

DE GRUYTER

LIVED RELIGION IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

APPROACHING RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS
FROM ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY AND CLASSICS

*Edited by Valentino Gasparini, Maik Patzelt,
Rubina Raja, Anna-Katharina Rieger, Jörg Rüpke
and Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli*



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in cooperation with Elisabeth Begemann

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Pursuing lived ancient religion

“Lived ancient religion” is a new approach to the religious practices, ideas, and institutions of the distant past. The notion of “lived religion”, as it has been applied to recent phenomena that go beyond orthodox beliefs and religious organizations, cannot be transferred directly to a study of ancient religions because its methodology, inspired above all by anthropology and empirical sociology, requires some form of direct access to the living of the religion. This departure is implied by the oxymoronic form of “lived ancient religion”, which juxtaposes the living of religion with an only incompletely accessible past in which the subjects of study are no longer living. What might have been deplored as a loss, has turned out to be a gain, allowing for a significant expansion of the concept. While still invoking “lived religion” as it is understood in modern contexts,¹ “lived ancient religion” is neither restricted to “everyday religion” nor focused on subjective experiences. Rather, the focus on the ancient world, the past, the already lived experiences and events, provides the opportunity to study lived religion with a renewed and revitalized focus. This approach overcomes the dichotomy of official and institutionalized religion on the one hand and “lived religion” on the other. Rather, taking the perspective on individual appropriations to its extremes, it also allows studying institutions as sedimented forms of lived religion. Thus, as “lived *ancient* religion” a framework to analyze religious change is given, religion in the making even on a large scale (see Albrecht et al. 2018).

As is indicated by the subtitle of the foundational project, “Questioning ‘cults’ and ‘polis religion’”, “lived ancient religion” shares a critical impetus with the study of contemporary “lived religion”. Yet given the very different degrees of coherence and embeddedness of religious practices in ancient Mediterranean societies, and in the Roman Empire in particular, our project (2012–2017) aimed at a much broader re-description of ancient “religion” (Rüpke 2012). Fundamentally, it questioned the implicit assumption that all inhabitants of the *Imperium Romanum* were equally religious. Likewise, the tendency to focus upon civic, that is collective, institutionalized religious practices was questioned, as such a focus has led to the production of a series of sub-categories (“oriental cults”, “votive religion”, “funerary rites”) in order to save those phenomena whose relation to civic practice is indeterminate. This shift in focus was

¹ E.g. Ammerman 1997; Hall 1997; Orsi 1997; Bergmann 2008; McGuire 2008.

necessary because, in terms of quantity, these phenomena are the subject of the majority of our ancient evidence and not just some small, hard to reconcile, subset. Finally, the project criticized the descriptive reproduction of disciplinary boundaries and the practice of treating “pagan” religion, Judaism, and Christianity as though they each had existed historically in separate worlds.

From a methodological perspective, the project focused on four different social and communicative spaces, from the domestic over associations, public sanctuaries and literary communication. Building on recent research of the relationship between religious institutions and individualization (briefly Fuchs and Rüpke 2015; Fuchs et al. 2018) made it possible to focus on the connections between social structures and individual agents, with the help of four key notions: appropriation, agency, situational meaning, and mediality (Raja and Rüpke 2015a).

Appropriation denotes the situational adaptation and deployment of existing practices and techniques, institutions, norms, and media in order to suit the contingent needs and aims of the individual or group (Raja and Rüpke 2015a; Arnhold and Rüpke 2016; Rüpke 2016c). The idea of religious agency, which grew out of an interest in the ascription of agency and a focus on competences, was used to underline the priority of personal engagement, knowledge, and skill in providing services of all kinds, including public and private performances, authorship, teaching, and networking, whether on an occasional or a professional basis (Gordon 2005; Hüsken 2009; Petridou 2013; Raja 2016). Instead of concentrating on professional religious roles (priests), this broader notion of “religious agency” functions as a perspective that replaces the narrow focus on the political elite of civic religion, widening and underlining the impact that studies of ancient material can have on discussions of religion in the context of modern societies. In speaking of the situational construction of meaning, we have assumed that religious meanings were not generated by worldviews, but by the complex interplay of interests, beliefs, and satisfactions in specific situations (Raja and Weiss 2015; 2016). Finally, the focus on communication (both vertical and horizontal) mandates a specific concern with the roles of material culture, embodiment, and group-styles in the construction of religious experience, in short, what we have called mediality.² Insofar as communication requires materiality, this amounts to a demand for a new approach in the archaeology of religion (the “archaeology of religious experience”, Raja and Rüpke 2015b). Inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology,³ we have focused on the role of bodily movements, actions, and gestures in conveying

² Malik, Rüpke and Wobbe 2007; Meyer 2008; Hjarvard 2011; Lövheim 2011.

³ See e.g. Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1999; Reynolds 2004; Silver 2011; Morgan 2015.

culturally-coded meanings and emotions. “Lived ancient religion” emphasizes the social context of religious action and, specifically, the group-styles in specific cultural contexts, such as the family, neighborhoods, and associations (Lichterman et al. 2017). From this perspective, public cult appears less as a set of ideals, and more as a scheme for ordering priorities and distinctions, the effect of which is to outline (rather than define) an imagined community. Religious change starts from domestic and individual practices, not from the competition of groups and cities. The challenge that has been addressed in the project is to observe, describe, and analyze such changes and their underlying patterns through the use of material and written evidence from antiquity.

The main thrust of the lived ancient religion approach is to resist the easy reification of “religion” in order to emphasize its ceaseless construction through individual action within the loose parameters provided by traditions and institutions (summarized as a new introduction to Roman religion in Rüpke 2016b). That is, to view religion as a precarious practice, whose referents (“gods”) and communicative strategies are constantly in need of investment-labor of different kinds in order to maintain their plausibility, as formulated by Richard Gordon (see Albrecht et al. 2018). The paradigm of “lived ancient religion” provides the stimulus to integrate “the” evidence on a new basis, invoke new types of evidence, challenge existing classifications of material, and focus on neglected types of religious action. The long-term aim from the beginning of the project was to provide new narratives of religious change in the Roman Empire, for instance by relating change to religious innovation across social groups and individuals.⁴ Looking at lived ancient religion opens a window into the day-to-day workings of long-term changes in religions that are never fixed but always traditions in the making.

For this reason, the present volume attempts to leave behind chronological as well as disciplinary comfort zones. Following several conferences and more than a hundred publications,⁵ the project ended with a final conference held at Eisenach in April 2017. Many of the revised contributions to that conference are included in this volume, all of which deliberately apply the “lived ancient religion” approach to new fields and new foci. These contributions are organized in four parts with different perspectives, which are developed in their respective introductions. “Experiencing the religious” is the first part of

⁴ Rüpke 2016a; 2018a; 2018b; Raja 2015.

⁵ Several of the conferences are published in the journal *Religion in the Roman Empire* from 2015 onwards (see the overviews by Feldmeier et al. 2015; Raja and Rüpke 2015a; Raja and Weiss 2015; Rüpke and Degelmann 2015; Lichterman et al. 2017), but see also Petridou, Gordon and Rüpke 2017.

the volume. Although experience is a central aspect of religious life, it is still an under-researched topic in the field of religious studies and especially in the history of ancient religion. In the light of recent approaches, such as those of Matthias Jung and Ann Taves (Jung 2006; Taves 2009), we understand (religious) experience as the product of a wide range of sensory stimuli, effects, and inner feelings that are articulated by subjects or interpreted by observers as religious experience. The production of such stimuli is as interesting as the spatial, temporal, and discursive contexts that favor the interpretation of a given phenomenon as “religious”. Individual experiences could thus be a result of passive participation in any ritual, such as in public sacrifices or in processions. These have recently been theorized as “emotional communities” (Chaniotis 2013a; 2013b). Alternatively, they can be conceptualized as resulting from individual and deliberate attempts at stimulation. The empirical evidence required can be found by examining ritualized patterns and spatial arrangements, as well as first person reports or literary narratives, which cast light on this point of view. Different questions help to bring to the fore experiences which underlie religious action and identify the discourses about the dangers or values of true or false religious experiences. In what contexts do we find reference to specifically religious experience? How can we detect religious experience and techniques toward them in our sources and how does this affect our overall view of religiosity, religious belief, and religious practice? How did people try to communicate, commemorate and contour their experiences through the channels available to them, such as the re-use of mythical narratives or the setting up of material objects? How did architectural spaces and objects allow for or stimulate religious experiences? How did certain persons or groups try to control the articulation and interpretation of experience?

“A ‘thing’ called body: expressing religion bodily” is the title of the second part of the volume. This part focuses on the use, reuse, abuse, and misuse of bodies, bones, bodily remains, body parts, anatomical votives, amulets, and saintly relics in Classical and Late Antiquity. Methodologically speaking, it aims to connect some of the theoretical parameters of the “lived ancient religion” project with a reapplication and semantic expansion of Bill Brown’s “Thing Theory” (Brown 2003) to cover not only objects, but also bodies, body-parts and remains, bodily extensions (prostheses) and body-modifications. In Brown’s view, material artifacts become “things”, when they stop working for us and when they are removed from their natural/original environment and situated in new contexts of meaning. This view dovetails nicely with the emphasis of a lived ancient religion approach to the situational meaning of material artifacts in religious contexts. The notion of “embodiment” links materiality with corporeal experience, two notions central to the contemporary anthropology of religion. Such an approach

allows us to palpate the bodies of our scholarly interest and take their “vital signs”. In other words, it enables us to revisit and look afresh at the synchronic practices (pilgrimage, agonistic performance, medical *agōnes*, dedication, healing rituals, prayer, divination, magic rituals, worship of saintly relics) which enlivened and literally “breathed life” into these bodies in their original contexts, as well as casting new light on our conceptualizations of this.

The third part of the volume is dedicated to “Lived places: from individual appropriation of space to locational group-styles”. The aim here is to investigate the methods employed by individual religious specialists or groups to inscribe individual acts of devotion and communication with “not unquestionably plausible supernatural agents” (Rüpke 2015) in shared sacred spaces. However, the focus is *not* on the obvious candidates, temples, and individual dedications or votive offerings. Since the emphasis of the “lived ancient religion” project is on individual appropriation and modification of (mainly public) norms in the religious field, including rituals, objects and spaces, this part focusses on micro-strategies of sacralization. The aim is to go beyond the religious actions themselves and their immediate apprehension, and ask how they were remembered, memorialized, contested, and prolonged in various media (including architecture) over time. We understand such reception and commemoration as critical to the construction of sacred space, time, and even experience for those coming after, whether helped in their understanding by religious specialists or not. Individual practice so mediated and re-presented could thus be transformed into patterns, inspiration, or constraint for later religious action, both at the original site and elsewhere. The contributions to this part are driven by questions such as: What were the motivations to give individual innovations a more permanent form? What can be said about the agents or guiding spirits of such moves? Why were some successful, others not? How were initial sacralizations modified by subsequent appropriations? How were religious spaces modified and how were the various competing claims negotiated? The focus will be as much on archaeological evidence as on literary and juridical text, narrating, reflecting, or regulating such practices, their conditions and consequences.

“Switching the code: meaning-making beyond established religious frameworks” is the heading of the fourth part of the volume. Phenomena of religious inventiveness are anything but a yardstick of modernization. Throughout ancient and late antique Mediterranean societies, a whole variety of motives prompted individuals to creatively adapt existing signs, beliefs, settings, and practices for their own personal ends, serving to re-key or displace them. Such creativity is not a prerogative of a political elite or of religious specialists. By different means, even “weak” individuals could recast aspects of a religious *habitus* and thus engage agentially with their structuring religious environments by appropriating

religious signs to one's own ends, transposing existing meanings into different settings, and reshaping established patterns of action so that they appear quite new. By focusing explicitly on such strategies, these contributions aim to reconsider the techniques and procedures by which non-discursive practices, discourses, and writings were performed, controlled, and reproduced in religious settings and/or for theological purposes. That is, these papers aim to look at the techniques and procedures not as powerful acts but, rather, as initially constrained and consumption-oriented practices that allow "consumers" to leave their mark on them in the process of reception. It also aims to raise the question of how these strategies fare over time, as they encounter resistance and attract polemics. We can see here a range of possibilities, from the establishment of new norms and group-generating processes to reactions to stigmatization as well as cunning attempts at the spread of false beliefs about what is the case.

*

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Section 1: **Experiencing the religious**

Maik Patzelt

Introduction to Section 1

1 Religious experience: a difficult thing to engage with

In approaching the topic of religious experiences, a writer always runs the risk of making arbitrary assumptions, as a brief survey of the academic debate on the topic reveals. For more than a century, scholars working in philosophy, psychology of religion, anthropology of religion, religious studies, and many other disciplines besides, have been engaged in a debate about the correct way to approach experiences in general and religious experiences in particular. Support has oscillated between subjectivist and constructivist poles, which is to say the ideas that religious experience is either something highly individual, something intrinsic and authentic, or something that is the result of culture and society.¹ In recent years, a broader critique of the notion of religious experience itself has also developed. R. Sharf (2000), for instance, has argued that the idea of an experience deemed religious or divine is itself intrinsically tied to Western conceptions of religion and religiosity, which prioritize, or even overvalue, *experiences* as pivotal points of human practice.

Sharf's criticism is primarily directed towards philosophical approaches to religious experience. Scholars contributing to this debate have tended to maintain a normative, indeed *essentializing*, approach that focuses on religious experience, rather than religious experiences. With the exception of F. Schleiermacher, one of the first and most influential thinkers to work on this topic (Martin 2016, 526–527), the most prominent protagonists in this respect tended to be early pragmatists and phenomenologists. Just as pragmatism, represented by W. James' highly influential *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, the phenomenology of religion (W. Dilthey, J. Wach and M. Eliade)² “enjoins the ‘imaginative participation in the world of the actor’ in order to arrive at ‘value free’ and ‘evocative’ descriptions” (Sharf 2000, 268 quoting Smart 1973, 20–21). Due to the new technological devices that neuroscience appears to offer for the study of religions, these essentialist approaches have undergone a renaissance in recent decades. Despite the questionable scientific bases of their 19th century's predecessors experiments in magnetism

¹ For a brief, even though outdated overview, see Proudfoot 1985; Taves 2009, 3–14.

² A comprehensive overview offered by Murphy 2010.

and other fields of popular psychology (cf. Taves 1999),³ cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, and, particularly, neuro-psychologists of religion (who tend to term themselves *neuro-theologists*),⁴ have not been deterred from seeking to identify religious experiences as anthropological constants, universal truths that are encoded as inherent elements in the human brain.

These essentializing approaches – as varied as they are – mainly build on a notion of religious practice that ignores its embodied dimensions. However, recent discussions in the cognitive science of religion,⁵ as well as research on the senses in religion, focusing particularly on aesthetics and mediality,⁶ have foregrounded an embodied approach to religious practice and experience. The emphasis here is on a non-Cartesian dialectical interaction between the body, the mind (or rather the brain), and the cultural and social environments in which body and brain are embedded (Kundtová Klocová and Geertz 2019, 76–80; Geertz 2010, 306–308). These studies do not consider religious experience as essentialized or as an anthropological constant or as something solely derived from a neurological core. Rather, they ask “How are the senses stimulated, governed and disciplined in the context of religious practice?” and “How are religious experiences, emotions and attitudes created, memorized and normalized?” (Grieser and Johnston 2017, 2).

From this perspective, religious experiences are not to be reduced to various aesthetic qualities – such as (flashing) lights, fragrances, or rhythmic sounds and performances (Geertz 2010, 306–308).⁷ An embodiment approach focuses instead on the “interplay between sensory, cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of world-construction” (Grieser and Johnston 2017, 2). Religious experiences are, thus, above all culturally learned and socially evoked. These experiences only

³ Their early 20th century predecessors are K. Girgensohn (1921) or T.K. Oesterreich (1921). Their and many other approaches are reminiscent of Schleiermacher or particularly R. Otto ([1917] 1991), who sought to cull a particular experience as an anthropological constant, such as Ottos’s *Kreaturgefühl*.

⁴ Most prominent figures are A. Newberg (2010, cf. d’Aquili and Newberg 1999) or Forman (1999). For positions against these views see Geertz 2010, 305; Schjoedt 2009; Azari et al. 2005; McNamara 2009.

⁵ Czachesz 2016, 8–23; Taves 2015; Schjoedt 2009; McNamara 2009; Azari et al. 2005; Whitehouse 2004; McCauley and Lawson 2002. For a general overview see Hick 2010.

⁶ Meyer 2010, 2008; Classen 2014; Classen and Howes 2014; Münster 2001; Kapferer and Hobart 2005; Cancik and Mohr 1988. A broad approach to mediality and religion is provided by Malik, Rüpke and Wobbe 2007.

⁷ On music, sounds and movements: Brown and Volgsten 2006; McCauley and Lawson 2002; Laderman 1991; Roseman 1986; Kapferer 1983, 178–206; on postures: Niedenthal et al. 2005; Barsalou et al. 2003; on pain: Ustinova 2019; Schjoedt et al. 2013.

have significance within a particular culture, within a particular social environment (status, milieu, etc.), and within the specific moment and social gathering in which they are evoked, negotiated, and communicated.⁸ In the words of Tanya Luhrmann, every culture and every individual within “cultivates” its own ways of “sensing” the religious.⁹ More precisely, it is the cultural- and milieu-specific recollection of these experiences, such as symbolic constructions (e.g. narratives) and representations (e.g. statues), that determines our ways of detecting a religious experience, most of all conceptualized as an experience of superhuman agency.¹⁰ These forms of knowledge and commemoration are (re)produced, nuanced, and actualized through communication.

An embodied approach of this sort leaves scholars of religion – and particularly historians of religion – with the problem of the *communicability* of experiences (see Jung 2006, 1999; Knoblauch 1998) and the interpretive dominance of religious specialists (Bendlin 2015, 538). There are many factors that complicate a coherent analysis of communicability. These range from the almost endless variety of individual (religious) knowledge, which may or may not be ascribed to an equally endless variety of neuro-physical ‘manipulations’ and arousals, or to the complexity of intersubjective negotiation processes in social gatherings (cf. Csordas 2008). However, the factor with which historians of religions are primarily concerned is the limited and fragmented historical evidence that complicates these efforts. This problem touches the very heart of the study of past cultures, that is, the expressive limits of language (cf. N. Belayche in this volume), the semiotics of architectural and poetic language, and the ‘meaning’ of ritual practice. The study of the experiences of the past thus requires a great deal of effort to, first and foremost, disclose and reconstruct the cultural, social, situational, and particularly the ritual context and the related discourses. As R. Gordon points out in this volume, religious experience “is at any rate communicable only via the relevant constructs available in a given culture or sub-culture”. The historian of religion, and particularly the historian of *ancient* religions, faces a difficult challenge in not reducing experiences to purely subjectivist frameworks while, at the same time, avoiding the development of normative generalizations about coherent group experiences. This latter case would amount to little more than the transfer of a civic religion model to a smaller scale of analysis.

8 Czachesz 2015, 7; Geertz 2010, 315–318; Taves 2009, 16–55; Barsalou et al. 2005. From a performative point of view see Schieffelin 1996.

9 Luhrmann 2013; Luhrmann and Morgain 2012.

10 The recent debate in the cognitive science of religion models this process as “predictive processing”, “predictive coding” or the “predictive mind” in general (Andersen 2019; Andersen et al. 2019; Andersen and Schjoedt 2017).

The present volume seeks to take up this challenge. The embodiment approach to experience avoids reducing experiences to a culturally normative set of meanings, as is pointed out by Sharf, and it is precisely for this reason that the “lived ancient religion”-approach pursues an embodiment approach to religious practice and experience. The “lived ancient religion”-approach furthermore seeks to enhance the embodiment approach by introducing the concept of *agency* (Rüpke 2015). A “lived ancient religion”-approach to experience, thus, acknowledges the social world in which the agent is embedded – the individual’s cultural and social belonging – just as it acknowledges the individual’s capacity to appropriate different strategies for eliciting sensory, emotional, and cognitive responses, as well as for expressing and communicating personal experiences (de Certeau 1984).¹¹

This section of the volume, therefore, aims at bringing to the fore the *contexts of experiences* underlying religious action and at identifying the *discourses* that diffuse, debate, and negotiate these experiences from the Early Empire to the beginnings of late antiquity. The production of sensory stimuli in religious rituals is just as interesting as are the spatial, temporal, and discursive contexts that favor interpretations of a given phenomenon as “religious”, “mystical”, or in some sense “divine”. Given the various strategies for eliciting, identifying and communicating the formation of religious experiences, the embodiment approach of this section provides a first tentative attempt to look for the variety of experiences that are encoded within and between the variety of cultures across time and space (cf. Martin 2012, 188–196).

The chapters that follow are driven by questions such as: How can we detect religious experience and techniques towards them in our sources and how does that affect our overall view of religiosity, religious belief, and religious practice in antiquity? In what contexts do we find reference to specifically religious experience? How did people try to communicate, memorize and contour their experiences through the channels available to them, such as the re-use of mythical narratives or the setting up of material objects? How did architectural spaces and objects allow for or stimulate religious experiences?

2 Research on ancient religions

In recent years, there has been an increasing, yet disparate interest in the experiential quality of ancient religions. Most of these approaches are strongly

¹¹ Cognitive scholars may speak about an *enactive* embodiment (Kundtová Klocová and Geertz 2019, 78–80).

informed by either the cognitive science of religion or by the anthropology of the senses and emotions. Cognitive studies mainly engage with particular cult systems, examining their specific sensescapes and modes of memory. Most of the studies collected here concentrate on Greek cults (Ustinova 2019, 2009; Panagiotidou 2017, 2014; Chalupa 2014) and early Christianity (Czachesz 2015, 2016; Harkins and Popović 2015). Similarly, recent scholarship on the anthropology of the senses and *sensorium* in both ancient religion¹² and early Christianities (Feldt 2017; Pentcheva 2014), particularly Christian asceticism (Alciati 2018), has initiated a debate about the social and cultural significance of sensory stimulations, emotions, arousals, and affections. As for Rome, addressing the issue of emotions has been a rather difficult challenge due to the history of research into Roman religion (Bendlin 2006, 2000). Only recently have first attempts been made to approach more closely the experiential aspects of Roman religion in the late Republican and early Imperial eras (Rüpke 2016, 218–269; Patzelt 2018, 18–45; Cusumano et al. 2013; vs. Scheid 2015, 113–118). These attempts seek to overcome the still prevailing dichotomy between institutionalized religion and individual religiosity in favor of an embodiment approach.

Due to differing cultures of academic disciplines and due to a variety of problems with the source material, all these approaches to Greek, Roman, and Christian religions place differing degrees of emphasis on the importance of agency, collective memory, and group religion in their roles as requisites for experiences or ways in which experiences are expressed. There is barely any interchange between these disciplines in this regard. Since such communication is essential if we are to reconsider the perspectives and methods of each discipline, this section draws together a broad range of methodological approaches to a variety of materials undertaken by scholars of Roman religions, Greek religions, and early Christianities.

3 Individual contributions in the section

The value of this book section is to bring together different perspectives and approaches from disciplines that have so far had little overlap. Corresponding to the conference’s original credo of “leaving the disciplinary comfort zone”, this

¹² Alvar et al. 2019; Harvey 2006; Chaniotis 2016, 2013. Recent but general approaches to synesthesia and the senses in antiquity in Toner 2016; Grand-Clément 2016; Bradley 2015; Butler and Purves 2013.

section seeks to encourage scholars of various disciplines to come into contact, to exchange ideas, and, finally, to cross boundaries and to rethink their views and perspectives about, and problems with, both the material and their methods for approaching it. In so doing, this section suggests various methodological perspectives that bring together aspects of agency, group memory, communication, and experience. This range of perspectives is applied to a wide scope of disciplines – such as theology, philology, and history – that focus on the study of ancient religion. The variety of religious practices (daily rituals, pilgrimage, cursing, praying, singing, drinking, mutilations), spaces (Rome, Corinth, Egypt, Asia Minor, Thracia), and times (1st to late 3rd century CE) covered here is, therefore, as essential for this section as is the variety of experiences (ecstasies, possessions, ordinary experiences) highlighted in the inevitably wide range of employed sources (inscriptions, letters, apocalyptic texts, hymns).

Given the problems of communicating experiences found within the media accessible to us, Richard Gordon argues that scholars should speak about “requisite” experiences rather than “special” or “subjective” experiences. In his case study, Gordon tentatively reconstructs a perceptual framework that may or may not indicate the formation of religious experiences in an ideal highly educated group of social elites. Based on the reader-response theory and a rigorous analysis of hymnic techniques, such as the use of epithets, mythic allusions, and references, Gordon examines how and to what extent the composition of works such as Orphic hymns or Aelius Aristides’ *Hymn to Serapis* conveyed intuitions and apprehensions of divinity to their audiences and/or performers.

Angela Kim Harkins addresses the problem of group memory and experience from another point of view. Drawing on cognitive science, she introduces the concepts of enactive reading and enactive perception and uses these to analyze the visionary experiences found within the *Shepherd of Hermas*, particularly the encounter with Rhoda and the Vision of the Tower. By analyzing the emotional contours of mythic references and narratives (e.g. the story of Reuben and Bilhah), these two modes of perception and cognition allow insights into how the ancients experienced reading about the visionary events reported in the *Shepherd*. These modes also offer insights into the writer’s strategy of tying in, and thereby transforming, the ascription processes of his readers. Harkins argues that the processes of enactive reading and enactive perception “act upon” the selves of the readers and, consequently, participate in their decision-making processes, that is, in the construction of ethical constraints on behavior.

Maria Dell’Isola focuses on the discourse about, indeed against, religious experiences in relation to their geneses. Drawing primarily on the Church Fathers Epiphanius, Philo, Eusebius, and Origen, Dell’Isola’s study reconstructs a “phenomenology” of ecstasy. As she points out, strategies directed towards achieving

states of ecstasy and experiences of possession did not necessarily differ in early Christianity. However, the judgments of the individual writers did. Dell’Isola’s philological study reveals the vocabulary of anti-Montanist polemics as a strategy of stigmatization within the ‘heresiological’ debates of early Christianity. Her approach thus emphasizes strategies of evoking, as well as of constructing, religious experiences for the sake of group formation.

Nicole Belayche takes the risky approach of identifying religious experiences on the basis of fragmentary epigraphic material, leading to ground-breaking results. By concentrating her philological approach on the invocative options *kýrios/a* and *despótes*, Belayche does not merely elucidate two possible options for expressing a worshipper’s personal submission. Her comparative approach, examining material from Thrace to Egypt to the Levant, rather illustrates a wide scope of religious experiences that are expressed and communicated using these epithets. According to Belayche, the invocation *despótes* in particular seeks to express a very intense and very personal experience, as there is mention in this context of such things as oracular advice and dreams.

Maik Patzelt addresses ways of eliciting religious experiences from another perspective. By applying a recent pragmatist discourse concerning “ordinary experiences” to the ancient material, he argues that there is no need to restrict experiences deemed “special” or “divine” to those that are arousing or “special” in some other way (a general criticism of such assumptions can be found in Sharf 2000, 285). The *salutationes* in front of Roman temples serve as a case study that illuminates the variety of individual strategies aiming to establish a personal relationship with the addressed deity. The variety of religious experiences thus stems from the variety of personal, highly nuanced social relationships with a deity.

Ian Rutherford provides an important contribution to the understanding of the variety of experiences at ancient pilgrimage sites. Focusing on the relation between *paideia* and ritual practice, Rutherford sets out three case studies covering Jewish pilgrimage, pilgrimage to the oracle of Apollo at Claros, and the healing-pilgrimages of Aelius Aristides to Pergamum. These case studies highlight different forms of subjective experience and, by doing so, allow deep insights into the importance of cult(ural) and even milieu-specific religious knowledge. Rutherford’s approach thereby highlights the interrelation between an evocative religious space (rites of passage, *communitas*) and the various things that the pilgrims’ bodies undergo, such as the strains (and pains) of travel and religious practices.

Irene Salvo has contributed a most compelling approach to the reconstruction of aesthetic qualities, which she considers as strategies for neuro-physical manipulations. She sketches the cognitive and embodied aspects of the cursing ritual as a multi-sensory experience. Her analysis of the archaeological and

ritual settings in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth (1st to 2nd century CE), the sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater in Mainz (1st to 2nd CE), and, finally, in the fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome (2nd to 5th CE) provides a reconstruction of the ritual sensescape. In her approach, the variety of sensory stimuli (lights, fragrances and so on) was able to modify – in the ideal case heighten – the emotions of participants. Salvo thereby refers to the thin line between the goal of shifting the emotions by the careful use of lead, on the one hand, and lead poisoning, on the other.

Paul’s so-called “Second Letter to the Corinthians” is an outstanding example of the genesis and diffusion of religious experiences in the New Testament. Analyzing the alleged “ego-documents” of Paul in these Corinthian letters, Oda Wischmeyer illustrates Paul’s shift from heavenly experiences to the experiences of the body, thereby turning to his body as place and bearer of revelation. She argues that rather than heavenly visions, experiences emanating from permanent suffering through hardship and disease constructed the religious authority of Paul. Paul employs his disease as an actual revelation of the *châris* and the *dynamis* of the *kýrios*. Just as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Paul uses his personal experiences as normative ascriptions of religious experiences with which he sought to support and lead the Corinthian Christian groups.

Taken together, these chapters demonstrate the ground-breaking value of the “lived religion” perspective. It is the variety of (embodied) experience – the variety of contexts, of stimuli, and the variety of cultural and social formations – that gives this approach its strength. Instead of categorizing these phenomena according to their various aspects and types of experience, this section considers the phenomena for what they are: a broad range of culturally specific experiences that only have significance within the moments and within the social contexts in which they are evoked.

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Richard L. Gordon

(Re-)modelling religious experience: some experiments with hymnic form in the imperial period

Abstract: Religious experience has been the topic of many different theoretical approaches. This paper starts from the premise that subjective individual experience is communicable only in terms of locally-available schemes, primarily linguistic, and thus ignores somatic signs such as ecstasy or frenzy. In the case of Greco-Roman Antiquity, this involves recourse to literary sources. The paper uses three Greek hymns of the imperial period, all of them experimental by comparison with “classical” models, to infer what we may call requisite rather than subjective experiences on the part of audiences. The hymns chosen are Mesomedes’ *Hymn to Isis* (no. 6 Regenauer), the Orphic hymn to the Nymphs (no. 51 Ricciardelli) and the hymn to “Apollo” in *PGrMag* VI 30–38. The suggestion is that rhetorical analysis enables us to gain a mediated idea of the contrasting responses ideally evoked in the course of ritualized performance.

1 Religious experience

Until the 1980s, the dominant terms in which religious experience was discussed were subjectivist and attributivist/attributional. At any rate in the field of religious studies, this was largely due to the dual influence of Schleiermacher’s evangelical Protestant intuitionism and William James’ asymmetrical opposition between institutional and personal religion (cf. Proudfoot 1985, 9–40; 155–189); more recently, however, to social psychology (e.g. Hood 1995) and the various forms of phenomenology (Martin 2016, 526–528).¹ Thanks to its simplicity, Rodney Stark’s fourfold typology of religious experience, confirming, responsive, ecstatic and revelational, has been, and continues to be, influential (Stark 1965, cf. 1999). Resistance arose from two sides, cultural anthropology and the linguistic turn. Already in 1961 Godfrey Lienhardt, a pupil of Evans-Pritchard at Oxford, entitled his account of Dinka religion *Divinity and Experience*, which among other things tackled the issue

¹ For a highly critical account of the influence of phenomenology on religious studies, particularly Rudolf Otto, G. van der Leeuw, Wach and Eliade, see Murphy 2010. Rappaport 1999, 391–395 (on Ultimate Sacred Postulates) reads to me like an attempt to save this sort of evaluative intuitionism.

of how to represent the self-knowledge of a culture that not only had no conception of “mind” but no very clear ontology of divinity (1961, 147–170). Nevertheless, he argued persuasively that the Dinkas’ “Powers” can be understood as images of complex experiences within their specific life-world. “With this knowledge, this separation of a subject and an object in experience, there arises for them also the possibility of creating a form of experience they desire, and of freeing themselves symbolically from what they must otherwise passively endure” (Lienhardt 1961, 170). It was, however, mainly Victor Turner’s later work that spawned an entire movement in US cultural anthropology, the “anthropology of (mainly bodily) experience” (Turner and Bruner 1986). Despite the enormous success of this trend over the past three decades, it has not proved particularly interested in specifically religious experience (cf. James 2003, 181–210). Where this was attempted, it tended, at any rate early on, to produce efforts at intuitionist “insights”, such as Turner’s *communitas* (1974, 166–299), a reversion to Durkheimian collectivist apriorism, or the anti-rationalism of Bruce Kapferer’s analysis of performance in major Sinhalese exorcisms (Kapferer 1986; cf. 1997), which, despite its impressive notation of ritual, often reads like the projections of a novelist. In the present context, therefore, I am more interested in the other form of resistance to authenticity-discourse, which was largely inspired by the linguistic turn (Martin 2016, 532–536).

Within religious studies, Wayne Proudfoot, without denying the possibility of Jamesian “experiences”, emphasized the logical priority of the concepts and interpretative frames available for the very identification and formulation of experiences claimed as “religious”, thus re-stating the most obvious socio-cultural conditions for the articulation of supposed mental events of this kind (1985, 190–227). A year or two later, Joan Scott, an historian critical of mainstream historical writing, emphasized historical discontinuities and the variety of local discourses that produce subjects and their experiences: “Experience is at once already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation” (1992, 37; cf. Fitzgerald 2000). Equally pertinent is the radical skepticism of an anthropologist such as Robert Sharf, who was inclined to doubt the referentiality of all reports of supposedly religious experiences, comparing such reports to the thousands of detailed “subjective” accounts of abduction by alien beings in the US in the 1950s and 60s (1998, 108–109; cf. 2000).

Perhaps the most important recent discussion of religious experience, by Ann Taves, attempts to outflank pure constructivism by developing an analytical framework that includes special experiences both religious and non-religious (2009, 120–160). Here the framing of all experience is taken as read; it is rather the category “religion” that is questioned, moving away from theological or formal conceptions towards acceptance of what “interacting subjects viewed as emerging

and how they decided to act on it” (2016, 6). Religious experience is not simply discursive but also embodied, and as such is neither stable nor fixed but a matter of how people decide on the meaning and significance of experiences. Taves’ work seems to suggest that in the field of Religious Studies there is a continuing desire to save something of authenticity (“special experiences”), albeit via the detour of cognitive psychology and theories of group dynamics (cf. Fitzgerald 2010).

Given the irremediable problems of evidence, however, the historian, especially the ancient historian, is better advised to start from the assumption that subjective individual experience, insofar as it is not purely staged as in Sharf’s comparison, is at any rate communicable only via the relevant constructs available in a given culture or sub-culture. Conversely, for practical purposes, we can view these locally-available linguistic and schematic resources as not merely the frame but in effect the stuff of religious experiences. At its simplest, we can call this the “Rhine-postcard” phenomenon, as noted by the British tourist Michael Quin in 1843: the gorge between Koblenz and Bingen is where “the Rhine begins to look like itself” – i.e. where it begins to resemble the guide-books’ descriptions of what it was supposed to look like (Quin 1843. 2, 116).

2 Exploiting Greek hymns as evidence for “requisite” experiences

Granted that “Greek religion” is a construction of post-Romantic scholarship, there is no denying that there survives a vast deal of evidence for what we at any rate view as religion, over a period of, say, 1,200 years, despite the fact that its practice and performance is irremediably lost. Much of this evidence is antiquarian and retrospective, much of the remainder oblique and by no means self-explanatory. If we are to speak of “locally-available linguistic and schematic resources”, we need to focus on direct sources, namely first-order texts. In this paper, I suggest using Greek ὕμνοι (“hymns”) experimentally for this purpose, which, as more or less complex songs in different forms directly addressed to named deities and performed in specific contexts perceived as related, directly or indirectly, to τὰ θεῖα (*ta theia*, things relevant to the gods → “religion”) (cf. Thraede 1994, 917–918), we can assume satisfy Taves’ criterion of appropriate ascription (“deemed religious”) (2009, 22–28).² Whereas “ritual performance” is too

² This formulation is intended to by-pass the discussion over the sort of distinction(s) to be made between “cultic hymns” versus “literary hymns”: cf. Furley and Bremer 2001 (1), 2–6; Pörtulas 2012, 235–240.

amorphous/complex an entity to invoke (cf. Sax, Quack and Weinhold 2010), and is anyway, for lack of adequate materials, more or less unavailable in the context of antiquity, one can make a virtue of the necessity of taking texts alone. As the current surge of interest in Aelius Aristides' *Hieroi Logoi* attests, his hermeneutics of dreams, visions, and conversations provides by far the most sophisticated account surviving from antiquity of what can be done on the interface of complex schemes, tropes, self-staging and stimuli (e.g. Petsalis-Diomidis 2010; Downie 2013). The topos of epiphany, too, perfectly exemplifies the fluency with which cultic resources could be drawn upon in imagining divine encounters (Platt 2011; Petridou 2015).

My suggestion is that, given the sort of doubts about the accessibility of “experience” raised by Sharf, we might use Greek hymns to infer “requisite” experiences rather than “special” or “subjective” experiences. We might treat them as one (rather sophisticated) component of the multiple interpretative frames available for the identification and formulation of experiences claimed as “religious” within a specific context of practice. If we cannot have any direct knowledge of subjective states, analysis of such texts may, I suggest, give us an inkling of the responses intended to be evoked in the course of ritual performances. Although we can know nothing directly about these wider contexts, we can at least examine the surviving texts and make inferences from them. Of course in reality actual responses to these, at least those that were performed on at least one or more occasions, must have varied considerably (indeed, the “hymns” of the magical papyri assume a secret recital, with the addressee (the deity/ies) as sole auditor/s). But of that diverse reality again we can have no knowledge. It may be objected that such an approach presupposes reception, which I readily admit; but it does not presuppose specific audiences. Adopting the terms of reader-response theory, I take “requisite” experiences as those of an ideal reader/auditor, which can now only be approximated by a learned commentator armed with lexica, concordances and data-bases and alert to the danger of myopic “atomization” of the text (Shuttleworth Kraus 2002, 10–16).

Although cult-hymns cannot formally be distinguished from other lyric forms as regards their religious content, a pragmatic distinction can be made, inasmuch as they are a “form of worship directed towards winning a god’s goodwill and securing his or her assistance or favor” (Furley and Bremer 2001 (1), 2–3). By virtue of its literary polish, the hymn has been likened to an ἄγαλμα, a “(god’s) delight”, that aims to store up divine χάρις on behalf of the community that stages the performance (Race 1982, 8–10; Furley and Bremer 2001 (1), 61–63; Pòrtulas 2012, 234). As in the case of sacrifice, the gods themselves, led by Apollo, καὶ ὕψι βιβὰς αἴγλη μιν ἀμφιφαεῖνει / μαρμαρυγαὶ τε ποδῶν καὶ ἐυκλώστοιο χιτῶνος, “high-stepping, radiant, feet-flashing, robe-gleaming”

(*HomHymn Apollo* 202–203 Allen), model hymnic performance for human beings (cf. Lonsdale 1995, 30–31). Ideally, as Strabo emphasizes in a famous passage relating to the Kourêtes on Crete (Bremer 1998, 522–523), such performances took place in an atmosphere of relaxation and rejoicing:

It is a common characteristic of both Greeks and non-Greeks to perform religious ceremonies in an atmosphere of relaxed festivity, whereby some rituals are performed with ‘enthusiasm’ and some not, some with music, some without it, some only by initiates in secret, others in the open. . . Whilst it is well said that men imitate the gods best whenever they do good, it is perhaps more appropriate to say ‘whenever they are happy’. And this happiness is found in gladness, in the celebration of festivals, in philosophy and in making music. (Geogr. 10.3.9, 467C tr. H.L. Jones, with changes)

In the special case of healing-gods, Asklepios and his assistant Telephoros could be imagined as dancing for joy when a patient recovers (*IG* III.1 171 = Furley and Bremer 2001, 7.7.1 ll.9–15). Indeed, the joy might extend still further: the Archaic poet Alkaios imagined nightingales, swallows and cicadas all singing to welcome the return of Apollo from the land of the Hyperboreans (frg. 307c19–22 Voigt = Furley and Bremer 2001, no. 2.1).

3 Greek hymnic production in the Hellenistic and Roman periods

It is generally thought that hymnic production greatly increased in the Hellenistic and Roman periods,³ with local literati routinely turning out songs (and music) for public performance.⁴ In many cities of the province of Asia and on the Black Sea coast there were formal associations of ὑμνωδοί (*hymnôdoi*), of varying social catchment, from prominent – for example at Smyrna, where the son of a city-councilor records that he was *hymnôdos* both of Hadrian and of the *gerousia*, positions that he had inherited from earlier generations of his family (*IGR* IV 1436) – to middling (e.g. οἱ ὑμνοῦντες τοὺς Σεβαστοῦς; Dionysopolis, Moesia Inf.: *IGBulg* I² 15[3] = 30). Although the precise organization is disputed,

³ A rapid but detailed overview in Lattke 1991, 37–39. Since this is not an epigraphic publication, I make no effort to cite the latest editions of inscriptions, but refer simply to familiar collections.

⁴ E.g. Kleochares of Athens: *Syll*³ 450; Glaukos of Marathon at Olympia (*IOlymp.* 457); a ὑμνητής of the *orgeônai* (sic) of Belêla in the Piraeus: *Syll*³ 1111; a ὑμνογράφος διὰ βίου from Laodikeia: *IGR* IV 1587 l.14–15 etc.).

and altered over time, from the Julio-Claudian period they were formally responsible for staging and executing performances in individual cities in connection with all imperial celebrations, such as birthdays and victories (Halfmann 1990; van Nijf 1997, 165–167). To this end, such associations enjoyed civic, provincial and imperial subventions (e.g. *IGR* IV 1431 l.34–40) and are frequently included among the beneficiaries of euergetic gestures by the very wealthy (e.g. at Smyrna: *IGR* IV 1431 l.39; Miletos: *IG* XII 68 l.12; Ephesos: *IEphesos* Ia. 27 l.146; [267]). Their connection to the imperial cult prompted cities to set up copies of at least the imperial documents in a bid for status (*IGR* IV 1608 with Keil 1908, 103–104). Another major panhellenic institution requiring hymns was that of the organized Dionysiac *technitai* (Le Guen 2001). In many places there were local groups of singers, some ancient, such as the *Molpoi* at Miletos (*Syll*³ 57 with Deshours 2011, 276–293 no. 25) and the *hymnôdoi* of Artemis at Ephesos, some more informal, such as the numerous ephebic and maiden choirs,⁵ and Metroac (e.g. *ILS* 4164) ceremonies. An important series of 2nd-century CE documents from Klaros records the delegations sent each year by cities to the oracular temple of Apollo, including boys' and girls' choirs, sometimes mixed (*SEG* 37: 961–978). All of these institutions required a regular supply of hymns for performance, whether by groups or by solo performers. Especially notable productions were even thought worthy of inclusion in the local epigraphic assortment, sometimes with the approval of an oracle: there survive at least twenty hymns of various kinds inscribed on stelai, mainly at panhellenic centers, between the second half of the 4th century BCE and into the 2nd CE, two of them with musical notation.⁶ Although the range of styles and quality is very variable, all are simple in structure and tend increasingly to brevity (Parker 2012, 715).

5 E.g. Eleusis: *Syll*³ 885.27–30; Magnesia: *Syll*³ 695 with Deshours 2011, 197–208 no.1; Teos: *IGR* III 90.7–10; the *paianistai* of Asklepios in Munichia (*Syll*³ 1110); and performers who sang at various Isiac ceremonies (e.g. the hymns of Isidoros of Narmuthis [*IMEGR* 175]; Chaeremon frg. 10 van der Horst; *Tibull.* 1.7.37–48; *RICIS* 104/0206).

6 Most of these are treated in Furley and Bremer 2001. In their enumeration they are as follows:

Delphi: 2.3 (Aristonoos' hymn to Hestia); 2.4 (Aristonoos' paian to Apollo); 2.5 (Aristodemos' paian to Dionysos); 2.6.1 (?Athenaios' paian to Apollo); 2.6.2 (Limenaiois' paian to Apollo, both with musical notation). Epidauros: 6.1 (paian to Asklepios, which survives in four slightly different versions, from Erythrai, Ptolemaios Hermion, Athens and Dion in Macedonia, though not from Epidauros itself); 6.2 (hymn to the Mother of the Gods); 6.3 (Ariphron's paian to Hygieia, copied on two different stelai and in two mss.); 6.4 (Isyllos' paian to Apollo and Asklepios, which was to be chanted three times while circling the altar); 6.5 (hymn to Pan); 6.7 (hymn to all the gods). Athens: 7.5 (Makedonikos of Amphipolis, paian to Apollo and Asklepios); 7.6 ("morning song" of 6 lines to Asklepios); 7.7.1 and 2 (two hymns to Telesphoros). We can add at least *IPerg.* II 324 (hymn to Zeus and other deities; for a recent discussion, see Várhelyi 2001, 26–30); the Cretan hymn to Antinoos (*SEG* 53: 1747bis = *AE* 1975: 832); and perhaps the "Berlin paian"

At 156 lines, Philodamos' mid-4th century BCE paian to Dionysos is by far the longest; none of those dated to the imperial period is longer than 20 lines.⁷ At the same time, the metrical structure tends to increasing complexity, to the point at which dactylic, lyric and iambic cola can all be used together, as in the late *Hymn to all the gods*, or traditional rules seem no longer to apply at all, as in the case of Makedonikos' paian.

Despite the almost total loss of ancient Greek hymns, and the multiplicity of sub-genres, we can safely say that traditionally the dominant content was mythical: the main exposition consisted of an evocation of one or more myths relating to the addressee, often relating his or her first advent or epiphany (Furley and Bremer 2001 (1), 18–19). Recent interest in the narrativity and narrative strategies of Greek hymns is grounded in this assumption (e.g. Faulkner and Hodkinson 2015). The paians of Philodamos and Isyllos (which is very much shorter) are still firmly in this tradition. Yet increasingly it is the imagined cultic setting of the hymn that takes precedence, the evocation of an ambience, a mood, an expectation. In place of narrative, we find experimentation in other modes, most explicitly in the case of Aelius Aristides' prose encomia of gods, which by that date were regularly termed "hymns" (Parker 2016, 67 n.1). Thus the first 13 sections of the earliest, the *Hymn to Serapis*, usually dated to the early 140s CE, are devoted to an attack on the routinization of the usual run of metrical hymns:

There is nothing they do not dare or that presents difficulties for them (i.e. the poets). They treat the gods like puppets, and turn them into ordinary fellow-travellers, make them companions of human beings, even carousing with them and lighting their way with torches. And that is why I, as I said at the beginning, poets are so high-handed, so carefree, so 'easeful' as Homer puts it, when they compose hymns and paeans to the gods. In a couple of strophes or periods all is done: when they have said 'sea-girt Delos' or 'Zeus who delights in thunder', or 'the loud-roaring sea', and then have told in passing how Heracles came to the Hyperboreans and how Iamos was an ancient seer, or how Heracles slew Antaios, or when they have mentioned Minos, or Rhadamanthys, or the Phasis or the Ister, or have declared that they themselves are 'nurslings of the Muses' and 'unmatched in wisdom', they think their hymn quite good enough; and no ordinary person demands any more of them. (§2–3, tr. Behr, heavily adapted)

(on papyrus): *PBerol.* 6870^v = 1: 52 Heitsch = *TrGF* 2: 683, which some have ascribed to Mesomedes (Bélis 2003, 232–234) but may rather come from an anonymous tragedy.

⁷ I omit here the literary and philosophical hymns, e.g. by Callimachus, Aristotle to Virtue, the Stoic hymn on the creation of the universe (*SEG* 28: 793 = 2007: 969), parodies (e.g. Lucian, *Podagr.* 129–137 etc.) and those composed for novels, e.g. Philostratos, *Her.* 19.14. 12–13 Follet = p. 208 Kayser (to Thetis); 19.16.6–8 = p. 213f. (to Homer), that were not intended for performance in a cultic setting; cf. Regenauer 2016, 37f.

Notwithstanding its traditional appropriateness in religious contexts, then, poetry tends towards the recycling of banalities that can provide only a general, abstract sense, whereas prose, with its advantages of clarity, coherence and discursivity, can purify religious language, an argument that links to Plutarch's earlier skepticism in *de Pythiae oraculis* 23–24 (405d-406f, cf. 403f1-3) of oracular utterance in poetic form (Pernot 2007, 176; 181–184). Among the banalities, evidently, is hand-me-down mythic reference. The use of prose for a hymn is thus for Aristides a strategy of defamiliarization as well as a demonstration of piety (cf. Russell 1990; Pernot 2007; Goeken 2007; 2016).

Although they are not in prose, much the same can be said of the three groups of hymns I propose briefly to discuss in the remainder of this paper, the hymns of Mesomedes of Crete (like Phlegon of Tralles and Aristomenes of Athens an imperial slave freed by Hadrian), the collection we call the *Orphic Hymns*, and the “hymns” embedded in some of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri. Although these are all very different in detail, all seek to re-model the cult-hymn to their own ends by means of formal experimentation. This in turn suggested to me that such shifts of formal strategy might have implications for religious experience: instead of viewing these compositions solely in terms of their overt aim of attracting divine attention and favor, we might also consider their possible cognitive, emotional and intellectual effects upon performers and audience (who, in the case of the *Orphic Hymns*, may well have been identical), in short, in terms of their construction of specific kinds of religious experience.

4 Three different experiments with the hymnic form

The three groups of hymns have been chosen for their diversity, despite the fact that all (probably) belong, at least in their original form, to the 2nd century CE.⁸ The thirteen surviving poems ascribed to P. Aelius Mesomedes, a prominent lyric poet and citharode at the court of Hadrian and a personal friend of the emperor (Cassius Dio 77.13.7), are fragile, allusive compositions in literary Doric for solo

⁸ The date of the twenty-six hymns incorporated into the longer Greco-Egyptian receptaries is conjectural, since in their surviving form they were only (re-)copied in the late 3rd and 4th centuries CE; however, although no parallel versions are known from other sources, and it is impossible to re-create the “originals”, they are probably based on earlier compositions, no doubt of the first two centuries CE, possibly even earlier (Furley 1995, 39–40; Brashear 1995, 3420; Bortolani 2016, 28–29).

performance, intermediate between the literary epigram and lyric poetry.⁹ Ignoring two very brief introductory addressees, only four of the surviving texts are hymns, though the poem to the Adriatic Sea (no. 6 Heitsch) uses hymnic *topoi* and it is known that he wrote an encomium for Antinoos (Suda s.v. Μεσομήδης); other poems are verse riddles and fables – one is on an astronomical orrery (cf. Brumbaugh 2015, 166).

Whereas Mesomedes was celebrated in antiquity (his work was imitated by Synesius, for example), no extant ancient source cites our *Orphic Hymns* (Morand 2001, 90), although they constitute the only known ancient “hymn-book”. Whereas the *Hymns* betray knowledge of Orphic-Bacchic lore, and various forms of Dionysos are prominent,¹⁰ their “Orphism” is *sui generis*, since none of them mentions any of the classic Orphic themes – the dismemberment of Dionysos by the Titans, the soul being trapped in the body so that death is a welcome release, underworld torments – so it is best to emphasize the diversity of “Orphism” and maintain simply that the collection is “Orphic” inasmuch as the group or groups who produced the hymns chose to consider Orpheus as their author (Rudhardt 2008, 167–168; Herrero de Jáuregui 2015, 229–232, cf. Morand 2001, 94). Hymns attributed to Orpheus had after all been current since at least the 5th century BCE (Euripides, *Alc.* 357–360, cf. *PDerveni* col. XXII ll.11f. p.22 Jourdan). Although in some cases they are clearly based on earlier material (e.g. in relation to Zeus: Bernabé 2010, 68), the *Hymns* affect an idiosyncratic style that pushes some current hymnic developments, above all asyndeton and polysyllabism, to their limit.

The circulation of the Greco-Egyptian “magical hymns” was likewise tightly restricted. With one or two exceptions in “activated” texts, they occur as elements within longer recipes (*praxeis*) contained in formularies whose contents derive from a ritual practice ultimately based on temple learning, although the actual practitioners are assumed to be working elsewhere, perhaps in the quarters reserved for temple-workers, perhaps in the village or urban area beyond. In the absence of close analogies, we can only say that they represent a fluent synthesis of Greek and Egyptian hymnic models, thoroughly integrated into their contexts by means of the introduction of *voces magicae*, the esoteric “names” whose utterance was deemed to provide direct access to the other world (Bortolani 2016, 32–38). They seem mainly to have been adapted, perhaps many times over, from Greek texts in honor of “classic” Greek gods, such as Apollo, Hermes, Aphrodite,

⁹ Cf. the succinct overview by Bélis 2003. Only two poems (nos. 11–12 Heitsch) are explicitly stated in the ms. tradition to be by Mesomedes (see e.g. Regenauer 2016, 17–19; 87–92). There are however fairly good grounds for ascribing the others to him.

¹⁰ Ricciardelli 2000b; 2008, 332; Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008; Morand 2015, 219–222.

or Helios, circulating in Egypt, whereas others, particularly those that display considerable familiarity with Egyptian theological concepts, especially those to Typhon-Seth, or address night-powers such as Artemis-Selene-Artemis, may have been composed directly by bilingual Egyptian priests.

4.1 Mesomedes

For reasons of space,¹¹ it seems best to illustrate Mesomedes' technique by means of the brief Hymn to Isis (no. 5 Heitsch = no. 25 Totti = no. 6 Regenauer), one of two hymns known only from *cod. Ottobon. gr. 59* (O), in cretics interspersed with "palimbacchei", but unfortunately without the accompanying musical notation:

Εἷς ὕμνος ἀνά τε γάν,
 ἀνά τε νέας ἀλιπόρους
 ᾄδεται, πολυτρόποις
 5 ἐν τέλος ἐν ὀργίοις: 5 ἄ βαθύκερωσ Ἴσις,
 ἄτ' ἔ(ι)αρος ἄ(τε) θέρεος,
 ἄτε χεῖματος ἄγει
 νεογόνους ἡνίας.
 Τέ καλεῖσι πῦρ Ἄϊδος {τε},
 10 ὁ χθόνιος ὑμέναιος,
 οἱ φυτῶν ὠδίνες,
 οἱ Κύπριδος ἴμεροι,
 τὲ νηπιάρχου γονά,
 πῦρ τέλεον ἄρρητον,
 15 οἱ Ῥέας Κούρητες
 ὃ τε Κρόνιος ἄμητος·
 ἄστρα διφρηλάτῃ
 πάντα δι' ἀνακτόρων
 Ἴσιδι χορεύεται.¹²

One single hymn is sung/ on land and/ on the seafaring ships,/ just one addressee in many rites:/ long-horned Isis, who holds/ the neonate reins/ of Spring, of Summer,/ of

¹¹ Brumbaugh 2015, 174–181 chooses the *Hymn to Helios* and *To the Adriatic* for a similar purpose.

¹² For the numerous editorial interventions, see Regenauer's apparatus (p. 251). At the beginning of l.10 O and Heitsch read καὶ χθόνιος; Regenauer follows Powell in reading ὁ χθόνιος, whereas Lanna 2013 prefers <ἐγ>χθόνιος. Regenauer also marks a semi-colon after ἄρρητον at the end of l.14, and understands the Kurêtes and Kronos' harvest as dancing, like the stars. Here I follow Heitsch, Totti and Lanna 2013, all of whom understand them as part of the list starting in l. 9 and mark the break after ἄμητος.

Winter./ Light of Hades, chthonic marriage-rite,/ the birth-pangs of plants,/ the desires inspired by Kypris,/ the birth of a baby,/ mystic fire unspeakable,/ Rhea's Kurêtes,/ and Kronos' harvest / – (all) call upon you!/ The stars all dance/ over holy places/ for Isis in her car.

Despite their wide generic variety, Greek hymns have traditionally been understood as manifesting a tripartite structure, invocation, exposition (“*pars epica*”), request (“*precatio*”) (Wünsch 1914, 144–145; Furley 1993; Hopman-Govers 2001, 35–36). More recently this division has been replaced by invocation, praise (which may include predication of powers, anaphoric address, reminders of earlier benefits, descriptions of the god and his doings, narratives) and the climax, prayer (including petition) (Furley and Bremer 2001 (1), 50–64). In this case, however, Mesomedes neatly avoids narrative altogether, combining an allusion to the generic rules (ῥυμος) with a self-referential claim to originality (εἶς, i.e. *my* hymn), a hymn that is both uniquely fitting and all-comprehending – he manages at the same time to allude both to the spelling Εἶς of the aretalogies and to the megatheistic acclamation εἶς θεός – even as it rises both from land and sea. Though a trope for “everywhere”, “land” and “sea” also evoke Isis as inventor of farming and founder of temples as against her maritime epithets, *Pharia*, *Euploia*, *Pelagia* and the major Isiac festival outside Egypt, the *Ploiaphesia/navigium Isidis*, celebrated on March 5th. At the same time, the twice-repeated switch from One to Many in ll.1–4 evokes Isis *myrionyma* (Bricault 1996, 11–75).

Although Mesomedes nowhere expressly thematizes Isis' Egyptian identity, it is deftly introduced in the epithet βαθύκερως (l.5), “deep-horned”, a *hapax*, whose first five letters initially arouse expectations of appropriate epithets, say βαθύκολπος (deep-breasted, implying fertility and fecundity, e.g. of Gê and the mountain nymphs as wet-nurses ...), but also βαθύκαρπος, “yield-rich”, or βαθυκύμων, “deep waved”, but whose finale is deliberately mystifying to anyone whose idea of Isis is formed by the Hellenistic iconography – say the auratic statue in black and white marble in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Gschwantler 2005): “horns? – what horns?” The image “deep-horned” is fitting only for those familiar with late-period Egyptian images of Isis-Hathor suckling Horus-the-Child, that is, those who have actually been to Egypt, not to those who know only the Isis with mini-horns occasionally found in Roman art. This hint at Egypt as other is immediately reinforced by an enumeration of the only three seasons, spring, summer and winter, recognized there (Diod. Sic. 1.26.5), whose imperceptible transitions are induced by Isis' motherly tenderness (νεόνους ἡνίας, l.8). Mesomedes' goddess is not so much a syncretistic as a polymorphic, polysemous deity (Malaise 2005, 193–99).

There follow eight lines in almost perfect asyndeton (except for minimal τε in ll.13 and 16), deftly intimating the contents of that other, imaginary, hymn,

evoking now this, now that Isiac presence – in this world, in the Underworld, in the mythic past. Here the most fitting adjective is “exquisite” – against the 57 clod-hopping lines of the Kyme aretalogy (Totti 1985 no.1 = *RICIS* 302/0204 etc.), to say nothing of the almost 300 lines of the Oxyrhynchus version (*POxy* 1380 = Totti 1985 no. 20) or the 178 lines of the verse hymn from Andros (Totti 1985 no. 2 = *RICIS* 202/1801), Mesomedes works in miniature, like one of the outstanding Greek intaglio-cutters of the Principate – Dioskurides, or his son Eutyches, or Euodos, or Thamyras. As such, he can hint transhistorically at grand themes through specific details, the slow unfolding of leaf buds and flowers (φυτῶν ὠδιῖνες, l.11); the vision of the midnight sun at initiation (πῦρ τέλειον ἄρρητον, l.14); the *para prosdokian* whereby, in contrast to Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 52–54, the Kurêtes – appropriate because of the identification of Isis’ mother Nut as Rhea – serve not to introduce the child-eating Kronos, but a quite different one; the neat rapprochement between the function of Isis-Renenutet-Thermouthis as bestower of bountiful harvests and the Greek identification of Isis’ father Geb as Kronos (cf. Plutarch, *De Iside* 12, 355f1-2), lord of the golden age, when the earth produced plentiful harvests αὐτομάτη, without the need for labor (Hesiod, *Op.* 118 Solmsen).

As a citharode, then, Mesomedes uses the privilege of performing to a restricted audience in a rarified genre to offer his own polysemous Greco-Egyptian Isis, the goddess whose power discreetly suffuses time, space and nature, by dismantling generic rules, dispensing with constatives, and working through hints and allusions (cf. Psaroudakes 2018). This, he suggests, is truly the way to intuit and experience such a deity. The Mesomedean cliché of the astral dance (l.19), evoking the clear night sky, omits all mention of the Moon. But the audience is assumed to be aware of its/her presence.

4.2 The *Orphic Hymns* (hereafter *HO*)

The *HO* consist (now) of 87 brief hexametric hymns,¹³ none longer than 30 lines, addressed to 87 different deities.¹⁴ A manuscript brought to Rome from Constantinople in 1423 by Giovanni Aurispa seems to have served as the basis

¹³ Quandt 1955 remains the standard text, despite its problematic punctuation; Ricciardelli 2000a is an excellent full commentary with translation; the Budé (Fayant 2014) also offers a serviceable tr. with a useful introduction. The best discussions for my purposes are Morand 2001; Ricciardelli 2008; Rudhardt 1991; 2008.

¹⁴ Rudhardt 2008, 183 counts 25 short hymns (6–9 lines); 45 medium-length (10–14) and 17 long hymns (16–30 lines).

of the four traditions known from later copies (Quandt 1955, 1–46*; Ricciardelli 2000, xlvi–xlvii; Morand 2001, 33–35). Many of these include *HO* with the texts of (at least) the Homeric Hymns, Callimachus’ hymns, the Orphic *Argonautica* and Proclus’ hymns, thus establishing a Humanist “classical” genre that was completely discredited with the rise of scientific philology. It is in fact mainly the re-invention of Orphism, with the “publication officieuse” of the Derveni papyrus (1962) and the Bacchic-Orphic *lamellae* on precious metal (etc.), that has led to a recent surge of scholarship (Morand 2015, 209).

It is routinely observed that the hymns of *HO* display a unified style and manner, drawing upon Homer and Hesiod but adding lexis, grammar and expressions from Classical, Hellenistic and imperial-period poetry. This has led some, most recently Graf, to claim that they were all composed by the same person (Graf 1992, 161). More recent scholarship has tended to doubt this (Hopman-Govers 2001, 37; Rudhardt 2008, 223, 230), and it is certain that the proem (εὐχή), which purports to be an address by Orpheus to Musaeus, has been cobbled on, since, among the 70 divinities listed, it mentions several, such as Eniautos, Atlas, Aion, Chronos etc., who are *not* represented by a hymn in the collection, and omits at least ten, including Protogonos, the Moirai and Nemesis, that are. Moreover in modern editions the proem as represented in the ms. tradition has been shortened by ten lines now assigned to a Hymn no. 1 (to Hekate), although no such heading appears in the mss.¹⁵ Further evidence of ancient editorship and design is provided by the clear sense of organization: the collection proceeds through a sequence of themes, beginning with primordial Orphic divinities (2–6: Prothyraia, Night, Ouranos, Aither, Protogonos), moving on to cosmic order (7–11: stars, Helios, Selene, Physis, Pan); representatives of the Old Order (12–14: Herakles as Titan, Kronos as husband of Rhea, Rhea); the New Order (15–18: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Pluto) and so on, through a central section mainly devoted to manifestations of Dionysos (42: Misê, 45–47: Dionysos Bassareus Trieterikos, Liknitês, Perikonios, 52–53: Trieterikos, Amphiêtês), then a large miscellaneous group, and ending with Hestia, Hypnos, Oneiros and Thanatos (84–87) (Ricciardelli 2008, 330–332).

It is for this reason that Morand observed that it makes no sense to read just one hymn by itself (2001, 98). Whether that allows us to infer a coherent liturgical procedure, moving between this lighted altar to the next, with “real” apparitions of deities, and terrifying experiences, as Graf has suggested, may be doubted (2009, 175–181; contra: Rudhardt 2008, 181). It is clear enough that

¹⁵ The mss. headings commence with Prothyraia, “She before the doors”, i.e. Artemis Eilithyia; see Ricciardelli 1995; 2008, 327–330.

HO assumes τελεταί (*teletai*, rituals) celebrated by μύσται (*mystai*, initiates/worshippers),¹⁶ and the discovery of scattered altars to Misê, Hipta/Sabazios, and Dionysos Êrikepaios in west-central Asia Minor clearly indicates a movement that grew up in that area (Morand 2001, 169–181, 189–193), no doubt initiated by a charismatic mystagogue in the Weberian sense. As for the probable date, Wolfgang Fauth hazarded the guess that *HO* is roughly contemporary with Plutarch (1983, 2264), while Morand, excessively reliant on parallels with the lexis of Nonnus, offered 2nd to 5th century CE (2001, 304). Most recently, it seems to have become usual to settle for a date in the Antonine period (e.g. Herrero de Jáuregui 2015, 224).

HO retains vestiges of the traditional hymnic structure, in that the first-person orant briefly invokes the addressee, and at the end outlines a very brief, indeed schematic, request, for health, peace, security, wealth and prosperity, that is, the usual stereotyped this-worldly benefits, though the Clouds (21) are asked for rain, Gê (26) for καρπούς . . . πολυγηθείς, hearty crops, and Thanatos (87) for a good old age (Hopman-Govers 2001, 41; Ricciardelli 2008, 340–341; Morand 2001, 309–317). Except in the short hymns such as nos. 49, 75, 80, 82, where invocation merges directly into the request, the central “praise” section is, as in the standard scheme, much the longest, but consists almost entirely of descriptive adjectives and participial phrases in asyndetic style.¹⁷ A good example is the hymn to Eleusinian Demeter (40):

Δηώ, παμμήτειρα θεά, πολώννυμε δαῖμον,
 σεμνή Δήμητερ, κουροτρόφε, ὀλβιοδώτι,
 πλουτοδότειρα θεά, σταχυοτρόφε, παντοδότειρα,
 εἰρήνηι χείρουσα καὶ ἐργασίας πολυμόχθοις,
 σπερμεία, σωρίτι, ἄλωαία, χλοόκαρπε, 5
 ἢ ναίεις ἀγνοῖσιν Ἐλευσῖνος γυάλοισιν,
 ἡμέροεσσ', ἐρατή, θνητῶν θρέπτειρα προπάντων,
 ἡ πρώτη ζεύξασα βοῶν ἄροτῆρα τένοντα
 καὶ βίον ἡμερόεντα βροτοῖς πολυόλβον ἀνείσα,
 αὖξιθαλής, Βρομίοιο συνέστιος, ἀγλαότιμος, 10
 λαμπαδόεσσ', ἀγνή, δρεπάνοις χείρουσα θερείοις·
 σὺ χθονία, σὺ δὲ φαινομένη, σὺ δε πᾶσι προσηνής·
 εὐτεκνε, παιδοφιλή, σεμνή, κουροτρόφε κούρα,
 ἄρμα δρακοντείοισιν ὑποζεύξασα χαλινοῖς

¹⁶ Τελετή/αί: e.g. 6.11, 24.10, 27.11, 35.7, 43.10, 49.7, 54.10, 76.7, 84.3; μύσται: e.g. 18.19, 23.7, 34.27, 50.10, 52.13, 56.12, 57.12, 61.10, 71.12, 75.5, 84.3. The gods are often invited to take part in these celebrations: Ricciardelli 2008, 333–335.

¹⁷ A variety of other techniques, for example phonic effects (alliteration, assonance), etymologization, and paradox, are discussed by Morand 2001, 61–68.

ἐγκυκλίους δίναις περι σὸν θρόνον εὐάζουσα,
 μουνογενής, πολύτεκνε θεά, πολυπότνια θνητοῖς,
 ἦς πολλαὶ μορφαί, πολυάνθεμοι, ἱεροθαλεῖς...

15

An English translation captures none of this asyndetic brilliance:

Deo, divine mother of all,/ goddess of many names, / revered Demeter, nurturer of youths, / giver of prosperity and wealth,/ you nourish the ears of corn,/ O giver of all,/ you delight in peace,/ and in toilsome labor,/ present at sowing, heaping and threshing,/ O spirit of the unripe fruit,/ you dwell/ in the sacred valley of Eleusis,/ charming and lovely,/ you give sustenance to all mortals;/ you were the first to yoke/ the ploughing ox,/ the first to send up from below a rich,/ a lovely harvest for mortals./ You are growth and blooming,/ O illustrious companion of Bromios,/ torch-bearing and pure,/ you delight in the summer's yield. From beneath the earth you appear,/ gentle to all,/ O holy and youth-nurturing lover of children and of fair off-spring./ You yoke your chariot/ to bridled dragons,/ round your throne/ you whirl and howl in ecstasy./ You are an only daughter, but you have many children/ and many powers over mortals;/ the variety of flowers reflect/ your myriad faces and your sacred blossoms

(tr. Athanassakis)

There are some exceptions to this model, such as 68 (Hygeia) and 87 (Thanatos), where virtually no epithets are used, and some complex examples, such as 18 (Pluto) and 34 (Apollo), where we find mythic allusions and references to favorite haunts, as in the classic praise-formula, but essentially *HO* achieves its singular effects by dense accumulation of epithets and short phrases.¹⁸ What interest me most of all in this connection are the compound adjectives. Although the use of this technique becomes common in Alexandrian poetry (especially Lycophron) and, later, Quintus Smyrnaeus and Oppian, in no extant Greek text is it deployed with the same intensity as in *HO*. The following list was drawn up by Jean Rudhardt (2008, 220–235), who alone has analyzed the compound epithets in detail:¹⁹

- 1) several dozen are taken over from the epic plus Hesiod, including the Homeric Hymns in particular, as part of the strategy of timelessness; these include a number, such as ἀγκυλομήτης (Kronos), πολυδέγμων (Pluto) or ἔλαφιβόλος (Artemis), that are typical of specific divinities

18 Hopman-Govers (2001, 36) provides a list of later Hellenistic and imperial-period texts that rely heavily on this technique, including *AnthPal* 9.524 (to Dionysos) and 525 (to Apollo) (both anonymous), which consist entirely of epithets arranged in alphabetical order, each of the 24 lines containing four epithets beginning with the same letter. Such jeux d'esprit imply a sophisticated awareness of the dangers of trivialization.

19 Bernabé's concordance (1988) is indispensable here.

- 2) then there are more than 100, such as βαθύστερνος, ἡερόφοιτος or σελασφόρος that are attested first in Classical authors
- 3) plus several dozen that, so far as we know, occur first in Hellenistic authors, including the *Garland of Philip* etc.
- 4) a restricted number known only from epigraphic and papyrological sources, mainly of imperial date
- 5) a smallish number, such as λυσιμέριμος, ὕγροπόρος or ψυχοτρόφος, known only from authors of imperial/late Roman date, such as Oppian, Nonnus, Synesius, Gregory of Nazianzen, and the later writers assembled in the *AnthPal*.²⁰ This leaves
- 6) no less than 140 compound adjectives that so far as we know are coinages of *HO* and found nowhere else, in other words, hapaxes of one sort or another, sometimes calqued on earlier compounds (listed in Rudhardt 2008, 225–229). And
- 7) a small number, such as ἀρχιγένηλος, χορομανής (“mad for choruses”), πυρίδρομος, that are only otherwise found in Orphic texts.

Whereas once Richard Wünsch could complain about “die endlosen Ketten” of epithets in *HO* (1914, 145), it has now become usual to stress the diversity and subtlety of the effects achieved by this “forme extrême de concentration” in achieving the overt aim of pleasing the gods (Hopman-Govers 2001, 37). Abundance, exhaustiveness, precision, grandeur, creative tension are some of the rhetorical aims that we can point to (Morand 2001, 72–76). The common view, which is surely at least partly true, is that, through the deployment of these and other performative techniques such as music and dancing, performers and audience felt “subsumed into divine company for the brief span of their celebration” (Furley and Bremer 2001 (1), 16; cf. Lonsdale 1995, 32–33). I want rather to suggest that the hypertrophy of rhetorical effects, and the multiplicity of compound adjectives in particular, constructed a complex, highly-differentiated experience of divinity that responded to the requirements of the self-image of a group that considered itself in every way elect and apart.

Of the many passages one might invoke, I take *exempli gratia* a section of the hymn to the Nymphs (51):

²⁰ Given the uncertainties of survival, Rudhardt agrees (2008, 223) that these are not to be given too much weight with regard to the issue of dating *HO*. On the importance of post-Trajanic hexameter poetry, including Dionysius Periegetes, for Nonnus see e.g. Whitby 1994, 105–107.

Νύμφαι, θυγατέρες μεγαλήτορος Ωκεανοῖο,
 ὑγροπόροις γαίης ὑπὸ κεύθεσιν οἰκί' ἔχουσαι,
 κρυψίδρομοι, Βάκχιοιο τροφοί, χθόνιαι, πολυγηθεῖς,
 καρποτρόφοι, λειμωνιάδες, σκολιοδρόμοι, ἀγναί,
 ἀντροχαρεῖς, σπήλυγξι κεχαρμέναι, ἠερόφοιτοι, 5
 πηγαῖαι, δρομάδες, δροσοεῖμονες, ἴχνησι κοῦφαι,
 φαινόμενα, ἀφανεῖς, ἀύλωνιάδες, πολυανθεῖς,
 σὺν Πανί σκιρτώσαι ἀν' οὔρεα, εὐάσταιραι,
 πετρόρυτοι, λιγυραί, βομβήτριαι, οὔρεσίφοιτοι,
 ἀγρότεροι κοῦραι, κρουνίτιδες ὕλονόμοι τε, 10
 παρθένου εὐώδεις, λευχεῖμονες, εὔπνοοι αὔραις,
 αἰπολικάι, νόμιαι, θηρσὶν φίλαι, ἀγλαόκαρποι,
 κρυμοχαρεῖς, ἀπαλαί, πολυθρέμμονες αὐξίτροφοί τε,
 κοῦραι ἀμαδρυάδες 14

O Nymphs, daughters of great-hearted Okeanos,/ you dwell inside the earth's damp
 caves;/ you are as secret as your paths, O joyous, O chthonic nurses of Bacchos./ You
 nurture fruits, you haunt meadows, O sprightly and pure / travelers of the winding roads,
 who delight in caves and grottos./ Swift, light-footed and clothed in dew, you frequent
 springs,/ visible and invisible, in ravines and among flowers,/ you shout and frisk with
 Pan upon mountainsides,/ gliding down on rocks, you hum with clear voice./ O moun-
 tain-haunting maidens of the fields, of gushing springs and of woodlands, sweet-smelling
 virgins, clothed in white, fresh as the breeze,/ herds of goats, pastures, you protect; wild
 animals love you./ Though you are tender, cold delights you; you feed many, you help
 them grow,/ Hamadryad maidens ...

(tr. Athanassakis)

It is virtually impossible for a modern western language to reproduce the insis-
 tent staccato rhythm created by the pitiless succession of vivid, evocative ideas
 in the Greek – one can only say that the combination of bathos and gushing
 paraphrase in Athanassakis' version is very unfortunate.²¹ As a whole, the hymn
 seeks to maintain a constantly renewed tension between the points of fecund,
 dark wetness, light aëry joy and the disturbingly uncanny, darting rapidly from
 one crystalline thought to another, now evoking epic, now contemporary poetic
 usage, and skillfully interweaving allusions to the arch-shapeshifter Dionysos. I
 see this as an attempt to communicate a vision of a complex, never to be compre-
 hended, divine reality, a vision that, through being committed to memory via
 repeated performance, becomes the experience of these divinities that the wor-
 shipper internalizes – an experience that is itself brilliantly faceted, elusive and

21 The version by Jacques Lacarrière in the series *La Salamandre* (1995) is much more
 successful.

yet pregnant with possibility. The hymn can be imagined as a sort of Antonine Virtual Reality headset, at once super-real and totally phantasmagoric.

One of Jean Rudhardt's suggestions was that, notwithstanding the device of epiclesal polychromy, individual lines in *HO* tend to carry consistent images or thoughts (1991, 267). This is surely sometimes the case, but no less often, the associations are deliberately discontinuous, negating the desire for semantic continuity and development. In the case of no.51, such discontinuity fits perfectly both with the fiction of multiple Nymphs/multiple races of Nymphs (itself a knotty problem for a short text) and with the hymn's ambition to represent them in perpetual movement and flow – a motion at once counteracted by the insistence on fixity and locality. Other major contrasts are between high and low, light and dark, confinement and freedom, sound and silence, the tamed and the wild, mythic memory and joyful presence. It is precisely in the unresolved tensions between these binaries that the religious experience is formed, a never-ending series of aporiae, a figure for the central aporia, the knowledge of god in a highly complex polytheistic system (cf. Sfameni Gasparro 2013, 440f., 446), an attempt to rise to the challenge of reversing and gainsaying the deadening routinization inherent in ceremonial performance in the context of civic religion.

In order to suggest how such a hymn effects its “VR-function”, I just take a closer look at the first few lines of 51.²² The topography starts deep and wet: the Nymphs are said (l.1) to be daughters of Okeanos, not a widespread idea, but *μεγαλήτωρ*, “of grand emotions”, plus proper name reassurance – this is an Homeric device.²³ The wetness implied by this parentage becomes explicit at the start of l.2: *ὕγροπόροις*, ambivalent between “wet-pathed” (cf. Homeric *πόροι ἄλός*) and “supplying wetness”, a common Nonnian word and a synonym of *ὕγρόκελευθος*, applied to the Nereids in *HO* 24.2, and later in this very hymn to the Nymphs themselves (l.14); and its domestic comforts for these creatures of wetness are suggested by the juxtaposition of *κεῦθεσιν* and *οἰκία*, which are grammatically unrelated but evoke the expression *κεῦθος οἴκων* for the interior of a house (e.g. Eur., *Alc.* 872). The twofold thought of darkness and movement is picked up in the first word of l.3, *κρυψίδρομοι*,²⁴ but immediately reduced to its first semantic component in the reference to looking after baby Dionysos to

²² Ricciardelli's commentary is indispensable (2000, 428–432). I do not here emphasize the semantics of the compound epithets, though they add another crucial level of tension.

²³ But note Dionysius Periegetes, *Orbis descr.* 658 (Hadrianic).

²⁴ Casaubon wanted to make this word pick up the reference to the house and proposed *κρυψίδρομοι*, but no one except LSJ⁹, who do not list the word *κρυψίδρομος*, has thought this was a good idea.

keep him safe from Hera;²⁵ then back to the underworld with χθόνια, followed by another apparent switch in πολυγηθείς, “extraordinarily cheerful, merry”, which is elsewhere in *HO* used of the effects produced by Hygeia (68.4), and here anticipates the mood evoked by λειμωνιάδες, “(disporting on) meadows” (l.4); but it also refers back to Dionysos, since the word is used of him twice elsewhere in *HO* (44.3;75.1).²⁶ A hidden reference to Dionysos (as god of shooting vegetation) provokes the next epithet, at the beginning of l.4, καρποτρόφοι, which with λειμωνιάδες brings us up from the damp depths into the sun-filled world of cultivation – and so settlement, a thought at once negated by σκολιοδρόμοι, “mazy” (cf. Spenser’s “the mazy thickette”)/”sinuoso”, which reverts back to the restlessness of ὑδροπόροις and κρυψίδρομοι in ll.2 and 3, and, while evoking maidens dancing in a circle, also suggests the aëry heavens, since σκολιοδρόμος is typically applied to the changes of the moon. L.5 amplifies this paradox by juxtaposing two words evoking caves (so back to the underworld, damp and darkness), ἀντροχαρεῖς and σπήλυγξι, with another aëry voyage in ἡερόφοιτοι, while at the same time picking up the joyful mood of πολυγηθείς (l.3) in κεχαρμένα.

Many hymns in *HO* can be analyzed in a similar manner. By shifting our emphasis from their “social” or overt aim, and thinking back to the Rhine postcard, we can begin to disengage the sense, important for the LAR project, in which each of them constructs its own specific religious experience over time.

4.3 Greco-Egyptian “magical” hymns

Once again, given constraints of space, I confine myself to providing a single, fairly representative, example of the hymns that were included by the authors and/or editors in their instructions for the performance of complex ritual procedures for a variety of ends. The following text is part of a longer hymn to Apollo that has been broken up into sections and spliced with *voces magicae*, and forms part of an elaborate request for a dream oracle. In this case, the papyrus partly reproduces the metrical scheme but ignores it when it seemed appropriate to insert *voces magicae*:

²⁵ This allusion is amplified in ll.15–16, just before the request, where the Nymphs are called “Nysaeae” (cf. *HomHym Dion.*26.3–5; also *Hom.*, *Il.* 6.132–133).

²⁶ *HO* 51 is placed right among the Dionysiac hymns. The association between D. and πολυγηθής is ancient, first found in Hes., *Theog.* 941 (with West’s note). In this connection it of course evokes the pleasures of wine, and suggests the Nymphs may also double as *bacchantes*.

κλυθι μευ, ἀργυρό[τοξ]ε, ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέ[βηκ]ας
 Κίλλαν τε ζαθέην [Τε]νέδοιό τε Ἴφι ἀνάσσεις.
 χρυσοφαῖ, λαῖλ[α]ψ και Πυθολέτα μεσεγκριφι / Λατῶε σιαωθ' Σ[αβ]αωθ Μελιούχε
 τύραννε / πευχρη νυκτη[ρόφ]οιτε σεσεγγενβαρφαραγης / ³⁵ και αρβεθ ωπολλορφε
 φιλαίματε αρβαθιαω /
 Σμινθεῦ, εἴ ποτ[έ] τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ βωμῶν ἔρεψα,
 ἦ εἰ δὴ ποτέ τοι κατὰ πίονα μηρί' ἔκηα
 ταύρων ἠδ' αἰγῶν, τόδε μοι κρήνηο[ν] ἐέλωρ.
PGrMag VI 30–38.²⁷

Pay heed to me, Silverbowed, protector of Chrysê and divine / Killa, and mighty Lord of Tenedos, // golden-gleaming [*vox magica*],²⁸ and Pythôn-slayer, [*vox magica*] / son of Letô [*vox magica*], Sabaôth, Meliouchos, Lord / [*vox magica*], night-rover, [*vox magica*], / and [2 *voces magicae*],²⁹ blood-relisher, [*vox magica*] // Smintheus, if ever I have piled the joyful altar high for you, / or burned for you the fat thighs of choice oxen or goats, then fulfil this desire of mine.

We happen to know that the five hexameter lines, except for the word βωμόν (1.36), are taken directly from the prayer in *Iliad* 1.37–41 to Phoibos Apollo uttered by the Trojan Chryses, the god's priest, who has been wronged by Agamemnon, a prayer that is at once answered by the god, who fires deadly arrows into the Achaean camp and causes a pestilence to break out. They represent therefore a crisis between two common resources of the magical papyri, the *historiola*, a mythical allusion or mini-narrative (Frankfurter 1995), and the deployment of Homeric citations, that is, words hallowed by centuries of repetition and re-contextualization, as inherently effective utterances (Karanika 2011).

²⁷ There are several uncertain readings (see also Kenyon 1893, 82 no. XLVII); I have mainly followed Preisendanz. Reproduced in *PGrMag* 2: 244 as Hymn III ll.30–38 (Heitsch), and somewhat differently by Bortolani 2016, 192 (her Hymn 8). Both present all the lines as though they were metrical. It has recently been recognized that the text (= *PLond* I 47 = *PGrMag* VI), which consists of a single sheet cut off a roll, is in fact the missing beginning of *PBerol.* 5026 = *PGrMag* II (see following note).

²⁸ Although λαῖλ[α]ψ could be a Greek word (“whirlwind”), it is not an Apollonian epithet, so that it is more appropriate in the context of a succession of epithets each “qualified” by a *vox magica* to understand it as λαῖλαμ, itself found in the form λαῖλαμψ at *PGrMag* II 117f. (relevant in that *PGrMag* VI is the lost beginning of *PGrMag* II) in the same sequence of Apollonian recipes, and XV 15 (cf. Bortolani 2016, 195).

²⁹ I follow Preisendanz in taking αρβεθ ωπολλορφε as a pair of *voces*, the latter apparently a fusion of Ἀπόλλων and the *vox* ορφι, cf. the *vox* λαητωνιον in *PGrMag* II 7, which is clearly inspired by the earlier epithet Λητοῖδη (“son of Letô”, 1.3). Bortolani follows Eitrem's conjecture (in the entry in Preisendanz' Index s.v. πολύμορφος) and inclines to think it is a miswriting or misunderstanding of that adjective in an earlier version (2016, 197–198).

This quotation, in itself a source of authority, has been “re-charged” by the insertion of ll.32–35, which begin as a pastiche of Apollonian epithets (χρυσοφαῖ, Πυθολέτα, Λατώε),³⁰ segue into a sequence of names/epithets associated with cosmic powers (Σ[αβ]αωθ, Μελιούχε, τύραννε l.34), and end up with two epithets, νυκτερόφοιτος, “night-rover”, and φιλαίματος, “blood-relisher”,³¹ the first of which anticipates the later invocation of Paian Apollo, who “controls this night” (*PGrMag* II 8), while the second serves to link the preceding re-classification of Apollo to the blood-sacrifice that follows in Chryses’ prayer.

Although the original prayer had nothing whatever to do with divination, it has been effectively appropriated for its new purpose. The adjectival insertions by the author of the praxis are far from willful, since they re-contextualize the Homeric citation in order to embed it within a quite different “syncretic” thematic horizon, in which “Apollo” is mere cipher for a transcendent power, which can be activated by the succession of *voces* whose mere utterance takes over, usurps, each adjective in turn. The inclusion of Greek verse invocations into the complex *praxeis* of some practitioners is to be seen both as an open acknowledgement of the fact that Greek metrical incantations had historically played a significant role in creating the very practice of Greco-Egyptian “magic” in its developed form (Faraone 2000), i.e. a claim to the possession of a certain cultural capital, but also as a strategy of relativization, inasmuch as the anonymized texts are treated as so much raw material to be dismembered and adapted as suited the contingent aims of the author.

5 Conclusion

Adopting the view that it is the situational linguistic and schematic resources that provide not merely the frame but in effect the stuff of religious experiences, I suggest here that the rubric of “requisite experiences” may allow us to make use of certain kinds of religious literature from the imperial period, in the

³⁰ “Apollonian”: χρυσοφαῖς is a relatively rare word except in Nonnus and, as a description of planets, in imperial-date astrological texts; the closest surviving parallel to this qualification of Apollo occurs in the four-line dedication of a golden wreath to him by T. Quinctius Flaminus at Delphi (196–94 BCE): Λατοῖδα, χρυσοφαῖ στέφανον (Plut., *Vit. T. Flam.* 12, 376bc). At *PGrMag* IV 458 the adjective is used as an epithet of Helios, as at Eur., *Hec.* 636 (lyric).

³¹ The papyrus reads φιλαμαγε, for which Preisendanz read φιλαίματε; K.F.W. Schmidt wanted to “re-apollinize” by reading φιλάρματε, “chariot-loving”, a word that occurs precisely twice in Greek, in each case qualifying a city.

present case, consciously innovative or idiosyncratic hymns, to infer an ideal response, which, I would urge, formed a significant element of the interpretative frames available for the formulation of experiences claimed as “religious” within each context. Privileged by the implied conditions of performance within a select group of cultivated connoisseurs, the hymns of Mesomedes deliberately dispense with “normative” genre-expectations in order to intimate a variety of impressions in rapid succession, impressions that in combination evoke a polyvalent, yet almost mystical, conception of divine action-in-the-world. The *Orphic Hymns*, on the other hand, uphold, even renew, a vision of an overwhelmingly vibrant polytheism, overflowing with energy and daring, and thus transforming an ancient tradition – albeit only within the confines of a sophisticated, like-minded performative group. While they acknowledged Greek hymns as a source of religious capital, the Greco-Egyptian practitioners who appropriated these fragments into their *praxeis* subordinated them to a larger, and on its own terms more effective, ritual project, namely direct intervention into the order of things, a project in which the notion of praise, central within the Greek tradition, rubs uneasily against the technology of high ritual realism. As mere quotations, the fragments lose their autonomy and take on the secondary role of items in a multi-cultural *Universalinstrument*. As such, it is appropriate that the audience was reduced to one, the practitioner himself.

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Angela Kim Harkins

Looking at the *Shepherd of Hermas* through the experience of lived religion

Abstract: This essay examines the first four visions in the *Book of Visions* found in the early Christian work known as the *Shepherd of Hermas* wherein Hermas reports having had a visionary experience happen to him. These are highly mediated and thoroughly edited literary reports that draw upon the emotional contours of foundational narratives and myths. Despite their highly constructed elements, literary features of the visionary reports can nevertheless give some insight into how flesh and blood readers may have experienced the reading or hearing of these texts. With the help of the integrative approaches associated with the cognitive literary theory, this essay considers how the process of imagining the scenes in the *Book of Visions* participates in the formation of the self.

1 Introduction

Modern scholars rely heavily on texts when investigating religion (Geertz 2000, 49–73, esp. 70–71). The tendency can be to assume that texts were the only voices and conduits for cultural exchange in the ancient world and to forget that there were other non-textualized performative mechanisms by which individuals were formed and transformed. Scholarly assumptions about texts often impute characteristics about people and families onto manuscripts, reflecting sensibilities about lineage and purity that befit the bourgeois class-consciousness of text criticism’s origins. The point has already been made by scholars of the “New Philology” that scholars typically seek to find a pure lineage by establishing the paternity of a textual tradition from one manuscript generation to the next (Nichols 1990, 1–10; Cerquiglini 1989). While our experience of ancient texts is often mediated through bound critical editions, we do well not to imagine texts with characteristics of people, but rather to imagine how texts were experienced and performed by people – what kind of affective response was had by the way a text was written? What kind of sensory perceptions influenced how a text was experienced when it was read or heard? How did the physical apparatus of a scroll or a codex influence how a text might be experienced (Harkins 2012)? More and more scholars have sought to expand how we understand the embodied experience of texts by introducing integrative bio-cultural approaches associated with the broad study of religion both past and present (Geertz 2010).

This reorientation to the past asks how texts were experienced in the body by the ancient reader and hearer. It is an investigation of the complexities of individual experiences – complexities that we know are a part of life as lived.¹ Attention to the body and embodied experiences of the individual highlight how comfortable scholars have become with assumptions about community/communities in antiquity that simply lack complexity (Stowers 2011; Rüpke 2016), as if groups in the past were like a stick of butter, solid and consistent all the way through, no matter how you slice it. The recent turn to the self and individual experiences recognizes that the ancient self was not pre-determined to conform to the large systematic ritual experiences often constructed by scholars. It goes without saying that reading texts may cultivate predispositions, but it does not pre-determine any individual to have any single particular experience.

The early Christian text known as the *Shepherd of Hermas* written in the first-person voice, offers an especially rich way of examining how visionary texts might expand how scholars imagine the role that texts played in the cultivation of individual experiences of religious phenomena in antiquity. The narrator recounts a series of five Visions, twelve Mandates, and ten Similitudes, all of which amount to a lengthy and complex text that is surely the result of a long process of growth.² Here I will treat only the first section known as the Book of Visions, focusing especially on the first four Visions, which scholars believe to constitute the oldest portion of the book (Osiek 1999, 10). These can be set apart from the fifth Vision, which is understood to be an introduction to the remainder of the book. The first four Visions are distinguished from the rest of the work by the presence of the Lady and explicit reference to the name of the protagonist Hermas. These opening Visions convey many details about Hermas, who is never named in the remainder of the work. In this section, there is a total absence of the Shepherd, the figure by which the work was known in antiquity. He is introduced to the reader only at the beginning of the fifth Vision, when he appears to Hermas as he lay in bed (Vis. v.1). Furthermore, from the fifth Vision onward, the Lady and the name of Hermas never appear again.

¹ The shift to the individual and to the phenomenological experiences of the body which has happened steadily in the social sciences during the last 40 years, has emerged more recently in the study of religion through approaches like feminist studies and material studies of religion. These changes in the social sciences in the last thirty years are described well by Desjarlais and Throop 2011, 87–102.

² The three sections of the *Shepherd of Hermas* differ markedly in vocabulary and tone, thus leading some scholars to assume multiple authorship. See Coleborne 1970, 65–70; many scholars today consider the possibility that this work is the product of a single author with complex layers of redaction, Henne 1992; Young 1994, 237–255; Osiek 1999, 13–15; Maier 1991, 56.

According to Jörg Rüpke, “Hermas’ text(s) aim(s) at the practice of fashioning the self” (2013, 51). This study engages the question of how this is done. We will look at the literary style and cognitive processes involved in reading and consider how they contribute to the formation of the self and experiences of transformation. The question of the self and identity construction is especially relevant for the opening Book of Visions which has a strong moralizing tone which indicates that the work sought to make a lasting impact on its readers. We will take a special interest in the ways that late Second Temple Jewish visionary and apocalyptic traditions may have influenced the religious imaginal world that stands behind this early Christian text.³ With the help of the integrative approaches associated with the cognitive science of religion, this study aims to investigate how the process of reading a text like the *Shepherd of Hermas* may be understood to participate in the formation and transformation of its readers and hearers (Batovici 2015; Tagliabue 2017).

2 Experiencing the world of the *Shepherd of Hermas* through Hermas

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is dated to sometime in the 2nd century CE largely based on a reference to it in the Muratorian Canon which expressly forbids its use in liturgy, but which permitted the private reading of the book (Osiek 1999, 6). The book was read by Christians during the first few centuries of the Church and was well-known during this time. While ritual is often the desired context for investigating questions of experiencing and transformation, the contemplative practice of reading and hearing texts written in the first-person voice can be a fruitful way of thinking about how religious practices worked to form and transform the ancient self. The earliest manuscript of this book has markings for oral reading, thus requiring that we also expand our focus beyond the activity of reading to the experience of listening.⁴ While the activity of reading or hearing is often imagined passively today, they have the capacity to be deeply embodied experiences in which various sensorimotor areas of the mind are engaged (Kuzmičová 2012). Performative elements and the embodied experiencing of narrative can be

³ On the use of Second Temple traditions see Snyder 1968, 8–9; Joly 1958; 1968, 47; Verheyden 2007, 69–70.

⁴ The oldest text of the *Shepherd of Hermas* is “written on the back of a local government register from the Fayûm, probably a copy made locally for the church in Arsinoe, the capital of the Fayûm; it has been specially marked for reading aloud”, Roberts 1970, 62.

examined through emotions and other ways in which we understand reading to happen cognitively and imaginatively.

Our study of the *Shepherd of Hermas* will rely on integrative studies of how mental imagery takes place at the cognitive level from practices of reading and or hearing – what cognitive literary theorists refer to as “enactive reading” (Kuzmičová 2014; 2016; Speer et al. 2009). Immersive experiences of reading are also greatly assisted by the first-person voice or language about the body (Kuzmičová 2012, 25; Gillmayr-Bucher 2004), which can allow the text to be experienced as an affective script as a reader takes on the point of view of the protagonist (Harkins 2012). Arresting narrative scenes such as the opening image of Hermas helping a beautiful woman emerge from the Tiber are recognizable ones that function as an experiential frame that allows for the reconstruction of memories of similar affect, either from the reader’s own personal experience or recalled from other texts (Barsalou 2005; Boyer 2009; Lee 2009; Schacter 2007). All of this allows the Book of Visions to be perceived more vividly and personally by the reader.

A second way in which we will consider the experiences of the reader is called “enactive perception.” Aldo Tagliabue describes “enactive perception” as a way of perceiving “as the world makes itself available to the perceiver through his physical movement and interaction with a given object in a precise environment. In other words, the perception of any object is made possible if one gets close to and moves around it” (Tagliabue 2016, 214). In such instances, the reader is guided by the descriptions of visual perception and physical locomotion that dominate visionary texts, all of which contribute to achieving a cumulative embodied experience. One does not simply perceive a vision with the eyes, but, just as in lived experience, one moves closer to inspect the object that is being viewed or moves around the object to get a better look. Visionary texts’ emphasis on visual experiences come along with other wide-ranging details about the body’s comprehensive experiences of physical perception, including senses, such as sound, touch, smell, taste, or movement toward, around, or away.⁵ Both enactive reading and enactive perception speak to the ways that referential descriptions of bodily experiences within a literary context can be accessed with varying degrees of vividness by a reader’s or hearer’s cognitive processes in ways that imitate the lived experiences of the body.

⁵ Tagliabue 2016, 214. The visual perception is enhanced by the convergence of other bodily senses in the narrated experience, an important one being that of motion. For a description of the enactive mental imaging of a scene, see the detailed description of breakfast in Hemmingway’s novel the *Garden of Eden* in which a wide range of sensory imagery achieves the state of experiencing the breakfast (taste, smell, touch, movement), Kuzmičová 2016, 223.

Our study is not a diagnostic inquiry into any specific individual's experience – something which could not be recovered. Instead, it is a consideration of lived experience of religion that does not presume that ritual and ceremonial practices are the sole mechanism by which spiritual and religious experiences were generated. Integrative approaches that consider the embodied experience of the individual engaged in practices that are not strictly ceremonial, such as enactive reading and perception, offer a potentially rich way to conceptualize how traditions moved from region to region, from the past to the future, between individuals and groups in larger social networks (Eidinow 2011). The performative practice of enactive reading could be imagined as an effective means by which texts participated in a social mechanism for the formation of identity. This means that the narratives that are instrumental in shaping and forming the self are compelling because their literary style is persuasive in drawing in the reader and hearer – not because they are “historical” (Todd 2013; Johnston 2016). While the *Shepherd of Hermas* may be only loosely tethered to a named historical figure from the 2nd century, the vividness of his visions and the first-person perspective allow readers to gain entry to these experiences. Our attention will be to the details and the various rhetorical and compositional techniques of these Visions which amount to an effective means by which an ancient reader and hearer might access the experiences that are described. Consideration of embodied experiences of texts, both enactive reading and enactive perception, can offer a way of supplementing modern imaginations about how people reconstituted foundational narrative experiences in ways that allowed for their possible access to a heavily constructed narrative world.

2.1 Enactive reading: an arresting narrative frame

The vividness and concreteness of visionary texts can be understood to have a notably strong effect on the readers and hearers of these writings because the literary style assists in drawing the reader into the text and heightening the possibility of an emotional response. Enactive reading offers a model for understanding how reading could be experienced in the body. Our own metaphors for reading speak to the highly embodied way in which we imagine the process (e.g. “devouring” a book; being “absorbed” or “consumed” by a novel). Cognitive science of religion can help us to understand how embodied practices of reading and visualization can generate experiences that resemble the immediacy of first-hand perception.

The activity of reading and the mental imaging that takes place is also a generative process whereby a sensory representation is produced in a malleable way within the individual mind, a process that is guided by the scripted emotions

and scenes in the narrative. The resulting experiential frame could then be updated or changed as a reader merges or blends details from other remembered traditions or his or her own personal experiences, thus allowing for a deeper intensification of the experience (Barsalou et al. 2005). Even if natural variation in sensory experiences which can be expected over any given population is allowed, embodied engagement of a text is generally recognized to involve the sensory and motor faculties of the brain. “Enactive reading” is a way of referring to the cognitive processes by which texts can be experienced with the perceptions of sensorimotor movement (Kuzmičová 2012, 2014; Starr 2013; Esrock 1994). When we read texts about figures who are engaged kinesthetically, our minds “also imagine the sensations of movement for ourselves – what it would be like *if we actually were to do what we are thinking*. Instead of using solely or primarily parts of the brain that correspond to vision and imagined vision, we use areas normally employed in planning our own movements” (italics original; Starr 2013, 82). References to the body and its experiences can give strong cues for how a reader should respond to a text, especially a text presented in the first-person voice (e.g. Gillmayr-Bucher 2004).

Since individuals seldom had private copies of texts in the early Christian period, the hearing of texts would have allowed for greater movement of the eyes, a scenario in which the physical space could serve to intensify the process of mental imaging thus strengthening an individual’s emotional response (Connelly 2011, 314; Stökl Ben Ezra 2014). The role that the physical environment plays during reading is thought to contribute to a stronger emotional response within the listener (Kuzmičová 2016). The naturally associative aspects of emotion can also allow a hearer to actualize a text by allowing him/her the opportunity to reinvigorate memories of similar emotional experiences (Harkins 2012). It is this complicated embodied process by which we might imagine how actualization allows for the affective re-experiencing of foundational narratives with first hand intensity and the generative process of updating that narrative in light of changing circumstances.

The arresting scene that begins the book between Hermas and Rhoda calls to mind a common trope familiar in various tales from Jewish and Christian scriptures and also Roman literature: David spying on the beautiful wife of Uriah as she bathed (2 Sam 11:2); the lascivious elders spying on the beautiful and vulnerable Susanna as she washed in her private garden (*Susanna and the Elders*). Later pseudepigraphic works speak in great detail about the lust of the patriarch Reuben which was said to have been sparked when he saw his father’s concubine Bilhah bathing. While this detail is not preserved in the book of Genesis, which gives only a fleeting mention of Reuben’s sexual relations with his father’s concubine Bilhah (Gen. 35:22; 49:4; 1 Chron. 5:1), an expanded tale of Reuben’s

voyeuristic watching of the bathing Bilhah comes to be attached to several Second Temple texts like the *Book of Jubilees* (*Jub.*) 33:15 and the *Testament of Reuben* (*T. Reu.*) 3:10–15.⁶ It is these retellings of Reuben and Bilhah that bear the most resemblance to the opening scene with Hermas and Rhoda because it too shares the narrative frame of a bathing woman who is being watched. The illicit detail that the man is related as a child of or subordinate-to-the-other serves to heighten the impropriety and scandal of the event.

While the expansions in the book of *Jub.* and the *T. Reu.* are often compared to one another, each gives a distinctly different understanding of the two parties who are involved (Rosen-Zvi 2006; Kugel 1995; Shinan and Zakovitch 1983). *Jubilees* goes to great lengths to exculpate Bilhah who cries out loudly as a raped woman is supposed to do according to the laws of Deuteronomy (22:24, 27). In this retelling, Bilhah responds to the violation in a manner similar to Tamar when she is raped by her half-brother Amnon in 2 Sam 13:12 (*Jub.* 33:4). In the case of Bilhah, however, her disclosure of the violation to Jacob is key, since he would not otherwise know of the offense since she was not a virgin. This differs from the case of Tamar, whose virginal state also made disclosure of the rape obligatory. *Jubilees* roundly presents Bilhah as acting with propriety and lays blame squarely on Reuben the aggressor.

The *T. Reu.* retells the story of Reuben and Bilhah differently from *Jub.* It is this pseudepigraphic tale that bears the strongest resemblance to the opening scene in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. It must be said that both stories have a clear moralizing tone admonishing the sexual act and condemning the very act of forbidden desire (*epithumia*) altogether. According to the *T. Reu.*, the responsibility for moral behavior lies with the man. Bilhah is presented in a completely passive way; she is incapacitated from drinking and sleeping naked in bed. Reuben comes to her bedroom when she is alone. These details are unique to the *T. Reu.* and also dramatically increase Reuben's responsibility, expressing the view that the burden of morality falls on the man. The pseudepigraphic

⁶ The passage from the *T. Reu.* reads as follows: "For if I had not seen Bilhah bathing in a sheltered place, I would not have fallen into this great lawless act. For so absorbed were my senses by her naked femininity that I was not able to sleep until I had performed this revolting act. While our father, Jacob, had gone off to visit his father, Isaac, and we were at Gader near Ephratha in Bethlehem, Bilhah became drunk and was sound asleep, naked in her bedchamber. So when I came in and saw her nakedness, I performed the impious deed without her being aware of it. Leaving her sleeping soundly, I went out. And immediately a messenger from God revealed it to my father. He came and made lamentation over me, and never again touched her." (3:11–15); Kee trans. 1983, 1, 783. The *T. Reu.* (2nd c. BCE) resembles the account preserved in *Jub.* 33:2–9 but has significant differences. Both are dated to approximately the same period.

retelling aligns with a conceptualization of a “gender economy” which Ishay Rosen-Zvi describes as designating the male gender as the desirer and the female as a completely passive temptress (2006, 73–74). The instructive lesson gained from the Testament’s retelling of Reuben and Bilhah is one that is shared with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, namely that there is a dynamic interior struggle that takes place within the moral agent. According to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the offense is the desire (*epithumia*) that arose in Hermas’ heart (Vis. 1.1.8). So too, the crime in the *T. Reu.* is desire (*epithumia*, 1:10), a sin that is born from “the spirit of seeing” (2:4; cf. 4:9); viz., seeing something that should not be seen. It is precisely this desire (*epithumia*), rooted in the act of seeing that is recounted later on in the *T. Reu.* when it describes the watchers, a class of angels who had looked at human women, saw their beauty (“goodness”) and were thus overcome by a desire for possession (*T. Reu.* 5:6; 6:4; also Gen 6:2). The consequences of this desire (*epithumia*) is the ill-fated birth of giants. It is here where the *T. Reu.* is most similar in its moral outlook with the *Shepherd of Hermas* because both understand illicit desire (*epithumia*) to be planted by the act of seeing and symptomatic of sin in general.

The consideration of the embodied cognitive processes involved in moving from text to experience can illuminate why compositional techniques in visionary texts reuse established literary elements (viz., imagery, vocabulary and scenarios) known from older narratives. Both Second Temple Jewish and early Christian texts reused known literary forms from scripture for their new compositions. *How* a text is told (e.g. its literary style, its first-person voice, its concreteness, its references to the body and its narrative pace, the way it reuses language and imagery from well-known highly-charged narratives), can exert considerable impact on a reader’s and hearer’s imagination, resulting in a deeper experiencing of that which is being described. These literary aspects of a text exert a greater force on a reader’s experience than whether or not the text reports events that modern readers would consider to be “historical” (Todd 2013). I make this point because scholars have long questioned our ability to discern the historicity of the speaker, Hermas, a fairly common name for this period. According to the 2nd-century Muratorian Canon, the work was described as a fairly recent writing by the brother of Pope Pius, a detail that ostensibly points to an historical author in the 2nd century (Muratorian Fragment II.77–78). It is thought by some that this is a gratuitous remark intended to impugn the work as one that stood clearly outside the apostolic period, and thus relegating it to a position of lesser authority than the other scriptures.

Even though the certain identification of the historical Hermas has been frustrated by the absence of information, the protagonist of the Book of Visions is described with complex personality traits that give his character vividness and

attribute to him the characteristics of life as lived. He expresses insecurity and worry, and he repeatedly agonizes over his state of sinfulness (e.g. Vis. I.2.1). We read about him openly expressing emotions of regret and weeping (Vis. I.2.2.). The initial scene of Hermas assisting the beautiful, much older – and naked – patroness Rhoda from the Tiber River by lending her a hand offers a scintillating image of doing something that could be potentially embarrassing or misunderstood. While the precise staging of the scene (assisting someone from bathing waters) may not be an all too common experience, the emotional coding of the scene calls to mind other situations of potentially embarrassing or inappropriate moments – episodes from lived experience that certainly everyone has had. Egocentric memories of past events are not recalled with precision – human minds are just not wired to have photographic memories. Even so, emotional memories of past events are long-lasting and can be rather accurate, calling to mind similar scenes from both personal experience or similarly related scenarios from the literary imagination (Boyer 2009, 20; Lee 2009). The arresting scene at the river bank which opens the *Book of Visions* effectively provides an experiential emotional frame for the reader to re-experience in the act of remembering (Barsalou 2005). It is in the emotional remembering of these scriptural and pseudepigraphic narratives, or if you will, the mimetic process, that individual experiencing takes place; this is when the egocentric remembering of personal memories could take place.

Regardless of whether scholars today can recover certain details about the historical figure of Hermas, ancient readers would have interacted with this text as it presents itself – namely as the first-person account of a series of revelatory experiences had by a Christian named Hermas. Most of the autobiographical details about Hermas found in these four Visions provide the gateway to the larger work. These referential details to Hermas' past, his first-person perspective, and his emotive responses help to give him the depth of a lived person, someone with whom readers can empathize. These Visions could be understood as arresting the attention of the readers and hearers, drawing them into the narrative world of the text. As anyone who has found themselves engrossed in a novel and desolate when it ends, whether or not any or all of the details found there are historical does not alter the emotional impact of the language and the rhetorical effect of that narrative on the reader. It is through Hermas' emotional and embodied experiences that readers and hearers gain entry to the world of the text.

According to Kuzmičová, enactive reading generates perceptions of phenomenal presence and relies on literary cues of first-person voice, spatial descriptions, and bodily movement (2014, 280). The scene that is described in the opening of the first Vision is one in which the reader is brought into the subjectivity of the protagonist, Hermas, through the use of the first-person voice. Compositional techniques that imitate scripture or redeploy scriptural language

and biblical forms can be understood to function purposefully in the generation of diverse expressions of religion during the Second Temple period. The Visions reuse Second Temple apocalyptic traditions.⁷ Features such as the pious self-diminishing practices that Hermas regularly takes part in prior to his visionary experiences are well-known visionary practices described in other late Second Temple apocalyptic texts (e.g. Daniel and 4 Ezra) (Merkur 1989). Prior to his dramatic encounters with the woman in the first Vision, Hermas is said to cross the river, kneel down, pray, and confess his sins (Vis. I.i.3). After his distressing exchange with this woman, Hermas, in a state of grief-filled agitation, begins to worry about the sins of desire (*epithumia*) that have been revealed to him (Vis. I.ii.1–2). He encounters the second woman, seated in a white chair, while distressed and in a weeping state of grief. In this second Vision, the Lady instructs him to copy a book. Prior to this moment, Hermas was engaged in similar behaviors: walking alone, thinking about the previous year’s vision, kneeling down, praying to the LORD, and contemplating God’s greatness and also his own sinful state (Vis. II.i.1–2; cf. Vis. III.i.4–5). In the second Vision, Hermas copies the book, but we also read that he is said to ruminate over the contents of the writing while fasting and praying for fifteen days (Vis. II.ii.1). In the third Vision, there are multiple encounters with the Lady. The third Vision begins with Hermas fasting for a long time and praying a great deal (Vis. III.i.2). His encounters with the Lady happen at night which could suggest either that he was engaged in sleep deprivation or that the vision resembled a dream experience.⁸

Rumination is the naturally occurring cognitive state, often associated with grief, in which the mind naturally mulls over and continually returns to an idea or thought. Martin and Tesser write that it is possible to define rumination generically as a reference “to several varieties of recurrent thinking, including making sense, problem solving, reminiscence, and anticipation” (1996, 192). The ritualized experience of grief can bring about a state of rumination and longing by which the mind naturally makes presence from absence. The self-

7 Scholars have gone back and forth over whether to categorize the *Shepherd* as an apocalypse because it does not contain features such as an apocalyptic eschatology; however these genre expectations are etic categories imposed on the text. There are good reasons to recognize it as revelatory literature; for some of this debate, see Batovici 2015, 151–70; Collins 1979, 74.

8 The second Vision begins as a revelation that comes to Hermas in his sleep. He is asked who the old Lady who has appeared to him is, and he identifies her (incorrectly) as the Sybil. Both female figures are said to be of old age, sitting, holding a book, and identified as revealing knowledge. The Sybil was probably well known in Rome during this time; Osiek 1999, 58 nn. 2, 3.

diminishing practices which Hermas engages in (viz. weeping, praying, confessing sins, kneeling) highlight the highly ritualized and performative dimension of grief in the ancient world, it was not solely an outpouring of interior anguish (Harkins 2017, 2016; Olyan 2004; Anderson 1991). The repetitive elements in the *Shepherd of Hermas* speak to ruminative practices and also suggest that similar ruminative experiences are intended to take place within the reader as well.

Writing that is intended to be read for communicating propositional content is generally more direct; but writing that is intended to evoke an emotional response in the reader is intentionally shaped by literary devices to slow down the pace of reading so that mental faculties of visualization and emotional response can take place (Miall and Kuiken 1994). When texts are written in imitation of older forms and employ a highly-stylized manner through alliteration, assonance, and other literary devices, or written in a deliberate structured format, the speed of reading is altered and slowed down creating the effect that Miall and Kuiken refer to as defamiliarization. For the Christian who reads or hears the visions, the familiar and arresting scenario of the protagonist and the bathing woman, the repetition of the penitential behaviors and emotional responses that Hermas gives, as well as the painstaking pace of the visionary scenes (viz. Vis. III) all allow for the intensification of attention, allowing the mind to generate a more vivid mental image of the text.

Hermas's dramatic and strong emotional responses to the visions and his own introspection of his moral state are openly displayed in his body through his posture (kneeling), his tears, and through the anguished voice of the reader. These embodied details could arouse similar responses within the individuals who read and hear the work,⁹ thereby providing them some access to a participatory re-experiencing of narrative events. Questions about the facticity of these foundational events, as they are described, are quickly overshadowed by the experience of the vividness of the imagery, the concreteness with which action is described, and the ruminative and multisensory experience of reading these texts. Hermas's behaviors are ritualized self-diminishing practices found in other Second Temple writings (viz. weeping, praying, confessing sins, kneeling). They are performative behaviors that generate emotional states that could be imagined concretely by the hearers and listeners of the text. These experiential aspects of the Visions offer a gateway for accessing foundational events in an embodied way, such that emotional engagement can take place in the mind of the reader and hearer.

⁹ Although these effects are not pre-determined to happen.

If we return for a moment to the opening Vision when Hermas recounts his encounter with Rhoda, the woman who had raised him. Hermas describes his thoughts as he saw her bathing in the river Tiber. “When I saw her beauty I reflected in my heart and said: ‘I should be happy if I had a wife of such beauty and character.’ *This was my only thought, and no other, no, not one*” (Vis. I.i.2). Next, we are told that Hermas has a vision of an old Lady who confronts him with his immoral desire (*epithumia*), precisely the very desire that he had ostensibly and preemptively denied ever having. This opening scene describes through a narrative frame how Hermas’ interior state becomes subject to scrutiny by a moral standard external to him in the form of an embodied figure who originates unexpectedly from elsewhere – the figure of the Lady. Like an actual encounter, the Lady in the first Vision confronts Hermas with his sin of inordinate desire in a conversation that both challenges and surprises him (Mittermaier 2012; Eidinow 2013). If we allow that the episode provides a dynamic experiential frame, the hearer of this story would also remember details about what happens to the person who inappropriately sees the bathing woman. According to the popular Second Temple pseudepigrapha known as the *T. Reu.*, seeing leads to transgression – the protagonist, Reuben, becomes emblematic of guilt and thoroughly shamed. That an individual might spontaneously remember the similar episodic event of Reuben and Bilhah may be part of the undetermined aspects of this process for an ancient reader.

