end these soldiers were aware of the folly of their heavy ships.⁸⁶¹ By the early third century CE, therefore, this 'consequential' image was clearly well developed.

Beyond the scope of my research, but revealing nonetheless, the image continues to develop into Late Antiquity, and the Actium narratives of both Vegetius' and Orosius' contain little information outside the 'Light vs. Heavy' tradition. These accounts, however, are revealing in their own way. This is because Vegetius, writing in the late fourth or early fifth century CE, only describes Actium in the course of his military manual to describe why big ships were replaced with Liburnians in Roman

⁸⁵⁸ Velleius also mentions the privations of Antony's camp and deserters to Octavian, Vell. Pat. 2.84.1.

⁸⁵⁹ Plut. *Ant.* 66.2

⁸⁶⁰ Plut. *Ant.* 67.2.

⁸⁶¹ Cass. Dio 50.32-33.

history. In other words, the tradition was by this time so strong that Actium was actually used to explain ship size choices, and not the other way around.⁸⁶² Orosius, writing in the early fifth century CE, mentions Liburnians too, but tellingly informs us that Antony's smaller numbers of ships were 'offset by their exceptional size, for in height they stood ten feet above the level of the sea.' We cannot guarantee this measurement has not been corrupted, or was invented, and ancient ship sizes are notoriously difficult to reconstruct, but Murray has noted that this actually does not seem anywhere near high enough.⁸⁶³ Orosius, however, seems to expect the reader to be impressed. Si Sheppard goes so far as to say that Orosius 'lets the cat out of the bag' regarding how little size difference there must have been between ship classes, but this is surely erroneous thinking.⁸⁶⁴ By the author's time, Roman fleets had abandoned large ships for some four hundred years, and so it is more likely that Orosius simply had no idea how large these ships could be.⁸⁶⁵

I remain mainly interested in the literary tradition, and not the actual sizes of the vessels at Actium, but it is worth noting that Augustus' victory monument at Actium displayed the rams of captured enemy ships, and archaeological surveys have found many to be vast. Indeed, according to Murray these constituted 'a larger and more massive array of warship rams than appeared on any other known rostral monument in the Mediterranean world.'⁸⁶⁶ However, there are representational issues, as Augustus claimed they were a random 10% (a 'tithe') of each class he collected, but Murray has made a convincing case that it is likely Augustus actually

⁸⁶² Veget. 4.33, 37.

⁸⁶³ Oros. 6.19.9, 11; Murray (2011) 278. This was noted in 1805 by David Macpherson, who argued that the number had been corrupted in transmission, and should have read XX or XV rather than X, Macpherson (1805) 32.

⁸⁶⁴ Sheppard (2009) 77; cf. Gibbon (1776) 18;

⁸⁶⁵ Another late fourth century CE author, Prudentius, actually depicts the ships on Antony's side as far smaller than Octavian's, describing them as 'slight boats and frail yachts' ineffectually ramming 'towered' *Liburnas* on Octavian's side, Prudent. 2.530-31. Towers were not found on ships smaller than *quadriremes*, suggesting that the author did not understand how small Liburnians were compared to the vessels on Antony's side, cf. Pitassi (2011) 90. It is tempting to suggest that Prudentius had heard that there was a disparity in ship sizes at Actium, but had forgotten which side was supposed to have the larger vessels.

⁸⁶⁶ Murray and Petsas (1989) 143. The Rams have not survived but their 'sockets' – the holes in stone walls in which they were placed – have. These have been compared with the few surviving Greco-Roman ship rams to gain a sense of the relative sizes.

selected all of the most impressive specimens he held.⁸⁶⁷ It is difficult to know for certain, but the literary representations involved can tell us a lot about how the battle was ideologically constructed. Murray argues for an origin to the tradition in Augustus' propaganda, with the aim of aggrandising Augustus' own role in the battle (he was apparently known to personally use small Liburnian vessels) over that of Agrippa, his general, who commanded from polyremes.⁸⁶⁸ Another suggestion is that Antony himself boasted untruthfully of his ship sizes when preparing for Actium to scare his opponent.⁸⁶⁹ Or perhaps a 'David vs Goliath' narrative always reflects well on the smaller party and was useful regardless of truth or evidence. Murray argues that, in reality, the fleets at Actium were similar in size, with Antony's largest ships perhaps being a little bigger than Octavian's largest, but it makes little difference for my argument.⁸⁷⁰ Whether Antony was influenced by Cleopatra's Ptolemaic heritage to build larger and more elaborate vessels, whether this was Augustan propaganda, or even just simply an invention by Roman historians using a pre-existing stereotype where it seemed to fit, the way Actium is represented nevertheless informs those who study Roman orientalism.

However, part of the puzzle is missing in the explanations given so far, involving the evolution of ship sizes in the Imperial period. As Liburnians became the mainstay of the Imperial fleets – the fleets of Augustus' successors – it was surely more and more tempting to emphasise their use in histories which depicted the climactic battle of the first emperor. Florus betrays this line of thinking when he talks of Octavian's troops as 'ours' (*nobis*) and Antony's as that of 'the enemy' (*hostium*).⁸⁷¹ To a Roman who had lived his life under emperors, it was all too easy to identify with the first emperor over the final challenger – especially given Antony's orientalist literary presentation. In this light, Antony's ship size choices would have increasingly

⁸⁶⁷ Murray and Petsas (1989) 142.

⁸⁶⁸ Murray and Petsas (1989) 147; cf. App. *B. Civ.* 5.111; Hor. *Epod.* 1.1-4; Prop. 3.11.44; Suet. *Aug.* 17.3. The term 'polyreme' refers to ships larger than triremes. The term was not used in antiquity, although the Greek *megala skaphe/megalai nees/megista skaphe* seemed to be used similarly, Murray (2011) 3-4.

⁸⁶⁹ Murray and Petsas (1989) 149.

⁸⁷⁰ Murray and Petsas (1989) 150.

⁸⁷¹ *Nobis quadrigentae amplius naves, ducentae minus hostium; sed numerum magnitudo pensabat*, Flor. 2.21.5.

seemed exotic, decadent and un-Roman as the centuries went on and memories of Roman polyremes became more and more distant. Roman authors, possibly prompted by Augustan propaganda, framed his war against Antony and Cleopatra as a war against Egypt and a war against the oriental East. This turned the disgrace of civil war into something for which a triumph might be permitted, but in my opinion, the narrative of ship size actually fits into this wider theme. Orientalism is implicated in the ship size disparity debate.

My explanation revolves around the ways in which Hellenistic rulers used naval vessels in modes of self-representation. As Dorothy Thompson stresses, 'as symbols of regal wealth and power [...] barges formed part of the competition for primacy played out among the successors of Alexander.'⁸⁷² However, crucially, those who took this to its furthest extreme were the Egyptian Ptolemies. Cleopatra's close ancestors were famous for the vastness of their ships, the winners of a kind of 'arms race' that resulted in vessels of increasing splendour and size, and decreasing practical utility, in the Hellenistic period. For Roman authors with pre-existing prejudices against Eastern luxury, monarchy, and ostentation anyway, the Hellenistic naval tradition was therefore at grave risk of being perceived as typical oriental unwarlikeness. Actium provided a perfect occasion to air these attitudes.

Hellenistic Royalty and Naval Self-presentation

Diodorus Siculus records the alleged motives of a Greek ruler in building larger ships in a passage regarding Dionysius I of Syracuse. He states that, in 399 BCE, Dionysius ordered the constructions of the first ever *quadrireme* and *quinquereme* ships in an effort to outdo their colony's ancestral homeland, Corinth, famous for its *triremes*. He was, in this way 'intent [...] on increasing the scale of naval construction.'⁸⁷³ No mention is made of the utility of such constructions – their

⁸⁷² Thompson (2013) 186.

⁸⁷³ Diod. Sic. 14.42.2-5.

increased weight providing more force to ram the smaller ships of their opponents, for example. Instead, the scheme is presented as a vanity project.

A spirit of one-upmanship also permeates the evidence regarding the increasingly large and ornamented vessels of the Hellenistic Kingdoms. The supposed inventions of Dionysius, *quadriremes* and *quinqueremes*, soon gained favour in the East, and Appian reports that the first Ptolemy, who seized and ruled Egypt after Alexander the Great's death and until 283/2 BCE, had these ships as his largest in a large fleet of 1500 vessels. However, Appian also addresses their ornamentation, and he describes the ships in very familiar terms: they were apparently 'gilded on stem and stern'.⁸⁷⁴ This suggests it was Ptolemaic tradition to gild naval vessels long before Cleopatra.⁸⁷⁵ Appian also explains why the vessels were decorated, saying that it was '...for the pomp of war, with which the kings themselves were wont to go to naval combats.'⁸⁷⁶ This is the connecting factor between ship size and ornamentation, as both were usually seen as ways of increasing the reputation of the ruler by the splendour of the spectacle. For Appian and Diodorus Siculus, Greek kings were interested in the aesthetics of their naval forces, just as they were with their armies. For later commentators, these decisions provided a window into the characters of such rulers.