The opening Visions of the *Shepherd of Hermas* can be understood to cultivate dispositions (formation) and also participate in various unexpected encounters that ultimately transform Hermas. According to Esther Eidinow, an ancient understanding of a figure like Hermas would have followed “a relational model of the self included a sense of interdependence not only with other mortals, but also with supernatural forces” (Eidinow 2013, 22). Eidinow’s understanding of the self in the ancient Greek world is one that could be extended to other pre-modern cultures, and some might say, also to modern non-Western cultures. Michael Lambek has also shown how the individual is deeply inter-relational and actively entwined with spirits and beings who not only exceed the limits of our temporal experience by interacting with figures from a long ago past but also transcend the limits of this world (Lambek 2003 [2015]; Mittermaier 2012, 254). Such understandings of the self conceptualize the self as one that is “acted upon” in ways that resemble lived encounters with this-worldly beings who similarly act as reminders or ethical constraints on an individual’s thoughts. In the context of our discussion of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Hermas the protagonist is acted upon, “seized” by a spirit and carried away (Vis I.i.3.; II.i.1.; cf. Rev. 4:2). Such scenarios were more like actual encounters with this worldly beings. According to Patricia Cox Miller, “dreams and visions

were not subjective fantasies of the psyche but rather autonomous messengers speaking divine words directly to the soul of the dreamer” (Miller 1988, 327; Koet 2012). In the narrative world of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the encounter with the Lady is vividly described with all of the features found in the lived experience of an interaction between a human man and woman.

2.2 On the solidity of stones: the enactive perception of the tower (Vis. III)

The Book of Visions offers an opportunity to consider the ways in which the reader’s enactive perception is cultivated by the text’s painstaking details about Hermas’ bodily experiences. While much has been discussed about the Tower and its significance, the tedious details about Hermas’ journey through the field and the mundane things that he both encounters and interacts with in Vision III effectively slows down the pace of the narrative and primes the reader to an even greater attentiveness to what will happen next – namely the tower scene. In this instance of enactive perception, the reader is able, through the bodily experiences of the protagonist, to achieve some degree of familiarity with the environment which further heightens the anticipation about what will come next. Hermas’ bodily experiences of locomotion and of the physical space serves to prepare the reader for the vision of the Tower which becomes part of the landscape in the field.

The third Vision takes place after Hermas has been fasting for a long time. He is pondering and puzzling over the words of the Lady. Hermas is instructed to go into the field, to a place of his choosing and that the Lady will appear there. Upon going into the field, he sees an ivory bench with a finely woven linen covering. After becoming agitated, he takes up his usual practice of praying and confessing his sins on his knees. Hermas and the Lady are also with six youths who are identified as “holy messengers of God, the first to be created, to whom the Lord delivered all of his creation to make it increase and to be building it up” (Vis. 3.24).

The opening scene to this third Vision unfolds extremely slowly, with much attention given to the kinesthetic movement of the protagonist and his changing emotional state. Hermas is instructed to *walk* to the field (cf. 4 Ezra 9:26; 10:53), and upon doing so, he is promised *visual* information:

‘... *Go into the field* where you linger, and at about the fifth hour *I will appear to you and show you what you must see.*’ I asked her. ‘Lady, to what part of the field?’ ‘Wherever you want,’ she answered. (italics mine; Vis. III.1.2–3)

As Hermas moves through the field, the reader is made aware of the various things that he encounters as he comes upon them:

So I *went*, brothers and sisters, into the field and *watched* the time and *went* to the place I had determined for her to come. I *saw* an ivory couch set up, on the couch a linen pillow, and a piece of good linen covering it. When I *saw* all this set out, but no one there, I was seized with terror and began trembling and my hair stood on end. I was panic-stricken because I was alone. (italics mine; Vis. III.4–5)

There is also a noticeable interlude prior to the vision of the Tower that recounts in painstaking detail where Hermas should sit:

8/ And after the young men had gone away and we were alone, she said to me: ‘Sit here’.
9/ Yet when I wished to sit on the right hand she would not let me, but signed to me with her hand to sit on the left. When therefore I thought about this, and was grieved because she did not let me sit on the right hand, she said to me: ‘are you sorry, Hermas? The seat on the right is for others, who have already been found well-pleasing to God and have suffered for the Name. But you fall far short of sitting with them. But remain in your simplicity as you are doing, and you shall sit with them, and so shall all who do their deeds and bear what they also bore’.
(Vis. III.i.8–9)

These details about Hermas’s locomotion and also the report of his interaction with the various objects that he encounters in the field are instrumental in assisting the reader in perceiving the narrative space as a virtual reality to enter. The discussion of seating continues through Vis. III.ii.1–4 and culminates with Hermas who cannot see anything at first. It is only later that he is able to gradually perceive the Tower being built (Vis. III.ii.5). What might otherwise be understood as tedious details about Hermas’ walking itinerary could easily be recognized as a strategy for preparing a reader for the vision of the Tower. Not only does Hermas’ walk through the field slow down the pace of the crucial Vision of the Tower, thus effectively building momentum towards its revelation, the reader is able to practice visualizing the space and imagining the events that are being recounted. We also gain important information about Hermas in Vis. III, that he falls “far short” of sitting on the right with the martyrs. This suggests that Hermas was a figure whose moral state was such that he was relatable to the ordinary reader; thus suggesting something about the implied reader of these visions.

The lengthy prelude to the vision of the Tower describes Hermas engaged in locomotion and changing postures (sitting, standing). These physical experiences are accompanied by detailed reports of his sensory perceptions: he sees the couch and he moves closer to it. According to Yael Avrahami, there is a correlation between kinaesthetic and visual apprehension in the Hebrew Bible;

two sensory experiences that are associated with the acquisition of personal knowledge (Avrahami 2012, 75–84). In the biblical imagination, the joining of the two express the idea of understanding gained by investigation.¹⁰ This feature of imagined locomotion and visual apprehension (“navigation” or sometimes referred to as “wayfinding”) is the cognitive capacity to perceive the self as it journeys with vividness, “especially in relation to foot travel through unpredictable environments, calculating times (such as sunrise and sunset) along with routes” taken (Richardson 2015, 236). Some have suggested that the human mind is predisposed to visualizing paths and journeys (Mithen 2001, 50; Easterlin 2010). The opening of the third vision painstakingly provides a narrativized travel itinerary, Hermas’s steps taken in the field, the things seen along on the journey, and the individuals encountered along the way. Such images could be experienced in the mind as egocentric episodes in which the first-person perspective of Hermas become the reader’s guide of the landscape which he/she is expected to visualize in great detail. The ivory couch, the linen pillow, and the fine linen covering, as well as the Tower, all become landmarks of a journey by foot that the reader is expected to follow and remember.

The Tower, the crucial component of this third Vision, is not revealed until well into Vis. III, after Hermas has situated himself and has fully taken in his new surroundings. The slowing down of the pace of events gives the reader the opportunity to engage the details of the narrative and to re-enact them in the mind’s imagination (Kuzmičová 2014). The Tower itself is given special kinaesthetic quality in the Vision which describes it as “*being built* in a square by the six youths” (italics mine, Vis. III.2.5). The movement and activity of building lends a three-dimensional vivacious quality to the vision. Elaine Scarry speaks about the way writing is able to express perceptual qualities of solidity, or what she calls “perceptual mimesis” (1999). Scarry writes: “[W]riters known for their sensory vivacity explicitly build objects within their pages, with the result that we are shown a discrete path along which to build them in our own minds” (1999, 20). This scaffolding of perceptual experiences takes place through the careful attention given to the constituent elements of the spatial details. The Tower is not inert but possesses qualities of lived experience as the mind carefully contemplates handling, rotating, inspecting each stone for cracks and flaws. Feeling the dust and hearing the noise of the construction become additional aspects of the enactive perception that can be supplied by the readers’ and hearers’ imaginations. One might imagine

¹⁰ Avrahami gives a number of examples: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105); “you have kept my feet from falling so that I may walk before God in the light of life” (Ps 56:14); “come and see what God has done” (Ps 66:5); 2012, 76–77.

the smooth and cool feel of the stones that click together and fit tightly into the Tower. So too the sounds of the stones being smashed, the color, shape, and roughness of the stones are described for the hearer.

5/The tower was being built in a square by the six young men who had come with her. But about ten thousand other men were carrying stones, some from the depth of the sea, some from land, which they were delivering to the six young men who were taking and building with them. 6/ All the stones that were dragged from the depths they placed in the building, for they were shaped to fit right into joint with the other stones, so they adhered to one another so well that the joints did not show. The building of the tower seemed to be of one stone. 7/ Of the other stones brought from dry ground, some they threw away and some they put in the building. Still others they broke up and threw away far from the tower. 8/ But there were many other stones lying around the tower that they did not use for the building. Some were scaly, others had cracks, others were broken off, others were white and round, and did not fit into the building. 9/ I saw other stones cast far away from the tower that fell on the road and did not stay there, but rolled off onto rough ground. Others were falling into fire and burning up; others were falling near water and could not roll into the water even though they wished to keep rolling into the water.

(Vis. III. 2.5–9)

In this painstaking passage that describes how the stones are chosen and rejected, the scene achieves a vivid state of solidity by the interactive quality of the description – the image is neither inert nor static. Each type of stone is accounted for in excruciating detail here and will be recounted at length in the following interpretation of the vision in Vis. III.3–7.

The detailed description uses *enargeia* to draw the reader into a deeper state of contemplation about the experiences that Hermas is having in the vision itself. *Enargeia* uses language to create a vivid perception of the things that are described, words that “represented what was actually not there in a way that made it seem so vivid, so clear, so animated or immediate that it appeared to be practically perceptible to the senses” (Heath 2009, 4–5). The details that some stones are rolling, with a few falling into the fire, and others coming perilously close to the edge of the water, draw the mind’s eye to a dynamic experience of the objects, one that has the perceptual qualities of first-hand experience of these objects. Such sensory complexities are recognized as also true of the experience of sight in life as lived.

We can imagine that the hearers of this third Vision about the Tower were also stimulated by their own eyes moving in their environment, their own sight path crossing common objects that resemble the stones that are described in the Vision. When we imagine such a scenario, it becomes possible to recognize how the activity of listening to a visionary text could generate mental imagery that is also highly individualized according to the hearer’s own memory of these objects that are being described and brought to mind, and also the

hearer's own experience of the environment at the moment of the reading. According to Kuzmičová, listening to a text can potentially be more stimulating and more generative of mental imagery than reading a text in solitude since in the latter, one's eyes are tethered to the written page and thus subject to less stimulation from the environment (2016, 221–222). Because it is also not possible for the hearer to pace the rate at which a text is read to him or her, the reader has the ability to slow down, amplify, to intone key descriptions, and use their posture to mark those scenes that are important to experience with enactive perception, all of which can further stimulate the listener's imagination. The Vision of the Tower can have a quality of elasticity in that the details of its perception becomes shaped by the hearer's own lived experience of the objects; the unique environment of the hearer and the sight path of his/her eyes become incorporated into the individual's mental image of the Tower and its stones.

Through *enargeia* and enactive perception, a reader or hearer could acquire an egocentric experience of the highly contoured space in which the visions occur. The terrain marked by the ivory couch, pillows, Tower, and stones, becomes more concrete and thus more vivid to the reader. The practices of enactive reading and perceiving assist in the cultivation of a disposition in which the visionary world of the *Shepherd of Hermas* can become accessible in an experiential way to the readers and listeners of this text, with the qualities of embodied first-hand experience.

In the opening of the third Vision we read how Hermas is overcome with emotion just before the vision of the Tower:

When I saw these things lying there, and no one in the place, I was greatly amazed, and, as it were, trembling seized me and my hair stood on end. And, as it were, panic came to me because I was alone. When therefore I came to myself, and remembered the glory of God and took courage, I knelt down and confessed my sins again to the Lord, as I had done before. (Vis. III.1.5)

Seers and visionaries in the Second Temple period are frequently described as engaging in various decentering practices of self-diminishment which in turn heightens receptivity to other cognitive states that may precipitate the onset of visionary experiences (Mercur 1989; Harkins 2017). The re-use of familiar practices and scenarios associated with visionary experience such as the practices of prayer and weeping that Hermas repeatedly engages in can be understood as a way of cultivating visionary experiences.

The resemblances between the Visions and other apocalyptic visionary texts (Daniel, 4 Ezra) also intentionally draw on the emotional impact of narrative experiences that reside in a scripturalized past and reconstitutes them in the present moment. It is here where psychologists observe the plasticity of

memory reconstruction; the mind's ability to remember is characterized by an adaptive strategy where mis-remembering is surprisingly the goal.¹¹ These highly detailed egocentric imaginings involve the same cognitive faculties that are at work in the imagining of future possibilities, including the ability to vividly imagine potential constraints or consequences to moral behavior – a cognitive process that is thought to be crucial for guiding decision-making processes (Boyer 2009; Schacter et al. 2007). Pascal Boyer calls the general cognitive processes that allow for the vivid perceptions of someone who is not there to express the evolutionary adaptiveness of imagination which allows for the construction of an ethical constraint (2009, 16). The ability to imagine vivid egocentric emotional memories (such as the ones that are generated from the highly descriptive accounts of an anxious Hermas or of his weeping) involves the same imaginative processes that are used when the mind vividly imagines the consequences for not performing the right behavior, guiding moral decision-making even though no one may be watching (Boyer 2009, 18–20).

These observations from integrative understandings of embodied cognitive processes that take place during reading can broaden and deepen our own understanding of how paraenetic literature, especially that which strongly arouses emotions and contains highly detailed visionary elements, participates in decision-making processes. In this way, the mind's cognitive capacity to make presence from absence is an adaptive function that well-suits visionary phenomena and also the paraenetic purpose of the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

3 Conclusion

The Book of Visions in the *Shepherd of Hermas* gives a narrative account of Hermas' visionary experiences. Oftentimes these visions include the appearance of figures like the Lady or the apprehension of the tower of stones. Perhaps the study of these texts can give us a glimpse of how the reading and hearing of such writings could be imagined in the ancient world. While visionary experiences could be cultivated through practices, they remain undetermined because they simply happen to the individual (Mittermaier 2012, 254; Miller 1988). In the case of both dreams and visions, the self is "acted upon" in ways that resemble lived encounters with this-worldly beings who can similarly bring unexpected challenges to an individual. Emotion allows narrated

¹¹ Lee 2009. Memory is not simply an automated retrieval system, but rather, "a special process that presents an opportunity for adaptive modification" (p. 413).

visionary events to be re-experienced by different groups through time with first-hand intensity. In the process, vivid memories of narratives can be updated in their details to meet the needs of new circumstances while retaining their emotionally compelling contours. How the Visions in the *Shepherd of Hermas* reuse familiar dramatic language and imagery may thus be important cues for how a reader should feel.

This discussion of the cognitive processes of enactive reading and enactive perception has focused on the importance of the style and imagery of the opening Visions in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The text scripts responses and cultivates certain “readerly” or “hearerly” predispositions such as regret, longing, grief, and awe. By inhabiting the role of Hermas, a listener might achieve a vivid state of immersive experiencing. The cultivation of the self through these enactive reading practices involves imaginative egocentric cognitive processes that participate in the construction of ethical constraints on behavior. The visionary encounter of the Lady is perceived as a real encounter with a moral standard external to the self, one in which the self is “acted upon” in ways that generate unexpected discomfort and unease in our protagonist Hermas (Mittermaier 2012). Hermas’ visionary encounters possess the complexities of lived experience and exert a force upon his decision-making processes – experiences that can be accessed by ancient readers and hearers through enactive reading and perception.

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Maria Dell'Isola

“They are not the words of a rational man”: ecstatic prophecy in Montanism

Abstract: Both the historiographical analysis and the ancient documents about the Christian movement known as Montanism place paramount importance on prophecy, visions, and ecstasy. The theological refutation of Montanist teaching and doctrine in the heresiological sources was almost entirely shaped by the attribution of deceitfulness and error to the experience of ecstatic prophecy. Even though some oracles uttered by the Montanist prophets are preserved, the most detailed description of their ecstasy is conveyed by the reports of the heresiologists. The present paper attempts to reconstruct the Montanist prophetic experience, comparing descriptions of Montanist ecstasy in the heresiological texts with other reports about ecstatic prophecy. More specifically, an analysis of the linguistic components that heresiologists used to describe ecstasy is contrasted with the vocabulary of other texts which illustrate the same basic model of religious experience. Finally, the conclusions draw attention to the discourses and interpretations of ecstatic prophecy related by different observers.

1 Introduction

In this paper, I would like to investigate the description of ecstasy as it occurs in the most relevant heresiological reports about Montanism. Surprisingly, we know of the importance that ecstasy assumes for the Montanists not through the direct voice of the three founders of this religious movement but rather through the reports of those authors who wrote polemical treatises against it. Since all the books that Montanists wrote are lost (see Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V.18.5 and VI.20.3; Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* VIII.19.1) and none of the scant number of oracles preserved hints specifically of the significance of ecstasy in the Montanist religious experience, we must rely on the heresiological sources in order to find traces of the role played by ecstasy itself in the shaping process of Montanist teachings. Therefore, I will reconstruct the Montanist prophetic experience through a re-evaluation of the available literary narrative.

I will start with a preliminary chapter aimed at illustrating the rhetorical framework which defines the most relevant literary representations of Montanist ecstatic prophecy (in the sense of ecstasy occurring in conjunction with prophecy). After that, I will compare the descriptions of Montanist ecstasy in the

heresiological texts (chapter 3) with other reports about it (chapters 4 and 5), and on such basis I identify a set of key features that may constitute a more reliable outline of this particular religious experience as it occurred in Montanist circles. More specifically, an analysis of the linguistic components that heresiologists used to describe the ecstatic behavior of Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla is contrasted with the vocabulary of other texts which illustrate the same basic model of religious experience. As a result, this contrast between different discourses and interpretations of ecstatic prophecy related by different observers shows how a single religious experience assumes various contours and nuances according to the particular narrator's theological view.¹

2 Montanist ecstasy according to the heresiological tradition

In Book IX (chapter 33) of the chronicle of Michael Syrus (end of the 12th century), there is a curious account of the persecution of the adherents of Montanism (see Gero 1977) which also includes two specific sections dedicated to the destruction, by John of Ephesus, Justinian's emissary, of the relics of Montanus and his two prophetesses, and to the story of the conflict between Apollos and Montanus:²

In the land of Phrygia there was a village called Pepuza, where the Montanists had a bishop and clerics. They called it Jerusalem and killed the Christians. John of Asia went there and burned their place of assembly with fire by the order of the emperor. And there was found in this building a great reliquary of marble, which was sealed with lead and bound together with iron hoops. Upon it was written, 'Of Montanus and his women'. And when it was opened, there were found the bodies of Montanus and of his women, Maximilla and Priscilla, with plates of gold upon their mouths. And they were ashamed because of this, when they saw the stinking bones of the one they called 'the Spirit'. And they were told, 'Are you not ashamed that you are going astray after this polluted one,

¹ See Segal 2006, 32: "This suggests forcefully that religious experiences are strongly influenced by the cultural context in which they occur, that the group itself through its leaders decides what is a valid or invalid experience, and that adepts learn which experiences to validate or valorize. It is not too much to suggest that in the process they learn how to generate the correct kind of physical states and extinguish those that are considered unhelpful. This means, of course, that mysticism is not a solitary experience; it is an experience that is social".

² For the Syriac text, Gero uses the edition of Chabot 1910. The English translation of the following passages is by Gero himself.

and that you call him “The Spirit”? Because a spirit has no flesh and bones.’ Then they burned the bones. The Montanists made sounds of lamentation and mourning, and they said, ‘Now the world is overthrown and will perish’. And they found their abominable books and burned them. And the building was purified and became a church.

Concerning this Montanus, Apollos, the companion of Paul, wrote in a letter that he was the son of Simon the magician, and when his father died by the instrumentality of Peter, he fled from Rome and set out to disturb the world. Then Apollos, (moved) by the Spirit, came to where he was and saw him sitting and leading men astray. And he stood and rebuked him and said, ‘O, enemy of God, may the Lord rebuke you!’. And Montanus began to contend, and said, ‘What is between me and you, Apollos? If you are a prophet, so am I, and if you are an apostle, so am I, and if you are a teacher, so am I’. Apollos said, ‘May your mouth be silenced, in the name of the Lord!’. And immediately he became speechless, and was not ever again able to speak. The people believed in our Lord, and were baptized. And they overturned the seat of Montanus, and he fled and escaped. The end of this story and of the other.

These two excerpts from the general account of Montanism are considerably relevant for the overall understanding of ecstatic prophecy as a fundamental religious experience within the Montanist doctrine. Generally speaking, all the heresiological sources focusing on the “New Prophecy”³ include a detailed description of the ecstatic behavior of Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla. Indeed, the relationship between prophecy and “false” ecstasy is the main issue in Christian polemics against them, starting from the anonymous author (end of the 2nd century) who was asked to write a report on Montanist prophets after taking part in an oral controversy against them (Eus. *HE* V.16.2).

In this sense, the above-quoted excerpts from the chronicle of Michael Syrus present the typical rhetorical framework⁴ which defines every single literary representation⁵ of the Montanist religious experience as they occurred in different polemical texts: the key-term “spirit” appears in both passages, and in each case, it assumes different meanings according to the specific character to whom it refers. Thus, when referring to the representatives of the Montanist side, it seems to require a further qualification in order to define its polemical use. Indeed, a “Montanist spirit” is always associated with the moral concepts of corruption and seduction: “And they were ashamed because of this, when they saw

³ See Eus. *HE* V.16.4 for the supposed (self-?) designation “(New?) Prophecy” attributed by the Montanists to their movement.

⁴ See Lieu 2015, for a detailed description of the mechanisms of a literary/rhetorical construction of heresy. For a specific attempt to use the idea of “rhetorical construction” in the investigation of Montanism (especially focusing on the construction of identity and otherness in Epiphanius’ *Panarion*), see Nasrallah 2003.

⁵ See Le Boulluec 1985, for a detailed survey of the theoretical principles at the heart of a “heresiological representation”.

the stinking bones of the one they called ‘the Spirit’. And they were told, ‘Are you not ashamed that you are going astray after this polluted one, and that you call him *The Spirit?*’” (Michael Syrus, *Chronicle* IX.33). By contrast, a “catholic spirit” does not seem to need any further clarification. For example, when the author says in the following lines, “Then Apollos, (moved) by the Spirit, came to where he was and saw him sitting and leading men astray”, Apollos is represented as moved by the spirit, which is revealed to be the real spirit, the right one, as proven by the absence of any further linguistic clarification. In addition, Apollos is also represented as coming to where Montanus was and observing him in the act of deceiving his followers. Ultimately, according to the author, Apollos represents the good, while Montanus is the evil.

However, when Apollos tries to rebuke Montanus, the latter replies by saying, “What is between me and you, Apollos? If you are a prophet, so am I”. This is the most significant statement of the overall passage, because it clearly underlines Montanus’ unequivocal perception of the intentional demarcation between true and false prophecy operated by the church authorities in the 2nd century. Indeed, the heresiological tradition tends to develop “[. . .] as a Christian literary discourse to define and refute theological error as a means of ensuring correct belief and exclusive identity” (see Lyman 2007, 297). This is to say it develops as the expression of the social dynamics of excluding the other (through charges of immorality) in order to reinforce its own identity, considered as the depository of true faith in opposition to the false teachings of the heretics.

The following short passage from the account of Montanism in Epiphanius’ *Panarion* is representative of this overall rhetorical tendency:

By comparing what they have said with the teachings of the Old and New Testaments – which are true, and which have been delivered and prophesied in truth – let us determine which is really prophecy, and which false prophecy.⁶

The vocabulary of “truth” is here emphatically stressed, demonstrating how the rhetorical strategy of constructing heresy is conducted through the definition “of true beliefs and practices versus false beliefs and practices” (Gilhus 2015, 153). The latter is in the end the preliminary statement leading to the consequent final assertion of the supremacy of “orthodoxy”.⁷

⁶ Epiph. *Pan.* 48.3.3: συγκρίνοντες γὰρ τὰ παρ’ αὐτῶν εἰρημένα καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὴν παλαιὰν διαθήκην καὶ καινὴν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ὄντα καὶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ γενόμενα καὶ πεπροφητευμένα δοκιμάσωμεν, ποῖα ὄντως προφητεία τυγχάνει, ποῖα δὲ ψευδοπροφητεία. The translation of all the passages (here and elsewhere) from *Panarion* is by F. Williams.

⁷ On the notion of orthodoxy within the rhetorical discourse on the creation of identities see Iricinschi and Zellentin 2008 (especially the contribution on Montanism by Karen King); for

This attribution of the character of mendacity and corruption reserved to the image of the heretic – a Montanist one in this case – is immediately associated with the very specific aspect of the Montanist religious experience of prophecy. In the opening passage of his account of Montanism, Epiphanius maintains that Montanists:

[...] accept every scripture of the Old and the New Testaments, and affirm the resurrection of the dead as well. But they boast of having Montanus for a prophet, and Priscilla and Maximilla for prophetesses, and have lost their wits by paying heed to them. They agree with the holy catholic church about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but have separated themselves by ‘giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils’ [...].⁸

The “error” of the Phrygian prophets does not consist in a theological distortion of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith, such as the affirmation of the resurrection of the dead or the acceptance of the Trinity. Their error is related neither to the aspect of doctrine, nor to Christian belief. It essentially concerns the practice of ecstatic prophecy instead. Particularly representative of this conflict is the reference to “losing wits”, which constitutes the starting point of the whole refutation of Montanism that follows in *Panarion* 48. Epiphanius attacks Montanus and Maximilla because they are false prophets and their ecstasy does not conform to the tradition of the church from the beginning: it is so extreme and uncontrolled that it appears to be a direct manifestation of frenzy. These prophets, Epiphanius says, have lost their minds, and so have their followers; therefore, their words sound incomprehensible and strange, like the words of a man who is not rational:⁹

But when the Phrygians profess to prophesy, it is plain that they are not sound of mind and rational. Their words are ambiguous and odd, with nothing right about them [...] For the Holy Spirit never spoke in him. Such expressions as ‘I fly’, and ‘strike’, and ‘watch’, and ‘The Lord distracteth men’s hearts’, are the utterances of an ecstatic. They are not the words of a rational man, but of someone of a different stamp from the Holy Spirit who spoke in the prophets.¹⁰

the issues related to heresiology, see also Shelton 2015; Aragione 2013; Cameron 2005; Pourkier 1992.

8 Eriph. *Pan.* 48.1.3–4: Οὔτοι γὰρ οἱ κατὰ Φρύγας καλούμενοι δέχονται καὶ αὐτοὶ πᾶσαν γραφὴν παλαιᾶς καὶ νέας διαθήκης καὶ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν ὁμοίως λέγουσι, Μοντανὸν δὲ τινα προφήτην αὐχοῦσιν ἔχειν καὶ Πρίσκιλλαν καὶ Μαξιμίλλαν προφήτιδας· οἷς προσέχοντες τὸν νοῦν ἐξετράπησαν. περὶ δὲ πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος ὁμοίως φρονοῦσι τῇ ἁγίᾳ καθολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀπέσχισαν δὲ ἑαυτοῦς, προσέχοντες πνεύμασι πλάνης καὶ διδασκαλίας δαιμονίων.

9 See Dell’Isola 2015 for the description of false prophecy in Epiphanius’ *Panarion*.

10 Eriph. *Pan.* 48.3.11–4.3: ἃ δὲ οὔτοι ἐπαγγέλλονται προφητεύειν, οὐδὲ εὐσταθοῦντες φανοῦνται οὔτε παρακολουθίαν λόγου ἔχοντες. λοξὰ γὰρ τὰ παρ’αὐτῶν ῥήματα καὶ σκαληνὰ καὶ

The anonymous author in Eusebius also followed exactly the same pattern when asked to give a description of the Montanist movement:

There they say that a recent convert called Montanus, when Gratus was proconsul of Asia, in the unbounded lust of his soul for leadership gave access to himself to the adversary, became obsessed, and suddenly fell into frenzy and convulsions. He began to be ecstatic and to speak and to talk strangely, prophesying contrary to the custom which belongs to the tradition and succession of the church from the beginning. Of those who at that time heard these bastard utterances some were vexed, thinking that he was possessed by a devil and by a spirit of error, and was disturbing the populace [...].¹¹

The language here belongs to the same semantic field which is at the heart of the account in *Panarion* 48:¹²

<u>Eus. HE V.16.7–8</u>	<u>Epiph. Pan. 48.3.11–4.3</u>
– “[...] became obsessed, and suddenly fell into frenzy and convulsions. He began to be ecstatic [...]”; “[...] thinking that he was possessed by a devil and by a spirit of error [...]”;	– “But when the Phrygians profess to prophesy, it is plain that they are not sound of mind and rational”;
– “[...] and to speak and to talk strangely [...]”; “[...] these bastard utterances [...]”;	– “Their words are ambiguous and odd, with nothing right about them [...]”; “Such expressions [...] are the utterances of an ecstatic”;

οὐδεμιᾶς ὀρθότητος ἐχόμενα. [...] οὔτε γὰρ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάλησεν ἐν αὐτῷ. τὸ γὰρ εἰπεῖν ἐφίπταται καὶ πλήσσω καὶ γρηγορῶ καὶ ἐξιστᾶ κύριος καρδίας, ἐκστατικοῦ ῥήματα ὑπάρχει ταῦτα καὶ οὐχὶ παρακολουθοῦντος, ἀλλὰ ἄλλον χαρακτῆρα ὑποδεικνύντος παρὰ τὸν χαρακτῆρα τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος τοῦ ἐν προφήταις λελαληκότος. See the opposite description of the “correct” Christian ecstasy in *Pan.* 48.3.4–3.9: “A prophet always spoke with composure and understanding, and delivered his oracles by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. He said everything with a sound mind [...]. And who can deny that Daniel was filled with all wisdom and in possession of his senses?”

11 Eus. HE V.16.7–8: ἔνθα φασὶ τίνα τῶν νεοπίστων πρώτως, Μοντανὸν τοῦνομα, κατὰ Γράτων Ἀσίας ἀνθύπατον, ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ ψυχῆς ἀμέτρῳ φιλοπρωτείας δόντα πάροδον εἰς ἑαυτὸν τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ πνευματοφορηθῆναι τε καὶ αἰφνιδίως ἐν κατοχῇ τιμῆς καὶ παρεκστάσει γινόμενον ἐνθουσιᾶν ἄρξασθαι τε λαλεῖν καὶ ξενοφωνεῖν, παρὰ τὸ κατὰ παράδοσιν καὶ κατὰ διαδοχὴν ἄνωθεν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἔθος δῆθεν προφητεῦντα. τῶν δὲ κατ’ ἐκεῖνο καιροῦ ἐν τῇ τῶν νόθων ἐκφωνημάτων ἀκροάσει γενομένων οἱ μὲν ὡς ἐπὶ ἐνεργουμένων καὶ δαιμονῶντι καὶ ἐν πλάνῃ πνεύματι ὑπάρχοντι καὶ τοὺς ὄχλους ταραττοντι ἀχθόμενοι [...]. The translation of all the passages (here and elsewhere) from *Historia Ecclesiastica* is by K. Lake.

12 See Mader 2012, 96–144, who argues for a comparison (and textual relationship) between the two main reports on Montanism in Eusebius and Epiphanius.

(continued)

<u>Eus. HEV.16.7–8</u>	<u>Epiph. Pan. 48.3.11–4.3</u>
<p>– “[...] prophesying contrary to the custom which belongs to the tradition and succession of the church from the beginning”.</p>	<p>– “They are not the words of a rational man, but of someone of a different stamp from the Holy Spirit who spoke in the prophets”.</p>

In both cases, the description appears to be articulated in three main arguments:

- 1) A prophetic ecstasy characterized by a loss of rationality, self-possession, and composure;
- 2) A prophetic discourse which reflects the irrationality of the ecstasy: words are incomprehensible, meaningless, and strange;
- 3) A Montanist prophecy (both in practice and discourse) which is the opposite of “traditional” Christian prophecy.

It is the final consideration of the opposition to ecclesiastical tradition that is relevant to the description of Montanist ecstasy in the heresiological sources. Ecstatic prophecy was certainly a familiar religious experience within 2nd-century Christianity (see Aune 1983, 291–313). In this sense, the description of Montanist prophetic speech as strange, inarticulate, and incomprehensible utterance could be also interpreted as a reference to glossolalia. Speaking in tongues was a common practice within the early Christian communities, as indicated by the fact that Paul, in *1 Corinthians*, tries to moderate ecstatic enthusiasm so that prophetic utterance could be clearer and understandable. Therefore, it could be likely that heresiologists refer to glossolalic speech when they characterize the prophecy of Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla as involving “strange and incomprehensible words” (Bremmer 2016, 11–18). However, as Forbes says, “Though it is certainly true that Montanist prophecy was characterized by ecstasy (in the modern sense), and occasionally by oracular obscurity, there is no unambiguous evidence whatsoever that it took glossolalic form. Indeed, the evidence of Eusebius, who knows of collections of Montanist oracles and actually cites the contents of some of them, makes it luminously clear that these oracles were delivered in plain Greek. Nor is there any suggestion at all, so far as I am aware, that they achieved this form by way of any complementary gift or process of interpretation” (Forbes 1995, 160–161).¹³ To sum up, it is likely that the Montanist ecstasy described by the heresiology

¹³ See Tabbernee 2007, 94–97, for a detailed discussion of glossolalia within Montanist prophecy.

reflects not a real case of glossolalia but the traditional representation of the false prophet.¹⁴ In this specific case, the representation of ecstasy assumes contours and definitions which concur to reinforce the opposition between church and heresy by ascribing to the Montanist religious experience the character of falseness and mendacity.

3 A “phenomenology” of ecstasy

In his article about the ecstasy of Montanus, Daunton-Fear argues that “Montanist ecstatic trance is thus neither a slanderous fabrication of the opponents of the movement nor yet the normal mode of Christian prophecy” (Daunton-Fear 1982, 649). He states that it simply reflects the *second form of trance*, that is to say, the so-called “possession”, where all the bodily senses are limited and the mind is totally suppressed, so that one cannot even recall what has happened during it. On the other hand, the *first form of trance* is characterized by “visions and out-of-body experiences”: the bodily senses become less functional and active although the mind remains conscious, where one can recall what has happened and communicate it to others. This is, according to Daunton-Fear, the type of ecstasy¹⁵ experienced by Peter and Paul and also all the Old Testament prophets. However, Athenagoras describes the Old Testament prophet in ecstasy as a man inspired by the Spirit which speaks through him like a flautist blowing into a flute (Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 9.1), thereby using the same traditional metaphor that Montanus also employs in one of his oracles reported by Epiphanius (Epiph. *Pan.* 48.4.1). According to Daunton-Fear, this similarity simply depends on the polemical aim that Athenagoras pursues: wishing to emphasize the superiority of Old Testament prophets, he has to distinguish between pagan poets and philosophers (with their limited intellects) and the biblical prophets who are divinely inspired, and this legitimizes the reduction of their human initiative. Daunton-Fear concludes that Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla could have been influenced by the cult of Apollo in their ecstatic experience (Daunton-Fear 1982, 650).

This approach follows the theological pattern elaborated by the heresiological tradition, which considers the ecstasy of Montanus as a sort of rising of the

¹⁴ For a very similar description of false prophecy see the case of Marcus and his prophetesses in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I.13.3.

¹⁵ I use here the terminology adopted by Daunton-Fear. He states that the word *ekstasis* “could be used to indicate two different forms of trance: 1) visions and out-of-the-body experiences, and 2) possession” (Daunton-Fear 1982, 649).

pagan tradition to the surface of the 2nd-century Christianity of Asia Minor.¹⁶ Stating that the ecstasy of Montanus is different from that experienced by all the other biblical prophets – simply because the latter do not behave like men who are possessed – means that the separation between true and false ecstasy evident in Epiphanius is still valid. The fact that the oracle uttered by Montanus is built on the same metaphor used by Athenagoras to describe the ecstasy of the biblical prophets is by contrast a relevant detail to prove the inconsistency of the traditional separation between the two main forms of ecstatic experiences listed above.¹⁷ To sum up, the analogy of the vocabulary in different texts describing different forms of ecstasy could attest to a uniformity of this religious experience beyond the theological evaluation lying behind its literary representation.

To examine this, we begin with the description of ecstasy in the most extended account of Montanism within the heresiological tradition. After quoting the aforementioned oracle of Montanus, in which the prophet in ecstasy is compared to a lyre played by the Spirit, Epiphanius affirms that Montanists appeal to the Scriptures to prove the validity of their prophecies, claiming that certain sections from the Scriptures bear a resemblance to themselves. In this case, the biblical verse to which they appeal as evidence of the correctness of their ecstasy is *Gen.* 2.21, which reports that God “sent an ecstasy upon Adam and he slept”. Epiphanius immediately comments:

But Adam’s case was nothing like theirs. In their case God did not mean to fashion a body – his reason for putting Adam into a trance – and, in his extreme loving kindness, give them a similar experience. God brought the unconsciousness of sleep upon Adam, not distraction of mind.¹⁸

According to Epiphanius, there is a difference between the ecstasy experienced by Adam and the ecstasy of Montanus, since the former is like a suspension of bodily senses, as it occurs while sleeping, while the latter is a deprivation of mind.¹⁹ He then continues:

For it is indeed plain that the sacred scripture was right to call this ecstasy. When someone is asleep, all his senses leave him and take a rest (*eis anapausin*). Though the sense of sight

¹⁶ See *Dialexis* I.5, where Montanus is presented as the priest of Apollo. For the Greek text I use here the critical edition by Berruto Martone 1999.

¹⁷ See Dell’Isola 2015, 198–203, for the investigation of the oracle of Montanus in *Pan.* 48.4.1, especially regarding its parallels in the early Christian literature; see also Trevett 1996, 83–84; Tabbernee 2007, 93–94; Mader 2012, 193–194.

¹⁸ [. . .] τὴν ἔκστασιν τοῦ ὕπνου, οὐκ ἔκστασιν φρενῶν (Epiph. *Pan.* 48.4.5–6). Here the Greek text of the last sentence quoted in the passage.

¹⁹ See Nasrallah 2003, 48.

is there, for example, but does not see; the eye is closed, and the mover in the man, the spirit or soul, is at rest (*hēsychazei*). If there is an unpleasant odour in the house or even a pleasant one, the sense of smell is there but does not perceive the odour; this sense has departed to take a rest (*eis anapausin*). If there are bitter, or salty or sweet fluids in the mouth, the sense of taste does not perceive them; it lies in the ecstasy of rest (*en ekstasei tēs anapauseōs*) without doing what it did in the man when he was awake. The ear is there, but the hearing is not functioning as a sense. And if people are talking in the house it often does not hear what anyone says unless the man wakes up; for the time being, its function is suspended. Creatures can be crawling on our bodies, but we do not feel their touch on our bodies unless their onslaught is severe; the whole body has abandoned its activity for the rest of sleep (*dia tēn anapausin tou ypnou*). For the body is made of earth and envelops the soul, and since God made it serviceable to us in this way, it is allowed a time of withdrawal from its full sensation to a state of rest (*eis katastasin anapauseōs*). The soul itself does not abandon its function of governance or thought (*oude tou fronēmatos*). It often imagines and sees itself as though it were awake, and walks around, does work, crosses the sea, addresses crowds – and sees itself in more situations, and more striking ones, in its dreams. But it is not like a madman, or an ecstatic in a transport (*ou mēn kata ton afrainonta kai en ekstasei ginomenon ekstatikon anthrōpon*). He takes frightful things in hand while awake in body and soul, and often does grievous harm to himself and his neighbours. He does not know (*agnoei*) what he is saying and doing, for he has fallen into the ecstasy of folly (*en ekstasei afrosynēs*). (Epiph. *Pan.* 48.4.6–5.8)

In the first form of ecstasy the body sleeps as with an anesthetization of the senses but the mind is awake, while in the ecstasy of the “madman” the mind is completely passive: it abandons the body leaving him without any guidance or control, in a physical and mental state that resembles madness. Thus, true ecstasy is the one where bodily senses are in the state of *anapausis* (a key-term which occurs five times in the whole passage) and *hēsychia*: this status means a physical condition of rest and relaxation, and especially quiet. By contrast, a false ecstasy is described as an “ecstasy of folly”, a state of *afrosynē*, that is to say, a complete absence of *frēn*, as the seat of mental faculties, perception, and thought (note that to describe the false ecstatic here the expression *ou mēn kata ton afrainonta* is used). On the one hand, the soul of a true ecstatic never loses its *fronēma*, an alternative term with the same root of *afrosynē*, to identify the mind as the seat of thought. On the other hand, the man who falls into a false trance is not able to recall what he has said or done during ecstasy: his mind is in a state of *agnoia*. The verb *agnoeō* means “not to perceive or recognize”, but since it derives from *nous*, which means “perception/thought” as well as “understanding/mind”, it also acquires the significance of “absent-mindedness”. In this sense, it appears to be very close to the *afrosynē* cited above.

This semantic field could be emphasized by the combination of *afrosynē*/*agnoia* and *amathia*, the latter being a relevant term in the anonymous account

of Montanism. That unknown author quotes the words of Miltiades, a writer who had also written a treatise against Montanists:

But the false prophet speaks in ecstasy, after which follow ease and freedom from fear; he begins with voluntary ignorance (*ex hekousiou amathias*), but turns to involuntary madness of soul (*eis akousion manian psychēs*), as has been said before. (Eus. *HE* V.17.2)

Miltiades affirms that the false ecstasy of the Montanist prophets resembles madness, and the way to madness is traced by a particular state of mind that has been described as *amathia*. This term derives from *manthanō* (“learn/perceive/understand”), so it acquires the significance of “absence of perception/understanding” and therefore the same meaning of *afrosynē/agnōia*.

4 Philo on the religious experience of ecstasy

In his article on early Christian prophecy and its relationship with the *Ascension of Isaiah*, Pier Cesare Bori compares the scene of ecstatic prophecy in *Ascension of Isaiah* 6 with other descriptions of ecstasy. This comparison serves to trace similarities and differences within an overall literary discourse on this specific religious experience (Bori 1980, 367–389).²⁰ One of the texts to which he appeals for the comparison is *De specialibus legibus*, by Philo of Alexandria.²¹ Certain passages, Bori suggests, reveal themselves as remarkably relevant also to the investigation of ecstasy described by Epiphanius in his personal refutation of Montanism. Philo says:

A prophet possessed by God will suddenly appear and give prophetic oracles. Nothing of what he says will be his own, for he that is truly under the control of divine inspiration (*enthousiōn*) has no power of apprehension when he speaks but serves as the channel for the insistent words of another’s prompting. For prophets are the interpreters of God, who makes full use of their organs of speech to set forth what he wills.²²

(Philo, *De Spec.Leg.* 1.65)

²⁰ According to Bori, in *Ascension of Isaiah* 6 there is no trace of the diffidence, which has its origins in the anti-Montanist struggle, that led to denying the identification of prophecy with ecstasy.

²¹ See Nasrallah 2003, 36–44, for the investigation of Philo’s taxonomy of ecstasy. See also Mader 2012, 69–79.

²² The translation of all the passages from *De specialibus legibus* (here and elsewhere) is by F.H. Colson.

He then continues:

For no pronouncement of a prophet is ever his own; he is an interpreter prompted by another in all his utterances, when knowing not (*en agnoiai*) what he does he is filled with inspiration (*enthousiai*), as the reason withdraws and surrenders the citadel of the soul to a new visitor and tenant, the Divine Spirit which plays upon the vocal organism and dictates words which clearly express its prophetic message. (Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* 4.49)

A further confirmation of this description of the prophet as a passive instrument of God's will can be found in *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*:

For a prophet (being a spokesman) has no utterance of his own, but all his utterance came from elsewhere, the echoes of another's voice. The wicked may never be the interpreter of God, so that no worthless person is "God-inspired" (*enthousiai*) in the proper sense. The name only befits the wise, since he alone is the vocal instrument of God, smitten and played by his invisible hand.²³ (Philo, *Quis Haer.* 259)

Two issues are crucial here and combine all the passages cited above:

- 1) The prophet is just an interpreter who does not say anything of his own, since his words are prompted by God speaking through him;
- 2) Since the prophet is just an instrument of God's voice, he finds himself in a physical and mental condition of not knowing what he is saying and doing, because his reason "withdraws".

The first issue does not trace the well-defined line of separation between the two main forms of ecstasy elaborated by Epiphanius: in both cases, the divine inspiration presupposes a passive role of the prophet who becomes the bodily instrument of God's voice. On the other hand, the second issue marks a considerable divergence between the two forms of ecstasy: the statement that the passive role of the prophet entails the loss of reason, with the inability to be conscious of what he himself is saying or doing, accords with the second form of ecstasy in the argument of Epiphanius. Furthermore, it is not by chance that Philo uses the term *agnoia*, which refers to the unawareness of what is being uttered, denoting thus a status of "absent-mindedness".

More significantly, there is another fundamental key term in all three of the aforementioned passages: *enthousiazō*, meaning "to be inspired or possessed by a god, to be in ecstasy". The verb, with its general significance, occurs in other passages of Christian writings. For example, in *Contra Celsum* Origen refers to it when describing the usual process of divine inspiration experienced by a Christian

²³ Transl. by F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker.

reader of Scripture.²⁴ Also in this case, it is no coincidence that the anonymous author in Eusebius employs exactly the same verb to describe the beginnings of Montanus’ prophetic activity (Eus. *HE* V.16.7–8). Such verbal coincidence attests to a common pre-existent vocabulary on ecstasy which all the authors draw on to trace a general description of the ecstatic experience. Ultimately, the same language of ecstasy is here common to Eusebius, Philo, Epiphanius, and Origen; this commonality provides evidence of a shared linguistic substrate at the heart of each literary representation of ecstasy as a religious experience.

5 Celsus against the Christian prophets

‘There are many’, he says, ‘who are nameless, who prophesy at the slightest excuse for some trivial cause both inside and outside temples; and there are some who wander about begging and roaming around cities and military camps; and they pretend to be moved as if giving some oracular utterance. It is an ordinary and common custom for each one to say: “I am God (or a son of God, or a divine Spirit). And I have come. Already the world is being destroyed. And you, O men, are to perish because of your iniquities. But I wish to save you. And you shall see me returning again with heavenly power. Blessed is he who has worshipped me now! But I will cast everlasting fire upon all the rest, both on cities and on country places. And men who fail to realize the penalties in store for them will in vain repent and groan. But I will preserve for ever those who have been convinced by me”’. Then after that he says: ‘Having brandished these threats they then go on to add incomprehensible, incoherent, and utterly obscure utterances, the meaning of which no intelligent person could discover; for they are meaningless and nonsensical, and give a chance for any fool or sorcerer to take the words in whatever sense he likes.’²⁵

Celsus, Origen says, is here comparing all the ancient prophets to some other prophets who were still active in his time both in Phoenicia and Palestine. This being said, he does not state their religious identity. Putting aside the question about the real identity of the oracle quoted here, I would like to focus my attention on the language used by Celsus to describe the ecstatic behavior of these prophets.

Here Celsus presents the prophetic words uttered by them as *agnōsta* (“unknown”, “that does not sound familiar”); *paroistra* (“delirious”, “attesting that they are produced by a state of excitement or delirium”); and *adēla* (“obscure”,

²⁴ Orig. *C.Cels.* VI.5.

²⁵ Orig. *C.Cels.* VII.9: [...] Ταῦτ’ ἐπανατεινάμενοι προστιθέασιν ἐφεξῆς ἄγνωστα καὶ πάροιστρα καὶ πάντη ἄδηλα, ἃν τὸ μὲν γνῶμα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἔχων νοῦν εὐρεῖν δύναιτο· ἀσαφὴ γὰρ καὶ τὸ μηδὲν, ἀνοήτω δὲ ἢ γόητι παντὶ περὶ παντὸς ἀφορμὴν ἐνδίδωσιν, ὅπη βούλεται, τὸ λεχθὲν σφετερίζεσθαι. Transl. by H. Chadwick. Here the Greek text of the last sentence quoted in the passage.

“not visible or manifest”). Further, he declares that no reasonable person (*oudeis echōn noun*) can grasp the true meaning of these words. After that, he goes back again to emphasize the words uttered by the prophets, describing them as *asafē* (“indistinct” (to the mind), “uncertain”, “obscure”). Celsus then concludes with a final sharp assessment that refers to magic, here represented as a negative counterpart of prophecy: namely, a symbol of falsehood in opposition to prophecy, which is obviously marked by a higher level of truth. He affirms that the words uttered by the prophets are so unintelligible that they give “to any unreasonable person” (*anoētōi*) or “to any magician” (*goēti*) – thus, to anyone who proves to be a charlatan – the chance to use them as he wishes.

This lexical apparatus, which entails a well-defined semantic field, seems to share a number of elements with the vocabulary of ecstasy in the accounts of Montanism within the heresiological tradition. For example, *agnōstos* is a derivative form of the verb *gignōskō*, and as such, it is very similar to *agnoia* regarding its meaning; *anoētos* (emphatically stressed here by the expression *oudeis echōn noun*) derives from *nous*, so it recalls directly the “absent-mindedness” which the same *agnoia* refers to.

More strikingly, the overall assessment expressed by Celsus to describe the prophecy of these “inspired persons”, whom he attacks in his polemic, appears considerably similar to Epiphanius’ comments on the Montanist oracle in *Pan.* 48.4.1. Celsus presents the prophetic words as obscure, unintelligible, and incomprehensible. Similarly, Epiphanius maintains that the words uttered by Montanus are distorted and meaningless. So much so that they cannot even “stand up”.

6 Conclusion

In talking about possession as religious experience, Ann Taves affirms “[. . .] the relationship between trance, a commonplace boundary phenomena, and possession, a social construct, provides a good vantage point for examining the complicated relationship between the psycho-physiological and social dimensions of experience. To differentiate these aspects of the phenomena, anthropologists typically distinguish between the psycho-physiological concept of trance and the cultural concept of possession” (Taves 2009, 78–79). Then – after stating that possession does not necessarily require trance in the neurological sense, since there can be trance without possession and possession without being in trance – she concludes that “since the presence of physiologically verifiable trance does not determine whether a performance is successful or not, historical and ethnographic work is required to discover the cultural

distinctions that subjects and observers use to decide if phenomena are authentic, fake, or pathological in various contexts” (Taves 2009, 81).

In the particular dynamic which links together actual religious performance and the perception of it experienced by observers and narrated by themselves, the role of these observers becomes extremely crucial; this is especially true of all the literary contexts where there is not any first-person narrative by the individual who has directly experienced the religious phenomenon.

In the case of Montanism, it is in the heresiological sources that we can find the only detailed analysis of the ecstasy experienced by the Phrygian prophets and prophetesses. That means the description of ecstasy is included within a broader literary context aiming to refute the religious experience of the heretics. However, the heresiological description of Montanist ecstasy stands as an exhaustive and detailed report. It traces the entire articulation of the ecstatic process throughout its course. In some cases, as in *Panarion 48*, the description of ecstatic prophecy even has been included within a broader theoretical discussion about the main forms of ecstasy, thus acquiring further consistency and efficacy. There is therefore a tension between ecstasy as a real experience and the literary constraints which seek to depict it according to a polemical intent. In this way, a religious experience which is real and observable tends to be subject to the domain of the controversial discussion. This means that the polemist imposes a sort of overlapping between a neutral description of ecstasy and a personal evaluation of it.

However, the vocabulary used in the traditional descriptions of Montanist ecstasy allows us to establish a comparison with other texts that also contain descriptions of ecstatic prophecy. The similar language in different writings seems to attest a uniformity in narrating the same religious experience. Therefore, the vocabulary becomes the instrument of the deconstruction of the value judgment expressed by the author’s personal assessment. In the end, this shows that the concept of “false” related to a religious experience depends entirely on the observer’s intentions.

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***Kyrios* and *despotes*: addresses to deities and religious experiences**

Abstract: Addresses to deities as *kyrios/a* and *despotes* (“master” or “lord”) top a list that encompasses a rich lexicon of divine rulership. My study tackles two combined issues raised by these two onomastic attributes: (1) do they betray mainly the memory of a more peculiar and closer religious experience of deities than do other addresses? (2) to what extent do the two terms express a prominent status of the experienced deities leading towards a “henotheistic” interpretation, as usually conceptualized by modern research? The collection and study of epigraphic testimonies invited me to distance my conclusions from both the three features generally recognized when deities are praised thus (slave’s submission, oriental flavor and henotheism) and current interpretations that treat the two terms as synonymous, as if expressing the same kind of experience of the deity. In the three geographical – thus cultural – areas under scrutiny, where these ritual epithets are the more numerous (the Levant, Thracia and its surroundings, and Egypt), any divine power is implicitly *kyrios* in his/her own sanctuary. *Despotes* might be a better candidate for advocating an evolution towards a hierarchical/henotheistic conception of the pantheon and its expression in specific religious experiences.

εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί.¹

ἔνθα σε ἔγνων, Μανδοῦλι,
ἥλιον τὸν παντεπόπτην δεσπότην, ἀπάντων βασιλέα.²

In the first *Letter to the Corinthians*, quoted above in excerpt, Paul noted the multiplicity of gods and *kyrioi* in order to distance his faith, and his God, from the conception of a plural divine world. For approaching both the topics of the structure and functioning of polytheisms throughout the kaleidoscopic aspects of divine

¹ Paul, *Ep. Cor.* I, 8, 5: “there are many gods and many lords”. I thank Dan Dana for our discussion on Thracia and its surroundings.

² Bernand 1969, no. 166, ll. 7–8, at Talmis (Kalabsha, Nubia), 1st–3rd century CE (= *SB* 4127): “Then I knew you, Mandoulis, the sun, all-seeing Lord, Master of everything”.

powers / ‘*puissances*’ (J.-P. Vernant),³ and the kinds and deepness of religious experiences, addresses to deities – the more so the *epicleseis* (i.e. ritual epithets) that deities are given in epigraphic dedications – offer an avenue.⁴ Considering the theme under scrutiny, “experiencing the religious”, I choose to focus on this corpus of written evidence because literary texts (novels and poetry mainly) narrate religious experiences through imaginative discourses, even when they rely or could rely on actual facts – thus endless discussions on the historical value of some texts like Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* XI. Epigraphy also has its discursive rules and strategies, notwithstanding stereotyped formulas; yet the fact that the author of an inscription usually speaks in the first person betrays a different stage and network of mediation, among which that of the temple authorities where the inscription is set up. Moreover, comparing lists of Latin and Greek epithets in literary evidence (Bruchmann 1893–1902; Santoro 1974; Ronchi 1974–1977) and indexes of epigraphic publications, demonstrates that the range of epithets is far larger in the first category.⁵ Artistic creation left more freedom, imagination and space for inventiveness than cultic communication, as the prose writer Aelius Aristides complained.⁶

In historiography, some of these ritual epithets are considered as reflecting testimony both of more intense or intimate experiences of the gods, and a state of submission of the worshipper that would be characteristic of an ‘Eastern religiosity’ (Pleket 1981, 176). Addresses to deities as *kyrios/a* and *despotes* (“master” or “lord”) top a list that encompasses a rich lexicon of divine rulership. My study tackles two combined issues raised by these two epithets: (1) investigating whether they betray mainly the memory of a more peculiar and closer religious experience of deities than do other dedications; and (2) appreciating to what extent the two terms express a prominent status of the experienced deities leading towards a “henotheistic” interpretation, as usually conceptualized by modern research. Such an inquiry opens towards a large

³ Vernant 1985, 362: “Les dieux helléniques sont des Puissances, non des personnes”. Cf. Bonnet, Belayche et al. 2017.

⁴ E.g. out of a long bibliography, Belayche et al. 2005. The research group “Mapping polytheisms” headed by Corinne Bonnet (Toulouse, FR) proposes now the syntagma “attribut onomastique”, Bonnet et al. 2018.

⁵ See for instance in Latin texts the numerous portraits of any deity as “*potens*” (Aesculapius, Amor, Apollon, Ceres, Dis, Fortuna, Juno, Jupiter, Lar, Liber, Mars, Neptune, Pan, Priape, Rome, Silvanus, Terra, Venus, Vesta), with or without their sphere of power (*Armipotens*, *Ignipotens*, *Salsipotens*, etc.), while *potens* is rare in epigraphic dedications and restricted to a few deities (Diana: *CIL* 3, 1418 and 11, 3198).

⁶ Aelius Aristides, Εἰς τὸν Σάρατιν (*Or.* 45), 1–3.

horizon in history of religions, in so far as *kyrios/a* and *despotes* are not neutral terms as we shall see.

The collection and study of epigraphic testimonies invites me to distance my conclusions from current interpretations that treat the two terms as synonymous, as if expressing the same kind of experience of the deity. Actually, their uses reveal different religious connotations within the three geographical – thus cultural – areas where these ritual epithets are the more numerous: the Levant, Thracia and its surroundings, and Egypt.⁷ At the very least they display significant nuances that will be underlined. Even in the Near East – where *kyrios/a* has a large range of meanings, yet with little clear evidence of direct experience of the divine (as in epiphanies for instance), and where *despotes* is rarely attested before Christian testimonies (from the 5th century onwards)⁸ – for the most part, *kyrios/a* designates an authoritative status of the deity within a sanctuary. In the three areas under scrutiny, increasing attestations of the two terms during the imperial period accords with the social trend towards glorification of powerful figures, either divine or human, that flourished within the contemporary context of civic competitions (see e.g. Belayche 2010, with previous bibliography). Viewed from this social history perspective, *kyrios* participates in an evolution that coined the religious language in the Roman Eastern Mediterranean, putting emphasis on a political lexicon (“*épiphètes de puissance*” in French, “*Machtepitheta*” in German)⁹ in line with competitive concerns in civic societies of the time.¹⁰ Voicing a masterly status within a community of gods and humans, addressing a deity as *kyrios* does not say a lot about a theological conception of the “*société des dieux*” (J.-P. Vernant) itself. *Despotes*, in contrast, is more frequently used when worshippers experience the divine personally, through oracles, dreams, or other similar specific experiences, as Egyptian testimonies will demonstrate clearly.

After some necessary historiographical reminders, I shall first examine Levantine evidence, since the prevalent scholarly position on the term *kyrios* stresses both an “oriental connection” and submission to deities. I shall then pass to the two other areas rich with attestations, searching for eventual differences. The Thracian repertoire of *kyrios/a* will demonstrate a literal use of the term for identifying divine powers – as masters of the (cult) place. Finally, Egyptian documents will show a clear distinction between *kyrios* and *despotes* in relation to worshippers’ religious experiences.

7 The demonstration will not refer to the exhaustive repertoire of attestations for reasons of space.

8 Cf. the Christian formula εἰς Θεός, ὁ πάντων Δεσπότης.

9 Cf. Chaniotis and Chiai 2007, 121.

10 For acclamatory epithets, Chaniotis 2009, 208–213 and Chaniotis 2010, 130–131 n. 80.

1 *Kyrios* according to the “orthodox” thesis (H.W. Pleket)

These historiographical observations are intended to draw attention (though briefly) to a possible hermeneutic bias arising from the Jewish use of *Kyrios* as one of the Greek designations of the Jewish God in the Septuagint¹¹ (and then its Christian application to Jesus Christ),¹² when interpretations of epigraphic addresses to gods/goddesses as *kyrios/a* are at stake. There is not much evidence to single out the term in traditional, Greek and Roman, religions. Few testimonies come from ancient Greece.¹³ Classicists list *kyrios* within a large category of epithets of power and sovereignty: “master of” the house, and then of the empire,¹⁴ “the one who has authority over” (e.g. the *parthenoi*), “lord” or “monarch” like *dominus* in Latin (Chantraine 2009 [1968–1980], 578–579). Actually, Zeus can be *kyrios* in archaic and classical Greek poetry and drama,¹⁵ as are other deities. Yet Greek gods’ sovereignty is rather termed with other words in literary or epigraphic evidence (like the oracular tablets from Dodona): *potnia*, *anax*,¹⁶ *basileus*, *despotes* (generally only in specific contexts),¹⁷ *despoina*. Starting from the basic, literal meaning, historians of religions rightly stress the vertical relationship between gods and men as expressed in the ritual uses of *kyrios*.

11 See among many epigraphic examples: *IJO* I, 70 = *IDelos* 2532 (Rheneia): ἀξιώ τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὑψιστὸν τὸν κύριον τῶν πνευμάτων. For Philo of Alexandria, *De mutatione nominum* 11–12, God is *Kyrios*, but this is not a personal name. The reference book is Baudissin 1926–1929, discussed by Cerfaux 1931 for the shift from the *Tetragrammaton* to “le Seigneur qui s’est attaché son peuple”. On the question of the use of *Kyrios* or the *Tetragrammaton* in the *Septuaginta*, Pietersma 1984 and Harl 1986, 51–52.

12 See among many epigraphic examples: *MAMA* III, 112 (Cilicia): τάδε λέγει Κ(ύριος) παντωκράτωρ (*sic*). The standard book is Bousset 1913. See also *TWNT* III (1938), *s.v.* κύριος (W. Foerster) and *SDB* 5 (1957), *s.v.* “Kyrios” (L. Cerfaux), col. 199–228; Nock 1928 [1972], 74–77.

13 Thus this chronological precision by Versnel 2011, 304, when defining henotheism: “Though most of the elements analyzed above [i.e. the nine characteristics of henotheism] can already be found sporadically in earlier periods, their amalgamation into one structural complex is specifically characteristic of the religious mentality we have been discussing.”

14 E.g. Trajan in Cilicia (in 106–115), Bean, Mitford 1965, 26 no. 30, ll. 2–3: τῷ κυρίῳ σωτήρι καὶ εὐεργέτῃ τοῦ κόσμου. See also many dedications τῇ κυρίᾳ πατρίδι, e.g. *SEG* 7, 852 and 858 (Gerasa, 2nd century).

15 Pindarus, *Isthm.* V, 52 (ὁ πάντων κύριος) and Euripides, *Iph. Aul.* 703; see also Aristophanes, *Plut.* 748.

16 E.g. in 350–200 BCE, Lhôte 2006, no. 23, l. 2: δέσποτα ἄναξ Ζεῦ Ναῖε καὶ Διώνη [. . .].

17 Cf. Dionysos acclaimed by the chorus as δέσποτα δέσποτα in Euripides, *Bacchae* 583; an Attic *defixio* (imprecation) addressed to the masters of the underworld, *IG* III, App. 94: [ὦ] δεσπότ[α]ι χθόνιοι καὶ ἐ[π]ιτύμβιοι.

Yet, upon interpretation, the dominant trend is that *kyrios* would betray a political (monarchic) and “oriental” religious conception, which spread in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Hellenistic period onwards.

I shall limit the review to two great scholars who marked important steps: from Arthur Darby Nock in 1925 to Hans Pleket in 1981 (for Latin evidence, Veyne 1986). Their interpretations of *kyrios* put emphasis on religious behaviors presented as obeying divine orders (after formulas like “*kata suntagma / onar / epitagen*”, etc.) or describing the worshippers as slaves of the deities – thus its examination in the *magnum opus* of Franz Bömer on the religion of the slaves.¹⁸ In Nock’s words in 1925:

That conception of the gods as absolute rulers [...] becomes prominent in Hellenistic times and finds expression in such titles as *kyrios*, *despotès*, *tyrannos*. The gods were assimilated to the absolute monarchs of the East. [Nock, 1925 (1972), 47]

Three years later, the great master of Harvard singled out a turning point in the Hellenistic period after the classical, literal use of *kyrios*:

the nuance of *Kyrios* depends on the person or god to whom it is applied; *it can be a mere courtesy title*, like “Master” in English. *In Christianity, just as in many Hellenistic cults*, it implies a belief in the divine overruling of the individual, who receives commands from on high. [Nock 1928 (1972), 87; my emphasis]

In 1928 already, A.D. Nock envisioned my two present issues (a status designation and a personal relationship), yet with the hermeneutic model of his time, asserting a *praeparatio* to Christianity by the Hellenistic, and then Roman, religious evolutions. The consensus on gods honored as *kyrioi* by δούλοι θεοῦ, according to an “oriental” conception, was revisited by Hans Pleket in 1981 (esp. 174–178). Though recalling documents going back to classical Greece, he reasserted the oriental influence during the post-Classical period, mirroring monarchic systems:

this dependency is strengthened and disseminated in the Hellenistic-Roman period under Oriental influence and in connection with the rise of autocratic political systems.¹⁹ [Pleket 1981, 155]

18 Bömer 1961, esp. 193–214. Yet in the sanctuary of the Mother of Gods at Leukopetra (Macedonia), the common formula for a slave’s manumissions (οὐδεὶς ἔστε κύριος ἢ μόνη ἢ θεός, *I Leukopétra*, no. 90 in 238–239) does not transform the newly free man into a sacred slave. He gets his freedom while entering into the patronage of the Mother and becoming her *cliens*, thus with no other possible master (*kyrios/dominus*).

19 Pleket 1981, 179 considers that the social structure offered a favorable field to this “ideology of power”; for a discussion of the dialectic between freedom and tyranny as a conscious

Actually one rarely finds the entry *kyrios* in indices of books on Greek and Roman religions, even when religion in the Hellenistic Near East is under discussion (e.g. Bonnet 2015). On the other hand, all dictionaries or lexica of the Bible or the New Testament (see above n. 12) have the item,²⁰ when they refer to the previous use of the term (the Pentateuch was translated in the 3rd century BCE). They all argue for what Pleket calls the “orthodox” version, after recalling the Semitic words translated by *kyrios* – *Ba’al/Ba’alat* (Lord, Dame) and *Adon* (Master).²¹ Following this interpretation, *kyrios* is connected to an “oriental” context or influence (whatever ambiguities vested with the term, Belayche 2000) characterized by the two aforementioned interwoven features: an absolute authority of the divine power who, consequently, rules over worshippers enslaved to it, in contrast to the *libertas* of the traditional, contractual relationship with the gods. A third feature also rests on such a basis: addressing a deity as *kyrios* accords with the “henotheistic” conception of pagan theology during the imperial period.²²

Evidence called to support the argument is far from displaying the advocated features – to say nothing of the current debate on the existence of divine rulership in Greek classical, polytheistic thinking (recent, comprehensive analysis in Versnel 2011 and 2017). First, the collection of epigraphic evidence honoring deities as *kyrios/a* in the Roman period does not single out the Near East (possibly for reasons of conservation),²³ when compared to Egypt (following an enduring tradition) and Thracia (and surrounding areas). Secondly, a relatively small amount of documents is found in Anatolia, although the worshippers’ submission is an unquestionable characteristic of the so-called confession texts.²⁴ These general observations prompt further examination.

ambiguity, Versnel 1998, 72–95. Pleket is followed by Versnel 2011, 287, for henotheistic trends (“This divine absolutism in many respects imitates the model of the worldly autocracy so typical of Hellenistic kingship”), but not for the “oriental” influence (128–129).

20 One recent example, Van der Toorn et al. 1999², s.v. *Kyrios* (D. Zeller, 492): “the designation *kyrios* for gods is mainly a non-Greek, oriental phenomenon from Hellenistic and Roman times”.

21 Cf. *L'DNY LMLK'STRT 'L HMN* (“To my Lord, to Milkashtart, god of Hammon”), quoted by Bonnet 2015, 318 (*TSSI* III, 32).

22 It is one of the “nine characteristics of henotheistic religion” (the fifth one: “cultic worship, personal submission to the god”) of Versnel 2011, 289–296.

23 The PHI Greek inscriptions database (<http://epigraphy.packhum.org/>) is not helpful for setting proportions because the term is frequently used in socio-political (patronage and emperors) and Christian contexts.

24 Two testimonies only: Petzl 1994, no. 68, 16 (Men *kyrios* of Tiamos), and 123, 2 (Apollo Lairbenos; it is not a formulaic designation though there are plenty of acclamatory epithets, see above n. 10).

2 *Kyrios/a* translates as *Ba'al/Ba'alat* or *Adon* in the Levant

The majority of Near Eastern dedications addressing their deity as *kyrios/a* comes from Syro-Phoenician and Arabic regions: coastal Syria, the Anti Lebanon from Bekaa to Hermon, and further east on the Hauran plateau to Gerasa and Bosra on the south, and north to the Euphrates. In these regions, the more so in hinterlands, local traditions of numerous divine masters were vivid, and they were even perpetuated thanks to Hellenization, as brilliantly demonstrated by Glen Bowersock (1990).

Kyrios/a is a literal translation of Semitic divine appellations: *Ba'al* and *Adon* for gods, *Ba'alat* for goddesses. Like in the *Phoenician history* of Philo of Byblos – Βεελσάμην, ὃ ἐστὶ παρὰ Φοῖνιξι κύριος οὐρανοῦ, Ζεὺς δὲ παρ' Ἑλλήσιν²⁵ – the bilingual dedication of Seleucos (*Bar'ateh* in Palmyrenian), son of Lucius, leaves no doubt on the equivalence, though the use does not echo *per se* a specific religious experience of the god (*PAT* 1089). In 31 CE – thus before Dura-Europos entered the *imperium* of Rome, though the presence of Rome is already perceptible in anthroponymy – Seleucos and his son Ababouis (*bbwhy*) offered a statue (τὸ[ν] ἀνδριάντα) – probably the relief – τῷ Δεῖ κυρίῳ / *b'šmyn* in three “languages”: Greek, Palmyrenian Aramaic, and iconographic (thanks to the sculptor / *glyptès* Iaraios / *Yarhai*). The document was found in a small structure (thus called “temple of Zeus *kyrios*”) possibly erected c. 28 CE by immigrants coming from Palmyra.²⁶ The inscription engraved on the plinth of the relief (Fig. 1) attests to the translation of the Aramaic *Ba'al Shamîn* as Zeus *kyrios*. There is only one other testimony in Dura: a Greek graffito dated to c. 210 CE, inscribed on a wall of one of the rooms of the Roman *praetorium* that enclosed the temple of Artemis-Azzanathkona.²⁷ It can be surmised that Aramaic was Seleucos' mother tongue,²⁸ for he calls *Ba'al Shamîn* “*lh*”, “my god” (with the suffix of ownership). This is a very thin clue for asserting a deep personal relationship of Seleucos with “his” god. Testimonies are more numerous in the Hauran, and that of Decimus Lucius Fabianus, a Roman legionary (legion unknown after the break of the stone) is more demonstrative for the point: he thanked “Zeus the Lord” for having been

²⁵ Baumgarten 1981 *ap.* Eusebius, *PE* I, 10, 7 (= Jacoby, 790.F, 2, 46) and 149–152.

²⁶ Downey 1977, 31–34 and 208–210, no. 10, pl. 4, fig. 10 (= *LIMC* 3, s.v. Zeus, 75–76 no. 1, pl. 62). Cf. Dirven 1999, 115–117 and 211–222 no. 5, pl. II and fig. 6 for the plan of the temple.

²⁷ Rostovtzeff 1934, 161–162 no. 483.

²⁸ On the complex Syrian “Greekness” in Dura, Andrade 2013, 211–232 (229–231 for the Seleucos monument).



Fig. 1: Yale University Art Gallery, 1935.45 (<https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/6833>), public domain.

propitiated (ἰλ[ασίας χάριν]).²⁹ Yet these two documents are isolated in the whole corpus analyzed below and cannot generate a systematic connection between the onomastic attribute and a specific religious experience.

Coming back to Seleucos in Dura, his relationship with Ba'al Shamîn in Aramaic (*lh*) is not paralleled in the Greek version of the dedication, nor in the relief. The latter pictures a commonplace sacrificial homage with Palmyrene iconographic features (Fig. 1). The god is seated, with his upper body facing the

²⁹ Littmann, Magie Jr., Stuart 1915, no. 665 (= *IGRR* 3.1297): Διὶ Κυρίῳ / [ε]ὐχὴν ἰλ[ασίας χάριν / Δέκ]μος Ἰ[ού]/[λ]ιος Φα/[βι]ανός / [στρ]ατιώτη[ς] / [λεγε]ῖννο<ς> [. . .].

viewer but his legs on profile, wearing a *calathos* and holding a bunch of fruits and grains in his right hand. A man wearing a himation is standing on his right, probably an image of Seleucos bringing a ram as an offering (?). The depiction of a master god, provider of prosperity, expresses one of the providential features of the atmospheric Lord of the Heavens (*Ba'al Shamîn*).

The Greek translation might sound redundant, as the prominent status of local *ba'alim*³⁰ was regularly interpreted in Greek by the master god Zeus' theonym, specified by an epichoric epithet (e.g. Ζεὺς Δαμασκένος), when the Semitic naming was not just transliterated, like Βεελσάμην or Βαλμαρκωδ (Lat. *Balmarcod*). Seleucos' *Zeus kyrios* version might intend to stress the mastership of the cult place, yet without any emphasis on a particular experience.

In the Hauran also (Sourdel 1952, 25–27), Zeus is honored as *kyrios* during the reign of the emperor Claudius. The area, then, was part of the land of the Herodian tetrarch Agrippa II, once it had been separated from the Nabatean sphere of influence half a century before. At Sanamein-Aire (50 km south of Damascus), three brothers with local or Hellenized names (Eunomos son of Hector, Aias and Nikaios), offered to Zeus *kyrios* some building (τοῦτο τὸ μέρος) in the “temple” (οἰκοδομησαὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ), “by piety and as a thanksgiving”.³¹ The temple is unlocated (unlike the Severian Tychaion, Dentzer-Feydi 2010). Yet the naming of the god as *kyrios* is consistent with the context of a cult place embellished or enlarged by the dedicants. The occasion for the dedication evokes regular religious homages, reinforced probably by euergetic concerns. The epithet of the god expresses in Greek a masterful position in his sanctuary, with no hint of specific experience of the god. One can read a similar semantic use in a consecration to a local *ba'al* (he is πατρώος) with a celestial field (he is οὐράνιος) at Damas:³² once both his divine field and link with the dedicant have been designated, his status is explicitly stated (“the Lord” with article). In Bosra, the dedication of Gaius Iulius Maximus, a soldier of the *IIIa legio Cyrenaica*, “to Zeus *kyrios* and Hera, ancestral gods”³³ points more probably towards a Roman context – Jupiter and Juno addressed with a local formula crossing a Jupiter *dominus*

30 Cf. *PAT* 1572, a bilingual dedication in Palmyra; in Gerasa a Zeus Kronos (Bel? Saturn?), *SEG* 7, 862. More generally Kaizer 2002, 83–84.

31 Littmann, Magie Jr., Stuart 1915, no. 655/2, in 45 CE: ἔτους πέμπτου τῆς <ἡγεμονίας> Αὐτοκράτορος Τιβερίου Κ<λ>αυδίου Καίσαρος Σεβασ/τοῦ Γερμανικοῦ Εὐνομος Ἐκτορος / καὶ Αἴας καὶ Νείκαιος ἀδελφοὶ ἤρξαν οἰκοδομησαὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος / ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων τῷ Διὶ Κυρίῳ εὐσεβείας κ/αὶ εὐχαριστείας ἕνεκα.

32 *SEG* 1, 546: Θεῷ Οὐρανίῳ / Πατρώῳ τῷ κυ/ρίῳ Λυσίας ὁ καὶ Δη/μήτριος Δημητρί/ου ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων / εὐσεβῶς ἀνέθη/κεν.

33 *IGLS* XIII, 1, 9002: Διὶ [Κ]υρίῳ καὶ Ἡρᾷ θεοῖς πατρώοις, Γ(αίος) Ἰούλιος Μά<ξ>μος στρατ (ιωτή)ς λεγ(ιώνος) γ' Κυ(ρηναϊκῆ)ς.

in Latin – than towards an *interpretatio* of local gods, for Hera did not match with local goddesses as far as I know.³⁴

Such a crossing between two cultural traditions of master gods is widely illustrated at Berytus/Heliopolis, the more Roman of the Phoenician coastal cities, where every god with a public sanctuary is *kyrios/a*. In this Roman colony, there is a combination of an indigenous tradition – exemplified by the transliterated Βαλμαρκωδ (Lat. *Balmarcod*), the “Lord of Dances (κοίρανε κώμων)” in his sanctuary of Deir el Kala³⁵ – with the colonial creation of Jupiter, Mercurius and Venus, for whom the Latin conception of *dominus/a* was vested with a welcomed local look.³⁶ A late dedication (250–300 CE) “to Hermes Lord Savior” was engraved by worshippers with local or Hellenized names on the moulding of an altar adorned with a caduceus within a crown.³⁷ The altar was found in the extra-urban sanctuary built on the Cheikh Abdallah hill (to the south of the colony), where a written boundary stone delimited Hermes’ territory.³⁸

A reverse bronze coin struck by Heliopolis under Philip the Arab (Fig. 2) pictures the temple on a rocky hill with a stepped path, with the purse and the caduceus in the field. Three Latin dedications found in the sanctuary call the god *dominus*. They were commissioned by well-known Berytan families (the Afidenii, Statilii and Tittii) and betray a Roman context in many respects: onomastics, nomenclatures, military functions and epigraphic formulas.³⁹ The fact that a god is called *kyrios* in his cult place is an expected designation of his ownership status and crosses many testimonies of deities honored as *dominus/a* in Latin. In the colony of Berytus/Heliopolis, the majority of homages to Mercurius are in Latin. All (but two) are offered *Mercurio domino*,⁴⁰ thus suggesting a

³⁴ Pirenne Delforge and Pironti 2016 do not examine Roman evidence.

³⁵ Cf. Rey-Coquais 1999, 626–627; Aliquot 2009a, 138–139; Belayche and Hošek 2011, 389–391.

³⁶ Cf. Hošek 2017.

³⁷ SEG 38, 1562: Ἑρμῆ Κυρίῳ / Σωτήρι / Σοαμῶς, Διόδοτος, I– —, / Διόδωρος υἱοῖ Αἰδρου ΑΡ — —.

³⁸ Cf. Aliquot 2009a, 294 for archaeological data, and 207–211. See also Aliquot 2009b.

³⁹ IGLS VI, 2737: Mercuri/o Dom(ino) / L(ucius) Afidenus / Stati[li]a[nus] / Val[ens]; Salamé-Sarkis 1987, 130, no. 7: (Mercur[ri]/o do[m(ino)] / Tittia / Severa / Rufilli / [—]); 131 no. 8: Mercur[ri]/o dom(ino) / Stat(ilius) Afide/nus L(uci) f(ilius) Fab(ia tribu) Ru/fillus, praefectus / fab[rum], tri(bunus) mil(itum) / leg(ionis) V Mac(edonicae) / v(otum) l(ibens) a(nimo) s(olvit).

⁴⁰ Cf. AE 1924, 1138 (Berytus): Mercurio / Domino / Q(uintus) Antonius / Eutyches / Sacerdotia/nus pro sal[u]/te sua et uxoris et filio[r(um)] / v(otum) l(ibens) a(nimo) s(olvit); AE 2009, 1572 (Berytus): [Mer]curio Dom(ino) / [e]x responso Apolli/nis C(aius) Iulius Her/mes Cinnamu[s] / geometra. Venus, who is the more Roman figure of the “triad” (see Hošek 2012, 402–409) is *domina* as well, AE 1924, 137 (= Triade I, no. 212): Veneri Dom(inae) / Caninia pr(o) s(alute) s(ua) / et Q(uinti) et fil(ii) Max(imi) / v(otum) l(ibens) a(nimo) s(olvit).



Fig. 2: SNG Copenhagen 435, Philip the Arab, used by courtesy of CNG, www.cngcoins.com.

formulaic designation with a Roman inspiration.⁴¹ This is confirmed by a dedication from a village which honors “Mercurius lord of the village of Ham (Μερκουρίω δωμίνω κῶμης Χάμωνος)” – with Lat. *domino* transliterated – on the occasion of the building of his temple.⁴² When comparing these testimonies to the one of *Hermes kyrios*, both express an authoritative status of the god, crossing two traditions, *dominus* and *ba'al*. Linguistic transfers were not one-way processes, whatever their apparent direction, and the building of the figure of Mercurius through his namings combines many features, both local and transferred ones, of the “*tuf culturel*”, to speak with Louis Robert for Anatolia (Hošek 2012, 260–273).

With Jupiter and Venus, this Mercurius/Hermes was one of the three figures of the so-called “Heliopolitan triad”, a modern reconstruction that recent researches invite rightly to dismiss.⁴³ The religious identity of the Heliopolitan Mercurius raised many debates recently as well. Julien Aliquot studied the god’s pre-Roman presence in Lebanon, for the caduceus is displayed on coins’ reverses of the Iturean tetrarchs of Chalcis in the 1st century BCE. He emphasized Mercurius’ quality of being a messenger, akin to the Palmyrenian Malakbel, which would have put a *dominus/kyrios* like him in a secondary rank (Aliquot 2009b), if the “triad” actually existed. Anne-Rose Hošek took to pieces the iconographic, cultural and religious *bricolage* that Roman colonists who built this divine figure manufactured; she underlines his aspect as a cosmic figure, far from the traditional image of being both a shepherd-god and secondary power (Hošek 2012, 389–401). For my concern with respect to the experience devotees had of gods they called “*kyrios*”, it is important that the two male gods of the so-called triad, Jupiter and Mercurius, both “*kyrios/dominus*”, are

⁴¹ Hošek 2012, 301–302. A similar phenomenon in Africa with Saturn, Le Glay 1966, 125.

⁴² *Triade* I, no. 168 (= Hošek 2012, 302).

⁴³ Cf. Kropp 2010. For a close study of the debate, Hošek 2012, 430–474.

often associated in reliefs and dedications (Hošek 2012, 391–393 and 414). Far from exhibiting inconsistency (Versnel 2017), they illustrate the conception of cohabitation of equally powerful divine powers within polytheism.

Heliopolitan Jupiter is *dominus*, rarely *kyrios*, because he is generally given homages in Latin. Thus the few dedications coming from Heliopolis and addressing him as *kyrios* or *despotes* offer helpful testimonies for discriminating between the two meanings and checking the “henotheistic” feature of *kyrios* if one follows the dominant scholarship. Under the Severans, Apollonios Segna, a citizen of Arados (further north on the coast), together with his children, consecrated a statue Διὶ μεγ[ίσ]τῳ Ἡλιοπολείτῃ κυρίῳ (*IGLS VI*, 2729, ll. 3–4). This worshipper reports a privileged relationship with the god through an oracle ([εὐξάμ]ενος κατὰ χ[ρηματισ]μόν, ll. 7–8), the reason why he adds an acknowledgement of the god’s powerful quality (*megistos*) to his authoritative status in his sanctuary (*kyrios*). For a couple of Roman citizens (Cassius Verus and Chareinè), worshippers of the Heliopolitan god (Jupiter probably), this all-powerful conception of the god of their homage is expressed by both *megistos* and *despotes*,⁴⁴ two epithets that distance their special experience of the god from the more common formula *dominus/kyrios*. The two aforementioned Heliopolitan dedications throw light on the rhetorical means for testifying of a specific experience of the god. But there is no great evidence for relating them to an “oriental” tradition, which would have existed in Arados for instance. In the famous inscription of Baitokaeke, the great sanctuary of a local Zeus/Ba’al in the *chora* of Arados,⁴⁵ the two emperors Valerian and Gratian (in 258–260) recalled economic and fiscal privileges for the sanctuary. The liberality is explicitly linked with the power of the god in his place (τῆς ἐνεργείας θεοῦ Διὸς Βαιτοκαυκῆς and ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ).⁴⁶ Yet the latter is not qualified as *kyrios* or *despotes*, though his power is duly underlined.

Local tradition is more likely expressed in Greek dedications offered to Kronos. At Nebi Abel, south-west of Abila, eleven worshippers offered an altar in 166/167 “to Kronos *kyrios* after an oracle of the gods Zeus and Apis of Abila”.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *IGLS VI*, 2730: Θεῶ μεγίστῳ / Ἡλιουπολίτῃ / δεσπότῃ / [Κ]άσσιος / Οὐῆρος / ἅμα Χαρείνη / συμβίῳ τῇ ἄξι[ο/λογ]ωτάτῃ καὶ —.

⁴⁵ Cf. Darbbour and Tholbecq 2009. A general overview in Bonnet 2015, 138–142.

⁴⁶ *IGLS VII*, 4028, C 18b-20 and Feissel 1993.

⁴⁷ South-West to Abila, in 166/167, *RICIS* 402/1005 with translation: [ἔ]τους η[ο]υ[ν] — — — Κρόν[ω] κυρί[ω] κατὰ χ[ρησ]μ[ό]ν θεῶν [Δι]ὸς καὶ Ἄπιδος Ἀβίλης ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας τῶν Κυρίων [11 names] τὸν βωμόν ἐποίησαν ἐπὶ ἱερέως διὰ βίου Σοαμίου Διοδότου, „En l’an 478 [...] au seigneur [Kron]os conformément à un oracle des dieux [Zeus] et Apis d’Abila, pour le salut des Seigneurs [list of 11 names] ont fait l’autel sous le prêtre à vie Sahaimos fils de Diodotos“.

The deity of the place, Kronos, is *kyrios*, while those of the religious experience are not. Thanks to another dedication cut on the rock between 14 and 29 CE, we know that his temple and the road access were offered by Nymphaios, son of Abimmes, an emancipated slave of the tetrarch Lysanias.

Pour le salut des Seigneurs augustes et toute leur maison, Nymphaios fils d'Abimmès, affranchi du tétrarque Lysanias, a construit la route qu'il a fondée (τὴν ὁδὸν κτίσας ἐπόησεν), et il a élevé le temple (τὸν ναὸν οἰκοδόμησεν) et a fait toutes les plantations (τὰς φυτείας πάσας ἐφύτευσεν), à ses frais, pour le seigneur Kronos et sa patrie (Κρόνω κυρίῳ καὶ τῇ πατρίδι), par piété (εὐσεβείας χάριν).

[OGIS 606; transl. Aliquot 2009a, 161, slightly modified]

In his dedication, Nymphaios links the divine owner of the newly founded cult place (Kronos *kyrios*) and the town related to him (his motherland). He does not report a specific religious experience besides the current piety and euergetism of this former slave. This Kronos *kyrios* recalls the Phoenician theology of Philo of Byblos, wherein Kronos is figured as the founder of the city of Byblos, the city being his house, i.e. temple,⁴⁸ according to a long tradition, Mesopotamian and then Ugaritic.⁴⁹ In that context, the “courtesy title” proposed by A.D. Nock is rightly consistent. In the Philonian mythology, woven with so many intricate cultural references, Kronos holds a prominent place as a primordial and founding figure, the one who dispatches the world between the deities, in the wake of the Hesiodic tradition.⁵⁰ Byblos, a main concern for the author as his homeland, is given to *Ba'alat Gubal*, the Lady of Byblos (Bonnet 2015, 164–171), and Phoenicia to the couple Zeus and Hadad-Astarte. In evidence of the Roman period, there is only one document (as far as I know) displaying Kronos *kyrios* as a supreme and cosmic deity. At Maad, in the mountainous hinterland of Byblos, a group of inscriptions was found in a church built on the ruins of a pagan building. One dedication, still discussed, is engraved on a cippus within a *tabula ansata*:

τῷ Κυρίῳ/ω ἀγί(ω) κὲ κυ/[ρ]ίῳ ὅλου / [τ]οῦ κόσ/[μ]ου Σατρά/[π]ε θεὸς / [ἐ]ποίησε
To the saint Lord and Lord of the whole universe, the god Satrapes made (this dedication).⁵¹

48 Baumgarten 1981 *ap.* Eusebius, *PE* I, 10, 19: “Following these events, Kronos builds a wall around his dwelling and founds the first city in Phoenicia, Byblos”. See Ribichini 1994.

49 Margueron 2016; Bonnet 2008.

50 Philo equates the Greek Kronos with the Ugaritic El (Baumgarten 1981, 180–213), though some of his deeds are parallel to those of the Greek Zeus.

51 Chausson and Nordiguian 1996, 40–43 no. 1, with French translation.

The first lines configure an all-powerful deity, honored for his sanctity like many deities in the Near East: an imperial type *Kyrios*, who has parallels with the biblical *Kyrios* and in Isiac aretologies anchored on Egyptian tradition. The god Satrapes⁵² is the Greek spelling of a Phoenician god Shadrafa,⁵³ honored at Sarepta and known in Palmyra as well (see *PAT* 0206), a “dieu protecteur, apotropaïque et thérapeutique” (Bonnet 2015, 195). Actually, he is pictured at Palmyra in a military garment, but the spear he leans on is wrapped by a snake’s coils,⁵⁴ as in Asclepieian iconography. Both the garment and attribute suggest a cultural fertilization by Greco-Roman figuration. Leaving aside the question of dedications made by gods (Milik 1972) – a question that Ernest Renan, the first editor of the document, bypassed when reading an anthroponym “Etheos” on line 5 –, a divine power as universal ruler, and even further a local lordship regularly acknowledged by the title “*kyrios*”, is not the rule so far. It is unique even at Maad.

A last example puts *kyrios* in a masterful position with no specific religious experience of him. In the mid-2nd century, at Skythopolis (Beth Shean) – one of the cities of the former Decapolis with a deep Hellenistic background –, Dionysos is *kyrios* and *ktistes*:

To the god Dionysos (Θεῶ Διονύσω), lord and founder (κτίστη τῷ κυρίῳ), Seleukos son of Aristo (Σέλευκος Ἀρίστωνος) offered in thanksgiving (χαριστήριον).⁵⁵

Though granted by scholarship with a prominent place in the local pantheon, Dionysos was not the only deity honored as *kyrios* there. He shares the epithet with Kore, *kyria* in her cult place at the foot of the theater (Fig. 3).

Yet Kore is far more glorified in Sebaste where she is “a mistress of everything (ὁ παντῶν δεσπότης)”, “great Kore invincible (μεγάλη Κόρη, ἡ ἀνείκητος)”, acclaimed as εἷς θεός (“One god”) (Flusser 1975), but not *kyria*. In Heliopolis as well, Kronos is *despotes* (and not *kyrios*) for a group of religious servants (ὑπερ[ε]τ[ή]σας) who call upon his providence (Ζεῦ βοήθῃ, “Zeus protect!”).⁵⁶

52 F. Chausson, who republished the text in 1996, chooses the reading on lines 5–6: Satrapes (nominative), with omission of the “s”.

53 The theonym would be Iranian, meaning “The Lord of Power”, Dupont-Sommer 1976, 653. At Maad in 8 BCE, he is honored by a local worshipper with no epiclesis, Chausson and Nordguian 1996, 43 no. 2.

54 Cf. Drijvers 1976, pl. XL VIII; for the inscription *PAT* 0318. See also Gawlikowski 1990, 2646–2647.

55 Di Segni 1997. See Belayche 2017, 11–15.

56 *IGLS* VI, 2740 with translation: Ζεῦ βοήθῃ μνησθῶσιν οἱ τῆς γ’ δεκανία[ς] Μαρτίνος Μαρῖνο[υ] ὁ καλῶς κέ δικέως ὑπερ[ε]τ[ή]σας δεσπ[ό]τη Κρόγγω κέ θεοῖς. Ἀπελ(λαίου) δ’, ἐτ(ους) –] (?), “Zeus protège ! Qu’on se souviennne de ceux de la 3^{ème} décanie. Martinos fils de Marinos ayant servi bien et justement le maître Cronos et les dieux, le 4 du mois Apellaios, en l’an [...]”.



Fig. 3: Skythopolis, inscription *in situ* in the temple of Demeter and Kore (photo: N. Belayche).

Definitely *kyrios* points towards rulership of a place, temple or city, compared to *despotes*, which is more akin to expressing a special experience of the deity and of his/her supreme position.

Recalling the three features that dominant historiography considers as characteristic of the use of *kyrios* – personal submission, oriental influence and henotheistic conception – this review of Near Eastern attestations demonstrates firstly that *kyrios* is not a systematic formula for gods in the Near East. Secondly, it designates local rulership of a place, with rare cases of intimate religious experiences of the respective god. The conclusion is not different for goddesses called *kyria* in the Levant, though we do find more numerous mentions of a specific and personal experience of their divine power.

As for male gods, the Greek “courtesy title” (Nock) is a regular translation of *Ba’alat* (“Lady/Dame”). Testimonies of goddesses called “*kyria*” are concentrated on a few divine figures,⁵⁷ because of the prevalence of the “Lady Astarte” in many Phoenician documents,⁵⁸ either in her Syrian form (*kyria* Atargatis) or in her Greek interpretation (*kyria* Artemis). She is regularly portrayed on reverses of Levantine civic coinages because of the role she plays in civic protection,

⁵⁷ Two examples: Athena, a Greek *interpretatio* of the Nabatean Allat, *SEG* 7, 1103 (Arabia, Athela / ‘Atīl, second-third centuries): Ἀθηνᾶ τῆ κ[υρία]; Kore many times, see above in Skythopolis and *IGLS* VI, 2978 (Chalcis of Lebanon, ‘Anḡarr, second-third centuries): τῆ κυρία Κόρη.

⁵⁸ See also Punic documents in the West, *CIS* I, 3914 (Carthage, fourth-third centuries BCE): “To the Ladies, to Astarte and to Tanit in Lebanon”.

comparable to the Tychai. In the Eastern Hermon at Kafr Hawar (to the south of the Anti-Lebanon massif), the Hierapolitan *Dea Syria* (Θεᾶ Συρία Ἱερα[π]ολιτῶν) is *kyria Atargatis* (πεμφθεὶς ὑπὸ τῆς κυρίας Αταργάτη[ς]), and Lucius is her worshipper, her slave (Λούκιος δοῦλος αὐτῆς):

(A) : A la déesse syrienne de Hiéropolis, Lucius, son esclave, a consacré l'autel, étant venu 20 fois et ayant rempli 40 sacs.

(B) : Lucius d'Akraba, pieux et envoyé par la Maîtresse Atargatis,

(C) : a fait lui-même toute l'inscription sur l'autel grâce à 24 autres déplacements,

(D) : il a offert pour chaque déplacement 2 sacs [. . .].

[IGLS XI, 45, B 3–5 and A 1–4, transl. Aliquot 79]

This document might sound as a perfect case for the “orthodox” interpretation (Pleket). But it is unique among other attestations for Artemis *kyria*. Moreover, Lucius is a servant of the goddess, either a wandering priest (Aliquot 2009, 79) or charged with collecting the revenues of sacred lands; in both cases, the goddess is her “boss”, her *kyria*. Obscure “Ladies of X place” are given the honorific appellation, like a “Dame Semea” (τῆ κυρία Σημέα) in Emesene,⁵⁹ or more well-known figures, like those of the circle of Pan, the divine owner of the sanctuary of Caesarea Philippi/Banias (Southern Hermon): Nemesis (honored by a priest of Pan)⁶⁰ and the Nymph Echo. Dedications to Nemesis do not stress any special relationship, in contrast to that of a statue of “Lady Echo (τὴν κ[υ]ρ[ί]αν Ἠχώ)” made after an oracle received in a dream (ὄνιρω χρησιμοδο[τ]ηθεὶς).⁶¹ Two other monuments stress a personal relationship: in Gerasa where Artemis *kyria* again sent an oracle in 98 CE (χρησμοῦ ἔνεκεν);⁶² and in 2nd-century Dura-Europos, with an homage τῆ κυρία Ἀταργάτι “after an order (κατ’ ἐπιταγήν)” (SEG 7, 801).

Again, these few experiences are not in the majority for goddesses called *kyria*. Artemis in Gerasa (Djerash) is a good case because, within the context of her competition with Zeus, who settled for long at the gate of the city, his temple adjoining the theater, she was set in a prominent place in the urban grid

⁵⁹ IGLS V, 2089, Burdj el-Qā’I in 196/7.

⁶⁰ IGLS XI, A 16 by Valerius Hispanus, priest of the god Pan (ιερεὺς θεοῦ Πανός), for the safety of the emperors: “a consacré (la statue de) la Dame Némésis (τὴν κυρίαν Νέμεσιν) et son temple, achevé avec la roche creusée par lui-même, avec son décor et sa grille de fer tout entire” (transl. Aliquot); in Palmyra, Seyrig 1950, 242–247, no. 6, l. 3 (Flavius Domitianus consecrated (the statue of) [τὴν] κυρίαν Νέμεσιν); and in 2nd century Syria (unknown provenance), Dain 1933, 92, no. 84.

⁶¹ IGLS XI, A 17, by Agrippa, son of Marcus, a magistrate, in 221/222.

⁶² IGRR III, 1358, 3–6: Διογένης Λεω/νίδου Ἀρτέμιδι κυρία τὸν / βωμὸν εὐσεβείας καὶ χρη/σμοῦ ἔνεκεν.

redesigned with the monumentalization of her temple under Antoninus Pius. She gets four dedications as *kyria* by both Hellenized natives and Romans, between the last quarter of the 1st century⁶³ and the 2nd century, when she is praised by ritual agents (ἀρχιβωμιστῆι) of other gods (Apollo, Kore and *sunnaoi theoi*) as celestial Lady⁶⁴ – polytheistic thinking being consistent with cohabitations of divine powers. In 209–211, Flavius Munatius, *bouleutes*, paid for the mosaic pavement of the *pronaos* of her temple.⁶⁵ The designation looks formulaic for the civic deity, like in Laodicea of Lebanon where she is similarly honored by two priestesses as well.⁶⁶ Her naming as *kyria* underlines the importance of her sanctuary.

For both female and male deities, *kyrios/a* in the Levant is firstly the devotional recognition of a status of local, divine leadership. Expressions of specific religious experiences connected with this onomastic attribute are few and situational, and not a systematic feature. Thus the prevailing interpretative model of *kyrios/a* would need further argument to switch from describing occasional cases to an actual pattern. This conclusion is also supported by another region where deities of both genres are regularly honored as *kyrios/a*: Thracia.

3 *Kyrios/a* as master of the local sanctuary in Thracia (and its surroundings)

I shall review more quickly the area of the Lower Danube provinces, because testimonies are numerous indeed, yet laconic and repetitive. They demonstrate clearly, to my eyes, that *kyrios/a* is foremost the designation for the local divine master. Any deity, within any cultural tradition (indigenous and Greco-Romanized), within any context (villages, Greek cities, Roman colonies), is honored as *kyrios/a* with traditional ritual (vows and regular offerings) by devotees of any social rank (up to *bouleutai*). Besides the “Thracian Hero/Rider”⁶⁷ and various local

63 In 79–80, Artemis *kyria* receives a portico (Ἀρτέμιδι κυρία τὴν στοὰν ἐπέησαν (*sic*) ἐκ τῶν ιδίων) and a cellar or a cistern (καὶ τὸν λάκκον) offered by a group of worshippers (οἱ σεβόμενοι), *IGRR* III, 1363.

64 *SEG* 38, 1652: ἀγαθῆ τύχη. / Ἀκρίσιος Ἀμύντου / καὶ Διογένης καὶ Ἀμύν/τας υἱοὶ ἀρχιβωμιστῆι / Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ Κόρης / καὶ τῶν συννάων θεῶν / εὐξάμενοι τῇ Κυρία Οὐρανία / Ἀρτέμιδι τὸν ἀκμάζοντα / Καρὸν ἐκ τῶν ιδίων / ἀνέθηκαγ. See also *SEG* 35, 1573.

65 *SEG* 7, 869: [τὸ πρό]ναιον τῆς κυρίας Ἀρτέμ[ιδ]ος ἐκ τῶν ιδίων ἐψηφοθέτη[σ]εν.

66 In 115/6 Zosipatra, ἱερασαμένην τ<ῆ>ς κυρίας Ἀρτέμιδος, and the year after Berenike (*IGLS* IV, 1263, 6–8, = *RICIS* 402/0302) and 1264).

67 See Oppermann 2006, index 400 s.v. Ἡρων and Ἡρωσ, 401 s.v. κύριος. E.g. *IGBulg* V, 5518 (Philippopolis, Plovdiv): κυρίω Ἡρωι (= Oppermann 2006, no. 82; for all deities with a rider

deities interpreted or not with Greek names and pictured or not as riders,⁶⁸ all gods/goddesses with Greek names are *kyrios/a*: Zeus⁶⁹ with Hera,⁷⁰ Asclepius many times,⁷¹ Pluto,⁷² Dionysos,⁷³ Sabazios,⁷⁴ Ares,⁷⁵ Apollo,⁷⁶ Herakles,⁷⁷ Artemis,⁷⁸ the Nymphs,⁷⁹ and so on. The honorific address fits to any divine figure, be it obscure for us like so many *kyrioi* of villages.⁸⁰ Many dedications are made by soldiers, who were usually strangers to the province and probably adopted both a formulaic address and the iconography of the rider god that typify many of them. However numerous the instances, the title is rarely connected with a specific religious experience, e.g. salvation for soldiers,⁸¹ or oracular assistance, for instance by Lord Asclepius, Hygeia and Telesphoros (an interpretation of

relief and called *kyrios* in the territory of the city, 180–212); *IGBulg* IV, 2344 (Nicopolis ad Nestum, Garmen): κυρίω Ἡρωί Πυρμηρ[ουλαί] (= Oppermann 2006, 179). For the Latin equivalent, *dominus*, Szabó 2017.

68 E.g. *IGBulg* II, 768 (between Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis): [κ]υρίω Δαρζαλαί, with a composite relief of a Greek-like, bearded god, sacrificing over an altar with a patera and holding the cornucopia (= Oppermann 2006, 292).

69 Possibly interpreting local gods, e.g. *IGBulg* IV, 2218 (Pautalia): τῷ κυρίω Διὶ Ζβελσουρδω, who is κυρίω θεῶν προγονικῶν Ζβελσουρδω (no. 2217). *IGBulg* III 1, 1373 (Διὶ Ζβελθουρδω) with a relief of Zeus with eagle and thunder.

70 *IGBulg*. III, 1089 (Philippopolis): κυρίω Διὶ καὶ κυρίᾳ Ἡρᾷ; 25 dedications for *kyria* Hera in the *IGBulg*.

71 *IGBulg* V 5810: κυρίω Ἀσκληπι[ῶ], in Pautalia where there were curative springs and one (or many) local deity(ies) interpreted as Asklepios, cf. 5801 (κυρίωι Ἀσκληπιῶ[ι Κε]ιλαισκη[νωι]), 5800 (κυρίω Ἀσκληπιῶ Κε]ιλαιδεβ[ηνω], 5786 (κυρίω Ἀ]σκληπιῶ Κου]λακ[ου]σηνω Κε]ιλαιδεου[ρηνω], etc.; see also 5839; II, 514 (on Oescus and Utus): κυρίω Ἀσκληπιῶ Σαλ]δοου[σηνω], by a *beneficiarius consularis* in Greek, with a relief figuring Asclepius with Hygeia and Telesphoros. See Oppermann 2006, index 398–399.

72 *IGBulg*. IV, 2343 (Nicopolis ad Nestum): κυρίω · Πλούτωνι.

73 *IGBulg* V, 5684 (Serdica): κυρίω Διονύσω.

74 *IGBulg*. IV, 1927 (Serdica): κυρίω Σαβαζίω Αθουπαρηνω by his priest who built the temple.

75 An *interpretatio*, *IGBulg* V, 5610 (Augusta Traiana): τῷ κυρίω Ἄρηι Σουρεγεθη Σελλη[νω].

76 *IGBulg*. V, 5652 (Anchialos): κυρίω Ἀπόλλωνι.

77 *IGBulg* IV, 2136 (Pautalia): κυρίω Ἡρακλ[ῆ].

78 *IGBulg* IV, 2113 (Pautalia): κυρίᾳ <Α>ρτέμιδι.

79 Seventeen dedications as *kyriai* in the *IGBulg*. Female deities (Hera, Artemis, the Nymphs, Hecate, etc.) are *kyriai*, yet with no systematic relief as the “Rider god”. For Artemis figured as a huntress, Deoudi 2010.

80 *IGBulg*. IV, 2232 (Pautalia): κυρίωι Διὶ *vac.* κωμηῆται Σπορτηληνοι; 2216 (Pautalia): Διὶ Ζβελσουρδω τῷ κυρίω by a village (Βολβαβρηνοι κωμηῆται); IV, 2043 (Serdica): ἡ κωμαρχία for Lord Zeus; III, 1711 (Augusta Traiana): κυρίω Ἀπόλλωνι Κερμυλληνω κωμηῆται] Σκασκοπαρηνοι.

81 In Serdica, a soldier of the *Ila legio Parthica* thanks Lord Sabazios for his *pronoia*, *IGBulg*. IV, 2024, 4–6: κυρίω Σαβαζίω ἐ[κ] προνοίας εὐχαρισ[τή]ριον ἔστησε.

local deities for they are Ζυσδρηνοί),⁸² though *kyrios* Asclepios has 125 attestations in the *IGBulg*. The onomastic attribute is a “courtesy title” that sets a status for divine powers. The term might have even looked much too formulaic for worshippers who were eager to single out their god or relate a special experience with him. In such cases, a further distinction needed to be added. In Pautalia the “Lord god *Zbelsourdos*” is praised as ancestral;⁸³ in Serdica an Asclepios (probably an interpretation of a local/tribal? god) is *kyrios* and *prostates*;⁸⁴ and in Apulum (Dacia) Lord Asclepios and Hygiea are singled out as *epekooi* (*IGRR* I, 541).

This brief, though representative, overview offers a clear picture of the meaning of *kyrios* when it qualifies deities in Thracia and its surroundings. As in the Near East, and without any clue for an influence though all testimonies date back to the Roman period, the designation is an expression of the status of the deity, as master in his sanctuary and thus patron of the community he or she protects. The fact that so many villages or peoples used the title is a convincing argument. If one searches for similarity with the Near Eastern *ba’alim*, it can be found in this relationship between a god in his “house”/temple and the people who lived nearby and expected a correlative protection.⁸⁵ In that respect, the daily experience they had of the god might look like a privileged one, even without specific experiences like dreams or oracles. Yet the epigraphic repertoire proves that the special link between a god and his place and population became a formula expressing a status, and thus spread in any group, including newly settled populations like colonists and travelling soldiers. In these Low Danubian provinces, the many reliefs of the riding god (the so-called Thracian rider / *Heros equitans*)⁸⁶ might have been a way for investigating also the visual expression of a deity entitled as *kyrios*. They are inconclusive,

82 *IGBulg* III, 1132, Philippopolis (Plovdiv): Κλ(αύδιος) Σπαρτοκος κυρίω Ἀσκληπιῶ καὶ Ὑγία καὶ Τελεσφόρω Ζυσδρηνοὺς ὑπὲρ τοῦ υἱοῦ Ρυμεταλκου τοῦ καὶ Ὀλυμπίου κατὰ χρησμόν κληθέντος εὐχήν. See also II, 544 (between Oescus and Utus).

83 *IGBulg* IV, 2217, 1–4: κυρίω θεῶ προγονικῶ Ζβελσουρδῶ.

84 *IGBulg* IV, 1934: τῷ κυρίω καὶ προστάτῃ Ἀσκληπιῶ Κουλκουσηνωί.

85 A parallel in Anatolian maledictions that entrust the integrity of the tomb to *Kyria Anaetis*, cf. Herrmann 1962, 59 no. 54. *Kyrioi theoi* on gold leaves found in tombs at Egnatia (*SEG* 57, 923–924), and on lead tablets in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth (Stroud 2013, no. 127, 115–117).

86 Dimitrova 2002. The many attestations of gods honored as *kyrios/a* in Thracia led “thracologists” (gladly nationalistic) to a reconstruction of a Thracian pantheon dominated by an all-powerful solar deity in line with henotheistic reconstructions of religious evolutions during the imperial period; see for instance Tacheva-Hitova 1978.

however, for the designation does not have a parallel in the iconographic language: the *Herodes equitans*' motive stands for any deity, *kyrios* or not.⁸⁷

4 *Kyrios* and *despotes* in Roman Egypt

The Egyptian dossier confirms what we observed in the case of Thracia. What is more important, it throws light on the distinction between *kyrios* and *despotes* with respect to religious experiences. As in the Lower Danube area, from the Nile Delta up to the Nubian desert⁸⁸ almost all the gods are *kyrios/a* in their sanctuaries, whatever their rank of importance in the Egyptian divine world. At Pathyris (mod. Dabbabīyeh) in the western desert, a *proskynema* is offered in 232 CE to a “triad” of deities – among which an epichoric form of Isis (“who takes care of Egypt”) – and to the “greatest gods” who share their temple. They are all *kyrioi* (τῶν κυρίων θεῶν Πρῶτῳ τοῦ θεοῦ μεγίστου καὶ Ὁρεγέβθιος καὶ Ἰσιδος Ἐσακέμεως καὶ οἱ (!) σὺν αὐτοῖ (!) θεῶν μεγίστων), and the stature of each is expressed either through their theonyms⁸⁹ or through their distinction as *megistos* (greatest).⁹⁰ The same precision occurs in Deir el-Bahari, where the Amenhotep's ownership (παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Ἀμενώθῃ, “at the Lord Amenotes”) “in this sanctuary” (ἐν τῷ τεμένει τοῦ[τῶ]) is combined with the greatness of the deities who share his cult place (τῶν συννάων θεῶν μεγίστων) (Bataille 1951, 77). Whatever the deities' local or more universal stature,⁹¹ the designation as

87 I studied this dossier at the Chicago-Paris Workshop on Ancient Religions, “*Image and Writing in Ancient Religions: Dispositifs, interactions, concurrence*”, Paris 2016, September 19: “Image et écriture, interprétation et juxtaposition. Des reliefs adressés Κυρίῳ en Thrace romaine” (unpublished). The conclusion is not proper to *kyrios*, cf. Belayche 2008.

88 A few examples only among many from North to South: the god Sobek/Soukos (the god crocodile, Lord of the lake) at Soknopaiou Nesos (Dimai), in March 24 BCE, Bernard 1975, 73, 3–4 (= *OGIS* 655 = *SB* 5, 8895): τῷ θεῷ καὶ κυρίῳ Σοκνοπαίῳ παρὰ τῷ <ν> ἐκ Νείλου πόλεως; at Theadelphia, 2nd century CE, Bernard 1981, II, 128, (= *SB* 3, 6940): τῷ κυρίῳ Σούχῳ. See also Bes à Abydos (Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1919, no. 504: τὸν κύριον Βησῶν) and Hermes at Pselkis (El Dakka), close to Kalabsha, in Nubia in 130/131 (*IGRR* I 5, 1367 / 5092 = *SB* 5, 7933): παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Ἑρμῆ, also in 135 CE (*OGIS* 207 = *SB* 5, 7931), a probable interpretation of the Egyptian god Thot, for he is honored by a physician (ἰατρός) of the *XXa legio*.

89 See Bricault and Pezin 1993, for their explication in Egyptian language.

90 Bernard 1989, no. 10 = *IGRR* I 5, 1271 = *SB* 1, 239.

91 Besides the expected Sarapis (*SB* 1, 1154 in the Fayoum) and Isis (Wagner 1987, 56 no. 10 = *SEG* 30, 1723, at Kharga/Doush, a Western oasis, in 1st–2nd century), the god Pan in his Paneion at Wadi Hammamat honored by a Roman citizen in 14 BCE (*IGRR* I 5, 1235 = *SB* 5, 8579): παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Πανί; and so on.

kyrios/a is but an expression of their status in the sanctuary, embedded within a social and polite rhetoric.

As already noted in Thracia, the addressee as *kyrios* is always attributed another quality when the devotee wishes to particularize the divine portrait or his/her experience. In the Memnonion of Abydos, the Osiris tomb housed an oracle, which was replaced by an oracle of Bes in the Roman period.⁹² The Memnonion housed a multitude of temples of gods and pharaohs (Seti I on the first rank); yet Bes is the only *kyrios* when he is honored with other deities.⁹³ Silvanus son of Hermodoros rendered his homage in the sanctuary after a consultation: παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ μου θεῷ μεγίστῳ Βησῶ ἀψεύστῳ χρησιμοδότῃ (Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1919, 505). He combines diverse devices for advertising the privileged relationship (τῷ κυρίῳ μου θεῷ, “to my god Lord”) he had with the god, and for expressing his exalted conception of him: Bes is *megistos* – another proof of the fact that *kyrios* does not cover the full register of glorification – and trustworthy (ἀψεύστῳ) when he gives oracles (χρησιμοδότῃ). Both the context and experience of the deity recall Heliopolitan evidence (above p. 98), and the limits of the term *kyrios* for emphasizing a special relationship with a deity. This reading is confirmed in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (W of Thebes), where (Asclepios-) Amenothep (and Hygeia) had an incubation sanctuary.⁹⁴ A well-known *dipinto* provides another proof. A rather detailed narrative of Athenodoros, a soldier garrisoned in Koptos under Hadrian (?), reports his nightly epiphanic experience of Asklepios, Amenothep and Hygeia: they are *agathos* (Asklepios and Amenothep), *eudoxos* (Amenothep), *megistè* (Hygeia), but not *kyrios*.⁹⁵ In another 1st/2nd-century consultation, “Lord Amenothep” is praised as “the greatest god” (τοῦ κυρίου Ἀμενώθου θεοῦ μεγίστου, Renberg 2017, 471). Similarly, in a 1st/2nd-century *proskynema*, Asclepios is praised as *kyrios* in the first lines that state the kind of homage: τὸ προσκύνημα Εὐγράφι[ος πα]ρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ / Ἀσκληπιῷ καὶ Ἀμενώθῃ καὶ Ὑγιείᾳ (“Proscyneme. Eugraphios for the god Lord Asclepios, and Amenothep, and Hygeia”). Then when the text comes to the mention of the salutary experience, it opts for more accurate expressions of the divine absolute power and providential assistance: μνήσθητι ἡμῶν, δέσποτα, ἡμῶν / σωτῆρες (“Be us remembered, Masters, our saviors”) (Bataille 1951, 120). *Despotes* is the designation at this stage of the experience.

⁹² With incubation practices, Renberg 2017, 486–497, who does not examine addresses to the god.

⁹³ Perdrizet, Lefebvre 1919, 580, 4–5: παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Βησῶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς.

⁹⁴ Cf. Bataille 1951, no. 79: παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἀμενώθ<ου>. See Renberg 2017, 456–467, who does not address the question of the appellation of the god.

⁹⁵ Bataille 1951, no. 126; Renberg 2013.