It is possible to map the course of naval developments of the Hellenistic era. Indeed, William Murray's *The Age of Titans* (2011) attempts exactly this. However, while Murray argues that these developments were practically motivated, with larger ships providing larger and more stable platforms for the siege weaponry required to blockade ports, I note the emphasis on the vanity of their builders in our sources.⁸⁷⁷ For another example, Demetrius of Macedon (ruled 294-288 BCE), an adversary of Ptolemy I, built even bigger ships, and Plutarch tells us that 'his enemies would

⁸⁷⁴ App. *Pr.*10.

⁸⁷⁵ Appian claims to have used contemporaneous royal accounts as his source for this information.

⁸⁷⁶ App. *Pr.*10.

⁸⁷⁷ The conclusions are not mutually exclusive. It is entirely feasible that larger ships were deemed useful but that later Roman commentators presented them as vanity projects.

stand on shore and admire his ‘Fifteens’ and ‘Sixteens’ as they sailed along past.’⁸⁷⁸ Indeed, Plutarch himself seems impressed and says that his constructions ‘had grandeur about it, since what he produced displayed loftiness of purpose and spirit combined with elegance and ingenuity.’⁸⁷⁹ These ships were clearly intended to be visually effective, and we should be left in no doubt that these ships had propaganda value in the Hellenistic world, as expressed by the Ptolemaic court poet Theocritus, who writes that Ptolemy II ‘possesses the best ships | to sail the sea. Every sea, every land, | all the rushing rivers are subject to Ptolemy.’⁸⁸⁰

Demetrius’ ‘Fifteens’ and ‘Sixteens’ would have been very large vessels, but apparently these ships were built only in an effort to match or outdo those of Ptolemy I. This was the beginning of what constituted, in Lionel Casson’s opinion, ‘the greatest naval arms race in ancient history.’⁸⁸¹ The Romans never extensively used ship sizes higher than *quinqueremes* (‘Fives’), but as the Punic Wars were beginning, Ptolemy II (ruled 283 – 245 BCE) had 90 ships larger than this, including ‘Nines’, ‘Thirteens’, and even ‘Twenties’ and ‘Thirties’. In addition to these huge polyremes, his navy also included 224 ships of trireme and smaller size, and 17 ‘Fives’ matching the biggest Roman classifications.⁸⁸² If the source material can be believed, a naval arms race between Macedon and Ptolemaic Egypt produced a maximum ship size increase from ‘Fives’ to ‘Thirties’ in only seventy years.

Attempts to reconstruct exact ship dimensions are unfortunately restricted by severe limitations in the surviving evidence, but it is likely that the ship number – a ‘Five’ or ‘Six’, for example – did not correspond to the number of oars, but the number of rowers who worked each vertical set of oars, on each side of the ship. For example, a ‘Five’ would involve five rowers sharing three oars on one side of the ship, and another five sharing three oars on the other. This would be repeated for the entire length of the ship, resulting in hundreds of rowers. The difference between a ‘Five’

⁸⁷⁸ Plut. *Dem.* 20.4. I note again the reoccurring theme of amazed bystanders.

⁸⁷⁹ Plut. *Dem.* 20.5.

⁸⁸⁰ Theoc. *Id.* 17.90-2. Trans. P. Jones (2006) 13.

⁸⁸¹ Casson (1971) 98.

⁸⁸² Ath. 5.203d.

and a 'Six', then, would involve the addition of two more rowers (one per side), multiplied by the amount of oar sets along the length of the ship. If a ship had a thirty sets of oars along the length of the ship, this could involve an additional sixty men, for a total of 180. This results in a somewhat exponential increase in bulk, weight and size as the class number rises and more horizontal space must be made for rowers. See fig. 1 and 2 for Casson's not-to-scale, but nevertheless indicative, reconstructions:

Fig. 1: Cross-section depictions of, from top to bottom, three possible 'Four' configurations, a 'Five' and a 'Six', from Casson (1994) 84. Note how the ship classification number corresponds to how many rowers are working the oars on each side of the vessel, not the number of oars.

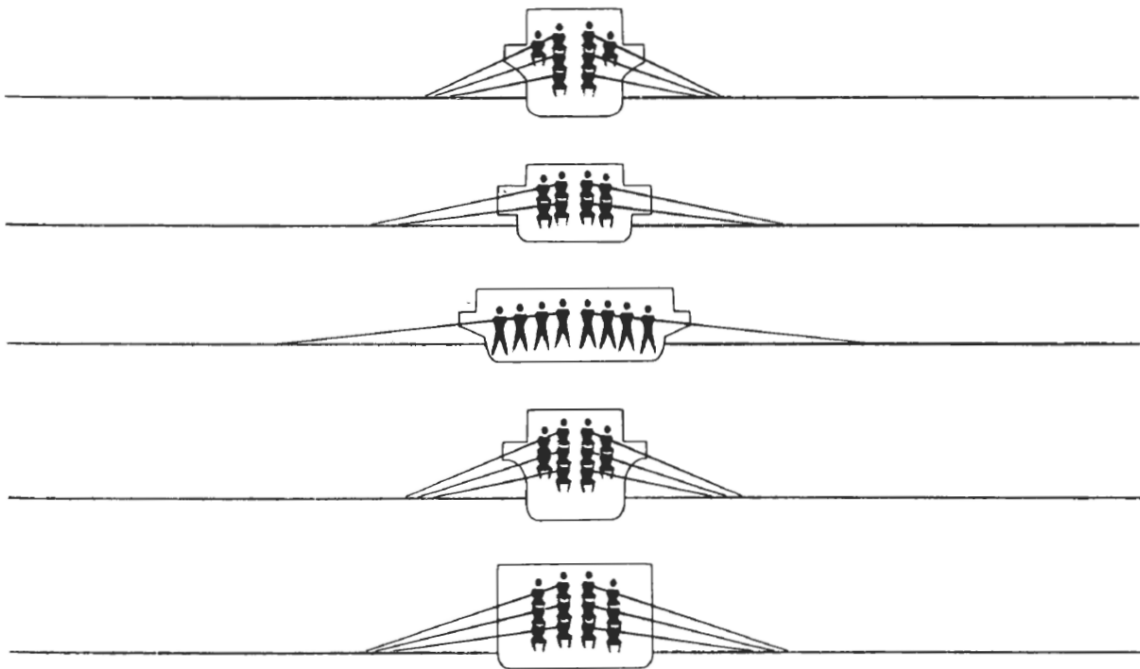
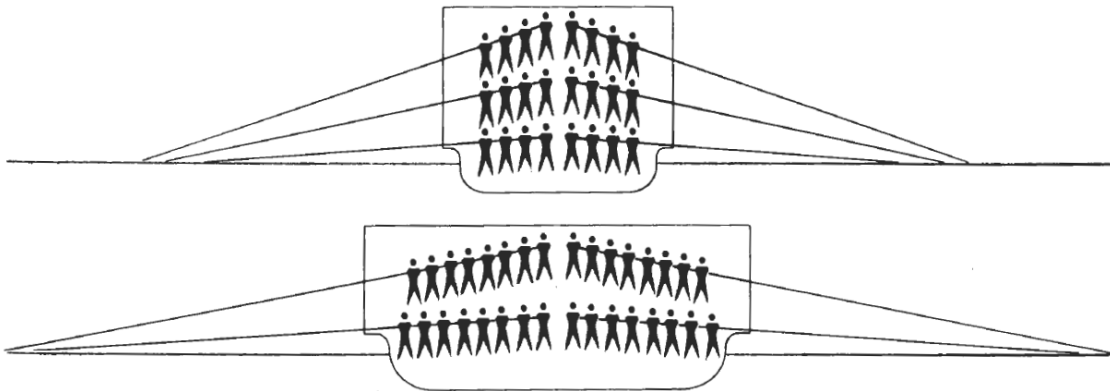


Fig. 2: Cross-section depictions of, from top to bottom, a ‘Twelve’ and a ‘Sixteen’, from Casson (1994) 86. The final example shows that it is the amount of rowers, and not the amount of oars, that is important.



Even without exact dimensions, it must have been the case that any ship finding room for sixteen rowers (let alone thirty) on either side, per cross section, must have made for a much heavier and wider ship than a ‘Four’ or ‘Five’. Indeed, Pausanias describes a massive ‘Nine’ used in the Panathenaic procession, which Murray estimates would have required the same amount of wood to construct as roughly fifteen ‘Fours’.⁸⁸³ For this reason, naval historians generally call this era of exceptional ship sizes the ‘Age of Titans’.⁸⁸⁴

Ship sizes continued to grow beyond even these sizes. Ptolemy IV (ruled 221 – 204 BCE) built a famous ‘Forty’, almost certainly the biggest ship ever constructed at that point, a colossal vessel unmatched in size until modern times. With room for thousands of men on-board, the ship represents an endgame in ostentatious ship building. It was also, crucially, of no military value. Plutarch tells us that ‘his ship was merely for show; and since she differed little from a stationary edifice on land,

⁸⁸³ Murray (2011) 276, cf. Paus. 1.29.1. His rough mathematics involves trusting Moschion, FGrH 575 F 1, who says that the Panathenaic ship was less than a quarter of the size of another famous ship, the *Syracusia*, Ath. 5.209e. The *Syracusia* itself apparently required the wood of sixty ‘Fours’ to build, Ath. 5.206e.

⁸⁸⁴ Casson (1991) 141; Murray (2011).

being meant for exhibition and not for use, she was moved only with difficulty and danger.⁸⁸⁵ This was a ship built purely for display. Callixeinus describes it in further detail, with 18-foot statues, every space painted, and an elaborate Bacchic-wand and ivy-leaf mural painted on each side: 'Wonderful also was the adornment of the vessel...'⁸⁸⁶ This *quadragintaremis* clearly represented for later commentators a lumbering, ostentatious symbol of unwarlike ship construction.

Neither was this the only large, ornamented ship associated with Ptolemy IV. If we are looking for further parallels with the representation of Cleopatra, then it is important to describe her great-great-great grandfather's river barge. Callixeinus records this vessel too, with its promenades, columned peristyles, gold and ivory features and decorative friezes.⁸⁸⁷ The sail was, of course, purple.⁸⁸⁸ Hellenistic rulers, and the Ptolemies in particular, were clearly associated with naval ostentation and sailing for leisure long before Cleopatra.

Another famously large ship of the period must also be mentioned: Archimedes' *Syracusia*, built in around 240 BCE. Nominally a 'Twenty', it was so large as to have gardens, *gymnasiae*, promenades and the entire story of the *Iliad* told thematically through murals and mosaics on-board.⁸⁸⁹ Importantly, it proved another case of a ship being built too big, as Hieron of Syracuse (270 – 215 BCE) realised that local harbours were too small to accommodate it. His solution was to send it as a gift to Egypt, which speaks to some association of Egypt with large vessels.⁸⁹⁰ It perhaps also prompted envy, as only a few decades passed before the Egyptian dynast built his famous 'Forty' for himself.

The Hellenistic period was the 'Age of Titans'. This was an era in which competing Hellenistic kingdoms, larger than the conglomerations of the Greek past, and with

⁸⁸⁵ Plut. *Dem.* 43.4-5.

⁸⁸⁶ Ath. 5.204b = FGrH 627 F 1.

⁸⁸⁷ Ath. 5.205b-d = FGrH 627 F 1.

⁸⁸⁸ Ath. 5.206c = FGrH 627 F 1.

⁸⁸⁹ Ath. 206d-207e = FGrH 627 F 1.

⁸⁹⁰ I think that this is a fair assumption, although the reason Moschion gives is a grain shortage in Egypt at the time (the ship was officially a grain transporter), Ath. 5.209b = FGrH 575 F 1. The harbours were perhaps not big enough even in Egypt, as apparently the ship was beached.

correspondingly greater resources, committed to compete with each other in the size and ornamentation of their vessels. These vessels – perhaps before reaching their endgame under Ptolemy IV – may have served genuinely useful military purposes, but our mainly Roman sources instead tend to focus upon the role they played in the representation of the monarch, and their ostentatious decoration. It is clearly important that these Hellenistic modes of royal self-representation, undertaken by most rulers, were taken to their furthest extremes in Egypt. I contend that associations of Egyptian naval ostentation were not lost on Roman authors and audiences, who would have likened them to similar criticisms in Roman culture based around pretentiously decorated weaponry. This in turn influenced portrayals of Actium.

Roman Awareness of Hellenistic Naval Tradition

It must be reiterated that Roman navies very rarely used ships bigger than ‘Fives’, which would have been dwarfed by the ships described above.⁸⁹¹ This fact surely influenced the portrayal of Antony’s ships and the ‘Light vs. Heavy’ debate, but it remains to show that Roman authors would have been aware of the association between oversized or ornamented ships and Hellenistic royals. For this, there is certainly evidence.

As Rome became increasingly embroiled in the geopolitics of the East during and after the Punic Wars, Romans were exposed to these peculiarly Hellenistic modes of naval construction and presentation. The idea that Hellenistic kings often reserved their largest ship for themselves as a ‘flagship’ is well attested, and it seems these flagships were used extensively for ceremonial and diplomatic missions in the Hellenistic world. For example, as early as the fourth century BCE the tyrant Dionysius sent the world’s first ‘Five’ to Locri to pick up his new wife.⁸⁹² Additionally, Demetrius apparently discussed marriage proposals with other rulers

⁸⁹¹ The exception is Antony’s fleet at Actium, which utilised ships provided by Cleopatra.

⁸⁹² Diod. Sic. 14.44.7.

during a banquet on his 'Thirteen', and his biggest ship was also heavily involved in his funeral.⁸⁹³ It stands to reason that Romans would have become accustomed with these vessels on diplomatic missions to the East.⁸⁹⁴ Indeed, this 'gunboat diplomacy' is something Romans also engaged in. Sextus Pompey, for example, demanded his fellow triumvirs dine with him upon his flagship 'Six', and even arranged a marriage-alliance there.⁸⁹⁵ In Plutarch, it is hinted that the ship was his father's, Pompey the Great.⁸⁹⁶ Pompey was a great conqueror of the Hellenistic East, so it stands to reason, though is otherwise unattested, that his father may have acquired the ship there. Regardless, Appian describes the flagship as 'magnificent'.⁸⁹⁷

Similarly, Livy describes the Romans using their biggest and best ships on diplomatic missions to Hellenistic royals, to put Rome's best foot forward in the East. One incident occurs in 205 BCE:

Up to that time the Roman people had no allies amongst the communities in Asia [...] [but] now that King Attalus had formed a friendly league with them against their common enemy, Philip, they hoped that he would do what he could in the interest of Rome [...] To this mission five *quinqueremes* were assigned, in order that, in a manner suitable to the dignity of the Roman people, they might

⁸⁹³ Plut. *Dem.* 31.1-3, 53.1-3. We're told that this flagship was accompanied with the rest of the fleet in a kind of naval procession/tour around his empire, where in every port his urn was adorned with gold and purple.

⁸⁹⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus records how envoys to Ptolemy II were showered with gifts by the king. It stands to reason they would have been exposed to his naval pretensions – and perhaps one of the 'Thirties' he built, Dion. Hali. 20.14.1-2.

⁸⁹⁵ App. *B. Civ.* 5.8.71-73.

⁸⁹⁶ 'For this is the ancestral house that is left to Pompey.', Plut. *Ant.* 32.4.

⁸⁹⁷ App. *B. Civ.* 5.8.71-73. This is, perhaps, one further way in which Pompey is represented in similar terms to Hellenistic kings in Roman literature.

visit those lands where it was important to gain respect for the Roman name.⁸⁹⁸

Livy 29.11.1-4.

Here, the Romans seem to appreciate the cultural currency of these flagship ships, sending out their largest vessels, even if they would have been dwarfed by Hellenistic ones. It is presented as an essential element for people who wished to be respected in the East.

Rome's wars also put Romans quite concretely into contact with Hellenistic flagships. For example, King Pyrrhus of Epirus brought his flagship 'Seven' with him on his invasion of Italy in the 290s BCE, and he went on to capture the Syracusan fleet, which included a flagship 'Nine'. Even if the Romans never faced Pyrrhus in a naval battle, they certainly faced his ship at the battle of Mylae in 260, according to Polybius, as the Carthaginian admiral Hannibal Gisco fought the Romans 'in the "Seven" that formerly belonged to King Pyrrhus.'⁸⁹⁹ The ship would have been conspicuously higher out of the water than the surrounding *quinqueremes*, Murray notes.⁹⁰⁰ Another occasion occurred sixty-four years later, when as part of a war settlement the Romans found themselves having to deal politically with the flagship of Philip V of Macedon. Naval restrictions formed an important part of the peace settlement enforced upon the Macedonians after their loss to the Romans at Cynoscephalae in 196 BCE, and Polybius informs us Philip was stripped of all of his ships but one: his flagship 'Sixteen.'⁹⁰¹ According to Thompson, this constituted an acceptance that it was 'a bare necessity if Philip was to retain any standing at all in

⁸⁹⁸ *nullas dum in Asia socias civitates habebat populus Romanus [...] tunc iam cum Attalo rege propter commune adversus Philippum bellum coeptam amicitiam esse, facturum eum, quae posset, populi Romani causa, legatos ad eum decernunt... iis quinque naves quinqueremes, ut ex dignitate populi Romani adirent eas terras, ad quas concilianda maiestas nomini Romano esset, decernunt.*

⁸⁹⁹ Polyb. 1.23.4. Trans. Loeb, adapted. Polybius actually goes on to claim that the Romans captured the vessel, 1.23.7.

⁹⁰⁰ Murray and Petsas (1989) 98.