The distinction between the uses of *kyrios* and *despotes* for narrating specific religious experiences is clearer at Kalabsha/Talmis in Nubia (50 km to the south of the first Cataract). The Nubian god Mandoulis had a well-known oracular sanctuary in Roman Talmis, built under Augustus at a traditional meeting point of the nomadic tribes, with a cult place already. The place attracted a lot of pilgrims who left memories of their visits, in Greek language in the majority. Worshippers belonged to the surrounding population and to military units stationed in the south of Egypt up to the 3rd century. As expected, Mandoulis is *kyrios* in his sanctuary,⁹⁶ and he is the only one so called when other deities are honored with him, like Bes at the Memnonion. When, under Vespasian, a Roman worshipper reports his homage made in the name of his whole family, he first reports the event in a formulaic way (τὸ προσκύνημα [...] παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Μανδούλει καὶ τοῖς συννάοις θεοῖς, “Proskyneme [...] for the Lord Mandoulis and the deities who share his temple”, ll. 1 & 5–6). Then he details the motive of his visit in the month of Choiak (ἦλθον εἰς Τάλμιν Χοιάκ κ’, ll. 6–7), singling out at that point the “great god Mandoulis” (προσεκύνησα θεὸν μέγαν Μανδούλο, ll. 8–9), before closing his text with an homage by his parents παρὰ τοῖς ἐνθάδε θεοῖς (ll. 9–10).⁹⁷ The variations in the report of the *proskynemata* are instructive. There is a distinction of tone between the common statement of the first lines (*kyrios*) – in most cases the only ones that were engraved by the pilgrims – and the more personal narrative that follows, where the god appears through his peculiar conception by his worshipper (*meḡas*, *meḡistos* in four other *proskynemata* written by Roman soldiers).⁹⁸ An additional argument is offered by the famous poetic hymn to Mandoulis Aion, a very complex narrative of an epiphanic, religious experience, which deserves the numerous available studies.⁹⁹ The purified, anonymous worshipper was granted a vision of a solar Mandoulis during a transforming experience (ἐνθεασάμενος ἀνέ[γνων], “I had a vision and I happened to know”, l. 9). He magnified the god as δέσποτα (l. 1), “the all-seeing master, king of all, all-powerful Eternity” (τὸν παντεπόπτην δεσπότην, ἀπάντων βασιλέα, Αἰῶνα παντοκράτορα, ll. 18–19).¹⁰⁰ Although *kyrios* is formulaic in the sanctuary, it has no place in the flood of exalted designations accompanying a mystical-like experience.

⁹⁶ E.g. *IGRR* I, 1339, 13–14 (= *SB* 1, 1020): παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Μανδούλει, by soldiers of an Iturean unit. See also 1346, and following.

⁹⁷ Gauthier 1911–1914, 268, no. 1 = *SB* 1, 4586.

⁹⁸ *IGRR* I 5, 1334 (= *SB* 1, 1018) and 1355 (= *SB* 5, 8532); Gauthier 1911–1914, 254 no. 14 (= *SB* 1, 4570) and 276 no. 18 (= *SB* 1, 4596).

⁹⁹ Three references only: Nock 1934 [1972]; Frankfurter 1998, 108–109; Tallet 2012 (with exhaustive bibliography).

¹⁰⁰ Bernand 1969, 166 (= *SB* 4127).

5 Conclusion

Some conclusions can be asserted even if it has been impossible to take into account all testimonies within the length of a paper. Analysis of epigraphic evidence of deities called *kyrios/a* or *despotes* invites solidly founded reservations on the three features generally recognized when deities are praised as such (slave's submission, oriental flavor and henotheism). Any divine power is implicitly *kyrios* in his/her own sanctuary, as demonstrated in the three regions I focused on. This observation weakens an interpretation that would recognize a henotheistic trend when addresses with *kyrios* are found in dedications. Yet the title is not formulaic in all sanctuaries. For instance, Men Askaenos is not *kyrios* in his great sanctuary at Pisidian Antioch. In Pergamon Asclepius is rarely praised as *kyrios*,¹⁰¹ the more so never praised as such by his most beloved worshipper, Aelius Aristides, who is in a permanent, privileged relationship with him. Moreover, a deity called *kyrios/a* in a particular place is not systematically *the* great deity of that place. At Comana of Cappadocia, where the great temple of the goddess Ma (interpreted as Bellona by the Romans) was coextensive to the political power (up to its annexation), this Anatolian Mother, divine mistress of the temple-state, is not *kyria*. The divine powers praised with this title there are Apollo, Asclepius, Hermes and Men, in dedications offered by their priests, for whom their god is a *Kyrios* indeed.¹⁰² *Kyrios* is not a marker for pre-eminence in the representation of a pantheon. It is but a “courtesy title”, a homage to a powerful figure,¹⁰³ a “*Monsignore*”. Gods are powers, thus they are all *kyrioi* as Paul said, and the term has no hyperbolic meaning that could characterize the henotheistic evolution of the imperial period. If the designation can match Near Eastern monarchic forms, it is not systematic for Levantine deities during the Roman period.

Inscriptions rarely show situations of submission, besides the basic fact that, in any religious relationship, there is always a gap between two imagined ontologies, the human and the divine one. In Thracia, dedications addressing deities as *kyrios/a* usually display a traditional, votive system (εὐχὴν, εὐξάμενος). In Egypt, some attestations of deities honored as *kyrios/a* are read on *proskynemata*, a relevant corpus for “lived religion”. And yet, in this Greco-Roman, Egyptian religious world, rooted in a long tradition of divine autocracy on the model of Pharaonic power, and where the gap between deities and humans was

¹⁰¹ *IvP* III, 106 (end of the 1st–beginning of the 2nd century), by a *frumentarius* of the *legio VIa Ferrata*.

¹⁰² *Anatolian Studies* 1972, 227–239, no. 2, 5, 6 and 10.

¹⁰³ Versnel 2010, 279, speaks of a “superior title” in “prayers for justice”.

immeasurable for those who were not priests,¹⁰⁴ addressing a deity as *kyrios/a* has a less personal impact than praising him/her as *despotes*. This could explain why *despotes* is more frequently used in poetic praises for deities, like in hymns honoring Isis.¹⁰⁵ In that respect and depending on a chronological inquiry, *despotes* might be a better candidate for advocating an evolution towards a hierarchical/henotheistic conception of the pantheon and its expression in specific religious experiences.

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Abbreviations (for periodicals see *L'Année philologique*):

<i>ANRW:</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>CIS:</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i>
<i>IDélos:</i>	<i>Inscriptions de Délos</i>
<i>IGBulg:</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae</i>
<i>IGLS:</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de Syrie</i>
<i>IGRR:</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas pertinentes</i>
<i>IJO:</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis</i>
<i>ILeukopetra:</i>	Ph.M. Photios, M.B. Hatzopoulos, L. Gounaropoulou, P. Paschidis 2000. <i>Inscriptions du sanctuaire de la Mère des Dieux autochthone de Leukopetra (Macédoine)</i> . Meletemata 28. Athens.
<i>IvP:</i>	<i>Inschriften von Pergamon</i>
<i>LIMC:</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i>
<i>MAMA:</i>	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i>
<i>OGIS:</i>	<i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
<i>PAT:</i>	D.R. Hillers, E. Cussini 1996. <i>Palmyrenian Aramaic Texts</i> . Baltimore-London.
<i>RICIS:</i>	<i>Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques</i>
<i>SB:</i>	<i>Sammelbuch Griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i>
<i>SDB:</i>	<i>Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible</i>

104 Like in Near Eastern temples, the topography of sanctuaries, with progressive areas (courts, then rooms) vested with different sacred qualities, up to the place where the divine figure stands (the *naos* or *cella*), opened only to ritual agents, gives a pertinent spatial image of the (im)possible contact with the “otherness”.

105 Cf. the Isidoros hymn to Isis at Medinet Mādi (Narmouthis), Bernard 1969 no. 175, 24–26 (1st century BCE), with translation: “Mais les Egyptiens t’appellent Θιοῦν (l’unique), parce que tu es, toi seule / Toutes les déesses que les peuples nomment par d’autres noms. / Maîtresse (δεσπότη), je n’obtiendrai pas ta grande puissance (μεγάλην δύναμίν) en te chantant, / sauveur immortelle, aux nombreux noms, très grande Isis (σώτειρ’ ἀθανάτη, πολυώνυμε, Ἴσι μεγίστη)”.

SEG:	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SNG:	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum</i>
TAM:	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris</i>
Triade:	Y. Hajjar 1977. <i>La triade d'Héliopolis-Baalbek</i> , vol. 1–2. EPRO 59. Leiden.
TWNT:	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>

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Maik Patzelt

About servants and flagellants: Seneca's Capitol description and the variety of 'ordinary' religious experience at Rome

Abstract: In introducing the idea of an “ordinary religious experience”, the present paper makes a first attempt at providing a framework for understanding and explaining religious experiences that do not necessarily depend on ecstatic states of joy or exaltation. An approach to ordinary experience rather highlights an aspect of practice that involves the “modelling” of valued relationships for the sake of the experience of that particular relationship itself. As an analysis of three fragments of Seneca's treatise “on superstition” (Frg. 34–36) will demonstrate, Roman individuals sought to model and experience a personal closeness, a friendship even, with their addressed gods. To this end, these worshippers appropriated various practices from contexts of ritualized friendship for their ritualized practices with which they established and thereby experienced a mutual and benevolent bond with the addressed deity.

1 Introductory remarks

Depictions of the religious life at Rome during the Late Republican and Early Imperial periods reveal a variety of religious experiences. Whereas religious experiences come readily to the fore when investigating “ecstatic practices”¹ such as the raising of arms,² charismatic healing,³ frenetic dancing and wailing,⁴

¹ “Ecstatic practices” refer to practices that one would intuitively understand as being in some sense “excessive” (Wulff 1991, 71–82).

² According to comments made by Tertullian (Tert., *Apol.* 30.4) and Aristotle (Aristot., *De mundo* 400a16), raised hands were commonly regarded as a central element in prayer (Sittl 1890, 187–198; Ohm 1948, 14–60. 231–239; Hamman 1980, 1212–1219; Demisch 1984, 107–147; Guittard 1995, 81–110). The emotional impact of these gestures is stressed in Quint., *Inst.* 11.3.114–116. From a comparative perspective, the raising of the arms as illustrated by Quintilian might be thought to correspond with the so-called “jerking exercise” in Methodist churches (Wulff 1991, 76–77).

³ See Gordon 1995; Ov., *Ars am.* 315–336.

⁴ Women, for instance, toss their heads and wail in a certain manner (*ululare*). For examples, see Lucan. 5.152–157; Liv. 3.7.7. 26.9.6–8; Ov., *Fast.* 3.213–223. 4.313–320. 6.513–515; Ov., *Met.* 3.726–727. 7.180–191. 257–258. 9.770–773; Tac., *Ann.* 11.31.2; Juv. 3.212–215. See Šterbenc Erker 2011, 182–188. Modern approaches to religious experience highlight this ritual pattern as a strategy for religious experience (Rouget 1985, 12–14; Bourguignon 2004; Theodoridou 2009).

and self-mutilating,⁵ Seneca's fragments on superstition point towards religious experiences in the context of non-ecstatic practices, such as introducing guests, announcing the time to Jupiter, or going through the motions of doing Juno's hair. Seneca's writings thus make scholars of ancient religions aware of the fact that "religious experiences" or "emotions" may encompass much more than mere sensory stimulations. Some religious experiences may not even depend on these stimulations at all. As M. McGuire once argued in the case of Christian welfare workers, even the act of cooking a meal may already elicit fundamental religious experiences, even experiences of divine presence, without any manipulation of the senses.⁶ This observation leaves us with the question of how to detect these non-arousing experiences in our material and how we can apply such a theory to our ancient material.

In introducing the idea of an "ordinary religious experience", the present paper makes a first risky attempt at providing a framework for understanding and explaining religious experiences that do not necessarily depend on ecstatic states of joy or exaltation. Having introduced this concept, this contribution examines two essential fragments of Seneca's treatise "On Superstition". After briefly examining the allegedly "superstitious" character of these practices, I turn to the role of individual agents who embed themselves into situations in which they gain experiences, and who ultimately ascribe a religious quality to these experiences.

2 Religious experience, experience deemed religious, and ordinary experience

2.1 Framing religious experience: ecstatic practices and hysteric moments

The primary question I will seek to answer is: what is a religious experience and how can we detect one in our (ancient) sources? This is a question that has

Likewise, male priests, such as the Salians, dance and sing in a similar way (Plut., *Num.* 13.4–5; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 2.70.4–5).

⁵ This mostly refers to the priests of Cybele, who supposedly perform their rites in the same way as the frenetic women, but additionally cut their arms and castrate themselves (Ov., *Fast.* 4.221–246. 339–348; Sen., *Vit. beat.* 26.8; Sen. *Frg.* 34 = apud August., *De civ. D.* 6.10; Mart. 3.24. 3.81. 11.72. 81. 13.63; Juv. 6.513–516; Lucr. 2.614–623; Luk., *Syr. Dea* 50–51).

⁶ McGuire 2008, 104–112.

attracted the interest of scholars for more than a hundred years already. Psychological, cognitive and anthropological approaches outline a variety of (cognitive) mechanisms that lead to an experience of divine or otherwise supernatural provenance. As already sketched in the introductory chapter of this book section, these mechanisms can broadly be clustered around two poles of argumentation. One pole argues that religious experience is triggered by certain brain activities in the amygdala and its surroundings.⁷ The other pole argues that embodiment plays a fundamental role.⁸ This is to say, they emphasize the importance of cultural learning and interactive meaning-making in the generation of religious experiences. Coming from this perspective, every experience, just as every feeling (cf. Goldie 2000, 28–37, 84–122; Damasio 2010, 108–129), is understood as a qualitative ascription that is fundamentally based on the socialization of the individual and their situation within a specific time and place, namely, the moment of practice. Strictly speaking, an experience is not inherently religious but can, rather, be “deemed religious” by the respective individual’s perception of the moment (Taves 2009, 16–55).

Before we go any further, it will be useful to define what the term “religious” is supposed to mean in the context of experiences. Rather than trying to unpack the philosophical, sociological, or historical dimensions of the terms “religion”, “religious”, and “religiosity”,⁹ I will restrict myself to defining “religious” from a basal cognitive perspective. Experiences and practices can count as religious as soon as – in Jörg Rüpke’s words – the situational inclusion of “not unquestionably plausible actors” in communication is detected,¹⁰ which is to say, once a deity is expected to be involved.

When it comes to tracking down which experiences are *deemed religious* or *divine* and which not, an intriguing degree of attention has been paid to (the embodiment of) sensory manipulations of body and mind.¹¹ Among many other

7 As most popularly expressed by D’Aquili and Newberg 1999. Criticism by Schjoedt 2009, 315–318; Jensen 2014, 117–118; Taves 2009, 17–22; Atran 2002, 181–186.

8 “Religious experience is an embodied, complex, essentially cognitive phenomenon, for which thoughts and beliefs are central” (Azari et al. 2005, 272). Cf. Barsalou et al. 2005; Schjoedt 2009, 322–325; Taves 2009, 56–87.

9 For an overview of “religion” through various disciplines, see Bergunder 2012; Taves 2011. “Religious” does not, however, mean the same thing as “religion”. Whereas the one marks a complex belief system and its institutions, the other marks the quality of something (Taves 2009, 24).

10 Rüpke 2015. Cf. Rüpke 2016, 27–35; McCauley and Lawson 2002, 8–9, 23–37; McCauley and Lawson 1996, 110–121; Taves 2009, 39–46; Hick [2006] 2010, 27–29. Recently theorized as *predictive coding* in agency detection by Andersen 2019; Andersen and Schjoedt 2017.

11 Overview by Kundtová Klocová and Geertz 2019, 76–80; Geertz 2010, 306–308.

modes of sensory manipulation, such as drug induction, two sensory modes enjoyed much attention in this field of study.¹² One mode involves highly stimulating sensory practices, a sensory pageantry as it were, that cause something like an “overstimulation” of the brain,¹³ variously resulting in states of “dissociation” or “hypnotic induction” that may or may not be *deemed* “possession”.¹⁴ The other mode involves various strategies of deprivation that may result in so-called states of “mindfulness” or “mystical experiences”.¹⁵ These include the strategies involved in incubations at Asclepia or in the styles of prayer advocated by Seneca, Origen, or Evagrius.¹⁶ Non-arousing and non-manipulating practices, it seems, tend to lack attention as a basis for proper religious experiences, without saying that they are entirely ignored.¹⁷

2.2 Ritualizing an “ordinary” religious experience

This chapter, on the contrary, seeks to suggest that an approach based on embodiment also has the potential for investigating religious experiences that fall outside the stereotypical ritual schemata of trance, ecstasy, “collective effervescences” (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 217–231; cf. Turner 1974, 80–154) or, as recently conceptualized for students of classics, of “emotional communities” (Chaniotis 2013, Chaniotis 2016; cf. Belayche 2003). This sort of approach allows an investigation that goes beyond questions of sensory manipulation and dissociation, even if it does not require that we abandon these questions in their entirety.

12 Further types are out-of-body experiences or lucid dreams (Taves 2009, 11–12, 74–78; Oesterreich 1921, 25–37, 37–87).

13 Harvey Whitehouse 2004, 65–82 opposes the rather arousing “imagistic mode” to a “doctrinal mode”. Cf. McCauley and Lawson 2002, 179–212. Approaches testing this model on ancient and medieval religions provided by Koskull 2011; Gragg 2004; Clark 2004.

14 Deeley et al. 2014; Jegindoe et al. 2013; McNamara 2009, 44–58; Taves 2009, 74–86; Atran 2002, 188–192. A small research history about the techniques for possession might be Girgensohn 1921; Oesterreich 1921, 16–24; Caillois 1964, 97–111; Rouget 1985, 11–39; Wulff 1991, 71–82.

15 Deprivation approached by calmness or, as McNamara suggests, as deep awareness (McNamara 2009, 55–58). Cf. Rouget 1985, 11–12. Defining an experience as “mystical” (Forman 1999; D’Aquili and Newberg 1999, 25–42) is, however, highly controversial.

16 For the incubation at the Asclepia, see Petsalis-Diomidis 2005, 198–217; Petridou 2016. For Origen, it is worth considering the monumental work of Perrone 2011. On Evagrius Ponticus and Isaac of Nineveh in relation to these concerns, see Bitton-Ashkelony 2011.

17 Tanya Luhrmann’s model of *cultivating the senses* for divine presence does not necessarily need any arousing stimuli, even though the Evangelicals, which she is studying, do not spare dramatic ways to manipulate bodily and mental states (Luhrmann 2013; 2012).

Matthias Jung's pragmatist considerations about "ordinary experiences" serves as perfect tool to that end.

As Jung correctly notes, most cognitive approaches to (non-)religious experience tend to ignore the agent's "positionality" (*Positionalität*, Jung 2014, 85–88),¹⁸ which is the individual's capacity to perceive and therefore to experience a situation not just sensorially but also symbolically. Jung sets the aspect of a "symbolic consciousness" against the processual, and thus mono-dimensional, cognitive reference system of image-making that dominates within the cognitive studies (Jung 2014, 54–56. 85–88). In other words, the notion of ordinary experience prioritizes the experience of those qualities ascribed to symbols, signs, and their respective values, which are deeply rooted in everyday life. Amongst such qualities or "values", which cognitive studies would otherwise be barely able to grasp, are friendship and freedom.

Adapting Jung's concept of "ordinary experience" to the study of "religious experience" extends the analysis of experiences deemed religious in a profound way towards the experience of symbols and values that are – due to the holistic nature of an experience – immediately evoked by the execution of a practice.¹⁹ This sort of approach towards "ordinary *religious* experiences" does not, thus, attempt to investigate whether and how an experience of divine presence can be embodied in, and thus triggered by, particular practices that are acted out in their respective particular moments (e.g. public rituals). Directing a study towards "ordinary religious experiences" encourages the consideration of perceived qualities, such as valued relationships of friendship, as experiences deemed religious. Focusing on "ordinary religious experiences" also encourages the consideration of an ability of the individual to carry out various strategic maneuvers that establish and maintain these valued relationships with a deity.

This notion of ritual practice as a "strategic way of acting" corresponds with C. Bell's concept of ritualization. This is to say, Bell deploys a notion of embodiment that does not reduce ritual practice to a set of particular embodied

18 „Indem wir uns artikulieren, erzeugen wir höherstufige Bewertungen und ordnen unsere unmittelbare Erfahrung in ein holistisches, symbolisches Netzwerk der Wirklichkeitsdeutung ein“ (Jung 2014, 87). Cf. Jung 2016. Humphrey and Laidlaw make exactly the opposite point. Their understanding of ritualization contains a loss of a conscious being-in-the-world (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 135–136).

19 As he indicates himself (Jung 2014, 10). Jung emphasizes that a particular experience does not necessarily have to indicate something special or ecstatic, although it can be referred to something special, such as a divine agent or agents. McNamara confirms this basic idea to some degree from a cognitive point of view, when he emphasizes that any religious practice evokes a religious experience (McNamara 2009, 148).

body techniques that are acquired for particular ritual occasions.²⁰ By transforming Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “practical mastery” (Bourdieu [1976] 2012, 139–202) into “ritual mastery”, Bell (1992, 107–117) instead pinpoints the dialectic between the (ritual) body and its (ritual) environment, thus revealing the importance of the *variety* of embodied practices in religious contexts. According to Bell, “ritualization is the strategic manipulation of ‘context’ in the very act of reproducing it” (Bell 1992, 100). In pursuit of that aim, “ritualization *could* involve the exact repetition of a centuries-old tradition” but it can also involve a “deliberately radical innovation and improvisation” (Bell 1992, 91, emphasis mine). In this sense, the notion of ritual mastery pinpoints the integration – or in de Certeau’s terms, the “appropriation” (1984, 29–42) – of all sorts of practices, whether already embodied or recently learned, into the concurrent moment of practice in order to “deal with some specific circumstances” of that particular moment (Bell 1992, 92). These circumstances might involve the need to experience certain values elicited by these ritualized practices.

What distinguishes practical mastery from ritual mastery are the intrinsic strategies of “differentiation”, a “play of differences” as Bell calls them (Bell 1992, 105, cf. 90–93, 101–107). Bell reveals differentiation as the curtain behind which all practices appear as “special” or “extra-ordinary”.²¹ In Bourdieu’s terms, the play of differences supports the “distinction” of (religious) practice (Bell 1992, 90–93). Repetitions, reductions, changes of rhythms, changes of speed, and even a changed environment indicate the ritualized practice as both being and not being displaced at the very same time (Bell 1992, 88–93; Schieffelin 1996, 61). Ritual mastery does not, thus, merely include a creative sequencing of acts. Rather, it is also a creative way to develop and slightly alter them. Therefore, Bell’s approach to ritualization also facilitates the identification of those techniques that are of the highest importance in cognitive studies and the psychology of religion. The crucial aspect of differentiation fits well with the basic scheme of ecstatic practices, as Stanley Tambiah, for instance, illustrates in respect to so-called “sacred language” (Tambiah 1968, 182–188; cf. Rouget 1985, 12–62; McNamara 2009, 173). The emergence of a frenetic and

20 In the words of Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994, 260–261), these embodied body techniques are “waiting for acting out”. Ritual practices are therefore considered as “learned, transmitted, and shared by all those in a particular social and cultural milieu” (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, ch. 6, cit. 134). For this notion of embodiment in studies of prayer, see Norris 1999. In general Price et al. 2012.

21 “Specialness” (Taves 2009, 26–48); “Otherness” (Jensen 2014, 61–131; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 101–103); “das Besondere” (Rüpke 2016, 24, 35–39).

histrionic loss of self in practice does not, however, necessarily imply the individual's intention to lose his or her mind.

3 Seneca's objection to idolatry or: unquestionably superhuman agents

According to Seneca, the belief of the majority of Romans that statues are instantiations of divine presence,²² and not merely depictions or representations of deities, is a ridiculous superstition. Seneca enriches his complaints by drawing on popular views of the social lives and the emotions of the gods in order to ridicule the belief in corporally and emotionally present social beings that are able to communicate and even to marry (Sen. *Frg.* 31–33; 39).²³ Since Seneca's criticism mainly derives from his philosophical rejection of idolatry (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 10.4–5; 41.1–2; 95.46–50),²⁴ all the beliefs and practices which he considers “superstitious” may, rather, indicate a commonly shared cognition²⁵ according to which human worshippers find themselves interacting directly with a feeling (unquestionably superhuman) agent who is present with his or her body and mind.

22 Given the tremendous debate concerning this issue, see recently Eich 2011 and Weddle 2010.
 23 “*Sacros,*” inquit, “*immortales, inuiolabiles in materia uilissima atque immobili dedicant, habitus illis hominum ferarumque et piscium, quidam uero mixto sexu, diuersis corporibus induunt; numina uocant, quae si spiritu accepto subito occurrerent, monstra haberentur.*” Deinde aliquanto post, cum theologian naturalem praedicans quorundam philosophorum sententias digessisset, obposuit sibi quaestionem et ait: “*Hoc loco dicit aliquis: Credam ego caelum et terram deos esse et supra lunam alios, infra alios? Ego feram aut Platonem aut Peripateticum Stratonem, quorum alter fecit deum sine corpore, alter sine animo?*” Et ad hoc respondens: “*Quid ergo tandem, inquit, ueriora tibi uidentur Titi Tatii aut Romuli aut Tulli Hostilii somnia? Cloacinam Tatius dedicauit deam, Picum Tiberinumque Romulus, Hostilius Pauorem atque Pallorem taeterrimos omnium affectus, quorum alter mentis territae motus est, alter corporis ne morbus quidem, sed color. Haec numina potius credes et caelo recipies?*” [...] “*Quid quod et matrimonia, inquit, deorum iungimus, et ne pie quidem, fratrum ac sororum! Bellonam Marti conlocamus, Vulcano Venerem, Neptuno Salaciam. Quosdam tamen caelibes relinquimus, quasi condicio defecerit, praesertim cum quaedam uiduae sint, ut Populonia uel Fulgora et diua Rumina.*”

24 Detailed discussion by Setaioli 2007; Merckel 2012, 82–89.

25 The notion of superstition in relation to these fragments has been challenged by Rüpke 2011, 51–54; Estienne 2001; Bendlin 2006, 310–311; Merckel 2012, 90–96.

4 The first scene: bloody frenzy and mass castrations at Rome?

Seneca illustrates his argument against the alleged superstitious *furor* of idolatry with the following scene:

One castrates himself, another cuts his arms. Where will they find room for the fear of these gods when angry, who use such means of gaining their favor when propitious? But gods who wish to be worshipped in this fashion should be worshipped in none. So great is the frenzy of the mind when perturbed and driven from its seat, that the gods are propitiated by men in a manner in which not even men of the greatest ferocity and fable-renowned cruelty vent their rage. Tyrants have lacerated the limbs of some; they never ordered any one to lacerate his own. For the gratification of royal lust, some have been castrated; but no one ever, by the command of his lord, laid violent hands on himself to emasculate himself. They kill themselves in the temples. They supplicate with their wounds and with their blood. If anyone has time to see the things they do and the things they suffer, he will find so many things unseemly for men of respectability, so unworthy of freemen, so unlike the doings of sane men, that no one would doubt that they are mad, had they been mad with the minority; but now the multitude of the insane is the defense of their sanity. (Transl. Philip Schaff)²⁶

The scene Seneca describes here is not truly representative, since we can be relatively certain that the majority of Roman citizens, the group Seneca addresses here, did not spend their lives as castrated persons. It seems clear to me that Seneca does not agitate against “Oriental cults” in general, or against the Galloi in particular, so as to favor Roman cults by contrast.²⁷ Instead, the example of Phrygian self-mutilation serves as an overarching framework for the condemnation of *every* kind of (public) religious ritual undertaken by the majority of Romans. The point he wishes to make is that they are all as excessive as the Phrygian rituals.²⁸

²⁶ Sen., *Frg.* 34 = Sen. apud August., *De civ. D.* 6.10: *Ille, inquit, uiriles sibi partes amputat, ille lacertos secat. Ubi iratos deos timent qui sic propitios merentur? Dii autem nullo debent coli genere, si hoc uolunt. Tantus est perturbatae mentis et sedibus suis pulsae furor ut sic dii placentur quem ad modum ne quidem homines saeuunt taeterrimi et in fabulas traditae crudelitatis. Tyranni lacerauerunt aliquorum membra, neminem sua lacerare iusserunt. In regiae libidinis uoluptatem castrati sunt quidam; sed nemo sibi, ne uir esset, iubente domino manus tulit. Se ipsi in templis contrucidant, uulneribus suis ac sanguine supplicant. Si cui intueri uacet, quae faciunt quaeque patiuntur, inueniet tam indecora honestis, tam indigna liberis, tam dissimilia sanis, ut nemo fuerit dubitaturus furere eos, si cum paucioribus furerent; nunc sanitatis patrociniū est insanientium turba.*

²⁷ For such readings and for critical responses, see Turcan 1967, 30–37; Lausberg 1970, 211–225; Alvar 2008, 1–9; Merckel 2012, 67–96.

²⁸ In his small treatise on the good life (*de vita beata*), Seneca uses a similar but more detailed strategy in order to oppose Stoic philosophy with the ecstatic behavior that takes place in front of the temples, to which Seneca also refers pontifical practices (Sen., *Vit. beat.* 26.7–8).

The explicit plurality of the respective temples (*in templis*) makes this point very clear, as does the closing statement: “the multitude of the insane is the defense of their sanity.” Later on, these excesses are even declared to be “commanded by the laws” (Sen. *Frg.* 39),²⁹ i.e. by Roman tradition. Seneca attacks these strategies for sensory (over)stimulation as being too deeply rooted in the religious arrangements of Rome, just as Polybius (6.56.9–11) had implied some 200 years earlier.

While many other sources reflect similar concerns about charismatic, hysterical, and even self-mutilating rituals, and Seneca even goes so far as to include the public prayers of magistrates and their prompting pontiffs in this category, this scene also fulfills an important narratological function. After repeatedly mentioning the clichéd act of self-castration several times in a short space, Seneca then compares the self-mutilating and self-castrating masses with those who carry out non-ecstatic personal services for the gods. Seneca uses this explicit and intuitive narrative of self-mutilation to introduce the intense emotional impact of carrying out the non-mutilating services described below.

5 The bloodless frenzy: experiencing the relationship with a deity

5.1 Establishing a valued relationship strategically

Still there is a fixed time for this frenzy. It is tolerable to go mad once in the year. But go to the Capitol, and you will be ashamed of the folly there disclosed, and of the duties (*officia*) which a deluded madness has assigned itself. One servant informs Jupiter of the names of his worshippers, another announces the hours; one is his bather, another his anointer, that is, he gestures with empty hands to imitate the act of anointing. There are women who are hairdressers for Juno and Minerva: while standing far away from the temple as well as from the image they move the fingers as if they were dressing the hair, and there are others who hold a mirror. There are men who summon the gods to give bond for them, and some who offer them lawyers' briefs and explain their case [...].

(Transl. Philip Schaff)³⁰

²⁹ *Omnem istam ignobilem deorum turbam, quam longo aeuo longa superstitio congessit, sic, inquit, adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum eius magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinere.*

³⁰ Sen., *Frg.* 35–36 = apud August., *De civ. D.* 6.10: *Huic tamen, inquit, furori certum tempus est. Tolerabile est semel anno insanire. In Capitolium perueni, pudebit publicatae demenciae, quod sibi uanus furor adtribuit officii. Alius nomina deo subicit, alius horas Ioui nuntiat, alius lutor est, alius unctor, qui uano motu bracciorum imitatur unguentem. Sunt quae Iunoni ac Mineruae capillos disponant (longe a templo, non tantum a simulacro stantes digitos mouent*

The persons described here do not appear as priests performing formalized ritual practices of oriental provenance. They do not even appear as devoted servants carrying out specific ritual services that are connected to some particular temple, as the temporal distinction from annual festivities emphasizes. They behave, rather, as household personnel, houseguests, clients, and flatterers, who seek to establish a personal bond with the deity.³¹ They enact a morning salutation, in which the three gods, but particularly Jupiter Optimus Maximus, are considered the hosts. The most obvious salutation agent is the servant who informs Jupiter about the names of his other guests. He appears as a *nomenclator*.³² The second person similarly appears as a house servant who is in charge of organizing time, a human cuckoo-clock so to speak, who likewise asserts control over the salutation and banqueting procedures.³³ The other persons fit perfectly into this scheme as well, notwithstanding that one or the other function – the anointment for instance – may also appear in particular cult contexts. The following scene from Seneca’s 95th letter to Lucilius underlines my point:

Let us forbid lamps to be lighted on the Sabbath, since the gods do not need light, neither do men take pleasure in soot. Let us forbid men to offer morning salutation (*salutatio*) and to throng the doors of temples; mortal ambitions (*ambitio*) are attracted by such services (*officia*), but God is worshipped by those who truly know Him. Let us forbid bringing towels and flesh-scrapers to Jupiter, and proffering mirrors to Juno; for God seeks no servants.³⁴

(Transl. E. Phillips Barker)

Seneca illustrates the services performed here amidst the morning salutation much more explicitly as “strategic ways of action.” By referring the advantage of this salutation to an *ambitio*, Seneca flags up the reciprocity for which the agents are obviously striving: these agents are only interested in performing *officia* because they expect a favor in return (Saller 2002, 15). Seneca accuses them of instantiating or maintaining a selfish, reciprocal relationship to the gods. However, Seneca does not stigmatize these attempts as a sort of bribery,

ornantium modo), sunt quae speculum teneant; sunt qui ad uadimonia sua deos aduocent, sunt qui libellos offerant et illos causam suam doceant [. . .].

31 Whereas Estienne differentiates between common ritual practices and “pratiques sociales humaines” in this scene (Estienne 2001, 199–201), Bendlin seems to regard all these practices as “social rituals” (Bendlin 2006, 310–311). MacMullen (1981, 43–46) refers to so-called “folk religion”.

32 On *nomenclatores*, see Mommsen [1887] 1952, 356–359.

33 Mart. 8.67; Petron. 26.9; Juv. 10.216.

34 Sen., *Ep.* 95.47. This salutation scene is also framed by an attack against idolatry in favor of Seneca’s Stoic conceptions of God, which are mentioned in the quoted text (Sen., *Ep.* 95.46. 50).

as do a number of other authors (e.g. Pers. 2). Neither does a simple reciprocal schema involving a generalized or balanced exchange of favors explain the heightened emotionality about which Seneca openly complains (cf. Rüpke 2011, 53; Rüpke 2013). It is only by comparing the behavior of these individuals to the ritualized practices of the morning salutation in aristocratic households that we can really discover what sort of “return” was expected.

A brief survey of morning salutations at Rome suffices to show that the most valuable return for various *officia* is found in the apodictic certainty of a personal closeness to the addressee (Goldbeck 2010, 235–246. 264–277). Right from the start of the salutation, a complex system of exclusion and inclusion in time and space establishes and stages this certainty. As soon as the clients and friends arrive at the house of a (usually aristocratic) host, they are divided and thereby graduated into several groups, with the most important meeting with the host soonest and in the smallest numbers, whereas the least important persons join a large group at the end of the morning (Sen., *Ben.* 6.33.4–34.3).³⁵ The *practical mastery* manifests itself in various services which the guests provide to the host in these contexts. From offering exotic food to washing feet, everything is possible that complements, substantiates, and specifies a reciprocal relationship and, thereby asserts the personal closeness for which these agents are striving.³⁶ In short, morning salutations at Rome involved a variety of ritualizations of *ordinary* practices that establish a close relationship – indeed a friendship – for the duration of the practice.

The (religious) ritual mastery in the presence of the statues follows the same reciprocal logic as the (social) ritual mastery performed at the houses of aristocrats, as Seneca displays perfectly when he disparages the respective function of each “idolatrous” practice. By holding lamps, telling names, or anointing, the human agents integrate the deity into a reciprocal relationship for the sake of this relationship itself. The salutations in the temples do not, thus, display strict formalized performances. Rather, they provide examples of a “practically mastered idolatry” that is carried out by each individual. While the anointers and hairdressers may have been inspired by the more or less formalized rituals of Isis, Cybele, or Dea Dia (cf. Apul., *Met.* 11.9; Ov., *Fast.* 4.133–348), none of these goddesses appears in the scenes described. The agents seek to dominate or “master” the current circumstances by taking communicative practices from a range of contexts and appropriating them,

³⁵ *Pro honore dare, ut ostio suo propius adsideas, ut gradum prior intra domum ponas, in qua deinceps multa sunt ostia, quae receptos quoque excludant.*

³⁶ A long list of services is provided by Friedländer [1922] 1979, 248–253.

reshaping them, and even innovating in order to achieve the goal of an apodictic certainty of personal closeness to a deity.³⁷

Against this background, Seneca's attack on Jewish practices such as the lighting of a lamp makes much more sense. On first impression, one might wonder why Jews should consider the Sabbath observance as a *daily* service that enables an unspecified plurality of gods to see in the dark. There are further good grounds for rejecting the common interpretation that Seneca is here agitating against the Jews of Rome: the weekly Sabbath observance was already an essential Jewish practice and, more importantly, an identity marker for Jewish groups in Seneca's times (Barclay 1996, 440–442). Moreover, Jewish specialists were not unknown in the public sphere of Rome (Juv. 6.520–564; Hor., *Sat.* 1.9.67–72). A daily performance of Sabbatical rites by Jews is, thus, as unlikely as a misreading of their practices by Seneca. Since Roman authors such as Ovid advertise the Sabbath for its erotic charm (Ov., *Ars am.* 1.75), Seneca may rather agitate against those who appropriated the service of holding a lamp, because they recognized in it a personal service that could be offered to any god.³⁸

A closer look at the distance of practitioners from the statues offers an insight into the purest sense of Bell's concept of ritualization, namely that people attempt to dominate, shift, or nuance a competitive situation towards their own advantage (Bell 1992, 106–108). At least to my eyes, it is striking that the farther away the agents are from the statues, the closer they should theoretically be in order to perform their services properly. The anointer and hairdressers, for instance, should have the deity right at hand and not far away. Acting at a distance may imply a competitive situation that requires a certain degree of creativity to navigate, that is to say a practical mastery that differentiates the agents' own practices from those of the other agents around. On the other hand, they could also merely be attempting to cope with the fact that these particular statues were enormous and that it was impractical given the difference in size between human and god to carry out the services in a straightforward manner. In any case, these practices indicate an attempt to establish a close personal relationship with the deities.

³⁷ The same can be detected in banquet scenes (Scheid 2005; Veyne 2000) and even in public *lectisternia* (Habinek 2005, 36–44).

³⁸ As mentioned for the rites of the Arval Brethren (Scheid 1990, 627–628). For non-Jews appropriating Jewish practices, see Katell Berthelot in this volume.

5.2 The *furor* of an “ordinary religious experience”

Since Seneca starts his polemical documentation with the most excessive ritual available to him at Rome, it is clear that his primary goal is to pinpoint the emotional impacts in the subsequent Capitoline scene. Whereas the Capitol description clearly confirms the aroused minds of the “servants” by ascribing states of *furor* or *dementia* to them, the passage in the letters clearly indicates their individual attempts to establish a reciprocal relationship with the gods. In the words of Matthias Jung, the “servants” experience the symbolic value or “quality” of their personal interactions, which is immediately evoked by the execution of practice and which they strategically nuance in pursuit of their end. Certain women, who Seneca describes in a subsequent fragment as appearing in Jupiter’s temple and believing they are beloved by the deity, definitely made the best attempt in this respect. As he explicitly states, these women intensively experience the value of the relationship that they impose on their interaction with Jupiter, namely love and intimacy (Sen., *Frg.* 37).

The calendric reference confirms the suspicion that these intense experiences derive from the experience of strategically established valued relationships. These people neither prefer nor depend on collective effervescences or emotional communities for their religious experience. Similarly, no leading ritual agent, such as a magistrate or a priest, controls either the practices in pursuit of an experience or the articulations of these experiences. In consequence, the divine essence is not experienced through the projection of conscious, subconscious, or sensory stimulations onto the deity, who functions as a direct reference. The experience is, rather, of an indirect and holistic sort. By this I mean that the interaction automatically instantiates a symbolic level of a relationship that is experienced at the very moment in which the interaction is executed. The “plausible agents” are participants in an interaction and this interaction, in turn, acquires a symbolic quality, such as friendship, *because* of their participation. This situation perfectly expresses the notion of an ordinary religious experience: a religious experience does not need any inherently religious practices.³⁹ These people evidently “appropriated” various practices from a wide range of occasions and circumstances in order to master, or even dominate, the current situation in front of the temples.

³⁹ „Selbst höchste außeralltägliche Erfahrungsmodi, etwa religiöse, ästhetische oder moralische Grenzerfahrungen, können dann in diesem, strukturellen Sinn gewöhnlich sein, auch wenn es ihre Inhalte offensichtlich nicht sind“ (Jung 2014, 10).

By ritualizing and appropriating various communication practices in accordance with the reciprocal logic applied in friendship, the agents appear to have nuanced the meaning of these practices to bring them into line with their personal goals, to wit, certain degrees of personal closeness to the deity. Otherwise, Seneca would not lay so great an emphasis on the “ordinary” meaning of these practices, namely slave-services. He tries to adjust the “original” connotations of these practices to the current situation, whereas, in fact, these practices had already lost the “original” significance due to their “manipulation” towards a “valued relationship”, as Bell would put it.

5.3 Concessions: ecstatic states

Despite the fact that close personal relationships are necessarily accompanied by the respective qualitative experiences, Seneca’s description also indicates the presence of those particular modes of religious experiences that are debated by scholars who approach these actions from a (neuro-)psychological perspective. This especially concerns the aspect of differentiation discussed above. This differentiation is best expressed by the fact that people sit in front of the closed temple doors, well-equipped and willing to fulfil their particular tasks. Whereas bathing or anointing is just one element among others during processions, the agents at the Capitol and at more distant temples seem to repeat the same practice throughout their service. They conform to the differentiation strategies of reduction and repetition. According to scholars of cognition, the repetition of particular ritualized patterns, and/or the exaggerated performance of such patterns, often tends to lead to histrionic takeovers. The agents lose intentionality and thereby fall into ecstatic, indeed dissociative states that may or may not lead to the experience of an “internal personal alien control” or, to put it more simply, “possession”.⁴⁰

The famous morning visits with which Scipio Africanus honored the Capitoline Jupiter confirm this view (Liv. 26.19.4–9; Gell. 6.1.6.; Val. Max. 1.2.2). As Livy points out, Scipio’s mind was possessed by somewhat superstitious thoughts or practices (*capti quadam superstitione animi*), by which he means that Scipio was practicing highly arousing “superstitious” rituals of the sort that John Scheid and Paul Veyne have identified with ecstatic prophetic practices (Scheid 1998, 176–180; Veyne 1989, 184–185). In this regard, Scipio spent

⁴⁰ Deeley et al. 2014; McNamara 2009, 167–192; Atran 2002, 165–169. From an anthropological point of view, see Rouget 1985, 17–46.

his morning visits, which Livy connects to the daily cycle of salutations,⁴¹ engaged in a frenetic and arousing ritualization. In this way, his behavior corresponds with that of the prophetic Sybil or, indeed, with Appian's depictions of Scipio's own religious frenzy before a battle.⁴²

Similarly, the Sabbath, which Seneca aligns with all the other services, is connected to ecstatic practices by some Roman and Greek authors. Juvenal and Plutarch, for instance, align Sabbath observances with other superstitious practices that are deemed extreme and ecstatic. For these writers, keeping the Sabbath is similar to supplicating in barbarian words (i.e. speaking in tongues), writhing in mud, or self-mutilation in the Phrygian style (Plut., *De superst.* 3d. 7d; Juv. 6.535–564). If we treat the Capitoline scene and the letter's scene as emerging from a single shared context, Seneca's notion of *furor* seems to confirm these notions of ecstatic experiences in Jewish practices.

This brief comparative survey will, I hope, suffice to show that, although ecstatic practices and experiences are not necessary, such experiences are nevertheless possible. The servants could lose themselves in their respective practice. These transitions into an altered level of conscious experience, however, are not to be confused with the primary intention of ritualizing services. They merely intensify or complement the ordinary religious experiences of divine closeness.

6 Conclusion

In my introduction, I asked: (a) how can we detect religious experience in our sources, and (b) how does this affect our overall view of religiosity, religious belief, and religious practice in antiquity?

With regard to the first question, my results will be rather unsatisfying for those who wish to extract a generalized framework that elucidates religious experiences in all contexts and on all occasions. Whereas the commonly applied models for ecstatic and dissociative experiences might be ideal for such a task, my considerations rather provide tentative access to something I referred to as “ordinary religious experience”. Seneca's polemic against individual religious

⁴¹ The formulation *nullo die prius ullam publicam priuatamque rem egit, quam in Capitolium iret* is to be understood this way (Liv. 26.19.5).

⁴² “He followed their movement, gazing at them and crying out like one possessed. The whole army, as it saw him turning hither and thither, imitated his actions, and all were fired with the idea of certain victory” (App., *Hisp.* 26).

practices exemplifies the variety of experiences deemed religious that go beyond altered states of consciousness. His account illuminates the fact that religious experiences do not necessarily depend on ecstatic or dissociative states. Likewise, the concepts of ritual mastery and ordinary experience clearly shift the idea of ritual embodiment, in the sense of an individual's rehearsed performance, to the notion of an individual's unique, situational, and therefore ephemeral practice. Ritualized practices can also be structured by a rather mundane strategic logic that aims at "modelling" valued relationships for the sake of the experience of that particular relationship itself.

Given this background, it is worth considering a pragmatist reading of belief. Coming from this point of view, knowledge and cognition are not simply pre-reflexive but, rather, self-reflexive. That is to say, cognition results from action. Acting at a certain moment shapes the individual's cognitive map and therefore evokes new expectations for prospective actions (Jung 2014, 37–74; Joas 1996, 232–237).⁴³ From this perspective, it is exactly those experiences that are deemed religious or divine that support the belief in a divine presence – a belief about which Seneca complains. As long as no skepticism arises about the nature of the statue or the success of the communication, there is no need to doubt the divine presence. That process can tentatively be recognized in the salutation scenes. People act out a personal relationship that they emotionalize. In experiencing this relationship, the presence of the deity becomes perceptually real. Once performatively established, there is an ongoing expectation that such a warm relationship with the deity can be re-established. Religious experience is, thus, a driving force for the making of belief.⁴⁴

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⁴³ For cognitive approaches on this notion of *personal belief* and its relation to culture and belief systems, see Leeuwen and van Elk 2018; Barret and Lanman 2008.

⁴⁴ If this is accepted, then John Scheid's (2015, 113) assumption that "emotion did not form the basis or origin of belief and practice" would be falsified.

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Ian Rutherford

The experience of pilgrimage in the Roman Empire: *communitas*, *paideiā*, and piety-signaling

Abstract: Pilgrimage of various types is well attested in the pre-Christian religions of the Roman Empire, but there is comparatively little evidence for the personal experiences of pilgrims. Some recent studies have argued that typical pilgrims of this period were members of the intellectual elite highly versed in literary culture (*paideia*) who saw sacred places as museums of Greek culture. In this paper, I try to reconstruct what we can about the experience of pilgrimage in early Roman Empire, looking at three cases studies:

- a. Philo's somewhat idealized account of Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which stresses intense common feeling (or *communitas*, to use Victor Turner's term) between participants;
- b. Pilgrimage to the oracle of Apollo at Claros, to which cities of Asia Minor and elsewhere sent sacred delegations, largely made up of children who performed hymns at the sanctuary. It may be suggested that the experience of the pilgrimage was in large part an educative one – learning about Greek culture and learning how to behave in public; it might even be seen as a sort of rite of passage.
- c. The healing-pilgrimages of Aelius Aristides to Pergamum and elsewhere. Aristides' experience at Pergamum is full of *paideia*, though that was not the primary motivation, and it sometimes approaches *communitas*, though in the end the presence of other people tends to serve the purpose of an audience and foil for his own brilliance. Key aspects of his experience seem to be: a) suffering and b) a feeling of closeness to the god, sometimes bordering on identification with him.

1 Introduction

Any enquiry into the experience of pilgrimage in the Ancient World faces three initial problems:¹

1 The paper excludes Christian pilgrimage (which is outside my sphere of competence).

Note: Much of this paper was written while I was a visiting senior fellow at ANAMED in Istanbul, spring 2017.

1. The definition of pilgrimage. Over the last two decades, some scholars have begun to use the term “pilgrimage” in the context of Mediterranean polytheism, while others have resisted it.² My view is that the use of the term is justifiable, as long as we are aware of what we mean by it. A useful general definition seems to me that of Joy McCorrison: “Pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place to participate in a system of sacred beliefs” (McCorrison 2011, 19).³ Within this general concept, we need to distinguish pilgrimages of different types, e.g. healing pilgrimages or pilgrimages of initiation. But however we define the concept, there will still be grey areas: for example, should we think of the audience of Pausanias’ *Periegesis* as tourists, an educated elite, or pilgrims (see Elsner 1997)? When people leave graffiti on Egyptian monuments, e.g. in the Theban Tombs, should those be considered pilgrimage or tourism or religious tourism? And can the term “pilgrimage” be applied even if the journey is only a few kilometres, such as that from Antioch in Pisidia to the sanctuary of Men Askaenos on the hill 5 km SE of the city (see Labarre and Tashahhan 2002)?
2. The definition of “experience”. The word is ambiguous, covering either i. “what happens to someone”, or ii. someone’s subjective experiences, i.e. how experience in the first sense feels. The second is of course harder to establish, given the nature of our sources.
3. Evidence. In general, pilgrimage leaves little evidence, considering its likely volume (see Rutherford 2013, 17). Some important pilgrimage traditions are almost undocumented, for example that relating to the festival of Artemis at Ephesos (Kötting 1950; Oster 1990; Elsner 1997). What evidence does survive tends to fall into two categories: i. literary accounts, and ii. inscriptions of various sorts. Inscriptions are usually simple public records of visitation, including little if any information about the experience of participants (at least in the sense of “subjective experience”). Literary accounts, where we have them, are a much better source for human experience, but they raise other problems: do they give us an accurate account of the “lived” experience of pilgrims, or should we think of them as shaped and determined by literary tradition?

In recent decades scholars have begun to discuss pilgrims’ experience. Matthew Dillon has assembled some relevant evidence for Greek sanctuaries (Dillon 1997, 204–227). In the *Seeing the Gods* volume the word “experience”

² Those using the term include Jas Elsner, Matthew Dillon and Troels Myrop Kristensen. For resistance to the term see Rutherford 2013, 12–14; recent criticism has come from Price 2012, 8 n. 36 and now Bremmer 2017.

³ I owe the citation to Kristensen 2012, 107 n. 1.

(noun or verb) is used well over one hundred times (Elsner and Rutherford 2005). Jas Elsner, Marco Galli and Alexia Petsalis-Diomides have looked particularly at experience of different forms of pilgrimage in the Second Sophistic (Elsner 1992; Galli 2005; Petsalis-Diomides 2005; 2010).

Here are some of the basic areas of experience that we find in most forms of pilgrimage, including Greco-Roman pilgrimage:

- Enhanced religious experience. The sacred place is often regarded as somewhere where access to the deity is easy, often because the deity is supposed to have manifested her-/himself there, or performed some miracle. Strabo (*Geog.* 8.6.15) talks of the *epiphaneia* (“tendency to reveal himself”) of Asclepius at Epidaurus. Aelius Aristides has a vivid dream of his encounter with Asclepius at Pergamum (“it seemed as if I touched him”: *Sacred Tales* 2.32–33). Thessalos of Tralles imagined himself as actually meeting Amun at Egyptian Thebes (Totti 1985, no. 5).⁴
- Obligatory ritual scripts. Pilgrims are required to perform certain key ritual acts in the sanctuary, such as making an offering, taking part in a procession, bathing or incubation. A case where we have reasonably good evidence is initiatory pilgrimage to the Great Mysteries in Attica. Similar patterns are found in Greco-Roman healing sanctuaries; see Petsalis-Diomidis 2005, 198–205 on the “choreography” of Roman Pergamum.
- A feeling of communality with other pilgrims. The term most commonly used for this today is *communitas*, invented by Victor Turner who saw in it an almost mystical “antistructure” uniting all humanity (Turner 1972). Shared feeling happens particularly on the occasion of festivals, but it can be generated vicariously by seeing evidence for visits by other people at the sanctuary. In reality, it may be that by creating cohesion within one group, pilgrimage has the effect of accentuating differences between groups, either between different groups of pilgrims, or between pilgrims and other people.⁵
- The experience of the journey. In some religious traditions, emphasis is put on the journey to and from the sacred place, sometimes with the idea that the difficulty of the journey enhances its value. The experience of the journey is not well documented for Greco-Roman pilgrimage, though we know that “sacred ways” leading to the sanctuary were in some cases ritualized (cf. Pausanias 1.36–7 the journey from Athens to Eleusis). Sacred delegates

⁴ In a previous paper (Rutherford 2000) I argued that intense religious vision might have been part of this.

⁵ For an effective critique of *communitas* in the context of pilgrimage, see Kantner et al. 2012, 67–68.

(*theōroi*) sent by cities to festivals seem to have had a special sacred status *en route* (cf. Rutherford 2013, 174–178).

- Experience of the sanctuary-infrastructure. Key elements are: a. cult statues, sacred ways, hostels, dining rooms etc.; b. dedications by and records of previous pilgrims; c. pilgrimage-infrastructure, such as hostels and dining rooms. The visitors' experience of the sanctuary was not always positive: the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, as reported by Arrian (*Discourses* 6.1.10) talks about the inconvenience of Olympia:

Do you not swelter? Are you not cramped and crowded? Do you not bathe with discomfort? Are you not drenched when it rains? Do you not have your fill of tumult and shouting and other annoyances?

- Pilgrimage experienced as a rite of passage? Victor Turner also suggested that pilgrimage can function as, or symbolize, a rite of passage between different life-stages (Turner 1972). This model might work for some forms of pilgrimage in the ancient world; for example, initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, which takes place at the culmination of a pilgrimage, functions as a rite of passage between the status “non-initiate” and “initiate”.⁶

2 *Paideiā* and the Second Sophistic

For educated pilgrims in the Second Sophistic, a more nuanced theory about the experience of pilgrimage has been proposed. It has been suggested that in this period sacred places were primarily *lieux de mémoire*; visiting them was thus an intellectual experience, but also triggered an emotional response for which visitors had already been primed from their *paideiā* (literary education). Jas Elsner suggested that Pausanias was writing for these sorts of people, and indeed was this sort of pilgrim himself (Elsner 1992). This view was further developed in an important article by Marco Galli, e.g. (Galli 2005, 258):

The interaction of mental images, already present in the observer, and their activation via emotional tensions generated by contact with a sacred place, constitute the catalyzing experience of the pilgrimage.

However, it would be a mistake to see these attitudes as confined to the Second Sophistic: it must have been common at all periods for visitors to approach the sanctuaries equipped with some knowledge about it sanctuary. For

⁶ For other examples, cf. Rutherford 2005.

example, the chorus of Euripides' tragedy *Ion* who are Athenians visiting Delphi for the first time, are represented as already knowing something about the material culture of Delphi, and in the same play Creusa reacts in a complex way to it, comparing it with her own negative experiences of Apollo (247ff.).

Equally, experience conditioned by elite-*paideiā* was not necessarily typical of the Second Sophistic. The basis for this reconstruction is largely literary sources, such as Plutarch and Pausanias, who it could be argued are not describing pilgrimage at all, but elite intellectual tourism. Meanwhile, there were other traditions, such as the pilgrimage to the Syrian Goddess at Hierapolis-Membig in North Syria and that to the cult of Glycon at Abonoteikhou in Paphlagonia, both described by Lucian (Petsalis-Diomides 2010), which were presumably more popular in character, and lacking in elite *paideiā*.

For some sanctuaries, the clientele may have been a mixture, comprising a majority of ordinary people, and some members of the educated elite. Take, for example, the case of the so-called Memnonion at Abydos in Egypt, which was originally the mortuary temple of the pharaoh Seti I, but identified with the palace of Memnon, the Ethiopian hero of Greek epic, from the time of Strabo (Geog.17.1.42):

Above this city is Abydos, where is the palace of Memnon, constructed in a singular manner, entirely of stone, and after the plan of the Labyrinth, which we have described, but not composed of many parts. It has a fountain situated at a great depth. There is a descent to it through an arched passage built with single stones, of remarkable size and workmanship.

Strabo refers to the so-called Oseirion at the back of the Memnonion. His account is aimed at the educated elite and the reference to the "Labyrinth" ultimately recalls Herodotus' account of the so-called Labyrinth at Lake Moeris (see Lloyd 1970).

The walls of the main building preserve graffiti in honor of the deities Sarapis or Bes (the latter approached via a chapel at the back of the building) written by or on behalf of visitors over several centuries (see Rutherford 2003). It may be that for many of these the primary destination was the main temple of Osiris, which has not survived. Major motivations were healing and consulting the oracle of Bes (the political importance of which in the 4th century is attested by Ammianus Marcellinus, *Hist.* 19.12). Little can be said about the experience of these pilgrims, except that many of them came from the region and some of them underwent incubation (see Rutherford 2003, 182). Some of them inscribed graffiti, often including the *proskunēma* formula, which announces the *proskunēma* ("adoration") of such and such a person besides the deity (see

Geraci 1971). This may imply the physical act of *proskunēsis* or prostration before the deity.

Of learned self-reflective pilgrims there are very few signs:

1. In one graffito (PL498)⁷ the pilgrim Bagas speculates on the identity of the divinity, who he himself thinks of as Dionysus.⁸
2. Another graffito (PL563), records a visit by one Menelaos son of Dikaios to the “Memnonion”, which shows knowledge of the tradition reported in Strabo (17.1.42).
3. The most “learned” artifact from the site seems to be a Greek poem which has been found inscribed on the wall of the Oseirion, composed apparently by two Italians passing through on their way home (Boyaval 1969). It is difficult to interpret, not least because only alternate lines survive, but it is clear that it is addressed to Maia, mother of Hermes in Greek tradition, presumably here identified with Hermes Trismegistos, who for Romans of this period would have been regarded as one of the most important Egyptian gods. Hermes is asked to help the dedicators in their journey as he had helped Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*.

But these three are not much out of a total of almost one thousand graffiti.

3 Jewish pilgrimage and *communitas*

One important pilgrimage tradition of the early Roman Empire that has often been neglected is that of Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁹ Until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, thousands of pilgrims from Judea, Babylon and all over the Jewish Diaspora visited Jerusalem every year to celebrate the three main Jewish festivals: Passover (Pesach) in Nisan (April), the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) in Sivan (June), roughly corresponding to Christian Pentecost, and Sukkot (Tabernacles) in Tishri (October). Attendance at these festivals is already prescribed in the Torah (although originally it applied only to pilgrimage from within Judea and Samaria). According to Greco-Jewish and Hebrew sources the numbers were huge. Josephus (*Jewish War* 6.420–7) in his discussion of the events of 70 CE says that 2,700,000 people attended the Passover in

⁷ PL = P. Perdrizet and G. Lefebvre 1919.

⁸ . . Ασκληπίον σε λέγουσιν, ἐγὼ δέ τε καὶ Διόνυσον, / ἄλλοι δ’ αὖ Φοῖβόν τε καὶ Ἑρμῆν καὶ Ἄρποχράτην.

⁹ See Safrai 1981; Feldman 2006; Amir 1983; Rutherford 2017.

that year; even if this number is hugely exaggerated, it was still a vast event. Martin Goodman has suggested that the practice was encouraged by Herod the Great for economic reasons (Goodman 1999).

The fullest discussion of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in an ancient writer, at least in Greek, is by the Jewish Alexandrian author Philo of Alexandria. For Philo both the city and the Temple of Jerusalem were unique. The Temple was the only place it was legitimate to worship Yahweh, and Jerusalem was the mother-city (*mētropolis*) of world Jewry (*In Flacc.* 46). Philo himself made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem at least once, but his brief reference to that journey in *On Providence* provides no insight into the significance of the experience (*De Prov.* 2.64). His fullest account is in the *Special Laws* (1.67–70), an elaboration of the prescription regarding pilgrimage in the Torah. Since God provides that there is only one Temple, it is incumbent on people to go there to sacrifice:

Further, he does not consent to those who wish to perform the rites in their houses, but bids them rise up from the ends of the earth and come to this temple. In this way he also applies the severest test to their dispositions. For one who is not going to sacrifice in a religious spirit would never bring himself to leave his country and friends and kinsfolk and sojourn in a strange land (*xeniteuein*), but clearly it must be the stronger attraction of piety which leads him to endure separation from his most familiar and dearest friends who form as it were a single whole with himself (*henōmenōn merōn*). And we have the surest proof of this in what actually happens. Countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea, from east and west and north and south at every feast. They take the temple for their port as a general haven and safe refuge from the bustle and great turmoil of life, and there they seek to find calm weather, and, released from cares whose yoke has been heavy upon them from their earliest years, to enjoy a brief breathing space in scenes of general cheerfulness. Thus filled with comfortable hopes, they devote the leisure, as is their bounden duty, to holiness and the honoring of god. Friendships are formed between those who hitherto did not know each other and the sacrifices and libations are the occasion of reciprocity of feeling (literally a mixing (*krāsis*) of *ēthē*) and constitute the surest pledge of concord (*homonoia*).¹⁰

10 εἶτα τοῖς βουλομένοις ἐν ταῖς οἰκίαις αὐτῶν ἱερουργεῖν οὐκ ἐφίησιν, ἀλλ' ἀνισταμένους ἀπὸ περάτων γῆς εἰς τοῦτ' ἀφικνεῖσθαι κελεύει, ἅμα καὶ τῶν τρόπων ἀναγκαιοτάτην λαμβάνων βάσανον· ὁ γὰρ μὴ μέλλων θύειν εὐαγῶς οὐκ ἂν ὑπομείναι ποτὲ πατρίδα καὶ φίλους καὶ συγγενεῖς ἀπολιπῶν ξενιτεύειν, ἀλλ' ἔοικεν ὑπὸ δυνατωτέρας ὀλκῆς ἀγόμενος τῆς πρὸς εὐσέβειαν ὑπομένειν τῶν συνηθεστάτων καὶ φιλάτων ὥσπερ τινῶν ἠνωμένων μερῶν ἀπαρτᾶσθαι. καὶ τοῦδε σαφεστάτη πίστις τὰ γινόμενα· μυριοὶ γὰρ ἀπὸ μυρίων ὄσων πόλεων, οἱ μὲν διὰ γῆς, οἱ δὲ διὰ θαλάττης, ἐξ ἀνατολῆς καὶ δύσεως καὶ ἄρκτου καὶ μεσημβρίας καθ' ἐκάστην ἑορτὴν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν καταίρουσιν οἷά τινα κοινὸν ὑπόδρομον καὶ καταγωγὴν ἀσφαλῆ πολυπράγμονος καὶ ταραχωδεστάτου βίου, ζητοῦντες εὐδὶαν εὐρεῖν καὶ φροντίδων ἀνεθέντες, αἷς ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας καταζεύγνυνται καὶ πιέζονται, βραχύν τινα διαπνεύσαντες χρόνον ἐν ἰλαραῖς διάγειν εὐθυμίας· ἐλπίδων τε χρηστῶν γεμισθέντες σχολάζουσι τὴν ἀναγκαιοτάτην

This text tells us a lot about the sociology and experience of the pilgrimage.¹¹ There are three components, which combine the religious and the sociological:

- i. first, leaving one's own community, as from a set of unified parts, so as to become a stranger abroad (*xeniteuein*).¹²
- ii. second, calm, cheerfulness, leisure-devoted-to-religion; and
- iii. third, becoming part of another community in Jerusalem: getting to know fellow Jews you did not know before, the mixing of *ēthē* and the creation of *homonoia*.

Philo's analysis is unique – nothing of this sort survives for Greco-Roman pilgrimage (although some of the ideas occur in philosophical analysis of festivals) (see Rutherford 2017). For Philo, religion itself plays a minor part, and learned *paideia* none at all; it is almost wholly sociological: the bodies of participants are torn from their ordinary social contexts and brought together to form a new, if temporary, body-politic. In fact, element iii. is very similar to Turner's *communitas*, a perceived leveling of differences between participants, resulting in a new social order which he called "antistructure".¹³ Perhaps it would be better to see the idealized community of the Jerusalem-pilgrimage as the authentic and underlying structure of the Jewish state, opposed to the unreal "antistructure" of the Diaspora. In any case, the idealized community of Jerusalem is an elite group, entirely separate from the mass of humanity.

4 Claros: *Paideia* as a rite of passage

The best documented pilgrimage tradition from the Roman period is that relating to the cult of Apollo at Claros at Colophon. The oracle dates back at least to the 6th century CE, but it came to prominence in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, when it started to rival Didyma. It seems that the cult of Apollo Clarius

σχολήν ὀσιότητα καὶ τιμὴ θεοῦ, φυλίαν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς τέως ἀγνοουμένους συντιθέμενοι καὶ κρᾶσιν ἡθῶν ἐπὶ θυσίων καὶ σπονδῶν εἰς βεβαιωτάτην πίστιν **ὁμονοίας** ποιοῦμενοι.

11 A few decades later, after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Josephus gives an account very similar to Philo's (*Jewish Antiquities* 4.203–204).

12 The word *xeniteia* is later used of the alienated life of monks: see Bitton-Ashkelony 2005, 147–151 on the role of *xeniteia* and its Syrian equivalent *askaniutha* in early Christian pilgrimage; for the idea of the Christian pilgrim as an alien see also Pullan 2005, 394–395.

13 *Communitas*: Turner 1974 (an adapted version of Turner 1972); see also Feldman 2006. For an insightful critique of Victor and Edith Turner's religious development, see Larsen 2014, 174–220.

was closely connected with the imperial cult, at least from the 2nd century CE (see Ferrary 2005; 2014).¹⁴

Almost all the evidence is epigraphical. Most of it is in the form of inscriptions displayed in the sanctuary documenting recording delegations. Several hundred of these survive covering a time span of over a century; they have recently been edited by Jean-Louis Ferrary. The delegations come from these main areas: Ionia and Aeolis; Macedonia and Thrace; the Black Sea; Northern Asia Minor; the Propontis; central Asia Minor; and Crete. The only delegation attested from mainland Greece is from Corinth. Some cities sent regular delegations (every year or every few years) over several decades; the most faithful clients are cities in SW Phrygia and NE Caria (e.g. Laodiceia on the Lycus) and Ionia (e.g. Chios). Secondly, we have verse-oracles from Claros which were displayed in the home cities of the consulters (Merkelbach and Stauber 1996), many of them responses to enquiries relating to plague. Most of the consulters come from Asia Minor, and almost all of them are cities. Sometimes the oracle seems to have ordered the sending of delegations. Light on the religious “network” of Clarian Apollo is also shed by two further data sets: first, a group of inscriptions which record dedications “in accordance with the exegesis of Clarian Apollo”; most of these come from the Western Roman Empire and are in Latin; only one Greek example survives, from Melli in Pisidia (Mitchell 2003). Secondly, one filial cult of Apollo Clarius is attested, from Sagalassos in Pisidia, which also sent delegations to Colophon; there may have been another at Apameia-Myrleia. Overall, the clientele of Claros seems to have been from Greek or Greco-Roman areas, although the theology of the oracle seems to be syncretic and to include some non-Greek elements,¹⁵ and, as has been noted, the oracle-authorities seems to have made a point of inviting *barbaroi* as well (see Robert and Robert 1989, 94–95).

A characteristic of the delegations is they include choirs of children (usually between six and fourteen in number; sometimes boys and girls, sometimes just boys) who sing hymns. In some cases the same individuals are known to have made several journeys, first as children and later as adults. The practice of sending choirs of young people to a sanctuary of Apollo recalls the festival culture of Delos in the 5th century BCE. It is rare in this period, though an inscription from Kaunos (1st century CE) attested a delegation of young men sent to Samothrace (Marek 2006, no. 28, 19). One learned feature of the inscriptions is

¹⁴ I discuss this further in Rutherford (forthcoming).

¹⁵ Cf. the verse oracles edited by Merkelbach and Stauber 1996, no. 25–28. Deities mention include Aither (no. 25), Aion (no. 26) and Iao (no. 28).

that the language used (such as the words *theōroi* and the archaic sounding *ēitheoi* (“young men”)) sometimes seems designed to recall descriptions of *theōroi* from earlier centuries. Hierapytna in Crete sends delegations of fourteen singers (seven girls, seven boys) which suggests the “Dis Hepta” (“Twice Seven”) familiar from the Athenian myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.

The delegations to Claros often included a designated oracle consulter, the *theopropos* (sometimes more than one), who underwent initiation, followed by an action designated by the Greek verb *embateuein*, which seems to mean “stepping into”. The prose introduction to the long oracle for Pergamum refers to those:

[... who being] initiated and ‘ste[pping into]’, consulted the oracle and received [t]he subscribed oracular response.

Three other documents also say that *theopropoi* were initiated, “stepped into” and consulted the oracle. It seems likely that both initiation and *embateiā* are integral parts of the process of consultation, rather than independent ritual activities. Perhaps the “initiation” had something to do with the mystical, syncretistic religious doctrines for which Claros seems to have been known. These actions seem to have been followed by the giving of the oracle and its reception by the delegates, perhaps in an underground chamber (cf. Rutherford 2013, 101–102).

That, in rough outline, is all the information we have for the experience of pilgrims at Claros. Much is unknown, such as whether delegations visited on the occasion of a festival, so that delegations from different cities met. We have no information about performances, dance-styles etc. There is in the extant documentation no sign of *communitas* (perhaps a great communal hymn to Apollo?) or any other communication between pilgrims from different towns. We don’t know whether other rituals were important also, such as animal sacrifice (an oracle from Didyma in the 3rd century BCE conveys the surprising information that Apollo prefers song to animal sacrifice) (see Rutherford 2013, 237). Nor do we know whether pilgrim-delegations coming all the way from central or even eastern Anatolia would have taken the opportunity to visit other famous sanctuaries in the West, such as Ephesos. It goes without saying that we have no information about how these young people felt to be removed from their home communities (like Philo’s pilgrims), though we can guess.

It is reasonable to think that a major part of the effect of the pilgrimage was showing off to other people. Cities may have aimed to outdo each other at Claros, sending elaborate delegations which served to display their piety and wealth (cf. the model of “costly signals”, which are effective because recognized as unlikely to be faked) (Henrich 2009; Kantner and Vaughn 2012). A clue

to how this worked may be provided by a scene from Heliodorus' novel the *Ethiopian Story* (3rd–4th centuries CE) which describes the arrival of a large *theōria* from Thessaly at Delphi and the spectacular impression it made. In Heliodorus' narrative the leader of the delegation is presented as a Greek of unimpeachable ancestry, tracing his family back the family of Achilles whose son Neoptolemus was worshipped at Delphi (Heliodorus, *Aithiopika* 3.4–5; Rutherford 2013, 351–352); possibly similar networks of ethnicity and ancestry played a part in pilgrimage to Claros. Delegations to Claros may also have tried to make an impressive display in other places *en route*, especially since they passed through other cities that sent delegations to Claros (e.g. delegations from Iconium in Lycaonia will have passed through or close to the territory of Laodikeia in SW Phrygia).

For the young choreuts themselves, these trips could have been a formative experience. They will have learned about the traditions of the sanctuary and gained experience of the broader world of Greco-Roman culture beyond their own cities. It will also have trained them to present themselves in a specific way in public, as a coordinated group of young, *paideiā*-equipped members of the elite, representing their cities in public and displaying the cultural habitus that befitted their status. Finally, the whole process of travel to Claros and back again will probably have tended to confirm their elite status within their own communities. It could have been a key stage in their initiation to adult life, almost a rite of passage.

5 Aristides and piety-signaling

Probably the best source for the experience of pilgrimage in the Roman world is Aelius Aristides, a prominent embodiment of *paideiā*, who left detailed records of his religious life in his *Sacred Tales*.¹⁶ Aristides was a devotee of Asclepius of Pergamum, to whose will, as revealed through dream oracles, he seems to have outsourced responsibility for running his life. For Aristides, Asclepius, or more precisely Zeus-Asclepius, was not merely a healer but the “fairest, and most perfect torch-bearer and mystagogue” (*Or.* 23.16), terminology which suggests the teleological initiation of Eleusis. He also calls him “the One” (*Sacred Tale* 4.50), an epithet which perhaps suggests Isiac religion (see Dousa 2002).

¹⁶ The bibliography on Aristides is increasing all the time. I wrote about Aristides' minor pilgrimages in Rutherford 1999, and I have found particularly helpful the work of Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, e.g. Petsalis-Diomidis 2005; 2010.

Aristides spent two years in the Asklepieion at Pergamum, during what he called the *Kathedrā* (“sitting”) from 145 CE to 147 CE, and this period can be thought of as a sort of extended pilgrimage. Apart from those years, he seems to have been often on the move, making journeys that often resemble mini-pilgrimages. Finally, Aristides also dreams of sacred journeys: the *Fifth Sacred Tale* concludes with a dream in which he is transported to Athens, where he visits a temple of Plato (see below). In another dream he is chased through a long tunnel, to arrive at Smyrna just at the moment when a choir there greets the sunrise (*Sacred Tale* 1.22).

Aristides’ pilgrimages are motivated by healing, and as such they are rather different from, say, the pilgrimage to a national festival described by Philo, and from the sacred delegations to Claros (though health, at least public health, was a motivation in the case of at least some of those as well). In fact, Aristides knew of motivations for sacred travel besides healing-pilgrimage. When he sets off for the healing springs at Gönen on the River Aesepeus (*Sacred Tale* 4.2) he says that he was in such a high spirits when they set out that it was “as if we were going to a festival (ὡς εἰς θεωρίαν)” (it is significant that on this journey, he composes hymns, almost as if he is going to visit Claros); the phrasing here implies that normally healing pilgrimages were different from festival journeys.¹⁷ Similarly, Aristides’ motivation is not primarily *paideiā*, although he is aware that intellectuals sometimes travel for this reason; for example the Cretan philosopher Euarestos who, as he relates, comes from Egypt to Pergamum “for the sake of inquiry into the matters of the god” (καθ’ ἰστορίαν τῶν περὶ τὸν θεὸν) (*Sacred Tale* 4.23) (cf. Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 132).

What can we say about his experience? His account is uniquely detailed, and he sheds light on aspects which are hardly mentioned in other sources, for example:

- a. that ancient pilgrims sometimes had to battle with adverse conditions on the journey, e.g. because of the weather (for examples in Aristides, see Rutherford 1999, 136; Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 108); similarly, that the god may sometimes be thought to supervise the journey. At *Sacred Tale* 5.26, the road towards the temple of Pergamum is marked by a streak of clear weather, while on the right it is snowy and on the left it is raining (cf. Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 138–139). On another occasion a mini-procession within the sanctuary is led by two divinely-sent ducks (*Sacred Tale* 3.49).¹⁸

¹⁷ Note that θεωρίαν here means “festival/spectacle”, not “pilgrimage” (Behr 1981) or “sacred embassy” (Rutherford 1999, 142).

¹⁸ Similarly, at *Sacred Tale* 5.18 a dream about the *Clouds* of Aristophanes warns him not to set out on what would turn out to be a rainy day.

- b. That the religious experience at the sanctuary is a very intense one. I have already mentions Aristides' account of his experience of Asclepius at Pergamum ("it seemed as if I touched him": *Sacred Tale* 2.32–33). Notice also his elation-coupled-with-anxiety at the culmination of the pilgrimage to the baths at Gönen on the Aesepus River at *Sacred Tale* 4.7:

It was all not only like an initiation into a mystery, since the rituals were so divine and strange, but there was also something coincidentally marvelous and unaccustomed. For at the same time there was gladness, and joy, and a contentment of spirit and body, and again, as it were, an incredulity that it will ever be possible to see a day when one will see himself free from such great troubles...

- c. That the return is a critical moment: e.g. at *Sacred Tale* 4.10 Aristides records the propitious remarks he heard from children and others when he arrived back from his second pilgrimage to Gönen. This is followed by a ritual of sprinkling earth on himself, which is said explicitly to be a substitute for death and burial, i.e. a sort of rite of passage.

All three of these things may have been characteristic of many forms of pilgrimage in this period or earlier.

On the face of it, Aristides' experience of pilgrimage includes something like *communitas*. He has elite fellow incubants/pilgrims (*sumphoitētai*);¹⁹ in a well-known passage of *On Concord* he praises the Asklepieion as a second colony from Trikka, the first being Epidaurus, and goes on:

No gathering of a chorus nor fellowship on board a ship nor having the same teachers is such a great thing as the benefit of going together (*sumphoitēsai*) to the temple of Asclepius and being initiated in the foremost rites by the fairest, and most perfect torch-bearer and mystagogue, to whom every law of necessity yields²⁰

¹⁹ A word first used by Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.60) in the context of pilgrimage to Bubastis in Egypt. Cf. Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 222: "although they may have travelled alone or accompanied by relatives or close friends, on arriving at the sanctuary those who came to consult Asklepios became part of a visible group of pilgrims to the god, and performed a variety of rituals en masse".

²⁰ *Or.* 23.16 (Jebb 529, lines 28): καὶ οὔτε χοροῦ σύλλογος πραγμα τοσοῦτον οὔτε πλοῦ κοινωνία οὔτε διδασκάλων τῶν αὐτῶν τυχεῖν, ὅσον χρῆμα καὶ κέρδος εἰς Ἀσκληπιοῦ τε συμφοιτῆσαι καὶ τελεσθῆναι τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἱερῶν ὑπὸ τῷ καλλίστῳ καὶ τελεωτάτῳ δαδούχῳ καὶ μυσταγωγῷ καὶ ᾧ πᾶς ἀνάγκης εἴκει θεσμος. (cf. Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 232). The hyperbolic language at the end (ᾧ πᾶς ἀνάγκης εἴκει θεσμος) recalls the standard Isiac aretalogy. For Egyptian religion at Pergamum, see the papers in Hoffmann 2005.

So in *Sacred Tale 2* he dreams he shares sacrificial meat with the *sumphoitētai* (2.27) and that he is one of a group of white-robed men standing before the Propyleia of the temple (2.31; cf. 2.30). In fact, however, this pretense of *communitas* breaks down in the face of Aristides' claim to personal exceptionalism.²¹ In another dream, a vision of *communitas* – a group of pilgrims worshipping Asclepius in person – is immediately undercut when Asclepius singles him out for praise (*Sacred Tale* 4.50).

First, the cult statue seemed to have three heads, and to shine about with fire, except for the heads. Next we worshippers stood by it, just as when the paean is sung, I almost amongst the first. At this point the god, in the posture in which he is represented in the statues, signaled our departure. All the others were going out, and I was turning to go out, and the god, with his hand, indicated for me to stay. And I was delighted by the honour and the extent to which I was preferred to the others, and I shouted out 'The One', meaning the god. But he said 'It is you'.²²

Elsewhere he imagines the community of the *Asklepieion* as a *panēguris* consisting of prominent Greeks who come to see him in his tribulations (*Sacred Tale* 1.65).²³ In Aristides' self-centered universe, the only form of *communitas* that matters is that of an audience united in paying attention to him. Or perhaps we might say that the only people he thinks of as in the same class as him are great figures of Greek literature and culture; thus at *Sacred Tale* 4.24 Asclepius tells him which authors to read and henceforth they become his comrades (*hetairoi*).

This brings us back to the issue of *paideia*. Aristides was certainly aware that in his time members of the elite used to visit sanctuaries to engage in Greek cultural traditions. Consider for example the narrative of his dream visit to the imaginary temple of Plato in Athens, where he holds forth on the date of the statue of Plato in a very *pepaideumenos* manner (*Sacred Tale* 5.61):

When I reached the entrance, I saw that it was a temple of Plato, the philosopher, and that a great and fair image was erected to him there, and a statue of someone was erected

²¹ There is an unambiguous illustration of this at *Sacred Tale* 4.49, where he dreams the he is proclaimed Olympic victor and is buried next to Alexander the Great. Another example is his statement in the Lalia to Asclepius (Or. 42.6–7) that Asclepius has given him his whole body (whereas to other people he gives at most part of his body).

²² For Aristides as a god, see *Sacred Tale* 1.17: a statue of Asclepius seems to be a statue of Aristides.

²³ ἔτι δὲ οἶον πανήγυρις ἦν κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν. οἱ γὰρ φίλοι τὰ πρῶτα τῶν τότε Ἑλλήνων ὄντες ἀπίντων ἀεὶ καὶ συνῆσαν μοι κατὰ τοὺς λόγους αὐτόθεν ἐκ κλίνης τοὺς ἀγῶνας ποιουμένω. On another occasion people going to attend a festival in Pergamum turn back to Ephesos when Aristides passes them going in the other direction (*Sacred Tale* 2.81; cf. Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 139).

on his right. A very beautiful woman sat upon the threshold and spoke about Plato and the statue. Some others also took part in the discussion, and at the same time spoke about it as if it were ancient. And I said about it: ‘it is not possible to say that it is ancient. For the form of the workmanship is shown to be somewhat recent, and there was not much regard for Plato in his lifetime, but, I said, his reputation grew later . . .’.

But we should not necessarily infer from dreams such as this that his own behavior in sanctuaries was serene and contemplative in the same way.

Certainly, *paideiā* permeates Aristides’ experience in the Pergamene Asklepieion: it is not only that he associates with educated people there, but also that he uses them as a practice audience, making demonstration speeches and organizing artistic performances. Asclepius actually encourages him to take up oratory again after a lapse caused by illness, and to make a “first fruit offering” (ἀπάρξασθαι) of extemporized speeches (*Sacred Tale* 4.15).²⁴ It might be argued, then, that in so far as for Aristides normal health implies the ability to practice as an orator, the form of healing he seeks and ultimately receives from Asclepius at Pergamum is at least in part an intellectual one, and the Asklepieion, which was an international cultural center as well as a sanatorium, was thus the perfect place to provide it.

But a different picture emerges if we consider the minor religious journeys or pilgrimages he makes. Key factors seem to be (a) his relationship with the deity, the meaning of whose instructions he sometimes seeks to discover *en route*; (b) the difficulties posed by the weather and the natural landscape (see Brink 2016); and (c) the suffering of his own body, sometimes accentuated by the journey, and by the rituals which he is obliged to perform, often in full view of an audience. A good example is the mini-pilgrimage which happened in 149 CE (*Sacred Tale* 2.11ff.), when Aristides was instructed to leave Pergamum and go to the island of Chios for a purgation. On embarking at Clazomenae to make the sea-trip to Chios, a storm occurs, and the boat is driven East to Phokaia instead, where he undergoes the purgation and performs a mock shipwreck. He spends three days at a place called Geneais. There is also an encore: Asclepius leads him to Smyrna, where he has a complex vision (described as an *epiphaneia*) of Asclepius, Apollo of Claros and Apollo Kalliteknos of Pergamum, and then a freezing bath in the river Meles in front of a crowd of people (*Sacred Tale* 2.19–21):

This is a summary of the divine manifestations (*epiphaneiai*), and I would place a high premium on being able to recount exactly each particular of it. It was the middle of winter, and the north wind was stormy and it was icy-cold, and the pebbles were fixed to one

²⁴ For “first fruits” applied to verbal contests, cf. the language of Athenian decrees at Delphi: Rutherford 2013, 114 n. 29.

another by the frost so that they seemed like a continuous sheet of ice, and the water was such as is likely in such weather. When the divine manifestation (*epiphaneîā*) was announced friends escorted us and various doctors, some of them acquaintances and those who came either out of concern or even for the purpose of investigation . . . When we reached the river there was no need for anyone to encourage us. But, being still full of warmth from the vision of the god, I cast off my clothes, and, not wanting a massage, I flung them where the river was deepest. Then as in a pool of very gentle and tempered water I passed my time swimming all about and splashing myself all over. When I came out, all my skin had a rosy hue, and there was a lightness throughout my body. There was also much shouting from those present and from those coming up, shouting the celebrated phrase, ‘Great is Asclepius’.

There are touches of *paideîā* here: the threefold identity of the deity, and the river Meles, associated with Homer and therefore appropriate for a wordsmith. There is no sign of *communitas*, except on the part of the audience. The focus is on the ritual performance, almost a form of public virtue signaling, and on Aristides’ reactions: his suffering at the beginning, his contentment at the end. The emergence of his body from the water at the end suggests a sort of climactic epiphany, and it is as if the chant “Great is Asclepius” was directed towards him.²⁵ Just as overcoming suffering is a sign of religious presence, so submitting oneself to suffering itself approaches the status of a religious act.

This combination of deliberate self-punishment and salvation is striking. Judith Perkins has drawn attention to parallels to Aristides’ suffering in accounts of the death of Christian martyrs, such as St. Blandina of Lyon and Ignatius of Antioch (although there is an important difference in that martyrs die, whereas Aristides recovers).²⁶ That might suggest that this is a phenomenon of the early Roman Empire, although it is possible that this is a false impression created by the lack of evidence for personal pilgrimage in the preceding centuries.²⁷ The best parallels may in fact be in initiation-rituals,

25 For slippage between Asclepius and Aristides, see *Sacred Tale* 1.17, cited earlier.

26 Perkins 1995, 180–181; for the general point, see p. 173: “Narrative issuing from different cultural points . . . brought into cultural consciousness a representation of the human self as a body in pain, a suffering body.” See also Perkins 1992: “If, as Foucault has suggested, the body is the site of all control, the *Orationes sacrae* relocates control, not to the self, the contemporary society, or the political structures, but to the realm of the transcendent. Part of the discursive project of the *Orationes sacrae* is a radical relocation of power from the earthly realm to the divine.”

27 Petridou 2017, 137–138 argues against the “Foucauldian” thesis that the body and the self emerge as center stage in the Second Sophistic, suggesting instead that interest in the body in the Second Sophistic is a “natural progression of embodying and further embellishing trusted and time-resistant ideas about the body as a whole when healthy, fragmented when ill, and safe at critical moments in life only when it is in the vicinity of the gods”.

which often seem to have involved physical suffering and sometimes even mutilation (as in the case of the cult of the Magna Mater, whose acolytes were believed to castrate themselves: Burkert 1987, 102–104; Burkert 2004, 104–105).

6 Conclusion

To sum up, pilgrimage in the Roman Empire came in many forms, and the pilgrims' experience must have varied greatly as well. In this paper, I have pointed to three case studies, each of which seems to involve a different form of subjective experience, and each of which can be correlated with a different treatment of the pilgrims' bodies. In Philo's account of Jewish pilgrimage, members of the Jewish Diaspora are removed from their present environment and brought together in Jerusalem to form a temporary "body" of Jewish citizenry; even after they return home, the memory of this broader identity presumably persists. In the case of Claros, participation in a broader Greek or Roman identity with its focus in the sanctuary is probably also a factor, but the emphasis is on training groups of young people to perform together in public, representing their city and acting as its united external face; I have suggested that taking part in these sacred missions would have been a formative experience for the children involved, with cognitive and behavioral consequences: they learned about Greco-Roman culture (*paideiā*), but they also learned how to present themselves as elite citizens.

Aristides' healing pilgrimages share some general features with both of these. As pilgrimage to Jerusalem transforms the social lives of those who take part in it, the *Kathedrā* at Pergamum provides a new community for Aristides, consisting in this case of members of the educated elite. However, Aristides is too unique an individual for this to be a stable *communitas*. There are also similarities between his pilgrimages and the delegations sent to Claros: like those, Aristides' pilgrimages were a response to oracular instruction (attested at least sometimes in the Clarian dossier); and they were public performances of ritual scripts, which communicated the pilgrim-performer's reverent attitude towards the deity. What is different about Aristides is that the elation of divine contact alternates with, and is facilitated by physical suffering and self-abasement, something which, as we saw, seems to be characteristic of the period. In the case of Aristides' pilgrimages, the suffering and elation seem to be mapped onto the journey and the arrival, a pattern with a long future in Christian pilgrimage.

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Experiencing curses: neurobehavioral traits of ritual and spatiality in the Roman Empire

Abstract: Love, wish for revenge, fear, hope: ancient cursing rituals managed to embrace a vast spectrum of emotions. They were prompted by emotional experiences, they manipulated feelings, and their result could have been a renewed emotional state. This paper intends to look at how the archaeological and ritual settings contributed to shape the emotional and bodily experience of individual participants. Active compounds such as frankincense could have helped the uplifting of negative emotions, but lead exposure could have provoked health damage. Sensory deprivation could have enhanced the sense of being in contact with the divine or could have distorted perception. The case studies include a selection of documents from the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth (I–II CE), the sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater in Mainz (I–II CE), and that of Anna Perenna in Rome (II–V CE). From these texts and their contexts, it is possible to attempt a sketch of the cognitive and embodied aspects of cursing rituals as a multi-sensory experience.

1 Introduction

The historian who intends to illuminate the history of emotion in antiquity could hardly avoid to look at the epigraphical evidence. Among the various typologies of inscription, curses offer a base for studying the description and

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display of emotions as well as for understanding mechanisms for arousing emotion. In this sense, curses are both emotional and emotive. They are a byproduct of an emotional state, sometimes they try to describe it, while they may aim to arouse an emotion in a human or a divine addressee.¹ Furthermore, curse tablets are not just texts: they are part of a set of components of a cursing rite. It is in their ritual dimension that they acquire another emotive connotation: they can transform the emotions of the participants of the rite.² In this respect, they can testify to the religious experience of individuals. About sixteen hundred tablets attesting cursing practices are scattered in the Mediterranean region and beyond, dating from the 6th century BCE to the 7th century CE.

Notwithstanding this considerably large number of documents,³ their fragmentary status as well as the few details that we can collect on the exact circumstances of their deposition render ambitious the intent of reconstructing the religious experience of curses. However, the challenge is worth the effort, since it may contribute to demonstrating how mind and body reacted to the ritual context. This chapter aims to unpack the experience of cursing rituals, looking at the way in which the spatial features of the place of deposition shaped the emotional and bodily effects of participating in the ritual.

Experience is here intended as the process of being the protagonist of an event that has an impact on feelings and existence. This process results from the interaction of the human mind and body with the environment. It is to investigate how the perception of ritual actions could be grounded within the physical world and its characteristics, and whether objects and procedures determined what was internally and corporeally experienced. In brief, this chapter will highlight instances in which cursing rituals could have been inscribed upon bodies and mental states. To trace the experiential dimension of religious actions and moments, contemporary studies in the field of neuroscience can help improve our understanding of what could have happened during the

1 On the strategies for persuading mortals (targets of a curse) and immortals (addressees as mediators of a curse), see Salvo 2016, with previous bibliography.

2 Focusing on the feeling of victimization and wish for revenge, in Salvo 2012 I have argued that cursing rituals helped to channel negative emotions aroused by a suffered injustice and to contain the escalation of violent behavior. Cf. Eidinow 2016, 221–223, on how curses generated and exacerbated anxiety, gossip, and cursing within a community.

3 Gager 1992, 3 counted an excess of fifteen hundred. The online database *Thesaurus Defixionum Magdeburgensis* (*TheDeMa*, <http://www-e.uni-magdeburg.de/defigo/thedema.php>, last accessed 20.03.2018) currently includes 1288 entries, and is constantly updated by the research group “Magische Verfluchungen als Durchsetzung von Recht. Transkulturelle Entwicklung und individuelle Prägung der antiken Fluchtafeln,” based at the Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg and directed by Martin Dreher.

deposition of a curse tablet. Finally, the concept of spatiality serves to underline in which ways the physiology of the human mind, elements of culture, and the spatial setting cooperated to affect religious thought.

It must be specified that not every single curse tablet can offer sufficient elements for a similar historical analysis. A deeper understanding of the experiential aspects of curses can be possible especially in the case of tablets deposited in sanctuaries and excavated in archeological digs. The analysis in this chapter will be focused on three sites that were particularly generous in restituting curse tablets from a secure archeological context: Corinth, Mainz, and Rome. The epigraphical findings are dated from the 1st to the 5th century CE. We will examine the Greek documents first and then the Latin evidence, starting therefore with Corinth.

2 Feeling the curse at the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth

On the Acrocorinth, in the second half of the 1st century CE, the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore was starting to regain life after a long period of abandonment since the sacking of the city in 146 BCE.⁴ The systematic excavation campaigns of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens have restituted a considerable amount of data on the life of the site across the centuries, and have offered a precious contribution to the history of ancient magic, since seventeen Greek inscriptions on lead tablets, plus one in Latin, have been found. These texts not only expand an ever-growing corpus of magical spells, but also present the opportunity to analyze the spatial backdrop of the cursing rite. The deposition of the tablets probably took place even before the architectural renovation works were accomplished during the second half of the 1st century CE, since the tablets are the most ancient findings in the sanctuarial area after the establishment of the new city with Roman colonists in 44 BCE (Stroud 2013, 153). The earliest tablets are two identical texts probably written by the same hand:

Maxima Pontia, for destruction.⁵

Maxima Pontia, for destruction.⁶

⁴ On the history and phases of the sanctuarial buildings, see Bookidis and Stroud 1997.

⁵ Stroud 2013, no. 130, Corinth, early I CE: Μαξιμῶν Πουγτίαν ἐπὶ κατεργασίᾳ *vacat*. This and the following Corinth texts and translations are from Stroud 2013, in some instances slightly modified.

⁶ Stroud 2013, no. 131, Corinth, early I CE: Μαξιμῶν Πουγτίαν ἐπὶ [κα]τεργασί[α].

These two very brief texts tell us very little about the circumstances of the ritual, why the target victim was cursed, and who was the author or commissioner. However, their archeological context offers additional clues. They were found together, unrolled, though folding lines are visible, in the filling of a reused dining room of the Classical and Hellenistic period and near two thymateria (Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 274–276; Stroud 2013, 138–139). In the Roman period, the dining benches were covered with layers of earth, and the space was re-functionalized for magical purposes.⁷ The incense burners bear signs of prolonged use (Stroud 2013, 139). This might constitute an example of the deposition of cursing tablets within a space sacred to Demeter and Kore, although still in an initial phase of renovation and reappropriation, and in an environment filled with the fumes of frankincense. The visual and olfactory stimuli triggered by frankincense would have probably enhanced the setting apart from the ritual moment and its efficacy. The offering of frankincense, burnt before uttering a prayer or over an inscribed tablet, often recurs in the prescriptions of the *Greek Magical Papyri*.⁸ The fumes from the burning of incense increase the sense of uplifting in human perception, as is now proven by experiments in the field of psychopharmacology that have traced the effects of the resin of the *Boswellia*, the tree from which frankincense is produced. In the mouse brain, frankincense shows anxiolytic and antidepressive effects comparable to those obtained using drugs as potent as diazepam and desipramine (Moussaieff et al. 2008). Although “destruction for Maxima Pontia” appears as a tense and enraged request, which needed to be solicited twice, the ritual agent was at the same time immersing him- or herself in calming suffumigations of incense.

Further data on the environment of a cursing ritual come from another findspot in the Lower Terrace of the sanctuary, that is from Room 7 of the Building of the Tablets, as identified by the excavators (Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 277–291; Stroud 2013, 138–153). Ten tablets were found possibly near their original place of deposition, around four small stone supports for altars or

7 The excavators do not rule out the possibility that the filling could be debris, but the uniform leveling and the upright position of one of the thymateria suggest to them a conscious reuse of the space, see Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 276; Stroud 2013, 139.

8 A selection of examples: offerings of frankincense in a spell producing dreams: *PGM IV.3195* (παρακείσθω δὲ θυμιατήριον, ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθύσεις λίβανον ἄτμητον); frankincense fumes before reciting an attraction charm: *PGM IV.1902–1905* (παρακείσθω δὲ τῶ κυνὶ θυμιατήριον, εἰς ὃ ἐπικείσθω λίβανος, λέγων τὸν λόγον); grains of frankincense put on a silver tablet with a spell securing the favor of people: *PGM XXXVI. 275–83* (καὶ λίβανον τοῖς ἐν [λ]επίδι ἀργυρᾷ χαρακτῆρσι); a spell that accomplishes everything instructs to inscribe a censor: *PGM IV. 1320–1322* (γράψον μέσον τοῦ θυμιατηρίου τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο· ἑερμουθερεψιφριφτισαλι' (γράμματα κδ), καὶ οὕτως ἐπίθουε).

tables or thymiateria.⁹ Three tablets, in particular, allow us to reflect upon the ritual setting. On a rolled up tablet inscribed on both sides, the only one with intelligible words, we find this text:

I bind down Secunda Postumia before Herakleides and before all men, her mind, her wits, her hands, her sinews, her knees, her entire body. I bind down Postumia Secunda before all [men/persons].¹⁰

Jealousy was an emotion that frequently prompted the dedication of a curse. In this case, the attack is against a certain Postumia Secunda. Her name is repeated twice in a chiasmic position,¹¹ and she probably aroused the jealousy of the writer or commissioner of this tablet. It is not straightforward to identify the gender of the sender of this message. As Stroud notes, it may be a man who wants to prevent the union of Postumia Secunda with other men, or it may more probably be a woman who was in love with Herakleides and who intended to protect her man from being seduced by Postumia Secunda (Stroud 2013, 89). Stroud is inclined towards this second possibility, since the text lacks other features of erotic attraction curses, such as the invocation of a divine helper who drags the beloved person to the *defigens* and the request that the victim forgets food, sleep, and family (Stroud 2013, 89). Indeed, it makes perfect sense to imagine a woman as the author or commissioner of this tablet. However, it could also be a case of same-sex attraction: a man who intended to keep Postumia Secunda away from his Herakleides or a woman who wanted to guarantee her exclusive possession of Postumia's body. Thus, the identification of the gender of the *defigens* remains uncertain. Additionally, it cannot be ruled out with confidence that the text functioned in spheres other than love magic. We only know that the cognitive faculties and then the bodily organs of a woman are cursed. The scope of this could also have pertained to a competition in commercial or agonistic domains, or perhaps Postumia Secunda had wronged somehow the author/commissioner of the

⁹ Stroud 2013, nos. 118–127. See Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 282: “It is our opinion that they were found near where they had been placed. Their appearance in consecutive strata suggests this.” They have also found small pieces of lead around base B.

¹⁰ Stroud 2013, no. 118 A, Corinth, before c. 70 CE, rolled up: καταδεσμεύω Σεκοῦνδαν Ποστούμιαν πρὸς Ἡρακλίδην, πρὸς πάντες ἄνδρες, τὸν νοῦν, τὰς φρένες, τὰς χεῖρας, τὰ νεῦρα, τὰ γόνατα, ν. τὸ σῶμα ὅλον. καταδεσμεύω Ποστούμιαν Σεκοῦνδαν [π]ρ[ό]ς [?] ΝΘΡΩ[.].[.]ΑΝΤ.

¹¹ See Stroud 2013, 89 on lines 2–4: “Postumia Secunda, written in this order here, but in proper sequence, Secunda Postumia, in lines 12–14. Possibly the reversal was thought to have some magical force, or, as B. Millis suggests to me, it might indicate how she was normally addressed. The name is apparently unattested so far in Corinth.”

tablet, prompting a cursing prayer.¹² Similarly formulaic texts had typically an undefined motivation, as this example from Athens shows:

I bind Protophanes (?) down – him and his hands and feet {and feet} and tongue and mind before Hermes Eriounios and before Hekate Epitymbia (?). I bind Hedeia and Phaidimos down. I bind him down and his feet and hands and tongue before Hermes Eriounios and before Hekate and Hermes. I bind Hedeia down and always (...) ¹³

In this curse, more than one person is attacked, and the names of the gods that should help are invoked. The epithets in association with Hermes and Hekate pertain to the sphere of supplication (if we imagine ἐριγούσιον as connected to the grasping of knees) and of the Underworld.¹⁴ Supplicatory tones to Chthonian divinities recur in another tablet from the Corinthian Sanctuary:

Text A: Lord gods of the underworld ---

Text B: Lord, expose them and – cut their hearts, Lord, by means of the gods of the underworld. THE[---] ¹⁵

With the invocation to the κύριοι θεοὶ (master gods), a hierarchical relationship is here construed with the divine interlocutors, who are declared sovereign, powerful, and authoritarian, while the worshipper assumes a position of inferiority and subjugation.¹⁶ This cursing prayer testifies to a perceived suffered injustice, something that was inflicted by those who are now the target victims (Versnel 2010, 314 with previous bibliography). The dedicator seeks to have the truth revealed about the people who committed a wrong against him or her. The punishment indicated in Text B consists on one side of being found out and going through a public

¹² On ‘anatomical’ curses see Versnel 1998: he distinguishes between curses in which the listing of body parts aims at restraining the abilities of an opponent (e.g. the feet of a race runner), and those in which it aims at provoking intense sufferings in the target victim as a measure of revenge for injustice or love conquest.

¹³ SEG XL 266, Athens, second half of the IV BCE, folded and nailed: καταδ[ῶ] ΠΡΟΨΦΝΑΤΗΝ καὶ αὐτὸν καὶ χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καὶ πόδα[ς] καὶ γλῶ(τ)ταν καὶ τὸν νόον, πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆν τὸν ἐριγούσιον καὶ πρὸς τὴν Ἑκάτην ἐπιτ[ο]υ(μ)βίαν· κρητ[α]δῶ Ἥδεϊαν καὶ Φαίδιμον· καταδῶ κ[αὶ] αὐτὸν καὶ πόδας[ς] κα[ὶ] χεῖρας [ας] καὶ γλῶ(τ)ταν κ[αὶ] ψυχὴν πρὸς τὸν [Ε]ρμ[ῆ]ν ἐριγούσιον [καὶ] πρὸς τὴν Ἑκάτην κα[ὶ] τὸν Ἑρμῆν· καὶ Ἥδεϊα, αἰεὶ καὶ - -. Text and Translation from Curbera 2016.

¹⁴ See Curbera 2016, 112 for a deeper analysis of the two epithets.

¹⁵ Stroud 2013, no. 127, Corinth, Roman period, unrolled but folding lines distinguishable: Text A: Κύριοι θεοὶ κ[α]ταχθόνιοι [. . .]A [. . . .]TEMOX[. . .] [. . .]N[. . .]IIEITEAI [. . .]NIΣ[. . .]Γο[. . .]. Text B: [Κ]ύριε, φανέρωσον αὐτοὺς καὶ ΟΜΕΙΛ. [. . .]ΚΤΙ [. . .]καρδια[τό]μ[η]σον[. . .] αὐτοὺς ν. Κύριε, δ[ι]ὰ [τοὺς] θε[ο]ὺς κατ[α]χ[θ]ονίους[. . .] Θ Ε [- - - ?]

¹⁶ On the κύριοι θεοὶ, cf. Nicole Belayche in this volume. On the construction of a hierarchical relationship of gods/mortals, see Versnel 2002; Chaniotis 2009; Salvo 2012, 258.

disclosure of probably socially embarrassing actions,¹⁷ and on the other side in having the hearts cut.¹⁸

Avenging gods, but this time without their placement in a superior rank, are explicitly invoked in another tablet from Corinth:

For her destruction and evil-eye bewitchment I deposit (this?) with you avenging gods and avenging goddesses so that you may [make] Karpime Babbia, weaver of garlands, phi[---]¹⁹

According to the first editor, the hand of this tablet seems to have inscribed two other curses: one is certainly addressed against the same person, Karpime Babbia, while in the other the name is not mentioned, but given the similarities in the handwriting he suggests that all three tablets had the same author and target (Stroud 2013, 101; the three curses are Stroud 2013, nos. 123, 124, 125/126). The translation above is slightly modified from Stroud, who translates *ἰς καταργασίαν καὶ μάγαρσιν* as “for destruction and for working a spell” (Stroud 2013, 102). To better explain the reasons why this translation needs nuancing, it is worth quoting his comments on the term *μάγαρσιν*: “Following a suggestion of Jordan, I have interpreted ΜΑΓΑΡΣΙΝ as the accusative singular of the noun, *μάγαρσις*, attested apparently only in Hesychios (s.v.), which could be derived from the verb *μεγαίρω*, one of whose meanings is equivalent to *βασκάνω* (bewitch); cf. *Ap. Rhod., Argon.* 4.1669–1670, *θεμένη δὲ κακὸν νόον, ἔχθοδοποῖσιν ὄμμασι χαλκείοιο Τάλω ἐμέγηρεν ὄπωπός* (shaping her mind to evil, with her hostile glance, she bewitched the eyes of Talos, man of bronze)” (Stroud 2013, 103). This interpretation is compelling, but it is important to fine-tune it and to highlight the value of this text as a precious addition to our understanding of ancient mentalities and magical belief.

Firstly, the entry in Hesychios’ lexicon reads: *μέγαρσις*: φθόνος. Hesychios, then, clearly states the connection between *μέγαρσις* and the emotion of envy, in the sense of envious feelings that can cause misfortune to the envied person. The idea is reinforced in the next entry: *μέγαρτος*: ἀγνώμων. καὶ φθονερός *r. ἀμέγαρτος δὲ ὁ ἀφθονος*, “envious: ill-judging, but also begrudging; the unenviable is not provoking envy,” or, in other words, the one who is miserable is free

¹⁷ On humiliation, cf. Eidinow 2016, 225–232.

¹⁸ See Stroud 2013, 117 on parallels for cutting the heart of a victim of a magical attack. Although another expression is used, in a Coptic prayer for justice against two women and a man, the seven archangels (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Rakuel, and Suriel in particular) are asked to strike them with their swords, see Meyer and Smith 1999², no. 91, 92.

¹⁹ Stroud 2013, no. 124, Corinth, c. 72 – early II CE, folded: *ἰς καταργασίαν καὶ μάγαρσιν παρατίθεμαι ὑμῖν θεοῖς ἀλειτηριοῖς* καὶ θεα<ῖ>ς ἀλει[τ]ηρίας [?] ΠΙΩΠΟΥΗΣ Καρπίμην Βαβίαν στεφαν<η>πλόκον ΦΙΣ[. .] *vacat*.

from envy.²⁰ The derivation of μέγαρσις from μεγάριω, then, seems certain – with μεγάριω being a synonym of βασκαίνειν and φθονεῖν.²¹ The writer of our tablet possibly misspelled the word μέγαρσις as μάγαρσις, and, very likely, the intention was to cast the Evil Eye on Karpime Babbia.²² The interplay between curses, prayers, envy, and the Evil Eye is a not uncommon feature of the involvement of immortals in social relationships.²³ In this Corinthian tablet, it creates an aggressive effect. The avenging gods must destroy the target and inflict upon her the worst misfortunes provoked by the power of the Evil Eye. The picture becomes more evident when the tablet no. 124 is read together with the other curses against the same target, nos. 123 and 125/126. While in the text no. 123 the destruction of the sinews is invoked (καὶ κατεργαζέται<ι> . . . νεῦρα), but the rest is fragmentary, the curse inscribed in the two tablets 125 and 126, fastened together by a nail, preserves the longest text found in the sanctuary. From this document, it seems to emerge that the author of these three curses was a woman who envied the fertility of Karpime Babbia and hoped to gain a more successful fecundity for herself; moreover, she had perhaps experienced mocking in public by Karpime Babbia

20 Cf. Homer, *Odyssey*, 17.219: ἀμέγαρτε σὺβῶτα, wretched swineherd! (LSJ).

21 A Salaminian word according to the Scholia Vetera to the *Iliad*: *Scholia ad Ilias* 13.563: βίोटιοι μεγίρας: φθονήσας Ἀδάμαντι, μὴ ἀφέληται τὸν βίον τοῦ Ἀντιλόχου. ἢ φθονήσας Ἀδάμαντι τοῦ βίου καὶ ποιήσασαυτὸν ἀναρεθῆναι. b (BCE^{3E}) Τ μεγάριω δὲ τὸ φθονεῖν Σαλαμίνοι λέγουσιν.

22 In *TheDeMa* no. 357 (<http://www.thedema.ovgu.de/thedema.php?tafel=357&seite=1>, last accessed 30.09.2017), Sara Chiarini offers a German translation of this tablet: „Zu Niederwerfen und Missgunst übergebe ich euch, schadenfrohen Göttern und schadenfrohen Göttinnen, . . . Karpime Babia, die Kranzflechterin, an . . . “ She also notes that Stroud’s translation is misleading, and adds in the commentary: „Zu μάγαρσις vgl. Hesych. μέγαρσις· φθόνος und μεγάριω (Groll gegen jemanden hegen). Da die magische Konnotation dieses Vokabels unsicher ist, halte ich für vorsichtiger, die primäre und allgemeinere Deutung von ‚Missgunst‘ anzunehmen.“ A glimpse into a third language, other than English and ancient Greek, may help indeed to deeper understand how envious emotions function on several layers, since German distinguishes between *Neid*, *Missgunst*, and *Scheelsucht*. According to Georg Simmel, *Missgunst* is the envious desire of an object, not because it is desirable *per se*, but only because another subject has it. One is ready to destroy that object so as to impede the other person from having it (Simmel 1992, 319). In Eberhard 1910, 262–263, *Neid* is translated as “envy,” while *Missgunst* is “grudge,” since it comes into play when the person who is enjoying a privilege is not deemed worthy of it by the begrudging subject. Finally, *Scheelsucht* is the highest grade of envy and the more loaded with hate, and is translated as “mean jealousy, malocchio.” In my interpretation, μέγαρσις would find a better equivalent in this last term.

23 It was rooted in ancient Greek mentality and was subsequently incorporated in the Greek Orthodox Church, where prayers and rituals to unbewitch someone (*xematiasma*) are still practiced, see Stewart 2008, 90–93 among others. Cf. *NGCT* 24, side A, Attica, early IV BCE, with Eidinow 2016 on φθόνος, envy, and ancient Greek curses.

because of her sterility.²⁴ Each one of these curses reinforces the others, and each time new divine powers are called upon.²⁵ The reason behind depositing more than one tablet was plausibly an intent to activate a greater number of different supernatural agents, asking them to accomplish several kinds of punishments, whose common denominator was the psychological and physical devastation of Karpime Babbia.

The curses against Karpime Babbia were all found in the Building of the Tablets, a small and dark room where cursing rituals were probably performed at night: alongside the lead tablets and the thymiateria, an abundant quantity of fragments of lamps as well as of pouring vessels was excavated (Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 277–291; Stroud 2013, 138–153). Stroud has highlighted the characteristics of this site: “a setting of chanting spells; pungent, smoky incense; manipulation of lamps; possibly sipping of potions; and probably other rites in addition to the folding, spiking, and depositing of the tablets themselves around or on four stone bases” (Stroud 2013, 115). A few questions arise from these observations. Did such a ritual setting affect the experience of depositing the curses? Moreover, who were the individuals operating in Room 7? It was a ground-floor room of c. 25 m².²⁶ Stroud notes that, given the small dimensions of the space, “only a few people at a time” participated in the rituals: there are no data from which to infer that they were performed secretly, nor it is possible to tell whether in groups or alone, by the persons concerned or religious personnel only (Stroud 2013, 142). Furthermore, it is hard to identify who inscribed a curse tablet, whether the attacker or a professional scribe, and it can be tentatively determined only from case to case.²⁷ However, it is not implausible to imagine that, although the spell-casters might not have inscribed the tablets autonomously, they could have been present at the deposition ceremony attending it as protagonists.

24 For an analysis of Stroud 2013, nos. 125/126, see Stroud’s commentary *ad hoc*, Versnel 2010, 314, and Salvo 2017, where I argue that this text is a combination of a curse and a fertility ritual.

25 In favor of a varied group of supernatural entities, I would rule out the possibility envisaged by Stroud 2013, 103 that the avenging gods and goddesses invoked in no. 124 could be identified with the divinities named in no. 125/126, that is, the Moirai Praxidikai, Hermes Chthonios, Ge, and the children of Ge. In Stroud 2013, no. 123, line 5, there are traces of the name of a katachthonian deity, see Stroud 2013, 101.

26 It is 5.08 m wide and 5.35 m long: Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 277; Stroud 2013, 142.

27 Cf. Tomlin 1988, 100 on the tablets found in the temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath (UK) and inscribed by “a mixture of professionals and amateur scribes.” Cf. also Dufault 2017 on the limited evidence for professional scribes.

We can try to imagine and visualize the interactions inside this room. Archaeologists have shown how the configuration of space can shape the emotions of the people using a building. The architectural and decorative arrangements of temples could have marked the entrance of an out-of-the-ordinary place, and facilitated a pious disposition of the worshipper towards the divine.²⁸ In the case of the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth, the design of the Building of the Tablets could have had a significant influence on the emotive state of the people who performed rituals inside it. An individual was receiving a variety of stimuli, and each sense was engaged: eyes had to get used to darkness,²⁹ ears were hearing chanting spells and murmured prayers, taste was perhaps challenged by unusual ingredients of magical potions, the olfactory system was sending to the brain relaxing messages from the incense, hands were touching cold, dusky-colored, and menacing lead tablets. The reception of one stimulus might have created the conditions for perceiving (with or without awareness) the subsequent ones as connected cues, even if unrelated, activating priming mechanisms.³⁰ Religious priming might have boosted prosocial behavior,³¹ as in the case of the frankincense that generated calming effects, causing a transformation in the emotive state of the ritual agents and helping them to abandon negative and aggressive feelings in favor of a sense of calm derived from having accomplished the necessary steps. However, participating in the cursing ceremony might also have been a dangerous experience, as we will see in the next case study.

3 Ritual experience and neurobehavioral toxicity of lead at the sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater in Mainz

In 1999 construction works in the center of Mainz revealed the remains of a joint temple dedicated to Isis Panthea and Magna Mater, which was active in the years between 70 and 130 CE. Among tons of the remains of burnt offerings in sacrificial

28 Metzler 1995; Marconi 2007. On the investigation of past emotion from archaeological sources, see, among others, Tarlow 2012; Masségliia 2012; Hamilakis 2013.