⁹⁰¹ Polyb. 18.1.5-9.

the Hellenistic world.⁹⁰² Such was the importance of flagships to Hellenistic rulers. Livy also, in familiar terms, calls the ship ‘of almost unmanageable size’.⁹⁰³

Furthermore, after Perseus reneged upon this deal, the vessel was confiscated after all, and Scipio Aemilianus sailed it up the Tiber in triumph in 168, as Plutarch describes:

[He] sailed up the river Tiber on the royal galley, a ‘Sixteen’ which was richly adorned with captured arms and cloths of scarlet and purple, so that the Romans actually came in throngs from out the city, as it were to some spectacle of triumphant progress whose pleasures they were enjoying in advance, and followed along the banks as the splashing oars sent the ship slowly up the stream.⁹⁰⁴

Plut. *Aem.* 30.1.

This emphatic spectacle might well have been the watershed moment for the Roman understanding of this Eastern naval tradition. It would have been several times larger than any warship most Romans had ever seen, and was richly adorned as well – even with purple cloth. Furthermore, the vessel was kept in Rome until at least 150 BCE, meaning it remained in Rome for at least eighteen years.⁹⁰⁵ However, this ship was not even the only Hellenistic royal flagship brought to Rome, as the scene was repeated in 56 BCE when Cato the Younger brought King Ptolemy of Cyprus’ flagship – admittedly only a ‘Six’ – up the Tiber, packed and adorned with extraordinary amounts of royal treasure. Its display apparently earned Cato an

⁹⁰² Thompson (2013) 195. In 188 BCE Rome may also have demanded all the ships of Antiochus III bar ten possibly ceremonial, undecked vessels, Thompson (2013) 195; cf. Polyb. 21.43.13.

⁹⁰³ Livy 33.30.5.

⁹⁰⁴ κάκειθεν εἰς Ἰταλίαν μετὰ τῶν δυνάμεων περαιωθεὶς ἀνέπλει τὸν Θύβριν ποταμὸν ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλικῆς ἑκκαίδεκάηρους κατεσκευασμένης εἰς κόσμον ὄπλοις αἰχμαλώτοις καὶ φοινικίσι καὶ πορφύραις, ὡς καὶ πανηγυρίζειν ἔξωθεν καθάπερ εἰς τινὰ θριαμβικῆς θέαν πομπῆς καὶ προαπολαύειν τοὺς Ῥωμαίους, τῷ ῥοθίῳ σχέδην ὑπάγοντι τὴν ναῦν ἀντιπαρεξάγοντας. cf. Polyb. 18.44.

⁹⁰⁵ Polybius describes its use to hold Carthaginian hostages, Polyb. 36.5.9.

‘extraordinary praetorship’.⁹⁰⁶ Even the Roman public, therefore, had the opportunity to identify overlarge and luxurious vessels with Hellenistic rulers.⁹⁰⁷

Additionally, a major incident in the Mithridatic wars, according to Appian, involved the king’s royal flagship. At the start of the war, Mithridates famously put to death all Romans and Italians in his territories, but many fled to Rhodes. Mithridates set about a naval siege of Rhodes to further his persecution of Romans living in the East, but during the battle, a ship of his allies’ from Chios accidentally bumped his flagship. We are told that ‘the king pretended not to mind it at the time, but later he punished the pilot and the lookout man, and conceived a hatred for all Chians.’⁹⁰⁸ He later kills and enslaves their entire population, for that reason, and for sending diplomats to Sulla. If the event actually occurred, it seems unlikely the Romans would not have heard of this incident, which would have informed them further of the ‘prestige factor’ involved with Hellenistic royal flagships.⁹⁰⁹

‘Kings who Indulge in Sport on the Sea’: Moralised Treatments

Roman historians were clearly aware of the relationship between Hellenistic royals and prestigious, oversize or ornamented flagships. However, there are also important, more general discussions in wider Roman literature. These show that such associations were also exposed to a more explicitly moralised analysis.

For example, the Younger Seneca specifically links rich kings to these kinds of vessels. I have already cited one example from the author, in which he says that a ship is not considered good when ‘covered with silver or gold [...] nor when it is

⁹⁰⁶ Plut. *Cat. Min.* 39.

⁹⁰⁷ No surviving account identifies the vessel Cleopatra sailed to Rome in for her state visit in 46 BCE, but it is not unreasonable to suggest it may have been a large polyreme flagship, perhaps even an ornately ornamented one, in the Ptolemaic tradition.

⁹⁰⁸ App. 25; cf. 46-7.

⁹⁰⁹ If it is an invention, it nevertheless speaks for a literary understanding that Eastern kings of the time used flagship vessels for prestige.

laden with [...] the wealth of kings.’⁹¹⁰ However, another passage also shows similar connections. The context is a little complicated, but it is, nevertheless, indicative of how stereotypes of Hellenistic kings and their luxury vessels could be utilised for rhetorical effect. In his *De Beneficiis*, Seneca discusses ways in which debts should be repaid, and whether it is morally correct to repay debts in ways which will make dangerous men yet more dangerous. He advises against giving martial, masculinising gifts to dangerous debtors, and instead suggests giving them soft, luxurious and effeminising ones. In doing this he diametrically opposes hard military vessels with the softening, luxury-ridden pleasure-vessels of rich kings:

If he desires marbles and raiments, these trappings of his luxury will do nobody any harm; but I shall not furnish him with soldiers and arms. If, as a great boon, he asks for stage-players and prostitutes and things that will soften his fierce nature, I shall gladly present them. I would not send to him *triremes* and bronze-beaked ships but I should send pleasure-boats and yachts and the other playthings of kings who indulge in sport on the sea.⁹¹¹

Sen. *Ben.* 7.20.2-3.

The passage illustrates my overall point, making it clear that elaborate pleasure-ships were associated with kings, and were placed among other general luxuries.⁹¹² It also shows the diametric opposition of this royal lifestyle with a martial, masculine one, and strongly reminds of Propertius allegation that Cleopatra wanted to swap warships for her ‘poled barge’.⁹¹³ Seneca’s use of ‘kings’ and not ‘queens’ suggests that this is not an association inspired directly from Cleopatra’s vessels at Actium, which was fought only about ninety before Seneca wrote the piece, but is instead a

⁹¹⁰ Sen. *Ep.* 76.13-14.

⁹¹¹ *Si marmora et vestes desideraverit, nihil oberit cuiquam id, quo luxuria eius in- struitur ; militem et arma non suggeram. Si pro magno petet munere artifices scenae et scorta et quae feritatem eius emolliant, libens offeram. Cui triremes et aeratas non mitterem, lusorias et cubiculatas et alia ludibria regum in mari lascivientium mittam.*

⁹¹² The East is not specifically referred to, but the juxtaposition of ideas – pleasure-boats, luxury, and unwarlikeness – suggest it is Hellenistic kings he is alluding to.

⁹¹³ Prop. 3.11.43-45.

more abstract generalisation, referring quite specifically to Hellenistic kings. His juxtaposition of explicitly warlike lifestyles with unwarlike ones – and arguably Roman and Eastern ones – show orientalist rhetoric is at play.

Another important moralised treatment occurs in Plutarch's *Lucullus*, in the passage concerning Mithridates' choices for *arma* cited previously.⁹¹⁴ When Mithridates decides to use plain arms instead of 'armour inlaid with gold and set with precious stones', and 'genuinely effective' arms over ones that were 'unsubstantial, though brilliant and ostentatious to look upon', he also makes changes to his navy:

...he [also] put in readiness ships which were not tricked out with gilded canopies, or baths for concubines, and luxurious apartments for women, but which were rather loaded down with armour and missiles and munitions of war.⁹¹⁵

Plut. *Luc.* 7.5.

The historicity of Mithridates' supposed *volte-face* between his two wars with Rome is dubious, but the passage is nevertheless important for its connection of almost all of the imagery I have detailed concerning Hellenistic navies. Plutarch makes the connection between adorned *arma* and adorned ships explicit, and has Mithridates reject both in favour of Roman-style armament, which is deemed more effective. This also implies that the alternative – ornamented weapons and ships – is the Eastern status quo. This previous way of doing things is also presented as feminine, with luxurious spaces reserved for women. Here, Mithridates rejects oriental practices in favour of a more masculine, warlike, and Roman set-up, and the moral resonance of the passage is clear.

⁹¹⁴ Plut. *Luc.* 7.3-4.

⁹¹⁵ ἔτι δὲ ναῦς οὐ χρυσορόφοις σκηγίσιν οὐδὲ λουτροῖς παλλακίδων καὶ γυναικωνίτισι τρυφώσαις ἠσκημέναις, ἀλλ' ὀπλῶν καὶ βελῶν καὶ χρημάτων γεμούσας παραρτυσάμενος...

Maximus of Tyre, a philosopher of the Second Sophistic, writes in the second century CE about an Egyptian ship, built by a king, with similar luxuries on board.⁹¹⁶ This ship apparently had baths, a *gymnasium*, and is 'adorned in many colours' and decked out in silver and gold. Music and roasting meat accompanied its maiden voyage – clear oriental themes also present in narratives around Cleopatra – but storms wreck it while leaving the 'every-day ships, properly equipped and prepared for useful work' surrounding it with no problems.⁹¹⁷ The 'effeminate rabble on board were left 'moaning in terror', the ship is called 'useless', and the moral lessons are clear. The gilded decks are even compared, using the now-familiar metaphor, to a 'coward fitted out in golden armour.'⁹¹⁸ The account does not seem factual, and Thompson suggests this account is 'probably little more than a literary construct employed to a moral end', but this is not a problem for my purposes.⁹¹⁹ Indeed, it shows that a general, moralising discourse existed at this time regarding Egyptian ships and their pointless, debilitating ostentation.

The passages in this section show that the naval ostentation of Hellenistic kings could live beyond the pages of history, and could instead be used as general moral exempla, to be referred to in discussions of other things. This speaks for a very general level of understanding of the association, providing further evidence that ideas of naval ostentation go beyond Cleopatra. However, as I will now discuss, there is some evidence that naval ostentation could be associated with the East even without reference to royal rule.

⁹¹⁶ The author is no more specific than that, and it becomes apparent that the episode is an extended allegory, not associated with a specific king.

⁹¹⁷ Maximus of Tyre 30.3; cf. Plut. *Ant.* 26.1-3.

⁹¹⁸ Maximus of Tyre 30.3. Trans. Trapp (1997). Maximus of Tyre was not a historian of Rome but a Greek philosopher who showed very little interest (or mention of) Rome in his works – we should therefore be careful of a generalising a 'Roman' attitude based on his views here. He nevertheless uses very familiar imagery regarding kings and ships here, showing these associations were, at least, widespread.

⁹¹⁹ Thompson (2013) 192. The setting is vague, but the references to 'kings' and Greek features like *gymnasia* place the story nominally within Ptolemaic Egypt.

Beyond Hellenistic Navies: Cilicians, Phrygians and Emperors

Conspicuously similar imagery is used in Plutarch's descriptions of the Cilician pirates, who menaced the Mediterranean in the first century BCE. He describes, at the time of the Mithridatic wars, the 'odious extravagance of their equipment', which includes familiar features like gilded sails, purple awnings, silvered oars and musical instruments.⁹²⁰ Here, their luxury is probably intended to articulate their brazenness. Their representation shows many similarities with the imagery of Cleopatra on the Tarsus – and for good reason, as both descriptions are found in the same work, and the river Tarsus is located in Cilicia, a fact which may have prompted Plutarch to use similar descriptions.⁹²¹ However, a more direct connection to Hellenistic kings is actually present, as Plutarch tells the reader that this brazenness was recent, and that the pirates only 'took on confidence and boldness during the Mithridatic war, because they lent themselves to the king's service.'⁹²² These adorned vessels are thus actually explicitly connected with an Eastern king, as they are presented as the agents of the king of Pontus. Indeed, Philip de Souza argues in his *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* that the Cilicians were perhaps less a band of lawless pirates than 'the navy of a country that Rome, for some reason, refuses to acknowledge as such', propagandised into a more politically acceptable package.⁹²³ They were, therefore, probably far better integrated into the Hellenistic world than often proposed – and their representation in Plutarch further suggests this.

The *Aeneid* is also worth analysing for evidence of adorned vessels, as it invokes naval themes, describes a war between Italians and Easterners, and was written in

⁹²⁰ Plut. *Pomp.* 14.3.

⁹²¹ Plutarch seems particularly interested in ornamented vessels, cf. Plut. *Luc.* 7.5; *Ant.* 26.1-3.

⁹²² Plut. *Pomp.* 14.1. Trans. Loeb, adapted. The Cilicians were also known to have worked with the Seleucid empire, cf.

⁹²³ De Souza (2002) 71, 86. Ulpian records the sentiment that 'Enemies are those upon whom the Roman people has declared war publicly or who have themselves declared war upon it: the rest are termed bandits or pirates.', *Dig.* 49.15.24.

the years following Actium. Despite these factors, the setting is remarkably different to the ones described so far, as the work is set in the mythical past, before the foundation of Rome. This perhaps provides the opportunity to see whether the association between the East and adorned vessels is preserved in a radically different setting.

The perspectives of indigenous non-Easterners provide crucial insight into the ethnic constructions of the *Aeneid*. Characters such as Iarbas and Numanus Remulus seem only to exist in the narrative to deliver bluntly ethnicised and gendered orientalisng insults, characterising the Phrygians very differently to the narrator. There are a few plausible reasons for this. Firstly, it could be an acknowledgement of the common use of orientalisng charges of effeminacy in Roman invective – i.e. orientalism was simply seen as a valid way to discredit rivals.⁹²⁴ Alternatively, it may more simply be a matter of perspective. The Phrygians do not comment on each other's clothing extensively, but their foreigner opponents Iarbas and Numanus emphatically do. Subtler references are made to ethnic difference in this regard, for example when Latinus' messengers describe the 'powerful men in strangers' dress' who approach his settlement.⁹²⁵ We may suspect some hyperbole in the descriptions made by the Trojans' western rivals, but Virgil is nonetheless drawing our attention to important points of ethnic difference. As with decorated armour and weapons, appearances can be important.

With this in mind, I note that the decoration of the Phrygian ships seems to elicit surprise and hostility from the Italian natives. For example, in book eight, the local geography itself seems amazed at the sight:

⁹²⁴ A disproportionate amount of the most direct and aggressive orientalist statements appear in 'direct speech' in histories, epic and invective. For examples, see Sil. 14.134-38; Livy 38.17.10, 16; Luc. 7.269ff; Cass. Dio 24.3, 50.27.

⁹²⁵ Verg. *Aen.* 7.167. Emphasising their foreignness, this comes immediately after a long description of the Latin city which contains a host of clearly proto-Roman buildings and institutions including a senate-house, a temple to Capitoline Jupiter, and military trophies on doorposts. Togas and military triumphs are also mentioned, 7.152-66.

and the dark tarred hulls go gliding through the river,
among the tides, amazing the groves unused to the sight
of warrior's shields, flashing far, and painted galleys
moving on upstream.⁹²⁶

Verg. *Aen.* 8.91-93.

The flashing arms and ships themselves are associated, dazzling to the enemy and even to the groves. However, we are not told whether the observers are overawed by the military hardware itself or the fact that it is painted. Turnus, the Latin hero, epitomises the associated value judgement in an earlier book, encouraging his troops to *pictasque exure carinas*, burn Aeneas' 'painted ships.'⁹²⁷ The word used, *pictas*, can be used as much to describe embroidery and sartorial embellishment as painted hulls. If we presume an ideological connection to adorned and brightly dyed clothes, Turnus arguably recognises this ostentation as distinctively foreign.

Significantly, both bright clothes and bright ships are associated with the Phrygian goddess Magna Mater and her cultists, the Galli. The Phrygian goddess unsurprisingly plays a strong supporting role in the *Aeneid*, and importantly, she holds a strong ethno-gendered significance. I have described the orientalist connotations of the appearance of Chloereus, her priest, but it is important to note that historically, Magna Mater was a religious import into Rome. Lynn Roller argues that there is a tension in Cybele's representation in the *Aeneid*, as she represents both a connection between Rome's heroic past and future greatness, at the same time preserving her 'dangerous, alien side': the sexualised, effeminate and foreign form represented by her priests.⁹²⁸ Numanus surely alludes to these figures when he calls Aeneas' group 'Phrygian women' and associates them with female clothes and musical instruments.⁹²⁹ Aeneas is also accused of being a *semivir* (half-man, or,

⁹²⁶ *labitur uncta vadis abies; mirantur et undae, | miratur nemus insuetum fulgentia longe | scuta virum fluvio pictasque innare carinas.* Trans. Fagles, adapted.

⁹²⁷ Verg. *Aen.* 7.431. The ships almost burn down two books earlier, and their paint is mentioned then too, as '...the God of Fire unleashed | goes raging over the benches, oarlocks, piney blazoned sterns.', 5.662-63.

⁹²⁸ Roller (1999) 304, cf. below, 100.

⁹²⁹ Verg. *Aen.* 9.618.

euphemistically, eunuch) by Iarbas.⁹³⁰ Virgil clearly knows and uses these associations.

It is important, therefore, that Magna Mater is linked heavily with the Phrygian ships in the *Aeneid*. Indeed, she provides the ships to build them from wood grown on her home mountain, Mount Ida, and thereafter the ships serve as a proxy of sorts for the Phrygian homeland. The ships are also ornately decorated, not only painted in bright colours as already described but also decorated with features which link them back to their homeland: 'with Phrygian lions fixed on her beak, Mount Ida looming aloft'.⁹³¹ Later, Cybele returns to protect the Phrygians as, with the ships under threat of burning, Cybele flashes a bright light specifically from the East, and 'Corybant' dancers appear. 'Corybant' was a term for the armed dancers who celebrated and worshipped Rhea, the Cretan/Greek mother goddess equated with Cybele.⁹³² More importantly, the gendered associations of Magna Mater are preserved, as the ships are transfigured into 'many maiden-like (*virgineae*) forms swimming out to the high seas.'⁹³³ They later return 'dancing about on the waves' and admit that cowardice was involved in their transformation, and the specific shapes that they take are those of the ships' figure-heads, transformed into feminine nymphs.⁹³⁴ Virgil, therefore, arguably connects the decorated Phrygian ships with Eastern effeminacy, and avoidance of battle.