29 On magic performed in secluded and dark places, see Ustinova 2009, 240–244.

30 To condense very essentially what priming is. On priming and related debates, see recently Molden 2014.

31 On religious priming and prosociality (behavior that benefits others), see Shariff et al. 2016. I owe this reference to Yulia Ustinova.

pits and delimited areas, 34 Latin curse tablets were found.³² Of these, 14 texts preserve intelligible and longer texts, mostly concerning thefts or frauds. The examples here selected are particularly revealing on the neurobehavioral aspects of ritual. In the following text, a crafted poetic simile conceals a powerful spell:

(Whatever) Aemilia Prima, (the lover?) of Narcissus may do, whatever she attempts, whatever she does, let it all turn into its opposite. May she get up (out of bed) out of her mind, may she go about her work out of her mind. Whatever she strives after, may her striving in all things be reversed. May this befall Prima, the lover of Narcissus: just as this letter never shall bloom, so she shall never bloom in any way.³³

For the present purpose, two points are worth highlighting. Firstly, we find an uncommon adjective like *amentitus* used with the intention to provoke in the victim a state of insanity and madness, similarly obtained by curses explicitly targeting cognitive faculties.³⁴ It has been convincingly suggested that this tablet aimed at making Prima Aemilia infertile (Sánchez Natalías 2018, 12). Reproductive impairment fits well in the picture intensifying the desired psychological distress. Secondly, the simile of blooming flowers, perhaps inspired by the name of Prima Aemilia's lover, Narcissus, shows a certain degree of poetic and personal choice. Although it follows the formulaic motif of sympathetic magic and the *similia similibus* formula, this adynaton expresses individual taste and personality. Indeed, greater originality than other standard curses is a feature of the Mainz tablets.³⁵

Moreover, this site remarkably testifies to another significant aspect. The evidence undoubtedly suggests that in Mainz the tablets were put on the fire of sacrificial pits during the ritual of deposition. Several tablets have been found only as lumps of molten lead, three are half melted, while in others the target's

³² Blänsdorf 2012a. See Veale 2017, 301–307 on the deposition of offerings at this sanctuary and the relation between the curses and the site.

³³ DTM 15, Mainz, I-II CE: *Prima Aemilia Narcissi agat, quidquid conabitur, quidquid aget, omnia illi inversum sit. Amentita surgat, amentita suas res agat. Quidquid surget, omnia interversum surgat. Prima Narcissi aga(t): como haec carta nuncquam florescet, sic illa nuncquam quicquam florescat.* Text and translation from Blänsdorf 2010a, 170, slightly modified.

³⁴ See Gordon 2013, 269–271, on physical and mental sufferings in Latin curses.

³⁵ See Blänsdorf 2010a, 146–147: “There are no signs of the standardisation that would indicate professional skill as a scribe. It is consistent with this that, apart from some standard formulae of invocation and curse, most of the texts employ personal, indeed idiosyncratic, language and expressions. Moreover, the typical features of learned or professionally-composed curse tablets, which only begin to appear during the 2nd century, are entirely absent.” On individuality in the Mainz tablets as well as in the documents from Bath, see also McKie 2016.

life liquefying like lead is a prominent simile.³⁶ The consequences of this ritual procedure on human health might have been underestimated in the scholarship. To the best of my knowledge, historians of religion and magic have not sufficiently underlined the toxicity of lead, and how this poisonousness may have affected the experience of cursing rituals.³⁷

It has been clinically proven that lead is toxic to adults and children. Ingestion, inhalation, and skin contact are the most common ways in which lead enters the body: since it is only slowly expelled via the feces, it accumulates over time. Lead poisoning is also known as plumbism or saturnism, and gout due to lead intoxication is called Saturnine gout, lead being the alchemical metal of the planet Saturn. The nervous system is remarkably affected, and acute as well as chronic exposure causes cognitive deficiencies such as headaches, lethargy, loss of memory, encephalopathy, muscle tremors, impairment of sensorimotor functions, irritability, depression and anxiety, delirium, and hallucinations. In children, lead exposure results in intelligence quotient loss and severe encephalopathy, while in pregnant women it increases the chance of abortions, miscarriages, stillbirths, reduced gestational age and impaired cognitive development of the fetus (see, *ex plurimis*, Papanikolaou et al. 2005; White et al. 2007; Vorvolakos et al. 2016). No safe blood concentration of lead is known yet (Flora et al. 2012; Vorvolakos et al. 2016). Neurocognitive deficits in adult men and women may occur from blood-lead concentration levels of 11–20 µg/100 ml (Gidlow 2015).

In toxicological studies, the paternity of the discovery of lead toxicity is sometimes erroneously attributed to Hippocrates, while the first to recognize the toxic effects of white lead (ψιμύθιον, lead carbonate, ceruse) seems to have been Nicander of Colophon in the 2nd century BCE.³⁸ Pliny mentions the noxious effects of lead, in particular the toxicity of lead fumes.³⁹ The use of lead, pewter, and lead

36 See Blänsdorf 2012a, 39. *DTM* 2 and 32: severally damaged by fire. *DTM* 10.9–10, 11.10 and 12.2: *quatmodum hoc plumbum liquescet* simile. Cf. Bevilacqua 2014, ll. 1–5: κ|ατορύσσω καὶ δέδεκα καὶ καταδεσμεύω εἰς ψυχρὸν τάφον, εἰς πυρὰν καιομένην, εἰς θάλασσαν, βάλλω εἰς ποταμόν, εἰς λο|υτρῶνα, εἰς μέγαρο[ν].

37 But cf. Tomlin 1988, 81, who notes that lead is chemically poisonous.

38 As it is still stated in Papanikolaou et al. 2005, 330, although already Waldron 1973a and 1978 noted that the symptoms of the miner described in *Corpus Hippocraticum*, *De morbis popularibus*, VI 25 do not necessarily point to lead colic. Nicander, *Alexipharmaca*, 74–86 = Gow and Scholfield 1953, 98–99.

39 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 34.50.167: *coquitur ad medicinae usus patinis fictilibus substrato sulphure minuto, lamnis inpositis tenuibus opertisque sulphure et ferro mixtis. cum coquatur, munienda in eo opere foramina spiritus convenit; alioqui plumbi fomatium halitus noxius sentitur. et pestilens est, canibus ocissime, omnium vero metallorum muscis et culcibus, quam ob rem non sunt ea taedia in metallis*. On ancient notions of lead toxicity, see Waldron 1973b, 394.



(a)



(b)

DTM 2 (Inv.-Nr. 182,18) Innenseite

Fig. 1: *DTM 2* rolled (a) and unrolled (b), from Blänsdorf 2012a. Reprint with permission of the GDKE Mainz.

alloys in Greco-Roman antiquity was extensive and was not restricted to writing materials,⁴⁰ but ranged from cooking and drinking vessels to face powders and white wall paints as ceruse. Especially in the Roman Empire, it was used in the construction of water and sewage systems, and a high (and toxic) proportion of lead was contained in the *sapa* as well as in the more concentrated *defructum*, grape must that was boiled down in leaden vessels, reduced, and added to wine and other various recipes as sweetener.⁴¹ Moreover, since the beginning of the 20th century, historical studies on Occupational Health have traced the clinical effects of lead exposure suffered by miners, metalworkers, and slaves from antiquity.⁴² However, little attention has been devoted to the use of lead in the religious sphere.

Since one of the channels for lead poisoning is dermal exposure, frequent and constant manipulation of lead tablets could have possibly meant long-term skin contact with a toxic material. Absorption could have occurred directly through the skin, or from having handled lead and then touching the eyes, mouth, or nose. Particles could have attached to hair and clothes, and could have been passed on to other people. Considering how tablets were produced – from melting lead or lead alloys, to laying them out on a flat surface, to cutting sheets, to engraving the text,⁴³ – the concentration of toxic particles in the workshop of a professional magician could have been high. The fumes from the melting metal and the dust from the cuttings as well as from the engraving with a stylus could have been dangerous sources of contamination on long-term exposure.

40 Besides curses, lead was widely used for writing oracular enquiries (as in the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona), commercial transactions and contracts, and personal correspondence; see Ceccarelli 2013, 37 on the qualities of lead, such as light weight and suitability for transmission over long distance, the possibility of folding the lamella for secrecy, and ease for writing complex messages. See Gordon 2015 on lead as material base of curses enhancing their perlocutionary efficacy. See Sánchez Natalías 2018 on how metaphors in curses were interrelated to the material of the writing support.

41 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 14.27.136: *ipsa quoque defruta ac sapa<s>, cum sit caelum sine luna, hoc est in sideris eius coitu, neque alio die coqui iubent, praeterea plumbeis vasis, non aereis, nucibusque iuglandibus additis; eas enim fumum excipere*. On lead poisoning in antiquity, with a critique of Nriagu 1983's theory that lead intoxication contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire, see, *ex plurimis*, Waldron 1973b; Prioreschi 1998, 659–661; Warren 2000, 18–21; Dalvi and Pillinger 2013.

42 See Riva et al. 2011 and 2012. See also Retief and Cilliers 2005, 155–156: the sources of pollution considered are (1) water supplies; (2) paints, medicines, and cosmetics; (3) food and beverages to which sugar of lead was added, or prepared in pewter or lead containers; (4) mines, foundries, and manufacturing industries.

43 See Tomlin 1988, 81–84 and Curbera 2014 on the process of tablet production.

A certain degree of exposure to lead poisoning can be imagined for the participants to the cursing ritual too, especially in the case of Mainz. The procedure of melting the tablets by fire would have generated an elevated concentration of toxic fumes within a not sufficiently ventilated area. Inhaling these fumes and particles, even if in an acute but non-chronic exposure, might have provoked negative effects on health. Unless one tries to reproduce in a laboratory experiment the melting of a Mainz tablet to measure the emission of lead particles, it is impossible to quantify the level of toxicity of these ritual actions. Without further chemical and pharmacological data, we cannot precisely determine the immediate symptoms resulting from acute exposure to the fumes of tablets melting on sacrificial pits. However, the fact that lead is a toxic metal should be included in the picture that tries to describe the religious experience of cursers. It is not an unlikely possibility that cursing rituals in Mainz may have resulted in participants feeling unwell, experiencing intoxication,⁴⁴ or manifesting visual misperceptions and altered mental states, especially if they were recurring to curses frequently. Firstly, as noted above, even a low level of lead contamination may damage organs and systems in the human body. Inhalation of small amounts of lead fumes may cause minor symptoms such as chest pain and headache, but also more seriously memory loss, personality changes, and hallucinations, while larger amounts of lead fumes may provoke delirium and seizures (Dikshith 2013, 241–242). Secondly, we should not forget the impact of suggestibility of the context in eliciting out-of-the-ordinary states of mind.⁴⁵ Even if the lead fumes inhaled during the ritual of deposition had a low level of toxicity without immediate poisonous effects, the participants could have developed psychogenic susceptibility to pain and sensory illusions. It is not unrealistic to suppose that the dedicators of the Mainz tablets were attracting to themselves exactly the sufferings and cognitive deficits that were requested for the target victims. At the end of *DTM 2*, the half-melted tablet in Fig. 1, we find the following phrasing:

⁴⁴ On intoxication detectable from archeological remains, and its consequences on sensory perception, in the ancient Mediterranean, see Hamilakis 2013, 50. 135.

⁴⁵ On mystical experiences in relation to the environment, see Andersen et al. 2014, 223–224: “strong expectations induced in suggestive contexts can elicit quite remarkable effects in individuals’ sensory experiences. (...) Sensory deprivation therefore obstructs the brain’s attempt to monitor the situation for potential prediction errors;” and 239: “a suggestive context combined with sensory deprivation is sufficient to elicit mystical experiences. We find, however, that successful elicitation of mystical experiences particularly depended upon the cultural background of the participants”. I owe this reference to Yulia Ustinova.

...his abilities, his thinking and wits... (...) Just as salt will <melt in water>, (15) so may his limbs and marrow melt, may he be tortured and may he confess that he has committed sacrilege. I solemnly entrust (this) to you, in order that you may fulfil my wishes and I gladly and willingly return my thanks to you, if you make him die a horrible death.⁴⁶

Asking for the deterioration of the health of the person who had defrauded some money, and then putting the lead tablet into fire, and inhaling the fumes, the *defigens* was possibly damaging his or her own health. Furthermore, the fumes in combination with the spatial configuration – a confined area, could have generated in the agents a sense of confused thoughts and distorted perception. Sensory deprivation caused by darkness and fumes, metaphorically visualizing the destruction of the opponent by fire, the sacred context, and the cultural predisposition of the believers all could have impacted the way in which the participation in the ritual was experienced.

4 Emotion, space, and mind at the Fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome

Out-of-the-ordinary ambience, dark lighting, and a special ceremonial setting constituted key elements of another sacred space where cursing rituals took place. It is our third, and last, case study: the sanctuary of Anna Perenna and her nymphs in Rome. Surely not because of the number 9 repeated three times, in the year 1999, two archaeological sites that have recently contributed most significantly to the history of ancient magic were discovered, the Mainz sanctuary above and this one in Rome. Anna Perenna was a goddess of the cyclical return of the year, previously known from Ovid, who dedicates to her a long section in the third book of his *Fasti* (Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.523–526). Outside of the city walls of Rome, a natural spring was enclosed in a sacred precinct and consecrated to her and her nymphs. Inside the fountain, the archaeologists have found a great quantity of depositional material that included 26 lead and copper tablets and seven figurines of bone and wax together with 24 lead containers and three made of terracotta, alongside coins, lamps, pottery, and other findings like pine cones and egg shells (see Piranomonte 2002, 2010, 2016). Although this site deserves a more thorough treatment, I will only mention and

46 DTM 2.11, 14–18, Mainz, I-II CE: *copia, cogitatum, mentes. (...) et a[d qu]em modum sal in [aqua liques]cet, sic et illi membra m[ed]ullae extabescant. Cr[uc]ietur] et dicat se admisisse neffa]s. D[e]mando tibi rel[igione,] ut me uotis condammes et ut laetus libens ea tibi referam, si de eo exitum malum feceris.* Translation from Blänsdorf 2010a, 181.

concisely comment on two texts. Moreover, whereas Marina Piranomonte and Jürgen Blänsdorf have presented the tablets on several occasions and in the catalogue of the Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme di Diocleziano (Friggeri et al. 2012), we still wait for their complete and final edition. The objects of my analysis are two tablets that exemplarily reveal the mentalities and emotions of the ritual agents here active. This first text is a curse against an *arbiter* whose organs needed for assessing a legal case and formulating a judgment – his eyes – must be pulled out:

The sacred and holy (nymphs), through the infernal gods and the messengers: what I wish and demand from your great virtue: take the eyes and take them completely away, the right or the left one, of Sura, who lately was born from a cursed vulva. I wish and demand from your great virtue it shall happen: take the eyes, the right and the left one, in order that the virtue of Sura the judge may not persist, who was born from a cursed vulva.⁴⁷

While examining the evidence in preparation for the trial, the victim might have seen something disadvantageous for the author (Blänsdorf 2015, 32–36). The distinction between *arbiter* and *iudex* after the Republic was practically nonexistent, but the *arbiter* was initially the magistrate responsible for deciding over details, “requiring a wide power of discretion: for example, the division of an inheritance or the assessment of a sum owing” (Metzger 2015, 283). Subjective discretion seems to have played a decisive role in this case. The curse might have targeted the judicial discretion of Sura and his ability to see things in a certain way. Thanks to the *magna virtus* of the divine agents, the *virtus* of Sura in judging could be crushed. A complex pattern of magical signs and drawings complement the text, which was engraved by a confident writer (Blänsdorf 2010b, 221–227). The drawings of snakes, stylized humans, geometrical shapes, and magical signs contributed to setting apart this message delivered to the underworld gods. The malediction of Sura started from his birth, as affirmed twice in the text and possibly in the drawings as well. The human sketch inside the central rhombus can represent the victim as a baby coming out from the womb (Blänsdorf 2015, 33, following E. Gradavohl). The extension of the curse to the victim’s mother is more potent and emotionally charged than the usual formula that identifies the victim specifying the mother’s name

47 Tablet inv. no. 475567, Rome, IV/V CE: *sacras santas a sup̄teris et angilis quod rogo et peto magnam uirtutem uestram: tollatis pertolla{e}tis oculus siue dextrum et sinisteru Surae, qui nat(us) maledicta modo ets de uulua. fiat rogo et peto magnam uirtutem uestra(m). dextra blobes sinistra irilesus tollite oculus dextru sinisteru, ne possit durare uirtus arbitri Surae, qui natu(s) est de uulua maledicta.* Transl. Blänsdorf 2015, 34.

(*X quem peperit Y*).⁴⁸ It gives to the curse a primordial root of damnation, and it further justifies the destruction of the victim and his faculties.

The second text is written on a copper tablet and is very fragmentary:

That his persons have been donated [...] and the worshipper (or: the little priest) [...] the son and whoever [...] tomorrow we will appeal as well to your goddesses [...] as to our Christ [...] those who] now are exulting, shall be in fear [...] I shall defeat him...⁴⁹

Here there is a rare mention of Jesus Christ in a curse tablet, though the inclusion of divinities from other traditions is frequent in Greek and Latin magical texts.⁵⁰ The author of this curse was Christian, while the opponents (the *defixi*) were believers in Greco-Roman gods. The Christian author possibly decided to attack them using their very own rituals and sacred places, although he deemed himself to be in an even better position, having also Jesus Christ on his side. Blänsdorf underlines that the expression *gaudeant, timiant* (that is *qui gaudeant timeant*) confirms the Christian influence, the only equivalent formula being from the Gospel of Luke: 6.25, “Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep”.⁵¹ However, another parallel might be offered by a Greek curse tablet from Amorgos, in which the author asks Demeter to “punish those who rejoice in our misery”.⁵² The casters of these two spells could have found themselves in a comparable situation: the victims were rejoicing to the detriment of the author, who then wished for fearful punishments that could suppress their grins of malicious exultation

48 A closer parallel is Kropp 2008, no. 11.3.1/1, Constantine/Cirta, IV CE: *demando tibi, ut acceptum habeas Silvanum quem peperit vulva facta et custodias*, “I entrust to you, that you accept as possession Silvanus, who was born from the vulva, his deeds and care.” See Jordan 1976, 131 for other examples in which the womb and not a personal name is mentioned.

49 Tablet inv. no. 475563, Rome, IV/V CE: [- - -]conatas suas [...] person[as - - -] ill[- - -] et uaticolo m[.]l[- - -]erio [- - -] filio et quisquis [.].c[.]m[.]m[.] [roga]mus cras deas uest[ra]s [...]et cristum nostr[um - - -] Qui] gaudent timi[a]nt t[- - -] eu(m) uincam i[- - -]c[- - -]l[- - -]suc[.]ui [- - -]; transl. Blänsdorf 2015, 25.

50 Blänsdorf 2012b, 32. See also Németh 2016 on the abbreviation of the name of Jesus Christ Nazareus in six containers from this site, inscribed inside the drawing of a bird-headed demon. Another invocation to Jesus is in *SM* 61, a cursing prayer on papyrus from Egypt, IV CE. Cf. Gager 1992, no. 119 (Dalmatia, VI CE), a Latin amulet on a lead tablet invoking Jesus (*In nom(ine) d(omi)ni Ieso Cr[is]ti denontio tibi, immondissime spirete tartaruce*) that perhaps could have been used in exorcism rituals as well.

51 Blänsdorf 2012b, 32; 2015, 24. Gospel of Luke 6.25: οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενθήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε. *Vae vobis, qui ridetis nunc: quia lugebitis et flebitis.*

52 *IG* XII 7, p. 1, B, Amorgos, dated from the Hellenistic to the early Imperial period: (...) κολάσαι τοὺς ἡμᾶς τοιοῦτους ἡδέως βλέποντας. “(...) punish those who get delight in seeing us in such a situation”. See Versnel 1999; Salvo 2012, 257–258. Cf. Eidinow 2016, 226–232. 250–253, for a critical discussion of *Schadenfreude* as a motivation of binding spells.

(perhaps on some misfortune of the author). Furthermore, if the opponents are rejoicing today, tomorrow they will be reached by divine punishment from multiple sides, Christian and non-Christian, as the text specifies that the ritual will be taking place the next day (*cras*) and be, thereupon, immediately effective.

The setting of these cursing practices in Rome is remarkable. Practitioners were approaching an underground cistern outside of city walls,⁵³ awakening in secrecy powerful deities from official and unofficial cults. Findings at this site like dolls inside nesting containers allow us to think at the preparatory phase of the ritual as well. Recontextualising for magical aims wax dolls and snakes, everyday objects like containers, lamps, and coins, the agents were starting to adapt and control their rite already at the stage of careful preparation and assembling of objects. During the rite, they were immersed into darkness, damp air, watery visual and aural stimuli, stirring potions in a copper cauldron (*caccabus*): each element elicited the reception of a plethora of stimuli as counter-intuitive signs, and the complexity of this environment augmented the disposition of the ritual agents towards experiencing a religious mental state.

5 Concluding remarks

On a flight from Tel Aviv to Frankfurt in February 2017, I overheard a conversation between a woman and a man. They had first met on the plane, but she was keen on telling him the story of her life. In particular, she told him how her husband had stubbornly refused to concede her a divorce, as required by the halachic law, although the rabbis were in favor of their separation. She decided, then, to visit the Kotel tunnels, the underground remains of the Western Wall from the Second Temple period in Jerusalem. At the next meeting, a rabbi finally managed to persuade her husband, and she obtained the divorce. According to her, the result was not due to the rabbi's persuasive rhetorical ability. It was her visit to the Kotel, and sending a message to God on a piece of paper, that changed everything. This story is worth mentioning because it shows the perceived efficacy of having visited a sacred place for a specific purpose as well as of experiencing a dark, enclosed environment in which actions are set apart. The appeal to the divine for the resolution of a problem is determined by the interaction between space, written materials,

⁵³ On magic in underground retreats and the intention to contact the Underworld, see Ustinova 2009, 240–244; Ogden 2007. On Nymphs, caves, and fountains in late antique magic, see Karivieri 2015, 184–186.

and emotions of the petitioner and other individuals that need manipulation. In antiquity, the deposition of a curse tablet was an experience in which emotions as well as senses were undergoing a transformation, assuaging the urge for revenge and increasing sensory sensibility.

It is beyond our reach to exactly reconstruct what individuals experienced when invoking divine justice in the Roman Empire. Notwithstanding the examination of some spatial elements and neurobiological features, many questions still remain unanswered. For example, it is hard to prove to what extent the interactions that took place at a sanctuary, facial expressions, blushing due to emotional stress, and body language influenced the interactions among those who were present or nearby, or whether someone who had just performed a cursing ritual could be clearly recognized by members outside of the sacred space. There are indeed challenges inherent to the study of curses as expressions of individual religious experiences, considering the strong formularity of their language and the typical patterns of the genre. Professional magicians could have intently collaborated with their clients, but these could also have engraved the tablets themselves. At any rate, in the act of dedicating the tablets, of putting them on the sacrificial pit, and chanting the spells, the dedicators became the protagonists of the rite. Therefore, individualities can be legitimately tracked down. Furthermore, the limits of formularity can be overcome when archaeological data are available. The characteristics of the space and the objects used in the ceremony allow for untangling the sensory aspects of the ritual experience. If we combine the epigraphical and archaeological data together with neurobiological factors, we may grasp a vague idea of the religious experiences and individual appropriations in Corinth, Mainz, and Rome. In the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth, Room 7 in the Building of the Tablets helped to transform into an “emotional community” the group of people entering it.⁵⁴ Besides the archaeological context, the configuration of the ritual setting and the chosen procedures further help to understand what emotional state could be achieved. The use of a psychoactive substance such as frankincense might have unwound the participants in the ritual. However, other procedures such as the burning of lead tablets in Mainz might have had more perilous effects on mind and body. The lived religious experience could result in an altered state of consciousness, in a sense of distorted perception, and even in an initial intoxication, given the high poisonousness of melted lead. Putting the dedication on fire must have been especially potent in terms of

54 On the concept of “emotional communities” in antiquity, see Chaniotis 2012.

visual and olfactory stimuli, rendering the ceremony more memorable and charging it with empowering efficacy. Sensory deprivation in a confined and damp space, secrecy, the invocation of deities from more than one system of cult, and out-of-the-ordinary objects impacted the perceptual and cognitive abilities of the devotees of Anna Perenna in Rome.

The scent of frankincense, melted lead, and possibly the altered gazes hint at how behavioral and bodily components made cursing an ever changing and adaptable performance. Depositing a curse created a multi-sensory experience in which both mind and body were affected.

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Oda Wischmeyer

Ego-documents on religious experiences in Paul's Letters: 2 Corinthians 12 and related texts

Abstract: This article investigates the earliest Pauline text that gives account of an individual revelation and reports on personal religious experience in this field: 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. Paul is the only person from the first decades of the Christ-confessing movement who wrote ego-documents (first person reports) that are embedded in his letters to several communities and individuals. These texts serve predominantly the polemical dispute with opponents in the newly founded communities of Christ-confessors. Some of these texts are very brief narratives of interior religious experiences Paul had in earlier stages of his life. In 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 he reports on visions and revelations (*hórasis* and *apokálypsis*), on one or two raptures (*harpagmós/raptus*) and in contrast on an audition, on a *lógion kyriou* that he understands as committing him to a life of weakness and disease even though he has urgently prayed for recovery. Though Paul uses his life and his religious experiences as a religious and moral example in this text, the text also opens up a window into his personal religious world that deserves special attention. Beyond its actual setting within Corinthian conflicts, 2 Corinthians 12 is an outstanding example of the hybrid character of Pauline religious experience: the text is situated at the interface of concepts of Ancient Judaism (especially apocalypticism, martyrdom, and the figure of Satan), pagan healing-oracles (Asclepius), individual prayer that is shaped by a formula close to Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, and the Early Christian concept of the heavenly Christ *Kýrios*. Beyond that, the function of the text within the broader argument is of particular interest: Paul does not use his *apokálypsis* for demonstrating the strength and authority of his unique religious expertise or for deepening the religious imagination of the communities, but for the defense and the interpretation of the physical weakness of his person by referring to a particular *lógion kyriou* that is transmitted only in 2 Corinthians. Thereby he provides his addressees an insight into his personal encounter with the heavenly *kýrios* and at the same time clarifies that religious communication with the *kýrios* neither means personal glory nor automatically leads to health, power and success. All in all the text works as a counter-revelation and expresses how cautious Paul is of using his

personal religious experiences, i.e. revelations, for what he calls boasting (*kauchāsthai*). The whole personal narrative is directed polemically against those charismatic missionaries who Paul names “hyper-apostles”. In contrast, he interprets his disease as the actual revelation of the *châris* and the *dýnamis* of the *kýrios*. The focus is not on the demonstration of Paul’s access to the heavenly world, but on the explanation of his weak physical condition as gift (*châris*) of the heavenly Christ and thereby on a *religious interpretation of the physical condition of his body*. His body is interpreted as a place of revelation.

1 New Testament Studies; Paul and the different aspects of the importance of his individual religious experiences

When I received the invitation for the conference on “*Lived Ancient Religion*”: *Leaving the (disciplinary) comfort zone – Lived Ancient Religion AD 1 to 800*, I wondered whether and how a New Testament scholar could contribute under the fashionable, but provoking and somehow threatening heading of “Leaving the disciplinary comfort zone”. New Testament scholarship is committed to the interpretation of the canonical collection of Early Christian texts in their Greco-Roman and Ancient Jewish contexts and to the study of the history of their reception. New Testament scholars also investigate that part of the Early Christian literature of roughly the first two or three centuries CE, that is known and collected under the term “NT apocrypha”: texts of different genres that follow up and imitate viz. develop the New Testament literary genres. Nevertheless we feel bound to our discipline and to the discussion of those particular subjects for exegetical debate that have arisen and still arise from the New Testament texts themselves. The extent of our canon is limited and the texts have been interpreted since about 150 CE.¹ There is no letter and no word in this collection of texts that has not been under discussion countless times, and there is no option for a scholar’s choosing of one hypothesis out of others without becoming associated with one or another New Testament “school” or “wing”. Therefore, it can be disputed whether New Testament studies are a real “comfort zone”; but the fact that New Testament scholars do work and argue within a specific “zone” –

¹ As far as we know the first commentary on a NT book was written by the Gnostic theologian Herakleon on the Gospel of John (about 150 CE).

or perhaps better, that a New Testament scholar is a member of a highly specialized and at least partly *closed* academic “discussion-room of one’s own” that fosters its own agenda – cannot be denied.

It is the canonical status of our specific literature that causes this particular situation. Even if we try to interpret our texts without paying any attention to their authoritative status past or present, we have to deal with the amount of learned literature which is the result of that specific status of “our” texts and which we should take seriously as long as we intend to follow the rules of good academic practice of the discipline. In this respect, it is something of a challenge to leave the boundaries of the New Testament scholarship and to navigate in the vast ocean of the history of Greco-Roman religion where “our” texts are not the focus and our interpretative battles and differences so far remain unknown or, at least, less important.

As is generally known, however, some generations ago the situation was quite different from what I have briefly outlined here. The scholars of the so called *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, professors from different faculties and fields of research of the University of Göttingen around 1890/1900, read the texts that later on would be collected in the “New Testament” in their “pagan” environment – especially against the backdrop of the so called mystery religion(s), Gnosticism and religious syncretism as well as of different ecstatic and pneumatic phenomena and movements. But so called Gnosticism is no longer understood as a pre-Christian movement and scholars especially of the two last generations have discovered more in depth the world of Ancient Jewish texts as “parallel text worlds” in comparison with the New Testament text collection. The category “Jewish texts” covers the Septuagint, Philo of Alexandria and Josephus as well as a large number of the amount of apocalyptic, didactic, sapiential and narrative pseudepigraphic texts and the fragments of the Jewish-Hellenistic authors besides the Septuagint. Still in the focus of contemporary scholarship is the exciting library of the Dead Sea Scrolls that have generated their own specialized scholarship. This vast and variegated literature is understood to be the original background of Paul, whom we know as the first Christ-confessing author. Since at least the last fifty years the scholarly focus is no longer on the embeddedness of the New Testament texts in their primarily “pagan” religious environment, but on the relation between Ancient Judaism and the origin of what later on was labelled as Ancient Christianity. In this wave of reconstructing the multifaceted world of Ancient Judaism and respectively Jewishness (recently Sängler 2017), especially Paul was re-interpreted as a Jewish religious agent or a Jewish thinker, and scholars have lengthily debated about the best way of classifying Paul’s

Judaism in the tableau of Jewish *hairéseis*, as Josephus phrases it, or in a less classifying way, in the context of Jewish texts and their textual communities of the time before the first Jewish war. The debates on “Paul within Judaism” still go on and attract the interest of most of Pauline scholarship so that scholars have paid less attention to the issue of Paul and ancient religion(s).

Interestingly enough, there is also a focus on Paul’s relationship with popular philosophy, especially fostered by such leading scholars as Hans Dieter Betz (Betz 1978) and Abraham Malherbe (Malherbe 2006; Downing 1998), and on Paul and Stoic and middle Platonic philosophy, inaugurated by the studies of Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Engberg-Pedersen 2000; 2010) and Stanley Stowers.² A second major issue is the emperor cult, with its specific combination of political and religious dimensions, in regard to Paul: recently labelled under the topic of “Paul and Empire” (Horsley 1997) or “Paul and Politics” (Horsley 2000) – the titles of two seminal collections of essays, edited by Richard Horsley.³ In comparison with these fields of research no large-scale initiative has been launched so far with the aim to revitalize or even to improve the approach from the side of the pagan – or perhaps better, the common – religious environment of Paul’s addressees in Asia Minor and Greece.⁴ My paper aims at pointing especially to this aspect of Paul’s religious mission in his encounters both with the Jewish religion from which he came (circumcised) and with “pagan” (*éthnē*) religion as the field to which he felt committed as agent of Jesus Christ *kyrios*. The majority of Paul’s addressees had shared the cult-practices of the cities in which they lived before Paul converted them to members of the Christ-confessing new associations, named *ekklēsiai* (1 Thessalonians 1:9s; 1 Corinthians 12:1–3; Galatians 4:8–10); Paul himself, as a diaspora Jew born in Tarsus and educated as Pharisee, was also acquainted with “pagan” cults and their religious culture. The newly established Christ-confessing communities existed in an uncertain religious and legal status between the variety of pagan cults, Jewish synagogues and those small Early Christian institutions that had already been founded by the first apostles in

² For an introduction to the current state of scholarship see: Stowers 2015; van Kooten, Wischmeyer and Wright 2015; Wischmeyer 2018.

³ Other major contributions by Neil Elliott, and John Dominic Crossan. Labelled as a “fresh” perspective on Paul by N.T. Wright in his 2000 Manson Memorial Lecture.

⁴ But see the major contributions by Hans Dieter Betz and Hans-Josef Klauck: Betz 1990–2009; Klauck 2003. There is also a lively scholarly debate on the issue of how to classify the Jesus movement and the early *ekklēsiai* in the context of cultic, religious, and ethnic associations. Special studies touch the religious scene of Corinth, Thessaloniki, Philippi and Galatia in the 1st century CE.

Palestine and Syria. As far as we know, the Jesus-literature of the gospels was not yet written, and only some oral traditional materials about Jesus' preaching and healing and about his death and resurrection circulated among the communities. The recently converted Christ-confessors had basically loosened or even cut off the public and private participation (1 Cor 8) in the Greco-Roman cults and so far had no deep knowledge of the Jewish imaginative religious background. Paul had to build up their discrete religious culture and knowledge – both practical and theoretical – as well as a particular exterior (house churches) and interior religious space (imaginings). The same was true for former Jews or God-fearers who were attracted by the Pauline *ekklēsiai*. They too had lost parts of their Jewish religious heritage, especially their connection to the Temple cult, perhaps also to local synagogues, and to Jewish ritual and daily religious life. Be they former pagans or former Jews, each of the converts had to grapple with a massive loss of the religious environment they were brought up in and used to, and they had to conceptualize a new religious framework for their assemblies in their house churches and for their individual religious and social lives in their homes (aspects of “domestic religion”⁵).

Since the topic of “The Pauline communities and Pauline religious advice in their overall religious context” has not yet been discussed sufficiently,⁶ I shall concentrate on Paul himself as we know him from his letters and on how he reacts to the situation of his communities. One of Paul's resources to build up and to strengthen the domestic religion and the inner religious ideas and perceptions of the members of the Christ-confessing communities, was his personal religious experience – which could work as an example that should be communicated to the *ekklēsiai*.⁷

At this point of my essay, I shall clarify in advance some overall aspects of the person and the religious agency of Paul in order to better connect the Pauline texts with the theme of religious experience. In the invitational text of the conference, the main issues of what we should investigate are outlined in detail. The concept of “lived ancient religion” has not been applied so far to Pauline texts and cannot be simply tried out or applied here. However, in so far

⁵ This term is necessary for describing Jewish religion and Early Christian house church cult (1 Cor 11:17–34).

⁶ Exegetical literature is focused on the institutional status of the *ekklēsiai*, not so much on the religious traditions, expectations and needs of their *members*.

⁷ We don't have a recent monograph on “Paul and Religion” that matches the standards of today's research in Greco-Roman religion. In contrast see the monographs of the „Religionsgeschichtliche Schule“: R. Reitzenstein, A. Deißmann, J. Weiß, W. Bousset, W. Wrede.

as the concept includes religious experience, it can help understand Paul and his communication with his communities. The look at the Pauline texts also broadens the general world of texts of religious studies by integrating those from the allegedly independent worlds of Ancient Jewish and Early Christian texts into the text-corpus of Greco-Roman religious studies. Furthermore, we are able to reconstruct at least aspects of Paul's "religious experience": in the conference-paper defined "as a product of a wide range of sensory stimuli, affects and inner feelings that are articulated by subjects . . . as religious experience". This endeavor can help us to attach a higher priority to Paul's religious experience than has been paid to date in current Pauline studies as I have already mentioned.⁸

The starting point for our endeavor are the *first person reports on individual religious experiences* by Paul, written down in his letters to his communities, although these texts are literarily and argumentatively shaped by apologetic, polemical and exhortative intentions. Paul refers four times to *visions* or to similar encounters with the heavenly world.⁹ He was the first and for a considerable space of time the only person among the leading figures of Earliest Christianity – Peter, James the brother of Jesus and some of the "Twelve" – who did not limit himself to oral preaching, but wrote letters under his own name and in his own responsibility, and at the same time argued by using predominantly not Jesus, but his own person as an example of moral and religious instruction. He was quite aware of his *persona* and discussed his *egō* in different theoretical and biographical contexts without ever questioning that not only his message and his instructions, but also his person was of highest importance for his communities and in particular for his epistolary audience.¹⁰ Primarily, his way of arguing by means of his personal conduct of life and of his external and inner religious biography was a matter of claiming *authority* within, against or even above the given authority of the leaders of the communities of Christ-confessors of the first generation (about 30–60 CE). As we learn from his letters, but also from some passages of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's person was highly controversial not only in the environment of contemporary diaspora synagogues, but Paul was also an object of dispute between different religious parties within the Christ-confessing communities on the one hand and between rivalling missionaries or newcomers in the cities and regions where he had

⁸ See the very short introduction by Lang 2013. This paragraph gives a clear picture of the marginal position of the topic in recent Pauline scholarship.

⁹ Gal 1; 1 Cor 9; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 12. Scholars point also to 2 Cor 4:6. Monographs: Heininger 1996; Meier 1998. Heath 2013 focusses on 2 Cor 2:14–7:4, especially on 3:18.

¹⁰ 2 Cor 10:10 on the impact of his letters in contrast to his preaching power.

established communities on the other. So, Paul had to do a lot of self-explaining and self-defense in his letters.

There was however another, still more important reason for his constant reference to his own thoughts and personal experiences. As I have already mentioned, the new religious movement of the Christ-confessing and Christ-believing¹¹ communities, which Paul had established around 50 CE as *ekklēsiai* in several main cities of western Asia Minor and Greece, had a strong need not only of institutional, doctrinal and moral advice, but also of imaginative and emotional support from him whom they thought of not so much as their teacher, but as their founding father.¹² That the communities themselves called for guidance is demonstrated by the dense communication between Paul and their leading figures.¹³ Paul himself was very much aware of his lasting responsibility for the members of the communities and of the importance of their personal and emotional guidance, as is demonstrated by his letters.¹⁴ In other words, the letters are documents not only of doctrinal, moral and institutional instruction, but also of constant efforts to build up, to strengthen and to enhance the personal and emotional communication, as well as the attachment, between his person and the addressees. In this regard, his letters are personal documents.

We have also to take into consideration that the earliest Christ-confessing communities which were already known by the Roman authorities¹⁵ (who named them *christianoí*,¹⁶ whilst Paul himself does not use this label¹⁷) were constituted so to speak from out of the blue by Paul. These brand-new religious associations (Öhler 2016), though having something like a religious club or association status and club or association rules from the outset and thereby some kind of inner structure and stability, nevertheless stood on extremely shaky ground. They were solely grounded in Paul's message and in his organizational genius and persuasive power. Their relations, neither to the local synagogues nor to the different pagan religious associations, were not sorted out and their status in relation to the local authorities remained unclear. Paul took residence

11 Romans 10:9: If you confess with your mouth “*kýrion Jēsoūn*” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.

12 Paul as father: Paynter 2017, 245–249.

13 Best example: 1 Corinthians and Corinthian correspondence as a whole. Introductory work: Bieringer 1996.

14 Scholars classify some of his letters as “friendship”-letters: Theissen 2007, 116.

15 According to Galatians 1:13.23 the Christ-confessing community of Damascus was known by the religious authorities in Jerusalem very early (already at about 33 CE).

16 Acts 11:26. That means that *Christianoí* lived in an unclear legal status and always were in need of mental, emotional and – as far as possible – legal or political (Romans 13) support.

17 He speaks of *en Christō einai*.

in the communities only for a short period of time, then left, and afterwards the new communities were left to themselves or to other missionaries, like Apollos in Corinth, whose status remained unclear – at least in Paul’s perspective. Further instruction, encouragement and personal proofs of the truth of Paul’s message were urgently needed, as the problems in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:12¹⁸) and the array of questions that are asked by the Corinthians themselves demonstrate: questions about marriage, food sacrificed to idols, women’s behavior during the services, the Lord’s supper, spiritual gifts, leading positions in the communities, and resurrection of the dead.

Paul was convinced that the religious experience of the Spirit worked in addition to his own support and affection. Accordingly he pointed to the multifold manifestations of ecstatic pneumatic power and abilities like healing and performing miracles as well as speaking in tongues and prophesying in the assemblies of the *christianoí*. In his view not he himself, but these “gift(s) of the Spirit” are the real foundation and the backbone of the communities. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul argues that the appearance of *charismata* and *pneumatiká* during the community-services were the most convincing expression and confirmation of the power and the truth of his initial preaching and of the community’s belief in his message (Galatians 3:2). In 1 Corinthians 12–14 he draws an authentic and vivid portrait of the community’s assembly for service which – besides singing hymns and psalms and preaching – is characterized by multifold charismatic or pneumatic activities such as prophetic speech and speaking in tongues (*glössolalia*) (Treu 2018).

But evidently the members of the communities needed more than their own pneumatic experience and more than Paul’s report on his personal experience. This becomes clear when we read 1 Corinthians 15:1–7. Here Paul in a fundamental way appeals to what later on will be called “apostolic tradition”. Not only *tradition* as such comes in, but Paul brings his own person into connection with this tradition. One may ask whether what Paul offered matched the needs of his communities, or whether Paul actually understood what the communities missed. But as far as we see, Paul uses reference to “Kephass and to the Twelve” and general recourse to the “tradition” (V.3) as the first and most convincing tool in the whole argument of chapter 15. Anyway, his reaction was far from picturing his own experience extensively and in detail, when he repeated what he called *to euaggélion*, i.e. the message of Jesus Christ, in firm relation to the tradition, though also combined with reference to his own person and responsibility

18 Problems that are addressed by Paul: quarrel and strife. Paul mentions also problems in regard to sexual behavior and to legal questions.

and his own religious experience. 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 is the key text for this kind of argument which is characteristic for Paul and for his kind of preaching:

3 For I handed on to you as of first importance *what I in turn had received*: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared (*ōphthē*)¹⁹ to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*²⁰

By that Paul puts himself into the line of tradition of the resurrection witnesses. Scholars disagree in their analysis of the text (Zeller 2010, 460–474): how far delivers the text tradition, and at which point does Paul extend the original tradition by adding more witnesses and at last inscribing himself in person in that list? This question cannot be discussed here sufficiently. What matters in our context is that this document is the expression of Paul's claim for apostolic authority in the context of the kind of apostolic authority that is already established in the communities. 1 Corinthians 15:8 does not provide insight into the religious *experience* Paul had, but only serves to demonstrate his absolute trustworthiness and his traditional apostolic *authority*.

Already earlier in the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul refers to the same qualities, i.e. to his apostolic status, by asking a series of rhetorical questions:

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? *Have I not seen (heōraka)*²¹ *Jesus our Lord?* Are you not my work in the Lord? (1 Corinthians 9:1)²²

Paul uses the same verb: *horāō* (see), but a differently addressed object: *Jēsoūn Kýrion* instead of *Christós*.²³ No further detail of this religious experience is reported by Paul. Astonishingly enough we encounter the same extreme *brevitas* in his letter to the Galatians 1:16s.:

15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 *to reveal his Son to me*, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those

¹⁹ Present time: *horāō*.

²⁰ NRSV.

²¹ Present time: *horaō*.

²² NRSV.

²³ *Christós* probably was part of the traditional formula. Jesus is the more personal name that points to a face-to-face encounter.

who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Galatians 1:10–2:14 (or 2:21)²⁴ is the most important of Paul's autobiographical texts, something like his *curriculum vitae*, and thereby the bedrock of Pauline chronology and biography. But even in this lengthy text Paul is absolutely silent about any detail of his religious experience. What counts is the vocation by God and the exclusive mandate God has given him even before his birth. In other words, also Galatians 1 is about authority and legitimacy, not about religious experience – though we may imagine that Paul's addressees longed exactly for that.

To sum up so far, there are two main exterior reasons that urge Paul to refer to his personal religious experience: first, the constant questioning of his authority and legitimacy, and second, the communities' demand for religious support, i.e. for personally approved pictures of the heavenly world of the *kýrios* whose reign Paul proclaimed and of their own destiny (1 Cor 15).²⁵ Paul however, reacts most restrainedly against these challenges, many times pointing to his apostleship, but only three times (!) to his experiences with the *kýrios*. He refuses to reveal any details of his personal experiences with Christ and nowhere draws a picture of the heavenly world in the contexts of his own experiences.

2 2 Corinthians 12:1–10: a literary stylized report on Paul's religious experience

But there is at least one exception. Among the numerous more or less independent text-units which build up the argument of Paul's letters we find one text in which we come closest to how Paul himself dealt with what we may call personal religion or the expression of individual religious experience: 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. It is this one particular text that is suited for drawing together all the threads from Ancient Jewish texts, Early Christian texts²⁶ and the vast variety of so to speak pagan religious documents, materials and artifacts, in order to interpret Paul's personal religious world from different angles. Besides its significance

²⁴ Scholars differ in their analysis of chapter 2: What is the extent of his biographical retrospection, and when does he start his current argument?

²⁵ In 2 Corinthians 10–13 Paul explores that topic in a polemical way.

²⁶ It is only *texts* we have from Jewish and Early Christian communities of the first two centuries CE.

for the subject of “Paul and Greco-Roman religion”, the report may be of particular interest for scholars engaged in research about *individual* religious experiences beyond the boundaries of Ancient Judaism, paganism resp. Greco-Roman religion and Early Christianity, because Paul is a very well documented historical figure of the 1st century CE whose personal religious reports are unparalleled, at least in Earliest Christianity:

2 Corinthians 12:1 It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations (*optasías kai apokalýpseis kýriou*) of the Lord. 2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up (*harpagénta*) to the third heaven (*trítou ouranou*) – whether in the body (*sōmati*) or out of the body I do not know; God knows. 3 And I know that such a person – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows – 4 was caught up into Paradise (*parádeison*) and heard things that are not to be told (*arrēta rēmata*), that no mortal is permitted to repeat. 5 On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, 7 even considering the exceptional character of the revelations (*tē hyperbolē tōn apokalýpseōn*). Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan (*áγγελος Satanā*) to torment (*kolaphízō*, ‘to buffet’, to strike (Liddell-Scott 971)) me, to keep me from being too elated. 8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 9 but he said to me, ‘My grace (*cháris*) is sufficient for you, for power (*dýnamis*) is made perfect in weakness.’ So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.²⁷

The text is characterized by some peculiarities and, all in all, by a remarkable lack of clarity which seems to be intended. In light of the carefully molded composition not only of 2 Corinthians 12:1–10, but also of the context (chapters 10–13), we have to suppose that Paul plays with this ambiguity, using it as a stylistic device. He initiates his text – *nolens volens* as he says – by announcing a recital of his personal visions and revelations of the heavenly *kýrios*, but we can suppose that his report left the addressees disappointed, because he immediately drops the enumeration of revelations. Instead of narrating about his heavenly adventures he writes in an obscure way about a third person, who nevertheless seems to be Paul as the exact dating of the revelation may indicate.²⁸ All in all,

²⁷ NRSV.

²⁸ Thrall 2000, 782. Of specific interest is that Paul points back to an experience that occurred to him about fourteen years ago (12:2). This exact biographical note makes clear that the experience was very important and an unforgettable one and that there have not been more important visions afterwards.

verses 1–5 are dominated by an obvious *reservation* towards exactly what he has announced to give: an explicit narration of his religious experiences with the *kýrios*. That restraint extends to both his person and the *kýrios*. He twice underlines that he does not know about the physical status of the “man in Christ” so that there remains “confusion about his bodily status”.²⁹ He also twice ironically discloses that he is not allowed to report about those words that “the man in Christ” heard. Here he uses the twofold stylistic means of mystery and paradox (*arrēta rēmata*): of a revelation that prohibits revealing.³⁰ In addition it remains unclear whether Paul refers to two different experiences, one *raptus* (*harpagmós*) to the “third heaven” and another *raptus* to the paradise, or whether the wording of V.4 is nothing but a stylistic variation of V.2.³¹ The text is deliberately unclear not only on this point, but also in regard to the most important aspect: does Paul actually report on *optasías kai apokalýpseis kýriou*? Heavenly journeys need not necessarily be linked to revelations or epiphanies of heavenly agents: in this context, of Christ. Scholars point to the lack of an explicit Christ epiphany in 2 Corinthians 12:1–5 (Thrall 2000, 773–775). Neither the rapture to the third heaven nor the rapture to the paradise seems to bring Paul to Christ or at least to the revelation of angels or patriarchs (cf. Luke 16:19–31). No vision is depicted at all, but only an enigmatic audition (*ēkousa*) – of whatever. Anyway, the dubious list of revelations comes to a premature end already with V.5, where Paul explicitly refuses to boast of his visions.

In V.6 Paul continues his self-commentary, developing a fresh argument: his refusal is not motivated by the weakness of his religious experiences. He states in contrast: these experiences are outsized and even overwhelming (*tē hyperbolē*). When Paul declines to report about these visions (*apokalýpseōn*), it is in order to avoid what we would name personality-cult. He labels his rejection of religious self-praise as waiver (*feídomai*) and limits the importance of his person to his external appearance (“what is *seen* in me or *heard* from me”): a physical parody of the pneumatic visions and auditions.

²⁹ Schantz 2009, 108. Colleen Schantz interprets this confusion as result of the neurobiological status of ecstasy in which Paul was during the *raptus*: “The disturbance of bodily perception is a telltale sign of ecstasy”. Similar Thrall 2000, 782: Thrall speaks of an “ecstatic phenomenon of the displacement of the ego”.

³⁰ Schantz interprets the *arrēta rēmata* in the same line: “The detail of ineffability is far more intelligibly understood as the result of neural tuning than it has been as an awkward remnant of esotericism” (Schantz 2009, 108). If Schantz is right VV.2–4 must be taken seriously as records of an ecstatic state of Paul’s mind and body.

³¹ See Thrall 2000, 791s. Thrall votes for “one single experience” (792).

In V.7 Paul starts a second narration about a religious experience that underlines both the glory of his visions (about which he does *not* report) and the necessity and religious quality of his disease. Hans Dieter Betz has interpreted VV.7–10 as a parody of a Christ-aretology: „Formgeschichtlich gesehen haben wir in V.7–10 ein ‚Heilungswunder‘ vor uns, das im Stile einer Aretalogie vorgetragen ist“ (Betz 1969, 289). Betz analyzes the structure of the text-unit: prayer – oracle – boast (an aretology, though not of the healing God, but of Paul himself).³² He refers to the Asclepius-inscriptions from Epidaurus. Betz's famous classification affects the whole text and calls into question whether Paul records actual experiences at all. Scholars such as Margaret E. Thrall, who wrote the outstanding commentary on 2 Corinthians, and Thomas Schmeller, the author of a comprehensive commentary from 2016, criticize Betz's doubts by pointing to the fact that Paul speaks of *optasías kai apokalýpseis kýriou*, a phrase that can hardly be interpreted as parody. Thrall therefore states: “What we have here will be a serious account of real religious experience, and, as the exegesis will show, experience personal to Paul” (Thrall 2000, 777s). I follow Thrall in regard to 12:1–10, but take into consideration Betz's literary approach to VV.7–9, especially in regard to the Asclepius-cult.³³

Perhaps the description of this sub-unit as “parodistic audition” would better match the structure of the text, because the *lógion kýriou* is the point of the brief narration, not the – refused – healing miracle of the God (*kýrios*). Let us have a look at the details of the text in question. First, Paul reports a severe disease and interprets the disease as caused by a satanic figure. For depicting his disease as gravely as possible, he combines three elements: first, the violent metaphor of *skólops*³⁴ *tē sarkí*; second, the evil, i.e. destructive heavenly agent: the *ággelos sataná*; and third, a second metaphor of the angel's violent striking of Paul's face (*kolafízē*). In V.8 even a fourth aspect is added: Paul understands the attacks of physical pain as caused by the angel of Satan, i.e. as actual assaults, not only as an interior state of feeling weak or ill. This combination is most remarkable: no angel is mentioned in the context of the heavenly world of VV.1–4, as Paul's addressees most likely may have expected, but when it comes to Paul's physical existence and to his illness, he introduces an “evil angel”! Scholars have discussed to which kind of disease Paul alludes, or what he veils

³² This is the reason for Betz's labelling the text as parody.

³³ In that regard Aelius Aristides' *Hieroi Logoi* are of interest. Aristides praises his God Asclepius for his healing power. Though Aristides in some respects always remains physically weak, he thanks Asclepius for protecting him. In contrast, Paul's *kýrios* explicitly refuses help.

³⁴ Pale or thorn, Liddell Scott 1613. Heckel 1993, 84.

behind the metaphor of the “thorn in the flesh”.³⁵ Since Paul deliberately hides the exact information about his disease,³⁶ the conundrum of Paul’s illness will remain unsolved. The only thing we know is that he also mentions a state of physical weakness in his letter to the Galatians (4:12–15):

12 Friends, I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. 13 You know that it was because of a physical infirmity (*asthēneian tēs sarkós*) that I first announced the gospel to you; 14 though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God (*ággelon theou*), as Christ Jesus. 15 What has become of the goodwill you felt? For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out (*exorýxantes*)³⁷ your eyes and given them to me.

Also in this text Paul on the one hand uses a metaphor of physical brutality (V.15) and contraposes physical disgust and contempt to the metaphorically alluded heavenly world of angels and of Christ on the other. In Galatians 4:13–14, Paul demonstrates how violently he can speak about his own body (*sárx*, flesh) from the material point of view and to what degree his physical state matters for the communities. In Galatians 4:14 he interprets his person by using a counter-realistic metaphorical wording for the description of his weak body.

Back to 2 Corinthians. In VV 8–9 Paul refers to a different kind of revelation: an audition as the result of a prayer for healing that remained unanswered (cf. Wischmeyer 2004). The account of the second audition is antithetic to the first heavenly audition in V.4. This time, the wording of the *lógos kyriou* is carefully communicated by Paul. The scenario is opened up by a formal three-time prayer to the *kýrios*: a ceremonious or ritual setting of private prayer.³⁸ The *lógos* is initiated by a disclosure formula. The answer in V.9a is perfectly styled:³⁹ the first sentence works as oracle, the second sentence gives the reason. Stylistic means are: *brevitas* or *laconism*, *chiasm*, *antithesis*, *obscurity*, *paradox*.

In VV.9b and 10 Paul draws the conclusion of the *lógon*: the heavenly *dýnamis* of Christ dwells (*episkēnōsē*) in his feeble or sick body, and accordingly his *aretē* or *kaúchēma* concerns his physical, not his pneumatic state. He confirms his conclusion by enumerating his *peristáseis* – a hardships-list. The closure-formula of the text consists of a repetition of the *lógos kyriou*, related to his person (ego-document).

³⁵ Thrall 2000, 809–818. Thrall opts for migraine.

³⁶ Perhaps the Corinthians knew about the particular illness. Betz 1969, 290: „Stilgerecht spricht der Apostel über sein Leiden in mythischen und metaphorischen Wendungen.“ Most likely we may suppose a kind of violent headache or migraine.

³⁷ *Exorýssō*, to dig out, to gouge out: Liddell Scott 598.

³⁸ See Jesus’ private prayer in Luke 22:39–49.

³⁹ Betz 1969 *pass*. See Aelius Aristides, Hieroi Logoi I 71.

This brief description of what we find in the text makes clear both that 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 is neatly composed by different small text-units that use specific sub-genres, and that these sub-texts, read as *one* coherent narrative, belong to the *genre of a counter-revelation*. Therefore the text cannot simply be read as the outcome of Paul's personal experiences, since Paul has molded these experiences into a deliberately composed pasticcio of small pieces of religious genres with the overall intention of foiling the Corinthians' claim for stories about revelations. What we read is by no means an unfiltered record or minute of several revelations in the form of one or two visions and an audition, but a literary text, composed with the intention of rebuking and correcting the Corinthians who long for narrations of Paul's personal religious experience, i.e. of heavenly encounters comparable to those recorded by Paul's opponents (2 Cor 11:5–33). This is also true when we basically agree with Colleen Shantz who argues in favor of interpreting our text as a report on an actual ecstatic experience.⁴⁰

3 Results

We started our enquiry with the expectation that those texts Paul has written about his personal revelations can be interpreted as examples of his religious experience and fall within the field of private or individual religion. At the end of the exegesis two conclusions emerge: first, there is an obvious lack of narration of visions, revelations and auditions. With the introductory passage – “I will go on to visions and revelations (*optasías kai apokalýpseis kýriou*) of the Lord” – Paul raises and then almost immediately definitely disappoints the Corinthians' expectations: he *claims* that he has had exceptional revelations, but does not narrate any details. Second, he points to a new field of religious experience: not the heavens, but his own *body*. This turn from heaven to Paul's body is authorized by the *kýrios*, and hence Paul himself, his body (*sōma*) and his flesh (*sárx*) become the place of this kind of revelation, not the third heaven and not the paradise, as the Corinthians believed. In terms of personal religion, not visions of the heavenly world, but the material body, with its status of disease and hardships, is the place where that religion, understood as communication with the heavenly *kýrios*, is experienced according to Paul.

By that Paul opens up a space of religious experience that will be of increasing importance during the following centuries. This may be illustrated by a very brief look on the history of reception of Paul's turn to his physical body

40 Cf. the positions of M. Thrall and Th. Schmeller.

as a religious place and as a bearer of revelation. Paul's turn leads to the concepts of early Christian martyrdom (*Acta Pauli*) as well as to the earliest development of Christian monasticism. But also Heaven and Paradise as the most favored places of revelations retained their importance, as is illustrated by the Apocalypse of Paul and related texts. Finally, Paul's interpreting his body as a religious place is not far from the ancient Jewish concept of martyrdom as elaborated in 4 Maccabees.⁴¹ Here the body of the martyr is the place of the demonstration of *aretē* and of *eusēbeia* in order to demonstrate the divine laws (*theias nomothesias*).⁴²

When we ask for the outcome of the exegesis for the issue of religious experience, we are relegated to a deliberately styled text, not to the possible experience itself. Paul's emphasis is not on heavenly visions and mysterious words, on physical ecstasy of his body or mind, or on his own affects, but on his feeble body, on pain, and on a saying of the Lord that is very disappointing. What he wants to establish by his text is control of any kind of religious experience. The benchmark is the waiver of "boasting" of ecstatic experiences. It seems as if Paul wants to strictly confine those personal experiences he had undoubtedly gained to the private sphere. The context for the topic of religious experience is the fight over authority in the communities, and the means of communication are his letters. His opponents apprehended these letters as "heavy and impressive" weapons in comparison to his physical performance which is "weak and rhetorically miserable" (2 Corinthians 10:10). So finally the opponents lead us back to the letters, i.e. to the texts that enshrine both Paul's religious experiences and their critical domestication.

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⁴¹ Scholars date 4 Macc between the end of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century CE (earlier options also possible).

⁴² 4 Macc 17:7.12.16.

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**Section 2: A “thing” called body:
expressing religion bodily**

Anna-Katharina Rieger

Introduction to Section 2

1 Embodied religion and corporeal religious experiences

The human body is the primordial location in which religion “takes place” (Smith 1987). The body transmits, embodies, and transmogrifies religious ideas, it expresses concepts of the divine and religious dimensions of sanctity, of physical and mental health, and of life and death. Since it is “the body that gives pleasure and pain”, it “also limits what humans can experience” (Furey 2012, 12). Hence, bodily actions, together with the sensorial abilities and corporeal cognition of humans, determine religious experiences. They influence religious practices and shape religious ideas, imaginaries, and concepts.

The return of the notion of the body to studies of religion, as both a topic and an analytical category, marked a re-acknowledgement of the importance of the bodily experience of religion, in contrast to the earlier focus on “disembodied spirits” (McGuire 1990, 294) that was a consequence of the dominance of Christian (Protestant) perspectives. In ritual theory, the “ritual body” (Bell 1992, title of ch. 5) has been operationalized for the understanding of religious practices and has also found its way into anthropologically oriented studies (e.g. Stewart and Strathern 2001; Droogers 2008, esp. 456–458). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, the more recent “lived religion” approach focuses on the embodied practitioners of religion and on the embodiment of religious practices (e.g. Csordas 2004; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1999; McGuire 2008; Morgan 2015; Petridou 2017a), while scholars interested in the aesthetic or sensorial dimensions of religions, religious (image-) objects, and media have also incorporated phenomenological approaches, emphasizing the embodied experiences and sensual apparatus of humans and their role in the practice of religion (Meyer 2008; Pentcheva 2010; 2017; Zito 2011).¹

When we study religious phenomena – objects, texts, persons, and practices – the involvement of the body itself, and its perceptions and conceptions, opens up a view onto questions concerning the basic conditions underlying religion: How is the body referred to in religious contexts? What roles are played by bodily

¹ For the role of experiences, see the introduction and the contributions in the Section 1 in this volume on “Experiencing the religious”. I thank Paul Scade for copy-editing the text.

sensations such as pain, by emotions and feelings such as happiness and fear, and by movements of the body? How is the body of a holy person conceptualized in comparison to the bodies of regular people? And how does a view of the body as a locus of religion alter views on the relations between humans and deities; between the dedication, the dedicator, and the recipient deity; or between a narrative, an object, and a ritual practice?

2 Lived ancient religion and the body

The “lived ancient religion” approach (LAR) is interested in “religion in the making” (Albrecht et al. 2018) from a “bottom up” perspective and in the situational and performative dimensions of ritual practices. As such, the “lived ancient religion” approach has, from its beginning, embraced the idea of embodiment. Besides the notions of “experience” and “culture in action” (Rüpke 2011) as conveying the culturally-coded meanings and experiences which form religion, the “somatic turn” in religious studies and the history of religion is acknowledged as falling within the phenomenological horizon of the “lived ancient religion” approach.² Embodiment as practice and concept connects materiality to corporeal experience, two dimensions of religion that are central to the field of contemporary religious studies (McGuire 1990; Boivin 2009) and which have been applied successfully in the various “lived ancient religion” projects on the religious phenomena of the ancient Mediterranean (e.g. Raja and Weiss 2015; 2016; Rieger 2016; Petridou 2017b).

Bodily integrity and activity are the basis of both a functioning self and the place of the individual in their social and material environment. In turn, the functions of the body – fertility, reproduction, and physical and psychic integrity – are the goods and needs that gods are made for, and addressed in pursuit of, in almost every religion of the past and present. What, then, is the role of the body in practicing, experiencing, and, thus, living religion? The body – either human, heroic, or divine – is pivotal in its appearance, characteristics, and dispositions in religious narratives, representations, and imagery. Restrictions on bodily functions or needs through laws of purity, ascetic

² See as a recent outcome of the “somatic turn” in religious studies the monograph by Yudith K. Greenberg (2017) on the “body in religion” where topics like “representing”, “celebrating”, “disciplining” or “modifying” the body in various socio-cultural or socio-religious contexts are dealt with.

practices, or food consumption form, cultivate, and sustain the (religious) body. Illnesses and malfunctions of the body are recurring reasons for addressing the gods, but are also a means by which humans can come closer to their deities. Religious experiences happen through sensory experiences of the body, supported by modifications or regulations that hinder or increase sensitivity. The bodily groundedness of the human being can be transgressed through religious practices, while death as the end of the physical body is insuperable and, as such, is something that is often negotiated in religious practices. Practices surrounding death, the treatment of deceased bodies, and the veneration of the dead are at the core of religious conceptions in many societies and at the basis of the idea of the existence of transcendent (or transcended) agents – ancestors or deities.

An approach that focuses on embodied religion accounts for the bodies that religious specialists, saints, deities, worshippers, and dedicants have and act with. If not their own bodies, they deal with and address the bodies of others (the deceased, the deity), operationalize them (body part dedications, mimicking of body parts, pain), or distribute and extend them through representations, objects, or narratives.

Texts and persons, food and dedicatory objects, architecture and initiation, imagery and martyrs in the Mediterranean between the 4th century BCE and the 5th century CE are the focus of the papers in this section. The section starts from the preconditions of embodiment and lived religion, supported by Bill Brown's "Thing Theory" (Brown 2001; 2003) and Merleau-Ponty's supposition that the "body is a thing among things" (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 163). Considering things and their materiality in the context of Brown's theory offers a key that allows us to explore not only objects, but also bodies, body-parts and remains, bodily extensions or prostheses, and body-modifications. In Brown's view, material artifacts become "things" when they stop working for us and when they are removed from their natural/original environment and situated in new contexts of meaning. This view dovetails nicely with the emphasis on a lived ancient religion approach to the situational meaning of material artifacts in religious contexts.

Seeing bodies or body parts as objects once they are removed from their primordial context enables us to unravel the agency of body parts that are involved in religious acts. The limbs, fluids, or pieces that are dissociated from the entity of the body, but also the body as an entity in pain, can gain new and varied agency in their interaction with groups of worshippers, dedicants, or other objects participating in religious practices (images, places), and, last but not least, in their interaction with deities.

3 Extended, truncated and fragmented bodies: religious expressions of the body

The four contributions in this section revolve around two major strands of inquiry: (1) the conceptualization and states of the body, and its role in and for religious practices and experiences; and (2) body parts, their materializations, and their significance. The authors deal with pain, illness as initiation, mimetic food and food consumption, proxies and performances, extended agency, and the personhood of saintly figures.

Emma J. Graham (“Hand in hand: Rethinking anatomical votives as material things”) examines so-called anatomical votives from Republican Italy – dedications of body parts made of terracotta – through the lens of the various materialities they represented and with which they played. With a focus on the hand as votive, and drawing on theories about agency and performative dimensions of religious practice, she starts from “the tactile and haptic affordances” (Graham 225; cf. Hamilakis 2013). Analyzing the terracotta hands in assemblages from mid-Republican sacred places (late 4th to early 1st century BCE) as representatives of body parts and objects that perform rituals activities, Graham discusses the ways in which “objects, combined with bodily motion, sensory perception, temporality, and spatiality, acted as ‘instruments of knowledge’ (Chidester 2005, 57), in this case instruments of *religious* knowledge” (Graham 211; cf. Draycott and Graham 2017). The result of her investigation is an understanding of the tripartite role that (terracotta) hands could play in the performative acts of rituals: “a terracotta votive hand can be acknowledged to have affected the body on at least three different levels: as a material thing, as a representational thing (votive hand), [. . . and] as a thing that was simultaneously a material *and* representational proxy for a real hand (described here as a ‘hand’)” (Graham 226). This interpretation of anatomical votives differentiates three levels of meaning that are intertwined but which all refer to the body and then brings these to bear on our understanding of the agency of these dedicational objects in ritual practices.

The topic of Georgia Petridou’s contribution (“The ‘lived’ body in pain: illness and initiation in Lucian’s *Podagra* and Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*”) is the relation of bodily pain to the ritual practice of initiation, a religious act that aims to achieve a closeness to the god or gods. Petridou sheds light on narratives of both ill and healthy bodies, and especially the role played by pain, by drawing on narratives about gout from the 2nd century CE. She argues that illness, but more specifically the pain generated by illness, was used in the religious (con)texts of this period, during which there was a particular interest in the body as the point of access for initiation (*myesis*), showcased in the mysteries of

Asklepios or *neos Asklepios Glykon* (cf. Good Delvecchio et al. 1992; King 2018). The “cultural conception of illness as initiation” (Petridou 238) is present “in both narratives”. While the healing of a suffering body is paired with initiation in the uniquely personal literary reports of Aelius concerning his unusual relationship with Asklepios, in the parodistic *Podagra* it is the illness that is tied to the initiatory rites. Pain serves in these narratives as a “facilitator . . . to the all-important process of initiation . . .” (Petridou 239). The sacred and the suffering are both ineffable and elusive, yet the body and its sensorial apparatus are the place in which both are experienced (cf. Sullivan 1990). Acknowledging these parallels, the close relationship between the religious practices of individuals and the body as the location of illness, disabilities, and the experience of pain, comes to the fore in this “lived ancient religion-friendly” approach to the subject.

The triangle of religion, practices, and the body are deepened in the contributions of Heather Hunter-Crawley and Nicola Denzey Lewis, which deal with Christian saints and their veneration. In these chapters, religious expression and embodiment are placed in extraordinary bodies, or in the extraordinary situations in which bodies find themselves, as well as in mimetic representations of these bodies.

The Syrian Saint Simeon the Elder (5th century CE), perched on his column, is seen as a body in refraction. Heather Hunter-Crawley (“Divinity refracted: extended agency and the cult of Symeon Stylites the Elder”) examines the agency, influence, and power of Simeon as a Christian holy person, starting from a sensory archaeology and ideas of extended personhood (Malafouris 2008; Hamilakis 2013). Iconographical representations of the saint, souvenir tokens made at the church at Qal’at Sem’an, and the location itself are all analyzed as evidence of the saint’s distributed agency (cf. Cox-Miller 2009). Arguing against a dichotomic view of the bounded body, Hunter-Crawley finds attestations of the importance of the saint’s body that go beyond its physical materiality: the saint not only lived on a column, but also iconographically became a column, his body transformed in its depiction. The tokens, in turn, made from the dust of the place, are materially identical with the saint. Hunter-Crawley convincingly claims that the tokens are not loaded with significance through the touch of the saint (the “contagion model”, p. 264) but, rather, that they become the saint through their localized materiality. The agency of his body was no less strong than the agency of the tokens, when we apply the idea of the extended or distributed body and personhood of the saint. The matter of the tokens and the column, when taken in parallel to the saint’s body, can be compared to the significance of the terracotta-hands and their threefold meaning, as developed in the contribution of Graham.

Nicola Denzey Lewis’s contribution (“Food for the body, the body as food: Roman martyrs and the paradox of consumption”) leads us a step further in

this direction, with the saints' being ingested. As in Petridou's argument, Denzey Lewis emphasizes the inextricable relationship between bodily pain and religious experience. Yet here it is pain in a figurative, rather than a literal, sense, since tortured body parts or liquids expressing the pain of the saints are represented in mimetic food that is consumed by the Christian believers. Denzey Lewis scrutinizes the "use" and the role of the bodies of the saints as food for the bodies of practitioners and participants in the saints' festivals (cf. Bynum 1994; Counihan 1999). The point of departure for her argument is the variety of foodstuffs used in the veneration of catholic saints who had been martyrs, which were either given the shape of bodily parts or were understood as mimetically represented in liquids such as milk. The relation of the martyrs' bodies to the body as food is discussed first in the context of the modern tradition of the *minne di Sant'Agata* (breast-like cakes) and then in relation to martyr narratives from late antiquity in order to examine what purpose the likening of the body of the saint to foods might have fulfilled (for example, the milk of Santa Perpetua or the body of Polycarp as bread). Denzey Lewis shows how the cruelty involved in the stories about the suffering of the saint and his or her body, that which makes the saint a saint, are somehow inverted in the consumption of their bodies as food (cf. Cobb 2016). Two interpretative theories are deployed: "The first theory is that the human body is presented as food (usually meat, sometimes milk) because it is meant to evoke shock and disgust. The second is that the human body is presented as food (usually bread, sometimes meat or milk) because it is part of a 'distancing mechanism' that mitigates the horror of martyrdom" (Denzey Lewis 296). Between distance and disgust lies the entire tasty world of the consumption of the food by believers – lived religion perpetuated in festive food that is "deeply and richly textured, satisfying and fully experiential" (Denzey Lewis 303).

Drawing on diverse source materials that range from anonymous dedications in Republican Italy, through Greek intellectuals of the Second Sophistic, to pilgrims and saints in late antique Syria, and diachronically from late antique martyrologies to the work benches of Sicilian pasticcerie, the contributions in this section show just how important the body and embodiment were to religious practices. Bodily practices and experiences, as these chapters reveal, can bring humans closer to god or saints closer to their pilgrims. Bodily proxies and mimicking turn out to be strategies used both to communicate and to live religion. Coping with or creating refracted, distributed, and transformed or tortured bodies in multifarious materializations (tokens, cakes, imagery, pain, texts) is the very first way in which human beings interact and communicate with, or even gain closer proximity to divine agents. Indeed, in the most extreme case of martyrdom, they become precursors of the divine agents. The transformation and

representation of the body or body parts in other materialities is not only a medium for religion but *is* embodied religion.

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Emma-Jayne Graham

Hand in hand: rethinking anatomical votives as material things

Abstract: Religious experience in ancient Italy was intimately connected with the production, manipulation, veneration, and discarding of material objects. This chapter argues that for a fuller understanding of lived religion it is necessary to approach these objects as more than the mere material or visual expression of otherwise intangible concepts. It consequently explores the affective relations between things, particularly how objects and human bodies assemble in order to produce lived religious experience and religious knowledge. Taking votive terracotta models of hands from mid-Republican Italy as a case study, this chapter adopts a broadly new materialist approach to the examination of anatomical votives, focusing on the tripartite affectivity of these offerings as objects manipulated in the moment of ritual, as material things, and as bodily proxies.

1 Introduction

Religious experience in ancient Italy was intimately connected with the production, manipulation, veneration, and discarding of material objects. Today, these objects are often used to identify and reconstruct past forms of ritual activity: ceramic vessels indicate the pouring of libations or giving of food offerings, altars suggest the celebration of sacrifice, and inscriptions record the roles of cult attendants. They also prompt speculation about the ideas, beliefs, and expectations expressed in ritual performance: votive offerings attest to the potential for divine intervention, cult statues to the existence of a deity with specific attributes. However, although the material culture of religion offers evidence for the performance of ritual activities and the concepts with which these were connected, for a fuller understanding of lived religion it is necessary to approach these objects as more than the mere material or visual expression of otherwise intangible concepts or transitory performances. After all, there is more to objects than meets the eye. Objects are, in fact, integral to

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the ways in which humans inhabit and experience a dwelt-in world, forcing them “to reconsider who they are and how they relate to the rest of the world” (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 92). This is something that researchers sometimes choose to comprehend with reference to a particular theoretical standpoint, such as the symmetry of Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2005), the entanglement of people and objects in relationships of dependence and dependency (Hodder 2012), or the reframing of objects as “things” (Olsen 2010). Especially pertinent for the study of lived ancient religion is the recognition that material objects neither “stand as vehicles of cultural meanings, waiting to be decoded and to yield their singular sense” (Joyce 2008, 26), nor “sit in silence waiting to be embodied with socially constituted meanings” (Olsen 2010, 10). Indeed, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, rather than pre-existing as an abstract idea awaiting material expression, understandings of being in the world that concern religion – that is, lived religious knowledge – are actively produced and renegotiated situationally, via the bodily performance of ritual acts and engagement with materials.¹ Calls have increasingly been made for researchers to explore more closely the ways in which objects and humans entangle in order to produce lived experience, more specifically to go further than just thinking about what objects are made to do as part of religious activities, to consider what they *are* and why that matters. This aligns more broadly with the so-called new materialist approach of archaeological theory, which involves looking beyond questions of materiality – usually defined as the study of how objects “are actively used in social practices” (Mills and Walker 2008, 14), or how the physical world “is appropriated in human projects” (Ingold 2012, 439) – in order to attend instead to the materialness of objects themselves (Ingold 2007; 2012). This means paying attention to their very physicality as material “things”, including their “emotive or sensory qualities” or affordances (Pollard 2008, 48).² It also means recognizing the agency that results when objects combine, sometimes only temporarily, with other things, including human bodies, minds, beliefs and ideas, as well as more-than-human things such as plants, animals, and gods, in a set of relations referred to by many new materialist scholars as an “assemblage” (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 139).

¹ For example: Chidester 2005; Boivin 2009; Morgan 2010a; 2010b; Frankfurter 2017; Graham 2017a.

² Knappett (2004, 44) notes that James Gibson first conceived of affordances as “The potentialities held by an object for a particular set of actions.” “Things” are defined and discussed in section 6 below.

Accordingly, an assemblage can be defined as “a specific arrangement of diverse, heterogeneous, interacting components that has specific *effects*; an assemblage acts, and acts in a way that none of its components can without being in such a configuration” (Fowler 2017, 96 original emphasis).³ Studying assemblages therefore means studying the affective relations between things, including human bodies and objects.

This chapter uses votive terracotta models of hands from mid-Republican Italy (approximately late 4th to early 1st century BCE) as a case study through which to explore the consequences for lived ancient religion of these more nuanced approaches to objects, particularly their inclusion, alongside the human body, within particular types of assemblage. It contends that a more critical appraisal of the feedback loop between bodies and objects in the course of the performance of ritual activities can help to make sense of the ways in which objects, combined with bodily motion, sensory perception, temporality, and spatiality, acted as “instruments of knowledge” (Chidester 2005, 57), in this case instruments of *religious* knowledge. More specifically, the argument outlined here demonstrates that in order to understand the capacity of objects, such as anatomical votives, to generate forms of knowledge that extend beyond the representational, studies of the bodily manipulation of material objects by actors in ritual performance contexts must be combined with an appreciation of the affordances of the materials from which objects were made, and the forms that this material was shaped into. This is what Oliver Harris and Craig Cipolla (2017, 200), amongst others, describe as approaching the past via a non-hierarchical flat ontology, a theory of being in which humans “take up their place as one kind of entity among many others.”⁴ Anatomical offerings provide a particularly interesting perspective on this because of the ways in which they complicate these relationships by mimicking the human body itself. This chapter consequently adopts a broadly new materialist approach to the examination of anatomical votives, exploring for the first time the tripartite affectivity of these offerings as objects manipulated in the moment of ritual, as material things, and as bodily proxies.

³ This definition of “assemblage” is used throughout this chapter, except when the word is used in a more conventional sense to refer to a collection of artifacts excavated from a given site or context (e.g. an assemblage of deposited artifacts). Hamilakis (2013, 126–128) has written specifically about “sensorial assemblages”, but all assemblages are ultimately sensorial in nature since their components have variable affective capacities. For discussion of assemblage theory within new materialist archaeology, see Crellin 2017; Hamilakis and Meirion Jones 2017.

⁴ For further discussion of flat ontologies see Garcia-Rovira 2015.

2 Religious knowledge and objects

This chapter, then, takes its lead from recent work in the cross-disciplinary field of material religion, which has stressed that objects actively participate in the performance of ritual activities and the production of religious knowledge.⁵ From this standpoint, the significance of objects lies not only in the forms that humans shape materials into, but also the ways in which those materials become enmeshed with the bodies of ritual practitioners, principally via the senses, affecting or stimulating emotions, movements and, ultimately, understandings or forms of knowledge. David Morgan (2010a, 8) refers to this combination of bodies and objects in motion as “the felt-life” of religion. In turn, David Chidester (2005) and Nicole Boivin (2009) have established that religious knowledge extends beyond the verbal and somatic expression of ideas, as well as beyond the embedding in objects of pre-existing beliefs. As Boivin (2009, 274) explains, “ideas and cultural understandings do not precede, but rather are helped into becoming by, the material world and human engagement with it during the course of ritual activity. Human thought and experience has not only used the world as a prop for expressing itself, but has, in fact, often been enabled by that world.” Consequently, religion can be studied not just as a set of doctrines or shared ideas, but as a form of embodied knowledge which is both produced and “felt” through the lived performance of activities and movements that encompass both the human body and the rest of the material world. The term “religious knowledge” is henceforth used in this chapter to denote a particular understanding of the world that is rooted in a person’s body, produced by their body, and lived by their body, specifically during the course of religious activities. It is therefore a form of proximal knowing that is produced in the very moment of each bodily and sensory experience. This knowledge is subtly different from, but might be related to, broader forms of distal religious knowledge or, in other words, knowledge of the bigger picture of a community’s religious practices and how one’s own lived activities align with shared cultural expectations about the divine world. As this chapter will argue, proximal religious knowledge is generated by personal lived experience: the experience of dedicating a terracotta votive offering in the form of a hand, for example, produced a form of proximal religious knowledge that was a direct consequence of that object’s material qualities (discussed below), combined with the sensing body of the dedicant, the motivations or emotional circumstances under which they performed that activity, and their spatio-temporal

⁵ In particular this includes Boivin 2009; Morgan 2009; 2010a; 2010b; Frankfurter 2017.

setting. This knowledge was subtly different from that produced when a person dedicated a terracotta swaddled infant, or a bronze figurine of Hercules, because even though the actions performed by all practitioners respected culturally-established (distal) patterns of ritual behavior and ideas (i.e. that a thank-offering was appropriate after the completion of a vow; that the divine could intercede in the fortunes or well-being of mortals), their lived experience resulted from a subtly different assemblage of things. In these examples, this was an assemblage composed of objects with different material qualities, as well as different bodies, motivations, and emotions. Where it appears in this chapter, then, the word “knowledge” should therefore not be read as a synonym for “thinking”, nor for the idea of “belief”, but of “knowing in one’s body”.⁶ As Meredith McGuire (2008, 100 and 102) affirms: “the practices for engaging in ritual are embodied – embedded in the participants’ mind-body as a unity,” whilst “bodily sensations produce a confirmation that what one is experiencing is real, not just imaginary.”

Because it is grounded in the dynamic personal “felt-life”, or lived practice of each individual, proximal religious knowledge may therefore not be as easily communicable as distal forms of knowledge, which are based on doctrines or shared customs or beliefs. For this reason it is distal forms of knowledge that tend to be reproduced by ancient written sources and modern accounts of “Roman religion” alike, meaning that the significance of proximal or personal religious knowledge is often overlooked in studies of ancient religious practice. Furthermore, until now, investigations of the relationship between bodies, objects, and religious knowledge have tended to see this as a simple coming together of the human body with objects that were significant purely because of how humans interpreted their form or shape, with their specific material properties remaining largely unnoticed (for exceptions see Rieger 2016; Graham 2017a). The significance of objects within many existing approaches to ancient religion therefore inclines towards an acknowledgement of their ostensibly passive presence at ritual performances.⁷ This chapter, in contrast, proposes that a more critical examination of the materialness of objects – in this case dedicated objects – can re-materialize approaches to ancient lived religious knowledge in significant new ways.

⁶ Bodily knowing is regularly linked to the senses, with studies often emphasizing aspects of the sensorium that promote particularly proximal forms of engagement with the world, including taste and touch, in contrast to visual and aural forms of perception which maintain a distance between world and body. For more on proximal and distal forms of knowledge see Cooper and Law 1995, and specifically in relation to touch, see Bailey 2014, 33–35.

⁷ This is exemplified by the statement that “objects were the primary material which created a physical and visual framework *around which* religious life unfolded in antiquity” (Raja and Weiss 2016, 298, emphasis added).

3 Anatomical votives as meaningful objects

Anatomical models are almost ubiquitous within deposits of objects dedicated at sites used for the celebration of votive cult in mid-Republican Italy. Dated to a period between the late 4th and 2nd/early 1st century BCE, but with clear antecedents in the bronze figurative models of heroes and deities, as well as terracotta human heads, known from earlier periods, anatomical votives are traditionally associated with the custom of petitioning and then thanking the divine for intervention in the health and well-being of the dedicant (Turfa 1994; Recke 2013; Graham and Draycott 2017). Thus, models in the shape of eyes are commonly connected with the healing of visual impairments, feet with injuries and mobility impairments, and wombs with conception, pregnancy, or childbirth. Nevertheless, evaluations of the form of these objects need not be restricted to medical diagnoses: eyes might reference mystic vision and enlightenment (Petridou 2017), or provide acknowledgement that a deity was “watching over” someone; feet might be connected to pilgrimage, travel, or the idea of metaphorical movement from one state of being to another (Graham 2017b; Graham (forthcoming)); wombs might be representative of the fertile future of a newly married couple, or an attempt to express in material form a complex combination of “folk tradition” and medical concepts of the “wandering womb” (Flemming 2017). Increasingly, scholarship on anatomical votives seeks to explore the abundance of meanings ascribed to these models of the fragmented body, including the extent to which dedicants considered that they were surrendering an actual part of their own body in terracotta form (Hughes 2008; 2017a; papers in Draycott and Graham 2017). Their intent is to delve deeper into the ways in which votive offerings could be multivalent artifacts with highly personal situational relevance, whilst not overlooking their universal role at the heart of a broadly homogeneous practice of making a vow, followed by an acknowledgement of its perceived resolution (Graham and Draycott 2017, 7–8).

However, even the most vigorous acknowledgement that votive objects adopted a contextually-specific resonance dependent upon the needs, experiences, identities, and motives of the persons who chose to dedicate them, continues to emphasize the representational role of objects in religious practice. Following this line of reasoning, a model of a foot might mean different things to different petitioners but must, at the very least, represent a concern that can be connected with a range of shared ideas for which a foot can serve as a suitable indicator. From this perspective we might imagine a votive manufacturer’s workshop, its shelves lined with mold-made limbs, ears, eyes, internal organs, torsos, and heads, all waiting for a petitioner to select one and bestow upon it one of many possible meanings in relation to their personal circumstances (e.g. a sore foot).

A second customer might select an object with the same form, but ascribe to it a different meaning (e.g. an act of pilgrimage). Both dedicants imbued their own discrete objects with a singular meaning, which, upon the excavation of those two identical artifacts several millennia later, archaeologists can then speculate about as part of a spectrum of multivalence that is based on a predetermined range of potential symbolic meanings. In this approach, the object as a material entity (i.e. its fabric, color, dimensions, texture, surface temperature, weight, and so on) has no relevance beyond the shape that it takes – it looks like a foot – and the location in which it was found – most likely in a pit associated with a sanctuary. Together these identify it as a votive offering and provide the impetus for an interpretation of the varied petitions with which it might be connected. Its reality as a material entity is important merely in that it signals to both petitioner and excavator the existence of an otherwise intangible or immaterial idea or action.

Attentiveness to multivalence is extremely valuable for moving closer to an appreciation of the complexities of votive offerings as individual objects connected with lived religion, and remains a necessary and important aspect of understanding the agency of the artifacts that lie at the heart of this paper. However, labelling an anatomical votive purely in relation to what it signifies, whilst neglecting to consider its connotations as a material entity, leaves us at least one step removed from really understanding what objects actively brought to the performance of the ritual act of votive dedication. In other words, in remaining focused on what an object might stand for, rather than what it actually is, we lose all sense of the object itself. These tensions are revealed particularly well by the objects which serve as this chapter's case study: votive hands.

4 Votive hands in mid-Republican Italy

Studies of these anatomical models are hampered by the absence of any comprehensive survey of votive hands (and/or upper limbs) at Italian sites, but their typical characteristics and an impression of their distribution can be established. Votive hands were sometimes produced in bronze, although the few known examples originate predominantly from northern regions of Italy: Annamaria Comella (1981) records the presence of only two hands in the Veneto/Cispadana region, both of which were bronze, with additional bronze “*arti superiori*” at two sites in the interior of northern Etruria. Hands/upper limbs were more commonly fabricated from clay pressed into molds, and are one of the typical features of the so-called Etrusco-Latial-Campanian votive tradition. The isolated hand is usually modelled in its open form, displaying the palm, heel and the back of the hand

from fingertips to wrist, with the fingers together and extended, but might also be fashioned to include the forearm and, in some instances, the entire arm (Figs. 1 and 2).⁸ They appear as single, individual pieces rather than pairs, with published deposits indicating that both left and right sides of the body were represented, although the nature of the available data makes it impossible to draw conclusions about handedness. Hands/upper limbs take a range of life-sized, under life-sized and sometimes miniaturized forms.



Fig. 1: Terracotta votive hands of unknown provenance (Wellcome Library, London, Museum nos. A636174 and A95397). Reproduced under CC BY 4.0 License.

Maria Fenelli (1975) collated information concerning anatomical votives from 150 individual votive assemblages from 96 locations across Italy. Of the individual

⁸ Broad surveys and brief excavation reports do not regularly distinguish between hands and upper limbs, nor is it always clear whether fragmentary hands originally belonged to a larger object, such as a statue.



Fig. 2: Terracotta votive forearm and hand of unknown provenance (Wellcome Library, London, Museum no. A636831). Reproduced under CC BY 4.0 License.

sites and collections that she surveyed, 69 (46%) featured at least one example of a hand, and 33 (22%) returned at least one example of either a forearm or an arm. These figures should undoubtedly be revised upwards as a consequence of more recently discovered deposits. Indeed, Annamaria Comella (1981) completed her own survey of 228 votive assemblages across Italy, 123 (54.8%) of which featured anatomical votives. Amongst the latter she recorded the presence of 86 with hands and/or upper limbs. No comparable study has since been produced, but even a decade ago estimates of the total number of sites with anatomical votives were ranging up to 290 (Glinister 2006, 13 n.11). Despite these uncertainties, Comella's data provides a baseline from which to develop an understanding of how widespread these types of offering were, both geographically and in relation to other popular types (Tab. 1 and Fig. 3).

Models of hands/upper limbs are known throughout Italy (with the exception, in 1981, of coastal northern Etruria, the territory of the Marsii, and Samnium), and like all anatomical votives they demonstrate a particular concentration in the region of Latium (41 out of 52 anatomical votive assemblages: 78.9%) and the territories collectively referred to in modern scholarship as Etruria (27 out of 43 anatomical votive assemblages: 62.8%). Hands/upper limbs are therefore known from at least 68.8% of anatomical votive assemblages across Italy. This frequency is slightly lower than that for feet/lower limbs (80%), although the latter demonstrate a similar overall pattern in relation to levels of density in Latium (47 out of 52 anatomical votive assemblages: 90.4%) and Etruria (31 out of 43 anatomical votive assemblages: 72.1%).

Excavation reports and publications supply more detail concerning individual sites within these regions, and a brief survey of the largest and best-studied

Tab. 1: Votive assemblages in Italy (based on Comella 1981). Shaded rows represent regions within Etruria.

Region	Total no. assemblages	Total AV assemblages	AV assemblages (%)	AV assemblages with upper limbs	AV assemblages with upper limbs (%)
Venetia/ Cispadana	8	2	25%	2	100%
Picenum	3	3	100%	2	66.6%
Umbria	8	2	25%	1	50%
Northern Etruria (interior)	8	4	50%	2	50%
Northern Etruria (coastal)	5	2	40%	0	0%
Vulcenate territory	15	10	66.6%	7	70%
Volsinian territory	5	4	80%	1	25%
Tarquian territory	9	8	88.8%	7	87.5%
Caeretan territory	14	10	71.4%	5	50%
Veian territory	8	5	62.5%	5	100%
Faliscan- Capenate territory	9	5	55.5%	4	80%
Latium	82	52	63.4%	41	78.8%
Sabine territory	1	1	100%	1	100%
Aequian territory	6	3	50%	2	66.6%
Marsian territory	1	0	0%	0	0%

Tab. 1 (continued)

Region	Total no. assemblages	Total AV assemblages	AV assemblages (%)	AV assemblages with upper limbs	AV assemblages with upper limbs (%)
Samnium	12	5	41.7%	0	0%
Campania	9	5	55.5%	4	80%
Southern Italy	19	3	15.8%	1	33.3%
Sicily	6	1	16.7%	1	100%
TOTAL	228	125	54.8%	86	68.8%

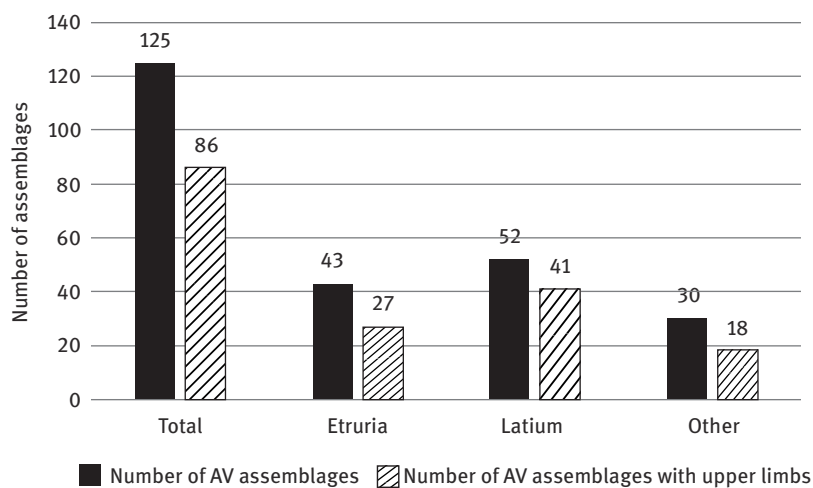


Fig. 3: Number of anatomical votive (AV) assemblages and those featuring upper limbs from the whole of Italy and from each (combined) region (based on Comella 1981).

provides a useful impressionistic view of raw numbers (summarized in Tab. 2). For instance, at Ponte di Nona (Latium) feet were dominant (38.2%), but the second largest group of offerings identified were hands (17.3%) (Potter 1989). A similarly high proportion of lower and upper limbs was recovered at Fregellae (Latium): feet/lower limbs make up 69.7% of the anatomical votive assemblage, but hands/upper limbs again comprise the second most numerically significant groups

Tab. 2: Total number of anatomical votives and upper/lower limb types at sites mentioned in the text.

Location	Total AVs	Hands	Upper limbs	Feet	Lower limbs
Ara della Regina, Tarquinia (Etruria)	759	–	46	225	26
Comunità, Veii (Etruria)	407	13	45	41	190
Fregellae (Latium)	3367	292	266	1654	693
Pantanacci (Latium)	c.490	c.10	c.10	c.30	c.20
Ponte di Nona (Latium)	6171	1066	–	2368	–

(totaling 16.6%), with the next largest comprising masks (169 = 5%) and phalli (106 = 3.2%) (Ferrea and Pinna 1986). Although individual numbers differ, these patterns are comparable with those at other sites. In Etruria, at the monumental Ara della Regina temple at Tarquinia, 46 upper limbs (6.1%) were reported, compared with 26 legs (3.4%) and 225 feet (29.7%) (Comella 1982), and in the Comunità deposit at Veii, hands (3.2%) and upper limbs (11.1%) were found alongside feet (10.1%) and lower limbs (46.7%) (Bartoloni and Benedettini 2011). At other sites, neither upper nor lower limbs stand out as particularly numerous, including the recent discovery of a deposit of approximately 490 anatomical offerings in a cave at Pantanacci, Lanuvium. Here, early indications suggest that around 4.1% of the offerings are upper limbs and 10.2% are lower limbs, comparable with more numerous uteri (c. 17%) and an unusual collection of oral cavities (c. 8%) (Attenni and Ghini 2014).⁹ Feet/lower limbs outnumber hands/upper limbs at this selection of sites from the central Italian regions, but it is evident that in many cases models of hands were dedicated in significant numbers.

5 Interpreting votive hands

Interpretations of votive hands remain conservative. As with the majority of anatomical votives, an absence of evidence for pathologies has not prevented studies aligning them specifically with requests for healing, especially

⁹ Attenni (2017, 29) reports a total of at least 1500 terracotta votives, but only 1020 of all of the objects from the cave, including both ceramic vessels and terracotta votives, have been studied at the time of writing.

for conditions associated with agricultural lifestyles (Potter 1989). Their occurrence in votive deposits alongside large quantities of feet/lower limbs may support this interpretation, although other scholars have suggested that both types might be “expressions of willingness to devote one’s actions, travels, and so on to the god, rather than emblems of specific diseases” (Turfa 1994, 224), whilst others have noted that hands might “express the prayer of the dedicant” (Recke 2013, 1076). Given the multivalent potential of votive offerings, it is possible that petitioners dedicated hands for many reasons, some of which are outlined in Tab. 3.

Tab. 3: Ways in which votive hands might be interpreted and broadly categorized in relation to types of request or other activities.

An indicator of	Interpretation	Category
Injury/acute conditions	A range of potential conditions, e.g. blisters, burns, crushing, dermatitis, fractures, laceration, tendon tears	Healing
Chronic/degenerative conditions	A range of potential conditions, e.g. carpal tunnel syndrome, osteoarthritis, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, tendonitis	Healing
Other medical conditions	A range of potential conditions, e.g. cancer, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s	Healing
Manumission	“Going out from the hand”, connected with being freed or the freeing of others	Life course
Marriage	Representative of the <i>dextrarum iunctio</i> , the clasping of right hands as a common Roman motif for marriage	Life course
Contract: commercial, business or political	Representative of <i>dextrarum iunctio</i> as indicative of concord between persons	Conceptual
Contract: with the divine, a vow	Representative of <i>dextrarum iunctio</i> as indicative of concord between human and divine established by a vow	Conceptual or Ritual
Oath	Representative of raised hands in oath swearing, marking initial vow as a solemn occasion/ acknowledgement that oath had been upheld	Conceptual or Ritual
Prayer	Representation of raising of hands in act of prayer	Ritual
Embodied act of offering	The role of the hand in the act of making an offering; gesture of handing something over	Ritual

Nevertheless, by adopting a flat ontological standpoint, in which these votive offerings are considered to be an equal part of a relational assemblage that featured not only human minds but also human bodies, we must look beyond the predominantly representational interpretations in Tab. 3 in order to avoid what Lambros Malafouris (2013, 90–91) terms “the fallacy of the linguistic sign”. After all, in the case of votive hands, this assemblage was deeply stratified, since these objects replicated, perhaps were even a direct proxy for, the same living body part that manipulated them. They also concurrently provided a mechanism through which the material of the object could act back on the body through the sense of touch (Bailey 2014, 34). Therefore, the hand of the dedicant not only manipulated an object, but an object which possessed its own capacity to affect the living body that grasped it, whilst it also resembled its form. Indeed, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968, 133) human bodies grasp and affect the world via things, although they do so “only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible . . . if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them.” For Merleau-Ponty and others, the significance of objects is to be found in what he termed their “flesh”, in other words the fact that all objects, plants, animals, and humans not only share certain material properties which are inherent to their existence as physical forms, but also share “membership in a dwelt-in world” in which they all have “the capacity for making a *difference* to the world and to other beings” (Olsen 2010, 9 original emphasis). Merleau-Ponty’s description of his own hand in relation to “the things it touches,” and its own reciprocal tangibility, spotlights the role of sensory perception in understanding the relations between human bodies and other materials within an assemblage (Chidester 2005; Graham 2017a). Bodies, via hands, grasp and manipulate objects but, through the senses, the materialness of objects also acts to affect and manipulate the grasping body itself, their qualities (e.g. weight, temperature, texture, smell, and form) determining how they are perceived and how the relations between them are produced and consequently understood. Together, and as part of a wider assemblage that also includes the temporal, spatial, and epistemological context in which that action takes place, body and object work to produce a unique lived experience. Merleau-Ponty may not have had anatomical votives in mind, but his observations are particularly resonant when the possibility arises that the objects one’s hands touch, and are touched by, might be alternative types of hand. Votive hands, then, offer a complex but potentially illuminating context in which to investigate the role of the materialness of objects and bodies in the ancient production of religious forms of knowledge.

6 Votive hands as things

The most recent and influential studies of objects have focused, however, on an almost entirely practical or mundane material world, rather than material entities implicated in, or made specifically for use in ritual.¹⁰ Theoretical focus rests, therefore, on the types of material entities that humans depend upon to make things happen as part of a hypothetical everyday life in which religion – lived or otherwise – generally plays no part. As a result, objects are frequently approached as entities that can be assigned a single, culturally agreed upon function, e.g. jugs hold and pour liquids. To fully understand how an assemblage of objects and bodies produced religious knowledge, however, this basic principle must be questioned. After all, a jug can hold and pour liquids in any context, but the difference that it makes to the world varies, depending upon the nuances of both cultural and performative context, such as whether it is pouring wine into a cup in a domestic context, or wine into a *patera* at a sanctuary. What is more, it has been demonstrated above that anatomical votives were always situationally meaningful and, even more significantly for the purposes of this chapter, it appears that objects used as votive offerings comfortably, and often intentionally, blurred purely functional expectations. Firstly, although terracotta mold-made anatomical votives may have been produced to be used only as offerings within ritual contexts, *how* they functioned always varied in relation to the nature of the petition (e.g. the healing of a foot condition, or the acknowledgement of a pilgrimage). Secondly, a host of objects were recruited from other contexts and repurposed within votive cult. According to Jessica Hughes (2017b), when used as an offering, the ultimate function of both types of object – which she terms “purpose-made” and “non-purpose-made” – was the same: to acknowledge the making or outcome of a vow, even though each offered the opportunity for different understandings or, in short, the creation of individualized religious knowledge. In her words, non-purpose-made votives “permanently entangled the different spheres in which religion was practiced” (Hughes 2017b, 198), something which her study shows was a consequence of their existence as material entities with multivalent potential, rather than their original function alone. A mold-made anatomical votive was deemed to be no more powerful than a bandage, a ring, or a crutch simply because it was made with a specific ritual purpose in mind. Indeed, Hughes (2017b, 199) suggests that in some circumstances the latter might have “embodied an intense, permanent entanglement between gift and giver” precisely *because* it was not originally intended to function in a dedicatory capacity. A new

¹⁰ Examples include Insoll 2004; Boivin 2008; Bennett 2010; Olsen 2010; Hodder 2012.

materialist might argue that this was also a consequence of it moving from one assemblage into another, allowing different aspects of its affective qualities to come to the fore.

Putting restrictive concepts of function to one side makes it easier to foreground the potential significance of the non-representational qualities of votive hands. Indeed, Bjørnar Olsen (2010, 34) notes, in sympathy with the discussion above, that “studies of material culture have become increasingly focused on the mental and representational: material culture as metaphor, symbol, icon, message, and text – in short, as always something other than itself.” He proposes that it is more “appropriate and necessary to pay less attention to things” ‘meaning’ in the ordinary sense – that is, the way they may function as part of a signifying system,” and more attention to the significance of things “in themselves” (Olsen 2010, 172). Similarly, although he adopts a different approach, Ian Hodder echoes Merleau-Ponty when he asserts that humans and objects become entangled because “materials and objects have affordances that are continuous from context to context. These material possibilities (whether instantiated or not) create potentials and constraints” (Hodder 2012, 94). Although it can be argued that Hodder ultimately places too much emphasis on dependency, for both scholars attending to objects means incorporating into our interpretations a more nuanced understanding of their potential affordances – that is, their essential material or affective qualities.¹¹ Whether inorganic (stone reliefs, ceramic vessels, bronze tripods), or organic (the human body, foodstuffs, sacrificial victims, garlands, sacred trees), material properties and, to some extent, affective qualities, remain more or less constant from culture to culture, and period to period. Fired clay feels like fired clay whether it is encountered in the early 21st century CE or the early 3rd century BCE, even if levels of familiarity with that sensory experience, and the impact that it has on understandings of the object and the context in which it is encountered, might vary as a consequence of prevailing cultural norms, or individual embodied memories and culturally conditioned sensoria. Modern individuals, for instance, might be less accustomed to the day-to-day tactile affordances of terracotta than they are with plastic, but each material still has the same *physical* effect on the human sensorium. In order to emphasize these qualities, and to avoid reducing objects only to the symbolic or representational purposes to which they are put by humans, Olsen has sought to draw attention to the “otherness” of objects by referring to them as “things” in their own right. Talking about things, rather than objects, differentiates the inherent material qualities of entities such as

¹¹ On affordances more generally see Knappett 2004; 2005; n.3 above.

terracotta votive hands, from those qualities that humans impose upon them (Olsen 2010, 156). It also makes it easier to adopt a non-hierarchical flat ontology in which human agency is not automatically privileged, one in which an assemblage of equal things might include material objects (e.g. a terracotta votive hand), the acting, sensing, and thinking human body, ideas (perhaps in this case concerning ritual activities) and symbols (the visual representation of a body part). All of these components of the assemblage contribute their own particular, independent qualities as things in their own right. In this way, reframing objects as things allows our understandings of them to become less anthropocentric, certainly less dependent upon the assumption that human agency must always dominate when humans and materials entangle. It suggests that we would do well not to let the physical and affective properties of terracotta votive hands slip through our grasp entirely.

One way to explore the implications of this for mid-Republican hand votives is to begin by identifying their potential individual qualities as things, and what those might offer to an assemblage that also featured the human sensorium. These qualities might include the tactile and haptic affordances of fired terracotta as material that is immediately cool to the touch (although not as cold as stone) but which also gradually warms, is dry and possibly also dusty or friable, relatively heavy, hard and unpliant, dense, smooth surfaced but rough edged. They might also include aural qualities, such as the hollow or muted clunking resonance produced when terracotta is knocked against another hard surface, but also its capacity to remain independently silent, not to mention other affordances such as its earthy scent (and taste), its range of colors (greys, browns, oranges, yellows, creams), and the fact that in this instance it took the shape of a human hand with extended fingers. As an object, then, the votive hand was clay formed by human agency to look like a hand, but as a thing it was sensed as substantively other, its own qualities signaling that it was very different from the hand of the living dedicator. Of course, it is not entirely clear exactly how dedicants interacted with votive hands as part of the performance of ritual activities, and therefore how these qualities came to affect the living body. Nevertheless, a certain amount can be surmised on the basis that it is known that these items, and others like them, were intentionally carried into a sanctuary or other sacred place by a dedicant, and that they were subsequently left behind as part of the practice outlined above whereby votives were offered in acknowledgement of the completion of a vow, or as a gesture of thanksgiving. In order to accomplish this the dedicant must have manipulated the offering in their own hand(s) at some point during their dedicatory activities, perhaps moving around the sanctuary with it, possibly continuing to grasp it during any prayer or spoken gesture that they made. It was then given to the deity, perhaps by being placed by those same

hands in a chosen location, passed to a cult official, or in some instances possibly even intentionally broken.¹² A votive hand might therefore be handled, smelled, and viewed in various ways, potentially being gripped with differing degrees of force, and possibly even presented balanced on an outstretched palm, a gesture that because of the model's weight would be felt in the muscles of the arm and upper body, as well as impacting upon balance and movement.¹³ Identifying the thingliness of a votive hand in terms of its qualities – that is, the range of ways in which it might affect the sensing body as part of these activities – provides a forceful reminder of its tangibility. The sheer physicality of its existence emerges as something that, as well as being thought about, might also be touched, smelled, tasted, heard, and seen by an ancient person performing such ritual activities. Moreover, as a thing in its own right, the votive hand was capable of affecting the living body by compelling it to feel and acknowledge particular things (“this is stiff and cool; it does not feel like clutching a living hand”), or move in certain ways (“its weight requires a firm grip”). Appreciating the material thingliness of a votive hand can therefore be achieved without having to mentally reduce it to its raw material alone, and without diminishing the potential semiotic significance of its particular form as representational of something other than itself, in this case a proxy for the real hand of the dedicant. Indeed, from this standpoint, a terracotta votive hand can be acknowledged to have affected the body on at least three different levels: as a material thing, as a representational thing (votive hand), as a thing that was simultaneously a material *and* representational proxy for a real hand (described here as a “hand”).

7 Votive hands as properties

The concept introduced at the end of the last section, whereby the combination of the material and representational affective qualities of a thing means

¹² One of three *favissae* (votive dumps) associated with the sanctuary of Juno at Gabii contained votive terracottas and ceramic vessels which appear to have been broken prior to deposition, although it is unclear whether they were broken immediately prior to this act of secondary deposition or at the moment of the original dedication (Favissa II, late 3rd-early 2nd century BCE: Almagro-Gorbea 1982, 264).

¹³ The outstretched palm is a familiar feature of figurines from across Italy: Scarpellini 2013. Whether there were other bodily gestures involved, such as raising the object in the air, kissing or anointing it, or whether some dedicants explored the object's texture or features more closely with their fingers as they held it, remains unknown.

that it “acquire[s] a set of semiotic quotation marks,” derives in part from Andrew Sofer’s (2003, 31) study of stage properties (more conventionally called theater props).¹⁴ His work offers a useful way of exploring the multiple layers of a votive hand’s thingliness. In common with the argument that religious knowledge is a product of the bodily performance of ritual activities and engagement with material things, Sofer (2003, vi) is concerned with the ways in which stage props are “more than just three-dimensional symbols; they are part of the material fabric of the play in performance. Enlivened by the actor’s touch, charged by the playwright’s dialogue, and quickened in the spectator’s imagination, they take on a life of their own as they weave in and out of the stage.” With a few minor amendments (in italics), these words might be recast for ancient cult contexts:

[votive offerings] are more than just three-dimensional symbols; they are part of the material fabric of the *[ritual]* in performance. Enlivened by the *[dedicator’s]* touch, charged by the *[dedicator’s words and actions]*, and quickened in the *[dedicator’s]* imagination, they take on a life of their own as they weave in and out of the *[ritual]*.

These two contexts also share a performative dynamic: like the performance of a play, religious performances involve activities in which humans “do ritual with their bodies” (Naerebout 2015, 107, original emphasis), in conjunction with an assemblage of other things, including a narrative (or a set of ideas), and a setting composed of bodies, minds, and materials. Similarly, the performance of plays and ritual activities is always spatially and temporally specific, and whilst the core of both may conform to a pre-determined scheme, each remains subject to subtle variations as a consequence of situational dynamics within its assemblage, such as the presence of performers/spectators with varying prior experience or different corporeal capacities, and the unique affective qualities of its material components. Through the bodily performance of discrete activities and movements, sensory and emotive experiences, and engagement with the materialness of a host of things, spatially and temporally specific place is also produced (Knott 2005; Biehl 2007; Graham (forthcoming)) or, put another way, ritual activities, like plays, also involve the creation of a “world within a world.” Seen in these terms, a votive offering can be understood to play a role in the production of context-specific, or proximal religious knowledge in the same way that a

¹⁴ I am grateful to Helen Slaney for introducing me to the work of Sofer (2003) and Carlson (2001). Melissa Mueller (2016) has also recently pursued the topic of objects as actors within Greek tragedy, focusing on the spectator rather than the performer.

stage prop produces and communicates its own context-specific knowledge. Both play an active part in the action of the performance, that is, by doing something in conjunction with the human body and mind in order to make a difference in the world. Votive offerings, like props in a play, were, after all, integral to progressing the action of votive cult activities since, as outlined above, it was their introduction into a sacred place, and the gesture of passing them over or otherwise rendering them sacred, that was crucial for the successful completion of the *da ut dem* (“give so that I may give”) contract between mortal and deity (Graham and Draycott 2017, 7–8). Taking this further, however, it can be suggested that in order to produce these forms of context-specific knowledge, anatomical votives, again like stage props, relied upon the affective combination of their qualities as material things *and* their capacity to signify both hands in general and the very specific hand of the dedicator. It is here that their third level of thingliness – in this case as “hands” – emerges as significant.

Props and votives, such as anatomical models of hands, have the capacity to act as a proxy for something else, or in the words of Marvin Carlson (2001), to “ghost” other things (in this case, a real hand), as well as the histories or ideas associated with them (such as those outlined in Tab. 3). At the same time, as noted above, their individual qualities draw attention to their fundamental material otherness (Fig. 4).¹⁵ This capacity of things to ghost whilst simultaneously remaining tangible, is vital to both theater and ritual activities, since both involve circumstances which compel participants to temporarily understand the world as other than it normally is: the actor shot by a pistol does not actually die but the audience understands this to be the case within the constraints of that context; the votive dedicant knows that their model of a hand is not their own hand, but understands that in the context of their relationship with the divine it is a proxy for their hand. Props and votive offerings are things that, because of their combined semiotic and material qualities, sit between categories, with particular forms of situational knowledge arising out of the questions that they raise about the world. Can a stage pistol, even if it looks like a pistol, actually *be* a pistol if it cannot fire? Does a terracotta model of a hand remain merely a representation of a hand or can it become a “hand” in its own right? These questions compel us to return to the thingliness of objects, since props and votive offerings possess the potential to be

¹⁵ See Graham (2017a) for a study of how swaddled infant votives produce a similar sensory dissonance by looking like babies and compelling the body to move accordingly, at the same time as feeling, smelling, and sounding like terracotta models. For discussion of “ghosting” in ancient Greek theatrical contexts: Mueller 2016.



Fig. 4: A terracotta votive hand of unknown provenance (Wellcome Library, London, Museum No. A636174; reproduced under CC BY 4.0 License) as the “ghost” of a real hand (HNDPTESBC via Pixabay, reproduced under CC0 1.0 License).

more than they appear because of (a) what they physically are, (b) what they are made to do, and (c) what they make people do or understand as a result. An actor (and their audience) can be convinced, in that moment, that the table knife they wield is a dagger, because they are persuaded by what they make it do in the course of the action; they can also use it convincingly to do this because its material qualities and the way in which they affect their own bodily movements make it “feel like” a dagger. This would not be the case if it was replaced with, say, a fish or a pillow, because the qualities of those objects would compel them to do and feel different things. The manipulation of a terracotta hand in the course of dedicatory ritual activities might convince the bearer (and the deity who received it) that it represented a hand, even substituted for their own hand, because it looked like a hand. However, at the same time, its affective qualities, such as its weight, temperature, and lack of autonomous movement, forced the bearer to question this straightforward relationship. Consequently, their lived experience of the act of dedication drew attention to the out-of-the-ordinary possibilities of the world in which they

currently dwelled as a dedicator, and on which their relationship with the divine was predicated.

8 Conclusions: making sense of hands and “hands”

How can conceptualizing votive offerings as akin to props, in combination with an appreciation of their thingliness as part of a relational assemblage, help to re-materialize understandings of the production of knowledge in ancient lived religion? The representational capacities of votive hands have been explored here alongside their existence as tangible material things in order to emphasize the extent to which both were crucial to the active role they played in the performance of ancient ritual activities. It has become evident that traditional approaches which focus exclusively on the former, despite the valuable emphasis they place on the offerings' multivalent potential, offer a limited view of the affectivity of votive offerings, emphasizing their role as signifiers rather than active participants in the assemblage of things that allowed a difference to be made to the world in the course of the performance of ritual activities. That is not to suggest that their signifying potential was unimportant, far from it. This quality was absolutely necessary in order for the dedicator, and the deity they petitioned, to establish a mutual understanding of what was represented by the offering that united them. Like stage props, they achieved this partly through their form – what they resembled – and the ideas they had the capacity to signify or represent. Importantly, however, for the performer of ritual activities, the thingliness of the offering was also essential, because it was through physical interaction with it – as its qualities affected their sensing body in the course of a ritual performance – that they were made aware of its tangibility as *more than* a symbol, idea or metaphor. By grounding the experience in the material world, this produced, as noted above, “a confirmation that what one [was] experiencing [was] real, not just imaginary” (McGuire 2008, 102). At the same moment, the thingliness of the votive hand that the petitioner manipulated within their own hand, revealed itself to be fundamentally different from it. As a consequence, a votive hand presented itself in the recognizable form of a hand, but revealed itself to be something other than a real hand to the person who grasped it.¹⁶ From a new

¹⁶ For the role of props in creating a similar “reveal” of the fictionality of a theatrical scene in Greek tragedy see Mueller 2016, 127–128.

materialist perspective, this demonstrates very well the need to emphasize “the way in which things and materials themselves bring elements to the table that go beyond what human beings think, know or understand about them” (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 146). Such an approach does not diminish the power of the votive hand as a signifier, or its capacity to represent an afflicted body part or something more ephemeral, such as the moment of manumission. Instead, it reveals that by compelling the dedicator to acknowledge the qualitative differences between their living hand, a model of a hand, and a proxy “hand” that was simultaneously both, the bodily sensory experience of the votive hand’s thingliness could produce a complex yet compatible set of understandings that were appropriate for the distinctive “in between” context of votive activity and its associated locations “in which boundaries were transgressed” (Hughes 2017a, 103). More specifically, this suggests that, in part, the power of objects within ancient ritual performance may have rested in their potential, as things, to blur the boundaries of normal expectations and to allow all things – objects and bodies included – to be other than might be expected.