Similar ships appear in a poem from Ovid's *Fasti* that details the arrival of Cybele, imported to Rome under Sibylline advice during the second Punic war.⁹³⁵ Set firmly in a context including raucous Galli and the mythical eunuch Attis, Ovid too describes 'the pine-trees; those trees pious Aeneas employed for his flight' and even more importantly, the decoration of her ship: 'the heavenly Mother soon has a

⁹³⁰ Verg. *Aen.* 4.215-17.

⁹³¹ *prima tenet rostro Phrygios subiuncta leones, | imminet Ida super...* Verg. *Aen.* 10.157-78.

⁹³² Rhea and Cybele are conflated in the *Aeneid*, as they often were in Roman literature, Verg. *Aen.* 2.111-12.

⁹³³ Verg. *Aen.* 9.122.

⁹³⁴ Verg. *Aen.* 10.220-01.

⁹³⁵ Ov. *Fast.* 4.179-372.

hollow ship, painted in fiery colours.⁹³⁶ It may be tempting to suggest that this confirms such imagery was popular in the Augustan period in general, but there are also reasons to be cautious. Other accounts of the transfer do not contain such imagery, and the similarities between Cybele's ships in the *Aeneid* and the *Fasti* probably derive from Ovid having read Virgil's epic.⁹³⁷ Other accounts may omit these comparisons, but it nevertheless speaks to an association by at least one other author of painted decorations and Phrygian ships, even if the depictions are not particularly negative.

Aeneas' navy – essentially an Eastern navy, out to conquer Latin lands – can also be usefully read in light of the Actian war and the threat of an Egyptian conquest of Italy, led by Cleopatra. As I have already stated, the description of Actium in the *Aeneid*, almost uniquely, does not clearly refer to the ornamentation of Cleopatra's ships. However, in his *Georgics*, written only two years after Actium, Virgil does at least reference painted Egyptian vessels. These are pleasure-boats, made of papyrus, lazily sailing on the still floodwaters, which give their nation such prosperity.⁹³⁸ However, closer parallels exist between sections of the *Aeneid* and descriptions of Actium by other authors. For example, the treasure-strewn wreckage described at Actium by Florus and Propertius recalls the opening scenes of the *Aeneid*, where storms throw Trojan treasure (*gaza*) into the sea.⁹³⁹ The word *gaza* has undeniably Eastern connotations, and comes originally from the Persian word for royal treasures.⁹⁴⁰ Propertius' descriptions of Centaurs painted upon Cleopatra's vessels also recall the mythical decorations upon Aeneas' ships, and he also refers to arms reflecting upon the water – a description also present in the *Aeneid*.⁹⁴¹ More explicitly, Propertius pointedly refers to Cleopatra's sails appearing 'in Latium's waters' – not *Roman* waters – which echoes Aeneas' fleet and their conquest of Latin

⁹³⁶ Ov. *Fast.* 4.273-76.

⁹³⁷ Livy 34.3.8; Cic. *Har. Resp.* 27-8; Silius Italicus goes as far as to say Magna Mater was brought on a Roman ship, Sil. 17.1-43. Ovid refers to the *Aeneid* at Ov. *Tr.* 2.533-34; cf. Hardie (2002) 23-25.

⁹³⁸ Verg. *Georg.* 4.287-90. The uncultivated, 'accidental' fertility of the East is a reoccurring theme in Roman literature, cf. B. Harris (2009) 4-5.

⁹³⁹ Verg. *Aen.* 1.119; Flor. 2.11.7-8; Prop. 4.6.58. Discussed above, 226.

⁹⁴⁰ Curt. 3.8.5.

⁹⁴¹ Prop. 4.6.26, 49-50; Verg. *Aen.* 8.93, 10.157-78.

lands.⁹⁴² The connection seems intentional, as in the same poem Propertius has Apollo claim Augustus is ‘greater than his Trojan ancestors’, further linking him to the mythical past and aligning him with the Latins, not the Eastern Trojans.⁹⁴³ In the case of such intertextual references, calculating the exact trajectory of the influences and ideas is impossible. Nevertheless, it is clear that naval themes in the *Aeneid* echo ideas found describing Eastern ships in wider Roman literature, and conversely, Aeneidic themes seem to have been used in discussions of Actium. This suggests that ideas regarding the ostentation of Eastern ships could be abstracted beyond association with Hellenistic kings.

One further category of luxurious ship remains to be discussed: the pleasure-boats of the early emperors Nero and Caligula. Those of Caligula in particular have captured the imagination due to the archaeological survival of two wrecks in Lake Nemi, near Rome, recovered in 1929. There is no surviving literary evidence for these lake-bound vessels, but Suetonius does record a series of large and luxurious seagoing vessel that the emperor had built:

He also built Liburnians with ten banks of oars, with sterns set with gems, multicoloured sails, huge spacious baths, colonnades, and banquet-halls, and even a great variety of vines and fruit trees; that on board of them he might recline at table from an early hour, and coast along the shores of Campania amid dancers and musicians.⁹⁴⁴

Suet. *Calig.* 37.2.

Here, the luxurious ships of Caligula strongly remind of those of earlier Hellenistic rulers – especially Cleopatra – as luxury materials, dyed sails, rooms for leisure, music and dancers are all familiarly present. The choice of label for the ship is curious, as Liburnians were usually small *biremes*. It is possible that Suetonius is

⁹⁴² Prop. 4.6.45-6.

⁹⁴³ Prop. 4.6.38-39.

⁹⁴⁴ *Fabricavit et deceris Liburnicas gemmatis puppibus, versicoloribus velis, magna thermarum et porticum et tricliniorum laxitate magnaue etiam vitium et pomiferarum arborum varietate; quibus discumbens de die inter choros ac symphonias.* Trans. Loeb, adapted.

being ironic, is confused, or is using the term more generally as most Roman warships at this time would have been Liburnians. The sense of scale implied in the description certainly seems to tally with a large 'Ten'.

From what could be ascertained from analysis of the Nemi ships conducted before they burned down during the Second World War, these too were ornately decorated pleasure-cruising vessels.⁹⁴⁵ My own usage of these ships as evidence will need to be limited, as this study is only concerned with literary reception and these ships have left none, but there are, nevertheless, some elements worth remarking upon. For one, their size is undeniably ostentatious, and especially so for the size of the lake in which they were trapped, which is a tiny 1.67 km². The lake was also sacred, and was known to be off-limits under Roman law.⁹⁴⁶ It is therefore tempting to suggest Caligula's intentions was, on the one hand, to show the inapplicability of such sacred laws to his own person and, on the other, to advertise his prestige by the very exaggerated luxury of a ship which could never serve any practical use beyond pleasure.

More importantly, there has been some scholarly debate on whether some of the early emperors may have actively emulated Hellenistic kings. Indeed, Caligula was known for another large ship, which was probably constructed to bring an Egyptian obelisk to Rome. This ship was then sunk to form a sizable mole in the Ostian harbour. This suggests one link to Egypt, but there were other suggestions that he had a 'naval' interest with Egypt, too, as evidence of the worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis has been found associated with one of the Nemi ships.⁹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Caligula's obsession with Alexandria is recorded by Philo, a contemporary Jewish Alexandrian author.⁹⁴⁸ He states that Caligula was planning a voyage to Egypt when

⁹⁴⁵ They burned down at some stage during the German retreat upon the liberation of Italy, though it has not been conclusively proven which party was to blame.

⁹⁴⁶ Plin. *Ep.* 8.20.5.

⁹⁴⁷ Ucelli (1950) 135. Anna Leone argues that the local cult of Diana, with which Caligula was said to have interfered, may have involved syncretism with Isis, Leone (2000) 31.

⁹⁴⁸ 'For he was possessed by an extraordinary and passionate love for Alexandria. His heart was entirely set upon visiting it and on his arrival staying there for a very considerable time. For he thought this city was unique in that it had both given birth to and would foster the idea of godship which occupied his dreams, and that its vast size and the world-wide value of its admirable situation

he was assassinated, and even suggests that Caligula was worried about his 'bodily comfort' were he to sail directly in a merchant ship, instead choosing to sail in a more suitable ship in leisure around the coast of Syria and Asia.⁹⁴⁹ Potentially, this may refer to the coast-hugging, luxurious and mysterious 'Liburnian' 'Tens' referred to by Suetonius. There are, therefore, at least somewhat feasible Egyptian connections for every luxurious ship with which Caligula is linked.