Moreover, it reveals something about how anatomical votive ritual activities were experienced and understood on a very personal or proximal bodily level. It also demonstrates how religious knowledge was consequently produced and lived in subtly different ways because of situational contexts connected not only with an individual’s motive for a vow, but also with their proximal experiences of the qualities of the offering that they dedicated. Unlike other forms of offering, those acting as proxies for body parts were always obliged to become ghosts, since living body parts could not be detached and dedicated (except for hair and nails: Draycott 2017). This resulted in the production of an especially complex form of knowledge: the understanding that the clay model was not only a thing in its own right, and a representation of a hand, but that at that moment it was also the dedicant’s own hand. It might even be suggested that in ritual activities associated with all anatomical votives, such as those described above, the very possibility that a model of a body part *could* exist simultaneously as both thing, hand and “hand”, or thing, foot and “foot” was in fact crucial.

This chapter has suggested, then, a new way of approaching the anatomical votive offerings of mid-Republican Italy by emphasizing the thingliness of these offerings and their affective qualities. From this perspective it becomes possible to appreciate anatomical votives as much more than signifiers of medical conditions or moments in the life-course. Whilst the importance of the representational potential of anatomical votives, and their capacity to serve as material metaphors for immaterial concepts, has not been denied, these have been shown to be even more powerful when combined with a more

explicit acknowledgement of the anatomical votive as merely one material thing within a wider assemblage of things that included the human body. The arguments about assemblages of equally relational things presented here, which might be applied to the material culture of ancient religion more broadly, have sought to turn attention back to the materialness of material culture, and in particular to stress the ways in which its very thingliness might be integral to the production of highly individualized forms of religious knowledge during the course of the performance of ritual activities, facilitating the “felt-life” of religion as it was lived on a personal scale.

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Georgia Petridou

The “lived” body in pain: illness and initiation in Lucian’s *Podagra* and Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*

Abstract: The ‘lived’ body is a concept I have borrowed from Meredith McGuire, a sociologist of religion whose work has contributed greatly to the conceptualization of the ‘Lived Ancient Religion’ approach. This paper employs recent advances in history of religions and socio-anthropology and divides its attention between Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi* and Lucian’s *Podagra*, Lucian’s tragicomic take on gout. In a nutshell, the argument is that pain, both physical and mental, is the *tertium comparationis* in the cultural conception of illness as initiation that runs through both narratives. The perception of extreme physical pain and anguish as an initiation rite may not make immediate sense to the clinician, or indeed the patient, of the 21st century. However, this view of pain did resonate with the ‘lived’ bodies of members of the socio-political elite in the Antonine period. Raising awareness of this culture-specific cognitive process is, thus, a *sine qua non* for our understanding of the ‘lived’ body in that era.

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1 Introduction

The “lived” body is a line of inquiry inspired by the “lived ancient religion” approach,¹ which foregrounds the lived, material, and embodied dimensions of religious practices.² “Lived ancient religion” has benefited a great deal by engaging closely with post-humanist conceptions of objects as containing agency,³ and offers a framework for approaching the body from the same methodological perspective. These modes of inquiry come as a response to previous approaches that tended to privilege consciousness and subjectivity and, as such, were thought not to do justice to the complexities of 21st-century biopolitics and political economy. The “lived ancient religion” approach critically evaluates these methodologies and raises fundamental questions about the place of ancient individual agents as embodied humans living in a material world, and about the ways in which such agents experience, produce, and reproduce their material environment.⁴ “Lived ancient religion’s” emphasis on embodiment and the individual agents’ entanglement with the material environment was timely but not an entirely new departure; in many ways, it serves as a response to an earlier call in the social sciences of religion for a deeper and more fruitful engagement with the material body.⁵

In an attempt to stay true to “lived ancient religion’s” final call for scholars to leave their comfort zones, instead of focusing exclusively on Aelius Aristides and the entanglement of medicine and religion in his *Hieroi Logoi* (henceforth *HL*),⁶ this paper divides its attention between the text of the *HL* and Lucian’s tragicomic take on gout, the *Podagra*. The argument of this comparative study is, in a nutshell, that pain, both physical and mental, is the *tertium comparationis* in the cultural conception of illness as initiation that runs through both narratives. This conception, I argue, was rather common in authors of the 2nd century CE. Raising awareness of this culture-specific cognitive process is, thus, a *sine qua non* for our understanding of the “lived” body in that era.

1 Rüpke 2011; 2016; 2018. Cf. also the introduction in Rüpke and Raja 2015, as well as Albrecht et al. 2018.

2 E.g. Furey 2012; Eidinow 2015.

3 E.g. Brown 2003; Coole and Frost 2010; Hodder 2012.

4 Raja and Rüpke 2015.

5 For such a call for a rematerialization of the human body in the social sciences of religion, see McGuire (1990). On McGuire’s influence in the conception of “lived ancient religion”, see below.

6 The entanglement of medicine and religion in Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi* is the topic of my forthcoming monograph.

This premise is further buttressed by reference to recent advances in history of religions and socio-anthropology (e.g. Sullivan 1990, Furey 2012),⁷ anthropology of pain (e.g. Throop 2010),⁸ and the medical humanities (e.g. Petridou and Thumiger 2016; and Petridou 2017), which place additional emphasis on the portrayal of bodily suffering and pain in terms of life-altering religious experiences. As Jason Throop (2015, 68) puts it:

In anthropology, the sacred has long been viewed as a unique register of human existence that is at times intimately associated with human suffering in its various forms and manifestations. Often enfolded within such orientations to the potential sacredness of human suffering are associated moral experiences and ethical concerns. Whether understood in the context of *painful rituals of initiation, in the light of pain-induced transformations in consciousness, in the context of particular salvational orientations to loss, illness, human finitude, and death, or in the tendency to view suffering as a means of sacrificing one’s own desires for the benefit of one’s ancestors, spirits, or deities, the link between suffering and the sacred has been well documented in anthropology . . .*

Throop acknowledges both Durkheimian and Geertzian influences on his analysis of the close correlations between suffering and the sacred. Clifford Geertz’s view that humans deal with the limitations of their often painful and nonsensical lived experience by seeking out the “religious perspective” has been particularly influential on Throop’s formulation of “sacred suffering” (Throop 2015, 70): “As finite, limited, and vulnerable beings, humans turn to religious orientations, Geertz (1973: 112) argues, as a means to cope with uncanny experiences, to make sense of suffering, pain, illness, and death, and to deal with the intractable ethical dilemmas that define our life as complex moral beings.”

Nonetheless, this methodological framework only partially explains the propensity of 2nd century CE authors, such as Aelius Aristides and Lucian, to conceptualize illness in terms of initiation into the highest mysteries (Petridou 2017), and illness-induced pain, in particular, as a facilitator (an operative *mystagōgos* of sorts) to the all-important process of initiation (*myēsis*). The other important factor that prompts the conceptual analogy between illness and initiation, between sacred and suffering, is pain’s complex and elusive nature, indeed the ineffability of pain. “The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her,” Virginia Woolf (1930, 6–7) asserts in her essay *On Being Ill*, “but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor

⁷ For more on Sullivan, see the last section of this paper.

⁸ At the risk of sounding too simplistic, anthropology of pain is the cross-cultural and comparative study of the experience of pain in human communities. See Moore Free 2002; Throop 2010 and Throop 2015. Cf. also Eisenberger 2012 and Duncan 2017 for historical surveys of changing attitudes to pain over time.

and language at once runs dry.”⁹ Pain eludes not only the communication between patient and physician, but also the historian of disability, the ancient historian, and the archaeologist. It often eludes even the palaeopathologist, who might be able to recognize an ancient disease and its physical signs on human remains but miss altogether the pervasiveness of chronic suffering in the individual’s lived experiences and relationships. Even modern pain specialists, who rely exclusively on quantitative neuroscientific tools for the exploration of pain, such as fMRI results, cannot quite fully comprehend nor qualify its impact on the everyday life of the individual. This has also been argued by the majority of the contributors to a recently published volume on the *Meanings of Pain*, edited by Simon van Rysewyk (more on which below).

2 The “lived” body in pain

The perception of extreme physical pain and anguish as an initiation rite may not make immediate sense to the clinician, or indeed the patient, of the 21st century. However, this view of pain did resonate with the “lived” bodies of members of the socio-political elite in the Antonine period. This resonance is manifested clearly in the pairing of medical and mystery terminology and imagery in some of the most emblematic narratives of the time, such as Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi* and Lucian’s *Alexander the Pseudo-Prophet* (Petridou 2017).

The “lived” body is a concept I have borrowed from Meredith McGuire, a sociologist of religion whose work has contributed greatly to the conceptualization of the “lived ancient religion” approach.¹⁰ McGuire uses this term to express the idea of the material body as both the vehicle for perceiving and interpreting social reality and the only means of anchoring human experience in reality.¹¹ McGuire’s “lived” body is “both a biological and cultural product, simultaneously physical and symbolic, existing always in a specific social and environmental context in which the body is both an active agent and yet shaped by each social moment and its history.” The “lived” body is fundamentally different from the body as an object of observation (especially in clinical practice). The experi-

⁹ Virginia Woolf, *On Being Ill*, introduction by Hermione Lee (Ashfield, MA 2002). The Hogarth Press published *On Being Ill* as an individual volume in 1930, but the work first appeared in 1926 in the *New Criterion*.

¹⁰ Cf. n. 2.

¹¹ McGuire 1990, 284.

ence of the “lived” body is unique and uniquely experienced by each individual – because individuals are uniquely embodied – and yet shared, communicated, and mediated (directly or indirectly, successfully or not) via common cultural symbols (e.g. language), shared social roles, and social expectations.¹²

According to McGuire, understanding the idiosyncrasies of the “lived” body is fundamental to our understanding of the individual’s conception of pain, illness, and suffering in general. It also helps us to understand the difficulties involved in expressing and evaluating bodily discomfort, pain, and physical or mental disability across cultures, social groups, and even individuals who do not share the same cultural parameters, views on illness, or clinical training in diagnosis and the alleviation of pain, etc. McGuire’s emphasis on embodiment and the individual’s entanglement with the cultural signification of pain provides an effective response to an earlier call in the social sciences of religion for a deeper and more fruitful engagement with health and the material body.

A similar call for closer engagement with the “lived body” and “lived pain” was also made in 2016 (almost 30 years later) by a large and diverse group of scientists, physicians, therapists, and students of the medical humanities in an extremely rich volume on the meanings (emphatically plural) of pain (edited by Simon van Rysewyk). As the introduction to that volume states, “the contributors of the book are united in the view that a better understanding of pain neurobiology is necessary to meet the challenges of pain management.”¹³ However, they also recognize that neuroscientific explanations of pain are, by definition, insufficient in that they fail to capture the degree to which pain is the outcome of an individual’s relational dynamic with self and world. In other words, although the neurophysiology of pain is the same in all human societies, the cultural elaboration of pain (idioms, categories, experience) is extremely diverse.¹⁴ To put it another way, while the sentiment of pain remains the same, the ways we personally experience, communicate, and respond to pain depend

12 McGuire 1990, 285 *passim*. The same aspect of socially shared modes and registers of pain in the context of pain in phantom members has also been discussed more recently by Gillet 2016. Gillet (2016, 37) challenges the standard view of pain “as something that goes on ‘inside’ a person” and maintains that our pain experience is influenced by cultural practices and stereotypes that “shape who we are and how we understand and give an account of ourselves.” Phantom limb pain, for example, might be thought of as the individual’s response to the societal evaluations and demands linked to the loss of a limb.

13 In a clinical environment, for example, pain can now be monitored closely via sophisticated investigatory techniques, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

14 Eisenberger 2012.

very much on our personal experiences, including our experiences of observing the suffering of pain by those in our immediate or wider social environment.¹⁵

3 The “lived” body in gout-induced pain

It is precisely this aspect of what can be termed “lived” pain that I want to explore in this paper. This section offers a brief survey of gout and its synchronic framing as a disease of dietary opulence and sedentary lifestyle, as well as an introduction to the socio-cultural and generic context of Lucian’s *Podagra*. My aim is to provide the reader with the essential conceptual framework for the main focus of the paper, which is an exploration of Lucian’s recasting of the lingering, excruciating pain caused by the bouts of gout into a painful and yet worthy initiation into the mysteries of the goddess Podagra.

Gout is essentially a metabolic disease. Our modern biomedical model attributes gout to either abnormally high production or irregular retention of uric acid in the blood (a condition known as hyperuricaemia). The presence of excessive amounts of uric acid in the blood in turn results in the formation of painful monosodium urate crystal deposits in the synovial fluid, thus causing inflammation and, in about fifty percent of sufferers, tophi (subcutaneous nodules) in the joint tissue, most commonly in the feet or knee. Hyperuricaemia may be caused by the kidneys’ defective capacity to excrete uric acid or it may be brought about by other causes, such as blood diseases, in which case we speak of “secondary gout”. Although not lethal, hyperuricaemia can cause excruciating pain.

Of course, it is not easy to equate ancient and modern afflictions (indeed, at times it can be quite impossible). The main treatment for any sort of ancient illness focused primarily on its symptoms rather than its aetiology. When the aetiology was identified, it was more often than not linked by practitioners of the time to one or more kinds of humoral imbalance. The treatment of gout was no exception. Indeed, the Latin *vox propria* for gout, *gutta* (lit. “drop”), is a reference to the synchronic concept of gout as a dropping, an excessive flow of one or more humors to the joints. The Greek technical term for the disease, *podagra*, was, by contrast, a nod to the cultural metaphor of illness as an aggressive entity that hunts down the affected bodily part: in the primary case, the was the foot (e.g. *pous* + *agra* = *podagra*), but the naming convention could be

¹⁵ See the informative and still very relevant discussion in the introduction to the co-edited volume of Good Delvecchio et al. 1992.

equally applied to other effected joints, such as the hand (*cheir + agra = cheiragra*) or the knee (*gnous + agra = gonagra*). Greek and Roman medical texts do discuss gout but, in most cases, they do not differentiate between gout and arthritis. Most importantly, none of the definitions that appear in these texts match our contemporary “framing” of gout in a precise manner.¹⁶

4 Initiation into the mysteries of the goddess Podagra

In terms of generic context, Lucian’s *Podagra*, i.e. *Gout* (the manuscripts also give *Tragopodagra* and *Tragodopodagra*), is a mock-tragedy.¹⁷ As such, the text follows the generic conventions of tragedy (especially the Euripidean form) but it has a comedic core.¹⁸ In particular, it bears a certain resemblance to the comedies of Aristophanes.¹⁹ At the same time, it exhibits all the trademarks of Lucianic satire: ludic allusions to the great figures of the first sophistic, caustic humor, preoccupation with certain ethnic stereotypes, elite mockery targeted against folk religious and medical beliefs, etc.²⁰ In *Podagra*, the famous Hippocratic triangle of patient, physician, and illness²¹ is twisted into a tragicomic pentagon consisting of Podagra (the Goddess Gout), Podagros (the Gouty Man), a chorus of Gout sufferers (*Podagroï*), two wandering Syrian physicians, and the personified pains (*Ponoi*) that the Goddess inflicts on the physicians who dare to challenge her authority by providing a salve that ameliorates pain.

16 On the socio-cultural “framing” of gout, see the introduction in Porter and Rousseau 1998. Cf. also Whitmarsh 2013, 176–185 on “Lucianic Paratragedy” and, more recently, King 2018, 115–127.

17 In terms of performance context, I agree with Orestis Karavas that *Podagra* was not destined for performance on stage but was, rather, intended for private entertainment. See more in Karavas 2005, esp. 327 and 331. In this, Karavas may be following Bompaire’s idea of “un dialogue du salon.”

18 I discuss this aspect of the play in depth in a recent article in *Illinois Classical Studies*. See Petridou 2019.

19 As Karavas 2005, ch. 4 rightly maintains, Lucian may have written this piece as entertainment but he nevertheless chose to follow all of the technical rules of tragic composition. Both the form and content of the *Podagra* demonstrate Lucian’s thorough familiarity with Classical Attic tragedy.

20 Anderson 1979. Cf. Anderson 1976, 11 n. 81.

21 On the Hippocratic triangle, see Gourevitch 1984 and, more recently, Webster 2016.

The prologue (1–29), delivered by Podagros (the Gouty Man), gives an idea of both Podagra’s high pedigree (she is the daughter of Kokytos and Magaira, one of the Furies) and the dominant social framing of gout as a punishment for excessive dietary habits and a sedentary lifestyle. Note, however, that this populist approach co-exists with the “scientific” explanation of gout attacks on the human body (15–22), which attributed the condition either to a disturbance in the equilibrium of the humors or to a perforation of one or more of the humors.²² Several passages in the play show the vindictive goddess Podagra at work. Most famously, lines 185–190 offer a close-up depiction of the “invincible Lady of pains” (ἀνίκητος δεσπότης πόνων), who, like the Homeric Ate, leaves no trace as she treads upon people’s lives,²³ and who resembles Isis, Cybele, or even Bacchus in presiding over peculiar and powerful mystic rites (112, 125, 127, 129–137, 180). Both patients and physicians obey the almighty goddess Podagra, whose mysteries consist in inflicting terrible physical pain and agony on her initiates (119–123). The physical ordeal the goddess Podagra puts her devotees through can only be relieved by the goddess herself (136, 245, 308). Her *mystae*, her initiates, are left pain-stricken, begging for salvation that can only be provided by her divine epiphany (131–137), a statement that reminds the reader strongly of sections 50–51 of the fourth book of Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*, where it is stated explicitly that the epiphany of the god Asclepius soothes Aristides’ severe pain (Petridou 2016).

After the *parodos*, the Podagros joins the chorus of gouty men, the Podagroï. The gouty men shout and groan in desperation and liken their frenzied dances to initiatory rites in honor of Cybele and Attis (30–40). Later on, the Goddess Podagra refers to her entourage of Ponoï, i.e. the personified painful attacks, as her accompanying Bacchae. The Podagroï, who identify themselves as initiates (*mystae*, 44), have come to pay tribute to the periodic onset of Podagra and her attacks, which usually take place in the spring (44–45).²⁴ At line 54, Podagros joins in the lamentations and gives a comedic version of the typical clinical image of a gout sufferer: the man has not left his bed for fifteen days and now remarks on the body-soul fragmentation he is experiencing: his willing soul

²² In his *De compositione medicamentorum secuntum locos* (13.331 K.), Galen accepted that the origins of gout were to be found in an excessive concentration of blood, phlegm, and yellow bile together, or a combination of phlegm, yellow bile, and blood in the joints. However, in his *De rebus boni maliq̄ue suci* (6.814 K.), Galen modified this widely held view by identifying κακοχυμία, i.e. the perforation of one of the humors, as the cause of gout.

²³ *Il.* 9.505–507; 19.91–95; 113; 126–130 with Padel 1992, 162.

²⁴ Springtime (alongside autumn) is described as a particular favorable period for the onset of gout in a number of earlier and contemporary medical treatises.

urges him to walk but his weak body holds him back (66–71). In an apostrophe to his *thymos* (a very Homeric body part) that is laden with pathos and accompanied by a strikingly pitiful “pi” alliteration, Podagros addresses his bodily disjointedness: ὄμως δ’ ἐπέιγ’ οὐκ, θυμέ, γινώσκων ὅτι / πτωχὸς ποδαγρῶν, περιπατεῖν μὲν ἂν θέλη / καὶ μὴ δύνηται, τοῦτον ἐν νεκροῖς τίθει (69–72). The gouty man declares that his current state of extreme pain has made him long for death. Similarly, for the vast majority of modern chronic pain sufferers, “bodily experience assumes enormous proportions.”²⁵ Patients describe their pain as “shattering” and “world-destroying”. Pain, especially chronic pain, subjugates the body and defines body perception in ways that often defy established biomedical taxonomies. In addition to Podagros, other first-person narratives, such as Marcus Aurelius’ letters to Fronto and Libanius’ *Autobiography*,²⁶ provide similar reports of the excruciating pain inflicted by gout. In these texts, sufferers are often portrayed as either being on the brink of death or actively wishing for it, a common element that aligns the ancient patient’s experience of one’s body being fragmented by pain with that of modern sufferers.

The Podagroï, the chorus of gouty men,²⁷ draw attention to Podagros’ walking stick and recognize him a fellow sufferer, or else, a fellow initiate of the invincible goddess: “we see a *mystes* of the invincible goddess”, μύστην ὀρώμεν τῆς ἀνίκητου θεᾶς (85). Podagros in turn acknowledges the Podagroï, who are all equipped with walking sticks like Podagros himself, and asks about the identity of the deity they honor with their frenzied dances (112–128). This scene refers to the social aspect of pain and how it forces sufferers to relate more closely to other sufferers. It also foregrounds the primary and secondary benefits of patient-centered groups and organizations. As Stuart Derbyshire argues in a different context, “part of the trouble arises from treating pain as a private experience when the roots of pain lie in a *socially negotiated subjectivity* (emphasis mine).”²⁸ The Podagros does not immediately recognize the Podagroï as his fellow sufferers, but his “third leg” (54), that is his walking stick, provides a visual manifestation of their common inability to walk unaided. Thus, to put it in Arthur Kleinman’s words (1988), pain becomes “the central idiom of a network of communication and negotiation.”

²⁵ Good Delvecchio et al. 1992, 37.

²⁶ On Marcus Aurelius’ intimate confessions to Fronto, see the introduction in Várhelyi 2010. On Libanius’ chronic suffering, see Norman 2000, 123–131; and Renberg 2017, 689–713.

²⁷ Whitmarsh 2013, 182 emphasizes the fact that the text does not clarify the sex of the chorus. However, we can hardly imagine the Podagroï as women, unless Lucian had opted for a chorus of post-menopausal females. More on this topic in Petridou 2019.

²⁸ Derbyshire 2016.

Nevertheless, Podagros is still confused and asks for further information about the nature of the mystic rites of the Podagroï (112–128). The gouty men explain that, unlike the devotees of Magna Mater, the followers of Bacchus, and those initiated in the mysteries of Mithras, they do not engage in bodily modification or wild and bloodthirsty rituals that involve the eating of animals. Instead, they subject themselves to a more subtle, yet far more painful, kind of initiation rite: that instituted by the goddess Gout (119–124) during springtime. Although there is no clear indication as to how Lucian's chorus have acquired their gout, there is an unquestionable emphasis on the extreme amount of pain gout causes its sufferers during the springtime bouts of the disease. The language Lucian uses here is reminiscent of Greek curse tablets (*katadesmoi*) and the protective incantations that were often inscribed in amulets (*phylaktēria*) or on personal objects such as rings.²⁹ Lines 117–124 are of particular interest to us because, although set in a comedic context, they offer a valuable insight into the patients' experience of the disease as a gradual process of bodily fragmentation and an inescapable acceleration of pain. The lines are worth quoting in full:

ὄτε δὲ πελέας ἔαρι βρύει τὸ λεπτὸν ἄνθος
καὶ πολυκέλαδος κόσσυφος ἐπὶ κλάδοισιν ἄδει,
τότε διὰ μελέων ὄξυ βέλος πέπηγε μύσταις,
ἀφανές, κρύφιον, δεδυκὸς ὑπὸ μυχοῖσι γυίων, 120
πόδα, γόνυ, κοτύλην, ἀστραγάλους, ἰσχία, μηρούς,
χέρας, ὠμοπλάτας, βραχίονας, κόρωνα, καρπούς
ἔσθει, νέμεται, φλέγει, κρατεῖ, πυροῖ, μαλάσσει,
μέχρις ἂν ἡ θεὸς τὸν πόνον ἀποφυγεῖν κελεύσῃ.

But when the spring brings tender flowers upon the elm and blackbirds' bubbling song is heard on every bough, then the limbs of the *mystae* are pierced by a sharp arrow, invisible, secret, sinking into the utmost depth of the joints: the foot, the knee, hip-joint, ankles, groins and thighs, hands, shoulder-blades, and arms, the elbows and the wrists it eats, devours, burns, quells, inflames and softens up, until the goddess bids the pain to flee away.

The same process of escalating physical agony and bodily disintegration is described in lines 275–287 but this time is seen from an external point of view: the almighty goddess Podagra, like another Dionysus, orders the Ponoï, her Bacchic entourage of personified pains (282), to attack the body of the physician who falsely claimed that he was able to cure gout by the application of a potent salve:

²⁹ On enumeration of affected body parts in protective incantations, usually in Iambic meter, see Faraone 2009 and Zellmann-Rohrer 2015; on curse tablets, see Eidinow 2007, 363–364, 366–368, 375–376, 380–387, 391–397 and 410–411, and Versnel 1991; 1998.

ΠΟΔΑΓΓΡΑ

Εἴτ' ὦ κατάρατοι καὶ κακῶς ὀλούμενοι, 275
 ἔστιν τις ἐν γῆ φαρμάκου δρᾶσις τόση,
 ὃ χρισθὲν οἶδε τὴν ἐμὴν παῦσαι βίαν;
 ἀλλ' εἶα, τήνδε σύμβασιν συνθώμεθα,
 καὶ πειράσωμεν εἴτε φαρμάκου σθένος
 ὑπέρτερον πέφυκεν εἴτ' ἐμαὶ φλόγες, 280
 δεῦτ', ὦ σκυθρωπαί, πάντοθεν ποτώμεναι
 βάσανοι, πάρεδροι τῶν ἐμῶν βακχευμάτων,
 πελάζετ' ἄσσον· καὶ σὺ μὲν ποδῶν ἄκρους
 φλέγμαινε ταρσοῦς δακτύλων ποδῶν ἄχρις,
 σὺ δὲ σφυροῖς ἔμβαινε, σὺ δὲ μηρῶν ἄπο 285
 ἐς γόνατα λείβε πικρὸν ἰχώρων βάθος,
 ὑμεῖς δὲ χειρῶν δακτύλους λυγίζετε.

Goddess Gout

Then, cursed ones whose death will be bitter, 275
 Is there on earth a remedy of such effect,
 An ointment potent which can check my violence?
 But come, upon these terms let us agree;
 Let's test the might of the remedy to find
 If it or if my burning pain prevails. 280
 Come, grim-faced ones, from every side fly here,
 torments, comrades of my Bacchic rites,
 approach, come near; you inflame the tips of their feet,
 from heel to utmost tip of toe;
 you assail their ankles; and you from the hip-bones 285
 down to their knees make your rank poison flow;
 and you must twist the fingers of their hands.

The Ponoι attack the individual parts of the physician's body. The painful fragmentation starts from the lower extremities (for the toes of his feet) and spreads upwards (to the fingers of the hands). No joint is to be left alone: ankles, thighs, knees, they must all be engulfed by excruciating anguish. This toe to top escalation of somatic suffering brings to mind analogous clinical descriptions of bodily breakdowns due to bouts of gout that appear in another medical author roughly contemporary with Lucian, Aretaeus of Cappadocia. Aretaeus was the author of a long medical treatise *On the Causes and the Signs of Acute Diseases* (*De causis et signis acutorum morborum*).³⁰ At 2.12.5 in this treatise, we read:

30 On “the shadowy figure of Aretaeus”, see King 2018, 43–66.

5. [...] ἰσχιᾶδος μὲν ἀπὸ μηροῦ κατόπιν ἢ ἰγνύος ἢ κνήμης ἢ ἀρχῆ. ἄλλοτε δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ κοτύλῃ τὸ ἄλγημα φαίνεται, αὐθις ἐς γλουτὸν ἢ ὄσφρὸν ὀκέλλει, καὶ πάντα μᾶλλον ἐστὶν ἢ δόκησις ἰσχίου. ἀτὰρ καὶ τὰ ἄρθρα ὡδὲ πως ἄρχεται· τοῦ ποδὸς τὸν μέγαν δάκτυλον ἀλγέει, αὐθις τὴν ἐπιπρόσω πτέρνην, ἢ πότι στηριζόμεθα· ἔπειτα ἐς τὸ κοῖλον ἦκε, τὸ δὲ σφυρὸν ἐξώδησε ὕστατον.

[...] The commencement of ischiatic disease is from the thigh behind, the ham, or the leg. Sometimes the pain appears in the cotyloid cavity, and again extends to the nates or loins, and has the appearance of anything rather than an affection of the hip-joint. But the joints begin to be affected in this way: pain seizes the great toe; then the forepart of the heel on which we lean; next it comes into the hollow of the foot, but the ankle swells last.

I am not claiming here that Lucian must have read this exact treatise – such a suggestion would make for a very narrow and not particularly fruitful example of intertextuality. What I maintain is that these ideas were part of a rich range of medical topics that would have been popular with the members of the intellectual and socio-political elite of his times.³¹ What matters most is that the depiction of gout as incurable and cruel was not Lucian's invention. The majority of the ancient treatises on gout emphasize the extreme and chronic pain caused by the disease and its incurability.³² In the Hippocratic *On the Affections of the Parts* (6.242–244), for instance, gout is described as the most violent of all chronic joint affections and Aretaeus probably had these lines in mind when he concluded (*De causis et signis acutorum morborum* 2.12.2) that the pain induced by gout in the big toe and its ligaments is more severe than iron screws, cords, the wound of a dagger, or even burning fire.³³ Aretaeus also famously admitted

³¹ The bibliography on the issue of popularized medicine in the 2nd century CE is vast. See, for instance, Van Nuffelen 2014, Paz de Hoz 2014, Petridou 2017, and the introduction in King 2018 with more bibliographical references.

³² Due to space restrictions I have not been able to provide here a full account of ancient medical treatises on gout and have restricted myself to Galen and Aretaeus, the two medical writers who were roughly contemporaries of Lucian. The interested reader is directed to Copeman 1964 and Porter and Rousseau 1998, ch. 2. Ancient medical treatises on gout remained in circulation in the Middle Ages. We often find them in popular manuals of diseases (essentially collections and/or compilations of medical literature), such as the 11th-century manuscript known as the Salernitan text, or the *Passionarius/Liber Nosematon/Book of Diseases*, which was compiled by the physician Gariopontus of Salerno. It contains, among other things, two condensed adaptations of Caelius Aurelianus' *Acute Diseases* and *Chronic Diseases*, which in turn were known in several early Latin manuscripts as *Aurelius* and *Esculapius*, and a short excerpt from Alexander of Tralles' *De Podagra*.

³³ ἦν δὲ ἐξ ωύτέων πονῆ, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἀλγέει τοῦδε δυνατώτερον, οὐ σίδηρα σφιγγοντα, οὐ δεσμά, οὐ τιτρώσκον ξίφος, οὐ καῖον πῦρ.

that although humans might try to understand the disease’s probable causes, the true reasons behind occurrences of gout were only known to the gods: αἰτίην δὲ ἀτρεκέα μὲν ἴσασι μούνοι θεοί, εὐοικῶν δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωποι.³⁴

Returning to Lucian’s text, the transformation of the doubting doctor after the goddess’ painful divine intervention is quick and wondrous (297–307). The physician whose joints have been torn apart by extreme pain admits defeat and addresses Podagra as *anassa* (“my Queen”, “my Lady”). His remedy has been proved useless in the face of chronic and acute pain and he has been forced to experience for himself that which he falsely claimed to be able to cure. Podagra acknowledges the Podagros’ confession and change of mind (*metanoia*) and orders the Ponoι to retreat.³⁵ The vote is unanimous, the rhetorical *agōn* (311) has been won by Podagra. This whole scene, encompassing the physician’s physical suffering and religious conversion into the *Mystēria* of Podagra is, of course, meant to be hilarious. However, as should be apparent by now, laughter in Lucian’s *Podagra* is pointedly grounded in the realities of bodily suffering. The laughter caused by the Syrian doctor’s succumbing to Podagra and being emerged in extreme physical agony is the laugh of physical powerlessness, corporeal infirmity, and human despair in the face of chronic pain and suffering.

All in all, Lucian in his *Podagra* presents gout as a chronic medical condition whose periodic attacks, despite being non-lethal, induce such extreme pain and a sense of bodily fragmentation to its sufferers that the whole experience of suffering can be perceived as an oscillation between life and death and, therefore, as a liminal condition. Undoubtedly, this idea of liminality would also have enabled the construction of a conceptual bridge between illness and initiation. Illness is experienced as a major crisis that challenges the foundations of the previously established identity and, thus, evokes ritually rehearsed crises that the individual has undergone in earlier initiatory rites. This idea of chronic illness as initiation, and of the “lived” body in pain as undergoing a painful but worthwhile *myesis* into *Mysteria* of the highest order, finds a uniquely powerful expression in another text, Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*.

³⁴ *De causis et signis acutorum morborum* 2.12.3.

³⁵ The episode has been rightly compared to the content of a confession inscription, such as those found in Phrygia and Lydia. See Petzl 1991.

5 The “lived” body in pain in Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*

In order to display the way in which the Pergamene cult of Asclepius acted as a mystery cult, and to showcase Aristides’s conceptualization of illness as initiation, it would be natural to examine a selection of passages from the *HL* and related orations in which Aristides depicts disease as a perpetual near-death experience and describes himself as being on the brink of death.³⁶ However, my focus here will be narrower. Chapters 38–39 of the second book of the *HL* bring home in a unique way how easy it was for Aristides to bridge and connect the concepts of illness and initiation, medicine and mystery cult:

μικρὸν δὲ ἀναλήψομαι. ἔτυχον μὲν ὦν ἐν τῷ προαστείῳ κατὰ θέρουσ ἀκμὴν, νόσος δὲ κατέσχε λοιμώδης πάντας σχεδὸν τοὺς προσχώρους. τῶν δὲ οἰκετῶν τὸ μὲν πρῶτων δύο καὶ τρεῖς ἔκαμνον, ἔπειτα ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος, ἔπειτ’ ἔκειντο ἅπαντες καὶ νεώτεροι καὶ πρεσβύτεροι, τελευταῖος δὲ ἐλήφθην ἐγώ. ἰατροὶ δὲ ἐφοίτων ἐξ ἄστεος καὶ τοῖς ἀκολουθοῖς αὐτῶν ἐχρώμεθα διακόνους, οἱ δὲ τινες καὶ αὐτοὶ προσεδρεύοντες ἀντὶ διακόνων ἦσαν. ἔκαμνε δὲ καὶ <τὰ> ὑποζύγια, καὶ εἴ που κινήθει τις, εὐθὺς πρὸ θυρῶν ἔκειτο· ὥστε οὐδ’ ἂν πλῆ χρήσασθαι περὶ τῶν συμβαινόντων ἐξῆν ἔτι ῥαδίως. Πάντα δ’ ἦν μεστὰ ἀθυμίας οἰμωγῆς στόνου δυσκολίας ἀπάσης· ἦσαν δὲ κἀν τῇ πόλει νόσοι δειναί. τέως μὲν οὖν ἀντείχον οὐδὲν ἦττον τῆς τῶν ἄλλων σωτηρίας ἢ τῆς ἐμαυτοῦ προνοούμενος, ἔπειτα ἐπέτεινέ τε ἡ νόσος καὶ κατελήφθην ὑπὸ δεινοῦ πυρὸς χολῆς παντοίας, ἢ συνεχῶς νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν ἠνώχλει, καὶ τῆς τροφῆς ἀπεκεκλείμην καὶ ἡ δύναμις κατελέλυτο. καὶ οἱ ἰατροὶ ἀφίσταντο καὶ τελευτῶντες ἀπέγνωσαν παντάπασι, καὶ διηγγέληθι ὡς οἰχισομένου αὐτίκα. τὸ μέντοι τοῦ Ὀμήρου κἀν τούτοις εἶπες ἄν, ‘τὸ νόσος γε μὲν ἔμπεδος ἦεν’ (Λ 813).

I shall now give a brief *analepsis* (‘flash-back’).³⁷ I happened to be in the suburbs (sic. of Smyrna) at the height of summer. A plague infected nearly all my neighbors. First, two or three of my household neighbors grew sick, then one after the other. Then they were all bedridden, both the young and the old ones. And I was the last to have taken ill. Doctors came from the city and we used their companions as servants. Even those who attended regularly acted as servants. The beasts for the yoke fell ill too and if anyone became somehow agitated, he lay immediately dead in front of the door. As a result, due to current events at that time it was no longer possible to sail easily. Everything was filled with sadness, lamentations, groaning and discontent of every sorts. For there was also terrible sickness to the city. Up to that point, I cared no less for the safety of the others than I did for my own. Then the disease accelerated and I was attacked by the terrible burning of

³⁶ E.g. Or. 47.69: ἐπ’ ἔσχατον ἐλθεῖν, and Or. 47.73: λιποψυχοῦντα.

³⁷ In Genette’s narratology, analepsis (i.e. the narrative technique whereby the narrator recounts after the fact an event that took place earlier than the present point in the main story) is a form of anachrony, the other being the prolepsis (i.e. when the narrator anticipates events that will occur after the main story ends).

every sort of bile, which tormented me constantly, come day or night; and I was turned away from food and my strength was diminished. And the doctors took their distance from my case, and in the end they all gave up on me, and it was announced that I would die at once. However, even under those circumstances you could use that Homeric saying (*Iliad* 11.813): ‘Still his mind was firm-set.’

The episode is set in the suburbs of Smyrna in the peak of the summer of 165 CE. Both the city and its environs were infected with an epidemic illness (often identified as smallpox)³⁸ that became better known as “the Antonine Plague”.³⁹ Aristides presents himself as bed-ridden and evidently *derelictus a medicis*.⁴⁰ The passage quoted above contains an exhaustive account of his continuous suffering (ἢ συνεχῶς νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν ἠνώχλει) and his physical weakness (καὶ ἡ δύναμις κατελέλυτο) during that period. He bases his account on hard medical facts, namely the rise of the fiery bilious mixture and his resulting abstinence from food (κατελήφθην ὑπὸ δεινοῦ πυρὸς χολῆς παντοίας . . . καὶ τῆς τροφῆς ἀπεκεκλείμην).⁴¹ Aristides’ despair about his lamentable state of health

38 Smallpox: Behr 1968, 96–97, 166–167; Behr 1981, 430 n. 64.

39 This mysterious but highly infectious disease, which flared up during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and continued well into the reign of Commodus, swept the entire Roman Empire and depleted it of its resources. Despite its profound consequences for both the economy (agricultural and urban) and the religious market place of the empire, the modern historian is faced with a very limited number of descriptions of the disease (mainly from Galen), in which the emphasis is laid more on the therapeutic course proposed than on the clinical image of the disease. Hence, although scholarly speculation on the nature of the illness is abundant, any sort of palaeopathological confirmation of it being smallpox is lacking. Sabbatini and Fiorino 2009 assert that the Parthian War in Mesopotamia and the wars against the Marcomanni in north-eastern Italy, in Noricum, and in Pannonia facilitated the spread of the disease. Other influential accounts of the epidemic include Gourevitch 2005; Gilliam 1961; Fears 2004. Some historians of religion have recognized a direct link between this enormous health-related crisis and the rise of religious ideas and practices with prominent henotheistic tendencies, such as Asclepian and Isiac cults, Mithraism, Christianity, etc.

40 *Derelictus a medicis*: a *topos* in narratives (epigraphic, papyrological, and literary) that account for patients’ experiences with divine healers after having been despaired of by human physicians. Cf. here the following 2nd-century inscription from Rome: Dittenberger, *Syll.*³ III, 1173.7, 11 (= *JG* XIV, 966): Λουκίῳ πλευρευτικῷ ἀφηλπισμένῳ ὑπὸ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐχρημάτισεν ὁ θεὸς ἐλθεῖν κτλ.; Asclepius-Imouthes intervenes when mortal practitioners fail in *POxy* 1381, co. III, 54: πολλὰκις ἀπηυδηκίης τῆς ἰατρικῆς πρὸς τὰς κατεχούσας αὐτοῦ νόσους ἔσωσεν; and, finally, Asclepius of Epidaurus saves a female patient from the incompetent mortal healers who operated on her in his absence in *Aelian NA* 9.33: καὶ ὑπὸ χειρὸς θνητῆς ἐς ἄκεις ἤκειν ἀδυνάτοις. More on this *locus* in Horstmanshoff 2004, 281 n. 13.

41 As Downie 2013 and King 2018 have shown, Aristides recalibrates medical language and embeds it firmly in his rhetorical and religious agenda. We do not have to assume that Aristides reproduces terminology he has acquired by listening to the medical experts who

(εἰς τοῦσχατον ἦλθον) echoes the dire prognosis of his attending physicians (καὶ οἱ ἰατροὶ ἀφίσταντο καὶ τελευτῶντες ἀπέγνωσαν παντάπασι). Evidently, he was not alone in believing that he was dying, as the medical experts present agreed that he was on the brink of death (καὶ διηγέληθι ὡς οἰχρησμένου αὐτικά). Aristides' subjective view echoes the "objective" perspective of the medical experts. However, Aristides goes one step further: he internalizes the power-gaze of his physicians,⁴² and describes himself as watching his own body from afar as if it belonged to someone else (οὕτω παρηκολούθουν ἑμαυτῶ, ὡσπερ ἂν ἄλλω τινὶ, καὶ ἦσθανόμην ὑπολείποντος ἀεὶ τοῦ σώματος). He graphically refers to his body as ever slipping away and himself as reaching the threshold of death (εἰς τοῦσχατον ἦλθον).

In modern neurological terms, these experiences can be described as "a state of altered consciousness" or an "out of body experience", also known as "autoscopy". Sensations of the complete alienation of one's mind and body are often concomitant with deep dreaming, extremely stressful and life-changing experiences, and near-death experiences (NDEs).⁴³ Near-death experiences of this sort share a number of similarities with mystic initiation rituals in the Greek-speaking world, as has been noted by Richard Seaford:

Mystic initiation was a rehearsal of death. Moreover, it has numerous points of similarity with the modern near-death experiences (NDEs) that have been so exhaustively recorded and investigated over the last two decades. The NDE displays a fair degree of similarity across different culture, and I suggest that the mystic ritual of the Greeks was in part a dramatization of their experience of NDEs.⁴⁴

looked after him. Knowledge of this sort could just as easily have been acquired by reading popular contemporary medical treatises on the topic. The interdependence between food input and humoral balance was explored in number of treatises, such as Galen's *On the Humors*, *On Black Bile*, *On Uneven Bad Temperament*, *On the Causes of Disease*, *On Barley Soup*, and three books *On the Power of Foods*. For a translation of these passages, see Grant 2000.

42 Powerful gaze of the Second Sophistic: Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, 71–73 compares the *Hieroi Logoi* with *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, one of the most celebrated Greek novels and a first-person narrative populated by dreams, divine epiphanies, statues, images, temples, and gazing at the human body. She concludes that it is easy to see how the authoritative, powerful, diagnostic gaze of the first and second centuries CE (expressed in a wide range of scientific texts of the period, such as Polemo's *Physiognomy* and Galen's medical treatises), was translated on the narrative level into an authoritative, controlling, first-person voice.

43 Autoscopy has also been linked to the pathology of the brain, the pathophysiology of trauma and coma, and to medical conditions such as epilepsy and psychosis: Blanke et al. 2004. On dreams and autoscopy, see Occhionero and Cigogna 2011.

44 Seaford 2005, 605. Jan Bremmer 2002, 90–96 compares NDEs to a number of Greek texts, such as the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic*. On mystic initiation as a descent to the Underworld

Be that as it may, what matters here is that although Aristides is presented with a “scientific” explanation of his situation (a rising of the bilious mixture) and with the hard, but pragmatic prognosis of his death, when processing the medical data (and the Homeric citation is, in my view a clear, albeit very self-conscious, reference to intense processing of sensorial and intellectual data)⁴⁵ he chooses to tap into previous religious experiences which centered on and around the body. In 2.39 in particular, the reader is explicitly told that Aristides’ physical suffering prepares the ground for and solidifies this feeling of alienation (ὥσπερ ἄν ἄλλω τιῶν). Feelings of self-alienation and distancing from previous conceptions of identity are commonly reported by participants in initiatory rites, such as those who partook in the *mysteria* of Eleusis. In a much-quoted Aristoteleian fragment (fr. 15 Rose), the initiatory experience (most likely that of the mysteries at Eleusis) is described as a *pathos*, a kind of suffering (physical or psychological), and an intense psychological experience: “thus, Aristotle has it that the initiants must not learn something in particular, but suffer and being psychologically predisposed” (καθάπερ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιῶ τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι). Similarly, in Sopater’s *Divisions of Questions*, a feeling of self-alienation is reported by the narrator, who has undergone an oneiric initiation into the *mysteria* of Eleusis (more on this below): “when I had gone in the interior of the Telestērion, and being a *mystēs*, had seen both the hierophant and the dadouchos, I saw that very initiation ritual, that all of you initiates know very well of, and went out of the Telestērion feeling a stranger to myself” (ἐπεὶ οὖν εἴσω τῶν ἀνακτόρων γεγένημαι, καὶ μύστης ὢν ἱεροφάντην ἅμα καὶ δαδοῦχον τεθέσθαι, καὶ τὴν τελετὴν ἐκείνην εἶδον, ἣν οἱ μεμνημένοι πάντες ἐπίστασθε, ἐξῆεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνακτόρων ἐπ’ ἐμαυτῶ ζενιζόμενος).⁴⁶

In all likelihood, Aristides, just like Podagros in Lucian’s text, draws upon previous bodily knowledge acquired through intense initiatory experiences, quite possibly from his own initiation at Eleusis.⁴⁷ They both tap into their previous experience of initiatory rites to describe their relationship with their

in Greek religions, see Riedweg 2011. Cf. also Seaford 2009. On NDEs, see Moody 1975 and Moody 1988.

45 Notice the emphatic disengagement between the dying body and Aristides’ *noos*, which, in true Homeric manner, was said to have remained ἔμπεδος (“steadfast”).

46 Sopater, *Divisions of Questions (Diairesis Zētēmatōn)* 8.115 Watz.

47 Although we cannot claim with any certainty that Aristides was indeed an initiate, this seems very likely to have been the case given the increased and renewed popularity of the Eleusinian *mysteria* in the imperial era, as well as Aristides’ visit to Eleusis and his emotional attachment to the city and the mysteries as expressed in his *Eleusinos (Oratio 22 Keil)*. On the Eleusinian Mysteries in Imperial times, see Clinton 1989, Muñiz Grijalvo 2005, and Galimberti

bodies at a time of crisis. In both narratives, illness is conceptualized and described as sharing physical boundaries with both life and death, as being in between the two states. Effectively, illness is framed as the liminal period that disrupts healthy life within the community, segregates the sufferer, and prepares them by means of excruciating physical pain and/or mental anguish (the medical equivalent of the Eleusinian *pathos*) for their reintegration into the community of the healthy. This is achieved by the resolution of the medical crisis brought about by the epiphany of Asclepius, the healing deity in Aristides, and by Podagra, the personification of the disease, in Lucian.

6 The ritually experienced and religiously expressed physiology of the Second Sophistic

Despite these similarities, there are also a number of distinctive differences between the two narratives as well. Unlike Aristides' *HL*, the entanglement of medical and mystery imagery in Lucian's *Podagra* is generally treated as little more than a rib-tickling tool aimed solely at raising a laugh. However, the perceptive reader will have noticed that the recasting of illness (especially chronic and acute illness) in terms of a painful initiation into a mystic cult is pointedly grounded in the realities of bodily suffering. I have addressed precisely this sort of question elsewhere, asking why religious imagery in general, and terminology drawn from mystery cults in particular, are employed to describe bodily knowledge in some of the most emblematic narratives of the Second Sophistic, such as Lucian's *Alexander the Pseudo-Prophet*.⁴⁸ I argued that these texts, and many others from the same period, present us with a *new kind of physiology*, a physiology that is ritually experienced and religiously expressed. However, I wonder now whether Lucian's *Podagra* should also join the list of texts that present us with facets of this newly conceived physiology. In all these texts, illness is portrayed as a sort of painful initiation and pain itself is presented as having immense transformative powers that are capable of shaking the foundations of a previously established self and paving the way for the establishment of a new enlightened self. This ties well with ideas set out by modern medical anthropologists such as Jason Throop (2010, 2), who examines pain and its

2010. The most comprehensive discussion of *Or.* 22 and Aristides' relationship to Eleusis remains Humbel 1994, 19–37.

48 Petridou 2017 and 2019.

transformative power: “throughout its various manifestations, a foundational property of pain’s existential structure is its capacity to enact a transformation in the subject who experiences it, whether for good or for ill.”

The goddess Gout strikes a very fine balance between appearing as the personification of gout-induced pain and as a healing deity who delivers the patients from this painful condition. Her mysteries just are the seasonal bouts of gout that plague the gout-sufferers and, since there was (and still is) no cure for this chronic ailment, the only effective treatment was to endure the pain and transform your conception of it. Critical body-related crises were often conceived as religious affairs, even in the wider medical circles as Aretaeus of Cappadocia’s famous statement demonstrates: “humans may try to understand the disease’s probable causes, but the true reasons behind gout were only known to the gods.”⁴⁹

Lawrence E. Sullivan, an anthropologist and historian of religion, argues that “critical knowledge of the body is frequently related to critical experiences that are religious. Such critical experiences are envisaged as crises.” He believes that this kind of physiology is central to the study of religions.⁵⁰ Sullivan, who extensively studied “the medical ritual systems” of traditional communities in the Americas, South Africa, Oceania, and Japan, concluded that the members of these communities acquired much of their knowledge about the body through life- and status-changing ritual experiences, such as rites of passage, purification rites, and initiatory rites. Illness, when experienced as a major crisis, challenges the foundations of the previously established identity and, thus, evokes other ritually rehearsed crises the individual has undergone in the context of earlier initiatory rites.

In a similar vein, one might argue that the “lived” body in pain in the writings of Lucian, Aristides, Marcus Aurelius, and, even two centuries later, in the works of Libanius,⁵¹ is construed, fragmented, and reassembled in ritual, while its processes are thought of as controlled and determined by ritual contact with prominent healing deities, such as Asclepius of Pergamum and *neos Asklepios Glykon* (“the Gentle One”). The body as a vibrant object with increased agency is the main focus of a plethora of medical writings of the Antonine period, but Lucian’s *Podagra* and Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*, as well as Lucian’s *Alexander*, are

⁴⁹ *De causis et signis acutorum morborum* 2.12.3: αἰτίην δὲ ἀτρεκέα μὲν ἴσασι μούνοι θεοί, εὐοκυῖαν δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωποι.

⁵⁰ Sullivan 1990, 86–99.

⁵¹ Libanius *Autobiography* 243–247. The year Libanius refers to is 386 CE. He has been suffering (on and off) from gout and migraine since 371. His symptoms include depression, neuralgia, and vertigo. The pain is so intense that he often expresses the desire to die.

unique in presenting us with a close-up of this new conception of a body that is dismembered and repaired in ritual.

These observations, along with Sullivan's view that bodily knowledge in many traditional communities is a religious affair, offer a particularly useful framework for approaching the ways that Aristides and his peers viewed and experienced their own bodies both in and out of the Asclepieion of Pergamum. The same conceptual outline can also help us understand the pairing of initiation, oracular rites, and healing rites instituted in honor of *neos Asklepios Glykon* at Abonouteichos, or the pairing of illness and initiatory rites in *Podagra*. In other words, socio-anthropology puts the close correlation of illness and initiation, medical and mystic imagery and terminology, in the 2nd century CE into a wholly new perspective, and one that is much more amenable to the "lived ancient religion" approach.

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Heather Hunter-Crawley

Divinity refracted: extended agency and the cult of Symeon Stylites the Elder

Abstract: In this paper, I suggest that the material evidence for the Late-Antique Syrian cult of Symeon Stylites the Elder demonstrates a pre-Cartesian understanding of extended personhood and agency, in contrast to a modern, dualist model of the bounded body. The saint's iconography, souvenir tokens, and pilgrimage site at Qal'at Sem'an are analyzed in turn, in order to explore the ways in which they reflect a deep concern with the performance of ascent in achieving sanctity, and an understanding of the saint as continually present, living on in the distribution of his agency through the material things of his life, particularly his column. It is suggested that the cult was concerned with the animation of matter and the revelation and refraction of divine presence and truth in the world, in a way which questions definitions of living or lived in the study of ancient religions.

In the age of the internet, we are increasingly becoming aware of the ways in which people, ideas, and things are intrinsically networked together. More and more often, we look to Google for the storage of information and memories which once had to be learned by rote. Indeed, new models of extended mind have had to be developed in order to explain the ways in which we “think through things” (see, for example: History of Distributed Cognition Project 2014).

Following on from this, sensory and material culture studies have broken away from the Cartesian dualist model which pervaded academic thought of the late 20th century, and which privileges logocentric meaning over materiality and tacit forms of knowledge or epistemologies.¹ Ecological theory and indigenous thought, alongside technological advances have drawn attention to the

¹ On these new developments see, in particular: Barad 2007; Bennett 2010; Coole and Frost 2010; Hamilakis 2013.

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distributed nature of the self and the artificiality of a strict boundary between self and world.² This blended model of human existence is not figurative but rather is a material and lived reality. Historians of pre-modern eras, especially the Medieval, Byzantine, and Archaic, have re-discovered their objects of study by removing the modern lens of Cartesian dualism, which is, of course, itself a culturally-situated perspective derived from 17th century French philosophy, and so its application to earlier periods such as Late Antiquity ought at least to be questioned.³

In this chapter, I suggest that the material evidence for the Late-Antique Syrian cult of Symeon Stylites the Elder demonstrates a pre-Cartesian understanding of distributed personhood, and thus agency, akin to theories of extended mind and embodiment, and in contrast to a 20th-century, dualist model of bounded self. This case study potentially could be expanded to the Late-Antique cult of saints more broadly, from souvenirs to relics and sites of pilgrimage.

1 Symeon Stylites the Elder, materiality, and agency

Building on work by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Patricia Cox-Miller, Bissera Pentcheva and others, I have previously argued that Late-Antique Christians understood materiality differently to the modern West.⁴ Society was broadly informed by the knowledge that the one God is infinite in power and presence; because he inhabits all of his Creation the material world is full of presence and power that can be revealed and made known through correct ritual and embodied behavior, particularly involving the correct use of the senses. We can think of this as akin to the refraction of light through a prism; the source is dispersed into multiple rays, yet each ray is continuous with and leads back to the source. In this way, in Late Antiquity materiality itself was infinite and interconnected,

² See, for example: Abram 2010; Hodder 2012; Ingold 2000; Malafouris and Renfrew 2010; Todd 2016.

³ This has particularly been the case in the newly emerging discipline of Sensory Archaeology, on which see: Day 2013; Hamilakis 2013; Day and Skeates 2020. Renger and Stellmacher 2010, argue against the application of Cartesian dualism to the life and cult of Symeon Stylites the Elder.

⁴ See especially: Hunter-Crawley 2012; Hunter-Crawley 2013. Cf. Harvey 2006; Cox-Miller 2009; Pentcheva 2010.

and had infinite potential to reveal the presence of God in this world, through embodied action and interaction with iconic objects which enabled Christians to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch divine truth.

This notion finds some expression in the *Syriac Life* of Symeon Stylites the Elder (dated c. 473 CE):

Truly, we all know and are convinced that God is everywhere – in heaven and on earth, on high and in the deep, in the sea and in the abyss, below the earth and above the heavens. There is no place where his divinity is absent, except in humans who do not do his will. Wherever a human calls on him in truth, there he finds him.

(111, trans. Doran 1992, 179)

Symeon was the first stylite saint and lived in the early 5th century in Syria. He was a severe ascetic whose practices culminated in standing atop a sequence of higher columns (up to c. 9 meters) for around 47 years without shelter. A community grew up around the column, and after his death a sanctuary, Qal'at Sem'an was built around it, probably by the emperor Zeno in the late 5th century. Against the emperor Leo's preference for bringing Symeon's body to Constantinople, it was taken to Antioch to act as a miraculous relic and protector of the city (it was later translated, in part, to the column of Daniel the Stylite: Eastmond 1999, 91–92; *Life of Daniel Stylites* 57, trans. Dawes 1948).

Our evidence for the saint and his cult includes three versions of his biography,⁵ the pilgrimage complex at Qal'at Sem'an (the largest and most famous on the route through northern Syria to the Holy Land, even though it lacked the saint's corpse), and also souvenir dust tokens, made of earth from the locale of the column and stamped with Symeon's image.

These tokens were understood to be highly powerful, particularly in acts of healing. In many ways, they acted as proxies for the healing hand of the saint himself, as argued by Gary Vikan (2003). Vikan has mapped miraculous tales from the *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* onto souvenir tokens of both the elder and younger saint in order to argue that they functioned through a tactile *contagion* of magical power, from token to pilgrim. This model appears to be based, either directly or indirectly, on James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1913), a work which famously constructed a dichotomy of magical and religious practices grounded in the author's ethnocentric bias, making colonialist assumptions

⁵ *The Life of Saint Simeon Stylites*, written by Theodoret of Cyrrhus during the saint's life; the *Life and Daily Mode of Living of Blessed Simeon the Stylite* by Antonius, of unknown date; and the anonymous *Syriac Life of Saint Simeon Stylites*, c. 473 CE. Hereafter these are collectively referred to as the *Lives*, and individually, respectively, as: Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon*; Antonius, *Life of Symeon*; and the *Syriac Life*. All are collected and translated in Doran 1992.

about cultural intelligence based on a notion of Western superiority, and in which Frazer argued that contagion was fundamental to magical principles.

Vikan's model is persuasive and has been influential in scholarship on the cults of both Symeon the Elder and Younger.⁶ However, its basis in Frazer's assumptions is problematic, particularly because this presents a one-directional transmission of supposedly misconceived "magical" power, which degrades in strength and clarity the further one is from the source, rather like a game of "whisper down the lane". The materiality of the token acts as a conduit which can transmit, in part, the healing power of the saint. Once that power reaches its object – the devotee – the power is transferred, but it can go no further; the devotee does not herself become a conduit or continue the process of contagion. The token itself is not inherently powerful, it is simply an intermediary for an act of touch, thus it cannot have any agency or material presence of its own. What is more, the contagion model implies that all tokens of Symeon the Elder and Younger were understood to have been touched by the saint's own hand (helped by the presence of the manufacturer's palm print, as in Fig. 1), but we cannot assume this was always the case, especially of tokens produced or circulated after the saint's death. Indeed, the miraculous healings carried out with



Fig. 1: Souvenir Token of Symeon Stylites the Elder. Left: Obverse. Right: Reverse (with manufacturer's palm print). Clay. 5th–6th c. CE. 23 x 18 x 8 mm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1980.48A. Photograph: The Author.

⁶ See, for example, Cox-Miller 2009, 128–129; 146–147, and Eastmond 1999, both of whom share Vikan's assumptions about tactile contagion.

the saint's dust (termed, in Syriac, his *hnana*, when mixed with liquid), or with oil or water in his *Lives* do not necessarily involve tactile contact with the hands of Symeon the Elder.⁷ The biographies inform us that he blesses materials (oil, water, and dust) in his vicinity with the sound of his divine voice (*Syriac Life* 38; 51, trans. Doran 1992, 123; 133), and instructs petitioners to take the dust or water and rub or pour it on themselves. In this typical example from the *Syriac Life*, Symeon deals with a boy possessed by demons by instructing him:

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, take some of the dust in front of you and rub it all over your body.” The boy took it in his hands and rubbed it all over his body. The saint ordered water to be brought and blessed it. The boy took it, drank some of it and poured it over his face. At that moment his reason returned . . .

(*Syriac Life* 89, trans. Doran 1992, 168)

In reality, the position of Symeon atop his column imposed tactile *distance* between saint and worshippers (perhaps even deliberately: Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* 12, trans. Doran 1992, 75). The sensory experiences of pilgrims in the saint's *Lives* focus on visual, auditory, and olfactory encounter, that is, the opportunity to see the saint, hear his spoken blessing, and smell his divine stench and fragrance (on which, see Harvey 2006). Direct tactile contact is usually missing, and there is no mention of the production of tokens by the saint atop his pillar. What seems instead to be the most important feature of the tokens is that they were made (or were believed to have been made) from dust from the locale of the saint and his column and enclosure. In this respect, the materiality of the objects themselves is important, and we must account for the agency which they were deemed to possess in effecting healing and miracles.

What I mean by the term “agency” is based on later theorists' development of Alfred Gell's work (1998; cf. Knappett 2005). Gell argued for the active role of objects in culture and human existence, such that our definition of what is animate and inanimate must be expanded beyond the binary limitations of Cartesian dualism (the body as a discrete entity, separate from the world). In this model, animacy necessarily includes not just that which is alive but also those things which enable life to take place. Thus, for example, drinking water keeps us alive and is therefore an integral part of the network of material things which constitute our animate existence as a whole; water is a component of any organism, not conceptually but materially. Equally, if I am to take a glass,

⁷ As noted above, the stories Vikan 2003 uses to demonstrate this point come from the later *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger*.

fill it with water, and place it in front of me, that glass of water has come to be through my agency, my embodied action and presence in the world, and is therefore part of an extended network of my agency in the environment around me (an environment which, thusly, I have animated and which animates me). We might think of this in terms of the continued sense of a deceased person's presence in the place they once lived, through the things which they have "lived through," or animated (as was the case with the cult of Symeon). Thus, human agency is not limited by the confines of our skin, instead it extends into the environments that we inhabit. In this sense, through our agency we animate the material world around us.

Developing this, archaeological and anthropological theorists such as Knappett have expanded Gell's anthropocentric model by highlighting the active role that things can play in constructing our existence (e.g. Knappett 2005; Knappett and Malafouris 2008). Animacy is constituted through the interactivity of people and things. This conjoins participants in a material network that constitutes an environment, through which their agency is distributed. None of these processes or products are located exclusively in the human body. We can take this further by applying it to understandings of selfhood. Lambros Malafouris (2008a) has argued against the anachronistic retrojection of Cartesian models of self onto archaeological evidence. He notes that, for example, studies of the Homeric self (a model of self-hood which, unlike Cartesianism, pre-dates rather than post-dates Symeon) demonstrate that it fails to conform to modern expectations; the hand of the Homeric hero may cause events, but its agency is often divine. The Homeric body is not a container for a *homunculus*, it is connected with and distributed among things and its environment. In such a mindset things, bodies, and minds shape each other; the self incorporates its environment and extends beyond the skin. This extended self is not a representational concept but rather the practice of embodiment, and it finds support in cognitive science. The phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2002, 165–166), drawing on ancient, medieval, and enlightenment philosophy, explored the idea of the blind person's cane as an instrument through which she or he "sees"; the cane is, in effect, a component of her or his sensory system and self. This is supported by studies of humans and animals which demonstrate that tools are cognitively processed as extensions of the body; the area which can be reached at a distance with a stick is cognitively transformed from extrapersonal to peripersonal space (see e.g. Berti and Frassinetti 2000; Holmes et al. 2004). Malafouris (2008b) terms this "I-as-object"; for the ancient warrior, grasping his sword is an act of incorporation which creates a self-awareness that stretches through to the tip of his sword. Both cognitively and historically, objects can become parts of living bodies.

In this model, then, selfhood (which, when perceived from someone else's perspective, is personhood) is not necessarily located in a particular human body, but instead is distributed throughout the environment that it inhabits and the things with which it interacts. I suggest that such a model is promising in its potential to reveal the rationale behind the use of Symeon tokens, especially in cases where the saint's direct touch is absent (a problem which destabilizes the essentially Cartesian idea of contagion, in which the saint's body and his world are presumed to be fundamentally distinct, the latter impacting imperfectly on the former through the senses as purely communicative channels). It also promises to address another complication of Symeon's cult, specifically the popularity and success of Qal'at Sem'an as a site of pilgrimage in the complete absence of the saint's corpse. The monumentalization of the site of Symeon's asceticism has been seen as a form of imperial apology for the removal of the saint's bodily relics upon his death to Antioch (Schachner 2010, 358; Sodini 2010), yet it does not make sense to acknowledge so elaborately the *absence* of a saint. Indeed, evidence indicates that Qal'at Sem'an outlived the success of Symeon's bodily relics, which become lost from the literary records in the 7th century and of which no archaeological record survives, while pilgrimage to the column flourished until the 12th century.⁸ Instead, we must find a way to account for the perception of Symeon's material environment as *itself* a form of bodily relic. The column, in particular, was clearly understood to be a relic, it was the central focus of a monumental cruciform basilica, and was chipped away over centuries to make souvenirs. The contagion model for the power of the column and the mountain would see both as intermediaries for the saint's touch, and thus as necessarily inferior to the power of the saint's body itself. However, the equal and perhaps greater importance of Qal'at Sem'an in relation to Antioch as a site of pilgrimage for devotees of Symeon suggests that Late-Antique pilgrims thought differently.⁹

⁸ Eastmond 1999, 90–93. Wright 1970, 83, goes so far as to state: “the column [was] more truly [Symeon's] relic than any part of his physical person”.

⁹ “Certainly even today there are performed healings of all kinds . . . not only where his remains lie buried, but also at the monument to his valour and his continual combat . . . the great and famous column”, Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* (interpolation) 28, trans. Doran 1992, 84. Cf. Antonius, *Life of Symeon* 33, trans. Doran 1992, 100. Interestingly, the corpse was not isolated from another material means of Symeon's asceticism: “Beside the head lies *the iron collar*, to which, as the companion of its endurance, the famous body has imparted a share of its own divinely-bestowed honours; for not even in death has Symeon been deserted by the loving iron” (emphasis mine), Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13, trans. Walford 1846.

I would like, then, to explore the materiality of the cult of Symeon through the lens of agency theory, exploring in turn his iconography, souvenir dust tokens, and finally the site itself.

2 Symeon as column

The question of the power of Symeon's column has interested many scholars. Antony Eastmond (1999), for example, has asked why the column was so attractive to devotees, concluding that it functioned like an imperial column, symbolizing authority and power.¹⁰ However, this does not explain the inherent power of the column as a material object, indeed, while Eastmond cites an example of an imperial column attributed with magical power this post-dates the rise of stylitism, and we may infer an influence of latter to former, rather than vice versa, leaving the power of Symeon's column unexplained. David Frankfurter (1990) has argued that the pillar defined the stylite, and that pre-existing traditions of erecting holy images on pillars (*baetyl*) authenticated the new form of piety. While this could explain the acceptance of stylitism in Syria, again, the question remains: what was it that made Symeon's column inherently powerful, and how did it relate to the saint's body?

The *Syriac Life* refers to Symeon as “a firm pillar which arose in our generation” (130, trans. Doran 1992, 195). This conflation of saint and pillar is not purely metaphorical, for it was through the embodied and physical activity of *ascent* that Symeon “turned [many of the lost] from error to knowledge of the truth” (*Syriac Life* 3, 106, trans. Doran 1992, 105, 175). Indeed, all three of his *Lives* abound with references to ascent as the fundamental activity of Symeon's sainthood and divine truth. In Theodoret of Cyrrhus' version, Symeon seeks “the way up”, he desires always to stand upright, interpreting sinking to sit or lie down as evidence of weakness; he builds an enclosure so as not to hinder “the flight of the mind”; in prayer he stretches his hands out to heaven, and he exhorts his followers to “look up to heaven and take wing”.¹¹ Indeed, a great many of Symeon's miraculous healings, in all versions of his *Life*, cure

¹⁰ He assumes that Symeon's corpse was the more important relic (Eastmond 1999, 90–95), though, as indicated above, the evidence does not support this interpretation.

¹¹ Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* 6, 9, 10, 24, 25, trans. Doran 1992, 72, 73, 74, 82. According to a later interpolation “even after death he remained upright: his soul had gained heaven, but even so his body could not bear to fall”, 28, trans. Doran 1992, 83.

paralytics, whom he orders, successfully, to “rise up”,¹² while his enemies and detractors are frequently thrown to the ground or paralyzed (Antonius, *Life of Symeon* 14, trans. Doran 1992, 93; *Syriac Life* 17, 68, 88, trans. Doran 1992, 113, 149, 167). Antonius, author of the third of the *Lives*, likewise emphasizes Symeon’s practice of praying by “stretching out his hands towards heaven” (*Life of Symeon* 20, trans. Doran 1992, 96). Harvey (1988; 2006) has shown that the importance of incense in the *Syriac Life* is symbolically related to the ascent of the saint on his column.¹³ The divine instruction to ascend is a continuous theme in Symeon’s visions in the *Syriac Life*,¹⁴ and he frequently “lifted his eyes to heaven” (*Syriac Life* 56, 81, 120, trans. Doran 1992, 136, 162, 189), a gesture which was dictated in a vision and has the power to save those of his followers who mimic it.¹⁵ Symeon’s mission to ascend is also expressed by the church historian Evagrius Scholasticus:

This man, endeavouring to realise in the flesh the existence of the heavenly hosts, lifts himself above the concerns of earth, and, overpowering the downward tendency of man’s nature, is intent upon things above: placed between earth and heaven, he holds communion with God, and unites with the angels in praising him; from earth, offering his intercessions on behalf of men, and from heaven, drawing down upon them the divine favour.

(Ecclesiastical History 1.13, trans. Walford 1846)

The essence of Symeon’s sainthood lay within the pillar itself, as an instrument of ascent, and without it he would not have been so powerful. The pillar de-

12 Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* 16, trans. Doran 1992, 78; the upward motion is sometimes continued, for example by climbing a mountain: “on her own feet she walked up the high mountain”, *Syriac Life* 33, trans. Doran, 1992, 120. See also: *Syriac Life* 34–35, 38, 80, 81, 83, trans. Doran 1992, 121–123, 161–164.

13 For example, Symeon’s prayer: “let the sweet smell [of storax] ascend to God who is in heaven”, *Syriac Life* 2, trans. Doran 1992, 105; and at his shrine “perfumes and chosen spices rise up just as they rose up during his life-time”, *Syriac Life* 126, trans. Doran 1992, 193.

14 For example, the early vision which “led [Symeon] up the mountain and placed him on top of it”, *Syriac Life* 4, trans. Doran 1992, 105; and later “he saw a ladder placed on the earth with its top reaching heaven . . . A voice was heard calling . . . ‘Come, ascend’”, Symeon then does the same for those coming after him: *Syriac Life* 41, trans. Doran 1992, 125–126; his demons, meanwhile, attempt to topple him from his column: *Syriac Life* 93, trans. Doran 1992, 170, cf. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13.

15 By a man who “raised his hands heavenward and lifted his eyes upward”, *Syriac Life* 112, trans. Doran 1992, 181 – a gesture Symeon replicates at his death: *Syriac Life* 117, trans. Doran 1992, 187. See also *Syriac Life* 74, trans. Doran 1992, 154.

fined Symeon's identity both in name ("stylite"; pillar-dwelling; pillar saint) and practice.¹⁶

Harvey (1988) suggests that Symeon transcended and was transfigured on the pillar, reaching true personhood as a unity of divine and human qualities through his ascent in prayer. He synthesized the parts of his being through the perfect practice of prayer. Similarly, Almut-Barbara Renger and Alexandra Stellmacher (2010) have argued that Symeon's asceticism should be viewed not through a Cartesian lens as the struggle of the divine soul to overcome the material body, but as the exercise and acquisition of embodied knowledge. They argue that in climbing his column, Symeon practiced a means of experiencing the divine which was not accessible or even comprehensible through rational thought. In so doing, he showed the way to heaven, and both he and his biographers incited others to follow his lead through devotees' own bodily practice. This practice was ascent.¹⁷

It is interesting, then, that the iconographic evidence portrays an inability to separate saint and column.¹⁸ In a clay token in the Walters Museum, Baltimore (identified by the inscription of the saint's name), Symeon's head is modelled in the shape of an obelisk, by means of his tapering monastic hood (*koukoullion*) (Fig. 2). This shape is a common feature throughout the iconography of the stylite, expressing both the monumental shape of the pillar and the typical dress of the monk, which crowned the column (compare Figs. 3 and 4). His face is simplistic, identifying this figure as an ascetic saint through the long beard and wide-eyed, frontal stare which crosses the boundary between object and viewer, confronting them with his visual presence and reciprocal gaze. In its minimalist style, the image encapsulates the core aspects of Symeon's sainthood: his asceticism, and his column. These are the aspects which define him.

16 The qualification of Symeon as pillar-dwelling occurs at least as early as Evagrius Scholasticus (*Ecclesiastical History* 1.13), indicating that such epithets were an established part of the cult from the 5th century. Certainly, those imitators of Symeon (Daniel, Symeon the Younger, and the many others who ascended columns in the Late-Antique Levant – estimated by Schachner 2010 to be c. 27 by the 9th century in Syria alone) perceived ascent as the defining feature of their asceticism. On the terminology and definition of stylites, see Schachner 2010, 332–335.

17 See also Stang 2010 on Symeon's asceticism as a process of descent followed by ascent, which creates a meeting point between underworld, earth, and heaven. *Contra* Frankfurter 1990, and others, Stang reinstates Drijvers' (1978) argument that Symeon acts in *imitatio Christi* through his ascent of the column; hence the prevalence of Symeon's iconographic depiction as a cross stationed on top of a column.

18 On Symeon's iconography more generally, see especially: Lassus 1932; Elbern 1965; Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975; Sodini 1989.



Fig. 2: Souvenir Token with Symeon-as-column. Clay. 6th-7th c. CE, 2.9 x 2.2 x 1.2 cm. Walters Museum, Baltimore, 48.2666. Photograph: The Author.

A basalt relief from Syria makes similar pictorial choices, again emphasizing the beard, frontal stare, and modelling the saint's body as an obelisk, here with the full length of the column revealed beneath (Fig. 3). The process of ascent is emphasized by the figure of a monk with a censer climbing the ladder. In the act of climbing towards Symeon, he too is becoming column-like; with column-shaped body and pyramidal head, his incongruous arms and feet are the last visible sign that he remains human, for now, caught in a moment of transition from earth towards heaven. The act of etching such figures into solid rock further solidifies their stony, column-like qualities.

Most Late-Antique depictions of Symeon and his fellow stylite saints reflect a similar inability to detach ascetic from the means of asceticism, with columnar bodies and body-like columns a consistent feature. The obverse of the token in Fig. 4 utilizes the most common iconography of a stylite, with pyramidal, bearded head, frontal gaze, and arms holding an object (book or cross) in front of the torso, above a rectangular, fenced parapet on top of a tall, narrow column. As is typical of stylite tokens, the equal proportion of torso to column gives the impression of a standing figure, but on closer inspection we discover that the figure rests not on legs but on a pillar, blurring the edges of the saint's bodily boundaries. The column is a limb, holding the saint upright, and it is this conflation which encapsulates his divine qualities and identifies this figure as a stylite.



Fig. 3: Basalt Relief of Symeon Stylites the Elder. Syria. 5th-6th c. CE. 84.5 x 76 x 18.5cm. Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, SBM 9/63. Credit: © bpk / Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, SMB / Jürgen Liepe.

The graffito in Fig. 5 is typical of those found on walls in Syria's Dead Cities, the region in which Symeon's column was located.¹⁹ It, and others like it, abstractly embody the key features of a stylite saint. A tall column, represented by a line, draws the eye up towards a cruciform shape – the appearance of a body praying with its arms outstretched towards heaven, and a symbol of the revelation of divine presence and truth.²⁰ Some of the key

¹⁹ For further examples, see: Schachner 2010, 370–375; Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975. Similar designs are also found on glass bottles, so-called “stylite vessels”: Evans and Ratliff 2012, no. 62a-c; Sodini 1989, 32.

²⁰ Drijvers 1978 argued that Symeon was understood to act as *imitatio crucis*. Frankfurter 1990 disagreed, seeing the equation of stylite and crucifix as a later iconographic development, while Stang 2010 has recently reinvigorated the debate by demonstrating how all three of the *Lives* paint Symeon as *imitatio Christi* from the cult's very beginning.



Fig. 4: Souvenir token of Symeon Stylites the Elder. Clay. 5th-6th c. CE. 28 x 26 x 7 mm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1980.47. Photograph: The Author.



Fig. 5: Graffito from a stable in Dayr Bāshakūh (Jabal Barīshā), northern Syria. Drawing: The Author after Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 77.

features of Symeon's iconography are here stylized: the base of the column; its shaft; the parapet fence; and the tapering peak. Again, the line between body and column is not clearly drawn and it is unclear where one ends and

the other begins, or, indeed, where the act of asceticism ends and revelation of divine truth begins. The message here is that each equates to the other, and to sever that connection is to negate the divine presence and power which Symeon revealed to the world.

These are just a few examples of many other such representations, which extended beyond Syria. Indeed, Theodoret reports that during Symeon's lifetime, in Rome "portraits of him were set up on a column at the entrances of every shop to bring . . . protection and security" (*Life of Saint Symeon* 11, trans. Doran 1992, 75).²¹ The emphasis on the mode of display suggests that the portraits were ineffective without the columns, and both together created a powerful protective device at a liminal place – the threshold. Comparatively, throughout northern Syria anthropomorphic columns have been found inscribed on doorposts, walls, and columns of Late-Antique and Byzantine churches, stables, and houses. Indeed, the church at Qalb Loze is covered in architectural and inscribed colonettes, capped by cruciform figures (Peña et al. 1975, 190–192; Wright 1970, 98). Stylized graffiti, like that in Fig. 5, is prolific, but we also find further architectural *stelae*, as in Fig. 3, and reliefs of stylites inscribed on reliquaries, including examples where an incised column extends beneath the hole through which oil, sanctified by the relics inside, was emitted, again indicating an inability to separate body from column (Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, 179–202, fig. 31–53; reliquaries: fig. 47–49). In all these instances, which reflect not just the cult of Symeon the Elder but also those of his stylite successors, there is a concerted effort to convey the special power of a human-column hybrid.²² Indeed, this is so well-established that at times the saint is depicted as simply a head or face perched on top of a column, while at others he radiates or is transfigured into a cross atop the column, and sometimes he is reduced simply to his *koukoullion* as an upward-pointing triangle which caps the column, emphasizing the process of ascent once again.²³ To his devotees, the

²¹ Doran reads "*anastelosai*" for "*anastesai*" (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 82, col. 1473). There is also evidence of stylite graffiti in the Domitilla Catacomb in Rome, which parallels the hybrid iconography of northern Syria: Menze 2015, fig. 16.3.

²² Frankfurter (1990, 186), notes the strong iconographic tendency towards an "anthropoid pillar". See also Lassus 1947, 278–279, 286. Menze (2015, 218), notes the hybrid nature of body and column, but ascribes this to abstract symbolism and a desire for a "catchy picture" (224), failing to acknowledge the material qualities and context of these images, which are etched into the same stony material as the column itself (architectural columns and supports), thereby converting existing architecture into powerful manifestations of stylite power through a form of mimesis.

²³ Head: 6th century *stèle* from the Hama Museum, Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 32. Face: *stèle* in the Louvre, Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 33. As a cross: *stèle* from Djibrin, Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 36. Radiating a cross: relief from the

stylite was understood as a human-column, and the inscription of his image could even transform any ordinary architectural column into that of a stylite.

A frequent feature of stylite iconography, then, are shapes that depict ascent, particularly the pointed obelisk or triangular figure which transform a column into an upward pointing arrow. Like these designs, coils encourage the eye to follow their trajectory upwards, and they, too, feature in the saint's iconography, such as the famous silver votive plaque in the Louvre (BJ2180: Sodini 1989, fig. 19) on which a snake attempts to ascend Symeon's column, drawing the viewer's eye up and along its form towards Symeon at its peak. Serpents had a rich and multivalent religious significance in Antiquity, but perhaps for the creator or dedicator of this plaque the tales of coiling snakes in Symeon's *Lives* held a particular relevance.²⁴

The identity of the shapes on a set of Symeon tokens in the British Museum is debated, with both snakes and mandrake roots suggested (1973,0501.62–67: Camber 1981; Rahmani 1999). However, whatever these objects' precise identity is, they certainly act, like any coiling shape, to draw the eye heavenward, thus reinforcing the theme of ascent in the saint's cult. For pilgrims visiting the site, coiling or circling in crowds around the column was an important ritual. According to Antonius, at the saint's death Ardabur's troops "formed circles around his pillar", and birds "circled round the enclosure" (*Life of Symeon* 29, trans. Doran 1992, 98), and Evagrius Scholasticus describes men dancing around the column and circulating it (*perinostountes*) with their beasts of burden on the anniversary of the saint's death (*Ecclesiastical History* 1.14).²⁵ Coiling upwards, whether with eyes or whole bodies, appears to have been an important theme for pilgrims to Qal'at Sem'an. Like the monk in our basalt relief, the embodiment of ascent appears to have offered a path to salvation.

The visual assimilation of the saint's body and column illustrates the contemporary perception that the pillar was as much a part of Symeon's physical presence as his beard and staring eyes. In effect, it was an extension of his body, much like a limb. In the same way that Malafouris' warrior's self

North tower of Qalb Loze church, Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 41. Schematized triangle: *Stele* from Rasm el Nafel, Peña et al. 1975, fig. 39, cf. a glass amulet from Qal'at Sem'an, Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 45.

²⁴ Snakes often coil around Symeon and his followers, attempting to distract or inhibit them, but the saint exorcizes and uncoils them: *Syriac Life* 30; 90, trans. Doran 1992, 119; 168.

²⁵ Cf. a tale of Symeon's early asceticism which involved coiling a rope around himself until it became one with his flesh: Antonius *Life of Symeon* 5–8, trans. Doran 1992, 89; *Syriac Life* 21, trans. Doran 1992, 114.

extended to the tip of his sword, so Symeon's sainthood extended into the world through and as the tools of his ascent. For the saint's devotees, to appreciate his power and presence involved not only seeing his face, or hearing his voice, or smelling his divine scent, but it also involved craning one's neck and raising one's eyes heavenward, along and up the column, in order to do so. The iconography of the stylite reveals the perfect marriage of Symeon with his material surroundings, and the synthesis of body and soul which he achieved. He is the column and it is he, and the one without the other is a fragmentary relic of the embodied whole icon. Both body and column had the potential, then, to reveal the saint's agency, and his truth, in equal measure.²⁶

3 Pieces of the mountain, pieces of the saint

The souvenir tokens of Symeon were composed of his sacred dust, mixed with oil or water from his mountain to make *hnana*, clay, and then imprinted with the saint's image as a hybrid body-column before being left out to dry in the sun. As we have seen, throughout Symeon's *Lives* pilgrims are exhorted by the living saint to pour or smear the dust on themselves for healing or to sprinkle it on land or possessions for protection. It is also reportedly used at remote locations to invoke Symeon's protective presence and perform miracles, for example to prevent shipwreck at sea, or to ward off dangerous beasts from one's property (*Syriac Life* 71–72, trans. Doran 1992, 151–153). These stories reminded devotees that the dust acted as a means for Symeon's holy agency to be materialized away from his mountain; through *hnana*, Symeon's power was made manifest as if his whole living self were present.

With Cox-Miller (2009, 128) we might ask precisely from what Symeon's *hnana* was composed. She notes that in the *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* the presence and body of the younger Symeon is extended by means of his iconic tokens, though:

²⁶ This is supported by the ensuing practice of burying successive stylites near to their columns, or, in the case of Daniel, the corpse being left standing on top of the column, thereby continuing his ritual of ascent beyond death: Schachner 2010, 358; *Life of Daniel Stylites* 99, trans. Dawes 1948. For examples of stylite reliquaries, which emphasize the role of the column, see Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, fig. 47–49.

the dust has an ambiguous referent: is it some actual shedding from the saint's real body (an allusion, perhaps, to the creation of human beings from the dust of the earth in Genesis), or is it the dust from around the saint's column, rendered holy due to its contact with Symeon's body and to its use as image-bearing token? (Cox-Miller 2009, 128–129)²⁷

There are some problematic assumptions here, firstly that the dust is referential rather than a form of material presence; if the tokens are composed of dust from around the column they do not simply signify that dust at some cognitive remove, they *are* that very dust. Secondly, in contradiction to the observation that Symeon's body is extended, the conjunction "or" imposes a Cartesian model of self in which the saint's body is distinct from his environment; the dust is *either* shed from the body *or* it comes from the ground, empowered through a contagion of touch, and this, as we have seen, is not axiomatic. Thirdly, even if "the dust of the earth" is understood to be flesh, or flesh-like, this does not explain why this very dust constitutes the flesh of this very saint; why is *this* earth a part of Symeon? Most helpful in illuminating this problem is the geochemical analysis of a set of Symeon tokens purportedly discovered at or near Qal'at Sem'an, which concludes that the soil of the tokens matches that of the site (Gerard et al. 1997). Symeon's *hnana* was indeed composed from the soil of his mountain.

The earth and water of the mountain from which these tokens were made were part of the environment Symeon inhabited, and, like the column, the mountain itself by means of its height enabled Symeon to enact ascension. Like the column, the mountain was a constituent part of the extended network of Symeon's agency, indeed a constituent part of his sainthood. He revealed divine truth by climbing on top of this very mound of earth, and pilgrims could access the saint's presence within its matter. On the face of his tokens, that is, on their highest points when laid flat, Symeon is imprinted as a column, just as he inhabited the top of the mountain. The token as a whole was a miniature icon of the whole saint, embodying the constituent parts of his personhood: his body and column, as an imprinted image; and the mountain itself, in the very material substance of the token. In this way, the saint was present in this object, as the components of his agency fused with each other and with the wider material network of Symeon's presence on earth. The sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch of the distributed saint were all accessible to devotees through these

²⁷ Steiner 2011 has developed the former suggestion by noting that God created the flesh of Adam from earth and water (clay), thus a concoction of earth and water may have been understood to be flesh. One notes, though, the absence of breath in the tokens' creation, perhaps the most important force of animation in Genesis.

tiny souvenir objects.²⁸ The pilgrim viewed Symeon atop his column, heard the sounds of his name or blessing whenever the inscribed words on the tokens were read aloud, and smelled, touched, and even tasted his ascent in the earthy substance of his mountain. Through their sensory engagement with the object, devotees' bodies re-vivified and re-animated Symeon's presence and truth, ensuring its infinite refraction in the community of the faithful as the reach of a miraculous person extended well beyond the confines of the human body.

The palm prints on many of the surviving tokens (Fig. 1), as highlighted by Vikan (2010), can also be understood to relate to the saint's body. However, this is not a process of contagion, involving diminishing power from the very hand of the original saint, rather we can understand these to be imprints in the same way as the image of the saint is an imprint of the original and the saint himself was an imprint of Christ and divine truth. Divine truth is infinite and cannot diminish in power, thus every imprint is a direct replica, equal in power to the original (see further Hunter-Crawley 2012; Hunter-Crawley 2013). The tokens both replicated and manifested the power of the saint.

4 Ascending the mountain, embodying the saint

Finally, I would like to consider the site of Symeon's asceticism more broadly. I have previously explored at length the role of the layout of the pilgrimage site at Qal'at Sem'an in focusing pilgrims' attention on the embodied process and experience of ascent (Hunter-Crawley 2017). The monumentalization of the site conspicuously encourages pilgrims to "rise up", and to "raise their eyes towards heaven", as the saint instructed in his *Lives*, versions of which would have been read aloud at the site on his saint's day.

The cruciform basilica around the complex (Fig. 6), and perhaps also the column itself, would have been visible from approaching roads for miles around (see Schachner 2010, fig. 15). However, during their ascent of the mountain, the sightlines of the pilgrim were focused and channeled such that the column was not fully revealed until one was directly in front of it. As the pilgrim began to ascend the mountain from the village of Dayr Sem'an at its base, buildings lined the path, enclosing their view, so that the focus was on the climb and not on the surrounding countryside. At the onset of their climb, and

²⁸ On tasting and eating the tokens, see Vikan 2003. Many tokens (including that in Fig. 4) show signs of being scraped by pilgrims to release some of their dust, presumably for curative purposes in the manner of *hnana* in the saint's biographies, see Pentcheva 2010, 38; Rahmani 1999.



Fig. 6: Southern Entrance to Qal'at Sem'an, Main Basilica. Photograph: Dick Osseman.

just before the path took a sharp turn to the left, they encountered a triumphal arch, supported by and decorated with colonnettes (Fig. 7).

This architectural feature continued throughout the site, and it functioned to draw the eye up the miniature columns and across the sweeping arch, thus priming the pilgrim for the acts of upward vision which were required ahead, and which accompanied the physical climb. The arch also served to narrow the flow of traffic, which, if it was as heavy as Theodore suggests (*Life of Saint Symeon* 11–12, trans. Doran 1992, 74–75), would have slowed progress and increased pilgrims' waiting time and sense of anticipation, while offering plenty of opportunity to view the arch itself.²⁹

The climb continued to be enclosed along the *via sacra*, reaching a series of monumentalized gateways, also decorated with colonnettes, which opened onto a sequence of walled terraces sloping uphill (Sodini and Biscop 2011, 19–26). After passing through these (slowly, in heavy traffic), the pilgrim crossed to the church enclosing the column, reaching the fourfold door in its southern basilica (Fig. 6).

²⁹ Hunter-Crawley 2017, 197. Yasin 2017, 170, and Sodini and Biscop 2011, 21, suggest pilgrims were formally registered here.



Fig. 7: Triumphal Arch, Dayr Sem'an processional way (base of Symeon's mountain).
 Photograph: Ann-Marie Yasin.

Again, the choice of a series of arches supported by colonettes here foreshadowed Symeon's column and encouraged the pilgrim's upward gaze.³⁰ The arches are perhaps not coincidentally capped with triangular pediments, similar to Symeon's pointed hood (*koukoullion*), further drawing the eye upward. Climbing the steps and passing through the dim basilica, eventually pilgrims reached the central, octagonal atrium, where the direct, unmediated presence of the column was finally revealed, and they could at last crane their necks to raise their eyes up towards its peak in the open-air above. The pilgrim had mimicked and re-embodied the very activity of the stylite, within the environment that he himself had inhabited, and ascended the mountain, towards heaven.

³⁰ Colonettes are frequently found as decorative features in churches and martyria of northern Syria during this period. The use of colonettes at Qalb Loze church has been identified as an explicit reference to stylitism, see Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, 190–192. Votive inscriptions of stylite columns are also commonly found: Peña, Castellana and Fernández 1975, 182–202.

5 Paths to salvation: the practice of mimesis, and soul-body synthesis

The cruciform basilica at Qal'at Sem'an radiates out to the four corners of the earth from the column in its central octagon. We might note, here, a parallel with the iconographic depiction of the stylite as cross atop a pillar (Fig. 5). The layout of the church reflects the shape of the stylite, with arms outstretched to heaven in prayer, and the iconography reflects both church and saint as the revelation of divine truth, extending out into the world. The presence of two baptisteries at the site indicates its importance as a place for baptism, offering opportunity for pilgrims to become immersed in yet more matter imbued with presence – the water of Symeon's mountain, which fell directly from heaven into cisterns (Sodini and Biscop 2011, 26; 33). The font of the southern baptistry sat beneath a canopy, supported by four columns, inside an octagonal tower, architecturally echoing the site's focal point, and likewise channeling the eye towards heaven (Sodini and Biscop 2011, 26–31).³¹ As was the case throughout Qal'at Sem'an and the material culture of Symeon's cult, mimesis with the stylite is here a key feature.

Symeon was understood as an imprint of divine truth, as were his tokens (Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* 12, trans. Doran 1992, 76). Like all saints and ascetics, Symeon, the living crucifix, was an imitation of Christ himself, who, as Theodoret reminds us, said: “He who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater than these will he do” (Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* 17, trans. Doran 1992, 79; see also above note 20). Symeon revealed and refracted the infinite presence of God in this world, and through his embodied practice of ascent became, as Harvey (1988) has argued, a perfect synthesis of body and soul, heaven and earth.³² In this way, Symeon's asceticism was not, as Eastmond suggests (1999, 87), a rejection of the body and material world, it was about learning to

³¹ Late-Antique, northern Syrian baptisteries were usually comprised of a rectangular building and circular font. They frequently imitated the architecture of the church to which they were attached: Peña 1996, 95–101. At Qal'at Sem'an there is a concerted effort to create this same effect, but in that site's international, rather than local style of monumental architecture. While Roman baptistries were commonly octagonal, an octagonal atrium at the centre of a cruciform basilica was an architectural innovation necessitated by the peculiar circumstances of Symeon's new form of asceticism – stylitism. The parallelism between the two buildings would have been striking to contemporary visitors, the specific context obviating a link between the architecture and experiences of ascent. See Sodini and Biscop 2011, 26–31.

³² “Symeon, that angel upon earth, that citizen in the flesh of the heavenly Jerusalem”, Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13, trans. Walford 1846.

engage with and live in the world in a correct and virtuous way. In the life and cult of Symeon Stylites the Elder, as Renger and Stellmacher (2010) have argued, materiality and ritual practice offered a path to salvation. Pilgrims mimicked Symeon's mode of embodiment, learning it through the physical process of ascent at the very site, imbued with Symeon's agency and continued presence, at which he himself learned and revealed that truth. In this way, they became a mimesis of the saint, as he himself was of Christ, and they too could harmonize body and soul, and reach closer toward heaven.³³ By inhabiting that same environment as Symeon, and in a similar way, pilgrims even participated in and became components of the network of Symeon's agency, becoming conjoined with him, fellow pilgrims, and the presence of God on earth.

6 Conclusion

Symeon's sainthood was not limited to a human body, but rather operated as an extended network, the agency of which could be present in the things that he "lived through" and "with", and which collaborated in his practices of ascent. The column and dust of his holy mountain were a part of Symeon, much as his bones or hair, and continued to manifest his holy agency after his death. Qal'at Sem'an and its material culture did not honor the paradoxical absence of the saint, but rather acknowledged his inherent presence at the locale that he had inhabited for most of his bodily life. The saint lived on in things, and through their senses and embodied actions pilgrims could come to know and understand the divine truth that Symeon continued to reveal and refract into the world – that, as the body ascended upward, heaven could indeed be brought down to earth.

I hope to have shown that models of extended or distributed body and mind, selfhood, and agency can prove helpful in answering certain questions about the value and function of the material culture of Symeon's cult that have challenged previous scholarship. Nonetheless, this study also raises new questions about the Late-Antique cult of saints and relics more broadly. Theories of extended self and the peripheries of the body usually take the perspective of the self as a living being. However, in Symeon's cult we are dealing with a deceased individual who continued to live on through things, and who was perceived to do so by his

³³ Theodoret prays that "my own life may be brought into harmony": *Life of Saint Symeon* 28, trans. Doran 1992, 83. Antonius presents "control of the soul" as the main theme of Symeon's asceticism: *Life of Symeon* 2, trans. Doran 1992, 87. Symeon as mimesis of Christ: Antonius, *Life of Symeon* 13, trans. Doran 1992, 92; Theodoret, *Life of Saint Symeon* 12, trans. Doran 1992, 76.

followers, whether or not he ascribed to such ideas himself.³⁴ This is indicative of the contemporary mindset, one in which new conceptions of the self and definitions of life and death were being developed as Christian cultures evolved. In the evolution of the cult of saints and relics, in which Symeon's innovation played an influential role, Christian society was establishing ideas about the transmutability of the human body, such that it was able to transition between earth and heaven, in life and in death. The saintly, unbounded body helped Christians to make sense of new, challenging concepts of the divine, and offered a prototype of practice for others to follow. In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that stylitism flourished in Syria in the centuries following Symeon's death. The material culture of the cult of saints offered a testing ground for the collective exploration of new ideas about the body, and the remains which survive today testify to this activity. The ritualized maintenance of Symeon's column and mountain kept the saint alive through a collective act of memory-making, and this enabled his truth to live on in other human lives, thus perpetuating its refraction and the extension of his (living) presence. In this way, we might say that the embodied practice of Symeon's asceticism offered a prototype for the refraction of the divine through the human, spirit through matter, resulting in eternal life (the hope of many a Late-Antique Christian). It remains to be seen, then, whether the cults of other Late-Antique saints could be understood to have operated in a similar manner, with similar consequences.

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³⁴ Though in refusing to be parted from his column, we might say that Symeon did indeed treat it as a limb.

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Nicola Denzey Lewis

Food for the body, the body as food: Roman martyrs and the paradox of consumption

Abstract: Each year in Sicily, Sicilians commemorate the life and death of Saint Agatha, a young woman martyred in antiquity, by consuming small cakes in the shape of a female breast. How did such a curious practice – eating a specific food shaped like a female body part – come to commemorate a late antique martyrdom, and when? This paper considers the curious conflation of bodies – particularly martyrial bodies – and food in late antique Christian martyrial legends, and explores how gender and consumption work together in text and literature to produce a distinctive preoccupation with body parts, fluids, meat, milk, and bread – sometimes positive, sometimes negative, and occasionally meant to evoke disgust or even delight.

Each February 5th in the city of Catania, Sicilians commemorate their patron saint, Agatha. The heady mix of pious Catholic ritual – extravagant and deeply felt – and raucous street celebrations provides rich opportunities for considering “lived religion.” The festival is resolutely modern in many ways – it continues unabated in 21st century Italy – and yet, it centers around a young woman believed to have been martyred in 251 CE, linking modernity with antiquity. How a modern Italian community evokes the collective memory of their patron saint is a fascinating and huge topic, albeit one that I cannot fully explore here in a project dedicated to antiquity. Nevertheless, this contribution to LAR’s final meeting conference volume will focus on one particular element of this Catanian feast. During these festal days, in memory of Agatha’s sexual mutilation at the hands of her torturers, Sicilians bake and consume mimetic food: small cherry-topped iced cakes known as *minne di Sant’Agata* or, in Sicilian dialect, *minnuzzi di Sant’Ajta* – Saint Agatha’s little breasts.

Why do Catanians “eat” Agatha? How do they do so, and why? Historian Cristina Mazzoni, in her wonderful book on women, cooking, and religious behaviors, terms the *minne* “edible icons of sexual sadomasochism” whose white icing “highlights rather than covers the perversion they evoke” (Mazzoni 2005, 81). Is this not a curious way of commemorating a saint – to make her severed sexual

body part into a confection? As a historian, I too am captivated by the question of how a late antique narrative – composed and circulated in early monastic environments – came to be transformed into a massive civic festival, and how (in particular) the late antique narrative sexual torture of a young woman came to be performed by playfully consuming delicious cakes in the form of her severed breasts. How did we move from one to the other? And how ancient is this tradition? Did anything like it exist in late antiquity? Sadly, most connective threads to the past can no longer be discerned, so I can follow here only one into antiquity: the curious conflation of a Christian martyr’s body with food which, as it turns out, is not as strange or as rare as one might think.

1 The martyrial body

Much has been written recently on the phenomenon of early Christian martyrdom. Inspired largely by Michel Foucault, scholars of late antiquity in the 1990s made a “corporeal turn,” considering the body as a particularly rich site for cultural production and projection. Some focused on the bodies of the martyrs themselves, particularly on the social functions of the martyrial body and its potential for channeling collective memory, tightening social cohesion, and structuring secular and ecclesiastical authority (e.g. DeSoucey et al. 2008; Tilley 1991; Perkins 1994).¹ These studies share the conviction that martyrdom was a historical phenomenon and that by studying the psychology and physiology of torture in, for example, modern totalitarian regimes, we might come to understand what Christian martyrs endured in antiquity.

Another stream of scholarship, by contrast, considers the work that the largely fictive genre of Christian martyr literature has done in supporting the goals of nascent Christianity (e.g. Shaw 1996; Castelli, 2004; Moss 2012). This work is immensely useful and perceptive, allowing us new insights into a troubling phenomenon that many see as central to Christianity’s growth. A focus on the martyrial body is no less absent in these studies, but there has been more of a conscious attempt to read the body not as the lived experience of individual martyrs but as a carefully crafted object embedded within the deeply ideological worldview revealed in a certain strand of early Christian literature – as Stephanie Cobb puts it, “not a raw biological fact but a cultural construct” (Cobb 2016, 11).

¹ These works of scholarship on late antiquity are inspired primarily by Scarry 1985 and Glucklich 2001.

As such, we cannot theorize the martyrial body using comparanda from modernity, because that body can only be understood within the specific culture that “thinks” it.

Whatever its positionality, modern scholarship on the martyrial body has been key to reconceptualizing the sort of cultural work that the Christian body did in late antiquity. But how does this reconceptualization help us to make sense of eating Agatha’s breasts? Here, we must adopt a broad view that glosses over cultural specificities; I will return later to the issue of whether such a ritual might have existed in antiquity. For now, one might argue that food is another “tool” that serves to mark nationalism, religiosity, and cultural traditions – no less so than the body.² Both the body of the martyr and food itself accomplish similar cultural work. Both act to cohere society, acting as the locus or focal point of group identity. Food and the body of the martyr both possess significant social power. This much is true now; it is also fair, I think, to hypothesize that this was also true of antiquity. Understood broadly, then, it is perhaps unsurprising that food and the body sometimes come together in Christian martyr narratives, with their heavy emphasis on commemoration and in mobilizing a shared, group identity. In the case of Agatha, Catanian social identity involves both adopting Agatha as a patron saint and celebrating her feast days through the consumption of socially particular and characteristically Catanian foods. The specific food ingested – the breast cakes – are likely not an ancient tradition, but celebrating civic cultural identity through rituals involving food very likely is. Still: why do Sicilians associate food with the deaths and dismemberment of holy women?

June di Schino, in her fascinating article on the origins of the *minne di Sant’Agata*, notes that they originated within female religious orders of Palermo, which during the 14th and 15th century began to specialize in the *arte dolciaria*, the arts of confectionary (di Schino 1995; cf. Mazzoni 2005). Their specialties were clever artifice – from these kitchens first emerge marzipan fruits artfully crafted to resemble their real counterparts, still produced in Italian bakeries to this day – and also coyly seductive. Their introduction provoked minor scandal. Di Schino reproduces a passage from Prince Tomasi de Lampedusa’s bestseller *Il Gattopardo* (1950):

Don Fabrizio asked for some of these [breast cakes], which, as he held them in his plate, looked like a profane caricature of St. Agatha. ‘Why ever didn’t the Holy Office forbid these cakes when it had the chance? St. Agatha’s sliced-off breasts sold by convents, devoured at dances! Well, well!’
(di Schino 1995, 67)

² Beardsworth and Keil 1997; Counihan 1999; Davidson 1999; Douglas 1984; Farb and Armelagos 1980.

Agatha's breast cakes are not the only martyrially mimetic foods in modern Italy. Santa Lucia, purportedly a virgin who lived and died in the Diocletianic period, put out her own eyes so as not to tempt men with her beauty.³ In Christian iconography, Lucia is immediately recognizable from the small platter she carries holding her own eyeballs; she is commemorated in Italy with double swirled Santa Lucia buns with raisins in their centers that are meant to look like eyes. There is also a special Lucia gruel offered up only on her feast day, made sweet with candied fruit and soaked barley grains that evoke tiny clenched-shut eyes. Some Sicilian shops even offer Lucia meatball sandwiches, where an oversized meatball is stuffed into a sort of pita bread; cut in half along the center, this sandwich resembles a giant, oozing eyeball. These foods are grotesque; at the same time, they are playful.

Robin Darling Young calls women saints' festivals in late antiquity "rituals of exaltation" (Young 2014, 125). By the modern era, they had become rituals of consumption, transmuting the sacrificial flesh of young women into meatballs or buns or cakes joyfully consumed as part of civic festivals. Agatha breast cakes *are* Agatha; being made once a year, they mark time – the day that Agatha was killed – and they make up civic identity and celebration: "this is what we Catanians do, here in Catania." It could be thought of as macabre, but human flesh transmutes in Sicily into sugar icing and candy cherry nipples, and who can be faulted for enjoying the spoils of the ancient executioner, of performing her dismemberment on a dessert plate?

I doubt these traditions of corporeally mimetic foods in the public domain, so to speak, would have developed without the hagiographic elaborations and imaginative horizons of late antique male clerics and, before them, the anonymous Christian writers of martyrologies that focused heavily on descriptions of the body that emphasized its carnality. Although the martyrs rarely felt pain, readers are treated to extensive, extended descriptions of the tortured body. In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* – arguably the earliest text of the genre – we learn, for instance, that the bodies of Christians were flayed until their sinews and veins were visible (2.2). The later martyrologies produced in abundance between the 5th and the 15th centuries are no less stinting in their description of bodies flayed, torn, split, chopped up, dragged, chewed by wild animals, drowned, and burned. For female martyrs, sexual torture was commonplace, at least in terms of

³ The detail of Lucia's blindness appears no earlier than the 16th century; variants of the legends exist, with either Lucia blinding herself, or her eyes being gouged out as part of the tortures that lead to her death.

disfiguring faces and cutting off breasts – virgin martyrs are always left virginal – until these snuff stories come to a crashing crescendo in tales such as that of the Italian saint Cristina of Bolsena, who is burned on a pyre, tortured with snakes, drowned in a lake with a millstone around her neck, flogged, boiled in a cauldron, and shot through with arrows. She also has her tongue and breasts severed.⁴ The textual history of her martyrology is typically complicated, as various texts were put together from the 5th to the 16th century without any attempt harmonize them, resulting in a grotesque multiplication of bodily terrors which the legendary Cristina was believed to have endured. Already with Cristina, however, we can witness a certain conceptual slippage of Cristina’s body into a foodstuff – she is boiled like food, and carved up like an animal. As it happens, this motif in martyr accounts was, by the first 5th century iterations of Cristina’s legend, already quite old.

2 Meat, milk, bread: ingesting the martyrial body

We might return, now, to late antiquity for a closer examination of the theme of ingesting the martyrial body. If Agatha’s breast cakes in modern day Catania strike us as bizarre, we might note that a curious feature of many early Christian and late antique martyrial accounts is the likening of the martyr’s body to food. In particular, we find three foods often invoked: meat, milk, and bread. Each of these three has a slightly different set of symbolic associations, so they are worth considering in isolation. In our oldest martyr literature, a martyr’s transformation into food can be positive or negative, depending on the degree of abstraction: a body turned to bread evokes a positive image, but into meat, something monstrous or bestial. Milk can be positive or negative. I will start with meat, perhaps the most basic and obvious of martyrial “foods.”

2.1 Meat

Close to the ritual process of sacrifice is the processing of a raw, live human body into cooked meat. A number of early martyr narratives pick up this theme. The church historian Eusebius claims to preserve a letter from the Christian communities at Lyon and Viennes in Gaul recounting the martyrdoms of four

⁴ Cristina’s sufferings are also cheerfully celebrated on her feast day (July 24th) in modern-day Bolsena, but she does not have any special food associated with her.

Christians: Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus. The transformation of these human bodies into cooked meat is nothing short of horrifying. The letter tells how, as a last form of torture, the martyrs were placed in an iron chair, “on which the roasting of their own bodies clothed them with its reek” (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.38, trans. Lake, 425). Sanctus, for instance, is pressed with red-hot copper plates on his groin that reduce him to a bruised, cooked piece of sexually undifferentiated meat. Not only does Sanctus lose his gender, he loses his human form altogether: “it was all one wound and bruise, wrenched and torn out of human shape” (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.23, trans. Lake, 417). Robbed of his human form and by extension, his humanity, Sanctus is reduced, at death, to a grotesque hunk of meat.

The same letter details the sufferings of Sanctus’s fellow Christian, Attalus:

And Attalus, when he was put on the iron chair and was being [burned] and the reek arose from his body, said to the crowd in Latin, ‘Lo! This which you are doing is to eat men, but we neither eat men nor do anything else wicked.’

(*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.52, trans. Lake, 431–433)

Attalus thus bitterly addresses the false charge that Christians practiced cannibalistic feasts, defiantly pointing out the irony: it is not the Christians but the pagan audience who are the cannibals – strikingly, smelling the aroma of the martyr’s roasted flesh is equated with eating. As a last example, the most famous martyrological account of humans as roasted meat is, of course, the torture and execution of Lawrence of Rome. Placed on a hot grill, Lawrence musters a little humor, suggesting that he is fully cooked on one side, and that it is time to turn him over to cook his other side. Lawrence remains, to this day, the patron saints of cooks.

2.2 Milk

It would not be inaccurate to note that many of our martyrologies and hagiographies have a distinct preoccupation with breasts, breast milk, or milk. One of the most well-known martyr accounts, the 3rd century *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, is quite explicit about the female body and its capacity for producing milk. The young matron and heroine, Perpetua – imprisoned for refusing to give up her Christian identity – is anxious to be parted from her infant; when he is brought to her and she nurses him in prison, she feels a true sense of wellbeing – even that her prison has now been transformed, for her, into a palace (*M. Perpetua* 3). Later in the narrative, she wishes to wean the child so

that she might face the beasts; the process happens easily and even miraculously: the child weans and Perpetua suffers no pain of engorgement from her breasts (*M. Perpetua* 6). Meanwhile, Perpetua's slave Felicitas has just given birth when she is thrown to the animals; the crowd roars with the indecency of seeing her naked body fresh from giving birth, with her breasts leaking milk (*M. Perpetua* 20). Felicitas is taken off and clothed before being sent out again. These details are often given to support the argument that this text must be authentic, and particularly that Perpetua must indeed have written the prison diary, for only a woman might detail the post-partum body and concerns about it, including details such as worrying about painful engorgement of the breasts.

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* does not include language where the bodies of the martyrs are likened to food, although both Perpetua and Felicitas produce life-giving food that is, while important to their identities as women, unimportant to their identities as martyrs. Yet it is intriguing that in one of Perpetua's highly symbolic and significant dreams as she awaits execution, she travels to heaven and receives a sort of sweet milk curd that she tastes in her mouth (*M. Perpetua* 4). Milk, then, is a sort of divine food – produced by the female body, but also transcending it.

To return to Perpetua nursing her soon-to-be-orphaned child in prison, it is interesting that in the early 3rd century – thus, roughly contemporaneous with the setting of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* circa 203 CE – Tertullian speaks of the service of providing food to those Christians in prison awaiting martyrdom. They provide food for the body (*inter carnis alimenta*) while “our Lady Mother the Church” (*domina mater ecclesia*) provides spiritual food “from her bountiful breasts” (*de uberibus suis*) (*Ad Martyras* 1.1, trans. Thelwall, 693). Tertullian here initiates what would become a long history of envisioning the Church, or even Christ himself, as lactating to provide sustenance for Christians (Bynum 1994, 62–65; 269–276; Penniman 2017).

As much as we find positive imagery around lactating breasts, there is also a way in which milk shows up oddly in places where it should not. In numerous stories of the martyrdom of girls or women in martyr *acta*, their breasts are cut off. In some, they are handed their severed breasts and made to hold them on a platter, as if they were food. The Roman martyr Candida from the 6th century Syriac *Chronicle of Seert*, for example, has each breast cut off and is forced to hold them as she is paraded naked in front of a crowd to (unsuccessfully) humiliate her (Brock 1978, paragraph 13).

Before leaving the topic of milk as a body-food, some time must be spent on considering the abstraction of finding milk where there ought to be blood in martyrologies. Several Roman *passiones* feature accounts of female martyrs whose

breasts, when they are severed, spurt milk rather than blood (in particular, the *Martyrdom of Felicitas and her Seven Sons* and the Acts of Cristina of Bolsena). Still more bizarrely, in the account of the apostle Paul's beheading found in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul* we find that milk issues from his head wound rather than blood:

Then Paul stood with his face to the east, and lifting up his hands to heaven prayed at length; and after communing and prayer in Hebrew with the fathers he stretched out his neck without speaking further. But when the executioner (*speculator*) struck off his head, milk spurted upon the soldier's clothing. (*Acts of Paul* 11.5, trans. Schneemelcher, 262)

It is difficult to know what to make of this; in essence, the removal of the breasts of female martyrs renders their bodies male; but Paul's moment of beheading with the spurting of milk from his body renders him, perversely, female – just as medieval accounts of saints drinking the breast milk of Christ renders Jesus as female. Milk, therefore, is more than just the body as food: it is the medium by which a body might be transgendered – female to male, male to female. It also is a site for metaphorical processing of the body: the spurting or feeding of milk is seen as a spiritual, not a literal act, of nourishing the soul – but only when it is not done according to normative biological processes.

2.3 Bread

In theory our oldest Christian martyr account, the 2nd century *Martyrdom of Polycarp* tells the heart-rending story of the elderly bishop Polycarp, arrested in his house and eventually burned in an oven for being a Christian.⁵ Perhaps the most remarkable (not to mention miraculous) element of this story is the transformation of Polycarp's body into food:

Now when he had uttered his Amen and finished his prayer, the men in charge of the fire lit it, and a great flame blazed up and we, to whom it was given to see, saw a marvel. And we have been preserved to report to others what befell. For the fire made the likeness of a room, like the sail of a vessel filled with wind, and surrounded the body of the martyr as with a wall, and he was within it not as burning flesh, but as bread that is being baked. (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 15, trans. Lake, 333)

⁵ I completely agree with Candida Moss's argument (Moss 2013, 95–104) that the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is either a later (i.e. 3rd or 4th century) invention, or that an earlier account was heavily redacted in this period to produce the document we now possess.

Why is Polycarp's body turned into bread? Is the language here purely metaphorical? On the one hand, the author uses a simile here: the body is not bread, but it is like bread. On the other hand, this is no mere simile; this transformation is the content of the "marvel" which the author is compelled to relate. It is miraculous, and remarkable, and serves to mark Polycarp's body as specially holy.

Despite Polycarp's striking postmortem transformation, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is not the only early Christian martyr literature to preserve the idea that the martyrial body can, will, and should be transformed into bread. Ignatius of Antioch was fond enough of the image of Christ's body as sacramental bread that he sought this bodily transformation as a goal. As he is taken from his home in Smyrna to be martyred at Rome, Ignatius pens a series of letters to his fellow Christians. These letters are remarkable for the tremendous obstinacy with which Ignatius faces his fate; he requests that he not be rescued, for his goal is to meet his death fully prepared to suffer. In his *Letter to the Romans*, Ignatius writes,

Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread of Christ.

(Ignatius, *Letter to the Romans*, 4.1. trans. Lake, 231)

Interesting from an anthropological perspective in this passage is Ignatius's presentation of martyrdom as a process by which a body is transformed into food. Animals, rather than humans, grind wheat into flour, and this flour can be processed into bread. Ignatius then points to a curious metamorphosis: wishing to be "food for the wild beasts" – that is, meat – Ignatius re-signifies meat (simple or pure food) as bread (processed food).

In both the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and Ignatius's *Letter to the Romans*, the process of martyrdom is a sort of philosopher's stone by which human flesh can be transubstantiated into bread, a spiritually higher substance. From where did this idea arise? In the passion narratives, Jesus is never transformed into bread or food. In the Last Supper accounts, by contrast, Jesus "becomes" bread, but the process does not require martyrdom to be effected. Further, neither Polycarp nor Ignatius are meant to be ritually consumed after their transformation – the metamorphosis is an end unto itself. What remains only is the notion that bread is a superior substance to meat, and although ordinarily processed by human labor, the process of martyrdom has the power to process human flesh into divine bread.

3 Understanding the rhetorical function of bodies as food

Martyr narratives are carefully cultivated fictions, filled with literary tropes. The transformation of body into food is one such trope. Even, however, if we recognize these martyr accounts as literary constructions, we still might query why it is that the trope of bodies-as-food is powerful and common within the Catholic imagination.

I offer two different and diametrically opposed theories for why the trope of body-as-food is present in martyr narratives. Both these theories might even be simultaneously correct, because they address different presentations of the trope. The first theory is that the human body is presented as food (usually meat, sometimes milk) because it is meant to evoke shock and disgust. The second is that human body is presented as food (usually bread, sometimes meat or milk) because it is part of a “distancing mechanism” that mitigates the horror of martyrdom.

3.1 Humans as food: disgust

Martyr accounts in which the body is meat rather than bread is meant to evoke disgust. In these accounts of the martyrial body as meat, the martyrs’ flesh is grilled, roasted, boiled, and fried, surely evoking a strong visceral reaction from readers or listeners. What did listeners think of as they heard about Lawrence, grilled like a great piece of meat? Or what about the 5th century poet Prudentius’s *Peristephanon* 5, where the martyr Vincent is tortured by slow-roasting while being basted with a piece of fat left to drip slowly onto his skin? Whatever we might imagine the response to have been, treating people like foodstuffs continues throughout medieval martyr narratives. In the medieval *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, for example, Saint Barbara is boiled in oil like a fritter (*Golden Legend* 6, trans. Ellis, 43).

Who is imagined to be eating this food? Primarily, martyrs were meant to be meat for the wild beasts who were set on them in the amphitheater. Blandina is hung up to be food for the beasts (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.41). At the same time, a consistent theme of martyr-as-meat motif is that animals reject this human food – not because they are distasteful, but because unlike human beings, the animals recognize the inherent holiness of the martyrial body. Thus “not one of the animals touched” Blandina after she was exposed (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.41). Prudentius, too, writes that when Vincent’s body was presented to the

wild beasts, they did not touch it, for they no longer recognized it as food (*Peristephanon* 5).

If animals do not perceive the martyrs as meat, the insinuation within the literature is that, on some level, people *did* – even finding the smell of human meat appetizing. Disgust is at its most heightened, narratively, when there are insinuations or accusations of cannibalism in martyr literature. The palpable horror of treating human flesh as meat comes through clearly in the letters concerning the martyrs of Lyons and Viennes with Attalus’s accusation, as his flesh sears, that Romans were “eating men,” even though no eating was actually going on in this context (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.52). Tertullian, too, charges pagans with transitive cannibalism when they eat the meat of animals who fought and killed Christians in the amphitheater (Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 8–9, 50; *Ad nationes* 1.10). The taboo against cannibalism runs deep in human culture; it is one way in which we distinguish the “civilized” from the “uncivilized.” Still, disgust is also only part of the emotional response of the reader or listener to these accounts. Their recitation can provide a full synaesthetic experience for both individuals and a community as they re-imagine the scenes in their mind. But is all this horror too much to bear?

I will turn, at this point, to a relatively little-known late antique martyrology from the eastern *limes* of the late Roman Empire. In the *Martyrs of Najran*, a Christian woman named Ruhm, arrested, requests to be put to death as a martyr (Brock and Harvey 1987). Instead, Ruhm’s daughter and granddaughter are beheaded, and their blood is poured into Ruhm’s mouth. A mother forced to drink her own children’s blood – a forced cannibalism – is akin to the violation of rape, only even more horrifying in that it invokes other violent transgressions: murder, and eating not just human flesh but the flesh of one’s own progeny. This account moves us from disgust to its opposite: an emotional distancing from the body-as-food motif.

3.2 Humans as food: distance

Distancing from the horror of the text is a frequent element of martyr narratives, and is accomplished in a variety of ways. Most directly, martyrologies dwell on grotesque details of the body-as-meat, while, at the same time, emphasizing repeatedly that the martyr her- or himself feels no pain. This “anaesthesia of glory” was first noted by Caroline Walker Bynum (Bynum 1994), and then elaborated by L. Stephanie Cobb in her book *Divine Deliverance* (Cobb 2016). Our own empathic response to pain is therefore short-circuited by the texts’ insistence that despite their corporeal suffering, the martyrs themselves were unaware

of any pain. The martyrs' distancing from their own pain allows the reader to acquire a similar distance.

A second distancing mechanism is at work when we find martyrological gruesomeness so over-the-top that a natural response might be laughter (Cobb 2016, 83–92). Although most of our martyr narratives cannot be said to be funny, there are, nevertheless, moments when they can have a subversive humor. In the medieval martyrological legend of Cristina of Bolsena, her father's attempts to silence and control his defiant daughter result in an escalating battle of wills in which the father comes across as ridiculous as well as cruel; Cristina herself emerges as a virtual trickster for her ability to walk off, unscathed, from collapsing buildings, burning pyres, and attacks of venomous snakes. She even manages to sass back at her father after he cuts off her tongue in a futile effort to silence her (Tracy 2012, 43). Even Lawrence's famous retort to his torturers – "It is done . . . eat it up, try whether it is nicer raw or roasted" (Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 2.406-8 trans. Thomson, 133) – comes across, surely, as a witticism: "Laurence well-done or Laurence tartare?" (Cobb 2016, 84). Cobb also points out another episode in the Donatist martyr account of Maxima and Donatilla, where, after the women are flogged and set on beds of crushed shells, the proconsul offers them "*tatiba*," which appears to have been a kind of seasoning for meat. The women retort, "You are a buffoon [*fatuus*]. Do we not have our august God most high as our seasoning?" (Cobb 2016, 88). Not only does the reader see the absurdity and the wit, there is perhaps a deeper joke here in offering to season the women as if they were meat. Humor, therefore, can be a distancing mechanism even in a martyrology. Recognizing this in the ancient and medieval materials helps us to understand the way in which Agatha's breast cakes fit into Catholic ritual behavior in ways that point to popular reception of a martyrology on the register of playfulness rather than disrespect or impiety.

Finally, it is easy to see how the transformation of martyrs into food is itself a distancing device. All of the rank horror of burning a body at the level of pious narrative is redirected, distanced, and healed/fixed when Polycarp's body in the furnace is transformed into bread. These martyr accounts may invoke a response from a resistant reader – just as the martyr herself might focus the mind on other things so as not to suffer, the reader might be induced to recall the pleasant smell of baking bread or the taste of roasted meat or the sweetness of milk; presumably, the pleasure of these recollections re-focuses the mind away from the horror of the text.⁶

⁶ On the sweet smell of the martyrs as abstraction but also evocative of holiness, see Evans 2002.

All these distancing mechanisms – emphasis on impassibility, or humor, or complete corporeal abstraction – make sense both for understanding Agatha’s breast cakes in modern Catania and also the range of possible receptions of martyrologies in antiquity. They are not culturally specific, nor products of modern sensibilities. But were there other ways in which late antique Christians responded to the theme of the martyrial body as food which might be more foreign to us as modern interpreters? Let me return briefly to the *Martyrs of Najran*. After Ruhm is forced to drink her daughter’s and granddaughter’s blood, she is made to stand before the king. He asks her, cruelly, “How did your daughter’s blood taste to you?” Ruhm replies, “Like a pure spotless offering, that is what it tasted like in my mouth and in my soul” (*Martyrs of Najran* 26, trans. Brock and Harvey 114). The account focuses not just on the horror of the act, but on the king’s question, where he wants to know *how the body tastes, as if it were food*.

On one level, as I have noted, Ruhm drinking her offspring’s blood clearly disgusts and horrifies us. On another level, however, it was surely meant to evoke the Eucharist, as are those moments where martyrs such as Polycarp or Ignatius are likened (or liken themselves) to bread (Barrett 2013, 105; Harvey 2005, 158; Harvey 2006). The scholar of late antiquity Susan Ashbrook Harvey argues persuasively that the discourse of the senses, particularly around smelling and tasting, evoked both scriptural exegesis and liturgical practice, “incorporating individual experience into the shared ecclesial ritual experience of the worshipping community” (Harvey 2005; Barrett 2013, 107). Harvey theorizes that beyond our own (modern) human faculties of sense, in late antique literature there is also an emphasis on “spiritual senses.” In the *Martyrs of Najran*, the function of the “spiritual senses” is made explicit by Ruhm’s identification of her soul as the source of sensory information. The concept of the “spiritual senses” is useful for understanding not just why taste is important here, but why the martyr’s body tastes/smells not like human flesh but like delicious food. The power to taste and smell the martyrs is not corporeal, it is spiritual. While the body may mis-taste or mis-smell, the soul is more discerning, and can taste and smell properly. Through, then, the distancing mechanism that is created by bifurcating human sense experience into the (crass) physical and, on the other hand, the spiritual, images of violence in the *Martyrs of Najran* are transformed into “images of victory and sanctity” (Barrett 2013, 109).

4 Women, torture, bodies, food: moving toward a “lived religion” frame

Christian martyr stories were not made for casual reading; they were written and elaborated as part of the long process of Christianization, ultimately serving the function of marking out new days in the calendar to commemorate those who ended their lives as martyrs. The martyrial body was central to this Christianization of time, inasmuch as time itself came to be marked out through the tortured flesh of human beings. More often than not in late antique and early medieval martyrologies, these human beings were young girls. When the martyr in question was female, or possessed a female body, these martyrologies focused on sexual torture and mutilation of those organs and features that distinguish the female body; again and again, female martyrs have their breasts cut off, effectively neutering them, if not actually making their female bodies more male. Christian rituals of reading aloud martyr stories on the days dedicated to their memory thus embedded pornographic hagiography into civic celebration. But here is what I find fascinating: in so doing, the literary erotics of the female martyr’s torture is not only resisted, it is de-fused. How so? Embedded in civic identity and civic time, a reader or listener is redirected from the violent pornography of the text to different resistant readings of the text that play out in the lived experience of the saint’s festival. One of these resistant readings, I have argued here, involves food. The question remains, however, at what point in time did this happen?

It is certainly the case that, as of the 4th century, the cult of the saints in the Mediterranean basin involved feasts in commemoration of the martyrs. While this much is clear, whether or not food was likened to the martyrial body remains unknown. All indications are that the feasts involved traditional offerings to the martyrs that had been for centuries before Christianity offered to the ancestors: wine, oil, cakes or grain, and perhaps milk. An offhand comment that Jerome makes to his young friend Eustochium on the occasion of St. Peter’s feast in his *Letter* 31 – that on this day gifts of cherries and small cakes in the shape of doves – perhaps indicates that certain foods came to be associated with certain saints, but in this instance, there is nothing to connect these foods mimetically with the apostle Peter. Still, the commensality of the martyr feast and the lack of enthusiasm with which our late antique writers took up the subject with any degree of detail points to, I think, a potent trend in late antique lived Christianity to associate martyrs and food.

Is there a way in which we might theorize this relationship? In a fascinating article, David Frankfurter considers the model of “sacrifice” as a ritual

transformation of some substance from the mundane to an entirely sacred or divine realm (Frankfurter 2004). He details two ways of processing the human body through stages of marginalization and destruction. He writes,

In acts of asceticism and stories of martyrdom, human bodies were transformed into, on the one hand, supernatural mediators with certain heavenly status, and on the other, sacred residues for devotees in coming generations: i.e., relics and substances of ‘blessing’.
(Frankfurter 2004, 530)

In sacrifice, Frankfurter emphasizes, the body becomes a thing: material to be transformed (Frankfurter 2004, 511; cf. Graham, this volume; Hunter-Crawley this volume). He wonders, “How does one ‘process’ the body – imaginatively or through deliberate acts – to extract sacred material or else to obliterate what that body represents?” (Frankfurter 2004, 511).

In the case of the martyrial body as *food* rather than *thing*, the process of that imaginative conceptualization does something Frankfurter does not discuss: it transforms the violence done to the body while maintaining the sanctity of the originated subject itself. To put this differently, the processing of Agatha’s body into a breast-shaped cake annuls or transmogrifies the act of violence upon that body into a form more palatable for social cohesion. When Frankfurter asks, partly rhetorically, “How can a culture rationalize such a horrific act (as human sacrifice)?” he gives two answers: the body can either be rendered sacred, or completely obliterated (Frankfurter 2004, 511). But are these really the only two options? I argue here that they are not; the body can be transformed into something that is not sacred, precisely, but which fits into its own class: mimetic food eaten “in memory of” a martyr. We might therefore shift our attentions from the question of “what” such foods are, but under what circumstances they are produced, under what circumstances they are received, and under what circumstances they are consumed. Here, at the level of action or practice, the “lived religion” aspects of mimetic food begin to be revealed, along with a connection to antiquity.

Although Agatha’s cakes are a modern phenomenon, as June di Schino points out, they were produced by female “reputational entrepreneurs” (DeSoucey et al. 2008) within cloistered monasteries and convents (di Schino 1995). As “reputational entrepreneurs,” these religious women were able to meet a growing market trend for sumptuous foods while also capitalizing on an ostensibly pious focus on Christian martyrs which peaked, like the production of this confection, in the 19th century. What they accomplished may have been a clever marketing innovation, but the very practice of producing virgin cakes likely had very traditional roots. Such foods – Agatha’s breast cakes, as well as Santa Lucia’s eye-shaped buns – have parallels in anatomical votives, well attested in

Italy since the Etruscan period, as Emma-Jayne Graham has investigated elsewhere in this volume. In fact, both breasts and eyes votives were mass produced in antiquity, presumably available cheaply and easily, and were meant not for eating but for depositing, either as requests for healing or as thanks for healing received (Draycott and Graham 2016).

A second ancient parallel for breast cakes may be confections produced in ancient Rome as offerings to the gods, especially those associated with fertility. In the towns of Frascati and Albano, a version of this cookie called *mustaccioli* is still made, fashioned in the shape of a mythical female figure with three breasts. Local folklore asserts that this woman once nourished the people of Nemi, providing milk from two of her breasts and fine Frascati wine from the third. In southern Italy and Sicily, *mustaccioli* are rubbed against statues of the saints and placed on the altar as offerings (di Schino 1995, 69). The biscuit's two ingredients, flour and honey, are separately blessed before they are baked so as to repel the evil eye, blessed again right before baking, and blessed again at the altar (di Schino 1995, 69).

The purchase and consumption of *minne di Sant'Agata* is therefore evocative of an ancient practice of remembering, celebrating, and recollecting a saint in a way that has little to do with Eucharistic overtones or even commemorating martyrdom as a violent obliteration of the female body; in a "lived religion" frame, it links body with a tradition of practice in which the holy person's body is invoked and remembered while bypassing theological elaborations of sacramentalism. At the same time, there are clearly resonances with sacrifice, by which a consecrated thing is destroyed (Detienne and Vernant 1982). The Calabrian anthropologist Francesco Faeta observes that rather than being consumed by fire, these foods are destroyed by human agents, employing eye, hand, and mouth. He notes the sophisticated relationship in the production and consumption of martyrially mimetic foods to what he terms constructive and destructive memory (Faeta 1989). The saint is invoked, fashioned, ingested and then simultaneously embodied, remembered, and destroyed – then the cycle of commemoration begins again the next year. Finally, the fact that female monastic confectioners selected Agatha's severed breasts alludes perhaps not so much to the marked and distinctive focus on pornographic, sexual violence against women in male-authored Christian martyrologies, but to traditional practices of fertility rites on the local or "lived religion" register, wherein sexual body parts (di Schino 1995, 72 and Mazzoni 2005, 81, record confections in the shapes of breasts, vulvas, and phalli) or sexualized figures (such as three-breasted maidens) were consecrated, consumed, or both.

5 Saints' food in the hands of the people: martyrologies and lived religion

Traditions of popular consumption of saint's foods or saint-food enjoy a *longue durée*. Still today, popular Catholic food blogs suggest absurd foods to make and enjoy with the family in memory of a martyr: puffy marshmallow lambs representing Saint Agnes; cupcakes for St. Lawrence's day, decorated to look like grills, complete with little shish kebabs made of frosting that represent his body.⁷ This is play, not piety, and is the essence of "lived religion": spontaneous and improvised, taking things both seriously and really, not so very seriously. And perhaps there is an implicitly subversive quality to them: the Church possesses and controls access to the martyr's body through the recitation of the *passio* and, more to the point, by possession and control of the martyr's body in the form of relics, or what Frankfurter here terms "residue." Martyr food, by contrast, places ownership of the saint back in the hands of the people. Agatha's relics may be locked away in her church and inaccessible, but she can be invoked with every mouthful of pastry. In a similar manner, the performance of martyr accounts within an explicitly ecclesiastical setting instantiates the martyr fully within that setting, establishing a link to the past. But reading aloud a martyr text is not the only form of performance: baking, selling, and eating Agatha cakes instantiates Agatha too – but in a different way, with the performance directed by a very different set of people – no longer clerics or cloistered nuns, but now city bakers – yet targeted to the very same audience as the Church.

Cutting into one of Agatha's cakes with our forks, among a convivial crowd of Sicilians, finally, might remind us to think back on ancient Christian texts, to the curious phenomenon of martyrs likened to food. Is there, in this act, resonances of a hitherto unperceived ritual life for some early Christians? When, as they heard the stories of Polycarp and Ignatius, would they – in addition to gasping, crying, applauding, or other performative responses – have taken up and broken bread together? Can this then help us to think differently, and more expansively, about commensality beyond the Lord's Supper, to a register of human behaviors and responses – not always liturgical, but "lived" religion – deeply and richly textured, satisfying and fully experiential? After all, what could be more transformative and powerful than a communal meal, celebrated in memory of a saint or a savior and their pain, but nevertheless delicious?

⁷ Read more: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/to-grill-or-not-to-grill-commemorating-a-saints-martyrdom-47208967/#5uuDsRoJu7pPZsAS.99>

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**Section 3: Lived places:
from individual appropriation of space
to locational group-styles**

Valentino Gasparini

Introduction to Section 3

The concept of “religious agency” at the core of the present volume consists of a twofold kind of agency, on the one hand ascribing powers to “not unquestionably plausible supernatural agents” (ancestors, spirits, demons, gods),¹ on the other enlarging (or, occasionally, reducing) the human capacity to act and communicate with these non- or super-human addressees: “Depending on their plausibility or degree of acceptance, the claims implied in such communication will also modify the wider social environment and so the agency attributed to an audience.”²

This statement implies the basic assumption that religious agents act and communicate within complex spatio-temporal contexts.³ In Foucault’s words:

the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things (...) we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.⁴

Of course, the space in which religious agents are embedded is first of all the situational result of the entanglement of landscape (that is ecological/environmental features) and “things”.⁵ Within this space, religion can be instantiated through a virtually endless range of different media like gestures (e.g. prayers and sacrifices), objects (e.g. lamps and vessels), monuments (e.g. altars and sanctuaries), images (e.g. statues and paintings), and texts (e.g. inscribed stele and curse tablets).⁶ But space is, also and above all, social (i.e. cultural) space, a “network domain”.⁷

1 Rüpke 2015 and 2018, 24.

2 Albrecht et al. 2018, 571. See also Rüpke 2018, 24.

3 Albrecht et al. 2018, 572.

4 Foucault 1986, 23.

5 Hodder 2012.

6 Albrecht et al. 2018, 572–574.

7 White 2008, 7–9. Cf. also Eidinow 2011, esp. 15–18.

1 Space as social space

Thrown in multiple temporally evolving relational contexts,⁸ humans build their own personal perspectives through an intersubjective process of emergent events that require a continual negotiation between old and new, past and future.⁹ The simultaneous embeddedness of social agents within manifold temporalities and spacialities constantly changes their relationship to networks and represents the very first source of their creativity in interactive response to the problems posed by these changing historical contingencies.¹⁰ Indeed, individual social actors do not limit themselves to a mechanical employment of routines, but are constantly engaged in problematic episodes, choose among several plausible alternatives according to specific needs and aspirations, elaborate strategies of selection and modification (i.e. appropriation) of social schemas and patterns in the effort to locate “correctly where given experiences fit within them and thus keep social relationships working along established lines”,¹¹ and find out their own creative responses. Thus, agency is historically variable and the reproductive and/or transformative dimensions of actors’ agentic orientations can vary (increasing/decreasing), according to different factors, in different times and places.

Actors who are positioned in complex matrices of political, economic, and religious relations and differently structured networks (e.g. cities and metropolises) can develop greater capacities for creative and critical intervention, while a smaller availability of cultural resources (e.g. in countryside and outskirts) can inhibit actors’ ability to build new creative trajectories of action and revert the agentic action to more routinized (eventually local) patterns. Group-styles of religious gathering in cities can deeply differ from those taking place in non-urban contexts. The peculiar environmental conditions of life (let’s call it, in Paul Lichterman’s words, the “scenes”) strongly influence the “binds” of the local religious groups (that is the cultural “map’ of reference points – other groups, individuals, social categories – in relation to which the group draws its boundaries”), their “bonds” (that is the “set of assumptions about how the actors are obligated to each other in the setting”) and their “speech norms” (that is the set of “assumptions about what kinds of communication are appropriate in the setting”).¹²

⁸ Joas 1996, esp. 148–167.

⁹ Mead 1932, *passim*.

¹⁰ Among many others, see Lynch 1972; Gell 1992; Gosden 1994; Loizou 2000; Dyke and Bardon 2013.

¹¹ Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 980.

¹² Lichterman et al. 2017, 4.

This is precisely the topic of this third section. Through the magnifying lens of the archaeological and epigraphic materials, the four following contributions (specifically focusing on the 2nd-3rd centuries CE) deal with the relationship between actors (individuals as well as groups) and scenes in very different geographical contexts of the Roman Empire (north-western corner of the Iberian peninsula, Syria, Rome's *suburbium*), in very different topographic contexts (including both extra-urban and urban sacred places: rock sanctuaries, temples, catacombs), and involving a wide range of actors (shifting between local Iberian or Aramaic people, Roman senators, Christian and Jewish communities, and so on).

2 Rural religion

In rural contexts, the more than reasonable concerns related to the meteorological conditions played a crucial role and implied some degree of prediction, for example trying to adjust the agricultural calendar by using the available public *parapegmata*, or mitigating social harm and economic risk by means, for instance, of what is currently called “magic” (namely the consultation of seers, itinerant diviners and specialists of astro-meteorology). As shown by Antón Alvar Nuño, these strategies were just part of the available set of religious resources and were deemed by the local communities as particularly effective group-styles.¹³ The hierarchies of and the rituals performed by the religious specialists in the cities could differ from the countryside. In the context of a common rural *villa*, the absenteeism of the landowners (who spent, in particular during the late Republican period, good part of the year within their urban *familia*) could change the relationship between the various members of the rural *familia* to religious rites: in case of absence of the landowner, the *villicus* (a freedman or even a slave) could replace the *dominus*, who delegated to him his sacrificial tasks and related knowledge, something that was in principle interdicted in an urban context and which temporally undermined local social hierarchies and ritual praxis.

For sure *density* (and thus the change of the concept of proximity and neighborhood) was able to influence (on a qualitative as well as quantitative level) the media employed to diversify religious offers, memorialize them, stress group-styles, and consequently modify social and power relationships.

¹³ Alvar (forthcoming).

Evidently, monumentality was not a prerogative of cities, and local entrepreneurs could be equally ready to mobilize conspicuous sums of money, invest them in religious communication in rural settlements, and negotiate between urban models and local variables.

Rural religion did not mechanically reproduce urban rituals and religious hierarchies and the rural world was not a space of cultural and religious resilience against a very Romanized urbanity. Rural areas represented instead an arena for very situational processes of negotiation between, on the one hand, Roman administrative patterns (for example the so-called “*pagus-vicus* system”), related social configurations (for example the *villa* system based on the figures of a *dominus* and a *villicus*) and spaces, and, on the other hand, processes of social conformance to the very characteristics of a local specific rural environment, of adaptation to its peculiar habitus and religious customs (involving supernatural beings whose competences directly mirrored a specific geophysical environment). Borrowing Emiliano Urciuoli’s concept of “citification” (see below), I will call all this complex process “rurification”.

The first case study dealt with in this session (Valentino Gasparini, “Renewing the Past: Rufinus’ Appropriation of the Sacred Site of Panóias (Vila Real, Portugal)”) is set at the rock sanctuary of Panóias, not far from modern Vila Real de Trás-os-Montes, in northern Portugal. The article aims to show how individuals could engage themselves with a pre-existing rural sacred site by introducing a new cult, reshaping the local architectural configuration, creating new behavioral norms and fixing the memory of their personal religious innovations. The protagonist of this study, the senator G(aius) C(?) Calp(urnius) Rufinus lived between the late 2nd and mid-3rd century CE, selected for his personal act of devotion an eccentric (though maybe locally-famous) extra-urban sanctuary, whose granite outcrops naturally evoked a religiously-charged attractive force. Its innovation (the introduction of the cult of Isis and Serapis) was introduced, displayed and negotiated via specific micro-strategies including code-switching communication (see the bilingual use of Latin and Greek in one of the five related inscriptions), epiclesis (e.g. *hypsistos*) positioning his privileged addresses at the top of the local divine hierarchy, mystery features (viz. the Eleusinian allusion to Korê), infrastructures (a number of *lacus* and *laciculi* used for sacrifices), and behavioral instructions regulating in the future a correct ritual performance. This analysis is a good example of what can be conceptualized as “temporary sacralization” of space, that is when “a place is used for religious communication and subjected to specific interpretations, maybe even rules of behaviour for the duration of the communication”.¹⁴

14 Rüpke 2018, 26.

The second chapter of this session (Anna-Katharina Rieger, “This God is Your God, This God is My God: Local Identities at Sacralized Places in Roman Syria”) moves to Roman Syria, specifically exploring the Lebanon mountains, the Mount Hermon area and the Beqaa plain (Niha, Hosn Niha, Temnine el-Fouqa, el-Taht). Again, the interest of this article does not lie on urban or large sanctuaries, but rather on small-scale, local, and low-density sacralized contexts. The aim of the author is to analyze the local social constellation and its related political and economic dynamics (control of the water regime, agriculture, husbandry, etc.) in order to explore how people felt to belong to the local sacred places, how they built their spatial layout, and how this was conceived in relation to the architecture of other nearby sacred places. Through the analysis of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence, it is possible to detect the different strategies through which it was possible to build identity markers as locals (ethnically natives), communicating them to gods through toponymic epithets, sharing them with other members of their communities (families, associations, villages, etc.), but also creating boundaries from close neighbors and using gods to reinforce them.

3 Urban religion

Urban religion is a phenomenon pressing religious actors to adopt and adapt city features, to engage with the socio-spatial conditions of city life, including appropriating city-spaces, localizing or de-localizing religious practices, providing specific infrastructures in order to attract, collect and host large groups of people (theaters, for example), facilitating processes of “intellectualization” of religion, authorship, and, more generally, competition.¹⁵

Two case studies about these processes of “citification”¹⁶ are collected in this session. The third chapter (Rubina Raja, “Come and Dine With Us: Invitations to Ritual Dining as Part of Social Strategies in Sacred Spaces in Palmyra”) heads north in Roman Syria, and deals with the example of Palmyra. Here the focus is on the practice of sharing non-funerary banquets, analyzed through the study of banqueting tesserae. These tesserae were mainly in clay, mostly measuring few centimeters per side, in more than 1,100 different lots characterized by a wide range of different iconographies including religious symbols, deities, and Palmyrene priests (sometimes accompanied by inscriptions indicating their names) wearing their

¹⁵ Urciuoli (forthcoming). Cf. also Rüpke 2018, 28–32 and Urciuoli and Rüpke 2018, esp. 120–124.

¹⁶ Urciuoli (forthcoming).

typical hats and laying on *klinai* while consuming the ritual meal. A good part of these tesserae has been found in the banqueting hall of the sanctuary of Bel. Of course, these tesserae were used for a practical reason, that is as tokens to access the sacred meals periodically held in the local sanctuaries, but their significance goes far beyond their pragmatic use. The author suggests that their rich and very personalized iconography (possibly selected and commissioned by the priests themselves) could enable a negotiation between individuals and group-styles by providing the invited guests with specific vivid information concerning the sponsors of the events, their social status, the urban religious contexts within which the banquets were organized, and even the social norms which the guests were expected to adhere to.

The fourth and last chapter of the session (Barbara E. Borg, “Does Religion Matter? Life, Death, and Interaction in the Roman *suburbium*”) selects the 2nd–3rd centuries CE Roman *suburbium*, and specifically the sites of the *memoria* ‘*ad catacumbas*’ under the church of S. Sebastiano, and the Monteverde, Randanini, and Torlonia catacombs, in order to explore how the funerary realm of the Roman cemeteries was affected by the introduction of references to Christian and Jewish shared group-styles. Catacombs, originally built in imperial properties as independent (and heterogeneous, in terms of size and architecture) hypogea and mainly acquired by private benefactors, were actually used by mixed Christian and non-Christian groups of people (including imperial staff and élite military, or people tied by social links like “vocational associations or membership in a *familia*”), and not conceived as communal burial spaces for the very Christian community. A specific Christian habit, attested by chi-rho signs and references to Christ, can be identified only from the 4th century CE, when also Jewish communities started to leave (mostly Greek) epitaphs and images like the *menorah* or the *shofar* in (virtually) exclusively Jewish catacombs. The selected examples suggest that, if communal burial spaces in *columbaria* belonging to noble families or by groups sharing a common occupation (*collegia*) were quite common from the Augustan period up to the end of the 1st century CE, this custom comes back to be in use just at the turn of the 2nd to 3rd centuries, when it is possible to finally detect traces also of ethnic groupings by Jordanians, Pannonians and Pisidians. Only from this moment on is it possible to perceive the desire by groups of people to share common burials in order to strengthen their religious identity, including Christian and Jewish communities, which (despite the limited display of identity markers until the 4th century CE) probably started to tend to conceive themselves as ethnic groups too, or at least to use ethnic terms in order to build “a notion of an autonomous, disembedded *religious* identity”. Only from this moment on is there explicit evidence allowing to trace

efforts in activating and displaying a Christian identity in opposition to a Jewish and pagan one, that is to use a religious affiliation as a means of constructing an individual's identity.

4 From social space to lived places

Beyond the differences between rural and urban contexts, these four essays clearly show that, according to different times and different places, actors negotiated their relationship with other humans differently, used specific paraphernalia differently, experienced the divine differently (see the first section "Experiencing the religious"), in particular via bodily sensorial stimuli (see the second section "A 'thing' called body: Expressing religion bodily"), and built their communication with gods differently (see the fourth and last section "Switching the code"). This third part of the volume analyzes how individuals inscribed their religious experience and communication within shared spaces, modifying pre-established ritual patterns, introducing new conceptualizations (viz. sacralizations) of these spaces, elaborating micro-strategies in order to memorialize their religious acts through different media, negotiated these innovations with further individuals and crystallized smaller or larger groups gravitating around these places and sharing specific religious styles, later eventually socially reproduced and institutionalized as norms.

The main purpose of this section is going beyond the quite abstract concept of space by exploring unique places as "grounded in existential or lived consciousness".¹⁷

What space is depends on who is experiencing it and how. Spatial experience is not innocent and neutral, but invested with power relating to age, gender, social position and relationships with others. Because space is differentially understood and experienced it forms a contradictory and conflict-ridden medium through which individuals act and are acted upon. The experience of space is always shot through with temporalities, as spaces are always created, reproduced and transformed in relation to previously constructed spaces provided and established from the past. Spaces are intimately related to the formation of biographies and social relationships.¹⁸

Space is here conceived as constituted by contingencies of lived places¹⁹ and boundaries, shaping and being shaped by agentic behavior, as a performative

¹⁷ Tilley 1994, 15.

¹⁸ Tilley 1994, 11.

¹⁹ Lefebvre 1991, *passim*. Cf. Bergmann 2008.

act relationally arranged by living beings and “social goods”, and repetitively reproduced and changed in the everyday life’s flow of actions.²⁰

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Valentino Gasparini

Renewing the past: Rufinus' appropriation of the sacred site of Panóias (Vila Real, Portugal)

Abstract: The topic of “lived places” is here approached through the analysis of the rock sanctuary of Panóias (Assento de Valnogueiras, Vila Real de Trás-os-Montes), one of the most popular archaeological sites in Portugal. When the Roman senator Gaius C(?) Calpurnius Rufinus, between the late 2nd and the mid-3rd century CE, had to choose the most appropriate location for his intervention, he decided to build a shrine far away from an urban center, preferring Panóias' remote and numinous set of granite rocks, which had hosted cultic activities already in pre-Roman times. The senator, though promoting new ritual patterns linked with the cult of Isis and Serapis (namely the construction of, at least, a temple equipped with basins where sacrifices were performed), showed a strong interest in evoking the ancestry of the pre-existing religious practices and negotiating continuity with the new ones. The article explores the micro-strategies enacted by Rufinus in order to introduce his innovation, elevate Serapis over all the other gods, paint the new cult with specific Eleusinian mystery traits, regulate the related liturgy, and thus significantly negotiate and renew a salient ancestral activity.

When dealing with the topic of “lived places”, the issue raised by part of the subtitle of this section (viz. the individual appropriation of space) is absolutely crucial. This chapter focuses precisely on the topics of appropriation, bricolage, resacralization, and prolongation of memory through different media. My interest here lies in discussing micro-strategies for evoking the ancestry of local cultic practices, promoting new ritual patterns, negotiating continuity and change among

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them, and manipulating pre-existing sets of religious options. By analyzing the rock sanctuary of Panóias and discussing the personal engagement by the author of a series of five inscriptions carved in its area, I will try to shed some light on specific processes involved in the dismantling and rebuilding of memory.

Panóias (Assento de Valnogueiras, Vila Real de Trás-os-Montes), which has been a Portuguese National Monument since 1910 (Freitas et al. 2012–2013, 184 n. 1), is one of the most popular archaeological sites in Portugal. It lies at an altitude of 460 m above sea level in a mountainous region (85 km from the Atlantic coast) the characteristic feature of which are the ancient, smoothly-rounded granite outcrops (locally called “*fragas*”) of the early Palaeozoic era.

The area now corresponding to Trás-os-Montes (north-eastern Portugal) has been more or less continuously inhabited since the Palaeolithic age. Prior to the Roman period, it was occupied by a people we know as the Lusitanians. It was nominally conquered by Decimus Iunius Brutus (later nicknamed “Callaicus” or “Gallaecus”) in 137 BCE but the Roman occupation was consolidated only after Augustus’ Cantabrian Wars (29–19 BCE). The area was incorporated into the *conventus Bracaraugustanus* (prov. *Hispania Tarraconensis*) and placed under the direct control of the *municipium* of *Aquae Flaviae* (Chaves) after the Flavian municipalization in 75 CE.¹ Apart from the hot springs, Rome’s interest in the area lay in the extraction of metals: the rich gold mines of Três Minas and Jales lie only 20 km north of Panóias.²

During Late Antiquity, Panóias was listed under its Latin name of *Pannonias* in the *Parochiale Suevorum* (569 CE) as the center of a parish belonging to the Suevian diocese of Braga.³ It is also attested as the site of a mint in the mid-Visigothic period, during the reigns of Witteric (603–610 CE) and Sisebut (612–621 CE).⁴

1 A brief history of exploration at the site

In 1721, the King of Portugal, João V, ordered the Senate of Vila Real to send the Royal Academy of History in Lisbon a detailed report assembling the main

1 Cf. *CIL* II 2477 = 5616 (with Hübner’s commentary) = Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 418–426, n° 587.

2 Domergue 1990, 201; Tranoy 2004, 88; Martins 2010; Fonseca Sorribas 2012, 525.

3 I 1, 19. The codex “G” already testifies the variant *Panoias*. Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 24 n. 27.

4 Russell Cortez 1947, 66–73; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19 n. 1 and 23–25.

information concerning the local remains of historical note. This report survives under the name *Relação da Câmara*. A similar request was sent by the Academy to the local parish priests. Of these, António Rodrigues de Aguiar, priest of the church of S. Pedro de Valnogueiras at Panóias, provided a document entitled *Relação da Fr(e)guesia de S(ao) Pedro de Valnogueiras Con(cell) de Villa Real Arzebisado de Bragas Primaz das Hespanhas*, containing eight drawings and twenty pages of text.⁵ Some years later, in 1732, both reports were read by Jerónimo Contador de Argote, a member of the Academy. Although he never visited the site personally, he published excerpts from these documents, describing some of the carved and inscribed rocks and illustrating eleven of them in his plates. Unfortunately, these illustrations were very inaccurate neo-Classical re-drawings by Gabriel François Louis Debrie of the images already made for the *Relação da Câmara* (Contador de Argote 1732, I, 325–359).

Both Contador de Argote and, more than a century later, William Henry Giles Kingston attest to the former presence of numerous marble columns, capitals, and slabs at the site, most of which had already been moved to Vila Real as construction materials or re-used in the local church of S. Pedro.⁶ Apart from Kingston, we know of a few other travellers who visited and documented the ruins of Panóias during the 19th century, notably Alexandre Herculano and Gabriel Pereira (Herculano 1839a; 1839b; Pereira 1895). But by far the most important visitor came towards the end of the century (1888). José Leite de Vasconcellos, the pioneer of Portuguese archaeology and later founder of the National Museum of Archaeology in Lisbon, devoted several pages of his wide-ranging work to Panóias, incorporating material collected in an earlier report (*Apontamentos sobre monumentos antigos existentes em Panóias*) written in 1883 by João Henrique von Hafe, an engineer under contract to the Portuguese railways.⁷

It is only since the cleaning of the site in 1942 and the topographical survey of 1951 that Panóias has once again begun to attract the attention of historians, so that the relevant bibliography is now quite considerable.⁸ The land itself has

5 Bibl. Nac. Lisboa, inv. n.º 222. Cf. Russell Cortez 1947, 20 n. 1; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19, 29–31, 143–195 and 197–219; Alvar 2012, 139–140; Abreu 2016, 14–15.

6 Contador de Argote 1732, I, 326; Kingston 1845, II, 351. Cf. also Lambrino 1954, 117 and Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 221–229. See in particular Kingston 1845, II, 351: “The last tower (*sic*) was a short time ago destroyed to construct a belfry for the church, and the padre had placed a Corinthian capital on one side of the top of it.”

7 Vasconcellos 1895a; 1895b; 1897a; 1897b; 1897–1913, II, 187–188; III, 81, 301, 345–347, 465–474 (with indices and commentaries collected in Bácia 1982 and Garcia 1991).

8 Cardoso 1943; Russell Cortez 1947; Lambrino 1954; Alföldy 1995; 1997; Azevedo 1998; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999; Alföldy 2002; Tranoy 2004; Alvar 2012, 138–146; Freitas et al.

recently been acquired by the state (1993), fenced (1995), freed of some modern buildings, and equipped with a ticket office, a bookshop, and a small auditorium (2004) (Freitas et al. 2012–2013, 184–186; Abreu 2016, 16). Unfortunately, however, no proper archaeological excavation using modern techniques has yet been conducted at the site.

2 The archaeological remains

The Roman occupation of the site is demonstrated beyond doubt by the marble architectural elements mentioned by Contador de Argote and Kingston,⁹ as well as by the discovery in the area of several Imperial coins. Kingston says that he was presented by the local priest with a coin showing a gladiator on one face and the head of an Emperor on the other (Kingston 1845, II, 351). What still survives of the Roman presence is a series of basins and cavities of different shapes and dimensions directly hewn out of the granite outcrops (Fig. 1). These features are mainly concentrated on as many as ten rocks of very different size and include 1) small shallow circular hand-excavated cavities, for which I here adopt the French term “cupules”; 2) square or rectangular tanks or small cisterns; 3) various channels; and 4) flights of steps, which are probably part of a zigzag path leading across the rocks (Fig. 2).¹⁰

The surviving features on Rock III (Fig. 3) have made it clear that no less than three different phases of use must be distinguished. The earliest is characterized by the cutting of “cupules” connected by channels. To this phase belongs an incised frame bearing non-recoverable signs (probably geometric symbols). The second phase saw the cutting of an access-staircase and five tanks with bevelled edges that seem to have been furnished with lids or covers. During the third phase, a rectangular hall (4 x 4.50 m) was built directly onto the rock and held in place by rectangular dowels fitted into the stone (these slots are in fact the only surviving evidence of the existence of the building) and incorporating two of the basins from the first phase (Alföldy 1997, 220–223; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 48–57).

2012–2013; Sousa and Silva 2013; Sousa Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014; Pires et al. 2014; Abreu 2016; Redentor 2016; Schattner 2017, 363–365 and 376–377.

⁹ Some granite architectural elements are still visible, reused in the walls of the local modern buildings: cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 23 and 24, fig. 5.

¹⁰ The following brief description requires the reader to move repeatedly between the text and the related figures.

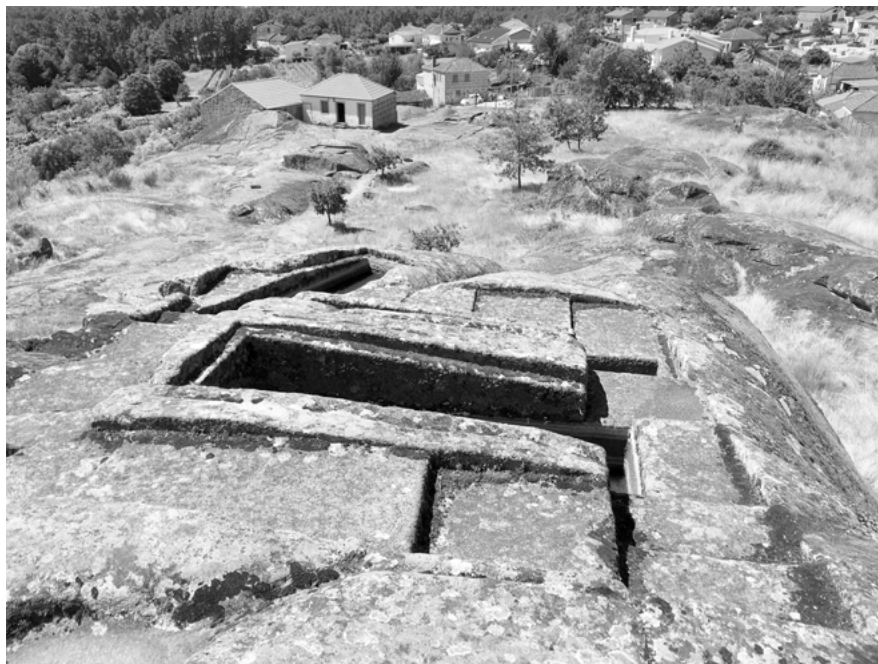


Fig. 1: The site of Panóias (photo V. Gasparini).

Another outcrop (also carved with a series of “cupules” linked by channels, then probably replaced or implemented by a small rectangular basin with bevelled edges, originally covered by a metal grid) led to the second monumental complex of Rock II (Fig. 4). Here again it has proved possible to detect three phases of construction or use: a first phase that is again characterized by small circular cavities (connected by a channel); a second phase with tanks with bevelled edges; and finally a third phase, with a monumental building (4.2 x 3.3 m) served by a staircase, a door, and three apparently anepigraphic frames (although we cannot exclude the possibility that texts were painted on these rather than inscribed). This building again incorporated two deep basins from an earlier phase (Alföldy 1997, 215–219; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 58–65).

Finally, Rock Ia (Fig. 5) presents an irregular horizontal terrace on which a third monumental building (5 x 4.5 m) was built, lying directly on the rock and stabilized by dowels. Inside it were five square or rectangular bevelled basins (0.60–0.68 m deep) with small notches for covers; a sixth tank is circular. Facing the building (at the side of a modern house, the construction of which probably destroyed other ancient remains), at least two altars were built on top

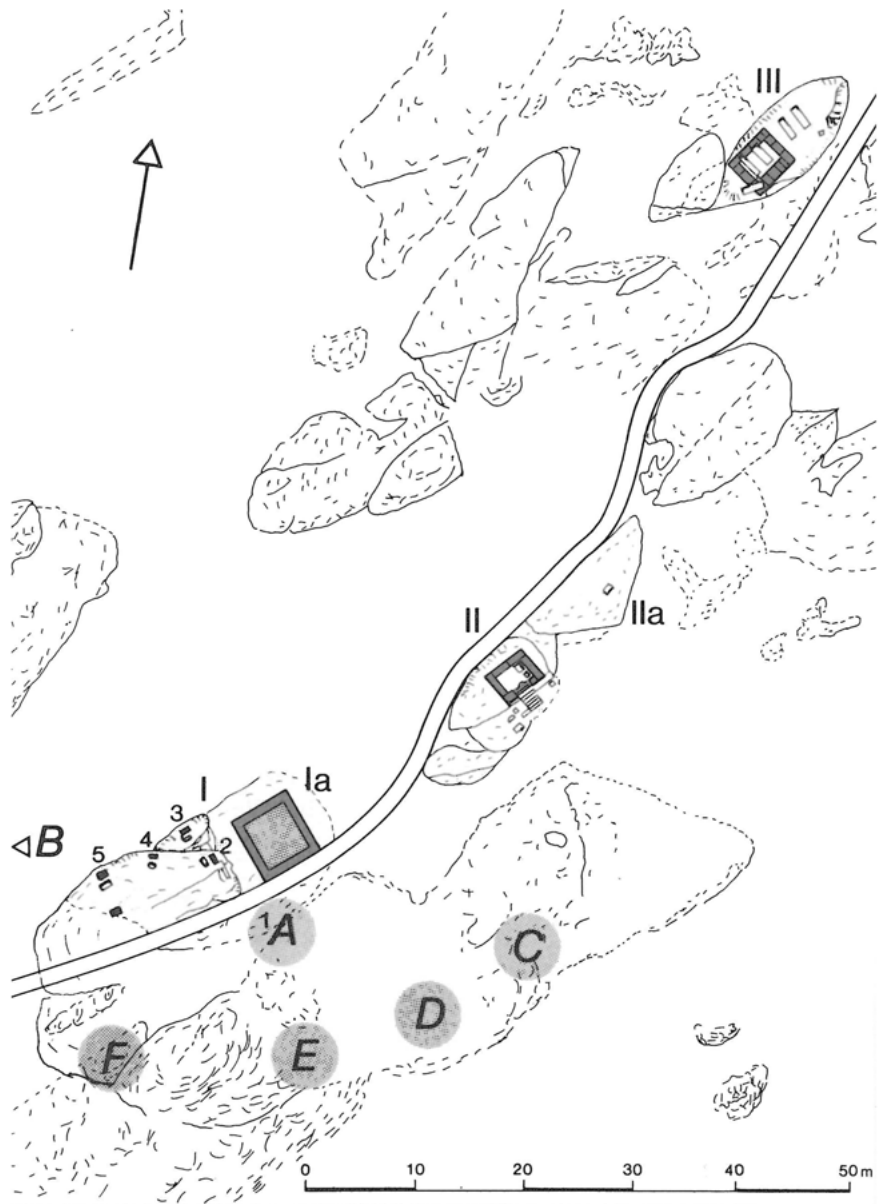


Fig. 2: Plan of the sanctuary of Panóias (after Alföldy 1997, 177, fig. 1).

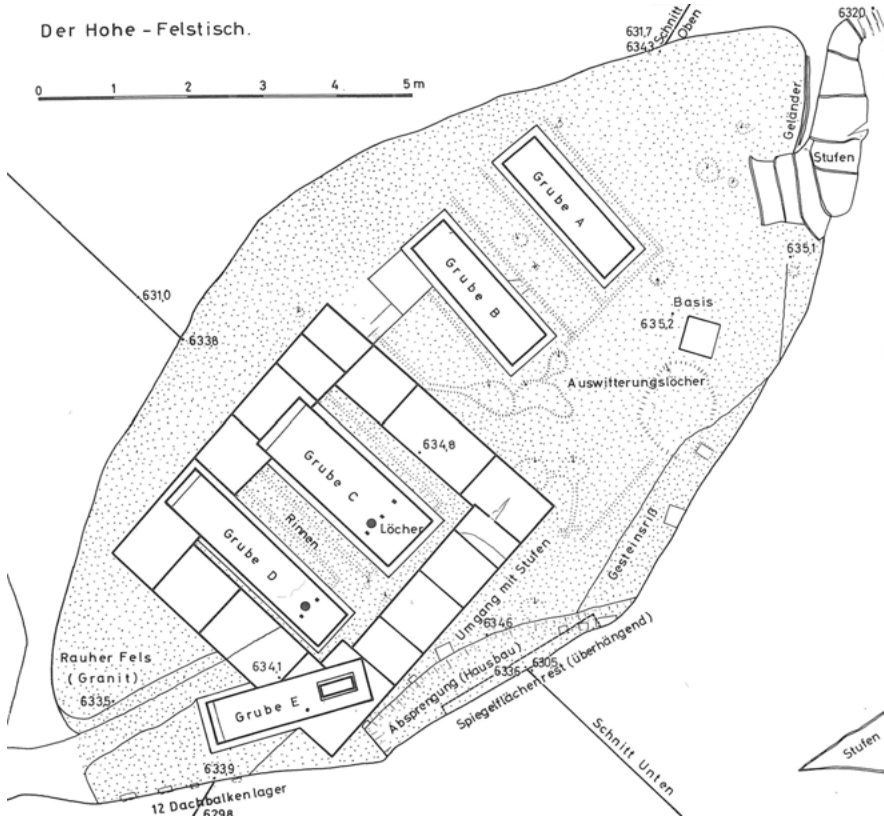


Fig. 3: Plan of the higher temple (III) (after Alföldy 1997, 220, fig. 11).

of rocks, with further traces of two staircases (one of them miniature) and small channels. Along the southern side of the ancient building was a further complex (Rocks I), in this case with three rectangular tanks and a circular one (all measuring 0.34–0.49 m deep). All four have bevelled edges, notches for metal lids or grids, and inscriptions (see below) (Alföldy 1997, 209–213; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 65–71).

These remains have, of course, inspired countless flights of fantasy. Many of these, including Francisco Fernandes Pereira's suggestion that the tanks were meant for storing precious minerals, can be dismissed out of hand. Pereira's hypothesis was clearly influenced by Roman mining activity in the region, which even prompted him to invent a pseudo-etymology of the name Panóias, which he derived from *Penas Auri*, i.e. "Golden Rocks" (Pereira 1836. Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19 n. 1, where he is cited under the erroneous name of

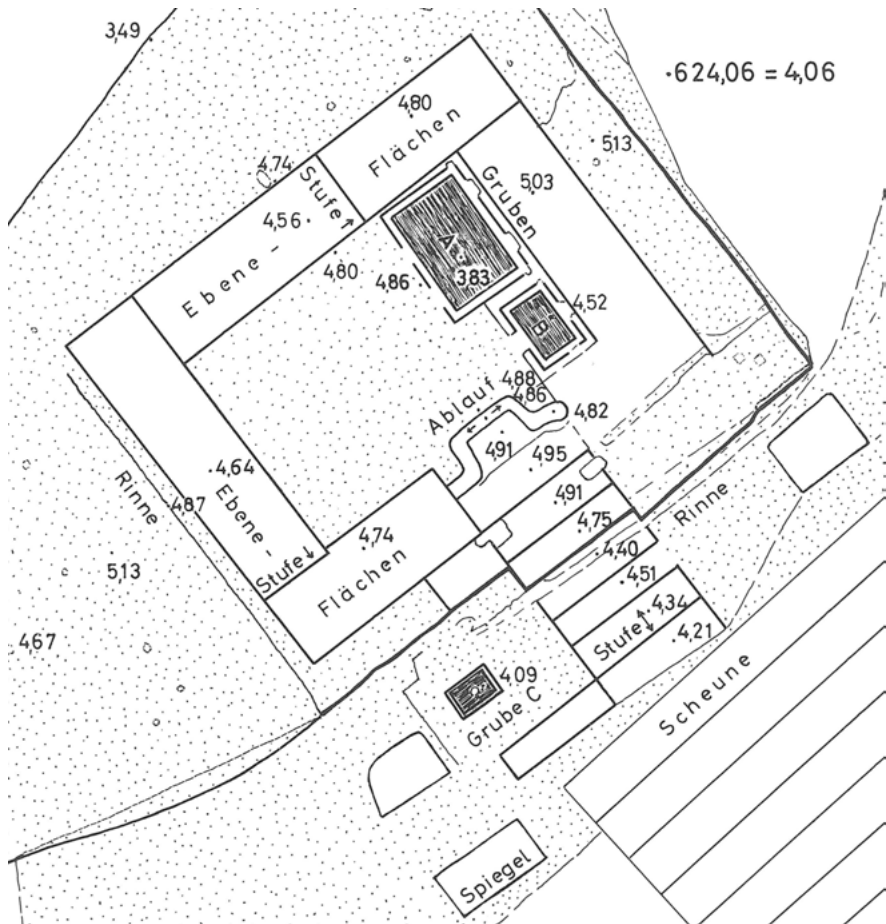


Fig. 4: Plan of the middle temple (II) (after Alföldy 1997, 218, fig. 9).

Ferreira). The priest who guided Kingston during his visit in 1845 referred to the discovery of skeletons in at least some of the basins, which of course suggested that the site was a sort of necropolis.¹¹ It is, however, certain that there was a Roman necropolis (and consequently a village or, at least, a *villa*) nearby, as is attested both by Rodrigues de Aguiar's *Relação*¹² and by the discovery of as

¹¹ Kingston 1845, II, 350–351. Cf. Lambrino 1954, 107; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 21.

¹² *Apud* Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19: *achãose tambem sepulturas antigas em pedras com modo de cabeça e hombros como em muitas partes hai.*

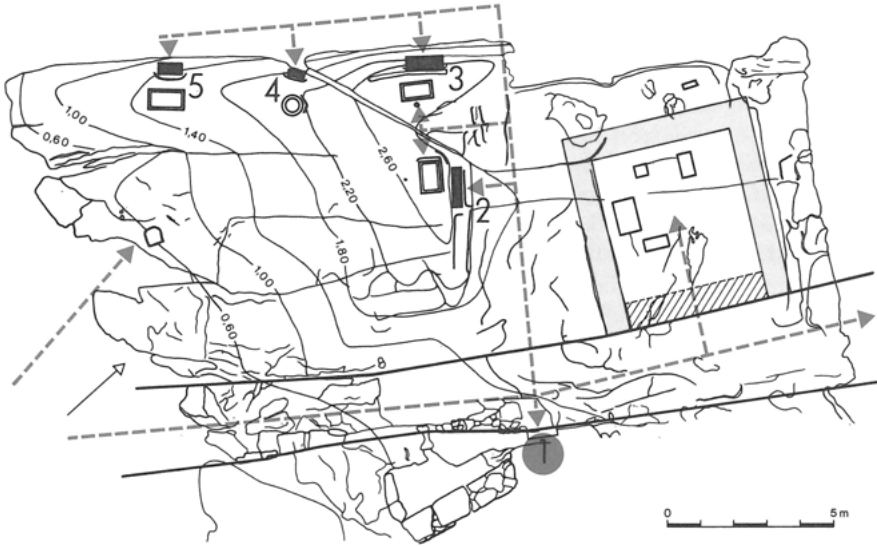


Fig. 5: Plans of the lower temple (Ia) with location of the inscriptions *CIL* II 2395a-d (after Alföldy 1997, 199, fig. 7).

many as six funerary granite steles inscribed in Latin and dating to the 2nd or 3rd century CE.¹³ Given this, we cannot, of course, exclude the possibility of late-antique or medieval re-use of the Roman cavities as tombs.¹⁴

13 1) *[D(iis)] M(anibus) s(acrum) / [F]lavio / Albino / Maxu/mina / [u]xor pi/[is]sima / [f(aciendum)] c(uravit)*. Cf. *CIL* II suppl. 5553; Cardoso 1943, 92; Russell Cortez 1947, 25; Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 261–262, n° 284; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 22. The deceased is probably the same person who had offered a dedication to the *Lares Viales* at *Bracara Augusta*, 70 km north-west of Panóias: *Larib(us) Viali/bus <F=I>l(avius) A[l]l/binus v(otum) / s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*. Cf. *CIL* II 2417.

2) *Trites M/ebdii (filius) h(ic) s(itus) / est. Taur/ocutius / Apoltae / f(ilius) f(aciendum) c(uravit) / d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia). / Aucalus / Hospites / Arcius et / Urtinus / p(osuerunt)*. Cf. *CIL* II suppl. 5556; Cardoso 1943, 95; Russell Cortez 1947, 25; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 22–23.

3) *[–]RI / [–]ONI / [–]S[–]*. Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 294, n° 370; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 22.

4) *Aureolae*. Cf. *CIL* II 2396a; Russell Cortez 1947, 26; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 21.

5) *Modestia*. Cf. *CIL* II 2396b; Russell Cortez 1947, 27.

6) *Millia stipib(us)*. Cf. *CIL* II 2396c; Russell Cortez 1947, 27; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 21.

14 Such reuse may have happened at the similar rock sanctuary of Pias dos Mouros (Argeriz, Valpaços), 40 km north of Panóias. Cf. Santos 2010a, 193–195; 2010b, 149–151.

3 The inscriptions

The crucial information regarding the site of Panóias is provided not by the rock-cut features, but by the epigraphy. As noted above, Rock I has four small basins, each of which carries an inscription. A fifth, which was recorded by Contador de Argote and von Hafe, but destroyed between 1883 and 1888, was located somewhere in the vicinity. The fact that all are seriously eroded has provoked numerous different readings over the last three centuries.¹⁵ Fortunately for my purposes, they have recently been analyzed by means of a new algorithm, the “Morphological Residual Model” (MRM) (Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014; Pires et al. 2014), which has greatly improved their legibility. In addition to showing that there are one or two probable misunderstandings by the authors of this last analysis (which have required further small modifications: see below), it is possible now to offer new, relatively reliable readings of the inscriptions:

- 1) *Diis [–] / huius hostiae quae ca/dunt hic immolantur, / exta intra quadrata / contra cremantur, / sanguis laciculis iuxta / superfu[ndi]tur.*¹⁶ Now lost.

To the gods (– and –), of which the sacrificed victims are immolated here, (their) internal organs are burnt into the square basins in the front, (their) blood is poured over the smaller basins next to them.

- 2) *Diis Serapidi Isidi, / diis deabus omni/bus lacum et [hanc?] / aedem G(aius) [C(–) C]alp(urnius) Ru/⁵finus v(ir) c(larissimus)* (Fig. 6).¹⁷ In situ.

Gaius C. Calpurnius Rufinus, *vir clarissimus*, (dedicated) the basin and (this?) temple to the gods Serapis (and) Isis, (and) to all the gods (and) goddesses.

¹⁵ According to Tranoy 2004, 92–93, it is possible that the inscriptions were re-inscribed in modern times (17th–18th century), because of their very poor degree of conservation.

¹⁶ *CIL* II 2395e = *Eph.Epigr.* IX 1913, p. 98. Cf. Contador de Argote 1732, I, 343; Vasconcellos 1897b and 1897–1913, III, 469; Russell Cortez 1947, 60–63; Lambrino 1954, 114–115, n° 5; García y Bellido 1956, 49–52; Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 62–63, n° 29; Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 174–175, n° 29; Alföldy 1997, 184–189; Búa Carballo 1999, 310; Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 178–179, n° 162; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 81–84; Alvar 2012, 140–141, n° 193; Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 204–205; Redentor 2016, 207.

¹⁷ *CIL* II 2395a. Cf. Contador de Argote 1732, I, 341–342; Kingston 1845, II, 350; Russell Cortez 1947, 64; Lambrino 1954, 111–113, n° 4; García y Bellido 1956, 47–48; Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 69–70, n° 33; Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 182–186, n° 33; Alföldy 1997, 189–192; Búa Carballo 1999, 310; Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 116, n° 86; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 84–85; Alvar 2012, 141–142, n° 194; Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 205–210; Redentor 2016, 205.



Fig. 6: Photograph, MRM model, and transcription of *CIL* II 2395a (after Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 206–208, figs. 3, 5 and 7).

- 3) *Diis deabusque ae/ternum lacum omni/busque numinibus / et Lapitearum cum / hoc templo sacrauit / G(aius) C(-) Calp(urnius) Rufinus v(ir) c(larissimus) / in quo hostiae voto / cremantur* (Fig. 7).¹⁸ In situ.

¹⁸ *CIL* II 2395b. Cf. Contador de Argote 1732, I, 345–346; Vasconcellos 1897–1913, III, 468; Russell Cortez 1947, 8 and 59–60; Lambrino 1954, 108–109, n° 1; García y Bellido 1956, 44–46; Gil Fernández 1985, 367–369; Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 63–65, n° 30, Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 176–177, n° 30; Alföldy 1997, 192–194; Búa Carballo 1999, 310; Rodríguez



DIIS·DEABVSQVEAE
 TERNVMLACVMOMNI
 BVS·QVENVMINIBVS·
 ET·LAPITEARVM·CVM
 HOC·TEMPLO·SACRAVIT
 G·C·CALP·RV·FIN·VS·V·C
 IN·QVO·HOSTIAE·VOTO
 CREMANTVR

Fig. 7: Photograph, MRM model, and transcription of *CIL* II 2395b (after Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 211–212, figs. 9 and 11; Alföldy 1997, 193, Abb. 4).

Gaius C. Calpurnius Rufinus, *vir clarissimus*, consecrated to the gods and the goddesses (this) eternal basin, where the victims are burnt according to a vow, together with this temple (dedicated) to all the deities, including those of the Lapiteae.

- 4) Ὑψίστῳ Σερά/πιδι σὺν καὶ Κό/ρα καὶ μυστα/ρίοις *G(aius) C(-) Cal(purnius) / Rufinus v(ir) c(larissimus)* (Fig. 8).¹⁹ In situ.

Gaius C. Calpurnius Rufinus, *vir clarissimus*, (dedicated this) to Serapis the Highest, together with Korê and the mysteries (?).

- 5) *Diis cum aede / et lacum qui / voto misce/tur / G(aius) C(-) Calp(urnius) Rufi/nus v(ir) c(larissimus)* (Fig. 9).²⁰ In situ.

Gaius C. Calpurnius Rufinus, *vir clarissimus*, (dedicated) to the gods also the basin, which is joined to the temple according to a vow.

These texts call for a brief commentary before I proceed to integrate them into an interpretation of the complex as a whole. I thus discuss in turn the deities, the use of the rock-cut features, and the donor.

3.1 The deities

It is obviously impossible to test the (lost) inscription n° 1 by means of MRM, therefore we cannot tell what followed the allusion to *Diis* read by von Hafe.²¹ In the (fully preserved) inscription n° 5, *Diis* is intentionally vague but the

¹⁹ *CIL* II 2395c = *AE* 1897, 86 = *Eph.Epigr.* IX 1913, p. 98 = *SEG* XLVI (1996) 1373 = *SIRIS* 758 = *RICIS* 602/0501. Cf. Contador de Argote 1732, I, 346; Vasconcellos 1897a, 59–60 and 1897–1913, III, 345–347; Russell Cortez 1947, 57–59; Lambrino 1954, 109–110, n° 2; García y Bellido 1956, 42–43; 1967, 133–134; Alföldy 1995, 256; Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 65–67, n° 31; Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 177–180, n° 31; Alföldy 1997, 194–196; Búa Carballo 1999, 311; Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 118–119, n° 89; De Hoz 1997, 85–86; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 88–90; Dias, Gaspar and Mota 2001, 18–19, n° 2; De Hoz 2011, 81–82; Alvar 2012, 143–144, n° 196; De Hoz 2013, 220–222; Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 213–218; De Hoz 2014, 465–467, n° 429; Redentor 2016, 206.

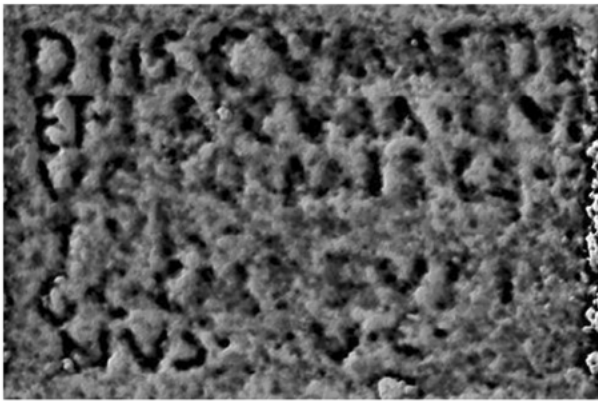
²⁰ *CIL* II 2395d. Cf. Contador de Argote 1732, I, 346; Russell Cortez 1947, 63; Lambrino 1954, 110–111, n° 3; García y Bellido 1956, 46–47; Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 67–69, n° 32; Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 180–182, n° 32; Alföldy 1997, 196–198; Búa Carballo 1999, 311; Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 180–181, n° 164; 1999, 90–93; Alvar 2012, 144–145, n° 197; Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 219–221; Redentor 2016, 206.

²¹ *Diis* [*omnipotentibus*] Lambrino 1954, 115; *Diis* [*loci*] Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 63; 1999, 81; *Diis* [*loci huius*] Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 175; 1997, 179; *Diis* [*deabusque templi*] Alföldy 1997, 187; Búa Carballo 1999, 310; Alvar 2012, 140; Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 204; Redentor 2016, 207.



ΥΥ ΙΓ·Τ ΩΣΕΡΑ
ΠΙΘΙΣΥΝΑΝ ΚΘ
ΡΑΚΑΙ ΜΥΣΤΑ
ΠΙΘΙΟΙΣ Γ Σ ΛΑΙ
ΡΥΦΙ ΝΥΣ·Υ·Σ

Fig. 8: Photograph, MRM model, and transcription of *CIL* II 2395c (after Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 216–218, figs. 13, 15 and 17).



D I I S C V M A R D E
 E T · L A C V M A · Q V I
 V O T O · M I S C E ·
 T V A ·
 G · C · C A L P R V F I
 N V S · · V · C ·

Fig. 9: Photograph, MRM model, and transcription of *CIL* II 2395d (after Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 220–222, figs. 19, 21 and 23).

following presence in no. 1 of the genitive singular pronoun *huius* suggests that a singular theonym had to be placed before it.

Inscription no. 2 is fortunately richer in details. For a long time, the text has been read as a (problematic) mention to the *Dii Severi*,²² which were identified by Contador de Argote (1732, I, 353) as some infernal gods, namely Serapis and Isis invoked under the prerogatives of Pluto (Dīs) and Proserpina (Korê), Lord and Lady of the Underworld (cf. Lambrino 1954, 122–123; Tranoy 2004, 94). The new MRM reading has provided us with a much more plausible solution (*Diis Serapidi Isidi, diis deabus omnibus*), which has, moreover, the merit of explicitly reintegrating the goddess Isis at her *paredros*' side.

Inscription no. 3, whose reading is more or less secure, is dedicated *Diis deabusque omnibusque numinibus et Lapitearum*. Whereas the first formula was quite popular during the 3rd century CE (Tranoy 2004, 90), the reading of *numina Lapitearum* (almost universally accepted)²³ has caused much discussion. Despite Amílcar Guerra's attempt at identifying these deities (the name of whom would derive from the Latin *lapis*) with some "oriental" or "mystery" cult (Guerra 2002, 158), it is much more plausible to consider them as local, pre-Roman gods. It has been suggested that they might be water-deities linked to the Cape d'Ortogonal (mentioned by Ptolemy as Λαπατία Κώρου ἄκρον)²⁴ or some local water- or mother-deities called *Lapiteae* (Lambrino 1954, 121; Blázquez Martínez 1962, 184), or as the *numina* of a local population,²⁵ or again the *numina* of a local toponym (*Lapitea* < **Lapitia*), hinting at the presence of crags.²⁶

The reading Ὑψίστω Σεράπιδι in no. 4 has largely remained unquestioned.²⁷ But MRM analysis has shown that the text does not mention Μοίρα (Moirā) or

22 *Diis Sev(eri)s Man(ibus) Diis Ira/tis* Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 70; *Diis Se(veris) M-a-n(ibus) Diis Ira(tis)* Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 185; 1997, 116; 1999, 84; *Diis Deabusque [local]/tis* Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 116; *Diis [Deabusque hic local]/tis* Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 84; *Diis Seve(r)is in hoc / templo lo(ca)t(i)s* Alföldy 1997, 191; Búa Carballo 1999, 310; Alvar 2012, 141; *Diis Sev[eris locatis] in hoc / templo* [—] Lambrino 1954, 113.

23 But see for *Lapitearum* L. 4, *amphitheatrum* Mommsen (*CIL*); (*ex lapide aram* Gil Fernández 1985, 368; Tranoy 2004, 93.

24 Ptol. II 6, 4. Cf. Vasconcellos 1897–1913, II, 187–188.

25 Contador de Argote 1732, I, 345; Vasconcellos 1897–1913, III, 468, n. 1; Russel Cortez 1947, 9 and 60; Alvar 2012, 143.

26 **lapa-* / **lapi-*, "rock", > **lapa-to* / **lapi-to*, "rocky", > **Lapat-ia* / *Lapit-iae*, "rocky place". Cf. Búa Carballo 1999, 311–312. And see also Vasconcellos, 1897–1913, III, 468; Russell Cortez 1947, 9.

27 Ὑψίστω (sic) Σεράπιδι (sic) Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 67; 1995, 180; 1999, 90; Ὑψίστω *Sera/pidi* Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 119; Ὑψίστω (sic) Σεράπιδι Dias, Gaspar and Mota 2001, 18.

γάστρα (a vessel bulging out like a paunch) but, rather, Κόρα (Korê). Against the editors' σὺν ἄν Κόρα, I suggest that we should read σὺν καὶ Κόρα, "together with Korê".²⁸ The dedication is completed by the mention of the mysteries,²⁹ which fits with the Eleusinian allusion inherent in Korê, although I find it difficult to take it as the addressee of a dedication. I am, therefore, tempted to think that μυσταρίοις is here a mistake for μύσταις.³⁰

All these texts come from a single outcrop and we have no means now of knowing whether other deities were invoked elsewhere on the site. After all, Kingston claimed that there were inscriptions on the majority of the rocks and it is still possible to detect at least six frames which might originally have carried text, as at the entrance of the sanctuary at Rock II, for example.³¹ The original presence of further inscriptions hinting at local pre-Roman deities is suggested by Rodríguez Colmenero's identification of a sixth rock inscription found in the center of the modern local village of Assento (60 m from the sanctuary) and supposedly mentioning the god *Vurebo*.³²

It is thus misguided to label the complex a *Serapeum* without qualification (as do, for example, García y Bellido 1967, 134). The site clearly reveals the cohabitation of the Isiac deities with a number of other *numina*.³³

28 σὺν Μοί/ρα Vasconcellos 1897–1913, III, 345; Russell Cortez 1947, 57; Lambrino 1954, 109; García y Bellido 1956, 42; 1967, 133; *SIRIS*; συνναο<κ>ο/ρω (sic) Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 67; σὺν κά-νθο/ρω (sic) Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 180; 1999, 90; *sin ka-nzo/ro* Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 119; σὺν γάστ/ρα Alföldy 1997, 196; De Hoz 1997, 85; 2011, 81; 2013, 221; 2014, 466; Dias, Gaspar and Mota 2001, 18; Alvar 2012, 143; σὺν ἄν Κόρα Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 213.

29 *kai misto/riois* (*templum sacravit*) Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 119; Ναί Russell Cortez 1947, 57; μυστε/ρίοις De Hoz 2014, 466; μυστη/ρίοις Vasconcellos 1897–1913, III, 345; Russell Cortez 1947, 57; García y Bellido 1956, 42; 1967, 133; *SIRIS*; μιστω/ριοις Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 67; μιστο/ριοις Rodríguez Colmenero 1995, 180; μυστό/ριοις Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 90.

30 I thank Marco Galli for suggesting to me this possibility.

31 Kingston 1845, II, 350; Russell Cortez 1947, fig. 14; Lambrino 1954, 115; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 93.

32 Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 73–74, n° 37; 1995, 187–190, n° 37; 1999, 94: *Vur/ebo / T(itus) S(ulpicius) pos(uit)*. Other presumed inscriptions are recorded by the author in Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 70–73, nn° 34–36; 1995, 186–187 nn° 34–36. Cf. *RICIS* *602/0502 and Bricault 2008, 99.

33 Vasconcellos 1897–1913, 345 and 474; García y Bellido 1956, 52–53; Wild 1984, 1831–1832; Alföldy 1997, 231; Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 105.

3.2 The sanctuary

The dedications, explicitly offered in accordance with a vow (*voto*), provide detailed information concerning the presence of at least one *templum/aedes* and (probably several) *lacus* (“basins”)³⁴ where sacrifices were performed.

As suggested by Antonio Rodríguez Colmenero, the *lacus* and *laciculi* of the sanctuary seem to have been used for different purposes: some of them (those incorporated into the temples) could serve as repositories for offerings or paraphernalia; others might have been small pools for ritual baths; others (with a rounded bottom) might have been intended for collecting water or blood; others again might have been for incinerating (parts of) victims (Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 118–124). The texts explicitly refer to animals (*hostiae*) being consecrated (*sacrauit*) by immolating them (*immolantur*),³⁵ burning (*cremantur*) their internal organs (*exta*) in square basins (*intra quadrata*), and pouring (*superfunditur*) their blood (*sanguis*)³⁶ over smaller basins (*laciculis*).³⁷

The technical terms employed in the inscriptions are very specific and sophisticated. The least unusual is of course *immolantur*, i.e. the solemn act of sprinkling the victims’ forehead with *mola salsa* (a mixture of toasted spelt and salt) and pouring on it some wine, and of course, by extension, the act of consecrating the animals (Prescendi 2007, 25, 36–37 and 102–110).

Once the victims had been killed and their entrails consulted, the latter were burnt (*cremantur*) not on the altar itself (as was the common practice) but apparently in square cavities cut into the granite (*quadrata*) (Prescendi 2007, 41–48). *Cremare* is a term frequently employed in Latin inscriptions and literary sources but almost always in the context of funerary epigraphy. As for animal sacrifices, apart from a few literary sources,³⁸ the only epigraphic evidence known to me refers to the burning of a heifer *in ara taurobolica duodena* at Beneventum, in honor of Attis and Minerva Berecintia, *iussu Matris Deum*.³⁹ This is not enough to

³⁴ Other readings of the inscription no. 2: L. 1–3 [*ded(icavit) lacum*] Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 70; [*hic cum lacu sacrauit*] Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 116; [*cum lacu sacrauit*] Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 84; *in hoc / templo* Lambrino 1954, 111; Búa Carballo 1999, 310. L. 4 *DEM* Lambrino 1954, 111.

³⁵ *immantur* Contador de Argote 1732, 344; Hübner (*CIL*); *inmolantur* Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 179.

³⁶ *santus* Contador de Argote 1732, 344; Hübner (*CIL*).

³⁷ *L AC ICVIIS* Contador de Argote 1732, 344; *LAC KVII* Hübner (*CIL*); *PACIO* Contador de Argote 1732, 344; Hübner (*CIL*).

³⁸ Ovid., *Fast.* IV 639; Serv., *Ad Aen.* XI 197, 6; Tac., *Hist.* II 95.

³⁹ *CIL IX 1538: Attini sacrum / et Minervae Berecint(iae) / Concordia col(oniae) lib(erta) Ianuari [a] / c[yl]mbal(istria) [l]oco secundo ob / criobolium factum M(atris) de(um) / Ma(gnae) tradentib(us)*

support the hypothesis of Scarlat Lambrino, who suggested that the subsequent formula (*sanguis superfunditur*) implies a *taurobolium* or *criobolium* and, thus, the involvement of Attis and Mater Deum (Lambrino 1954, 123–125). *Superfundere sanguinem* has no parallel either in Latin epigraphy⁴⁰ or literature, although we do occasionally find *fundere* or *profundere sanguinem* used with reference to animal sacrifices or blood-libations.⁴¹ The term *superfundere* is found most often (in relation to water, oil, and other liquids) in the fields of medicine and cooking.⁴² A possible explanation is that the blood of the victims was cooked in order to prepare the *sangunculus*, a sort of fricassée to be consumed during the banquet at the end of the ceremony (cf. Prescendi 2007, 46–47). The term *miscetur* (inscription no. 5) is usually understood as the act of mixing something (i.e. libations or victims' blood and entrails linked to the *effusio sanguinis*), presumably in a *lacus*, but I would not exclude the possibility that the verb refers here either to the “joining” of the *lacus* to the temple (as suggested in the translation) or to the “sharing” by the devotees of these facilities,⁴³ that is “taking part”, “joining” the ceremony in honor of the gods (*diis*) who were thought to gravitate around the temple and the basin.

3.3 The donor

Although it is attested in all four surviving texts,⁴⁴ the name of the donor, G. C. Calp. Rufinus, is not free of interpretative difficulties. Following Contador de Argote, it has been most frequently been read as G(naeus) C(aius) Calp(urnius)

Septimio / Primitivo augure et sac(erdote) / Servilia Varia et Terentia / Elisviana sacerd(ote) XVvir (ali) / praeunte Mamio Secundo / haec iussu Matris deum / in ara taurobolica duo/dena cum vitula crem(ata) / sub die V Idus Aprilis / Modesto II et Probo co(n)s(ulibus).

40 A similar formula is mentioned in a Christian inscription (*IHC* 230) from *Coelobriga* (Celanova, 100 km north of Panóias), which reads: *Funditur hic sanguis quo virus pellitur anguis.*

41 See e.g. Cic., *De divin.* I 46; Appendix Vergiliana, *Priapea* 2.12–15; Petron., *Sat.* 97.9.

42 See the several occurrences in, for example, Apicius' *De Re Coquinaria*, Columella's *De Re Rustica*, Philumenus medicus' *De Medicina*, and Scribonius Largus' *Compositiones*.

43 Other readings: L. 1 *cum hoc* Russell Cortez 1947, 63; Lambrino 1954, 110; Alföldy 1997, 197; Alvar 2012, 144; *cum aede(m)* Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014, 219. L. 2 *hic* Contador de Argote 1732, 344; Búa Carballo 1999, 311; *hyc* Hübner (*CIL*); (*h*)*uc* Lambrino 1954, 110; *VO* Russell Cortez 1947, 63; *et lacu, m(eatum) qui* Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 181; 1999, 90; *et la/cu m(actatio)? ovi* Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 69. L. 3 *TO O* Russell Cortez 1947, 63; *voto miscetur (sacravit)* Rodríguez Colmenero 1997, 181; 1999, 91–92.

44 Apparently the donor did not sign the lost inscription.

Rufinus but numerous alternatives have been hazarded: G(naeus) C(aecilius) Calp(urnius) Rufinus, G(naeus) C(assius) Calp(urnius) Rufinus, G(naeus) C(ai filius) Calp(urnius) Rufinus, G(aius) C(aristianus) Calp(urnianus) Rufinus, G(aius) C(ai filius) Calp(urnius) Rufinus.⁴⁵ Several scholars, following Rodrigues de Aguiar, have preferred (as I do) to leave the name open: G(aius) C(?) Calp(urnius) Rufinus.⁴⁶

At all events, Rufinus was a person of senatorial rank, since he can boast the title of *v(ir) c(larissimus)*,⁴⁷ which also allows us (in the absence of more precise palaeographic criteria) to place the dedications somewhere between the late 2nd and the mid-3rd century CE.⁴⁸ Géza Alföldy has offered the intriguing suggestion that the donor should be identified as a *legatus iuridicus* (Alföldy 1969, 110) or a provincial government official (Alföldy 1997, 237), while Rodríguez Colmenero prefers the hypothesis of a *censitor* sent by the Emperor or even a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* (Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 127).⁴⁹

Alföldy also suggests that Rufinus may have originated in Pamphylia, the only place (together with Antiochia ad Pisidiam) in which we find fairly extensive evidence both for the Calpurnii Rufini and the Isiac cults (Alföldy 1997, 240). Such an origin (say in Attaleia or Perge) would account for the use of Doric (Κόρα, μυσταρίσις) in the bilingual inscription no. 4 (unless they are citations).

A somewhat different scenario may also be suggested, which takes account of the proximity of the gold-mines. On this view, the senator may have lived in Lusitania and had business with the gold mines of the region (Tranoy 2004, 90). The mention in a funerary inscription from *Ebora* (Evora) of a certain *Calpurni(a) Titi filia Rufiniana* seems to suggest the presence of the family of the Calpurnii Rufini in southern Portugal at least (*IRCPacen* 391).

⁴⁵ Búa Carballo 1999; Rodríguez Colmenero 1997; 1999; Redentor 2016, 214–217. The cohabitation, within the same inscription, of G and C (the difference between which looks substantial only in the inscription n° 5) for the name Gaius has several parallels, which include also the formula *Gaius Cai filius*, but never without the mention of the F of the patronymic and never with the patronymic itself placed before the *nomen gentilicium*.

⁴⁶ Alföldy 1997; Alvar 2012; Santos, Pires and Sousa 2014.

⁴⁷ The abbreviation is interpreted as *v(oti) c(ompos)* by Vasconcellos 1897–1913, III; Russell Cortez 1947, 57; Lambrino 1954, 109–110; García y Bellido 1956, 42; 1967, 133; as *v(ir) c(onsularis)* by Contador de Argote 1732, I, 345–346; Hübner (*CLL*).

⁴⁸ End of the 2nd – beginning of the 3rd century CE: *RICIS*, Tranoy 2004, 89; beginning of the 3rd century CE: Lambrino 1954, 123. The chronology is anticipated to 75–200 CE by Russell Cortez 1947, 28.

⁴⁹ We can certainly do without the recent hypothesis by María Paz De Hoz, who identifies in this senator a sort of missionary traveling with the purpose of proselytizing in favor of his own personal religion (De Hoz 2011, 82).

4 Contextualization

The site of Panóias offers the rare possibility of identifying a sort of archaeological “rock stratigraphy”. The analysis of the material clearly shows a sequence of at least three different phases of development: first, the network of “cupules” connected by channels, then the square or rectangular cisterns covered and/or protected by metallic grids, some of which were later incorporated into the three (or more) buildings whose walls were fitted to the rock-surfaces (Lambrino 1954, 127–128). It is not impossible that three incisions in the shape of crosses, identified by Rodríguez Colmenero (1999, 73) not far from a rock, may even attest to a fourth, Christian, phase.

Although it seems reasonable enough to associate the third stage with Rufinus’ inscriptions (text 2 explicitly mentions a temple), the chronology of the earlier, presumably pre-Roman, phases remains uncertain. Nearly half a century ago, László Castiglione pointed out that

the different cuttings on the rock are not of the same age. The earliest grooves, round cavities connected by canals, circular and quadrangular but irregular basins, outlets leading to the sides of the rocks, agree with the grooves of the prehistoric sacrificial rocks well known from France (. . .). On certain rocks these were effaced, and on others completely removed by the regularly circular and quadrangular basins made with a more developed stone cutting technique, the partial levelling of the surface of the rocks and the paths leading up and the steps. (Castiglione 1970, 101)

“Cupules” are known already from the Palaeolithic period but become very common only during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (Couderc 2016, 15). In Europe, they are concentrated in three famous megalithic areas: Ireland, Brittany, and north-western Iberia.⁵⁰ In the latter area, they begin in the fourth millennium BCE (in the area of Frieiro in Trás-os-Montes, 32 “cupules” of this date are known, associated with Neolithic amulets and scrapers, and probably linked with mortuary incineration: see already Vasconcellos 1897–1913, I, 358–359), but increase in number during the Bronze Age. During this period, the “cupules” are often accompanied by incisions in the shape of crosses (which perhaps raises doubts about a “Christian” fourth phase at Panóias) and by the so-called “*pierres aux pieds*” (Couderc 2016, 224–231), i.e. human or animal footprints carved into the rock. Similar so-called “petrosomatoglyphs” have been identified at Panóias too. Both Contador de Argote and Kingston noted the vestiges of three human footprints carved on the surface of a rock.⁵¹ A pair of footprints (left and right) was

⁵⁰ Couderc 2016, 151–157 and 201–204 (201–203 on Panóias).

⁵¹ Contador de Argote 1732, I, 347; Kingston 1845, II, 350; Lambrino 1954, 125.

found beside a channel leading from a square basin, facing south, while a third (right) footprint is located crosswise in front of them, facing east (Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 115). Rodríguez Colmenero has found traces of two further footprints, one facing the other (Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 58). But it is likely that many others were originally carved in the area: Kingston records that “[s]hallow steps were carved *all round*”.⁵²

These footprints have generally been interpreted as Roman. Alföldy thought they marked the base of a bronze statue (Alföldy 1997, 215, n. 99); Lambrino preferred to link them to the so-called “Serapis feet”, or similar healing votives, or even with *vestigia* left *pro itu et reditu* by pilgrims under the protection of *Caelestis*,⁵³ Jaime Alvar understands the pair of prints as symbols of Serapis standing over the Nile (represented by the channel in-between), while the isolated footprint would indicate the place where the priest or the devotee had to kneel piously in front of the god (Alvar 2012, 145–146, n° 198). Rodríguez Colmenero has even toyed with the suggestion that the (absolutely unproved) existence of a 27 m long tunnel connecting the rock with the footprints and Rock I (with the four surviving inscriptions) may have been a complex for a mystery-cult, with the initiate’s passage through the tunnel hinting at his symbolic death (Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 117).

Castiglione, however, demurred, pointing out that there are better parallels in Celtic sacrificial sites all over western and northern Europe from the Neolithic up to the Iron Age (Castiglione 1970, 100–102). There are numerous examples in the Iberian peninsula itself (Vasconcellos 1897–1913, I, 381–383; Couderc 2016, 229), notably in Galicia: the indigenous rock sanctuaries of S. Salvador do Mundo (south of the Douro), Fraga das Pasadas (Soutelo), Bustelo (Chaves), and Peña de Santa Maria (Iruelos del Mesón Nuevo) are all not far from Panóias.⁵⁴ There are also close parallels in France: the “pierre Le Mulot” of Bleurville (Vosges), for example, has three very similar footprints; both the Neolithic sites of the “pieds de Sainte-Anne” and “de la Vierge” at Nanteau-sur-Essonne (Seine-et-Marne) contain two similar footprints at right-angles to one another, pointing south and east, exactly as at Panóias (Baudouin 1914).

⁵² Kingston 1845, II, 350 (my italics). Cf. Lambrino 1954, 125. For “step” meaning “the mark or impression made by the foot on the ground; a footprint”, see *OED* sense 9; the earliest citation is dated c. 1290.

⁵³ Lambrino 1954, 125–126. On the “Serapis feet” see Puccio 2010, 139–143 (esp. 142–143 specifically in relation to the Iberian peninsula). On the dedication of Isiac *vestigia*, see Gasparini (forthcoming), with a discussion including the material found in Spain.

⁵⁴ Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 106 n. 7; Santos 2010c, 154 and 169, figs. 21–22.

Castiglione's argument is compelling. If, then, the “cupules” and the footprints of Panóias belong to a common pre- or proto-historical horizon (whether of Neolithic or Bronze-Age date), and if Rufinus was responsible for the construction of the temple(s) some time between the late Antonine dynasty and the mid-3rd century CE, it is very difficult to date the intermediate phase, mainly characterized by the excavation of staircases and small cisterns. Nearly 150 (both pre-Roman and Roman) sites in the Iberian peninsula have been interpreted as rock sanctuaries (most of them concentrated in northern Portugal, Galicia, and Castile and León: see Rodríguez Colmenero 2000; Salinas de Frías 2001). Rock staircases,⁵⁵ Latin inscriptions,⁵⁶ and individual or clustered cisterns or tanks, some of which have indications of covers or metallic grids and are sometimes explicitly called *lacus*, *laticuli*, and *quadrata*, are all common features of these sanctuaries, especially in the region of the Douro valley and Trás-os-Montes.⁵⁷ Just in the roughly square area between Ourense (to the north), Guarda (south), Braganca (east) and the Atlantic (west), as many as 48 rock inscriptions have been identified, 20 of them with explicitly religious content (Rodríguez Colmenero 1993 and 1995).

The case of Pena Escrita (Vilar de Perdizes, Montalegre) is particularly interesting in this context (Santos 2010a, 184–187; 2010b, 129–136). In this sanctuary, a rock-cut staircase led up to an altar, with a square basin and channels nearby, and dedications to Jupiter and *Laraucus*. See also the inscription signed by Silius Eorinus at *Oia* (Oya), which mentions a *lacu{u}s hostiarum*, i.e. a cistern for use during or after the sacrificial ritual.⁵⁸ These architectural facilities attest to a local sacrificial practice, and specifically the *suovetaurilia* (Alföldy 1997, 198–209), details of which are provided by Strabo, who also records the local preference of the Lusitanians for hecatombs,⁵⁹ and by several reliefs and

55 For example, at Vila Real, Castro das Cruvas (Murça), Outeiro dos Mouros (Castelões), São Salvador do Mundo (São João da Pesqueira), Santa Marina das Aguas Santas (Cameixa, Boboras), Pias dos Mouros (Argeriz, Valpaços). Cf. Santos 2010a, 193–195; 2010b, 149–151.

56 For example, at São Martinho de Mouros (Mogueira, Resende, Viseu), Pena Escrita (Vilar de Perdizes), Pias dos Mouros (Argeriz, Valpaços), Mougas (Oia). Cf. Maciel 2007; Santos 2010a, 187–195; 2010b, 137–151.

57 For example, at Santa Marina das Aguas Santas (Cameixa, Boboras), Fundões (Alijó), Penedo Linhares (Alvão), Campa dos Mouros (Monte Fralães). Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 2000; Tranoy 2004, 88–89.

58 *HEp* 1995, 660: *Sili Eorini hos(tiarum) / lacuus*. Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 74–77, n° 38; Tranoy 2004, 88–89.

59 Strabo, III 3, 6–7: “The Lusitanians are given to offering sacrifices, and they inspect the vitals, without cutting them out. Besides, they also inspect the veins on the side of the victim; and they divine by the tokens of touch, too (. . .). They eat goat’s meat mostly, and to Ares they sacrifice a he-goat and also the prisoners and horses; and they also offer hecatombs of each

inscriptions (Maciel 2007), including the well known example from Cabeço de Fráguas (Pousafoles, Sabuga).⁶⁰

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence confirms the continuity of these sacrificial practices between the pre-Roman and Roman periods, and the involvement in the Imperial period of (both human and divine) agents of different cultural origins. The rock sanctuary of Herdade da Lentisca (Santa Eulália, Elvas) included a tank with bevelled edges (designed for the insertion of a cover and/or of a metallic grid) and an altar dedicated to Bellona (beginning of the 1st century CE) by a local man named Valgius (Maciel 2007, 34 n. 30). The presence of Isis and Serapis at Panóias (*Pannonias*) has been linked with the presence in the region of *Legio VII Gemina* (created by Galba in 68 CE, active mainly in *Pannonia*, and finally moved to Léon, 225 km north-east of Panóias).⁶¹ However, it is probably better to follow Alföldy in linking the toponym *Pannonias* with the Celtic root **pan* or **pen*, i.e. “water”, “humidity”.⁶²

5 Micro-strategies of memorialization

Placing Panóias within the archaeological and epigraphic context of the Iberian peninsula makes it clear that, so far from being something exceptional, Rufinus’ integration of Roman deities within a pre-Roman rock sanctuary that was equipped with facilities specifically focusing on the sacrificial act belongs to a standard pattern of Roman (re-)sacralization. What is exceptional at Panóias is the unusually rich archaeological and epigraphic evidence, which provides an insight into the micro-strategies employed to negotiate between an existing cultic site and Rufinus’ desire to memorialize his own individual

kind, after the Greek fashion – as Pindar himself says, “to sacrifice a hundred of every kind” (transl. H. L. Jones). Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 130–135; Santos 2007 and 2008.

60 The text runs: *Oilam Trebopala indi porcom Laebo, comaïam Iccona Loiminna, oilam useam Trebarune indi taurom ifadem Reue Tre*. See Rodríguez Colmenero 1993, 104–105, n^o 47; Maciel 2007, 34–35; Schattner and Santos 2010.

61 Russell Cortez 1947, 9–24, 28, 32–34. Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19 n. 1.

62 Alföldy 1997, 176 n. 2. Cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19 n. 1 (and n. 2 with a third, equally unlikely hypothesis of etymology from *pannus*). On the basis of *RICIS* 603/0801, it has been claimed that the Isiac deities were worshipped in a rock sanctuary at the site of Montroig del Camp (Baix Camp, Tarragona), where basins, altars, staircases, and channels have been found: cf. Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 136. But Gorostidi Pi 2010, 124, n^o 96 convincingly suggests that this is a funerary inscription of the 16th–17th century mentioning the name Isidro.

efforts of appropriation, sacralization, and redefinition. Whatever the donor's origins and period of presence in the area, Rufinus seems to have been aware of the danger of causing local resentment by his re-modelling of the site. The repeated invocation of *dii* (*deaeque omnes*) and specific local deities such as the *numina Lapitearum* implies a conscious desire to avoid conflict with pre-existing religious traditions even as he introduced new divinities to the site. Rufinus made an effort to evoke and acknowledge local sensibilities and traditions, implying a desire to engage with local actors.

This is not an isolated case. At *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga, 200 km north-east of Panóias), C. Iulius Silvanus Melanio, *procurator Augustorum provinciae Hispaniae Citerioris* during the years 198–209 CE, made a dedication to Serapis, Isis, Korê *invicta*, Apollo Grannus, and Mars Sagatus.⁶³ This inscription contains the sole explicit mention of Korê together with the Isiac deities other than in Rufinus' text 2. The same official made two further dedications at Astorga, one to the Capitoline triad and *all the other immortal gods*⁶⁴ and the other, in Greek, to the two Nemeseis of Smyrna.⁶⁵ All three inscriptions illustrate Silvanus' cumulative (and non-exclusive) religious preferences. Especially notable is the choice of Greek as a more effective code when communicating with Greek gods rather than with the local audience.

Rufinus and Silvanus Melanio were not the only members of the administrative elite who dedicated to the Isiac gods in this area at the end of the 2nd to the beginning of the 3rd century CE. Just after Silvanus, another equestrian procurator, Claudius Zenobius (212–222 CE), set up an altar *Invicto Deo Serapidi et Isidi* beside that of Silvanus at Astorga.⁶⁶ At *Legio VII* (León, c. 200 CE), two others, L. Cassius Paulinus Augustianus Alpinus Bellicius Sollers, probably the son of P. Cassius Dexter (cos. suff.? 151 CE) and no doubt currently legate of *leg. VII*

63 AE 1968, 230 = RICIS 603/1101: *Serapidi / sancto / Isidi mironymo / Core invictae / Apollini / Granno / Marti Sagato / Iul(ius) Melanio / proc(urator) / Augg(ustorum) / v(otum) s(olvit)*. Cf. Mangas 1996, 48, n° b; Alvar 2012, 131–132, n° 184.

64 AE 1968, 231: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Custodi / Iunoni Reginae / Minervae Sanctae / ceterisque Dis / Deabusque / immortalibus / Iulius Silvanus / Melanio proc(urator) Aug(ustorum duorum) / provinc(iae) Hisp(aniae) Cit(erioris) / dicavit*. Cf. Mangas 1996, 48, n° a; Alvar 2012, 132 n. 102.

65 AE 1968, 233: Ἀγαθῆ Τύχη / θεᾶς Νεμέσεσιν / Συμυρναίαις / σεβασμώταταις / Ἰούλιος Σιλουανός / Μελανίων / ἐπίτροπος σεβ(αστῶν) εὐχήν. Cf. Mangas 1996, 48, n° c; Alvar 2012, 132 n. 103. On the two Nemeseis of Smyrna, whose mother was Night, see Paus. VII 5, 2–3; cf. Karanastassi 1992.

66 AE 1968, 232 = RICIS 603/1102: *Invicto Deo / Serapidi et / Isidi / Cl(audius) Zenobius / proc(urator) <Au=XX>g(usti)*. Cf. Alvar 2012, 131, n° 183, with bibliography.

Gemina, alongside his equally polyonymous son, honored four healing deities, Aesculapius, Salus, Serapis and Isis.⁶⁷

Whereas in text 3 Rufinus invoked all the local deities, the unique invocation of Serapis as *hypsistos* (“the Highest”) in the bilingual text 4⁶⁸ seems to have the specific function of representing his religious act as part of a lengthy continuum of practice at this site and yet at the same time establishing a privileged, intimate communication with Serapis.⁶⁹ By elevating Serapis *over* all the other gods, Rufinus asserts his justification for intervening into the local religious tradition and defends his substantial economic investment. It is certainly likely to claim that the switch to Greek in text 4 (parallel to Silvanus’ use of Greek in his dedication to the Nemeseis of Smyrna) suggests a desire to establish a more intimate channel of communication with a god perceived in that moment as Greek (cf. De Hoz 2011, 81–82). Moreover, the use of Greek, in an area where it was of course virtually unknown (and indecipherable), in a text linking mysteries (μυσταρίοις) with Korê,⁷⁰ hints at the Eleusinian traits of the ceremonies performed in Rufinus’ re-modelled Panóias (Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 112–113). The thematic parallel perceived between Demeter’s search for her daughter Korê and Isis’ search for her husband (Osiris/Serapis) at the *Inventio Osiridis* had led, already at the beginning of the 3rd century CE, to the notion that Isis was looking for her son Harpocrates.⁷¹

Choosing the most telling location for his intervention was also a crucial factor. Unlike his peers in Astorga or León, Rufinus decided to build his shrine far away from an urban center where selective monumentalization would enjoy high visibility. Instead he chose a remote, albeit locally-famous and numinous, spot for his investment, a set of granite rocks with a naturally attractive force which could get, very early, vocation to be sacralized (Tranoy 2004, 87).

Summing up, we have little idea of how the sanctuary might have appeared prior to Rufinus’ intervention but there can be no doubt that his new constructions

⁶⁷ AE 1967, 223 = 1968, 235 = RICS 603/1001: (A)esculapio / Saluti / Serapi(di) Isidi / L(ucius) Cassius Paullus / Augustianus Alpinus / Bellicius Sollers / et M(arcus) Cassius Agrippa / Sanct(i)us Paullinus / Augustianus Alp(i)nu[s]. Cf. Alföldy 1999, 330, nos. 3 and 4; Alvar 2012, 130, n° 182, with bibliography (wrongly claiming that Agrippa was a *procurator*).

⁶⁸ Heitsch 1961, II, followed by Bricault and Dionysopoulou 2016, 116, claims that the same epithet is used of Serapis (again in the 3rd century CE) in *P.Schubart* 12, 2, but the epithet ὑψιστος does not appear there.

⁶⁹ Belayche 2005a (2011), 146 and 2005b, 433 and 439–440.

⁷⁰ Persephone was locally identified with the Lusitanian goddess Ataecina or Ataegina. See Vasconcellos 1897–1913, II, 146–173; Abascal Palazón 2002.

⁷¹ Min. Felix, *Octav.* XXI; Lact., *Inst. Div.* I 17.6 and 21.20; cf. *Epit.* 18.5; Arnob., *Adv. nationes* I 36.6.

and installations radically altered it. The open-air site was “domesticated” and partially converted into an elegant Roman sanctuary. Classical columns rose up from the primordial natural granite.⁷² The small temples, profusely adorned with capitals and polished pediments but perched near the top of the rocks, were intentionally isolated and hard to reach (especially the northern temple, which was accessible only by means of a steep, narrow flight of steps and a very narrow ledge). The altars were placed on the granite outcrops nearby. It must have been an extremely arduous process to transport the victims up there alive.

It is impossible on the basis of the available material to decide whether these three small buildings, scattered over the rocks and almost inaccessible, were intended to constitute a topographic and cultic “unity”, and whether they might have formed *stationes* in, say, processions. What is likely is that Rufinus’ sanctuary provided an arena for negotiating multiple narratives, in particular those represented by his individual efforts at memorialization and the immemorial local religious history. Memorialization is a long-term process and the media (including architecture) that do not pay attention to it risk becoming irrelevant over time. This means that both sequencing and moment must be carefully selected, and the media chosen so as to ensure their intelligibility into the future. This can be done either by explicitly affirming such perpetuity (e.g. *lucus aeternus* in text 3) or by creating a context capable of shaping the behavior of future visitors to the sanctuary. At Panóias, sacrifice had probably always played a central role in local cultic praxis. Rufinus attempted to regulate this tradition by providing explicit and rather detailed instructions about the procedures to be followed (text 1).

The case-study of Panóias witnesses the spontaneity and randomness with which individuals could unsystematically implement the Isiac cults, even far from the preconfigured behaviors and the institutional pressure of what we call “civic religion”. Panóias shows how a pre-Roman rock sanctuary could, during the period between the late 2nd and mid-3rd centuries CE, be experienced as a *Serapeum* and adapted to specific mystic requirements. Moreover, it highlights the strategies used by the senator Rufinus to reckon with a highly-charged past, inserting his religious innovation into a historical continuum in an appropriate and respectful manner, thus prolonging and renewing a salient ancestral activity.

72 See Rodrigues de Aguiar’s *Relação apud* Rodríguez Colmenero 1999, 19: “*basas e capiteis e pedaços de colunas, redondas e pedras de frisos, entabolamentos, caleiros e outras muitas, e muito diversas e algús pedaços de colunas e pedras de jaspe, e outra muito branca a modo de pedra de sal, e outra de grã miuda como pedra de açúcar*”.

In conclusion, this is an excellent example of the possible micro-mechanisms of appropriation through which, in antiquity, religious entrepreneurs could negotiate their innovations, find spaces for creativity and individual distinction, and therefore empower and enlarge their agency.

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Anna-Katharina Rieger

This god is your god, this god is my god: local identities at sacralized places in Roman Syria

Abstract: Numerous sacralized places with a wide range of architectonic, iconographical, and epigraphical-linguistic motifs, habits, and religious practices populate the Roman provinces of Syria and Syria Phoenice (Mount Hermon, plain of Beqaa, Lebanon mountains). This paper examines the socio-spatial strategies used at some of these sacralized places between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE in order to establish a local identity by making use of local deities. By applying a spatial approach and explaining sacralized places as spaces of lived religion, the local character of common deities, such as Dea Syria, Zeus, or Leukothea, come to the fore, whereas others (Hadaranes, Mifsenus) are seen to be inherently local, since they are unique to the place. Communication and negotiation through local divine agents of the interests, needs, status, and connections of local residents seems to have provided a vital means for clarifying the belonging of individuals to specific places in a world of changing territorial boundaries. Spatializing religion in this way is an approach to the archaeology of religion that takes proper account of the importance of places, contexts, and objects.

1 Point of departure: local deities and place-bound identities in Roman Syria

Numerous sanctuaries and temples populated the landscapes of Roman Syria and Syria Phoenice, providing venues for the local population and visitors to venerate and communicate with a huge variety of deities (Kaizer 2008). Many

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of the gods and goddesses were either addressed by unique names or were associated with the area by the addition of localizing epithets. Taking these local and/or localized deities as a point of departure, my discussion will focus on the distinctions between the sacralized places,¹ their divine owners, and the human counterparts of these divinities. Drawing on case studies from the Hermon ranges and the Beqaa plain, I aim to show that the sheer number of such places within a small area played an important role in the negotiation of identities throughout the region and helped to determine where people belonged, economically, individually, and imaginatively. A fundamental aspect of the identity of human agents is their local, spatially defined identity.² I claim here that the local specification of deities and the identity-shaping of their human counterparts occurred at the sacralized places due to tensions between local interests and those of outsiders, primarily concerning agricultural resources and especially in the 1st to 3rd centuries CE.

I follow Massey (2005, 154) in defining local identity by reference to places that “are formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices ... through which the constituent ‘identities’ are also themselves continually moulded. Place ... does ... change us ... through the *practising* of place.” In addition to her practice-oriented conceptualization of places, Massey also draws attention to the non-human dimensions of place (2005, 140): “Place ... is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.” Hence, sacralized places can be understood as the crystallization of the negotiation that human beings embark on with the support of divine agents as they aim to carve out their position within their social and natural environments.

It is particularly challenging to approach the question of identity in the highly diverse, multi-lingual, -scriptural, and -cultural region of Roman Syria. Religious phenomena are often analyzed to provide criteria for differentiating and, thus, creating the – conjecturally collective – identities of groups and communities living in this region (Teixidor 1977; Sartre 2001, 926; Aliquot 2009,

¹ I prefer to use the term “sacralized places” for sanctuaries, sacred places, and the like, since this term better conveys that the sacred character of places is not a given fact but is, rather, negotiated in a continuous process of sacralization in varying intensities, Albrecht et al. 2018, 582.

² Only secondarily Roman, Syrian, Hellenized, or native identities may be at stake – all themselves constructed.

155–194; Butcher 2011; Hošek 2012; Andrande 2013). Recently, Ted Kaizer (2013; 2015) has acknowledged clearly the importance of the “locale” of religious expressions in the Near East, at the same time locating them within the wider frame of the Mediterranean world (local vs. global).³

I aim to complement Kaizer’s approach by focusing on one individual place, to which I will apply a spatial methodology that parallels lived religion with lived space. In doing so, I will inquire into the identity formation of individuals through their communication with deities and co-users at sacralized places in Roman Syria. It is through and in these landscapes and places, I argue, that place-bound identity is constructed and negotiated.⁴ A spatial approach helps us to understand these places as locations in which a local identity, which forms part of nested individual or group identities, is founded. With the focus on identity and space, the religious practices taking place in these locations establish, confirm, or distinguish the negotiated identities and clarify the relations that hold with other groups or places, both within the community and beyond.

2 Areas of action: lived space and lived religion in Roman Syria

If we take as our starting points the phenomenological assumptions that (a) we live space, rather than live *in* space, and (b) that space is produced by practices, then space takes on an agentic role, acting alongside people, time, and objects. Since religious practices are also spatial practices, we can examine religious places in Roman Syria as produced and negotiated spaces (cf. Brace et al. 2006; Knott 2005, esp. 122–123), and ask a number of important questions. How did people relate to the various deities within their locale? What were the interrelations, connections, and distinctions between divinities, sacralized places, and users in the villages of Mount Hermon, Mount Lebanon, or the Beqaa plain, such as Niha, Bethmare, or Seigeira? How did spaces participate in constructing,

³ For a summary of the history of religious studies on the Greco-Roman Near East, see Kaizer 2008; for differentiated approaches, see Belayche 2009 and Isaac 2009. My paper can be understood as an attempt to meet the claim by Kaizer 2008, 23 to approach the varieties of religious life via the toponymic deities.

⁴ Mediterranean Archaeology has dealt with the construction of ethnic or cultural and social identity (Hall 1998; Hodos 2010); see also Cifani and Stoddart 2012. MacSweeney 2011 includes local communities in concepts of identity.

communicating, and negotiating identities in the region? What agency did sacralized places develop in addition to their religious function, and what are the capacities of such places for constructing relationships in the immediate local and regional settings?

2.1 Towards a spatial methodology for ancient religion

Spaces, as well as the spatial relations associated with the multifarious identities of individuals and groups, are parts of the agentic network involved in doing religion (cf. Gasparini this volume; Hunter-Crawley this volume). If we live space, and space is thus reciprocally produced by human actions just as human actions are produced by space, the consequences for our understanding of religious spaces are highly significant. Rather than thinking that we carry out rituals *at* a religious place, we must conclude that the spatial setting together with people, practices, dedications, sacrifices, and prayers interact to *produce* the religious place in on-going processes of sacralization. This process then also reciprocally shapes the settings, activities, and participants. Applying the paradigm of “religion in the making” (Albrecht et al. 2018), I attempt to move sacralized places out of the position of isolation and fixedness they have been placed in by the history of research on this subject. I acknowledge them as relational spaces (Massey 2004, 5–6, 10) formed by the deities and users, which experience significant physical changes that depend on developments in other spaces, communities, and societal groups.

An acknowledgment of the relation between identity, religion, and space can be brought to bear on the interpretation of sacralized places in Roman Syria in two ways: space and scales can be addressed as quantitative categories and can also be operationalized as qualitative dimensions for understanding social and socio-religious relations. “Space” embraces places (houses, villages, necropoleis, sacralized places) and landscapes (agricultural and “unprocessed” areas), all culturally constructed and imbued with meaning and memory (Ashmore 2004) through divine agents, the dead, daily necessities, and resources. Space just is lived space.

2.2 Religious spaces as lived spaces

I use the phrase “lived space” to refer to what Henri Lefebvre calls *espace vécu*, one of the intertwined dimensions of space he distinguishes in *Le production de l'espace* (1974). Even though religion does not feature in Lefebvre’s discussion,

he identifies three contemporaneously present and overlapping conceptual productions of space that can be used for approaching religious places (Lefebvre 1974, 48–49). The *espace perçu*, the repeated practices that take place in space, is materially and functionally perceivable and socially determined, as with “house”, “field”, and “street”; when applied to ancient religious spaces, we can identify parallel material categories such as “altar” or “temple”. The *espace conçu* is the space that comprises aspects of power and socio-spatial order. It is space formed by institutions and specialists. Applied to ancient religious spaces, the conceived space correlates to the architectural concepts and traditions, the organization of ritual space according to an accepted set of religious knowledge. In my case, the *espace perçu* and *conçu* are defined by the broader cultural settings of the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asian areas, taking in the political changes that started in the late 1st century BCE and the cultural, religious, and economic developments of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The *espace vécu* corresponds to how agents describe or imagine their environment. The lived space embraces all strategies of appropriation, as well as counter-hegemonic activities. This is a subjective and mental dimension of space which includes stories and memories that relate past to present and future. Lived space is open for creativity and differentiation. In religious spaces, the aspect of lived space bears on self-world-relations, on identity-building, and on imaginations.

By drawing a parallel between the notions of “lived space” and “lived religion” (Orsi 1997, 9–12, 17–18; Rüpke 2011; Albrecht et al. 2018)⁵ – which examines the experiences of practitioners, as well as situations, locations, and appropriations of religion from a bottom-up perspective on (everyday) life – I open up the means by which religious places in Roman Syria can be analyzed to approaches that study spatial arrangements, interconnections, and the valuations ascribed to them by various people (*espace perçu*). The background, i.e. from where the users of spaces come and in what institutional and architectural frame they practice religion, corresponds to Lefebvre’s *espace conçu*. The lived space (*espace vécu*) emerges from how those who use it shape and mark religious space and from the traditions in which they anchor their (group) identity.

⁵ Cf. the discussion of Jörg Rüpke’s monograph *Pantheon* (Munich, 2016, Engl. translation 2018) with Corinne Bonnet, Jan Bremmer, Judith Lieu, and Zsuzsanna Varhelyi at the conference, published in *Religion in the Roman Empire 4* (2018).

3 Lines of relations and the location of identities at sacralized places in Roman Syria

What impact do these premises have on our understanding of the large number of sacralized places that were within a day's walk for the populations of Mount Lebanon, the Mount Hermon area, or the plain of Beqaa (Massyas) (Fig. 1)? How can we grasp the local significance of, and the individual ascription of meaning to, these places and their deities by the groups or communities, villages or cities, who made use of them?

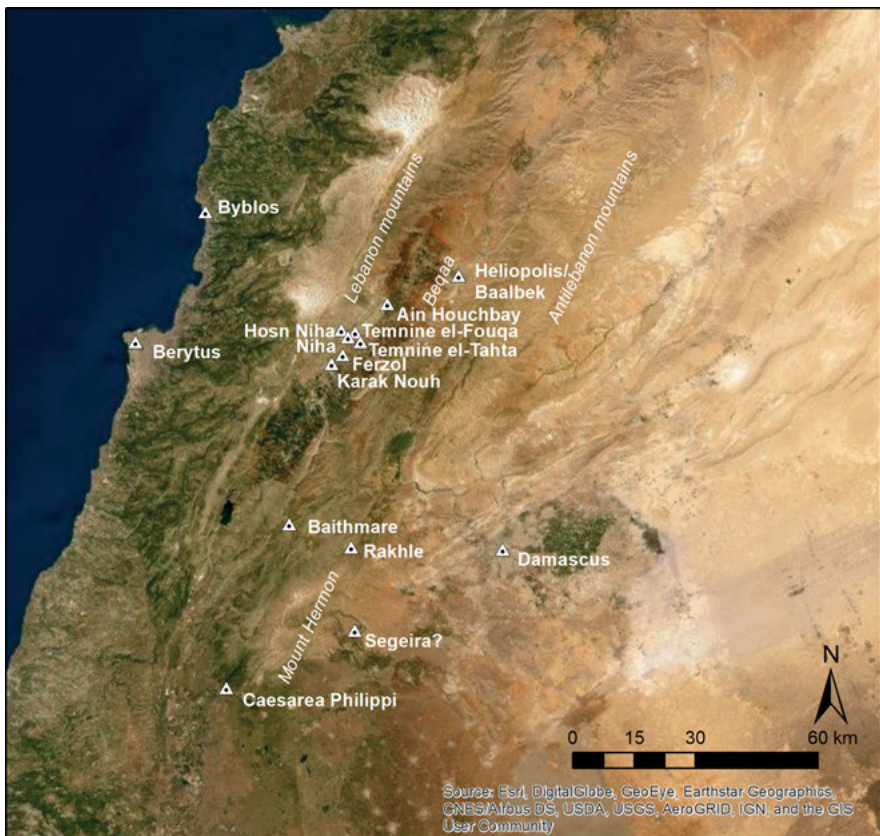


Fig. 1: Topographical view of the area of Mount Hermon, Lebanon, Anti-Lebanon and the Beqaa plain, and the places of Roman Syria mentioned in the text (see image for sources of satellite imagery, map created by the author with ArcMap).