More luxurious vessels were apparently constructed by Caligula's nephew, Nero. These were more lake-bound pleasure-craft, sailed, according to Tacitus, in the *stagno Agrippae*, the 'lake of Agrippa', perhaps a man-made body of water attached to Agrippa's baths:

The ships were adorned with gold and ivory, and the oarsmen were male prostitutes (*exoleti*) marshalled according to their ages and their skills in bed (*scientiam libidinum*) [...] On the quays of the lake stood brothels, filled with women of high rank; and, opposite, naked prostitutes (*scorta*) met the view.⁹⁵⁰

Tac. *Ann.* 15.37.

The ships are thus adorned familiarly, but the activities on-board are more explicitly sexualised than in similar descriptions of Hellenistic vessels. Nevertheless, the fundamental purpose of the description is likely the same, serving a moralised purpose to demonstrate the failings of the ruler. Indeed, we are told that Nero, 'defiled by every natural and unnatural lust had left no abomination in reserve with which to crown his vicious existence'.⁹⁵¹ However, according to Tacitus, Nero only

had made it a pattern to other cities of the worship due to him, since it is true both of individual men and of whole populations that the inferior try to emulate the qualities of the great men and cities respectively', Philo, *Leg.* 43.

⁹⁴⁹ Philo, *Leg.* 33.

⁹⁵⁰ *Naves auro et ebore distinctae, remigesque exoleti per aetates et scientiam libidinum componebantur. [...] Crepidinibus stagni lupanaria adstabant inlustribus feminis completa, et contra scorta visebantur nudis corporibus.* Trans. Loeb, adapted, with reference to Williams's sexually nuanced discussion of the passage, C. Williams (1999) 83-85.

⁹⁵¹ Tac. *Ann.* 15.37.

built these vessels to demonstrate that ‘no place gave him equal pleasure with Rome’ after abandoning plans to visit Greece, the Eastern provinces, and ‘Egypt in particular’. Indeed, Tacitus says that his ‘secret imaginations’ were ‘occupied’ with the trip, but he decided against it after he perceived the disfavour of Vesta.⁹⁵² Tacitus, therefore, links Nero’s adorned, luxurious vessels with an attempt to replicate the pleasures of the East – perhaps even Egypt in particular – at home.

Several things become clear when analysing passages concerning the luxurious ships of the early emperors. Firstly, it is clear that the moral resonance of these themes had not lost their potency, and that authors could still mobilise lurid descriptions of such vessels and the behaviours of those on-board to emphasise the baseness of their historical subjects. Furthermore, subtle connections to the East, and to Egypt in particular, are present throughout, which might imply that either Roman authors wanted to mobilise the very persistent Hellenistic connotations of luxurious vessels, or the emperors themselves thought that such Hellenistic modes of representation might serve their own purposes.⁹⁵³ Indeed, Marco Bonino argues that the Nemi ships belong in the Hellenistic tradition.⁹⁵⁴ Either possibility is testament to the lingering power of the imagery of Hellenistic royals in the Roman imagination.

One final Imperial Roman ship, often cited in studies of large ancient vessels, is the grain-carrier *Isis*, described in a dialogue written by Lucian in the second century CE. The vessel, described as docked in Piraeus harbour, merits discussion because of its enormous size and ornamentation. Lucian has Samippus describe the ship as ‘huge’ – some 55m long and 13m tall, not including the ‘tall’ mast – but special attention is paid to the ornamentation, which includes figures of Isis, paintings, a ‘topsail blazing like fire’, ‘all very wonderful to me.’⁹⁵⁵ There are no signs of moral concern, perhaps because being large made this ship good at its job carrying grain (Samippus says it could carry enough corn for all of Attica) but the ship’s origins nevertheless

⁹⁵² Tac. *Ann.* 15.35-37.

⁹⁵³ Perhaps to demonstrate their own prestige and distance from their common subjects.

⁹⁵⁴ Bonino (2005) 149-50.

⁹⁵⁵ Lucian, *Navigium* 5-6.

support my arguments. This is because, of course, the ship is Egyptian. This means that even if the ship is fictitious, as some have argued, a lingering association of Egypt with oversize and ornamented vessels remained even into the second century CE.⁹⁵⁶

Conclusions

It is clear that Roman attitudes towards naval vessels were mediated through a large array of associations and prejudices – moral, ethnic, and gendered. The same is true for attitudes to *arma*, but in many ways, the associations of ships are easier to map – more specific, less ubiquitous, and with a plethora of accounts describing Actium to hang arguments upon. The evidence reveals that the very biggest ships of the ancient world were built in Hellenistic kingdoms and dwarfed Roman vessels of any era. Romans knew about this ‘titan’ ship tradition, interacted with these vessels in diplomacy and war, and were well aware of their importance to these rulers in terms of aesthetics and prestige. Later authors considered naval ornamentation a preoccupation of Hellenistic kings, to the detriment of practical and military utility, echoing similar descriptions for land forces that date back to Herodotus.⁹⁵⁷ Given Roman constructions of warlikeness, moral and gendered judgements were always likely to follow.

Roman authors were also almost certainly aware that the Ptolemies took this tradition to its furthest extent. The propensity of the Egyptians to build large vessels is noted in studies of ancient ships, but few have connected this to descriptions of Actium. I argue that every reference to the size and weight of Antony’s vessels actually contributed to wider Augustan and later Roman efforts to orientalise those fighting on Antony’s side of the conflict. It spoke to the resources they had available, to the choices they made in preparing their forces and the priorities they sought, and to their choice of pomp over utility. It gave the tragic impression that Antony and

⁹⁵⁶ Anderson (1976) 39.

⁹⁵⁷ It is difficult to identify at which stage in Roman history this ‘negative ideology’ developed, i.e. the making of moral conclusions based on their knowledge of luxurious Eastern ships. It was certainly in place by the time of Augustus.

Cleopatra were defeated by their own ostentation, and their own moral failings. It particularly highlights Antony's transference in the Roman mind from patriotic triumvir to Eastern potentate.

Literary traditions – especially ones concerning ethnic stereotyping – can be nebulous, but this chapter also provides further evidence that Roman authors often elaborated orientalist discourses with reference to real Eastern phenomena. Just as Hellenistic armies probably seemed more diverse than Roman ones, Eastern ships were probably bigger and more ornately decorated. Nevertheless, these historical 'facts' only provided a springboard for the imaginations of these authors, as hyperbole often took over and exaggerated moralised points were made. In this case, the ways in which Hellenistic kings chose to present themselves provided ammunition to negotiate a militarised, utilitarian Roman identity that could and would not compete materially in these ways. This discourse remained remarkably strong in the Roman imagination, contributing to the ease with which Antony and Cleopatra's historical reputations drowned in a sea of orientalist denigration.

The remarkable strength of these associations can be observed in the subtle connections to the East in passages that initially seem unrelated. Seneca twice links immoral luxury ships to 'kings', which in the context can only refer to Hellenistic royals. Even pirates with luxury ships are said to have only gained them after the patronage of an Eastern king. However, it is Egypt that the sources come back to repeatedly. Egypt is the setting for Maximus of Tyre's moral fable about a useless, luxurious giant ship, and among the descriptions of the luxurious ships of the early emperors, there are subtle connections to Egypt constantly present. These include the possible worship of Isis on the Nemi ships, Nero and Caligula's aborted voyages to Egypt, and Nero's explicit emulation of Egypt-style life on his own party-boats. Egypt surely loomed large in the Roman naval imagination.

This chapter has foregrounded themes of luxury, unwarlikeness and orientalism, but gender still surely forms the background for the debate. Indeed, ideas of unwarlikeness without reference to gender are incomplete, and the discussion of

Cleopatra in the literature demonstrates this. Roman authors effortlessly used ships in their narratives to describe Cleopatra's seductiveness with both Antony and Caesar, and her purple sail represented her luxury, orientalism and feminine cowardice in several historical narratives. Even outside of discussions of Cleopatra, Seneca clearly considers luxury vessels to belong to the realm of effeminising products, and Nero's ships show that luxury and runaway sexuality were still considered important themes by Tacitus. So, also, could adornment be considered feminine in any context, and especially so when it involved purple cloths and precious metals. Indeed, behind every reference to the Hellenistic vessels decked out in gold and purple lay an assumption that masculine, warlike utility had been sacrificed for feminine or effeminate artifice. This is how ornamented ships fitted into the wider, gendered realm of orientalist rhetoric.

Conclusions

In Roman texts, the portrayal of war was subject to literary constructions that took into account gendered, ethnic, moral and ideological factors. The Roman obsession with war has not been a neglected topic of enquiry for ancient historians, but the idea that this interest was a crucial factor in Roman constructions of the peoples of the East has been less well studied. I stress how the seemingly disparate ideas of athletic training, decorated weapons, and oversized ships were symptomatic of deep-seated attitudes regarding the relative worth of people and peoples. The phenomena are connected by the Roman response. I argue that Roman authors creatively utilised gendered discourses – with reference to objects, behaviours and attitudes considered part of a feminine lifestyle – to describe and criticise Eastern peoples.

I began my arguments by discussing Roman attitudes to training. These attitudes, as mediated (or constructed) through the surviving moralising Roman literature, exhibit an intrinsically gendered outlook on training. Deeply interested in militarism both for militarism's sake, and in metaphors for good character, the attitudes of our authors to masculinity and personal warlikeness show remarkable similarity.

Indeed, I argue they were inextricable, as both masculinity and warlikeness were thought to be produced through a system of personal virtue that involved a strong willingness to undergo toil and hardship to achieve one's aims. For this, military training was a perfect metaphor. *Patientia* was a valourised quality, and any failures to exhibit it were seen through the prism of 'effeminacy'. This was a concept embedded within gendered notions of lifestyle that associated pleasurable activities with the trivial lives of women. On the other end of the spectrum, constructed as the most warlike and masculine of activities, lay training.

Roman authors were prone to characterise men – both ‘people’ and ‘peoples’ – into these two camps.⁹⁵⁸ In many ways, then, Greek training fell inescapably into a trap set by moralising Roman authors. It seemed a little like military training but was pleasurable, and exposed its adherents to no particular danger or hardship. This already ensured it was received as an unwarlike activity. However, differing attitudes to the sexual availability of young citizen men, nudity, and self-beautifying aspects further condemned athletics to moral censure. My research explains the fervour with which it was received. More importantly, I argue that Roman authors did not need to grasp at new ways to react to the influx of athletics to Rome. Orientalism, as a discourse, provided a perfectly suitable lens with which to interpret the phenomenon. Constant references to warfare and gender in such criticisms show that this was the case.

Having established my approach by discussing this well-studied topic, I then moved on to discuss attitudes to *arma*. As Roman authors saw ethnicity and gender through a martial lens, I argued that orientalist ideas could be usefully studied by exploring the associations of martial symbols. Emphatically, this was a useful avenue of enquiry. In Roman literature, women and weapons were seen as incompatible, to such an extent that they could be considered *aliena* to each other. Indeed, martial women who could utilise *arma* were usually either thought to have been corrupted by divine forces, or to be deserving of retribution for exceeding their natural capabilities. In every case, the male victims of armed women had their masculinity undermined by these exchanges. Indeed, analogues to Roman constructions of sexual roles are apparent, as male ‘receptivity’ in both sexual and military roles was seen as emasculating. Seeing women as ‘failed men’ – lacking the intrinsically masculine skills required for warfare – made gender a powerful tool to ideologically subordinate Easterners too. Roman depictions of Easterners and their substandard abilities with *arma* expose this connection.

⁹⁵⁸ Constructions of warlikeness were concerned almost exclusively with men – Roman men, or the men of other peoples. Isaac argues that ‘it is not clear that authors who refer to an effeminate people had any thoughts about what the women of an effeminate people were like’, Isaac (2004) 153.

In many cases this involved a poor standard of armament, a lack of arms, or an indifference to *arma*. However, more prominently, Roman authors might associate Eastern soldiers with adorned arms, or Eastern generals with the use of ethnic contingents for visual display. These were prevalent literary themes, traceable to Herodotus' descriptions of Persian forces. Roman authors clearly saw that as a useful model – one which could emphasise desirable Roman qualities during conflicts with Hellenistic kings, and which, in contrast, could emphasise Eastern weaknesses. Regarding adorned arms themselves, connections with my previous arguments are readily apparent, as physically pleasant training and visually pleasant weapons betray the Roman precept that militarism should involve exhausting toil, not enjoyment. Indeed, a prominent theme of this thesis is the constructed dichotomy between superficial, trivial experiences, on the one hand, and tough, austere ones, on the other. A similar dichotomy differentiated beauty and utility. Ornamented arms, it seems, provided a perfect symbol for deficiencies in warlikeness for these reasons.

It should, therefore, come as no surprise that an analysis of Roman attitudes to ships shows striking similarities in their depictions. Several authors even explicitly compare gaudily decorated weapons and vessels. In this case, my arguments gain strong explanatory power in contextualising the extant narratives of the battle of Actium. I argue that the depictions of Cleopatra's heavily ornamented vessels exhibit the hallmarks of orientalist rhetoric, and relate to ways in which other Hellenistic rulers presented themselves using naval forces. This places Antony's alleged choices, depicted in yet more exaggerated ways in Roman histories as the centuries went on, further into the realms of Hellenistic despot as contrasted with his previous life as a Roman *imperator*.

It is impossible to treat every conceivable facet of enquiry in a single thesis, and so the present work necessarily points to other avenues that may prove fruitful. The literary significance of the sword is one, and could potentially be done on a per-text basis.⁹⁵⁹ However, further areas may also be worthy of study. The prominence of

⁹⁵⁹ Lucan's *De Bello Civili* may deliver particularly fruitful results, I suggest.

groups from the Near East in Roman battle narratives demands further discussion, as it seems one of the worst things that Greek armies – or even Roman ones – could be accused of is reliance upon Eastern allies constructed as an Asian, polyglot rabble. This further calls into question the lineage of Roman orientalist ideas, and their descent from Greek constructions of Persians. Indeed, Persia retained its orientalist connotations in Roman texts – but was this because the Hellenistic kingdoms were seen as their successors in some way, through the Persianisation of Alexander and his followers? Or did the use of wealth and grand spectacle as a means to signal Hellenistic royal prestige ensure the conflation? And how early was the first identifiably orientalist Roman literature? I could also not tackle every ‘military context’ in depth. The figure of the Hellenistic king, or Eastern general, in Roman literature may prove fruitful. The propensity of Eastern troops towards cowardice and retreat certainly would. But were logistics orientalised? Recruitment? Encampment and besiegement? Even peace may be fruitfully studied through this lens. Furthermore, having focused on orientalism in military contexts, it may be worth asking whether orientalism, as a discourse, is feasible without reference to military ideas. I argue that it would be unrecognisable.

Although my research has focused upon literary constructions, I have stayed aware throughout that tensions exist in the evidence for many of the topics I have discussed. Roman authors criticised athletics as elites were outfitting their houses with *gymnasia* and the athletic calendar at Rome expanded, and railed against any martial adornment except the sort the Roman army engaged in regularly. Our wealthy authors also lived lives of ease and opulence – at least relative to the vast majority of ancients. Furthermore, elites were becoming increasingly demilitarised throughout my period of study, and it is possible their insecurities in this regard are reflected in the seriousness with which they tackled issues of militarism and warlikeness: a case of protesting too much. Asserting moral rules – even when these were not followed religiously by even their own group – was one way in which Roman elites justified their rule, and this is the system that orientalist rhetoric

became embedded in.⁹⁶⁰ The ‘hypocrisy’ of these elites is fascinating, and should inform us that something was usually at stake in their constructions. Gnaeus Manlius Vulso may have called the Gallogreeks soft and ‘Phrygians burdened with the weapons of Gauls’ in his speech on the eve of battle, but when challenged after demanding a triumph for his victory, he changes tack and espouses their warlike qualities to the senate.⁹⁶¹ Roman orientalism was creatively used, and context-dependent.

Nevertheless, war was a bedrock on which Roman authors constructed other peoples, and this martial lens dictates much of what we know about other peoples, mediated through our texts. It is easy to dismiss every moralising source as hypocritical, or in some ways dishonest. However, if we take our sources at their word, and understand that they believed themselves the moral arbiters of their societies, then we start to understand the fervour with which they went about their moralising. If we trust in the faithfulness of our texts, then these authors saw themselves as the last bastions of defence facing up to terrifying forces. I have described the relevant model of Eastern culture as ‘infective’, but this perhaps does not state the case strongly enough. A better analogy may be that of addiction, a fear that Romans, tasting a small amount of pleasure, might lose sight of everything that made them great in an effort to taste just a little more. Roman authors were aware that their world was propped up by militarism, and that their safety depended on military protection from a more dangerous world than we can imagine. That is what

⁹⁶⁰ Elites could call themselves *boni*, ‘good men’ or even *optimates*, the ‘best men’. Edward Bispham writes ‘The division of ancient societies into various categories of ‘have’ and ‘have-not’ was figured (by the ‘haves’, naturally) in moral terms; those to whom more of the political cake had been given justified the inequality by appropriating for themselves language connoting moral goodness, and imputing moral failings to the masses.’, Bispham (2006) 461.

⁹⁶¹ For the battlefield speech, Livy 38.17.9-20. For the speech to senate, Livy 38.47.6, 12-13, 38.48.9, and esp. 38.49.12 ‘[I] tried the sentiments of the Gauls, in the hope that perhaps their native fierceness could be softened, and, after I saw that they were untamed and intractable, then at length I decided that I must restrain them by force of arms.’ As I briefly detailed in my third chapter, our most forceful orientalist rhetoric seems to come disproportionately from reported battlefield exhortations – this is perhaps related to the agonistic invective culture of Rome, and is another topic that demands further enquiry.

gave force to their arguments, and enabled the construction of a peculiarly 'military' orientalism.

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