The places I consider in the southern area of Mount Hermon and the southwestern Beqaa provide examples of not only different designs, dimensions, fame, or deities, but also varying ecological and economic settings (Niha, Hosn Niha, Temnine el-Fouqa, Rakhle, Segeira, Baithmare; Fig. 1). I enquire into the shaping and communication of identities (cf. Borg this volume; Gasparini this volume) by revising and recontextualizing the material related to these sites (image-objects of deities and users, dedications, architecture), and by looking beyond the setting and architectural characteristics of a temple, its priests, statues, and inscriptions, or the worshippers who use it (Krumeich 1998; Freyberger 1999). This approach offers an insight into how local residents instrumentalized the tension between the local, the close-by, and the global (Massey 2004; Versluys 2015) in order to negotiate their needs, identities, and attitudes (Butcher 2011, 456) by acknowledging the spatial relations between places, objects, and religious groupings. We can ask a range of important questions. What kind of relationships did those who used a certain sacralized place have to the place itself and to other nearby places? What can we deduce about “belonging to the place” from the spatial layout, architecture, dedications, and, consequently, the religious practices associated with it? What kind of identity-shaping can we deduce from these practices? How local was the construction of a social and spatial identity mediated through religious practices at the chosen places?

By considering particular sacralized places in terms of the differing scales within which they are embedded, from their immediate locale, through their surroundings and neighboring communities, and on up to the regional level, we can analyze their role in the place-attachment of residents. In doing so, we add to our understanding of the places as themselves agents in socio-religious processes.

The traditions of the Seleucid Empire, up to the 1st century BCE, and the political changes instigated by Rome’s dominance of the region in the mid-2nd century CE (Millar 1993, 27–125, 225–385), are reflected in the accumulation of precincts, buildings, and altars to the gods in all regions of Roman Syria (and its subdivisions). Changes over time in political control of areas and networks of routes (Guillon 2013, up to the 1st century CE) influenced the political, administrative, and logistical conditions of the sacralized places and their users.⁶

⁶ The 1st to 3rd centuries CE in the Eastern Roman Empire stand for changes in the political administration, a general increase in interest in *paideia* (Borg 2004; Rutherford this volume); the interest in the body (Petridou this volume; Petridou 2016); and a new way of managing individual crisis (Belayche 2007). All these aspects are responsible for a competition among and an increasing interest in sacralized places all over the Mediterranean.

At the same time, gods from the Western Asian provinces who were originally very local – Dea Syria, Zeus Heliopolitanus, Zeus Dolichenus – traveled with groups and individuals from their places of origin and spread as part of processes of appropriation, due to a combination of factors such as an interest across the Roman Empire in “exotic” deities, in religious Otherness, or in Antiquarianism (Belayche 2000; Blömer 2017; Versluys 2015). However, many other deities maintained their staunchly local guises, transmitting their vernacular character in names, epithets, and the places with which they were associated.

The dynamics of venerating these various local gods and goddesses, of setting up dedications, carving niches, or constructing buildings, depended not only on decisions, demands, and traditions at one specific site, but also on relationships that spanned other (sacralized) places, with their own practices, functions, and particularities. In order to acknowledge the multi-directional social and spatial positions of such places, the search for interdependencies needs to go beyond “central” places, such as provincial capitals and economic centers (Berytus, Byblos, Tyros) or large sanctuaries of supra-regional influence (Baalbek/Heliopolis), and look instead at the sacralized place “next door”.⁷ Local places played a role in the daily, local, and generation-spanning organization of individual and family lives, and were involved in establishing and negotiating identities within a frame composed of general trends throughout the region. It is only on the next socio-spatial level that more distant cities – in their guise as economic, religious, and administrative centers – contribute to the picture of local identity formation through personal or virtual relations expressed in texts, images, offices, or practices such as tax payment.

3.1 Jebel Sannine – bonds to deities valley for valley

On the eastern slope of Jebel Sannine, we find at least six sacralized places located within an area of 10 km² (Fig. 2). Niha and Hosn Niha are among the better-known temples of the Lebanon, due to the reliefs and inscriptions found there, as well as the character of the worshipped deities (Aliquot 2009, no. 59; Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, 105–121; Krumeich 1998; Newson and Young 2015). These two ancient settlements are located some 60 km east of Berytus. They are situated one above the other, roughly 2 km apart, on the slopes of Jebel Sannine, from where they look out across the river valley below.

⁷ This perspective also enables us to shed light on the interrelations of urban and rural spaces; for a good approach, see Schuler 2012.



Fig. 2: Location of Niha, Hosn Niha and Temnine (see image for sources of satellite imagery, map created by the author with ArcMap).

Temnine el-Fouqa and Temnine el-Tahta are situated in the next valley, 1.5 km and 3 km to the northeast from Niha. The remains of necropoleis have been found in the area between Niha and Temnine el-Fouqa (IGLS 6, 2940–2945), and also at Ferzol and Karak Nouh, 3.5 and 4 km away to the south.

3.1.1 Niha: local divine and religious celebrities

The sanctuary at Niha with its buildings, inscriptions, and image-objects often serves as an example of how we can distinguish the various identities and ascriptions (especially “Romanness”) of people living in ancient Lebanon, both the Hellenized Near Eastern populations and the “natives” (Butcher 2011; Aliquot 2009, no. 59). However, the social distinction and representation of the political elite in a local guise, the roles played by actual local religious specialists, and an assumed “citizens’ performance” at the sacralized place (Andrande

2013, 223), all seem to fall short as a way of approaching the question of how such space was part of the construction and negotiation of identities.

The two large temple buildings at Niha frame the river and lie close to a spring that flows year-round. The smaller Temple B, in north-south orientation, is about 10 m long, while the larger Temple A, in east-west orientation, is 20 m long, with a staircase and platform extending it a further 20 m to the east. Temple A is the more recent construction (2nd century CE), while the smaller Temple B is older (1st century CE); a third building a little to the northwest of Temple B cannot be dated (Yasmine 2009; 2013).

The finds at the site include altars or bases with dedicational inscriptions and relief images, a bronze votive hand, and some fragmentary texts (IGLS 6, 2928–2939). The set of gods venerated here often appear together in the Near East. A pair of highest gods is formed by Dea Syria Nihathena / Atargatis (IGLS 6, 2929; Fig. 3) and Had(a)ranes (IGLS 6, 2928; Fig. 3), while the image of a young male god (Mercurius or Dionysos) might have completed a triad (IGLS 6, 2933 with pl. 45; Kropp 2010) comparable to the triad attested at the sanctuary of Heliopolis/Baalbek some 30 km to the north. The findings provide a starting-point from which to ask about the provenance and social or religious identities of the inhabitants of the village, the users of the sacralized place (cf. Rey-Coquais 1981, 171; Rey-Coquais 1992, 258; Krumeich 1998; Butcher 2011).

An altar or base found in Temple B (IGLS 6, 2928, 2nd century CE?; Fig. 3; Hajjar 1990, 2262) mentions a woman active at the sacralized place. The virgin Hochmaea followed the order of the god Had(a)ranes and pursued an ascetic lifestyle, not eating bread for twenty years. The altar is decorated on one side with an image of Hochmaea, wearing a veil and a fillet around her head;⁸ on another, the seated god is depicted flanked by bovids (?) (IGLS 6, 2928 A; Fig. 3). Hochmaea dedicated this altar/base as the fulfillment of a vow.

The same woman is mentioned on a bilingual stela dedicated by the veteran Sextus Allius Iullus that describes her function in the sanctuary (IGLS 6, 2929; Fig. 3): In the Latin text she is the prophetess (*vates*) of the Dea Syria Nihathena. The Greek line tells the reader that she was the *parthenos* of the *thea* Atargateis, synonymous with the local Dea Syria, and that she lived for a hundred years. The *monumentum* reminds the viewer of a grave stela in form and formula, but Sextus, a veteran and Roman *civis*, uses it to honor the *vates*

⁸ It is common to depict women with a veil covering the head (e.g. on portraits on grave stelae, Skupinska-Lovset 1983). However, the thick fillet around her head might point to a priestly sign (and not only to an “Eastern” dress); cf. the description of a soothsayer by Hilarius, Amm. Marc. 29.1.29 *torulo capiti circumflexo*.



Fig. 3: Altar dedicated to Hadaranes by Hochmaea (top). Dedication by Sextus Iullus to Hochmaea (below left). Altar to Dea Syria Nihathena/Atargatis (below right) (Aliquot 2009, Fig. 55. 56. 49. 62).

or *parthenos* Hochmaea rather than a dead woman, reconfirming her extraordinary prophetic abilities (cf. Butcher 2011, 460; Lott 2017, 209).

The two agents, Hochmaea and Sextus, both identify themselves with the place through their connections to the local deities. Sextus proclaims Hochmaea's abilities as an "intuitively acceptable agent" (Lott 2017, 210), which makes her a person of reference at Niha. He sets up his dedication in both Greek and Latin so that not only locals but also non-locals (Romans serving in military or administrative capacities) will be able to understand it.

Hochmaea is related to two deities: Hadaranes and Atargatis/Dea Syria Nihathena. The female deity appears under her Latin name of Dea Syria, with her epithet derived from the location of the temple – Nihathena. The Greek Atargatis has its roots in the Semitic word for a widely worshipped goddess in Western Asia, but is not specified with the epithet of the place. The god Had(a)ranes is known only from Niha and Deir el-Ahmar, a settlement 15 km north-west of Baalbek (IGLS 6, 2908 Latin, cippus from the temple).⁹ Had(a)ranes' depiction (Fig. 3) is analogous to that of the male highest god that appears in many forms throughout ancient Western Asia. However, he is flanked here by lions rather than the bulls that would accompany Zeus Heliopolitanus. Hadaranes is a local god with his own character, not a Heliopolitan god with another name (Cumont 1912).¹⁰ The way in which Atargatis is depicted is also iconographically distinct from depictions of the Heliopolitanian Venus: on the relief on the altar, she is flanked by lions, not by sphinxes (Kropp 2010, 242 with n. 178–179; Hajjar 1990a, 2522), which ties in well with the local character of the high goddess as Nihathena.

At what was presumably almost the same time as Hochmaea was active at Niha, the priest Narkisos, depicted on the ante of the stairs to Temple A in his priestly dress, identifies himself as *bouleutikos* of Hierapolis/Baalbek, showing a relation between the place and the huge sanctuary in the plain of Beqaa, once also part of the territory under the administration of Berytus (Rey-Coquais 1987, 200–207; Krumeich 1998; IGLS 6, 2935).¹¹ However, his role as an agent in the sanctuary remains underdetermined in comparison to that of Hochmaea. His dress – the pectoral, crown, and offering gesture – represents him as a religiously active man. Hochmaea chooses to relate herself to her religious function in the text and in the image, while Narkisos mentions in the text his

⁹ The Heliopolitanian Triad was also venerated at Deir el-Ahmar (IGLS 6, 2909).

¹⁰ A marble table dedicated to Atargatis was also found at Niha, Rey-Coquais 1987, 206; Kropp 2010, n. 182.

¹¹ *Bouleutikos* could label an honorary *decurio* at Heliopolis; cf. Rey-Coquais 1987, pl. 4,1, unpublished inscription on an altar/base.

political role and his iconography attests to his religious function. Tiberios, the artist of the priestly relief, is, in turn, keen to tell viewers about his own priestly role as well. Another priest is depicted on a large stela (c. 2 m high, Seyrig 1961, 131–132, pl. V,3), dressed in a manner comparable to Narkisos but with no additional epigraphic text.

Priests and prophetesses as religious agents for Dea Syria Nihathena do not appear with the *tria nomina* but, rather, with their Greek or Semitic names and in “autochthonous” costumes that say nothing about their civic status (Rey-Coquais 1987, 198–207). By contrast, a clear relation not only to the local goddess, but also to some sort of civic entity, is established by the colonists of the *pagus Augusti* in a dedication found on a *tabula ansata* of uncertain date (IGLS 6, 2936, pl. 45). Taking together the dedication of the statue of the young male god by a Roman citizen with the *tria nomina* Julius Apollinaris Cels(inius?) (IGLS 6, 2933) and the dedication of the inhabitants of a *colonia* for an emperor (IGLS, 6, 2937, 2nd century CE, pl. 45; *colonia* Berytus, see Millar 1993, 178), we encounter a number of Roman institutions and people related to them at Niha. However, they are clearly distinct in what they dedicate and how they do so. For example, a Roman citizen has left a dedicational inscription on one column shaft; it is the only inscription at the site which dedicates something *pro salute* of an emperor (IGLS 6, 2938).

A quite different reference to identity and affiliation is presented on another altar/base which bears a relief and a number of inscriptions (IGLS 6, 2939). Eutyches offers this object in his role as a (non-religious) professional. The imagery shows a rider/messenger and his horse or donkey, with the text giving his profession as *kouls(o)r*. Above the image, on the moulding of the base, (probably) (Iou)ill(o)s added that he fulfilled a vow for the salvation of his *oikeia* and his children.¹²

On the other sides of the altar/base, it seems that other people have added their own inscriptions, since they differ in letter form from the two inscriptions mentioned above. On the left side, a certain Gaianos, wishing to be commemorated (*mneste*), describes himself as “the one who works with foals”. The rear side is covered by an inscription dedicated by a man (Maranas or Maralas?, see Mouterde 1934), again with the formula *mneste*. He specifies himself as *paranymphos*, best man, of Iouillos Mneros.¹³ On this altar/base, the individuals identify themselves by referring to their professions or their

¹² I see neither a reason for interpreting the *familia* as *stationarii* (Mouterde 1934, 69) nor as *focaria* (Rey-Coquais IGLS 6, 2939, p. 206).

¹³ *Paranymphos* as a religious official is attested at Amathus, Hermay 2010, 129–130.

relations to their family, friends, or colleagues. In contrast to Narkisos, both Sextus and the people in the inscription of the *pagus* prefer to mention their occupations or professions rather than their roles in the military or civic systems (*pagus*, *veteranus*). That they form a unified group is established by the fact that they appear together in this image-object, and the object itself is located and visible in the sanctuary at Niha. The Greek formula *mneste* (“remembered be X”), which derives from the Aramaic formula “for the good remembrance of X” (Gudme 2013, 91–134), is used in two cases, adding a temporal dimension to the place. Place-making is enabled by the text on the altar/base, since it stands for an act of remembrance (Casey 1996, 26): Everyone who reads the words is urged to think of those who commissioned the inscription. These inscriptions, by different scribes and on different sides of the altar/base, establish relations between people, their roles, the location, and the deities at Niha, and sacralize the place through the religious practice of calling on passers-by to “remember”.

From the necropoleis at Karak Nouh comes a stela of a Roman citizen that sheds valuable light on the differentiations individuals made in their self-ascriptions: Q. Vesius Petilianus was *flamen* and *decurio* at the *colonia* Berytus, and also *quaestor* for, most probably, the same *colonia*, thus showing off a double affiliation, encompassing both his loyalty to the Roman emperor and his Roman civic status (IGLS 6, 2942, pl. 48). Yet the location of his grave close to Niha demonstrates his strong connection with the place, since he and his wife chose this location to be buried. In shape and motif, the couple draws also on different traditions: Their stela has a local form, but shows the deceased in a very Roman way, using portrait busts.¹⁴

In the material depicting and describing human and divine agents at Niha, images predominate over script. The reliefs on the temple and on the altars/bases show users and visitors who might not have been able to decipher Latin or Greek the various agents at the sacralized place: The priests, the deities, the prophetesses, the dedicators, and admirers. Those visitors who were able to read would see a range of relations between the various agents transmitted through the texts (Hochmaea, Sextus, the deities, the group in IGLS 6, 2939), and also between the agents and (virtually present) spaces or groups (Heliopolis, the Roman military, Berytus, a *pagus*).¹⁵ This provides evidence for (self- and etc) ascriptions by people present at Niha, all of which refer either to the deity of the place or to the

¹⁴ Rey-Coquais 1987, 204 with n. 47 emphasizes the high number of grave stelae adapted to Roman models.

¹⁵ The problematic interpretation of the *pagus Augusti* at Niha cannot be dealt with here; see Millar 1990; Rey-Coquais 1987; Aliquot 2009, 39–69; Hošek 2012, 131–147.

place itself by locating a piece of their life (or death) there. Those in a religious office emphasize autochthonous characteristics (Hochmaea, the priests). At the other end of the scale, Narkisos, for example, alludes to other places, such as Berytus or Heliopolis. The human agents and both real (*perçu*) and virtual or imagined (*vécu*) spaces meet at the sanctuary of Dea Syria Nihathena and Hadaranes in the 2nd/3rd century CE in the form of their dedications, images, and inscriptions. Their identities, understood as systems of references and relations between individuals or groups and places, are expressed and communicated in the way that their objects and inscriptions are arranged within the place.

This approach to interpreting the agents, objects, and spaces at Niha goes beyond the search for a “Roman” or “indigenous” identity (Freyberger 1999; Krumeich 1998), accounting, rather, for an identity that is distinctively local. Even though Butcher (2011, 460–461) nicely disentangles the power relations and identities of the individual agents at Niha, he invokes “a place to affirm an ancient ‘native’ identity” by arguing that Narkisos made use of a presupposed “nativeness” of the sacralized place. By including not only common identity markers such as provenance, dress, family, or social status, but also emphasizing what people themselves relate to in their communication with deities and humans, we come closer to the local, communal conglomeration of personal or group interests, of families, functions, and professions. Under the umbrella of Dea Syria Nihathena, the goddess of this place, the activities – visible in the shape of dedications, buildings, inscribed vows, and depictions – establish a local system of references, a local identity that forms part of people’s individual identities. By setting up a dedicational inscription or sculpting a relief, people localize themselves within this place and sacralize it. They refer in script and image to other places or institutions (*colonia* Berytus, Heliopolis, Roman military, portraiture), which points to the rhizomatic web of people and places pinned down at the place where the Dea Syria Nihathena resides. There is not only one “there” but various “theres” at Niha (cf. Massey 2005, 140).

Apart from these rather virtual spatial relations, the “production of space” through religious practices could also have occurred at the place: While we do not know where Hochmaea’s altar/base and Sextus Iullus’ stela stood, those able to read would be able to relate the two to each other, even over a distance. The descriptions in these two inscriptions refer to religious duties and agencies. Narkisos’ inscription, by contrast, is positioned on the ante of the stairs leading up to the temple while another priest had a stela that was not part of the building but was still hardly mobile. They and their images had a “sacralizing effect”, since their appearance and attributes show them as religiously active. The base/altar, with its inscriptions by people related through profession or friendship, seems to have been an object that was in continuous use: new lines

were added in order to establish a relation both through the placement of the inscription and through social aspects.

The density of and relations between the buildings, human agents, and objects within the sanctuary, the chronological coincidences and practices, the various roles and functions played by agents in establishing community (or distinction) around the very local divine agents, all contribute to making this space a lived religious space.

3.1.2 Hosn Niha: religious team work

It is not only the density *at* the sacralized places that is important, but also the density *of* the places: The closest sacralized place to Niha is Hosn Niha, 2 km up the valley to the west (Fig. 2; Newson and Young 2015). This place also belongs to a very local deity. The settlement spreads along the slope and its inhabitants would have been able to make use of the fertile soil that lined the valley bottom. On three terraces on the northern slopes, various buildings mark a sacralized place that is roughly contemporaneous to Niha: A large temple from the 2nd century CE; a smaller building with a well; and several simple rectangular buildings along the southern side of the terrace.¹⁶ On the other side of the valley, a building, divided into two rooms and with two altars in front of it, has been excavated and marks the point at which a second road crosses that which comes up from Niha.¹⁷ Water is abundant here and springs feed a kind of well-house in the sanctuary, as well as the creek running down to Niha. Apart from these connections, the sanctuary of Hosn Niha is distinct in so far as it has different functional parts and belongs to a different local god.

The buildings, temple, well-house, stock rooms (?) and terraces have not yielded any finds that would allow us to draw conclusions about the rituals that took place there. The only finds are a part of a base/altar and the inner part of a *hamana*, a kind of block surrounded by columns (Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, Fig. 190; 189). The rectangular *hamana*-block is decorated with niches at each side, formerly containing statue(tte)s, with an inscription running above one of the niches (IGLS 6, 2946, 2.5 m high). The inscription speaks about property and revenues that the local stakeholders administered

¹⁶ Cf. F, G, H on the map of Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, 122–137, esp. pl. 60; Aliquot 2009, no. 60; Yasmine 2009; 2013 for a refined chronology and the layout of the place.

¹⁷ Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, 135–136; the building at the crossroads is denominated H003 by Newson and Young 2015.

for the god Mifsenus and the *vicus* for which he is responsible. They were the *cultores dei Mifseni* in the spatial and economic realm of the god Mifsenus, who acted collectively, if not necessarily harmoniously. Four of the people who dedicated the *hamana* and were responsible for the finances have Latin names while five have Aramaic names. Apart from this differentiation, it is noteworthy that no one mentions a father's name. They do not refer to families and ancestors at all, but only to their group, their function and their god. Like Dea Syria Nihathena, this god also bears a toponymic name marked by the ending *-enus*. It was in terms of their relation to him and to the place that these nine individuals chose to present themselves.

One of Mifsenus' officials probably identified himself as *veteranus* (l. 4), while the other three who bear Roman names appear without specification. How Roman these people were in comparison to their Aramaic-named colleagues remains an open question, since onomastic characteristics cannot, *contra* Rey-Coquais,¹⁸ be taken as an ethnic identity marker. Just how blurred ethnic boundaries in the region are is made clear in the form and content of the funerary stela of the children of Gaius Claudius Marcellus: two of the three sons of a man with the *tria nomina* bear Greek names and one a Latin name (IGLS 6, 2940; Rey-Coquais 1987, 203–206). The stela is shaped in the form of a cone, with four more cones engraved in the upper part, which is typical of tomb markers in this region (Kropp 2013, 216–218). If the inscription of the *cultores dei Mifseni* is correctly dated to the 2nd century CE, the Roman administration of the area will still have been a relatively new phenomenon. Nevertheless, the presence of individuals from a wide range of places, including the Roman Empire, and with various provenances, languages, or fashions was nothing new in the valleys of the eastern Lebanon.

What is more interesting for understanding the spatio-relational dimension of identity is that the *cultores* appear as a collective of nine men identified only by their names – no family or communal affiliations are given. The kind of identity they chose to show becomes clear from the spatial setting in which the inscription is located: placed in the agricultural terrain of the god Mifsenus on the slopes of Jebel Sannine, they appear as his *vicani* without reference to families or status. The other aspects of identity simply do not play a role in this context. More important is their individual identification with the god, his economic performance, the *vicus*, and the land (Hošek 2012, 132–136). Through their connection to a particular architectural shape and a visible monument in the god's place, these individuals manifest their loyalty and services to the deity.

¹⁸ See IGLS 6, 2946, p. 211: “l’association . . . des éléments autochtones de la population et des colons romains”. For a differentiated view on onomastics, see, for example, Isaac 2009.

The term *cultores* can be treated as parallel to *katochoi*, a group of people responsible for the cult attested at Baitokaike and Har Senaim (IGLS 7, 4028; Dar and Kokkinos 1992, no. 1 with Fig. 3; IGSL 11, A/2). This group served in the financial and economical administration and in the performance of the sacralized places. It is, thus, unsurprising that a certain Sophron holds the office of *oikonomos* at Hosn Niha (IGLS 6, 2947), most likely a position related to the financial administration and investments of the *cultores*.¹⁹ The inscription and reliefs on the base here are mutilated, so that only Sophron stands out as a clearly male name among a number of other fragments.

In comparison with Niha, Hosn Niha appears to have served a different function, even though the evidence that has survived might distort the picture. Property, economic success, and organization prevail here under the auspices of Mifsenus, the god of this area alone. Ritual dress or a civic office is not the focal point of reference for any identity building here. Rather, this role is fulfilled by the terrain and the god of the place. The agents appear only in relation to him, and no other ascriptions or affiliations are applied in the services they perform for him. We can detect here a functional split, despite their proximity, between the sanctuary down the slope at Niha and that at Hosn Niha, which goes along with a clear distinction in the affiliations and allocations of the residents. People make no references to places and entities outside the terrain of Hosn Niha. Even though the territories and families must have overlapped, or at least neighbored one another, and some tasks, such as water regulation, could only have been resolved on a broader inter-communal scale, the responsibility for certain areas and the people associated with those areas rests with a certain local deity. At the risk of overinterpreting the evidence, the *hamana* block at the sacralized place with its inscription naming the *cultores* in service of the god might be interpreted as both a part and a result of “the lived space” in the valley and community of Hosn Niha.

¹⁹ Sophron may also feature on an altar/base, where a person is depicted with a veiled head in frontal view, either bearded or covering the lower parts of the face with the veil. Beside him or her, a child at the height of the shoulder is visible in profile, holding a tabula with *Sophron* written on it. More veiled figures, of whom only the heads are preserved, appear on the right side (cf. Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, 136–137). In case the two Sophron are identical, he appears in a financial and a religious office.

3.1.3 The upper and the lower Temnine: next valley, next god

If I am right in assuming a very local self-ascription of agents at Hosn Niha (through the god Mifsenus) and at Niha (through a concentration of external spaces and social entities represented by agents, texts, and images), then it makes sense to expect this small-scale religio-spatial identity pattern to continue on the slopes of Mount Lebanon.

Connected with Niha and Hosn Niha by a necropolis, we find in the valley to the north the sacralized places of Temnine el-Fouqa (Fig. 2) and Temnine el-Tahta. The upper Temnine (el-Fouqa), 1.5 km northeast of Niha as the crow flies, could be reached in less than an hour's walk. Here, a spring is enclosed by a vaulted construction dug 4 m deep into the slope. Two columns in antis mark the entrance. Inside the vaulted room, niches remain visible on three sides, as do a raised area running the length of the rear wall and a manhole for reaching the water in a deep well. The niches may have housed images of gods or just served a decorative function. The religious character of the water and place may be deduced from a rather worn relief on a cubic altar/base found close to the nymphaeum. It shows in low relief a female deity with a curled, wavy object in her right hand.²⁰ From the knees down she merges with the pedestal on which she stands, as is common for Syrian gods. Given the poor state of preservation of the relief, all proposed names for the depicted deity must remain assumptions. Nevertheless, if we take the curled object to be a snake, then this iconography would point towards Hygieia if interpreted in a Greco-Roman context, perhaps suggesting that the water was considered to have beneficial properties.

There are no traces of human agents at the spring of Temnine el-Fouqa. However, given the presence of the many tomb stones and inscriptions found between the ancient villages of Niha, Hosn Niha, and Temnine el-Tahta and el-Fouqa, we can assume a landscape on the slopes of Jebel Sannine with a considerable number of inhabitants – either living or dead (IGLS 6, 2940. 2942–2944). The accessible water at Temnine, the close-by necropoleis, and the villages and fields represent the layers of the *espace perçu* and the *espace vécu* of Lefebvre. Forms of lived space are represented by natural phenomena, anthropogenic organization of natural space, the ascription of meanings to places, and the formation of memory, which latter is closely related to various aspects of identity through its shaping of status, family, ancestors, and, finally, also divine agents.

²⁰ www.facebook.com/lebanonbaalbekmegaliths/photos/pcb.1686869351578412/1686868651578482/?type=3&theater, retrieved 5th of November 2018.

In the lower Temnine, a temple was dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Beelseddes (Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, 138–140, pl. 6; Aliquot 2009, no. 58). The Latin inscription IGLS 6, 2925 reads *I(ovi) O(ptimo) Beelseddi*, addressing the Latin high god Jupiter with the topographically descriptive Semitic epithet, Belseddes. Belseddes can mean a Baal of the mountain or of the field. The inscription was set up by three people with Latin and Greek names.²¹ The Jupiter of this mountain – the Jebel Sannine or, from a more localized perspective, its eastern slopes – seems to be an important deity with whom the people of Temnine were able to identify.

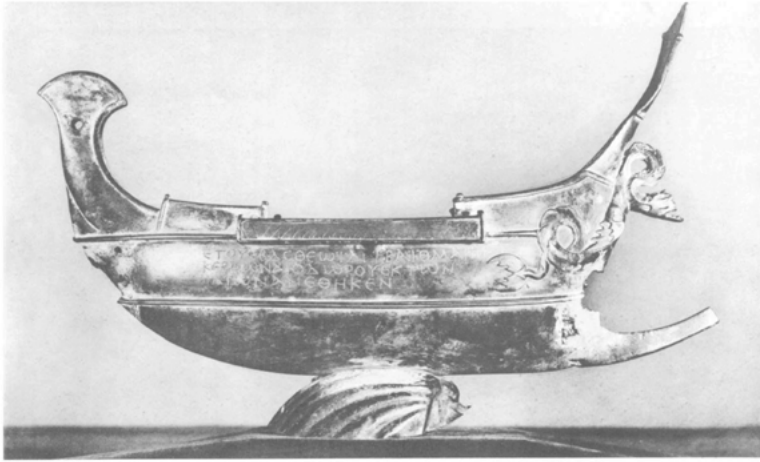
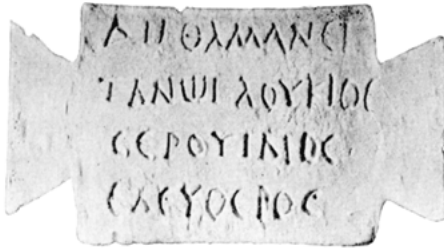
Temnine also had another local god, Zeus Thamaneitanos. An inscription on a small bronze tablet refers to the place and people of Thamneita, for which he was responsible (IGLS 6, 2960; Fig. 4).²² This was found at Zahle, c. 8 km to the southwest of Temnine, and can be attributed to the village, the name of which was later Arabicized (Aliquot 2009, no. 58). Lucius Servilius Eleutherus offered this plaque to be fixed in a wall or on a stand.

Scholars of the history of Rome's Western Asian provinces agree that there was some degree of ongoing integration and mixing of "Roman" people, i.e. Western and Central Mediterranean people, with inhabitants of the mountains and plains of Lebanon and Syria after the first colony at Berytus was founded in the 1st century CE. A close examination of the sanctuaries in these areas and their boom in the 2nd century shows the necessity but also the success of the locals in negotiating their belonging to a place and, ultimately, to a broader political and economic unit. We find Roman names and marks of status reflected in the texts, but the dedications at these places are offered up to local gods. Of course, a reorganization of land ownership was taking place during this period and there were, perhaps, more people to be fed by the existing cultivated land. However, for many inhabitants, the appropriate course of action seems to have been to build a strong relationship with the already strong local deities by using their sanctuaries (Hošek 2012, 199 – the enlargement of the territory of Augustan Berytus).

Things are rather different at Ain Housbay, c. 12 km northeast of Temnine and close to Beit Chama (Aliquot 2009, no. 56, Fig. 171). Nevertheless, the situation here also reflects the various layers of perception and construction of inhabited land. Here, *IOMH* is the addressee of a *votum* by Quintus Baebius Rufus (IGLS 6, 2923; Hošek 2012, 135–136) given in an inscription on the curved

²¹ Another dedication, this time solely to Jupiter (IGLS 6, 2926), was raised by a *libertus*.

²² See Seyrig 1954, Fig. 3, with correct measurements: 7 x 3.6 x 3 cm (with provenance from Arabia).



ΕΤΟΥΣ ΒΛΑΘΕΩΤΙΔΙ ΤΒΑΙΘΜΑΡΗΙ
 ΚΕΡΔΩΝΔΙΟΔΩΡΟΥΕΚΤΩΝ
 ΙΔΙΩΝ ΔΑΝΕΘΗΚΕΝ

Fig. 4: Bronze tablet with the inscription to Zeus Thamaneitanos (top). Bronze ship dedicated to Zeus Baithmare (below). (Seyrig 1954, 128, Fig. 3; Seyrig 1951, pl. 9 and p. 101).

moulding of the barrel-vaulted nymphaeum. The god in this case is the Jupiter worshipped at the supra-regional sanctuary at Heliopolis. The common explanation for other instances of *IOMH* in the Beqaa and the Lebanon mountains is the domination and territorial claims of the Heliopolitanian sanctuary. However, the spatial approach outlined so far shows that it was, in fact, the local deities and religious identities that provided points of references for inhabitants of this area.

The evidence from Ain Housbay shows that it was the close personal connection to Heliopolis of this particular donor that instigated the choice of this god rather than any generalized status that this god had (other Baebii IGLS 6, 2719; 2743; 2964). Baebius identifies himself as Roman, and as related to Heliopolis and its male highest god; local identities do not play a role for him in this case.

This outlier aside, each place was inhabited by an individual god: Zeus Thamaneitanos is the god of Temnine; Jupiter Beelseddes is also present at Temnine el-Tahta; the Dea Syria Nihathena was responsible for the village of Niha 1.5 km away; the Deus Mifsenus is the god at Hosn Niha. Each deity in a radius of 5 km reigns over a certain defined area and is relevant for certain groups of people that are active in the area, and each deity is ascribed certain specific competences.

The small-scale religio-spatial pattern that emerges may be related to a complex socio-political constellation, driven by the varying economic interests of the people in the Beqaa plain and on the Jebel Sannine. Generations of families seem to have integrated newcomers (Rey-Coquais 1992, 252; Hošek 2012, 130–159), looking for ways to cope with the various groups and places they belonged to or could belong to, and ways to manage the changing social relationships. It is possible to interpret the growth and reorganization of the sacralized places mentioned so far as both a part of, and a result of, these processes: people lived on this land, had ancestors' graves to visit, fields to cultivate, and gods to worship. The reorganization that began in the 1st century CE encouraged the use of practices that could help the individual position him- or herself within the various changing social groupings. The places and names of the gods remained local (in contrast to the developments at Heliopolis, see Hošek 2012, 128–148; Kaizer 2016), and in turn sacralized them by dedicational practices that maintained and fostered their local character. In seeking support, and in establishing or negotiating relations, people were able to rely on these close-by deities. They “lived” these spaces in daily practices (*perçu*), in their ascriptions of transcended responsibility (*vécu*), and in the construction of an imaginative mind-map of the flexible, dynamic spaces around them.

Underpinning locality and local references and identities only makes sense when there is a non-local environment against which one can be distinct. Hence, the Dea Syria Nihathena is only valuable if there is a Mifsenus and Zeus Thamaneita. Aliquot (2009, 62) is right to dismiss the still common opinion that all these gods are basically forms of the Heliopolitan Triad (Ronzevalle 1937; Seyrig 1961; see also Kropp 2010; Kaizer 2016), which supposition is a retrospective construction rather than a contemporary fact. These gods and goddesses are distinctively local and are closely bound to specific places. Only where Zeus (or Jupiter) Heliopolitanus is named as such does the name refer to Baalbek, as the example

from Ain Housbay demonstrates (Aliquot 2009, Fig. 108). In addition, Romans or Roman colonists at Yammoune (Aliquot 2009, no. 52; IGLS 6, 2918) and Karak Nouh (IGLS 6, 2953; 2955 Gnaeus Iulius Rufus) speak of their connections to Heliopolis or Berytus, connections that might also be mirrored in architectonic similarities between temple architecture at Heliopolis and, for example, the temples at Niha and Hosn Niha (Yasmine 2009).

On the one hand, addressing a local god with a localizing epithet makes it clear to where the divine agent and his or her human counterpart belong. On the other hand, it is only necessary to name the locale if either outsiders or non-locals are present and if one feels the need to distinguish oneself from them, as with the need to distinguish one's own village identity from that of the next village over. Since many of the temple areas were also heavily involved in cadastral, economic, and redistributory services (Hosn Niha, Ferzol; IGLS 6, 2951),²³ the denomination of a local divinity responsible for the local community makes even more sense. The locale is the background against which the individuals and families of one community could make themselves distinct from another.

3.2 Village, community, and deity in the Mount Hermon region: small environmental and social boundaries

3.2.1 Zeus at Baithmare – a local Zeus as identificational model

Further south, on the northern slopes of Mount Hermon, we have only little, yet still rather promising, evidence of local deities and the relationships they had with local residents. Theos Zeus Baithmare received here a bronze ship, transformed at a later point into a lamp, given by Kerdon, son of Diodoros (Seyrig 1951, 121/122 CE, era of Sidon; Fig. 4). The find spot is about 5 km away from a village named Bab Mar'a (IGLS 6, 2989). I follow Seyrig (1951, 102) in connecting the Zeus with the toponymic epithet Baithmare to this village, which is about 5 km from the first "appearance" of the ship in Aithenit, a village 5 km to the south, roughly between Sidon and Caesarea Philippi.

Bab Mar'a is a hotspot for finds: Others in the area include a statue of a cuirassed god and the marble head of a female ideal sculpture, probably also a deity. Moreover, a jug, a statuette, and a lamp, as well as pieces of chains – all made from bronze – have been found (Seyrig 1951, 120–123). There is no trace

²³ Cf. IGLS 6, 2734. 2735 to Mercurius at Sheikh Abdallah close to Heliopolis.

here of a sacralized place dedicated to this Zeus, and we cannot be sure to what contexts the described pieces belong.

Even if these objects do not allow for far-reaching interpretations, we can still say with some certainty that the place is more than just a sacred place at the border of the territories of two cities, Sidon and Caesarea Philippi. It is also more than just an attestation of the “vitality and independence of village life”.²⁴ If we examine the evidence from the perspective of place-bound identity and lived space, the place offers an important point of reference for the people living there. A local high god is the point of reference and identification for those worshipping him, and a sign of distinction from other gods and their places in the area. The pieces of sculptures, the metal objects, and the dedication to Zeus Baithmare from the village at the southern end of the Beqaa plain thus not only attest to the community of the village with its god, but also to ways in which people engaged in making their living there communicated and negotiated – under the auspices of Zeus – local demands, needs, and identities. The local god offers a powerful basis for interacting with the cities along the coast (Sidon and Tyros), or in the Hermon (Caesarea Philippi) or Bekka (Heliopolis) areas. Its position on the border with the area of Caesarea Philippi (hence, with Galilee) might lead one to call it the border sanctuary of a local Zeus, while the proximity to Sidon might be thought to indicate that it is a territorial “extra-urban” sanctuary of the city. Yet these terms grasp only one aspect of the character of such a place of a god: sacred places in the ongoing process of sacralization through rituals are locales through which a city can mark off its territory. However, this interpretation takes only partial account of the people living in these places. The continuity of individuals and families living at certain places might be stronger than the shifting constellations of territorial claims. The sacralized places are lived spaces, formed by and containing traces of stories, relations, memories, etc., which are enacted through the worship of a local deity, in this case Zeus Baithmare on Mount Hermon. The place of Zeus Baithmare, his village, and the community for which he is responsible, is comparable to the sacralized area of Dea Syria Nihathena. The concentration, and hence the point of communication and negotiation, is created by the god or goddess, his or her worshippers, and the place in its larger environmental and political setting.²⁵

²⁴ Millar 1993, 287, explaining thus the density of sacralized places in Lebanon.

²⁵ People at Haloua in the northwestern parts of the Hermon (Aliquot 2009, no. 89) worshipped another local Zeus. On the meaning of *kyrios* as acclamation also for Zeus in Greco-Roman dedications see Belayche this volume.

3.2.2 Leukothea at Rakhle and at Segeira – the integrating divine figure

Close to Baithmare and its gods lies a place and village under the protection of the Leukothea of Rakhla, *thea Leukothea Rachlas* (IGLS 11, 23). The ancient village is situated on the northeastern slopes of Mount Hermon (Dar 1988; Dar and Kokkinos 1992; Fig. 1). Findings which point to the deity Leukothea come from the northeastern parts of the modern village (Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938, 223–226; Aliquot 2009, no. 106).²⁶ The goddess with the Greek name is denominated not with a local but with a societal epithet – the genitive of the community to which she belongs, or which belongs to her (IGLS 6, 23). The inscription dates to 268/69 CE and mentions two *hierotamiai* of this goddess using some silver from the deity's property for the doors of a building (Sartre 1993, 54–55, no. 3; IGLS 11, 23; Bonnet 1986). *Thea Leukothea*, without the local epithet, received another dedication in the 1st or 2nd century (IGLS 6, 21). Earlier, in 60 CE, there was only a *thea* venerated at Rakhle (IGLS 6, 20. 22). In the second inscription, it is the plain mention of *thea* that can be interpreted as a localized form of the goddess Leukothea, even though the stone in which the text was inscribed is not preserved, but stood somewhere at Rakhle. Hence, the *thea* is referred to through the position of the dedicational text and is associated with that place. The earliest inscription from Rakhle, IGLS 11, 20, dated to 60 CE, refers to a personalized deity – *thea Moithou*. This strategy of making deities unique by “personalizing” them is common in, for example, southern Syria (cf. Theandrios at Kanatha, Aliquot 2008, 287). The inscription to *thea Moithou* speaks about a building in her sacralized place, while the subsequent inscriptions (IGLS 6, 21–30) speak about renovations; money was not a problem here, it seems. We can infer from these texts that the goddess of Rakhle not only had personnel responsible for overseeing her cult, buildings, and visitors, but also for managing the property of the deity. As the deity of the village's community, her property is identical to that of the villagers.

From the northern slopes of Mount Hermon (Qalaat Jendal) originates an inscription in which *Leucothea Segeiron* features at the end of the text on a large marble slab (Fig. 1. 5; IGLS 11, 39). Where exactly ancient Segeira was located remains an open question (Aliquot 2002 on the location, esp. p. 246). However, we can see that people from this place venerated the goddess Leukothea as the goddess of the villagers, the social body of the place (Bonnet

²⁶ The deity to whom the remains of a second temple building were dedicated is not clear.

- Ἔτους ορ´, μηνὸς Λάφου ε´ · Θεᾶς Μοιθοῦ τοῦ Ραιο[υ]
 [.]ΑΙΔΟΑ[. .]ΑΙΑC Αμαρου, Ῥο(μ)α(ν)ός Ζαβδα, Μοιθ[ος]
 Αβιδαναας, Νετιρο[ς] Σιλουανοῦ, Συμ[---]
 4 Θολε(μ)ος Κη(δ)αμ[ου], Μαββογαιο[ς ---]
 Ο(κ)βαα [δι]οικητ[αί ---]

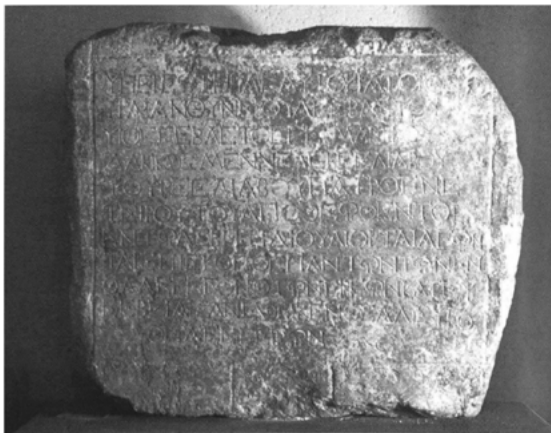
IGLS 11, 20 (60 c. CE)

- Ἀγαθῆ Τύχη · θεᾶς Λευκοθέα[ς], ἐπὶ ἀρχῇ Βε[ε]λκ-
 αμου (δι)ά Μνασῆα Πτολεμῆσου καὶ [---]ΝΑ[---]
 δα καὶ Αματεου Βεελι(α)βου καὶ Σωβου [--- καὶ Αεια]-
 4 νους Βεελιαβου καὶ Βεελιαβου Αειανου[ς καὶ ---]
 [.]C Βεελκαμου καὶ Φαλεου Αμρεου ΓΕ[---]
 διοικητῶν --- ca 16 lettres ---]ΥCΕΙΔΟ[---]

IGLS 11, 21 (1st or 2nd c. CE)

- Θεᾶς Λευκοθέας Ρα-
χλας, ἱεροταμίαι Αμαρ-
 ουρος Σελεύκου ἱερέως κα-
 4 ἰ Αβισσης Ζαβδαανα Αραβια
 τὰ λειψθέντα παρ' αὐτο-
 ῖς ἀργύρια ἀνάλωσαν τὰ
 ὑπὲρ τῆς θύρας, ἔ-
 8 τους θοτ'.

IGLS 11, 23 (269 CE)



IGLS 11, 39 (early 2nd c. CE)

Fig. 5: Inscriptions of Leucothea from Rakhle (top) and Segeira (below). (IGLS 11, 20. 21. 23. 39).

1986; Sartre 1993, 57–58; Kaizer 2005).²⁷ Since marble is used for inscribing and offering the dedication to the goddess, we can assume a choice and effort on the part of the commissioners and dedicators: marble is a rare and very unusual material throughout this entire region.

Alongside the bias of the extant pieces towards financial issues, another characteristic in the texts is the predominance of certain names, and perhaps the families of the cultic officials. Six inscriptions from the 1st to 3rd centuries CE (IGLS 11, 20–25) feature Amreos/Amaros, Zabdas, Seleukos, and Beeliabos, hinting at a family dynasty of officials. For a certain group of families at Rakhle, the strong interest in the goddess and the village was connected to the responsibility and power involved in the control of the revenues from the property of the deity. Even though other inhabitants of the area and the village are not represented in the epigraphical material (the only image-object is the eagle on the lintel),²⁸ parts of the population did their very best to create a long-lasting rootedness in that place. What makes the difference here is the local form. In a way that is comparable to Christian saints who have the same name (and comparable functions) wherever they are venerated, the localized appearances gain significance in, for example, the form of pilgrimages, and serve as signs of local identity.

So, why is Leukothea so prominent in these two villages of Mount Hermon during the Roman period?²⁹ The preference for Leukothea in Syria Phoenice (and Syria) is often explained by reference to the importance of this Greek Mediterranean goddess for women and for seafaring. But this is a Greco-Roman-centric view. If we confine ourselves to these mountain communities in the province of Syria, Leukothea is equivalent to the many “localized” Zeuses. We can track down her potential to be used for strategies of constructing place-bound identity in the global setting of a Greco-Roman Mediterranean. In the Roman period, Leukothea no longer appears as a “foreign” Greek goddess, since she has been assimilated to Atargatis. As Lightfoot 2003, 71 states, “Leukothea is attested in a fairly specific area, but even within that her own contexts seem to differ . . . So even within her relatively limited compass, it is unlikely that all her local forms were direct equivalents of Atargatis.” Leukothea is capable of being the deity of numerous particular spots in Phoenicia and Syria, with epithets giving her local guises in each case. The addition of the village or the villagers to the deity’s name

²⁷ The similarity of the dedicational inscription to funerary inscriptions (Aliquot 2002, contrary to Bonnet 1986) might also point to a very local tradition and background.

²⁸ Only one funerary inscription is preserved (IGLS 11, 33) at Rakhle.

²⁹ For all the places in the Lebanon mountains where Leukothea was worshipped, see Aliquot 2009, Fig. 108.

makes this local affiliation clear: making an offering to this Leukothea is a statement in favor of a certain local community and place.

Religion, and with it the veneration of gods and goddesses, serves to stabilize social relationships and institutions. This explains the strategy of local attributions and affiliations by and for agents. Spatializing religion makes it work on a local level, from which we can then extrapolate to larger societal entities.³⁰ Even if a local identification of and with the god or goddess is implicit at all sacralized places, because the deity is present at his or her site, the evidence for the addition of the name of a place or community, an epithet as her or his specification, still implies a wish on the behalf of the local residents to emphasize and display the local divine power.

4 Spatializing religion and localizing identities as one approach to the archaeology of religion in the Roman provinces of Western Asia

The examples of the places, people, and gods of the Roman provinces of Syria and Syria Phoenice from the 1st to the 3rd century CE, discussed above in the context of their material and social particularities, demonstrate the close relationship between local identities, lived religion, and lived space in these parts of the Roman Empire. Hence, we can speak of the locally-lived identities of people in the Mount Lebanon, Beqaa plain, or Mount Hermon areas. It is not only the religious dimension of identity building that has become clear through the strong connection of individuals to local deities and their sacralized places, but also the deities' impact on and relationships with groupings and individuals.

In order to maintain my focus on the local character of the deities and their role in establishing and negotiating rather small-scale identities, I have not examined many of the historical, political, and socio-economic dimensions of the places discussed here. The deities and their sacralized places at Niha, Hosn Niha, and Temnine el-Fouqa and el-Tahta are embedded in a small-scale landscape of finely-tuned spatial and functional distinctions. The deities are named after the place, or vice versa (Dea Syria Nihathena), or they are unique (Mifsenus). The small distances between the deities and their places leads to localized

³⁰ What we learn from the spatial approach to religion correlates with results from economic and administrative surveys in the region and corroborates e.g. Millar 1993, 287 (on the independence of village life).

specifications and demonstrates the desire for local religious points of reference for the people living close by. The example of Leukothea on Mount Hermon demonstrates how a goddess – despite her widely acknowledged competences – features as the *local* deity, corresponding to the various Zeuses with their own local specifications. Small-scale natural, material, and personal conditions and environments fostered the development of the deities attributed to the corresponding spatial and social entities. As Kaizer 2005, 204 has stated, “religion in the Roman Near East ought to be approached first and foremost from the local perspective.”

The need for, and interest in, very local gods lies in shifting borders and the changes in political power and economic relationships in the period between the 1st and the 3rd centuries CE. The net of local divine agents served to stabilize this highly variable environment, and added to their local identity, one of the presumably many identities that people in this area had. Approaching religion in a strictly spatial manner and analyzing religious places as lived spaces contributes to a picture of lived religion in Roman Syria. It acknowledges the local and conveys the narrow interrelations of localities, local religion and local identity.

The combination of a spatial methodology of the lived space and the analytical paradigm of lived religion focuses the lens through which we can view individual religious choices or the choices taken by groups at a certain place in comparison with the choices of other practitioners at the same location, nearby, in a wider area, or lastly in the wider context of the Mediterranean (cf. Sommer 2009). This approach re-locates and contextualizes archaeological evidence of human agents in non-urban, rural areas as a first step towards interpreting it. A narrative of the history of the religion of the Western Asian Roman provinces has to start on this level, before it can begin to deal with sanctuaries and their building history, with supra-regional divine triads, and with the territories that were steered and influenced by cities and their officials.

The perspective of lived religious spaces I have presented here accounts for the situational, space-producing character of religious practices. The approach to lived, practiced, and material religion, complemented with concepts of (the production of) space, enables us to revise overly narrow views of architecturally formed spaces (“temple”) within a natural space (“landscape”). It opens up new perspectives on the sacralized places and landscapes in which human and divine agents interact, with the goal of establishing and negotiating bonds and identities, as well as self-world relations. Acknowledging these processes generates a picture of religious practices and places in the distinctive regions of Roman Syria that is dynamic and fluid rather than static. Religious places thus become more than mere dots on a map.

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Rubina Raja

Come and dine with us: invitations to ritual dining as part of social strategies in sacred spaces in Palmyra

Abstract: This article investigates the so-called banqueting tesserae from Palmyra, which were used to gain entrance to religious banquets in Palmyra. In antiquity, banquets, ritual dining and sacred meals were pivotal societal practices through which groups and individuals could situate and regulate themselves and others within broader complex societal settings. Banquets functioned as a cultural practice, which would have been learned and which certain segments of society would certainly have become accustomed to from childhood. Such learning processes would have been part of the general socialization of children in order to shape them into individuals who could participate in the overall range of activities required by adults in order to form part of a broader community. For sure, dining practices would have been important to learn in the Greek and Roman cultural spheres if one belonged to the higher layers of society, where joint meals in domestic, public and religious contexts were a way of practicing accepted social behavior. In the context of this paper, the Palmyrene material is reassessed and examined in order to unlock these tiny items as pivotal objects in broader social strategies in Roman Palmyra.

1 Banquets and their societal meanings

In antiquity, banquets, ritual dining and sacred meals were pivotal societal practices through which groups and individuals could situate and regulate

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themselves and others within broader complex societal settings.¹ Banquets functioned as a cultural practice, which would have been learned and which certain segments of society would certainly have become accustomed to from childhood. Such learning processes would have been part of the general socialization of children in order to shape them into individuals who could participate in the overall range of activities required by adults in order to form part of a broader community.² For sure, dining practices would have been important to learn in the Greek and Roman cultural spheres if one belonged to the higher layers of society, where joint meals in domestic, public and religious contexts were a way of practicing accepted social behavior. Joint dining was not only observed in ancient so-called – for lack of a better word – pagan cults, but was also an essential element in both Judaism and Christianity.³ Furthermore, joint dining could also take place outside of religious contexts. Eating and drinking could bring people together around a topic, namely that of food and drink, and such a setting, with its different sensations of smell and taste and also often sound (music and/or singing), might not only have provided something to look forward to, but might also in the situation itself have allowed for tension to be released and conversation to flow more freely.⁴ Food and drink were also, in antiquity as they are today, social currencies through which status, prestige and societal standing evolved.

Extensive research has been undertaken on the nature of ritual banqueting in antiquity and opinions have differed immensely as to what in fact

1 Fabricius 1999. Also see Dentzer 1982 for a standard work on banqueting reliefs. For recent contributions on banqueting reliefs, see Draycott and Stamatopoulou 2016. In that volume, see especially Fabricius 2016, Baughan 2016, Lockwood 2016 and Audley-Miller 2016, which are of particular relevance to this article.

2 See for example Ochs and Shohet 2006 for an article which deals with mealtime practice as an essential way of socializing children in modern societies. It is interesting to observe that they underline that the cultural knowledge accumulated through understanding how to behave at mealtimes, through practice and language, is expressed even more at special events, such as feasts and ritual occasions (p. 47). It is important to notice that we take for granted that individuals in ancient societies would have known how to conduct themselves in banqueting situations, whereas in fact such practices must have been learned and practiced before one could attend such events together with members outside the immediate family.

3 Also see Nielsen 2014 for buildings in which such groups would have met as well as further references to publications on banqueting.

4 See for example Kleibl 2009 for examples stemming from the Isis sanctuaries across the Roman world. Also see the recently published collected volume edited by Gasparini and Veymiers (2018) for contributions dealing with numerous aspects of the Isis cult, also involving considerations of dining and the senses involved in the religious practices within this cult.

went on at such banquets and what they would have meant to individuals and groups.⁵ Such research into the nature of ancient banqueting is often based on the visual representations of these banquets, which are handed down to us in the shape of reliefs on a variety of monuments – including rock-cut facades, graves, sarcophagus lids and public buildings and through images in wall paintings as well as mosaics.⁶ The banqueting motif was indeed one that was popular in ancient art. The architecture attesting to banqueting shows us that communal dining took place in a variety of societal contexts: private homes, sanctuaries and both publicly and privately owned buildings.⁷ We must assume that a wide range of local and regional traditions existed depending on the specific settings and that some traditions might have spanned across vast regions if, for example, they were transmitted via a particular cult, such as that of Mithras and other so-called mystery cults.⁸ However, what remains common for conclusions made about ritual banquets, which were a wide-spread phenomenon in antiquity across time and space, is that they seem to have been a popular way to celebrate and offer respect to the gods or to commemorate deceased individuals, while also offering people a social space in which to interact with other individuals and, not to forget, also enjoy food and drink.⁹ While on the one hand celebrating the divine or the dead, basic human needs were also remembered at

5 See the recent volume by Draycott and Stamatopoulou (2016) on dining and death, which offers a string of high-quality contributions dealing with a variety of banquets, in particular those that are connected to funerary rites and death in general, spanning from the Mediterranean world across the Levant and as far east as China. Also see Draycott's introduction in the same volume for a thorough overview of the most important literature published on banqueting in antiquity and a strong historiographical contextualization of research already undertaken. Here I mention only a few of the most important works, which have been part of creating turns in the way in which we deal with banqueting in antiquity. These works include Dunbabin 2003; Dentzer 1982 (in French and therefore having received little attention in some newer non-French works on banquets, whereas Fehr's review (1984) of Dentzer's book received a lot of attention).

6 See Dunbabin 2003 and Dentzer 1982 for two standard works on the banqueting motif in Greek and Roman art.

7 Nielsen 2014 for a monograph which considers the architectural remains of constructions belonging to religious groups of various kinds. The bibliography holds a string of useful references and the book does show how it is in fact highly complex and difficult to interpret architectural remains and their original functions. Also see the earlier publication by van Nijf 1997 for primarily non-religious associations in the Roman East.

8 Publications by Benedikt Eckhardt, who has published extensively on ritual dining in ancient societies in broader contexts in recent years, provide a good insight into the various mechanisms and patterns in ritual dining. See for example Eckhardt 2009; 2016; 2017a; 2017b.

9 E.g. Dentzer 1982; Dunbabin 2003; Effenberger 1972; Murray 1988.

these events through the – often regulated – distribution of food and drink. However, not everyone was invited to these events. Banquets, be they *Totenmahle* (meals for the dead) or not, were always in one way or another closed or exclusive events to which one would have been invited for special reasons, e.g. if one was a member of a certain family or of a certain group. Social regulation was inherent to the nature of banqueting in antiquity. The banquet itself as well as the time leading up to it were situations which involved the playing out of complex societal patterns. At some times, these might have been more complex than at others. For closed exclusive groups, it might have been quite clear who was to be invited or not, such as in the case of Mithraic groups. However, in other cases this might not have been completely obvious from the outset, and maybe such ambiguity was even wished for and could be productive in negotiations about societal and religious situations and in circumstances where interaction between different groups had to take place.¹⁰

While it might be too generalizing to say that ritual banquets in principle had the same function in all places across the ancient Mediterranean world and beyond, it is appealing and probably appropriate to conclude that just as celebrating Christmas in Christian contexts is a celebration of one specific event – the birth of Jesus – ritual banquets would also have celebrated one thing: namely the recognition of the supposed existence of the divine, although taking place within a wide variety of contexts and traditions, which might have differed greatly in their details. Coming together around food and drink in structured settings is a basic human practice, which has been developed, changed and refined over thousands of years in numerous cultural settings, and the prevalence of the banqueting motif testifies to this practice.

While ritual banquets often seem to have been connected with death and burials, there were also established banqueting traditions which were not centered around the *Totenmahl*, or funerary banquet. In this paper, such non-funerary banquets that were held in the sanctuaries of Palmyra and their role within Palmyrene society are revisited.¹¹ This is done here primarily through a discussion of the iconography of the long overlooked – but crucial material

¹⁰ I have written about such notions in the context of Palmyrene religious life in Raja 2016a, in particular, 362–366.

¹¹ Audley-Miller's contribution in Draycott and Stamatopoulou 2016 deals with the banqueting reliefs in the graves of Palmyra on a general level, setting them apart from the funerary banquets. See Krag and Raja 2017 for a contribution that addresses the role of women and children in the Palmyrene banqueting reliefs. This contribution shows that a full overview of the material is needed in order to make broader generalizations about the use of these motifs and their original contexts.

evidence – so-called banqueting tesserae, which indeed might be considered one of the most important sources for the study of Palmyrene religion.¹² While the banqueting tesserae of Palmyra have been treated in scholarship for several decades, they have not been considered as objects which held specific meanings in certain and time-limited situations until recently.¹³ Sacred space in Palmyra has been examined in much more detail, and the religious life of Palmyra in general has been treated by a number of scholars over the last century, but the relationship between the physical spaces and the more ephemeral material of the tesserae have not often been connected in order to try to understand the ritual banquet in Palmyra in a more nuanced light.¹⁴

2 Tadmor in the Syrian Desert – an oasis city and a crossroads

We do not know much about Palmyra, an oasis city in the Syrian Desert situated half way between the Mediterranean coast and the river Euphrates, before the Roman period.¹⁵ The name of the site is, however, mentioned already in sources

12 I have dealt with the Palmyrene banqueting tesserae in a number of earlier publications and explained them as objects which hold much and crucial information about the religious life of Palmyra and which remain understudied. See Raja 2016a; 2015a; 2015b. Also see Kaizer and Raja 2018 on tesserae from Palmyra in the journal *Syria*. This contribution deals with a specific sign, earlier called the rain sign, used in the religious symbolism of the city. We show that it was rather a sign which indicated the presence of the divine without using names of deities. Also see the contribution by Schmidt-Colinet 2011 which considers the Palmyrene banquet, as well as Gnoli 2016. An important contribution on the ritual banquet in Palmyra has been published by Kaizer 2008, who also in his 2002 monograph on the religious life of Palmyra addresses the banquet tradition in the city, in particular 198–199 and 213–233.

13 See Raja (forthcoming) for a publication which considers the impact of such interpretations. See the corpus by Ingholt, Seyrig and Starcky 1955 which remains a standard work on the tesserae, but which did not allow for much interpretation as to their significance for Palmyrene religious practices. Also see du Mesnil du Buisson 1944 and 1962. The 1944 volume included only images – among them numerous tesserae. The text volume was subsequently published in 1962. The interpretations of du Mesnil du Buisson are largely outdated and often downright wrong. Other publications which have added invaluable knowledge about the tesserae include Dunant 1959 as well as al-As'ad, Briquel-Chatonnet and Yon 2005.

14 For standard works on Palmyrene religion and religious life, see: Gawlikowski 1979–1980; 2014; Gawlikowski and Pietrzykowski 1980; Kaizer 2002. See Dirven 1999 for a study of Palmyrenes and their religious life outside of Palmyra.

15 For overview introductions to Palmyra see the recent works by Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2008; Andrade 2013; Smith 2013; Sartre and Sartre-Fauriat 2014; Andrade 2018. Also see the

from the second millennium BCE, which were found in Mari.¹⁶ The oasis city, which flourished because of the perennial Efqā spring, therefore seems to have gone far back in time and have functioned as a crossroads or focal point in the Syrian Desert. Then, the site was called Tadmor, which was the name it kept also in the Roman period. Palmyra became part of the wider Roman world when Pompey conquered the region in the 60s BCE.¹⁷ However, it is only for the somewhat later period that we truly begin to grasp the archaeology at the site and its development, namely from around the turn of the first millennium. Palmyrene society in the Roman period was structured around tribes, which can be considered large extended family groups.¹⁸ In Palmyra, we know of between 12 and 14 of these tribes. In the Roman period, they seem to have been reorganized into four tribes, but it remains unknown what this reorganization in fact meant to Palmyrene society overall and whether it might simply have been an administrative reorganization and not one which would have had a day-to-day effect on the community. The society must have been tightly knit, and the families must all have known of each other and interacted in a variety of societal spheres.¹⁹ The funerary sculptural material and the graves in Palmyra in general underline the importance of the family to the construction of Palmyrene society, since these graves were family graves financed by one family patriarch or in some cases several Palmyrene men from the same family.

It is widely known that Palmyrenes were active in long-distance trade in the Roman period, and that the city's wealth came from this trade.²⁰ The first three centuries CE were those in which the city flourished immensely and

still important articles Millar 1987; and Sartre 1996 which deal with the history of the region and city in a broader context.

16 Gawlikowski 1974; Klengel 1996, 159–162; Dirven 1999, 18–19.

17 See Kropp and Raja (eds) 2016 for a set of contributions which all focus on the history and archaeology of Palmyra. Also see the standard works by Millar 1993; Sartre 2001. These monographs have colored all research undertaken since their publication and still do. Basically, the authors argue along two opposing lines of understanding of the region. While Millar goes so far as to claim a 'cultural amnesia' in the region between the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Sartre advocates that the region was steeped in a deep-rooted Greek past.

18 See the following publications for considerations on the development of Palmyra and its societal structure: Kaizer 2002; Gawlikowski 1997; 2003; Smith 2013.

19 See now the recent volume edited by Long and Højen Sørensen (2017), which includes a number of articles dealing with representations of city's elite and their trades.

20 For some important contributions on the trade of Palmyra see: Gawlikowski 1994; 1996; Seland 2015; Meyer, Seland and Anfinset 2016; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2008; Kaizer 2015.

rose to fame. When Zenobia took power in Palmyra reigning for her underage son, the Palmyrenes tried to break free from the Roman Empire, and for a short while, the Palmyrene territory extended and included Egypt and large parts of Anatolia.²¹ In 273 CE, the city fell to the legions of the Roman Emperor Aurelian, who for the second time sacked the city. After this second attack, the city did not rise again, and Zenobia was captured and her fate remains unknown to us despite the speculations and stories told in the sources. Although the city never fully recovered or regained its status as an important trade node, it did live on in some form, and more scholarly emphasis has in recent years been put on understanding the site in the post-Zenobian era.²² The city, although only very partially explored, remains mostly known for its monumental architecture, which includes colonnaded streets, large sanctuaries, temples, and public spaces as well as the well-known hypogea and tower tombs, which are visible from anywhere in the city. Palmyra's city core was one which centered upon the greenery of the oasis and monumental Sanctuary of Bel and stretched from there towards the desert.²³ The Sanctuary of Bel, which was the main sanctuary of the city, stood at the end of the colonnaded main street, hovering majestically over the rest of the cityscape. However, the city also had a string of other sanctuaries, such as the Sanctuary of Nabu, that of Baalshamin and the one of Allat.²⁴ Furthermore, in the main Sanctuary of Bel, other gods of Palmyra were also worshipped, namely Yarhibol and Aglibol. The city had a complex religious life, which lay in the hands of the Palmyrene male elite, as far as we can tell from the textual evidence.²⁵

21 For recent contributions on the age of Zenobia and her role in the fate of Palmyra, see Sartre and Sartre-Fauriat 2014; Andrade 2018.

22 See Intagliata 2018, also for further literature.

23 Gawlikowski 2015.

24 Gawlikowski 1973; 1976; 1983a; 1983b; 1990a; 1990b; 1991; 2014; Kaizer 2002 for the cults and sanctuaries known in Palmyra as well as further literature.

25 Kaizer 2002. Also see Raja 2016b; 2017c for recent contributions on Palmyrene priesthoods and their relations to the elite of Palmyra and implications for structure of the religious life. On the elites of Palmyra, see the standard works by Yon 1999; 2002. Also see the edited volume by Raja 2019 for contributions dealing with a variety of aspects of the religious life of the city in the Roman period.

3 The banqueting tesserae as tools for social inscenation – the SoMe of the Palmyrene male elite

It is within this framework of an elite-driven society that the so-called banqueting tesserae must be understood and contextualized. The tesserae were small objects, often measuring no more than a few centimeters in diameter and usually made of clay, although examples of bronze, iron, glass and lead are also known.²⁶ They were made in unique series of numerous pieces. One lot, which is considered complete and consisting of 125 tesserae, was found buried in a pot in a sanctuary (al-As'ad, Briquel-Chatonnet and Yon 2005). This find indicates that the tesserae had not been distributed, since tesserae normally are found scattered across the site or in large amounts in other parts of the sanctuaries. In particular in the banqueting hall of the Sanctuary of Bel, large amounts have been found, not least in the drainage connected to the hall. More than 1100 different series or types of the tesserae are known.²⁷ While this sounds like many, in reality when divided over a potential time span of three hundred years, this amounts to one series made roughly every 110 days, so three times a year. Of course such an equation is highly theoretical, but it is important to clarify that the tesserae seem to have been quite restricted in use and most likely were only used at very special occasions and not at all banquets held in the sanctuaries in the city. It might also have been that the tesserae were a phenomenon only used for a short time in Palmyra. This is, however, difficult to say, since the tesserae cannot be dated on the basis of style or typology, because they are so small and developments over time cannot be detected.

While it has been claimed that the tesserae were produced in connection with heroization banquets, this seems very unlikely.²⁸ There is nothing in the iconography of the tesserae which testifies to a heroization or divinization of

²⁶ I have dealt with the tesserae in earlier publications and will not give all references to other publications here, since they are all listed in my earlier publications. See Raja 2015a, 183–186 for the nature of the tesserae and the way in which they were produced and used. Furthermore see Raja 2015b and 2016a for other publications on the tesserae. Ingholt, Seyrig and Starcky 1955 remains the standard work on these objects, but is in the meanwhile due for an update. This publication also records the other materials that tesserae could be made of. See also Raja 2015a, 184 for a listing of those.

²⁷ Ingholt, Seyrig and Starcky 1955.

²⁸ Hvidberg-Hansen and Ploug 1993, 18–20 and in the tesserae part of the catalogue. They conclude this on the basis of stars, which sometimes are located on both sides of the heads of the Palmyrene priests shown on the tesserae, and they also imply that the reclining priests

deceased Palmyrenes taking place.²⁹ The iconography of the tesserae is highly varied for such small objects and includes a wide range of religious symbols, representations of deities, and inscriptions, as well as signet ring seal imprints, which make for a highly individualized imagery for each series of tesserae. We must assume that a signet ring would have identified a specific priest. This conclusion is supported by the fact that many of the male funerary busts display such rings on one of their fingers, underlining that the tradition of using such rings to put one's individual mark on important documents was flourishing in Palmyra. But one element which is repeated on the majority of the tesserae is the depiction of Palmyrene priests wearing their distinct Palmyrene priestly hats.³⁰ Most often, these priests are shown as small full figures laying on a *kline* at a banquet, but sometimes they are also represented in bust form or standing (Figs. 1–6). Sometimes, the figures are accompanied by inscriptions giving us the names of the priests or of the group of priests they belonged to and who hosted and paid for the banquet. Priests in Palmyra were plentiful. In the corpus collected within the framework of the Palmyra Portrait Project, representations of Palmyrene priests make up more than 10 percent of the entire corpus and more than 20 percent of all male representations.³¹ These numbers are significant, because they give insight into the fact that Palmyrene priesthoods were commonly held within the elite male groups of Palmyra and that they were often primarily status symbols rather than professions.³² Palmyrene priesthoods were, so to say, not only religious offices but also positions which expressed societal power and high standing (Raja 2016b; 2017b). Thus, the tesserae, which were closely connected to Palmyrene priests and the groups to which they belonged, must be seen in a different light than they have been until now. They can be viewed as tokens of power – power to give access to

might have been dead and shown in a position of being honored by their group of priests. However, there is nothing to indicate that such an interpretation holds up.

29 Contra Hvidberg-Hansen and Ploug; Gnoli 2016; Kaizer 2002 as well as Raja 2015a; 2015b; 2016a.

30 See Raja 2016b; 2017d; 2017c; 2017b for a collection of articles on Palmyrene priesthood and further references. See in particular Raja 2018b for a recent contribution on the terminology earlier used for the Palmyrene priestly hat. Also, see Stucky 1973 for an earlier important contribution on Palmyrene priests, as well as Kaizer 2002, 234–241.

31 See Raja 2018a; 2019 for very recent contributions, which include a report on the status of the Palmyra Portrait Project and the corpus which now comprises more than 3,700 funerary portraits of deceased Palmyrenes. Also, see Krag 2018 for a monograph on the female representations.

32 See Raja 2017c; 2017a for further considerations on this aspect of Palmyrene societal structure and patterns.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 1: Tesserula from the collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (IN 3213) depicting reclining priest in full figure on the obverse and a signet seal imprint of a portrait in profile on the reverse (photo by Anders Sune Berg; copyright Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, reproduced courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).



Fig. 2: Tessera from the collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (IN 3198) depicting reclining priest in full figure on the obverse and busts of deities on the reverse (photo by Anders Sune Berg; copyright Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, reproduced courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

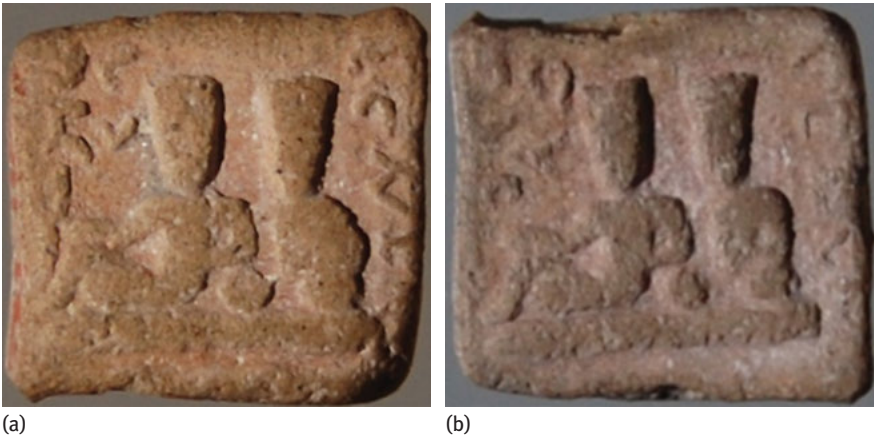


Fig. 3: Tessera from the collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (IN 1143) depicting two reclining priests in full figure on either side of the tessera (photo by Anders Sune Berg; copyright Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, reproduced courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

high status and attractive events, such as the religious banquets which we know, from the archaeological contexts, took place in the sanctuaries of Palmyra, not least in the banqueting hall located in the *temenos* of its main sanctuary, that of Bel (Fig. 7).

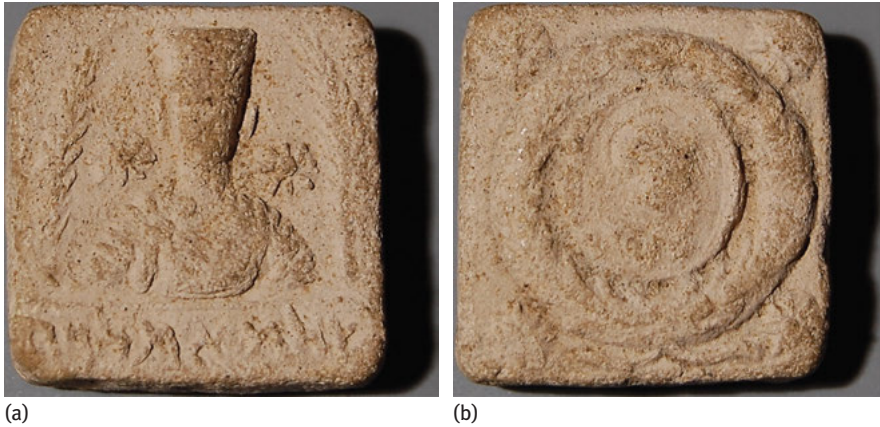


Fig. 4: Tesserera from the collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (IN 3215) depicting a Palmyrene priest in bust shape on the obverse and a signet seal imprint showing the head of Athena in profile set in a wreath on the reverse (photo by Anders Sune Berg; copyright Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, reproduced courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

How could such power – power to use the main banqueting hall of Palmyra and other sanctuaries – be achieved by a certain group of Palmyrene men, who likely even belonged to a string of different religious groupings? On the one hand, their high societal status must have played a role. But on the other hand, the number of Palmyrene priests in relation to the representations of “ordinary” Palmyrene men in fact also shows that priests were not such an exclusive group within the group of elite men. As mentioned above, they make up more than 20 percent of the entire corpus of male representations. So within the elite male group, it can be assumed that it was normal to hold a priesthood. Therefore, such power must also have been legitimized by the rest of the male elite group. Most likely most of these, if not all, were related to some priests as well. At least the banqueting scenes from Palmyra warrant such conclusions, since they usually show one or more priests in combination with non-priestly family members (Fig. 8). Certainly, the number of priests overall would have given some power to the groups as such. However, this was most likely also a power that came with responsibility and obligations, which might have included having to host and therefore pay for banquets. One way of being acknowledged and making people aware of the financing which had gone into a banquet, as well as the religious event which it was, was through the iconography imprinted on the tesseræ.



Fig. 5: Tessera from the collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (IN 3200) depicting a standing Palmyrene priest in full figure flanked by two (sacrificial?) animals on the obverse and two animals on the reverse surrounded by symbols (photo by Anders Sune Berg; copyright Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, reproduced courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

So the tesserae became objects that served a very practical function: namely to admit guests to religious banquets held in the sanctuaries of Palmyra, most likely on rare occasions – judging by the number of series distributed over the history of Roman Palmyra – which in turn may have made these events even more exclusive. The images which the tesserae carried would have informed the invited visitor of the fact that he, or less likely she, was a selected guest;



Fig. 6: Tesserera from the collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (IN 3206) depicting a standing Palmyrene priest in full figure on the obverse and a wreath with a signet seal imprint in the middle depicting a standing (naked?) deity on the reverse (photo by Anders Sune Berg; copyright Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, reproduced courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

revealed who was the sponsor of the event as well as the religious context within which the banquet was to be held. However, the tesseræ came to hold another function as well: they served as expressions of both individual identity as well as being signs of belonging to exclusive groups – even if only for a certain event. Priests would have their tesseræ iconography very individually configured. Perhaps they were themselves even involved in the process of selecting the images – obverse and reverse – which is likely. The tesseræ iconography, which almost always includes an image of a priest, or even two, therefore can be considered a kind of SoMe (social media) of antiquity, which at one and the same time expressed individuality – the image of a specific priest and the individual configuration of both sides of the tesseræ – while also being a strong expression of belonging to a wider group of powerful Palmyrene men, the priests.



Fig. 7: View of the remains of the banqueting hall located in front of the Temple of Bel within the temenos of the Sanctuary of Bel in Palmyra (copyright Rubina Raja).

4 Conclusion

The Palmyrene banqueting tesserae remain an unexhausted source for exploring societal structure and patterns as well as the structure of the religious life of Palmyra on so many levels. While being – as far as we can tell – a quite unique phenomenon in classical antiquity, the tesserae testify to processes of expressing individual identities, while at the same time strongly underlining the individual's belonging to a wider group within one's societal level/hierarchy. In this way, Palmyrene priests, although powerful, also conformed to traditions which seem to have been deeply embedded in the structure of Palmyrene religious life. While Palmyra developed extensively during the three hundred years it flourished in the Roman period, the structure of the religious life seems to have been quite conservative and did not allow for much divergence as far as we can tell from the visual representations of priests in Palmyra or from the plentiful corpus of the banqueting tesserae. So individuality was kept within the framework of already existing societal and religious norms. But groups and individuals seem to have found ways of expressing their distinct identities anyhow – not least through the fascinating iconographic language of the banqueting tesserae.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 8: Complete sarcophagus with banqueting scene with standing priest and two reclining priests and portrait busts on the box, two being of priests. National Museum of Damascus, Damascus, 240–273 CE (copyright Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

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Barbara E. Borg

Does religion matter?

Life, death, and interaction in the Roman *suburbium*

Abstract: This paper discusses the first emergence of epitaphs and images indicative of Christian and Jewish affiliation and identity in Rome and its surroundings. It starts from the observation that unambiguous markers of Christianity only begin to emerge in the early 3rd century, and become more widespread towards the end of that century and in the 4th century. It further argues that, with very few exceptions, the same is most likely true also for indications of Jewish identity, and concludes that this lateness cannot be explained by fear of hostility in either case. Instead, it is suggested, this phenomenon must be seen in the wider context of a new desire emerging around the same time to form groups based on ethnic identities that engage in communal activities such as burial or dedications, and of those groups to make their ethnicity known. If this chronological coincidence could be confirmed by future research, it would not only support the view that religious identity grows out of identities originally conceived of in ethnic terms, but it would also suggest that we need to look at wider socio-historical factors for an explanation of this process.

Studying “lived ancient religion” – as opposed to its philosophical and theological underpinnings, for instance – inevitably entails attention to socio-historical questions, since no religion can be “lived” in complete isolation from the realm of more mundane activities, or outside social networks and human interaction, without which life would simply be impossible. The exploration of the space and social context of religious activity and self-identification also informs parts of my larger project that aims at “Mapping the Social History of Rome”.¹ By exploring the varied, closely interconnected, and changing uses of land in a key area of the Roman *suburbium*, and by linking the activities there to their agency via epigraphic and literary sources, it seeks a better understanding of the actual interactions between different social, economic, ethnic, and religious groups, not only in this area but in Roman society more generally. In this way, I not only hope to fill some gaps in our literary records, but also to

¹ This project was generously funded by a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship.

offer a kind of “reality check” to the latter. In this paper, I am interested in the role of religious affiliations and beliefs within the funerary realm, focusing in particular on the chronology and processes involved in the delayed introduction of (Christian and Jewish) references to religious beliefs into the commemorative space of metropolitan Roman cemeteries.

1 The Roman catacombs

The search for evidence of early Christianity in Rome had long been a rather marginal issue, but came to the center of attention during the Counter-Reformation in the second half of the 16th century. The rediscovery of the catacombs in the early 17th century, and their systematic exploration from the 1860s onwards,² were met with great excitement, not least because it was believed that their establishment went back to the 1st century CE. Within the vast networks of galleries, evidence for obviously pagan (here: “traditional polytheists”) burials was largely lacking, while both images and texts occasionally referred to biblical figures and stories, and Christian eschatological beliefs. The highly inconspicuous nature of the galleries when they were found, and the assumption that Christians were segregated from their surroundings and more or less constantly under threat, led to the view that they were not only burial spaces but also places of cult and worship, and hiding places during the persecutions.

Many of these views have by now been discarded for some time. There is no evidence for any cult activity in the catacombs except for the cult of the dead; the persecutions are now believed to have been intermittent, often not affecting the ordinary Christian but office holders; and the catacombs are utterly unsuitable as hiding places. Their locations are normally close to Rome on the major consular roads, and at least some entrances were clearly designed to be seen and to impress. There is no evidence for catacombs before the late 2nd century; there is a growing amount of evidence of features that can hardly be reconciled with Christian faith (at least the Christian faith that the church fathers promoted); and an increasing number of scholars now agree that the catacombs

² On the early history of excavation and study: Osborne 1985; Caldelli and Ricci 1999, 567; Fiocchi Nicolai, Bisconti and Mazzoleni 1999, 9–13 (V. Fiocchi Nicolai); Bowes 2008, esp. 582–586.

must have been used by a mixed group of people that included both Christians and non-Christians.³

I have proposed elsewhere a more specific model for the organization of a mixed use of the 3rd-century catacomb nuclei (Borg 2013, 72–121). One key observation, generally passed over in silence, is that the largest catacombs were situated on land that was already imperial property when the first galleries were excavated. Why would Christian communities choose such locations, especially when they may have been regarded with suspicion by the authorities? Accordingly, literary sources attest that Christian burial space was normally acquired from private benefactors. Moreover, a careful mapping of the catacombs' developments demonstrates that they typically originated in several independent hypogea, which were only merged in the 4th century. Why would Christians maintain multiple independent hypogea with their own entrances, all situated on the land of a common owner, when their purpose was to offer the Christian community a *communal* burial space, as is often claimed? In the area of the later Praetextatus Catacomb, for instance, Area G – which is also the only one with pre-4th-century Christian wall paintings in a rather remotely situated cubiculum –, Area F, and the so-called “Spelunca Magna” with its extensions all remained separate spaces until the 4th century (Spera 2004; Borg 2013, 80–96) (Fig. 1). In the later Pietro e Marcellino Catacomb, the same applies to Regions X, Y, and Z (Guyon 1987).

It is also noticeable that these original nuclei were often of rather different character with regard to size, efforts expended, and range of grave types. The structure, organization, and pattern of usage of the underground were essentially the same as in the *sub divo* cemeteries. Epigraphic evidence from the latter frequently suggests a significant presence of imperial staff among tomb patrons, who were organized in *collegia* subdivided into *decuriae*, and I have argued that such divisions also made up a significant number of those buried in the early nuclei of the catacombs (Borg 2013, esp. 91–96, 119–121). At Praetextatus, for instance, catering staff are prominent in the *sub divo* necropolis and in Area E

³ E.g. Harries 1992, 61; Johnson 1997; Rebillard 2003 = Rebillard 2009; Bodel 2008; Borg 2013, 72–121. I would like to stress from the outset that I fully subscribe to Jaś Elsner's warning that, during the period we are studying here, pagans, Christians, and Jews did not exist as discrete entities or identities, and that it is dangerous to conclude from a specific image the religious affiliation of its patron: Elsner 2003; cf. also Rebillard and Rüpke 2015, esp. the introduction and Rebillard's ch. 11; Raja and Rüpke 2015, esp. Rebillard's ch. 32. The material presented here would need much fuller discussion along the lines of these works than this paper allows. Since I am interested here in larger trends and group identities, fuzzy as they may be, rather than individual objects or people, I shall still use these terms without adding qualifications in every case where they may apply.

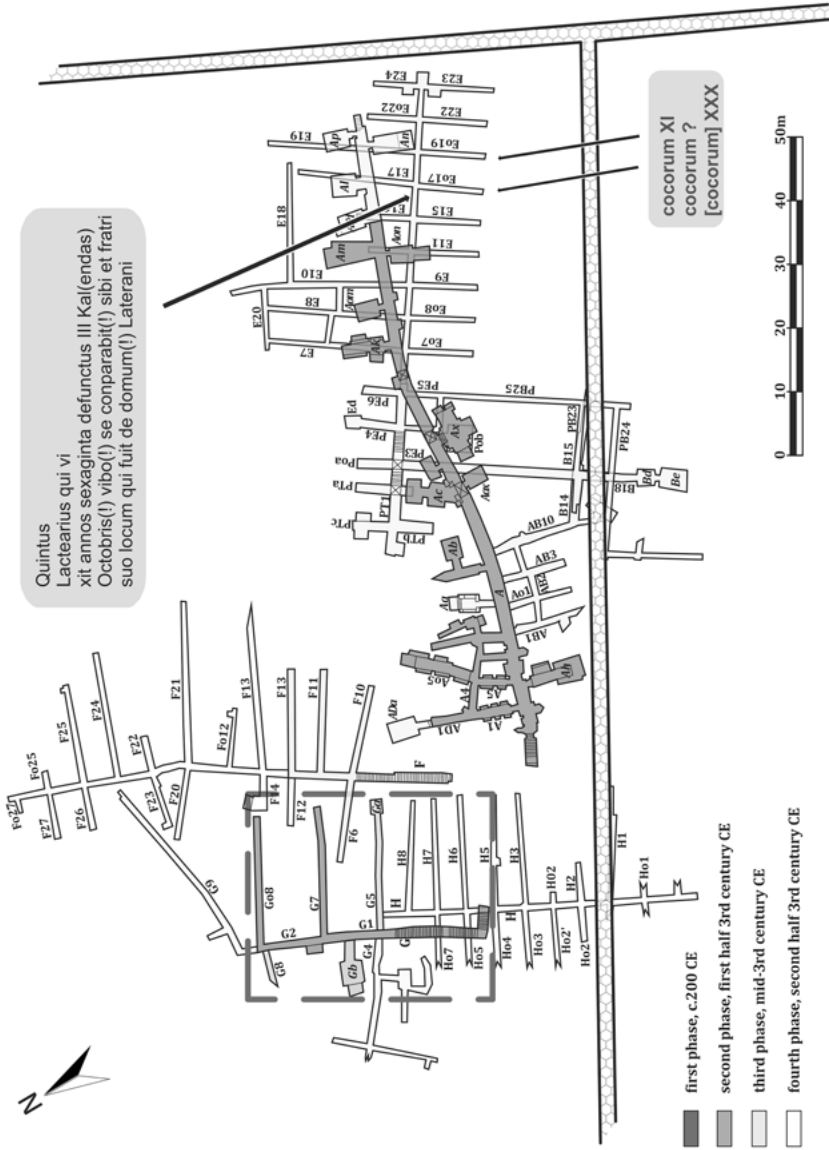


Fig. 1: Phases of the three earliest nuclei of the Praetextatus Catacomb (© Barbara E. Borg).

underneath, where three sections were marked off for three *decuriae* of imperial cooks. Other parts of the galleries or individual *cubicula* must have been sold or donated to a range of different patrons, as was the case with space above ground. By statistical probability alone, we can assume that Christians featured among both imperial staff and other patrons, and the rare biblical paintings confirm this view. These burial patterns point to a far more natural relationship between Christians and non-Christians than some ancient and modern authors suggest, at least in the funerary realm, where it was not segregation along religious lines that normally determined the physical context of burial and commemoration, but social ties such as vocational associations or membership in a *familia*.

2 Christians *ad catacumbas*

This conclusion is supported also by one of the most controversial sites on the Appia, the area of a former pozzolana mine now underneath the church of S. Sebastiano, known in antiquity as “*ad catacumbas*”. It has long been noted that the first three miles of the Appia featured a relatively large number of tombstones for members of élite military corps such as the Praetorian Guard, Praetorian Fleet, and the *equites singulares*. Somewhere between S. Sebastiano and the tomb of Caecilia Metella, the praetorians also maintained a *statio*, which was later turned into a proper *castrum peregrini* (Latteri 2002). Moreover, the necropolis that started to develop within and above the former mine featured a striking number of burials of imperial slaves and freedmen, which suggests again that the land may have been imperial property.⁴ It is therefore all the more surprising that, in the mid-3rd century, a Christian place of worship and congregation was established in this cemetery, a walled-in piazza conventionally called “*memoria*” (see esp. Tolotti 1953) (Fig. 2). Graffiti on the wall of a simple portico flanking the piazza (the so-called “*triclia*”) commemorate the apostles Peter and Paul, and confirm literary records according to which an official festival for Peter and Paul was established in 258 and celebrated *ad catacumbas* as well as in the Vatican and on the via Ostiense.⁵

⁴ For the *sub divo* cemetery, see Taccalite 2009; Nieddu 2009, 257–281.

⁵ Graffiti: Styger 1918, 57–90; *ICUR* V 12907–13090; graffito potentially dating to 260: Nieddu 2009, 11 with n. 66. The lower date is suggested by the “Innocentii” buried in Mausoleum Y, which was destroyed by the *memoria*, who were named after the emperors of 238, Gordian,

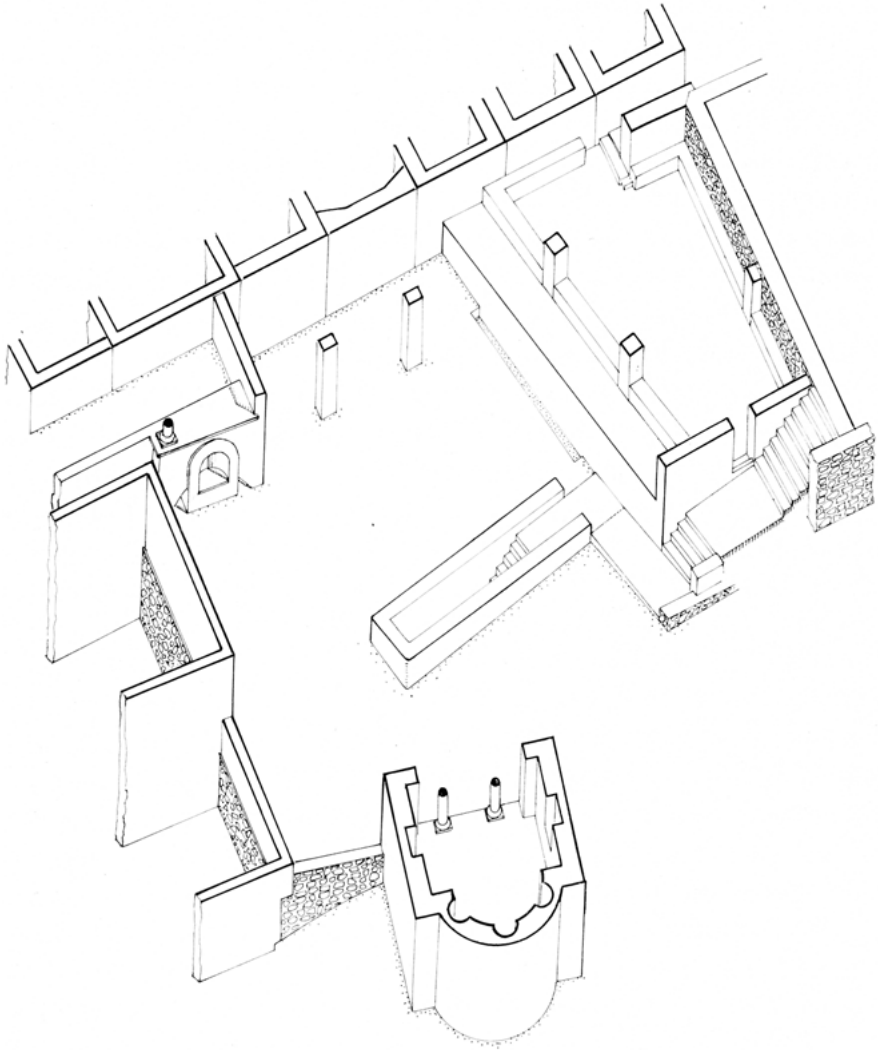


Fig. 2: Axonometric reconstruction of the Triclia (memoria), with the loggia featuring Christian graffiti on its back wall (Tolotti 1953, 195, fig. 43).

Pupienus, and Balbinus. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* records for 29 June 258 cult for Peter and Paul *ad catacumbas*.

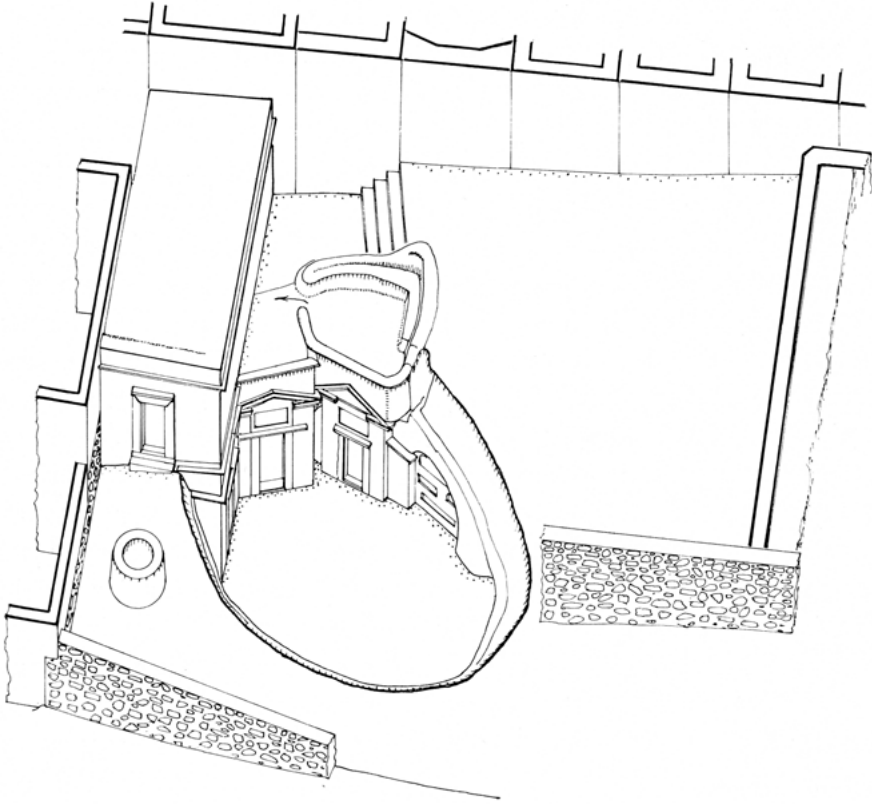


Fig. 3: Axonometric reconstruction of the so-called ‘piazzaola’ with mausolea built into the former mine’s walls (Tolotti 1953, 147, fig. 34).

The physical changes to the area around this time were considerable. In the early 2nd century, parts of the defunct *pozzolana* mine had caved in and tombs had been built into its walls, which were used by praetorians and people very closely connected to the imperial household (see esp. Mancini 1923) (Fig. 3). This cave had to be filled in to level the ground for the *memoria*, a measure which also buried the existing mausolea, only leaving a staircase for access to an enigmatic “well” (Tolotti 1953, esp. 156–157). All this required good planning and engineering skills, the movement of large amounts of soil, and doubtless permission from the authorities. It is inconceivable that this work was done under false pretenses or in secrecy. This is not the place to discuss the significance of the *memoria*, and the related question of the apostles’ burial place. Yet one popular narrative can be ruled out from the start: that the Christian community translated to this place

the relics of the apostles to hide and protect them from their persecutors.⁶ I shall discuss elsewhere more plausible explanations for the developments *ad catacumbas*. For the time being, it is significant that there was, in the mid-3rd century, at a time of heightened tensions between the Christian community and the imperial administration, a Christian cult place established in the middle of a busy necropolis frequented by imperial staff and élite military, just meters away from a main road, and just across from an imperial villa and a *castrum* of praetorians.⁷ The history of this location – which I believe shows the range of official reactions to Christian cult, from active toleration (if not support) to persecution of its protagonists – cannot be traced here in any detail. But the existence of the cult site in its given environment over the second half of the 3rd century alone discounts narratives of an early Christianity under constant threat. Rather, neither these Christians nor their pagan surroundings appear to have taken offense from each other.

3 Invisible Christianity

The *memoria ad catacumbas* is extraordinary in many respects, but not least in that it provides the earliest securely dated epigraphic evidence for Christians in Rome. Considering the mixed usage of the catacombs, it is nearly impossible to identify a specifically Christian epigraphic habit before the 4th century, when we start to find the Chi-Rho sign and references to Christ or uniquely Christian ideas (ditto Carletti 2006). Biblical images go back in time a little further, but are still extremely rare in the 3rd century, when we also see the first Christian hypogea emerging.⁸ The most uncontroversial and important one is Area I of the later Callixtus catacomb, which was established on a plot of land originally belonging to Zephyrinus, Bishop of Rome 199–217, and which contained the graves of later bishops, from Pontianus († 235) to Eutychianus († 283), with the exception of Cornelius who died in exile (Fiocchi Nicolai and Guyon 2006b, 133–144, 153–155) (Fig. 4).

⁶ Nieddu 2009, 11–13, and Lampe 2015, 287–289, for a summary of views with ample bibliography.

⁷ For the villa see Pisani Sartorio and Calza 1976. It had become imperial under Caracalla at the latest: *CIL* VI 1215, with p. 4336; see also *CIL* VI 1107, pp. 844, 3071, 4324, for Gallienus.

⁸ Fiocchi Nicolai, Bisconti and Mazzoleni 1999, ch. 2 (F. Bisconti); Borg 2013, 252–260, for overviews.

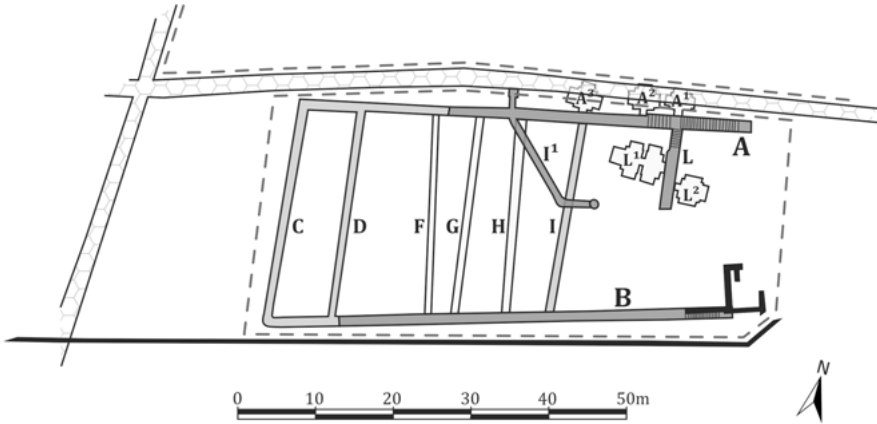


Fig. 4: Phases of Area I in the later Callixtus Catacomb, with the Crypt of the Popes (L1)
(© Barbara E. Borg).

Over a century, it developed on a limited plot of just 0.23 ha (i.e. less than a tenth of the contemporary Praetextatus area of 2.9 ha) and was integrated into a wider network of galleries only during the 4th century (Borg 2013, 75–76, with bibliography). The identification of this hypogeum as Christian is based, however, on a combination of literary sources and the 4th-century epitaphs of the bishops, while the rest of the galleries are no different from non-Christian ones elsewhere, with the exception of six *cubicula* with biblical paintings in a marginal position of the system. The earliest stages of the Novatianus and Calepodius catacombs may equally have belonged to Christian patrons but did not feature any biblical imagery at all. The large mid-3rd-century double *cubiculum* called “Cappella Greca” with its lavish decoration of biblical imagery is therefore highly unusual, and at the same time the most limited in size as it was not initially part of a larger gallery system but integrated into the Priscilla catacomb only in the 4th century (Borg 2013, 76–79, 103–104, 255–257, with bibliography). If we accept a much more relaxed relationship between Christians and non-Christians for most of the time, this absence of a Christian epigraphic habit and extreme rarity of Christian symbols and imagery can no longer be explained by their desire to keep a low profile, as it were, in order not to attract the attention of their potentially hostile surroundings. Why then are we having such great difficulty in identifying them in the material and epigraphic record? I would like to approach this question via a detour.

4 Jews in Rome and Ostia

Unlike the Christians, or so it is often implied, already by the early 3rd century Jewish communities had left hundreds of epitaphs and images of liturgical objects such as the menorah, the Torah shrine, or the shofar in six different catacombs and hypogea that seem to have been dedicated primarily, if not potentially exclusively, to practitioners of this religion. Epitaphs are mostly written in Greek, sometimes in Latin, and occasionally contain Hebrew or Aramaic elements; they use certain formulae that are unique to them; and they also deploy images (Noy 1995; Rutgers 1995; Cappelletti 2006). It is particularly this evidence that makes the absence of similarly overt Christian statements, and the rarity of exclusively Christian hypogea, so striking, not least because it is believed that a substantial number of early Christians were in fact converted Jews.

But the Jewish practices merit closer inspection before we rush to conclusions. Virtually all the evidence for Jewish self-identification comes from the Jewish catacombs,⁹ which in all probability started to be established only around the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries.¹⁰ This is considerably later than the first attestations of Jews in Rome, which date to the 2nd century BCE. Their numbers in the imperial period are hotly debated, with Rutgers suggesting as few as 6,000, and others assuming up to 80,000 individuals.¹¹ While the matter is fraught with methodological difficulties and cannot be discussed here, both extremes are highly unlikely. What is normally agreed and can hardly be doubted is that Jews lived in Rome in considerable numbers, noticeable enough to feature in our literary sources. No fiddling with numbers can explain the discrepancy between the virtual absence of material and epigraphic evidence for

⁹ For the present argument, it is irrelevant whether we think that the catacombs in question were used exclusively by Jews or also by pagans (and Christians?). I am using the designation “Jewish catacombs” here as a shorthand for catacombs with a significant Jewish presence. For inscriptions that may not be from any of the catacombs, see Noy 1995, 415–468. According to their style and formulae, they all date to the same timeframe as those from the catacombs.

¹⁰ Borg 2013, 107–110 for an overview and bibliography. Early dates proposed for the Monteverde catacomb (Müller 1912 and Williams 1994, 176) could not be confirmed by evidence (cf. n. 25). Rutgers 2009, 21–22, suggested an early date for the Villa Torlonia catacomb based on three radiocarbon dates from charcoal particles in the mortar of *loculi*. But details of where exactly these samples have been taken, and how his dates could be reconciled with the other evidence from the place, have not been explained. Moreover, as Vismara 2013, 1862, points out, for charcoal from mortar special calibration needs to be carried out, as the process of calcination affects the C14 ratio.

¹¹ Solin 1983, 698–701; Barclay 1996, 295; Noy 2000, 257–258; Gruen 2004, 15; Rutgers 2006; Pacchiani 2009, esp. 14–23; for a recent review of the debate see Vismara 2013.

their existence before c. 200, and its abundance after that time. In fact, I am not aware of any Jewish inscription or image from Rome that can be shown to date before the late 2nd century, although three Ostian inscriptions probably can (see below). Since we only start to see Jews in epigraphy from around 200 at the earliest, when also the first catacombs were established, it could be suspected that there is a causal connection. Was it the more secluded environment that allowed them to dare exhibit their symbols? After all, like the Christians, Jews were not uncontroversial in Roman society.

This is highly unlikely. Jews had been a visible entity in Rome for a long time, and even benefited from imperial protection and privileges.¹² Erich Gruen has argued forcefully that the episodes of Jewish expulsion from Rome recorded in our literary sources were no more than that – episodes, with little long-term impact – and joined those who argue that Jews generally participated in the life of the communities they lived in (Gruen 2004, esp. 15–53, 122–132). Even if he may be accused of downplaying somewhat the evidence of anti-Jewish sentiment and measures, as several of his reviewers have suggested, these recurring incidents of anti-Jewish actions demonstrate that the expulsions cannot have been comprehensive and/or permanent (ditto e.g. Barclay 1996, 300–306), and the respective edicts were normally directed not at Jews alone but also at other marginal groups.¹³ Derogatory comments by Roman authors were typically marked by ridicule and puzzlement, but by neither anxiety nor aggression.¹⁴

Even after the Great Revolt and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70, while the Jewish tax may have been humiliating and the years under Domitian uneasy, Jewish life continued to prosper at Rome. Non-Jews carried on adopting Jewish practices or even became Jews, with all the obligations this entailed,¹⁵ demonstrating that the disparaging remarks of some ancient writers do not reflect the Romans' view at large. We do not hear of any concerted violence or animosity against Jews, and not even of anti-Jewish agitation, as is recorded for some places in the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶ While the degree to which Jews were assimilated to their gentile surroundings is still debated, it is

12 The literature on Roman Jews is enormous, but see e.g. Rutgers 1995; Barclay 1996; Gruen 2004, 15–53; Cappelletti 2006, all with bibliography.

13 For a new and intriguing explanation, see Wendt 2015.

14 For the Romans' views of the Jews, see Hidal 2001; Gruen 2004, 42–132; Stern 1974, for a full list of sources; for Judeophobia, see Schäfer 1997, esp. 180–195 on Rome. For a similar view as Gruen's, see e.g. Barclay 1996, 292–306; Mitternacht 2003.

15 Cohen 1999, 141–162. See also the contribution by Katell Berthelot in this volume with further bibliography.

16 Barclay 1996, 310–319; Gruen 2004, 42, who also notes that the Roman Jews were not taking part in the insurrections.

clear that they were well integrated and participated in society, without hiding or losing their sense of their Jewishness.¹⁷ A 1st- or 2nd-century epitaph from via Gabina in Rome specifies the location of the workplace of a non-Jewish fruit vendor as at “the rampart by the synagogue”, suggesting that this synagogue was a well-known topographical reference point.¹⁸ The Ostian synagogue, perhaps existing already in the second half of the 2nd century, while outside the city walls, was located close to the Porta Marina near the harbor on the important via Severiana, surrounded by *insulae* and villas, and thus in a fairly conspicuous place.¹⁹ Three 2nd-century Jewish inscriptions from around Ostia proudly refer to Jewish institutions while otherwise fitting in perfectly well with the epigraphic habit prevailing in the rest of Roman society. The dedication of, among other things, a Torah arc for the wellbeing of the emperors (*pro salute Augustorum*) was most likely set up in a synagogue,²⁰ confirming that a practice reported by Philo (*Leg.* 133; *Flacc.* 49) continued into at least the advanced 2nd century, and it recalls the practice of naming Roman synagogues after rulers and influential people.²¹ The epitaph of the gerusiarch C. Iulius Iustus from Castel Porziano south of Ostia was the tomb’s main *titulus*. It starts with the evocation of the synagogue (?) of the *Iudaioi*, mentions its patron’s

17 Cf. e.g. Cohen 1999; Gruen 2004, *passim*, who stresses that the dichotomy of either resistance against their gentile surroundings or far-reaching assimilation misses the point that for most, “(m)aintenance of a Jewish identity and accommodation to the circumstances of diaspora were joint objectives” that did not result in them “forever grappling with dissonance in their daily lives” (p. 6), but could be reconciled for most of the time. Whether the lack of a distinct and visible Jewish material and visual culture must be interpreted as a sign of temporary loss of Jewish identity, as Schwartz 2001 proposes, is therefore doubtful. That onomastic patterns and some general features of Jewish epitaphs resembled very closely those of their non-Jewish contemporaries had already been observed by Rutgers 1995, esp. 136–138, 170–175.

18 Noy 1995, 487, n° 602. The synagogue in question is often suspected to be the Siburesian, named after the *subura* region of the city.

19 Olsson, Mitternacht and Brandt 2001; Mitternacht 2003, 533–556; Simonsohn 2015, 381–382, with extensive bibliography in n. 25. The building has recently been shown to date to no earlier than the mid-2nd century (personal communication Douglas Boin and Cuyler 2018, who generously shared her paper with me before publication), and it featured unambiguous elements of a synagogue only after its 4th-century renovation. Yet since the 2nd-century building already contained a large meeting room, and some features apparently continued in use in the final phase, it is possible that the building was already a synagogue at that time; cf. also the inscriptions mentioned in nn. 20 and 22, which may or may not refer to the building at issue. For the area around the synagogue, see Heinzlmann 2001.

20 Noy 1993, 22–26, n° 13, pl. 6; Olsson, Mitternacht and Brandt 2001, 85–88, fig. 105. The inscription was found re-used in the floor of the Ostian synagogue’s vestibule.

21 Leon 1960, 140–166; Richardson 1998, on the Synagogue of the Augustans (*Augustesioi*), the Agrippesians, and the Herodians.

office as a matter of pride, and the *gerusia* as giving permission for the erection of the tomb, probably because the plot belonged to the community (Noy 1993, 32–35, n° 18, pl. 10; Olsson, Mitternacht and Brandt 2001, 88–89, fig. 106). In the third inscription, from a tomb on a road of Ostia's Pianabella, the deceased's office of *archisynagogos* is again proudly stressed, while names and the dedicatory formulae of the Latin inscription are entirely conventional and religious symbols absent.²²

These examples suggest that, while religious affiliation did not need to be concealed, it was also only in rare circumstances that it became apparent, and such circumstances had to do more with technicalities or pride in an office than with any religious statement. They also confirm that Jews did not necessarily have their own necropoleis, but chose their burial sites for a range of different reasons, with no qualms about being buried among pagans and Christians.²³ The triangular plot of land where the Jewish Randanini Catacomb is situated was right on the most prestigious road, and in one of the busiest areas of the *suburbium*, just a stone's throw from an imperial villa, and underneath a necropolis that had been used by pagans for over two hundred years.²⁴ While the epitaphs with explicitly Jewish elements from underground galleries raise questions about their target audience, it is clear that we need to look elsewhere for explanations of the onset of a Jewish epigraphic habit (which may in turn explain, at least partly, its lacking in the centuries before).

5 Dates

One aspect that seriously affects the argument is the difficulty in dating these epitaphs. While both the epitaphs and the symbols are normally treated as if they were representative of the 3rd and 4th centuries, strictly speaking they only possess a *terminus post quem* in the foundation of the catacombs, which however continued to be used well into late antiquity. It cannot therefore be excluded that, like overtly Christian epitaphs in other catacombs, the majority in fact belong to the 4th century and later. For the Monteverde Catacomb, a

²² NSc 1906, 410–415 (E. Ghislanzoni); Noy 1993, 26–28, n° 14, pl. 7; Olsson, Mitternacht and Brandt 2001, 91–92, fig. 107.

²³ Ditto Noy 1998, 81–85, who further assumes that Jews may not normally have had any epitaphs at the time.

²⁴ Spera 1999, 259–265, UUTT 430–447; Nuzzo 2000, 135–138; on the catacomb most recently Laurenzi 2013. On the villa, see above n. 7.

recent review of dated evidence, lamps in particular, suggests its establishment only in the mid-3rd century, while just 13.8% of epitaphs are dated to the late 3rd century, and lamps and gold glass with Jewish symbols only date from the 4th century onwards.²⁵

Whether the chronology of other Jewish catacombs is consistent with that of Monteverde is less clear, ironically enough since this least well preserved of the larger Jewish catacombs is the best published. The particular frequency of Jewish symbols depicted, and synagogues mentioned there, as well as the fact that only at Monteverde do we find Hebrew/Aramaic words or phrases, could be the result of its being slightly later than the other catacombs.²⁶ Differently from Monteverde, some nuclei of the Villa Torlonia and Randanini catacombs show characteristics of the earlier 3rd century. Based on Donatella Nuzzo's typology and dating, the early galleries of Area E of the lower Torlonia catacomb should date to the first half of the 3rd century (Nuzzo 2000; cf. Fasola 1976, esp. 43–44) (Fig. 5). A date around 230 is suggested for *cubiculum* 14 in the Randanini catacomb (Fig. 6), and the building with its many *arcosolia* on the via Appia Pignateli, which later formed a monumental entrance into the catacomb (M), is likely to also be of early 3rd-century date.²⁷ Assuming that they were already used for members of the Jewish community at this stage therefore raises the possibility that also some of the inscriptions and depictions of menoroth may be earlier and just badly executed. The type of menorah featuring in the Roman evidence is elsewhere first attested in dated contexts in the mid-3rd-century Doura Europos synagogue. This could, but by no means must, indicate that the Roman examples are no earlier than this. On the other hand, few if any lamps with Jewish symbols from Rome (and most other Diaspora locations) date to before the 4th century; the four sarcophagi with menoroth from Rome, and the painted *arcosolia* and *cubicula* in the Torlonia and

²⁵ Rossi and Di Mento 2013, 328–340, 346–350. Noy 1995, 4, notes that the rarity of Aurelii “might suggest that the full effects of the Constitutio Antoniniana of 212 were not yet felt”, but it could as well support a late dating of the epitaphs, since Aurelii become rare again in the 4th century.

²⁶ 19 of the 26 epitaphs naming synagogues with known provenance come from Monteverde, where also the highest percentage of offices and almost twice the number of religious symbols than in the Randanini catacomb were found. Against the suggestion that the Monteverde Jews represent a contemporary but more conservative group of Jews (e.g. Leon 1960, 243–244), see convincingly Rutgers 1995, 139–143.

²⁷ Laurenzi 2013, 43–47, 55–66. The earliest parts of the Monteverde catacomb near its entrance(s) were already destroyed when the site was discovered and may equally predate the late galleries that were documented, as Rutgers 2009, 23–24, notes. Yet there is no reason to believe that the catacomb was founded in the early imperial period or even earlier.

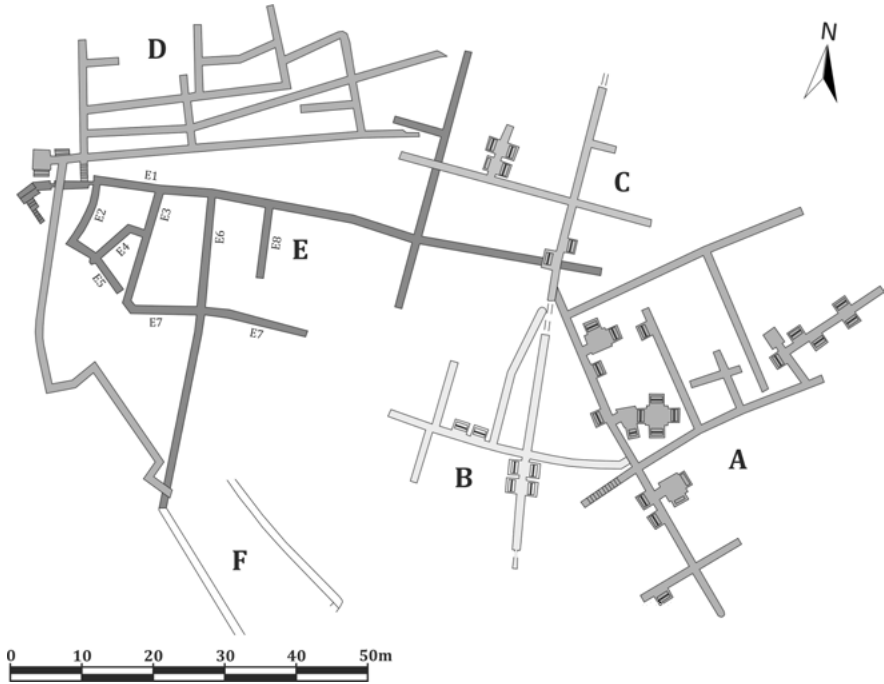


Fig. 5: Jewish 'Torlonia' catacomb on via Nomentana with indication of individual hypogea and extension phases (© Barbara E. Borg after Fasola 1976, pl. 1).

Randanini catacombs which feature Jewish symbols, equally belong to the (early and later) 4th century.²⁸

The Torlonia catacomb originated in two separate nuclei with their own entrances from a secondary road near via Nomentana (Fig. 5). While the earliest, western parts of the lower catacomb (galleries E1-3) with their first extensions (E4, 5, 7) featured nine inscriptions but only a single painted menorah, the system's later extension, Area D, boasted 35 inscriptions as well as Jewish symbols (Fasola 1976, 43-47, 53-59; Noy 1995, 341-387). Potentially, this pattern is partly due to the plundering of the catacomb before its formal "discovery", which may have been more thorough in its more accessible parts. Yet it is those parts of Area D closest to the entrance that also boast the majority of inscriptions, suggesting that chronology may have played a part too. Area A of the

²⁸ Hachlili 1998, 275-282 (*cubicula*), 285-287 (*arcosolia*), with bibliography; on the Randanini *cubicula*, see also Laurenzi 2013, 49-66, figs. 22-47.

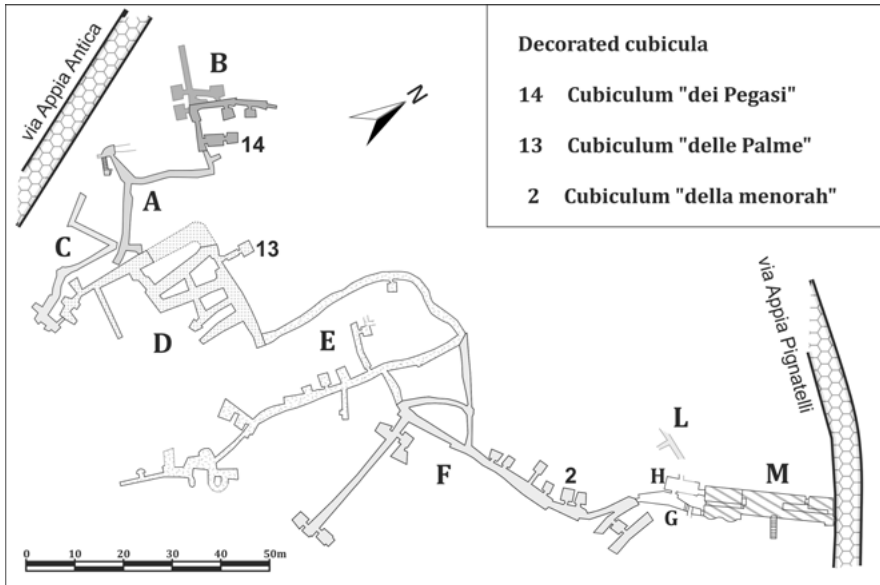


Fig. 6: Jewish 'Randanini' catacomb on via Appia with indication of individual hypogea and extension phases (© Barbara E. Borg after Laurenzi 2013, 30, fig. 7).

upper catacomb equally featured numerous inscriptions and Jewish symbols as well as two painted *cubicula* and several painted *arcosolia* with Jewish symbols, which are all dated to the 4th century.²⁹ While these painted features belong to a second phase after the floor of the original galleries was lowered, there is little indication that much time passed before this was done, so that the upper catacomb may not have been established before the late 3rd or early 4th century. Unfortunately, locations of the epitaphs coming from this area are unknown and documentation of the exact features of the phases, such as *loculus* shapes, is still lacking. Moreover, there is no complete visual documentation of

²⁹ Fasola 1976, 13–28. His dates for the development of the catacomb from the earlier 3rd century onwards are based, however, on stamped bricks which were almost certainly re-used, and on an outdated assessment of the painted *cubiculum* Aa. Cappelletti 2002 is even more optimistic in using brick stamps for the dating, and proposes a starting date in the mid-2nd century and its most extensive use in the 3rd. These dates are, however, unsustainable due to the widespread re-use of bricks and tiles (cf. Rutgers 1998, 50–54), and the paintings as well as the typology of the *cubicula* and *arcosolia* in Area A clearly point to the 4th century (Rutgers 1998, 59–66).

the epitaphs that would allow for comparison of the epigraphic features, which in turn could underpin new efforts in their dating.

The case of the Randanini catacomb is particularly interesting (Fig. 6). A double *cubiculum* (14) decorated in the standard Roman linear style, including figures of Victory crowning a youth and Fortuna, can be dated to the earlier 3rd century (the date normally suggested is around 230). A further two *cubicula* (13 and 2) featuring Jewish symbols such as the menorah, however, were only decorated in the 4th century. Since individual parts of the catacomb once constituted separate hypogea, it is possible that parts of Area B were originally pagan, and only later used by Jews when they were integrated into the catacomb, just as was the case for pagan hypogea in the “Christian” catacombs.³⁰ Yet this later use does not only demonstrate that Jews did not have a problem with such decoration. If it is accepted that the large “Christian” catacombs started off as mixed cemeteries, and became “Christianized” only with changing demographics and/or their passing into Church administration over the course of the 4th century, the situation was quite different for the Jewish catacombs. Given their initially rather limited size, they may well have been far more restrictive in terms of their patronage. While they may have admitted the burial of non-Jewish individuals, it is hard to see why, in the 4th century, they should have integrated into their communal burial grounds hypogea of patrons who had nothing to do with the Jewish community. Also considering the use of “pagan” imagery in Jewish cemeteries such as Beth Shearim (Schwartz 2001, 153–158, with bibliography), it is perhaps likely that hypogeum B was patronized by Jews from the start, and that they just felt no need to use any Jewish symbols. Even if we admit that the bulk of explicitly Jewish evidence originates from the 4th century, it is therefore possible that we see the first clustering of Jewish burials already in the 3rd century.

6 Collective burial in the 3rd century

Looking at burial customs in Rome more generally puts these observations into context. A significant change starting around the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries is a return to communal burial after about a hundred years during which this was extremely rare. From the Augustan period until the end of the 1st

³⁰ Thus the explanation by e.g. Rutgers 1995, 54–55; Laurenzi 2013, 47. The later use by Jews is attested by the *kochim*. For pagan hypogea in the later Christian catacombs, see Borg 2013, 72–121.

century, there is plenty of evidence for communal burial in smaller or larger *columbaria*, which were organized and owned by the *familiae* of noble families (including the imperial), or by groups who shared a common occupation, such as the musicians and other entertainers in Vigna Codini 2.³¹ As Dirk Borbonus has demonstrated, the large *columbaria* went out of use towards the end of the 1st century, and I argue in detail elsewhere that the typical occupants of these *columbaria* now opted to found their own family tombs, which were designed to be used by subsequent generations of their family or *familia*.³² The 3rd century seems to see a return to 1st-century practices, with communal or, to adopt John Bodel's cautious terminology, collective burial spaces (Borg 2013, 273–275; cf. Bodel 2008). Reasons are likely to have varied, and included financial constraints in the wake of the various crises that marked the 3rd century, which probably most affected the lower and middling strata of society.

The decision for communal burial obviously raised the question of who one should liaise with for that purpose, and the *familiae* of wealthier families clearly became one option again.³³ Yet there is evidence for other groupings as well, which are likely often to have been *collegia*. *Collegia* did of course flourish throughout the 2nd century, and they had also always involved a prominent funerary element.³⁴ But during the 2nd century, there is little evidence that they also maintained shared burial grounds, and the financial contributions they paid out when a death occurred were rather to support activities around an individual's burial in a family mausoleum, and the celebration of anniversaries.

Around the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century, however – dating is notoriously difficult – we start to see evidence again for such *collegia* using shared burial sites. There is now a new way of marking such tombs, namely by a name in the genitive plural, such as *Eutyriorum*, *Gaudentiorum*, *Melaniorum*, and so on (several listed in *CIL* VI 10268–10285). Some of these genitives are derived from *nomina gentilicia*, such as the Melanii (*CIL* VI 10277) or the Graptii, whose inscription features on the door lintel of *cubiculum* H in the Flavii Aurelii region of the Domitilla catacomb (Pergola 1983, 222 n. 96). Others are formed on *cognomina*, such as the Eplegii, whose name was inscribed on the door lintel of

³¹ Borbonus 2014, *passim*, with cat. 3 on Vigna Codini 2.

³² Borbonus 2014, esp. 142–146 (with different interpretation from my own); Borg 2019, ch. 3.

³³ This includes not only the imperial family, but probably also private ones: Borg 2013, 98–105.

³⁴ For sources and extensive annotated bibliography, see Ascough, Harland and Kloppenborg 2012.

cubiculum P in the same hypogeum.³⁵ Others again evoke some general positive notion, such as the Eutyctii, who occupied a large *cubiculum* in the Soter region of Callixtus.³⁶ The inscription again featured over the door of this late 3rd-century *cubiculum*, which was laid out for some 30 individuals and was later extended to accommodate about 50 bodies. Differently from what has sometimes been suggested, they were not Christian support groups but, as Eric Rébillard argued already in 1999, they formed the equivalent of patrons of *sub divo* mausolea – although in this case perhaps not of families and *familiae*, but of *collegia* of uncertain character (cf. Rebillard 1999, 280). Moreover, they are also not necessarily (all or exclusively) Christian. Positive evidence for this assumption is lacking, and there are non-Christian *sub divo* parallels. The Pancratii are a well-known example, who re-used a Flavian senatorial mausoleum from around 270 onwards, set up sarcophagi in the vestibule of the tomb chamber, and excavated galleries around the original tomb to cater for their members.³⁷

7 Ethnic pride and clustering

What is most interesting in our context is that, for the first time, we now also find indications of ethnic groupings. The Pesidii, who inscribed a large block found on the Appia (*CIL* VI 10285), may well be people from Pisidia, since the name of the region is sometimes spelt with an “e”. There is also a notable cluster of Pannonians buried in the area of the later church of S. Sebastiano,³⁸ which continued to attract Pannonian burials even after the *Basilica Apostolorum* had been built.³⁹ The name of the *Coemeterium Iordanorum* or Catacomb of the Jordanians on the via Salaria, established in the mid-3rd century, is ancient, and suggests

³⁵ *ICUR* III 6662: Rebillard 1999, 280; cf. Marucchi 1909, 134–135; Pergola 1983b, 221–223, for the proposal that the name is formed after the *cognomen* of the family.

³⁶ *ICUR* IV 981: DeRossi 1877, 37–42; Rebillard 1999, 279–280; *LTURS* II (2004) 231–232, s.v. “*Eutyctiorum sepulcrum*” (V. Cipollone).

³⁷ *LTURS* III (2005) 165–167, s.v. “*Latina via*” (F. Montella); Borg 2013, 146–150, with further bibliography.

³⁸ Latteri 2002. While the presence of praetorians may be explained by their *castrum* on the other side of the road, the fact that Pannonia is the only *natio* mentioned is not. There is no evidence for Thracians, for instance.

³⁹ Esp. the large semi-circular late 4th-century Mausoleum (X; so-called “*Platonía*”) that was attached to the apse of the church: Nieddu 2009, 212–249; Nieddu and Heid 2008, with a different interpretation. Cf. also the sarcophagus dedicated in 375 by one Roscia Calcedonia for the *clarissimi* Simplicius, Didyme, and Innocentius: *ICUR* V 13109 = *CIL* VI 32045 = Bovini and Brandenburg 1967, 219; Bertolino 1997, 119–121, who further notes (p. 125 n. 26) that there are

that the entire hypogeum was originally dedicated to an ethnic group.⁴⁰ In other cases, there are indications of ethnic clustering without explicit self-identification. In the Pamphilus Catacomb, for instance, one gallery seems to have been reserved for foreigners, and it is possible that the African martyr Panphilus was translated to the *cubiculum* at this gallery's end because there was already a tradition of burying Africans there, as was the case with Quirinus and the Pannonians *ad catacumbas* (Mazzoleni 1990–1991).

These changes in ethnic clustering and self-identification are evident beyond the funerary realm. Migration into Rome, voluntary as well as involuntary, had been extensive ever since the Late Republic, but we hardly see these thousands of people of foreign origin in the epigraphic record anywhere before the late 2nd century (Noy 2000; Tacoma 2016). Yet suddenly we do see at least some. David Noy has noted that Thracian soldiers, and only Thracians, set up dedications exclusively in the name of their ethnic group during the 3rd century.⁴¹ A considerable number of *stationes*, which represented different groups of foreigners, mostly traders and *navicularii*, from outside Italy, set up inscriptions in Rome and Ostia. In Rome, several were found along the via Sacra close to the Forum, near the Temple of Faustina and Antoninus Pius, suggesting that their *stationes* were situated nearby, and thus in a very prominent location. Most of them date to the late 2nd and 3rd centuries (cf. Moretti 1958, 115–116; Noy 2000, 160–164). Similarly, at Ostia such *stationes* were located behind the theater in the so-called “Piazzale delle Corporazioni”, where the mosaics with their inscriptions date to the same period.⁴² The point here is not the existence of such *stationes*, which goes back to at least the time of Nero, but the fact that we can see them now for the first time proudly presenting their ethnicities to the public.⁴³

only four other Christian epitaphs for Pannonians in the whole of Rome, and they all come from different catacombs.

40 Fasola 1972; *LTURS* III (2005) 89–93, s.v. “*Iordanorum coemeterium*” (P. De Santis).

41 Noy 2000, 219, e.g. *CIL* VI 32582 = 2807. It is worth noting here that it had always been a habit of the praetorians to record their origin in inscriptions (Noy 2010, 151), but the point here is about clustering and communal activities by specific ethnic groups.

42 General chronology: Carta, Pohl and Zevi 1987, esp. 167–193 (I. Pohl); mosaics: Becatti 1961, 64–85, nn° 83–136, pls. 139, 173–190; *CIL* XIV 4549. Inscriptions name foreign *collegia* from North Africa, Sardinia, southern France, and Alexandria.

43 It may thus not be mere coincidence that the few well-preserved earlier mosaics do not feature inscriptions with their ethnic origin, although they do feature hints of the latter in their imagery: Becatti 1961, 74–77, nn°. 108–109, pls. 93 and 184; 82–83, nn°. 128–129, pls. 101 and 138; 84–85, nn° 136–137, pl. 81.

Viewing the emergence of early identifiably Christian and Jewish evidence in this wider context suggests that we are looking here not at a process specific to these groups, but at one of wider application. From around the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, we see people organizing their burials in distinct groups which share a common purpose and identity. Some of them we can identify as *familiae* (or parts thereof), some as sharing a common vocation. Others again do not disclose what holds them together, but they not only self-identify as a group (e.g. through inscriptions above entrances or inscribed member lists), their members also identify as such in their own epitaphs.⁴⁴ What is entirely new (and reaches beyond the funerary sphere) is visible clustering according to ethnic affiliation. It may be objected that, since ethnic signifiers were almost entirely absent in the previous period, such clustering may have occurred but gone unnoticed. There is no way to exclude such a practice, but what evidence we have seems to suggest that this was rare at best. Not only did Christians and Jews bury their dead among the rest of the population, as discussed, but also the praetorians, who regularly indicate their origin, did not previously cluster according to this criterion. We may therefore suspect that burial groups formed on common ethnicity were a largely new feature of the 3rd century.

I suggest that it is here that also the first Christian and Jewish hypogea best fit. Recent scholarship has made it abundantly clear that Jewish identity never conceived of itself as a religious identity disembedded from its cultural heritage, kinship ties, and origins from Judaea; that is, that it was, and remained throughout antiquity, an ethnic identity, albeit one that may have been shaped by religious beliefs and rites to a greater extent than some other ethnicities.⁴⁵ This may explain why even the late epitaphs are largely lacking references to explicit religious doctrine.⁴⁶ Epitaphs mentioning their patrons' Jewish offices appear to be primarily a

⁴⁴ For the former, see nn. 35, 36, and 37 above, and e.g. the member list from the Pancratii tomb *CIL* VI 10282; for the latter, see e.g. the inscription on the sarcophagus of C. Severienus Demetrius and his wife from the Pancratii tomb (*CIL* VI 10281), or the commemorative inscription for Aurelius Petrus, a member of the Pelagii (*ICUR* IX 25005).

⁴⁵ Boyarin 2008, with bibliography; see also n. 51. There has been some debate over Boyarin's claim that, even in the later 4th and 5th centuries and under the pressure of Christianity, there was no Judaism as a separate, religious entity in Jewish self-perception. But this need not worry us for the present purpose.

⁴⁶ Explicitly religious statements such as prayers or quotations from the Bible are extremely rare (Noy 1999; Cappelletti 2006, 183–186), and may well be among the latest of epitaphs (cf. the gold glass Noy 1998, 471–477, n° 588).

matter of pride in status rather than of religious piety.⁴⁷ It is also noticeable that none of the seven catacombs was reserved for a particular synagogue. Epitaphs mentioning the name of the congregation to which a deceased had belonged are relatively few, with the majority coming from Monteverde (18 out of 25),⁴⁸ while there is an abundance of epitaphs mentioning offices related to the synagogue without indicating which one.⁴⁹ It should therefore not surprise us if the first Jewish cemeteries in Rome dated back as far as the earlier 3rd century, following a more general trend towards ethnic clustering in the organization of burials, although in all likelihood these clusters were relatively limited in size.

Similarly, it has been shown how Christian writers, striving to carve out an identity for Christians as a distinct group, often conceived of themselves in terms of *ethnos/natio* or *genos/genus*. While these terms, in their narrower sense where territory and genealogy are key defining elements, may seem ill-suited, in fact they had long been rather fluid in their meaning and application.⁵⁰ It has also been demonstrated that Christian writers took their first steps in developing a notion of an autonomous, disembedded *religious* identity in the later 2nd century, yet such a notion only took hold more fully in the 4th century.⁵¹ Outside specialist theological discourse in particular, familiar ethnic terms must certainly have managed to communicate the general claim of a coherent identity that lived up to, and even superseded, Jewish and other ethnically framed identities. The establishment of communal hypogea by Christians who *did* feel a desire to be buried among their fellow believers would therefore equally have fitted into the new pattern.

The extent to which both groups visually and explicitly self-identified as Jewish or Christian in epitaphs and through the display of religious symbols and

47 Ditto Noy 1998, 83–84, who thinks that it was these office holders who introduced epigraphy into Jewish burials, but does not provide a plausible explanation for the chronological coincidence; Williams 2013, 193–194.

48 Based on Noy 1995. Cf. also Williams 1994, who argues for the organization of burial by the family, not just in Rome but across the Diaspora and Palestine.

49 Epitaphs from the Monteverde catacomb record 45 titles, while 49 are recorded for the Vigna Randanini catacomb (where only once is the synagogue specified) and 18 for the Torlonia catacomb.

50 Esp. with further bibliography: Buell 2002; 2005; Johnson 2014; for examples of a more un-specific use of *ethnos* and *genos*, for the rich and poor classes, or for bakers and potters, for instance, see Aaron P. Johnson's review of Buell 2005 at <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2006/2006-02-31.html> (last accessed 1.1.2017).

51 For influential suggestions for how and when the notion of a disembedded religion and religious identity came into existence, see Schwartz 2001; Boyarin 2004; Buell 2005; Boyarin 2008; 2009.

images is a different matter again. There was very little tradition in Rome of making any kind of religious statement in the funerary realm, and religion was not normally part of an individual's explicit identity claims. Altars were sometimes set up to traditional deities in tombs and funerary precincts as to a family's tutelary deity, but there was no need to evoke any divinity on the occasion of death, except for the *Dii Manes*. In the rare cases where this was still done, it normally had nothing to do with eschatological beliefs, and it was also never meant as an ostentatious statement of religious belief, affiliation, or identity. It typically resulted from pride in a priestly office. At present, it is impossible to tell to what degree Jews already displayed markers of their identity such as liturgical symbols or offices related to the synagogue in the 3rd century. A review of the evidence suggests that such display may have been very limited at the time, and only increased significantly during the 4th century. Similarly, as indicated above, there is no recognizable Christian epigraphic habit before the 4th century, and biblical images are also very rare, often occurring in the more marginal parts of gallery systems, and almost invariably within individual *cubicula*: that is, in spaces separated from the rest of the hypogea. Unfortunately, we do not know who their patrons were, but it is noticeable that there is no indication of a special involvement of clerics. While the Crypt of the Popes in Area I Callixtus may have been remodeled so significantly in later times that few if any features of the original decoration were preserved, it is still important to note that it does not contain any biblical imagery. Subsequent Popes were buried in different places in the Roman *suburbium*. Only two *cubicula* have been preserved with their original decoration, but both were lacking religious imagery as well.⁵² The bones of Cornelius († 253), which were not buried in the Crypt because he died in exile, were later translated to the so-called "Crypt of Lucina", a different part of the Callixtus catacomb, where the paintings of four saints and martyrs were not added before the 6th century, and most likely only in the first half of the 8th.⁵³ Still, the number of biblical scenes in the catacombs increased markedly in the 4th century, when gold glass with images of the saints and of Christ also first emerges, often set into the sealing mortar of *loculi*,⁵⁴ and from the

⁵² Gaius (283–296 CE) was buried in a huge double *cubiculum* immediately to the west of the entrance stairs (O2), and Pope Miltiades translated the remains of Eusebius (309) from his location of exile to *cubiculum* O1 facing it: Reekmans 1988, esp. 207–223; Reekmans 1992; Guyon 2005, 238.

⁵³ Reekmans 1964, esp. 118–120; Osborne 1985, 305–310.

⁵⁴ Morey 1959; see now Walker 2018, with a new approach to dating.

Constantinian period onwards we find explicit references to Christ and Christian ideas in epitaphs too.⁵⁵

This evidence would be consistent with the observation that the efforts to forge a distinct Christian identity in opposition to a Jewish and pagan one started to shape discourses more widely in the 4th century, and also affected Jewish identity claims.⁵⁶ Moreover, it suggests that such ideas had by then also filtered down to the wider Christian lay community, and that they had moved on from being part of a theoretical and intellectual discourse to shaping the “lived religion” of growing numbers of people in increasing numbers of contexts. Many Christians now felt the desire to activate and even display their religious identity in new ways, and in contexts that were not, until then, much affected by their Christian-ness, such as the funerary realm.⁵⁷ At the same time, whether in response to Christian pressure, as part of a general trend, or a general trend that accelerated after Christianity received a great boost from the emperors’ support, Jewish identity equally became more visible, with their synagogues now architecturally more distinct and decorated with religious symbols, and with the display of liturgical objects and the frequent mentioning of Jewish offices in the funerary realm.⁵⁸ For the first time in Roman history, religious affiliation as such (rather than a priestly office) became an aspect of an individual’s identity that was worth commemorating in permanent forms such as epigraphy and imagery. With the details of chronology of the Roman evidence being as elusive as they are, it would be hazardous to speculate on cause and effect on these grounds alone. Yet it is remarkable how the development – from the formation of the first Christian collective hypogea of very

55 For the content of these references, see esp. Dresken-Weiland, Angerstorfer and Merkt 2012.

56 See authors n. 51.

57 For the activation of a Christian identity in specific contexts, see esp. Rebillard 2012.

58 Schwartz 2001, 179–289, for Palestine; Levine 2006, for the general development; Noga-Banai 2008, on the choice of specific motifs. Collar 2013, esp. ch. 4, argues that the marked increase of explicitly Jewish epigraphy is a reaction to the destruction of the temple, which in turn triggered rabbinic Judaism spreading throughout the Mediterranean and inspiring a stronger sense of Jewish identity. Quite apart from the fact that the influence of the rabbis in the 2nd and 3rd centuries is debated, and considered by many to have been very limited even in Palestine (for a radical view, see e.g. Schwartz 2001, part 2), her hypothesis rests on her dating of this increase to the 2nd century, a chronology that is impossible to sustain for the western Empire including Rome (Noy 1998, 79), and on the unproven assumption that Jewish identity as expressed in offices and images of the menorah and other liturgical elements must reflect a rabbinic form of Jewish identity (did the rabbis not condemn the memorialization of honors?).

limited size and with even more limited display of identity markers, to more extended clustered cemeteries with more extensive and overt display of such identity markers – occurs largely parallel to the development of Jewish underground cemeteries and their decoration.⁵⁹

There is a host of questions that my paper does not address. Some have never been posed, such as what may have triggered this emerging ethnic clustering and pride (the *Constitutio Antoniniana* is too late for this role). Megan Williams (among some others) stated a few years ago: “[. . .] we cannot write a history of the relations between Christianity and Judaism in the Roman Empire without at the same time taking into account the relation of each of these concepts to other categories of identity current at the time.”⁶⁰ It is to this contextualization that I hope to have contributed with this paper.

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⁵⁹ For the menorah, Levine 2000 has suggested that it was deployed as an equivalent to the Christian cross. Given the latter’s rarity in the earlier 4th century, I wonder whether the prevalent Chi/Rho sign may have been its opposite number.

⁶⁰ Williams 2009, 51.

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Section 4: **Switching the code:
meaning-making beyond established
religious frameworks**

Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli

Introduction to Section 4

1 A serviceable Goffmanian framework

In a famous chapter of *Frame Analysis* that opens with a discussion of non-human animals at play, Erving Goffman points out that “not all serious activity is unkeyed, and not all untransformed activity can be called serious” (Goffman 1974, 46). The fourth section of this volume takes its inspiration from the first part of the quote. Few people – believers or not – would consider religion to be unserious. Religion is not what we first think of when imagining a playful act. Nevertheless, religion can, in some senses, be said to share an important property with “unserious” activities like sports and games: it often relies on a prior schema of interpretation and description of “what is going on” and then alters this pattern significantly in certain respects.

In Goffman’s terms, we can say that individuals and groups do not always select religion as a “primary framework” (Goffman 1974, 21–39).¹ Religion, in fact, is neither always nor necessarily used to make meaningless or unguided events (like thunder) meaningful and guided (thunder interpreted as a supernatural sign). Religious activities, experiences, and ascriptions of meanings often depend on a “systematic transformation” of materials that have already been situated within a background conceptual framework without which the religious transcription itself would be meaningless. For, on the one hand, religion offers just one possible way out of a variety of culturally available options to meaningfully define and effectively organize an undetermined situation (Rüpke 2016, 19–20). On the other hand, thinking, feeling, and behaving religiously is often about *coding* strips of thoughts, experiences, and actions that are already meaningful in themselves according to prior schemata. Such religious doings (e.g. sacrifices or the Agape) appear as activities patterned after ordinary “guided doings” (Goffman 1974, 22) and transformed in such a way that participants come to see them as something quite different (e.g. a sacrifice is a systematically altered session of gift-giving or exchange; the Agape is an utterly

¹ To follow up on Goffman’s distinction of primary frameworks between two classes, natural and social, we may say that religion functions as a “social primary framework,” inasmuch as it “provide[s] background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the [super-]human being. Such an agency is anything but implacable; it can be coaxed, flattered, affronted, and threatened” (Goffman 1974, 22; slightly modified).

changed segment of a banquet). Goffman calls these transformations “keyings” (Goffman 1974, 40–82).

Religious ways of keying abound. To borrow from Goffman’s taxonomy of the “basic keys employed in our society,” (Goffman 1974, 48) religion is replete with forms of “make-believe” (or “as if”: see Benavides 2000, 233; Burkert 1987, 154),² it elicits theatricality and choreographed “ceremonials,” may demand rehearsals and “technical re-doings,” and not infrequently implies the “regrounding” of ordinary domains of activity (Goffman 1974, 48–77).³ Psychoanalysts (Freud 1933 [1907]), ritual theorists (Bell 1992), and cognitive scholars of religion (McCauley and Lawson 2002) have long explained “ritualization,” which boils down to a repetitive transposition of an otherwise ordinary strip of activity, as the basic keying of a religious way of doing things. “Sacralization” has most recently been reconceptualized along the same lines (see Rüpke 2018, 24–27). Religion largely functions by keying and coding human activities that are vulnerable to transformation.

Against this theoretical backdrop, we take here a further step. We suggest that *switching the code*,⁴ that is “rekeying” (Goffman 1974, 79) a material that has already been coded religiously (e.g. the Eucharist is a significantly altered sacrifice), is how religion frequently appears to operate when it is *studied historically* across an already stratified religious landscape and when we zoom in on *the level of the individual*. “Keyings,” Goffman explains, “are themselves also vulnerable to rekeying.”

So we must deal with retransformations as well as transformations. Nor can any obvious limit be seen to the number of rekeyings to which a particular strip of activity can be subject; clearly multiple rekeyings are possible. [. . .]. A New Yorker cartoon can depict two male models posing (under the direction of a photographer) at a chess board for a

² “By this term I mean to refer to activity that participants treat as an avowed, ostensible imitation or running through of less transformed activity, this being done with the knowledge that nothing practical will come of the doing” (Goffman 1974, 48).

³ “What is involved is the performance of an activity more or less openly for reasons or motives felt to be radically different from those that govern ordinary actors” (Goffman 1974, 75). See Benavides’ observation that “rituals connected with work frequently attempt to establish a distance between the celebrant and real labour: when, for instance, Chinese (and Vietnamese) rulers performed agricultural rituals, the amount of land ritually ploughed increased as the status of the ritual performer decreased. In other words, if the emperor ploughed three furrows up and three back, the three princes each ploughed five furrows up and back, the nine high officials turned nine furrows each, and so on, it being left to the peasants to do the actual work” (Benavides 2000, 233).

⁴ On the reasons why Goffman opted for “key” rather than “code,” see Goffman 1974, 44 note 14.

liquor ad, apparently deep in play, one saying to another, ‘I wish I had learned to play the game.’ [. . .]. And, of course, not only can a particular stage play be presented in various versions or styles, from classical to modern dress, but also one of these versions can be satirized, guyed, camped, or played broad, *the persistent purpose being to use a traditional presentation as a substance in its own right, as something itself to work upon.*

(Goffman 1974, 80–81; emphasis mine)

Viewed as rekeyings of already religiously keyed frameworks, code-switching religious practices are the subject of this section of the volume. At first sight, such practices look bewilderingly heterogeneous. They can be either discursive (such as penning a word or swearing an oath) or non-discursive (such as wearing a type of clothing or giving up pork). They can be instantiated by texts as well as performed despite of, or against, textual prescriptions. They oscillate between authoritarian hermeneutic strategies of the “strong” (e.g. a late 4th-century Christian exegesis of Jewish scriptures) and life-saving tactics of the “weak” (e.g. a double-edged statement during a criminal trial). They can serve functions as opposed as the dogmatic policing of the boundaries of a discourse (for instance, when a specialist authors a biblical commentary) or the wholesale changing of the rules of a conversation (for instance, when an emperor engages in the resemanticization of a term). They can be “lived” in the most easily grasped sense of the performance of a daily prayer or in the more subtle character of a literary bricolage. Some are accomplished on the spot, some cover an adult human life-span, and some span centuries. In general, code-switching religious practices crisscross the border between production and consumption (de Certeau 1984 [1980]) and, needless to say, cut across *religions*. Nevertheless, what eventually unifies this miscellaneous array of practices is that, in order to perform them, an individual has to alter – or re-alter – the character of a more or less firmly established and closely scripted religious, or religiously infused, practice.

Before introducing these code-switching activities in detail, it will be necessary to briefly consider their implications in the context of the collective historical enterprise that is the study of “lived ancient religion”.

2 “Lived ancient religion”: beyond “traditional symbolic interactionism”

The “lived ancient religion” approach (Rüpke 2011; Albrecht et al. 2018) construes and investigates religion as the intrinsically precarious and ceaselessly constructed outcome of individual actions that navigate the “*loose parameters* provided by traditions, ideals, and institutions” (Albrecht et al. 2018, 569;

emphasis mine). Therefore, on the one hand, the Goffmanian framework of this section of the present volume is nothing but a recognition of the original *interactionist* agenda of the “lived ancient religion” conceptualization of “lived religion” as “religion in the making,” set against a tradition of scholarship that has heavily invested in “the existence of a-priori norms and thought of behaviour as determined by membership of a specific group” (Albrecht et al. 2018, 584). “Interactionism,” an appropriately loose term, sociologically grounds the “lived ancient religion” historical study of religion at the level of the individual (see Rüpke 2013). Therefore, on the one hand, it positions the “lived ancient religion” approach in theoretical contrast to perspectives on religious self-identification and patterns of religiosity that are too laden with notions of normativity, and theories of identity, philosophies of actions, and ethnographies of grouping processes that are too structure-oriented. On the other hand, the interplay and cross-fertilization between anthropological and archaeological theories of human-object interaction (Miller 1998; Brown 2003; Latour 2005; Hodder 2012), varieties of relational structuralism (Emirbayer and Mische 1998) and group-centered cultural sociology (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003), and bio-cultural embodied approaches to religious world-making and experience (Geertz 2010; Grieser and Johnston 2017) work to provide the “lived ancient religion” perspective with a programmatic sensitivity towards “the resistance of objects, the durability of institutions, and the tenacity of human bodies and minds” (Rüpke 2015, 352).

Sociologically speaking, this leads to an eclectic and balanced interactionist perspective that does not allow identities, roles, and meanings to be unrestrictedly defined and constructed anew in any situation.⁵ The materiality of things does matter (Miller 1998; see Raja and Weiss 2015; 2016); structures and agencies relate to one another and constitute each other (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; see Rüpke 2015); “group styles” are recognizably patterned and relatively durable “elements of culture” (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; see Lichterman et al. 2017; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015); habitus are stockpiled in series and thus come in the plural (Lahire 2003; see Arcari in this section); meanings are bordered fields that individuals can poach their way across (de Certeau 1984 [1980]; see Urciuoli in this section).

Indexing processes of individualization based on religion, the code-switching practices outlined and investigated in this section arise out of this loosely policed and never reified web of structures, lines of actions, and

⁵ For the tendency to “dissolve social structure in a solvent of subjective definitions” as the shared commonality of so-called “traditional versions of symbolic interactionism,” see Stryker 2000, 27; Burke and Stets 2009, 33–37.

meaning-making processes. A whole variety of religious and non-religious motives can account for the strategies pursued by individuals to creatively re-key and adapt existing signs, beliefs, settings, and practices to their own personal ends. This sort of creativity is clearly not a prerogative of socio-political elites or religious specialists, that is, of those privileged urban agents endowed with forms of capitals that entitle them to manipulate religiously coded signs and symbols. Nor should the inventive way in which these practices insinuate themselves into prior systems of meanings be associated with the limited power resources of the dominated sectors of the Roman imperial population: while certainly including authentic “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985), these code-switching moves cannot be restricted to the ingenious manners “in which the weak make use of the strong” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], xvii) in order to face and overcome conditions of marginality and situations of exclusion. Top-down attempts to typify meanings and bottom-up efforts to appropriate them will be investigated equally in this section. Differently empowered individuals, such as emperors, senators, and literate and illiterate members of religious minorities, all have a stake in this transformational game, in which words and deeds are transcribed and re-transcribed without losing any of their *ascribed* religious seriousness.

3 Individual contributions in the section

This fourth section of the volume focuses on heterogeneous items that the technical jargon of related disciplines and specialized bodies of knowledge have traditionally worked to isolate from one another, for instance by tagging them as conversion and Judaization (Berthelot), apostasy and Hellenization (Boin), narrativization (Degelmann), textualization and interpolation (Arcari), commentary (Bracht), and accommodation (Urciuoli). In this volume, these items are all grouped together under a general heading that treats them as techniques and procedures by which non-discursive practices, discourses, and writings are rekeyed/recoded within religiously framed contexts of meaning-making and interaction. In addition to this unifying function, the “Switching the code” designation has a second advantage: it keeps together transformational activities that Goffman himself would rather distinguish into two classes, “keyings” and “fabrications,” according to the varying intentionality of the practitioner/s. While the former have been already introduced, the latter refer to

the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on.

(Goffman 1974, 80–83)

In some cases, transformation clearly requires a difference in the participants' view of what is going on. A Roman patrician who ostentatiously refuses to display symbolic mourning wants his public to share the *key* in order to appreciate the gesture. By contrast, a Christian martyr playing at riddles *fabricates* a frame that is meant to divide the awareness of the audience, that is, to deceive some outgroup persons while instructing an ingroup who are provided with the correct code. In this latter case, a different “transformational vulnerability” of human activities is at stake insofar as “the rim of the frame is a construction” that only the fabricators can see (Goffman 1974, 84). Yet the question of whether or not a scribe interpolating and modifying a text acts deceptively, and for what reason, can be difficult to answer: she may, in fact, think her intervention is meant to alter an already transformed text and/or aim to restore or reveal its genuine meaning. By the same token, non-Jews mentioned among Jewish benefactors for their financial contributions to the construction or refurbishment of buildings used by the Jewish community might have at least partly concealed from their Jewish public, or euphemized, their non-religious motivations for acting. All in all, by glossing over the distinction between fabrications and keyings, “Switching the code” emphasizes that, in all the cases addressed by the chapters of this section, a particular religiously-laden body of behaviors and/or words within which action has meaning is recoded.

The sequence in which the chapters are presented deliberately avoids following the chronological order of the subject matter. They are rather arranged to create a sort of back-and-forth movement between textual and extra-textual materials that should help further highlight the extreme variety of what is used as a pattern for the transformations.

Christopher Degelmann's chapter opens in a most Goffmanian way. A Roman boy, son of a killed man and facing the impossibility of succeeding in a legal action, transposes a court scene into the streets of the capital by publicly displaying what earlier research has referred to as *squalor* and what Degelmann interprets as “symbolic mourning.” Instead of performing his grief in the setting of a tribunal, the boy begins to follow the putative murderer while wearing rags. This keying strategy is somehow effective, since “the man fail[s] at the following election.” Applying to Roman antiquity the Luhmann-inspired notion of “transformation,” which indexes mechanisms of the creative appropriation of elements from the past, Degelmann sets out from this episode to survey the formal and functional changes that occurred to symbolic mourning practices over the centuries, swinging between Roman history and classical historiography,

and between classical historiography and other textual genres and non-literary sources. Already “a bricolage of numerous practices in Roman daily (political) life,” *squalor* undergoes continuous metamorphoses into different “mourning scene[s],” from the Middle Republic through to the Early Imperial era. The resulting impression is of a constant flux of altered motifs that are patterned after earlier historical episodes and literary depictions and which, in turn, influence subsequent narratives and actual modes of action. The reader is confronted with a deliberately puzzling chain of connections that draws the origins of the *squalor*, a custom that had become conventional by Claudius’ time, back to the founding myth of the city of Rome.

Code-switching devices and techniques applied to texts alone are no less influenced by extra-textual reality and factors that reach beyond semantics. Drawing on both relevance-theoretic and embodiment approaches, Luca Arcari addresses interpretive practices carried out by scribal experts on two exemplars of what he calls “living visionary texts”: P.Oxy. 1.5 and the *Codex Sangermanensis*. The redactor of the former both interpolates and modifies a few lines from a 2nd-century early Christian text, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, while the scribe copying the latter expunges a doctrinally problematic section of the Latin version of the Jewish apocalypse *4 Ezra* (end of 1st century). By showing how textualization works to intensify complexity and to systematize extremely fluid and unstable scripts, Arcari stresses the role of the scribal agents in the meaning-making process: via either subtle manipulation or the “extreme operation of the cut,” interpretation consists in appropriating, transposing, and reshaping information that is contained in an “original” text and processed through mechanisms that require more than semantic means. The interpretive work creates pathways in long-term memory and generates meaning through the interplay of the “cognitive environment” and the social positionality of the interpreter.

Using literary and epigraphic evidence to shed light on textual and non-textual practices, Katell Berthelot focuses on so-called “Judaizers” as “non-Jews appropriat[ing] Jewish rituals, costumes, and beliefs.” Her chapter foregrounds two major aspects of this widely documented phenomenon by construing them in a way that is highly resonant with the “lived ancient religion” approach. First, Judaizing attitudes encompass a variety of personal modes of adopting and adapting, that is to say reworking, an environmentally available, meaningful Jewish cultural frame. Performed in a polytheistic world in which acknowledging the power of a god can often be seen as a safer option than denying it, such attitudes eschew conclusive attempts to range them according to categories (assimilation, acculturation, accommodation) charting the degree of the individual’s implication in a local or translocal Jewish “community”. Second, Berthelot’s observation that this wide array of appropriating practices seems to “elude

control and codification” intensifies the troublesome interpretive aspect of the “exact nature” of the relationship between the Judaizers and the local Jewish group/s. In consequence, it is rather the individualized, that is the de-traditionalized manner of performing Jewishness by Judaizing, that features prominently in the extant sources.

Since the Maccabean period, *Ioudaismos* has formed a semiotic-semantic pair with *Hellenismos*. Ancient Christian writers have redesigned both words to wound, thus using them to stigmatize ritual misbeliefs and misbehaviors typical of the Jews, on the one hand, and Greek-styled slandered forms of life and religiosity, on the other. It is precisely within this age-old discursive tradition that Douglas Boin relocates and reinterprets *Hellenismos*, a term that scholars usually understand as the concept branding the alleged religious ideology and politics of the three-year reign of the emperor Julian (361–363 CE). The lasting stigmatic connotation, along with the observation that the “word appears nowhere in the epigraphic record” of Julian’s day, leads Boin to explain *Hellenismos* as an isolated attempt to claim, rekey, and assert the disparaging signifier into the technical label of a “coherent vision” opposing that of Christian “hard-liners.” Julian aims to recast it to fit a model of positive engagement with the Greco-Roman culture that could give voice to the nonrigid lifestyle of numerous Christian and non-Christian inhabitants of the empire. More unfortunate than untimely, the code-switching challenge carried out by the mightiest man on earth did not succeed in the top-down transformation of those “acting (too) Greek” into “good citizens” and, eventually, into the “real Christians.”

Katharina Bracht’s chapter starts with a period slightly after that investigated by Boin. The context, however, has significantly changed: the empire is now a legally Christian territorial entity where literate practices of sense-making are given a privileged focus, i.e. authoritative texts now have a canonical standing. Ever since the Bible started to become holy, processes of scripturalization and methods for re-signifying scriptures have always gone hand in hand. Yet the two protagonists of this chapter, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Jerome of Stridon, are somehow engaged in an unprecedented activity: the appropriation via commentary of the 800-year-old Jewish canonical book of Jonah. Drawing on Jan Assman’s theory of communication, Bracht elucidates the problem in terms of the “expansion of the communicative situation,” insofar as both the temporal distance between the original text and the contemporary audience and the religious difference between the early Jewish audience and the late antique Christian public had become huge. Therefore, it is only by re-keying the already christologically and eschatologically interpreted Biblical “pretext” via the “metatextual” operation of the commentary that it is possible to secure its relevance, gain signification, and produce the expected “normative

and formative effects” on the Christian readers. Bracht stresses how the dissimilar urban contexts and intended readerships, the different linguistic character of the chosen version of the pretext, and the diverse hermeneutic methodologies resulted in two different outcomes of Christian sense-making.

Code-switching techniques are just as useful for openly imposing new meanings and new definitions of the situation as they are for cunningly resisting impositions and, eventually, for deceiving. In the last chapter of the section, Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli enlists three pieces of conceptual apparatus, namely Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of mimicry, James C. Scott’s theory of infrapolitics, and Michel de Certeau’s analysis of poaching, in order to unearth and shed light on the so-called early Christians’ “pedagogy of trickery”. Proposing “a praxeological insight into non-confrontational forms of resistance,” Urciuoli sifts through early Christian literature to seek out different kinds of tricks that Christ-believing individuals might have used to cheat – or teach to cheat – different forms of power. Double-sided expressions, ambiguous speeches, riddles, euphemisms, and stratagems are all polysemic figures that indicate forms of noncompliance based on a differentiated understanding of the situation and explained by the will to avoid direct confrontation. Fabrication, Goffman shows, is another basic way in which meanings and activities can be transformed and in which new sense can be produced. To focus on the manners in which vulnerable individuals and groups can profit from the structural vulnerability of any meaningful situation – including religiously framed situations – thus seems to be an appropriate way to conclude a collective investigation of “lived ancient religion”. For religion-in-the-making also means a religion liable to be made, and re-made, *by anybody*, weak or strong, or even by the weak against the strong.

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Symbolic mourning

The literary appropriation of signs in Late Republican and Early Imperial Rome

Abstract: “Symbolic mourning” describes the phenomenon of appearing in public in mourning without any prior fatality. These scenes result from conflicts between different members of the society, mainly within the nobility. The protagonists aim at the compassion of the bystanders and want to create an atmosphere of equality with the people, at least for the moment. At the same time, these mourning scenes exert pressure on their peers, because the support of the people could help overthrow public order. Sen. *contr.* 10.1.1 refers implicitly to that practice when he lets a poor boy ask in the words of Julius Bassus: “When are we not in mourning in the eyes of these rich people?” The contribution shows the traditions Seneca is relating to – legal texts and Roman *exempla* – and how these sources interacted in the literary construction of mourning scenes.

1 Introduction:

Seneca’s controversy about the *squalor*

L. Annaeus Seneca (54 BCE – 39 CE), father of the famous philosopher of the same name, composed a series of rhetorical manuals at the end of his life in order to prepare his ambitious sons for the battle of words on the *rostrum*. Among these were the so-called *Controversiae*, which provide a central source for the rhetorical and judicial practices of the early Imperial Period. The ten books contain legal cases, fictitious for the most part, that served as practical exercises and were “discussed by famous scholars” of the time. Each controversy is introduced by a few sentences outlining the problem of a case. After this introduction, Seneca gives an account of the positions of different legal scholars in direct speech and lists them side by side. One of the few passages

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which may be considered authentic is the first controversy of the tenth book. Seneca introduces the case as follows:¹

A man who had a son and a rich enemy was found killed, though not robbed. The youth, dressed in mourning, began to follow the rich man about. The rich man took him to court, and demanded that if he had any suspicions he should accuse him. The poor man said: "I shall accuse when I can," and continued to follow the rich man in mourning clothes just the same. The rich man stood for office, but was rejected; he accuses the poor man of injury.

This passage describes a case of defamation (*iniuria*). In this *controversia*, a boy (*adulescens*) is causing damage to the reputation (*fama*) of a rich man (*dives*) by putting on dirty garments (*sordidatus*) and following him step by step through the streets of Rome (*sequor*). The boy holds the man, who had been his father's enemy (*inimicus*), responsible for the murder since only a rich man would refrain from robbing someone after killing him (*inspoliatus*). The consequence of this defamation was that the rich man later failed to be elected for a public office (*honores petere repulsus*) which is why he decided to take the matter to court.

The most interesting point about this passage is that the man who had applied for an office argues that the son of the dead man should bring an action before the court instead of following him in rags if he wished the case to be examined. In fact, it was a common practice at the time to settle a feud before a court (see Thomas 1984; David 1991); this was even seen as an act of *pietas* (see Thornton 2013), the fulfilling of a sense of duty towards close relatives (see Šterbenc Erker 2009; Flaig 2009). In the course of the controversy, however, it becomes clear that the poor boy considered himself unable to begin such an action. On the one hand, he was too young to initiate legal action, while, on the other hand, there was also no hope for him of securing a fair trial given the influence and the prestige of his opponent. The boy therefore symbolically carried the court scene out into the streets instead. Since the violent death of a relative came with the obligation to take vengeance, and the filing of a lawsuit was not, in this case, a particularly promising path, it became necessary for the boy to find another way. The strategy he pursued instead was to publicly display signs of mourning, which was his right as a relative, and to turn them

¹ Seneca, *Controversiae* 10, 1 pr.: . . . *Quidam, cum haberet filium et divitem inimicum, occisus inspoliatus inventus est. Adulescens sordidatus divitem sequebatur; dives eduxit in ius eum et postulavit ut si quid suspicaretur accusaret se. Pauper ait: "accusabo cum potero" et nihilominus sordidatus divitem sequebatur. Cum peteret honores dives, repulsus accusat iniuriarum pauperem.* All texts and translations have been taken from the Loeb Classical Library.

against the rich man. Thus, by pursuing the supposed murderer of his father, the boy publicly demonstrated the cause of his mourning. In the end, this approach proved effective and the rich man failed at the following election (see Raber 1969, 52–63).

Some such version of this episode is said to have taken place as early as the 2nd century BCE. Since it was common to mourn in cases of death, a specific practice evolved in which signs of mourning, such as clothes and beards, were appropriated and displayed in completely different situations – later even without any cases of death. In these new contexts, the signs took on additional symbolic meanings that could assist in the settling of conflicts.² This custom was often combined with the use of signs and gestures which originally had nothing to do with mourning or burying practices. This combination can be seen in Seneca’s anecdote, in which the wearing of soiled mourning garments coincides with the *adsectatio* (see Hartmann 2016, 96–97), an act that was usually performed by a client for his patron in order to enlarge his entourage. The act of closely accompanying a person usually demonstrated the popularity of this person and his social rank. However, according to Seneca the *adsectatio* did not, in this case, represent a favor but, rather, a disservice that produced exactly the opposite of a demonstration of status. The appropriation of signs and gestures in a way that partly inverts their original meaning is a device that also appears in the literary tradition, with a number of authors using it to embroider symbolic scenes of mourning (see Degelmann 2018; see also Flaig 2003, 99–110).

After the second Punic War, this practice of symbolic mourning continued to expand before declining rapidly during the early Imperial era. There exist almost one hundred historical records of this kind of *mutatio vestis*, including historiographical works, papyri, and portraits on coins, busts and gems. Older research has referred to this custom as *squalor* since it involved the wearing of dirty clothes and the neglect of one’s scalp and facial hair (Becker 1849, 157 and Mommsen 1899, 390–391 n. 2).

Against this background, my aim in this chapter will be to demonstrate the interplay between different textual genres which have this *squalor* as their common topic, since Seneca’s controversy did not arise in a vacuum. The controversy clearly makes reference to a tradition that was based on both narrative and non-literary sources. In pursuing this goal, I will consider the mutual references and quotations as processes of “transformation”. I will begin by briefly

² For the environment of mourning and burial, see Hope and Huskinson 2011; Hope 2009; Rüpke and Scheid 2009; Schrupf 2006; Hinard 1995; Wesch-Klein 1993; Toynbee 1971.

outlining the concept of transformation and will then go on to examine three case studies of the mutual influence between the *squalor* and various textual genres: first, the relation between Seneca's case and two digests; second, the interconnections within historiography; and, finally, the mutual influence between narrative sources and judicial texts, which will serve as a synthesis of the two previous cases.

2 The literary transformation of symbolic mourning

In recent times, the term “transformation” has become a key concept within research on cultural change. The Berlin-based Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) 644 “Transformationen der Antike” has made a major contribution to this field by developing a special analytical conception of transformation. This conception provides a framework for describing the complex forms of the appropriation of antiquity in post-classical European cultures up to the present day, as well as for identifying different modes of transformation. At the center of this notion of transformation stands the idea of the interrelatedness of processes (*allelopoiesis*) that continually generate new interpretations and constructions of antiquity.³ According to this approach, every present age generates its own specific, time-dependent view of antiquity through the appropriation of antique elements and, in doing so, creates a new perspective on the past (see Böhme 2011). While the SFB provides a valuable starting point, it has little to say about the specific sense of appropriation with which I will be concerned with in this chapter.

However, there is no need to look to the Middle Ages or Early Modern Europe to discover mechanisms of transformation. Antiquity itself already offers starting points from which to apply the concept, since ancient culture was not a monolithic, unchanging bloc. These changes are, in fact, constantly visible in the texts of classical authors: either because they were themselves irritated by certain developments or because, through the passage of time, different sources reported in quite different ways about the same institutions. These variations remain significant even if they only indicate the viewpoint and the intention of the specific author.

When looking at acts of symbolic mourning, however, transformative processes also become discernible in other ways because every form of appropriation

³ An echo of Niklas Luhmann's system theory is clearly audible here.

transforms the appropriated product into something new that can only be understood by reference to the preceding version. Since the *squalor* represented a *bricolage* of numerous practices in Roman daily (political) life,⁴ classical authors creating their scenes of symbolic mourning according to similar rules produced transformations of the *squalor* that can be seen as appropriations of a *bricolage*. Historiographers and biographers in particular appropriated this custom with the intention of doing more than just providing accurate reports of the practice as it was performed. Moreover, the success or the failure of the *squalor* was always an ideal opportunity to give history a surprising twist. Since such an act of mourning was mostly employed as a final resort in an otherwise hopeless conflict, success or failure often alters the narrative (see Degelmann 2018, 100–104). In fact, classical writers, historiographers and biographers in particular, also transferred the mourning acts known to them into scenes from early Roman history. The reasons for this went beyond the simple use of narrative devices; the literary episodes were also supposed to guide the actions of contemporaries who would try to model their own behavior on these *exempla*.

In what follows, I will try to describe these phenomena by considering the examples of symbolic mourning. My work will focus on the narrative and rhetorical strategies through which transformations become visible. Given the narratological dimension of symbolic mourning *acts*, throughout this chapter I will also refer to the *squalor* as a mourning *scene*.

3 A cause of controversy: the tension in the digests of the Middle Republic

Symbols that accompanied the humiliation of one's own person were not simply integrated into acts of mourning. Indeed, numerous other cultures of the ancient Mediterranean area also performed rituals of self-humiliation or self-mutilation in the face of death. In fact, the literary sources themselves point to a close connection between the *squalor* and mourning (*luctus*).⁵

⁴ Besides mourning in general, the *squalor* could (but need not) refer to the *pompa funebris*, *salutatio*, *ambulatio*, *prensatio*, *nomenclatio* (so broader practices of patronage), *deditio*, and the (religious) supplication; see Degelmann 2018, 117–217.

⁵ Filthiness in connection with *luctus*: Cicero, *Oratio post reditum in Senatu* 12; *Oratio post reditum ad Quirites* 8; *De domo sua* 26 and 59; *ad Atticum* 3.10.2; *De oratore* 2.167; Seneca, *Controversiae* 9.5.1 and 10.1.2; Lucan 2.374–378; Suetonius, *Augustus* 23.2; *Digests* 47.10.15.27.

Seneca's description clearly borrows from two digests that are usually dated to the time shortly before the Gracchi and that emerged alongside the expansion of staged mourning scenes (Daube 1991a; 1991b). Usually the codification of the provisions is dated to the time of Antoninus Pius (Stroux 1929, 62–63). One of the digests is concerned with the excessive dishonor caused by the *squalor*:⁶

Generally speaking, the Praetor forbade anything to be done which would render anyone infamous; hence, whatever a person does or says that has a tendency to bring another into disrepute will afford ground for an action for injury sustained. Such are almost all those things which cause disgrace; as, for instance, the use of mourning garments or clothing that is filthy, or allowing the hair or the beard to grow . . .

According to this passage, the *praetor* was responsible for taking actions against measures that caused reputational damage and fell within the scope of the crime of *iniuria*. These measures included the wearing of rags or mourning garments, as well as the growing of one's hair and beard. Despite these restrictions, relatives were allowed to support a defendant in court by wearing shabby clothes and long hair. By displaying the appropriate signs of mourning, both family members and the accused person hoped to arouse compassion among the jurymen:⁷

No one is permitted to wear filthy clothing or long hair in public under the name of an accused person, unless he is so closely connected with him by affinity that he cannot be compelled to testify against him in opposition to his will.

The first provision suggests that there was considerable concern about public demonstrations of grief in court while the second allowed close relatives to use this form of expression. Despite later attributions, Roman law was never intended to be a coherent juridical code and was rather a collection of decrees that could be presented in court to serve as test cases. This meant that Roman law was systematized in a completely different manner to the way legal systems are structured today. The tension between the two digests cited above thus becomes less surprising as they have simply been juxtaposed. The simultaneous ban on and permission for the *squalor* were, however, a cause of controversy

⁶ Digests 47.10.15.27: *Generaliter vetuit praetor quid ad infamiam alicuius fieri. proinde quodcumque quis fecerit vel dixerit, ut alium infamet, erit actio iniuriarum. haec autem fere sunt, quae ad infamiam alicuius fiunt: ut puta ad invidiam alicuius veste lugubri utitur aut squalida, aut si barbam demittat vel capillos submittat . . .*

⁷ Digests 47.10.39: *Vestem sordidam rei nomine in publico habere capillumve summittere nulli licet, nisi ita coniunctus est adfinitati, ut invitus in reum testimonium dicere cogi non possit.*

and Seneca the Elder seems to have taken advantage of the discrepancy between the two decrees. In matters of transformation, this means that, while Seneca concentrated on the reception of the two provisions, his composition also changed the way in which the two digests were understood. Since the early 1st century CE, the reader tried to synchronize both decrees with the story told by Seneca without reaching a coherent interpretation because Seneca's construction obscured the juxtaposition of Roman legal claims. Given the developments of the 2nd century BCE, the controversy thus represents a key source for the understanding of the transition of symbolic mourning from *luctus* to the *squalor*. Furthermore, it illustrates the appropriation of legal texts by authors who engage in and write rhetorical treatises.

Besides the legal decrees of the Republican era, Seneca could also draw on various literary sources. Cicero's legal speeches, in particular, attest to the importance of the *squalor* in court.⁸ This topic appeared in Cicero's rhetorical works, which rapidly became part of the canon of classical texts and to which Seneca himself would surely have had access (Cicero, *De oratore* 2.195). Both the legal provisions and Seneca's texts relied on their persuasive strength and, ultimately, included rhetorical strategies. Historiography, by contrast, derived its ability to persuade from narrative strategies and it is to these that I now turn.

4 Narrative interdependencies within Augustan historiography

Although symbolic mourning is mentioned repeatedly by Seneca in the controversies, his examination of speech and counter-speech is nowhere as detailed as in the tenth book.⁹ But already the historiographical tradition of Augustan times provides numerous examples of the *squalor*. However, especially in classical historiography, one can observe narrative mechanisms and interdependencies between stories concerned with the *squalor* that ultimately caused a permanent transformation of the practice itself. An examination of the *ab urbe*

⁸ Cicero, *In Verrem* 2.2.62; 2.3.6; 2.4.41; 2.5.128 and 130; *Pro Cluentio* 18 and 192; *Pro Murena* 86; *Pro Flacco* 106; *In Vatinius* 30–33; *Pro Sestio* 1 and 144–145; *Pro Caelio* 4; *Pro Scauro* 49; *Pro Plancio* 21; 29; 87; *Pro Ligario* 32–33; *Pro Milone* 92 and 105; for Cicero's use of the *squalor* see also Hall 2014, 40–63; even Quintilian, *Institutiones* 6.1.30 and 33–34 discusses the *squalor*.

⁹ See further references to the practices in Seneca, *Controversiae* 1.1.17–19; 7.3.1; 7.3.7; 9.5.1.

condita by Titus Livius (Livy), for example, shows a form of interdependence that was central to mourning scenes.¹⁰

After Cicero, Livy is the author who reports the most mourning scenes. However, his historiographical work is conserved only in fragments. If we set aside the fragments and content tables of later versions, the surviving text covers a period that begins with the founding story of Rome and stretches to 167 BCE, while leaving a big gap in the 3rd century. Despite these limitations, Livy reports more than twenty mourning scenes. Roughly half of these are found in the early books that are often regarded as problematic. The first appears in the founding myth of the city of Rome. In this passage, Livy has the Sabines wander about in dirty clothes while they bemoan their pain and the injustice they have suffered since their daughters have been stolen by Romulus and his men.¹¹ What is remarkable about this story is that, when he first mentions it, Livy attributes this custom not to the Romans but to the non-Roman (albeit Latin) Sabines. This might lead us to two different conclusions: either he did not consider the custom to be originally Roman or the custom had become so common that he expected it to be practiced by neighboring cultures as well. However, Livy's attitude towards foreign cultures was rather ambivalent. In fact, by the time he was writing, the custom had passed far beyond the Sabines and had even reached Egypt

10 The same could be shown for Cassius Dio and Dionysios of Halikarnassos. Although the narratives of Plutarch follow different patterns, this interdependence of mourning acts is also reflected in his works; Suetonius does not provide enough passages to give a reliable judgment. There are comparable trends in Polybios' work but he has no particular interest in these practices, possibly because they were still fairly recent in his times. The books of Diodorus for the relevant periods are too fragmentary; Tacitus only sporadically gives us information about the *squalor*. For the state of art on Livy's narratological approach, see Pausch 2011, 3–8 and Cornell 1995 for a histori(ographi)cal perspective on early Rome.

11 Livy 1.10.1: "The resentment of the brides was already much diminished at the very moment when their parents, in mourning garb and with tears and lamentations, were attempting to arouse their states to action", *Iam admodum mitigati animi raptis erant; at raptarum parentes tum maxime sordida veste lacrimisque et querellis civitates concitabant*. – Plutarch, *Romulus* 19 only refers to the loosened hair and the children but not to mourning. Dionysios of Halikarnassos 2.45.5 reverses the situation; this time it is not the relatives of the stolen women that are in mourning but the robbed ones themselves implore their relatives not to start a war with the Romans because they want to save the fathers of their children whom they brought with them from death: "After this the women went out dressed in mourning, some of them also carrying their infant children", μετὰ τοῦτο ἐξήρσαν ἐσθῆτας ἔχουσαι πενθίμους, τινὲς δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τέκνα νήπια ἐπαγόμενα. – See also Livy 1.13.1: "Then the Sabine women, whose wrong had given rise to the war, with loosened hair and torn garments . . .", *Tum Sabinae mulieres, quarum ex iniuria bellum ortum erat, crinibus passis scissaque veste* . . . See, further, Cassius Dio 1.5.7 frg.; for the tearing of clothes and hair while mourning, see Kowalewski 2002, 17–33, where the parallel tradition is mentioned (without signs of mourning).

after the expansion of the empire. Many of the figures characterized as foreign that will appear later in his work were considered Romans in Augustan times. Despite their cultural differences, they were ultimately united by the *pax Romana*, the empire, and the Roman civil law, all of which were above ethnic differences.¹² It is also very revealing that Livy apparently has no concerns about depicting this practice at the origins of the Roman community. This suggests that familiarity with this practice in Augustan times may be the best explanation for the early *mutatio vestis* mentioned by Livy.

The last of the historiographically doubtful stories about the *squalor* dating from the early to the Middle Republic follows a similar scheme. When the Tusculans, a neighboring people who had first been subjugated by and then allied with the Romans, were accused by M. Flavius in 323 BCE of taking up arms in self-defense without the permission of the Romans, they performed a mourning scene which took the form of an emphatic solicitation. The Tusculans came to Rome with their wives (and children), who were covered in dirt. Their performance aroused so much compassion that the lawsuit was dropped.¹³

Four episodes from historical times are comparable to the story about the Tusculans, not so much because of their causes but because of the order of events. Among these, the incident of the Rhodians is particularly well documented. The other three incidents involve the Sicels (208 BCE), the Locrians (204 BCE), and the Egyptians (169 BCE).¹⁴ After pursuing their own interests and falling into disgrace during the Third Macedonian War, the Rhodians demanded an audience before the senate (167 BCE). This request was rejected and

12 Livy 34.9.3 shows this e.g. for the Spanish town of Emporion: “... at present all are fused into one mass, the Spaniards first, and later the Greeks, having been received into Roman citizenship”, *Nunc in corpus unum confusi omnes Hispanis prius, postremo et Graecis in civitatem Romanam adscitis*.

13 Livy 8.37.8–12, especially 9–10: “The citizens of Tusculum, with their wives and children, came to Rome; and the great throng, putting on the sordid raiment of defendants, went about amongst the tribes and clasped the knees of the citizens in supplication. And so it happened that pity was more effective in gaining them remission of their punishment than were their arguments in clearing away the charges”, *Populus Tusculanus cum coniugibus ac liberis Roman venit. Ea multitudo veste mutata et specie reorum tribus circuit, genibus se omnium ad- volvens; plus itaque misericordia ad poenae veniam impetrandam quam causa ad crimen pur- gandum valuit*. See also Valerius Maximus 9.10.1, where children are mentioned as well; see Naiden 2006, 32; 50; 59–60; 120. Cassius Dio 8.16 frg., an episode from the same period, is obscure.

14 For the Sicels, see: 26.29.2; the Locrians: 29.16.6; the Egyptians: 44.19.6–7. See also Livy 45.4.2, where three *legati* of Perseus appear as *sordidati*, and the Aitolians in Livy 45.28.2, who do not provide a delegation but roam the countryside.

so they put on soiled garments and went from door to door to the senators' houses.¹⁵ After long debates – during which a tribune appeared, as in the case of the Tusculans – the Rhodians were finally granted access to the senate. There, they threw themselves to the ground in the *curia* with tears in their eyes and deplored the lamentable appearance they had been forced to take on in order to gain the compassion of the senators.

There are many reasons to think that this incident, perhaps in connection with those of the Sicels, Locrians, and Egyptians, served Livy as a model for the mourning scenes he ascribes to the Sabines and Tusculans. While the events surrounding the Sabines are partly a product of the dominant discourse of the Augustan period and partly a product of Livy's creativity, one has to be more careful about the Tusculans. As a result of the confrontations with Rome during the 4th century BCE, the Tusculans had successively been integrated into the Roman community. Nevertheless, they maintained a certain local identity, which is why a distinct tradition that remembered the conflict of 323 BCE might have existed.¹⁶ Whether Livy had access to this tradition is uncertain, although he mentions in his sixth book that his report will now follow written records.¹⁷ All in all, this episode appears to have been widely known at the time. Almost 400 years later, Valerius Maximus mentioned it among his *exempla* of vengeance. According to him, everyone knew why the *tribus Papiria*, with which Tusculum later coalesced, never supported a candidate from the *tribus Pollia*: it was this *tribus* alone that had voted for a punishment for the Tusculans in spite of their gesture of humility.¹⁸ The affair was, by then, deeply rooted in the collective memory of the Tusculans. Their *mutatio vestis*, which was well received in every *tribus* except one, may well have inspired other groups to act in the same way when they clashed with Rome. That successful practices should be imitated by others was in no way a unique occurrence.¹⁹

15 Livy 45.20.10: "Forthwith the Rhodians put on mourning and went the rounds of the houses of the chief men begging with tears and entreaties that they would hear the case before passing sentence", *Extemplo veste sordida sumpta domos principum cum precibus ac lacrimis circumibant orantes, ut prius cognoscerent causam quam condemnarent*. See also Polybios 30.4.5; Diodor 31.5.3.

16 For the political constellation and the transmission, see Linke 2013, 76–77, 86–89.

17 Livy 6.1.1–3, a statement which is probably an annalistic fiction.

18 Valerius Maximus 9.10.1: "The Tusculans came to Rome with their wives and children, wearing mourning in supplication", *qui cum coniugibus ac liberis squalore obsiti supplices Romam <cum> venissent* . . .

19 Dionysios of Halikarnassos (14.6.2–3) probably knew of an alternative tradition as is suggested by his quite different report on Tusculum.

At this point, it is possible to observe the interdependence between traditional forms of acting and historiographical reports. Historical actors used the oral or the written tradition for inspiration for a successful performance and self-staging in the public space. Occasionally, they added elements of their own choice to the *exempla* and in turn became themselves examples of good conduct.²⁰ By doing this, they not only had an influence on the transmission of their own history but authors of the time could also make use of their observations of these recent *exempla* to better understand, describe, and explain older *exempla*.²¹

As for cases that date to periods for which our sources are unreliable, one must assume that these examples could have served as “role models”²² for later incidents. Some of them may even have been created specifically for this reason while more recent anecdotes that were considered historical had an influence on the literary elaboration of older events. Concerning the historiographical description, it is reasonable to assume an interplay between verifiable (template) and unhistorical or poorly documented occurrences (example). Consequently, we are faced with a narrative circle that re-narrates and modifies these stories over and over. In addition, this relation underlines the performativity of the reading aloud of texts: each scene comes into being by being read out and is sometimes “acted out” by the audience.

The task of ancient writers of history was to mediate between these two poles and to develop a credible narrative full of tensions while skillfully balancing the relation between the example and the template. When examining mourning scenes in Livy and other authors, it is important to keep in mind this mutual dependence because similar politically motivated mourning acts frequently appear (cf. for example Livy 2.23.3–4 with 6.14.3–7). In the case of the requests of the Tusculans and the Rhodians, this would mean that the Greeks followed the successful example of the Italians and possibly added new elements, since 150 years later the memories would certainly be vague. However, this does not imply that Roman historiography was regularly consumed on Rhodes. It simply shows that the Greeks had knowledge of these practices. Finally, Livy mentions that the Rhodians had intercessors among the Romans

20 For the interdependence between canonized images of the past and the present society in late Republican rhetoric, see Stemmler 2000 who shows something similar for Republican speeches.

21 For the value of the *exempla* in Livy, see Chaplin 2000; for the meaning of the *exempla* in Roman historiography, see Roller 2009; for Livy’s sources, see also Wiseman 2008, 24–38.

22 “Role models” in Roman history in Walter 2003; 2004a; for the concept see Merton 1959, especially 279–334.

who could have advised them to perform a *squalor* scene before the senate by referring to past examples.²³ The well-documented story of the Rhodian delegation in turn offered later generations of antique historiographers the opportunity to extensively elaborate in a literary manner the scarce information about the approach of the Tusculans or the Sabines. The example of the Rhodians might even have had an influence on the reports about the Sicels, the Locrians, and the Egyptians (and vice versa).

The consideration of the mutual influence between historical and narrative mourning scenes also makes it possible to include early records in the analysis without rejecting them globally as constructions of later times, as has been done by radical sceptics in the tradition of Timothy P. Wiseman. It thus becomes possible to obtain a wider perspective on historical continuities and changes.²⁴ This interdependence is also reflected in other forms in the written tradition. One of the tasks of historiography was to connect the strangeness of the past – sometimes even the strangeness of the past of one’s own language – with a reference to present events. The pedagogical task of the antique historiographer thus consisted in bridging the historical distance between the literary raw material and the reader without ignoring the exoticism of the antiquities and thereby diminishing the attractiveness of the subject matter. By functioning as a collective memory of exemplary conduct, historiography became a moral enterprise. Nevertheless, it must, of course, also be seen as a form of entertainment literature.

If this assumption is accurate, then the interplay between the example and the template should not only be found within one single author. In fact, this should

23 For example, Cato; ORF (= *Oratorum romanorum fragmenta*, ed. Enrico Malcovati) XLII/62–7, especially the two tribunes of the people M. Antonius und M. Pomponius; Livy 45.21.3. The confrontation with the praetor Mn. Juventius Thalna and the measures taken by both tribunes without the senate seem to anticipate the events of the period of Tiberius Gracchus. It should also be mentioned that the family of Thalna came from Tusculum; see Cicero, *Pro Plancio* 19.

24 A good overview of the research history is found in Richardson and Santangelo 2014; the debate is made particularly clear in the contributions of Raaflaub 2005; for contrary positions, see the foundational studies of Cornell 1995 as a (naive) “optimist” and Wiseman 1979 as a (radical) “skeptic” of the early Roman tradition. For the value of the unhistorical narratives, see Walter 1999, who prefers not to pose the question of historicity but to find out instead why and how early Rome was remembered and constantly retold, and how the Romans (re-)constructed their history. Pausch 2011, 242–246 has pointed to the fact that such apparent doublings are seldom identical and interprets them as part of the narrative strategy. This strategy should create excitement in the reader, who would ask himself whether the familiar sequences would stay the same or be interrupted. In addition, it would also have given the reader a pleasant feeling to be familiar with Rome’s history and to be able to recognize similar events; for such narrative strategies, see in general Koschorke 2012.

also be the case for two historiographers referring to each other, as well as for the relation between narrative and judicial texts. Both aspects will be examined below.

5 From the Late Republic to the Early Empire: the refusal of the *squalor* as a test case

The passages discussed above point to a transition in the discourse on the *squalor* in the Late Republic and Early Empire. In fact, collective acts of mourning demonstrate well the interrelatedness described above (a phenomenon that is also visible in individual mourning acts). However, the interplay between the example (e.g. the Tusculans) and the template (e.g. the Rhodians et al.) becomes more complex if one tries to reconstruct other events that have been preserved by Livy only as possible *role models*, the template of which is lost or must be found outside his work – in fact, hints for this regularly occur in other authors who provide traces of the material Livy has drawn on. Such an interplay was reflected in, for example, the rejection of the *squalor* that had been ritualized for some occasions and was therefore expected by the contemporaries. This will be examined in the following case study. In the ensuing case one can see the interdependence between the historical *exempla* and Livy's contemporary setting again. By respecting traditional motivations, Livy created a specific elaboration of early Roman history according to the norms of the historiographical genre, his own taste, and that of his contemporaries. In this case, the narrative component of historiography must be neither over- nor underestimated.²⁵ One can instead observe his constant struggle with the example and the template.

In the early 5th century BCE, Livy has the patrician Appius Claudius refuse to change his clothes while an accusation hangs over him.²⁶ The consular had

²⁵ See Morley 1999, 97–132; Pausch 2011; Koschorke 2012; also White 1978.

²⁶ Livy 2.61.5: “He was not one whom the threats of the plebeians or the entreaties of the senate could ever prevail upon, I do not say to put on mourning, or to seek men out with appeals for mercy, but even to soften and subdue in a slight degree the accustomed sharpness of his tongue, though it was before the people he must plead”, *Illum non minae plebis, non senatus preces percellere umquam potuere, non modo ut vestem mutaret aut supplex prensaret homines, sed ne ut ex consueta quidem asperitate orationis, cum ad populum agenda causa esset, aliquid leniret atque submitteret*. Cf. Dionysios of Halikarnassos. 9.54.4: “neither changed his dress, altered the haughtiness of his looks nor abated anything of his proud spirit . . .”, οὐτ’ ἐσθῆτα ἀλλάξας οὔτε τὸ τῆς ὄψεως γαῦρον ἀλλοιώσας οὔτε φρονήματός τι ὑφέμενος . . . For the refused *squalores*, see also Stroux 1929, 63–65.

been accused of impeding a renewed land distribution. However, the real cause of his indictment was his conduct as consul the year before, during which time he had tried to proceed against the newly established institution of the *concilium plebis*. Ultimately, he escaped conviction by committing suicide. Livy explains Claudius' decision to refuse a *squalor* by making his usual polemical remarks about the Claudians, who he blamed for their arrogance (*superbia*) and cruelty (*crudelitas*).²⁷ To act on the same level as the populace would have clashed with the self-image of the Claudians. At the same time, Livy also tries to inspire in the enemies of Appius a certain degree of admiration for Claudius' firm character (*constantia*).

Livy may have found the same sort of *constantia* in the case of the famous orator and legal scholar P. Rutilius Rufus. In 94 BCE, Rufus, in his role as a legate, had protected the inhabitants of Asia Minor from the arbitrariness of the *publicanii*. Their lobby subsequently accused him in Rome of a *crimen repetundarum* in order to get rid of him.²⁸ According to tradition, it was a sign of his noble character (Cicero, *Brutus* 113–114; Cassius Dio 28.97.2) that he rejected the usual form of defense under these circumstances (see Kallet-Marx 1990). He refused to wear mourning garments or to put down the signs of his rank during the process, believing that by doing so he would be accepting his guilt.²⁹ He was, nevertheless, still found guilty and had to go into exile. It is possible that Livy knew of this incident

27 For example, the reproach of the tribune Volero in Livy 2.56.7: "... Appius and his family, as most cruel and arrogant towards the Roman plebs", ... *Appi familiaeque superbissimae ac crudelissimae in plebem Romanam* ... Similarly, Livy 2.61.3–4.

28 Livy, *Periochae* 70; Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Postumo* 27; *Pro Fonteio* 38; *In Pisone* 95; Velleius Paterculus 2.13.2; Valerius Maximus 2.10.5; Seneca, *Epistulae* 79.14; Asconius, *Pro Scauro* 21.2 Clark; Tacitus, *Annales* 3.66.1; for the constellation see also Badian 1972, 91–92.

29 Valerius Maximus 6.4.4: "... he did not put on shabby clothes or lay aside the emblems of senatorial rank or stretch hands in supplication to the knees of the jury or say anything below the lustre of his past years", ... *nec obsoletam vestem induit, nec insignia senatoris deposuit, nec supplices ad genua iudicum manus tetendit, nec dixit quicquam splendore praeteritorum annorum humilium* ... Orosius 5.17.12: "Rutilius also, a man of great integrity, so firmly maintained his spirit of good faith and uprightness that, until the day which his accusers had set for the trial, and indeed up to the very moment of the judicial examination, he did not let his hair or beard grow. Nor did he court the favor of his jurors by wearing shabby clothing or by displaying a humble mien. Neither did he flatter his enemies nor did he try to moderate his judges. On the contrary, upon being given permission by the praetor, he delivered a speech that was just as defiant as was his spirit", *Rutilius quoque vir integerrimus adeo fidei atque innocentiae constantia usus est, ut die sibi ab accusatoribus dicta, usque ad cognitionem neque capillum barbavne promiserit neque sordida veste humilive habitu suffragatores conciliarit, inimicos permulserit, iudices temperarit, orationem quoque a praetore concessam nihilo summisioem quam animum habuerit*.

through Rufus' autobiography, although his version, according to which Rufus did not want to confess his deed by putting on the *vestis reorum*, differs from that of Appian.³⁰

In the case of the story of T. Annius Milo, Livy might even have drawn on first-hand knowledge of the situation. Milo had been accused of the murder of Clodius but refused to put on mourning garments. He confessed to the killing but did not consider himself guilty of a crime because, he insisted, he had acted in self-defense. In his defense speech, his lawyer, Cicero, explicitly mentions that Milo had not allowed him to make the usual appeals to the compassion of the judges, although Cicero himself manages to do so precisely by drawing attention to this fact.³¹ According to Plutarch, by acting in such a way, Milo actively contributed to his conviction.³² Plutarch, it seems, understood that this defense strategy had no effect. If the guilt of the accused could not be denied, then the best defense was the *deprecatio* which stressed the good reputation of the accused, his deeds on behalf of the community, and his symbolic mourning during the process, which was considered an accomplished humiliation (see Lausberg 1990, 104–105). However, an alternative strategy involved emphasizing the righteousness of the deed. While Cicero preferred the first, Milo opted for the second and this division of purpose seems to have led to some confusion among the jurymen.

Both, Cicero's speech as well as the memoirs of Rutilius Rufus, could plausibly have been available to Livy. This is also the case for Aulus Gellius' report of an episode involving Scipio Aemilianus, since Livy had several biographies of

30 For this, see now *FRM* (= *Fragmente Römischer Memoiren*, ed. Peter Scholz, Uwe Walter, Christian Winkle. Heidelberg 2013) 59–70; furthermore Hendrickson 1933.

31 Cicero, *Pro Milone* 92: “What is left, save that I should beg and implore you, gentlemen, to extend to this brave man that mercy which he himself does not beg, but which I, in spite of his protests, both beg and demand. Do not, if amid the tears of us all you have beheld not a single tear of Milo's, if you see him with unchanging countenance and with accents and tones steady and unflinching . . .”, *Quid restat nisi ut orem obtesterque vos, iudices, ut eam misericordiam tribuatis fortissimo viro, quam ipse non implorat, ego etiam repugnante hoc et imploro et exopto? Nolite, si in nostro omnium fletu nullam lacrimam aspexistis Milonis, si vultum semper eundem, si vocem, si orationem stabilem ac non mutatam videtis, hoc minus ei parcere . . .* 105: “Indeed I can no longer speak for tears, and my client forbids that tears should plead his cause”, . . . *neque enim prae lacrimis iam loqui possum, et hic se lacrimis defendi vetat.*

32 Plutarch, *Cicero* 35.5: “. . . whereas Milo showed the good courage of a brave man at the trial and had not deigned to let his hair go untrimmed or to change his attire to a dark one; and this seems most of all to have contributed to his condemnation”, . . . αὐτοῦ τοῦ Μίλωνος εὐθαρσῶς καὶ ἀνδρείως παρισταμένου τῷ ἀγῶνι καὶ κόμην θρέψαι καὶ μεταβαλεῖν ἐσθῆτα φαῖαν ἀπαξίσωντος· ὅπερ οὐχ ἥκιστα δοκεῖ συναίτιον αὐτῷ γενέσθαι τῆς καταδίκης.

Africanus the Younger to hand. In 139/140 BCE,³³ he was accused by Tib. Claudius Asellus of failing, as censor, to properly carry out the *lustrum*, a religious cleansing ritual performed by the citizen army.³⁴ During the process Scipio exposed Asellus' claims as an attempt to avenge himself for his exclusion from the rank of the knights during Scipio's censorship. Convinced that his innocence was clear, Scipio refused to grow a beard or put on dirty clothes, going so far as to don bright clothing instead.³⁵ This incident stands apart from the others in that at its center stands a *nobilis* who is not very loyal to the senate.³⁶ However, more important is the fact that, of the four accused persons, only Scipio was exculpated, even though he had refused to change clothes. What made the difference in this case? While the others put themselves in the spotlight by ostentatiously refusing to do what was expected of them, Scipio did not simply strengthen his own reputation by refusing a *mutatio vestis* – partly because this symbolic ritual was quite new at the time – but took aim instead at Asellus' prestige. With the dishonorable motives of the tribune exposed, the claimant instead became the central actor. Scipio thus made everyone forget the real subject of the process. The *vestis candida* (see Deniaux 2003) played a part here too, as Gellius writes. Although Scipio's performance had nothing to do with an official candidature – even if this was suggested by such an attire – he used a strategy that was also used by applicants for office. By displaying his clothes, he demonstrated his clean conscience and countered the expectations of the public with a sign of protest, underlining the contrast between the appearance of an applicant for office and that of a defendant.

Admittedly, this incident cannot have served as a template for Livius' Appius. However, it almost certainly served as an example for the conduct of Rufus and Milo in court, since successful forms of conduct could become *role models* for following generations. Despite this, it becomes clear from the sources how negatively

33 For the controversial dating, see *MRR* I, 480 (= *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, Vol. I, ed. Thomas Robert Shannon Broughton. Atlanta, GA, 1982).

34 Perhaps he modified the final passage of the prayer (see North 1976, 3; Klinghardt 1999, 7). In Valerius Maximus (4.1.10), we find the same accusation, although this time aimed at a certain C. Licinius Sacerdos.

35 Gellius 3.4.1: “... neither ceased to shave his beard and to wear white raiment nor appeared in the usual garb of those under accusation”, ... *neque barbam desisse radi neque candida veste uti neque fuisse cultu solito reorum*. See the reference to the life stories of Aemilianus shortly before: “I found it stated in books which I read dealing with the life of Publius Scipio Africanus ...”, *In libris quos de vita P. Scipionis Africani compositos legimus, scriptum esse animadvertimus* ...

36 Perhaps he referred to Africanus the Elder, who hesitated to appear in court at all and who really was not summoned; see Livy 38.52.2; 53.10; Plutarch, *Cato maior* 15.2; Cassius Dio 19.63 frg.

later generations perceived the refusal of the *mutatio vestis*, since, as far as we know, only Aemilianus succeeded in avoiding an accusation.

The ostentatious refusal to humiliate oneself by a gesture of mourning in court was still considered an expression of arrogant patrician conduct in the 2nd century CE (see Wiseman 1979, 57–112; Walter 2004b, 121–30). Suetonius still knew the literary topos of the rejection of gestures of self-abasement by defendants and he most likely refers to the case of Appius Claudius when mentioning the strictly aristocratic attitude of the Claudians in his *Tiberius-Vita*.³⁷ In general, it is striking that symbolic acts of mourning were only rarely performed by members of patrician *gentes*; even Clodius, who was rather popular, refused several times to participate in collective mourning scenes, even though this would have been an opportunity for him to come into close contact with the *plebs* (see Cicero, *Oratio post reditum in Senatu* 12; Cassius Dio 39.29.1). Clodius' refusal certainly prompted Livy to portray Appius as someone who disapproved of such methods. At any rate, the unusual *squalor* performed for Appius by an enemy within his family, C. Claudius, and the other members of the *gens Claudia* are emphasized accordingly.³⁸

The practice of refusing acts of symbolic mourning seems to have become further established during the Imperial era. It obviously changed dealing with the practice of a *squalor* as it became less frequent in politics but remained important in the courts. At the same time, mourning acts visibly disappeared from the histori(ographi)cal record. In a speech that has been preserved on papyrus, the emperor Claudius complains that the custom of refusing to change one's clothes and to let one's beard and hair grow when accused was gaining ground (see Stroux 1929, 61–70; v. Woess 1931, 354–356).³⁹ This speech had a status very

37 Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 2.4: “Their attitude towards the common people was so headstrong and stubborn that not even when on trial for his life before the people did any one of them deign to put on mourning or beg for mercy . . .”, *adversus plebem adeo violentos et contumaces, ut ne capitis quidem quisquam reus apud populum mutare vestem aut deprecari sustinuerit* . . .

38 See Livy 6.20.1: “That a man's nearest friends should not join him in assuming mourning in an hour so fraught with danger to him, was something that had never until that day occurred. They remembered that on the imprisonment of Appius Claudius, his enemy Gaius Claudius and all the Claudian family had gone into mourning; and they concluded that there must be a general conspiracy to put down the people's friend because he had been the first to forsake the patricians for the plebs”, . . . *ut in tanto discrimine non et proximi vestem mutarent: Ap. Claudio in vincula ducto C. Claudium inimicum Claudiamque omnem gentem sordidatam fuisse; consensu opprimi popularem virum, quod primus a patribus ad plebem defecisset*.

39 FIRA I (= *Fontes Iuris Romani Anteiustiniani*, vol. I, ed. Salvatore Riccobono. Florence 1941), No. 44, col. 2, 17–22 (= BGU II, 611 = ChLA X, 418): *Adiuuan[t] quidem hoc | . . . prof[po] situm accusa[to]rum et reorum | del[i]ciae, q[uo] min[u]s inuidio[s]um sit eorum | tale factum qui iam sq[ua]llorem sumere | barbamque et capillum [s]ummittere, | col. 3, 1–3: sua causa quo*

like that of a decree and is linked to the provisions of the digests discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It is not certain how successful this enterprise was, but the fact that the custom of refusing the *mutatio vestis* continually spread means that this new strategy must have had a certain success (see Degelmann 2018, 276). Whether Claudius had in mind the example of Rutilius Rufus or that of his legendary ancestor Appius remains an open question. However, the process undertaken in Milo's case, in which his relatives rather than Milo himself performed a *squalor*, offers the most parallels with Appius' case, even if Milo did not commit suicide but went into exile instead. While he retained his life, this exile should surely be considered a form of social death.

6 Conclusion

This contribution has aimed at showing, on the one hand, the discursive “transformations” of the *squalor* from the Middle Republic to the Early Empire and, on the other, the dialectic between *stories about* and the *action of* symbolic mourning.

The discourse of symbolic mourning first came into existence in the middle of the 2nd century BCE and then found its way into Roman politics, in which conflicts were carried out verbally or non-verbally in the streets and in the courts. This is why passages concerning the *squalor* can be found in the historiographical tradition as well as in rhetorical and legal texts of various genres. The formation of a discourse about scenes of mourning seems to have come to an end in Augustan times. Examples in the sources after Livy had all been narrated earlier in one form or another and no new instances occur after this time – except with regard to the imperial family. The complaint of the emperor Claudius about the delay of legal processes caused by the absence of a *squalor* suggests that the practice of appearing before court in rags had already been deeply inscribed in the legal procedures of the early Imperial era. As a result, acts of symbolic mourning did not offer the same potential for scandal as they had done during the Republican period. These acts became sufficiently conventional that eventually it was the refusal of the practice, rather than its performance, that represented the greater transgression and attracted more attention.

Those episodes that served as models of (successful) mourning scenes quickly found their way into literature. At the same time, the belief that refusals also had a

magis miserab[i]lis ui[d]e[atur], | fastidiunt. Sed [u]ide[ant] [ipsi quid haec] sibi a [natura] | data inst[r]umenta mise[r]ationis prosint].

long tradition set the rules for the elaboration of contemporary mourning acts and their conversion into written text. All in all, both narrative and non-narrative textual genres influenced the understanding and the composition of literary *squalor*, which was, however, only comprehensible through the real practices of each period. Indeed, it is difficult to navigate the dialectic between *stories about* and the *action of* symbolic mourning. It is my hope that this chapter gives insight into, and perhaps even instantiates, the sort of “confusion” between example and template generated by the rootedness of specific instances in their particular times: a bit of puzzlement was part of the agenda in writing this piece. This interdependence is characteristic of the transformative character of mourning scenes. Stories about and actions of symbolic mourning are influenced by each other again and again in an ongoing process in which they re-shape and modify each other and, thus, ultimately themselves.

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P.Oxy. 1.5 and the *Codex Sangermanensis* as “visionary living texts”: visionary *habitus* and processes of “textualization” and/or “scripturalization” in Late Antiquity

Abstract: This paper aims at analyzing two cases of individual scribal interventions on visionary texts of late antiquity: the Papyrus from Oxhyrhynchus n. 5 (3rd–4th century CE), a text containing a passage from Hermas’ *Mand.* 11.9–10, and a manuscript of *IV Ezra*, the so-called Sangermanensis Codex (9th century CE). Both the cases reveal figures of entrepreneurs (the scribe? or the customer?) engaged in related typologies of individual acquisition/intervention, appropriation, modification, and transposition. Both the analyzed manuscripts reveal cases of re-formulation connected to a specific late-antique “religious” *habitus*, i.e. the visionary *habitus*, a cognitive and socio-cultural pattern from which processes of re-proposition and re-contextualization of previous authoritative accounts in and for specific environments seem to stem.

1 Introduction

The texts normally classified as “apocalyptic”¹ by scholars provide evidence for a close correlation between accessing the supernatural and textuality (see Güttgemanns 1987, 19–27; Rüpke 2014, 65–66). Certainly based on authoritative models, textuality is here conceived as a sign of the process of composition and transmission of visionary accounts as actual “living texts”.² Textuality allows us to

¹ In this paper, I take into account a wide definition of “apocalyptic text”, which transcends a literary genre distinction. My evaluation is purely functional, hence I am classifying as apocalyptic every text which focuses on the “seeing” of particular individuals who describe events of contact with the other-world in first person. In my evaluation, “apocalyptic” is a synonym of “account of a mediatory experience,” and it stands apart from the particular theological content that this revelation intends to convey.

² Parker 1997 has utilized the concept of living text as a necessary antidote against the desire for a single “original” text of the “New Testament”, stemming from the churches’ need for an authoritative, and consequently fixed text, and from the scholars’ need for a sure foundation for their theories (see especially 209). The concept of living text, as a result of the New Testament scholarly debate, takes into account the fact that for ancient texts, at least at the earliest stages, there are several texts, in an uncertain relation to each other and to the various media of

face a complex world, where different media are associated and outline social and cultural stratifications: the supremacy of textual practice involves specialists who address both people who usually do not have literacy skills, who can only access the account by listening to it, and groups of “peers” who are capable to read, access and transmit the account themselves through its reading.³ Textuality recalls a further aspect of the composition or the re-elaboration of visionary accounts, a difficult aspect of which only the final effects can be seen. What stands out is that apocalyptic texts often present themselves as veritable traditional mosaics. They appear as a set of re-used materials coming from different sources, a sort of construction comparable to numerous late-antique monuments and buildings (e.g. the

transmission (oral and/or written forms) from which they stem; these texts vary from one another far more than can be explained by any process of scribal miscopying. In my approach, the concept of “living text” is used as a means to understand the process of textualization (and/or formation) of visionary accounts. These writings are capable of triggering experiences of contact with the other-world by themselves and traces of this process are to be found in their multifaceted textual and linguistic transmissions. The concept of “textualization” focuses also on the dynamic system in which reading and writing, as well as re-writing and re-reading live together (see Cavallo 2016; Grafton and Most 2016). On social dynamics connected to the processes of textualization and/or “scripturalization” in Late Antiquity, see the recent works by Mroczek 2016 and Stroumsa 2016.

3 This interaction between textuality and transmission in socially varied backgrounds seems to be evident in some scenes described in apocalyptic texts. In *4 Ezra*, the visionary tells a supernatural being, almost certainly YHWH himself, that he is endowed with the holy spirit so that he can write “all that has been in the world since the beginning” (14.22; English translation in Henze and Stone 2013, 79), an allusion to what he is about to know through direct contact with the supernatural. The supernatural being asks the mediator to gather a lot of tablets to write on and says that, once the revelation will be completed, some things will be made public and some others will be kept secret for the wise (14.26). In *2 Enoch*, a particularly difficult text to locate in space and time, the testamentary discourse emerges as a means to clarify the transmission and the reception of the visionary account. In 47.1–2 the dimension of listening is clearly highlighted, but then in 48.5–8 we find again the theme of the transmission and the distribution of the “book” (see Andersen 1983, 174). In John’s *Revelation* there are many references to the act of writing, or to the book, or roll (for instance, see 10.4; 14.13; 19.9); however, what acquires a main role is the necessity to preserve in written word and spread what the mediator experienced. In the letters sent directly to the seven *ekklesiai* in Asia Minor (*Revelation* 2–3), the presence of elements connected to the writings and their diffusion justifies the presence of the letters as an integral part of the visionary accounts. However, in the preface, the revelation/prophesy is announced as something to be read and listened to at the same time (see *Rev.* 1.3). The mediator himself, whom we know as John, is invited to write what he sees in a book (see 1.11). The admonishment is made again at the end of the introduction, before the letter is sent to the *ekklesia* of Ephesus. Here a figure similar to a “son of man” invites John to “write [...] the things that you saw, and the things that are, and the things that are to take place after these” (1.19; transl. by Lupieri 2006, 49), with an evident reference to the content of the account as a whole.

Arch of Constantine). In the light of the close correlation between orality and writing (as an actual process of “textualization”), apocalyptic texts appear as the final result of a complex process in which, after having had peculiar experiences of contact with the other-world, a mediator employs the memory patterns he found in his traditional context to verbalize and confer authority upon his own life experience. “Living visionary text” and “textualization” are terms meant to highlight this continuous process of use and adaptation of social contexts in which orality lives together with other media and elitist communicative forms, mostly connected to layered groups that include specialized as well as specializing conveyors of knowledge.

The relationship between visionary experience, textualization and production of living visionary texts within the varied late-antique backgrounds, highlights, in my opinion, a fundamental aspect of what I call “visionary” *habitus* (I will clarify the sense of this terminology in the conclusion of the paper). Likewise, it allows us to consider the circulation of the apocalyptic and/or visionary accounts in different social-cultural contexts. Both these elements are very often linked to a process of “re-actualization” of experiences by specific readers, who perceive themselves as directly affected by particular texts. Visionary texts therefore become objects of appropriation, rearrangement, transposition, translation and, more generally, of re-adaptation. The study of papyri and of the single manuscripts acquires a particular relevance in this respect. With this paper, I refer in particular to distinct forms of using and re-using specific visionary accounts as they emerge from two particular textual artifacts. These materials show *in itinere* the action of individuals who, working within various technical environments (such as the scribal one), carry out practices of manipulation of actual “living texts”.

In the majoritarian scholarly debate on processes of transmission and re-uses of ancient texts in new historical contexts, concepts as “interpretation”, “exegesis”, “symbolism”, “metaphor”, “allegory” assume a pivotal role (for example, see Norton 2013 and Teeter 2014). In this essay, I will consider the multifaceted processes of transmission of texts in the theoretical framework of “relevance theory” (RT) of Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber (see Sperber and Wilson 1995; 2004; 2012).⁴ Against semiotic understandings of communication and/or interpretation, in which a speaker’s/text’s thoughts are duplicated in the mind of the hearer and/or the reader, RT holds that communication involves the modification of the cognitive environment of the recipient. This theory is a

⁴ This theory has been further developed by Carston 2002. Some years ago, Ernst-August Gutt applied RT to biblical texts as part of his endorsement of RT as a stand-alone translation theory (see Gutt 2000), and in recent years scholars such as Gene L. Green have strongly advocated the adoption of RT for “biblical” studies (Green 2009; 2012). For the application of RT theory to New Testament studies, see Lappenga 2015.

consequence of the advent of cognitive pragmatics, specifically of the relevance-theoretic approach, which has brought a rather different orientation: pragmatics is a “capacity of the mind, a kind of information-processing system, a system for interpreting a particular phenomenon in the world, namely human communicative behavior” (Carston 2002, 128–129).

Language is a code, but it is only part of the intended communication, which the hearer or the reader must infer based on a wide range of “implicatures” or “explicitures”. Since a speaker’s meaning is linguistically underdetermined, the fundamental insight of RT is that “[h]uman cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance” (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 260). Human cognition, and therefore interpretive processes, occur as a balance between minimal processing effort and maximum cognitive effect. There are two extent conditions, the first is that an assumption is relevant to an individual to the extent that the positive cognitive effects achieved when it is optimally processed are large; the second is that an assumption is relevant to an individual to the extent that the effort required to achieve these positive cognitive effects is small (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 265). Within this framework, Sperber and Wilson argue convincingly that very little of a communicator’s conceptual repertoire is lexicalized (see also Sperber and Wilson 1998, 185). As Benjamin J. Lappenga has brilliantly summarized, “Pragmatic enrichment of encoded meaning (semantics) takes place at every level, so that what is expressed by an utterance (the ‘truth-conditional proposition’) cannot be obtained by semantic means alone. This is known as ‘semantic underdeterminacy’ and has received wide acceptance from advocates of RT” (Lappenga 2015, 42). RT theory claims that, given the phenomenon of semantic underdeterminacy, concept construction is *ad hoc*. That is, “[w]ords uttered in a particular context provide access to concept schemas but, in any and every particular utterance, the concepts themselves shift and morph” (Green 2012, 321). This includes the narrowing or broadening of concepts, as well as category extension (metaphors). So in a given context, the hearer or reader is constantly creating meaning, down to the level of the very words themselves. Carston has further stated that the term *ad hoc* concept “is used to refer to concepts that are constructed pragmatically by a hearer in the process of utterance comprehension. [...] The description of such concepts as ‘ad hoc’ reflects the fact that they are not linguistically given, but are constructed on-line (on the fly) in response to specific expectations of relevance raised in specific contexts” (Carston 2002, 322).

According to such a theoretic framework, what previous scholars have meant with terms like “interpretation”, “exegesis”, “symbolism”, “metaphor”, and “allegory” consist in a pragmatic process of searches in memory in order to find a relevant place for new information in the preexisting database, not of finding a meaning. Interpretation is best viewed as a cognitive mechanism that participate

in the construction of knowledge as well as in the functioning of memory (Sperber 1978, xi–xii and 146–147). As Ilkka Pyysiäinen has summarized (2014, 21–22), interpretation has two aspects: a displacement of attention (focalization) and a search in memory (evocation). In focalization, attention shifts from the new information in question to the unfulfilled conceptual conceptions. In evocation, the new information is reviewed and tested against the information in one’s long-term memory. When the invocation of relevant background information fails, evocation begins. It is this evocation that is substituted for “meaning” in RT model: the “meaning” of a symbol (i.e. a text) is the same as its evocative processing. Thus, for example, the “exegetical” meaning of an authoritative text consists of an individual (and/or collective) evocative search that an agent undertakes for a relevant place in memory for this piece of information. The interpretive mechanisms create their own pathways in memory, and this process may become endless. “Religious representations, for example, are never given a final definition; the symbolic exegesis rather is an endless process” (Pyysiäinen 2014, 22; see also Sperber 1978, 119–123, 141–145).

In the first part of this paper I will discuss the process of circulation of visionary narratives as living scriptures. In the following section, I refer to two visionary manuscripts as illustrations of RT model: the first transmits a passage from Hermas’ *Mandate* 11.9–10 included in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, i.e. the Papyrus from Oxyrhynchus n. 1.5, and the second contains the complete Latin text of 4 *Ezra*, i.e. the *Codex Sangermanensis*. Both are considered as examples of the circulation process of living visionary scriptures as well as products of interpretive process as carried out by Sperber and Wilson. In the conclusion of the essay, I discuss whether Jewish and proto-Christian visionary accounts, in their *longue durée* of transmission, can be read as evidence of a late-antique visionary *habitus*.

2 Visionary living scriptures and forms of “critical spatiality” adapting visionary accounts in and for new contexts

In a very intriguing paper, A.K. Harkins argues that “The rhetorical use of embodiment language, through the construction of spatial realms and the generation of subjectivity (including phenomenal bodies and affect), can create a religious experience for the reader who seeks to re-enact the text” (Harkins 2012, 223). Harkins refers to the critical classification of spatiality articulated into “first, second and third” spaces (see Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; see also Schofield 2012). These are understood as elaborate ways in which language about space and physical experience can facilitate a reader’s re-enactment of a text. According to Harkins’

analysis, while “first space” refers to the bodily experience of space as it is perceived empirically, “second space” hints at the religiously “fabricated” geography, like that found in prayers and authoritative narrations. “Third space” is the realm “where transformation is possible and power is reconfigured” (Harkins 2012, 226). This refers not only to a site of resistance, where alternative realities are produced, but also to a locus of simultaneity: a sort of counteraction to the position occupied by a reflected figure, like in mirror images. “Third space” as heterotopia, according to Foucault’s terminology (Foucault 1986, 24), makes the space occupied by a person at the same time real and unreal. In this sense, “third space” experiences are liminal spaces “that are real world experiences and so have real world consequences, but they allow for full participation in other worlds” (Harkins 2012, 227).

Such a critical theory has important consequences for the study of the *Nachleben* of apocalyptic and/or visionary narrations. The process of textualization of a visionary account, as well as its fixation in the writing medium, imply the use of forms and methodologies based on such a medium. This necessarily considers the on-going re-uses and re-formulations of these narrations by groups and/or individuals that transmit them in and for new experiences of re-visualization. In Foucauldian heterotopic terms, visionary texts function as “a physical portal to a world constructed by the religious imagination,” producing heterotopic experiences of re-enacting that have the potential “to transform a reader into a full participant in the religious event” (Harkins 2012, 228).

This process is represented in some ancient texts connected with visionary experiences, and two examples can be given to illustrate it.⁵ *1 Enoch* 104.10–11, according to Nickelsburg’s interpretation (Nickelsburg 2001, 534), speaks about people who “copy”, or simply attach their own names to a pre-existent literary composition, probably alluding to authors who claim a pseudepigraphical authority for specific writings. This text offers a glimpse of the impact of textualization on the transmission of a particular visionary experience based on “Enochic” streams of transmission. The visionary, in this case, seems to counter possible uncontrolled forms of textualization of his account, but, in so doing, she/he⁶ casts light on the

⁵ The case lamented by both these texts finds a clearer illustration if we look at the complex history of their textual transmission. For *1 Enoch*, see Nickelsburg 2001, 12–21; for the process of textualization (or re-textualization?) of *Revelation*, as it emerges especially from P⁴⁷, see Royse 2007, 359–398. On the legacy of Jewish apocalyptic writings in early Christianity in a “regional” perspective, see Frankfurter 1996.

⁶ As remarked by P. van Minnen, “This is not merely deference to feminism” (van Minnen 2003, 19). The only documentary attestation of a Greek reading public for apocalyptic texts in Egypt happens to relate to a woman: P.Oxy. 63.4365 is a 4th-century letter in which the writer asks a woman to lend him/her a copy of *4 Ezra* in exchange for a copy of the *Book of Jubilees*. On this text see Hagedom 1997.

possibilities which are connected to this process, possibly alluding to on-going re-uses and re-formulations by groups and/or individuals that transmit these narrations in and for new contexts.

The conclusion of *Revelation* highlights the importance of writing itself as an element capable to define a main aspect of a visionary account. John is the one to have seen and listened to the other-world; at the end of the experience, he would like to bow down to the feet of the angel who has shown him everything, but he does not let him do it. Instead, he says: “I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets, and of those who keep (*syndoulos*) the words of this scroll (*bibliou*)” (22.9; transl. by Lupieri 2006, 95). The angel also recommends not to “seal closed the words of the prophecy in this scroll, for the moment is near” (22.10; transl. by Lupieri 2006, 95). In the last exchanges, the angel reminds the prophet of the fact that he can witness the words of the account himself (called more often “prophecy”, but also “revelation”, intended as synonyms: see *Rev.* 1.1–3): “if someone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues, those written in this scroll” (22.18; transl. by Lupieri 2006, 95). Equally, he goes on: “if someone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his share from the wood/tree of life and from the holy city, that is, the things written in this scroll” (22.19; transl. by Lupieri 2006, 95). Despite the prohibition and the associated anathema, the reference to the possible modification of the content of the *Revelation* alludes to a mechanism which may have been quite frequent, for this type of material. The text also informs us that John intends to contrast the practice of modifying and/or re-adapting the experience of contact of the mediator with the other-world.

Both the mentioned texts can be interpreted in light of processes of re-reading and re-functionalization as evident characteristics of visionary writings. They convey visionary accounts and contribute to the definition of the processes of textualization which are linked to actual *living scriptures*.

3 Late-antique visionary manuscripts as living texts: P.Oxy. 1.5 and the *Codex Sangermanensis*

The on-going interdisciplinary debate on ancient literary manuscripts as artifacts and individual texts, and the methodical reflections on reconstructions of fragmentary papyri and a systematization of manuscripts labeled as “amulets”

and/or “sacred” texts (see Bremmer 2015) have at least one thing in common: they support critical research on ancient texts as material objects for a contextual study of ancient practices and experiences. In the earliest centuries of Christianity, scribes living throughout the Mediterranean world were entrusted with the task of copying and re-adapting documents that were, or would become, generators of authority. The subject here does not only concern some of the artifacts that these scribes created, but also their forms of religious communication, giving prominence to the individual as a meaningful actor who emphasizes *his* religious options.⁷

My approach starts from the necessity to allow for permeable boundaries between Jewish, Greek, and Roman scribal enterprises.⁸ After all, what we call Christianity inherited its text-centric religious practices from Jewish textual practices, no matter how tenuous the relationship became in later centuries. Furthermore, developments in Jewish scribal approaches toward religious texts during the process of canonization of the Hebrew Bible interacted with the larger Greek-speaking world, in Alexandria as well as in the entire Roman Empire. This is why some Jewish scribes spoke Greek and inherited Greek writing practices, while some Greek-speaking Christian scribes and scholars were aware of Jewish scholarship and could read Hebrew texts.

Concerning visionary texts, textual practices documented in fragments and translations, as well as in quotations and transcriptions, confirm the idea that the written form “is not primarily a medium of dissemination aimed at broadcasting or ‘publishing’ thoughts, but a medium for the intensification of complexity” (Rüpke 2014, 157). Written visionary accounts, according to Jörg Rüpke, have “a systematizing function, providing further levels of detail and helping to establish intellectual consistency, thus serving to conclude rather than initiate a communication process” (Rüpke 2014, 157). Therefore, the use of the written medium explains also the survival of these texts in various translations and *recensiones*, as well as their dissemination in religious circles with different aims and worldviews.

7 On the materiality of communication, see Rüpke 2014, 153–168 (and the bibliography quoted there). On the scribal *habitus* in the transmission of the texts later on included in the “New Testament” see Ehrman 1996; Hernández 2006; Hurtado 2006; Roysse 2007.

8 On this topic, see Bremmer 2014, esp. 353: “In the Hellenized world of the Near East after Alexander the Great there was a coming together of all kinds of traditions that often can be separated only artificially.”

3.1 P.Oxy. 1.5: the Shepherd of Hermas and its “prophetic” specialization

This small papyrus (12.0 x 11.4 cm) originates from a 3rd or 4th century codex that contains, on the recto, 16 lines of a Christian text that quotes a few lines of the *Mandates* from the *Shepherd of Hermas* (the text on the verso is not all legible). Found during the first year of excavation in Oxyrhynchus, this papyrus was originally published in the first volume of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt (Grenfell and Hunt 1898, 8–9 n. 5). The fragment initially generated some interest in Adolf von Harnack, who thought it was written at the end of the 2nd century by Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180; see Harnack 1898). In an essay published almost a century later, Henning Paulsen has rightly questioned Melito’s authorship and Harnack’s main idea that the papyrus represents a text originating from disputes with Montanists (see Paulsen 1979).

In the first lines that are available to us, the papyrus quotes a brief text from the eleventh *Mandate* of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The lines of the papyrus, as reconstructed in contemporary scholarship in comparison with the critical edition of *Herm.* 43.9–10, read as follows:

Herm. 43.9–10 = Simonetti 2015, 328

τότε ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ
προφητικοῦ ὁ κείμενος ἐπ’ αὐτῷ πληροῖ
τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ πλησθεῖς ὁ ἄνθρωπος
ἐκεῖνος τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ λαλεῖ εἰς τὸ
πλῆθος καθὼς ὁ κύριος βούλεται. οὕτως
οὕν φανερόν ἔσται τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς
θεότητος.

[...] then the angel of the prophetic
Spirit, who is destined for him, fills the
man; and the man being filled with the
Holy Spirit, speaks to the multitude as
the Lord wishes. Thus, then, will the
Spirit of Divinity become manifest.

P.Oxy. 1.5, ll. 1–9 = Blumell, Wayment 2015, 334

[...] [ὁ ἄγγελ-]
λος τοῦ πν(εύματος) τοῦ προφητ[ι-]
κοῦ ὁ κείμενος ἐπ’ αὐτῷ
π[...]. [] . ν, καὶ
πλησθεῖς ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖ-
νος τῷ πν(εύματι) τῷ ἁγίῳ λα-
λεῖ καθὼς ὁ κ(ύριος) βούλεται,
οὕτως φανερόν ἔστε τὸ
πν(εῦμα) τῆς θεότητος.

[...] [the an-]
gel of the prophetic Sp(irit)
who is destined for him
f[...]. [] . n, and
the man being filled
with the Holy Sp(irit)
speaks as the Lord wishes,
thus the Spirit of Divinity will
become manifest.

However, in the following lines, after the phrase *houtōs phaneron este to pneuma tēs theotētos*, the papyrus continues with an unattested portion of text, thus including it in the known narration of the *Shepherd*.

Herm. 43.10 = Simonetti 2015, 328

P.Oxy. 1.5, ll. 8–16 = Blumell, Wayment 2015, 334

[...] οὐν φανερὸν ἔσται τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς θεότητος. ὅση οὐν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς θεότητος τοῦ κυρίου ἢ δύναμις, [...].

[...] οὕτως φανερὸν ἔστε τὸ πν(εῦ)μα τῆς θεότητος. τὸ γὰρ προφητικὸν πν(εῦ)μα τὸ σω-μάτειόν ἐστιν τῆς προφητικῆς τάξεως, ὃ ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα τῆς σαρκὸς Ἰ(ησοῦ) Χ(ριστοῦ) τὸ μιγὲν τῇ ἀνθρωπότητι διὰ Μαρίας.

[...] **Thus, then, will the Spirit of Divinity become manifest.** Whatever power therefore comes from the Spirit of Divinity, [...].

[...] **Thus, then, the Spirit of Divinity will become manifest.** For the prophetic Spirit is the corporate body of the prophetic order, which is the body of the flesh of J(esu)s Christ which was mingled with human nature through Mary.

In his essay, Paulsen has raised the question of whether inquiring into the history of the reception of the *Shepherd* would shed further light on the origins of this papyrus (see Paulsen 1979). There is enough evidence to suggest that the papyrus has incorporated a sort of “commentary” centered on specific practices of contact with the other-world, as it emerges from the use of a typical explicative technique (*to gar*).⁹ The interpretive work carried out by the papyrus aims to appropriate, transpose and reshape the episode of the eleventh *Mandate* of the *Shepherd* concerning the man who, coming into the assembly of righteous

⁹ On the use of *gar* as a typical exegetical instrument in the commentary attested by the Derveni Papyrus, especially after a quotation of a passage from the commented hymn, see *Papyrus of Derveni* 10.1; 3; 13.2; 18.13 (according to the new edition by A. Bernabé and V. Piano).

men, is touched by the angel of the prophetic spirit and, according to the Lord’s will, starts to speak to the multitude. When the reconstructed text of the *Shepherd* describes the way the Spirit of the deity becomes manifest, at this point the scribe of the papyrus inserts his new section, employing a vocabulary that is similar to other proto-Christian texts (see especially *Didache* 11 and *Ascension of Isaiah* 6).

Starting from a comparison with the reconstructed “original” text of the eleventh *Mandate* of the *Shepherd*, P.Oxy. 1.5 essentially shows two techniques of reproduction: interpolation and modification. The first aims at offering a claim of self-representation in the process of reception of the *Shepherd*. Hence, the vocabulary associated with practices of contact with the supernatural is quite revealing: *to sōmateion* and *profētikē taxis*, a terminology that may imply an institutionalized prophetic order. *Sōmateion* seems to allude to the particular collective self-definition of the religious agent who is behind the fragment, clearly based on the word-play *sōmateion* > *sōma* – in fact, a similar self-definition on the basis of the association with the body of Christ is attested in Paul (see *1 Corinthians* 12.12–27).¹⁰ With the phrase *profētikē taxis*, the technical terminology of ordering assumes a prominent role. The text of the *Shepherd* opens to the explicit self-representative reference to the reader of the text, offering to him/her the possibility to find an actual place in the space of the text. Although there is no evidence of the actual social composition of the text’s user(s), its explicit mention in a collective dimension, or somehow connected to a collective dimension, in a visionary discursive space assumes a clear performative role in and for a new religious context. This seems to be confirmed by the final legible lines of P.Oxy. 1.5, where we find, according to Paulsen’s reconstruction, the noun *diadochē*, perhaps an allusion to the “prophetic” succession (Paulsen 1979, 446).¹¹ It is hard to determine whether this *diadochē* concerns a theological reflection in the light of the authoritative traditions on the prophetic succession, or both the user and her/his successors’ prophetic identities considered within their in-group discursive dimensions (see Norelli 1994, 243).

The second technique of intervention attested in P.Oxy. 1.5 is that of modification. In transmitting the phrase *ton anthrōpon kai plēstheis ho anthrōpos*

¹⁰ Like other ancient philosophical writers, Paul employs the image of the body to challenge the anti-group behavior of some of his readers. The image of the body provides the vehicle for reinforcing a sense of unity in a variegated group entity, and in so doing he shares the common concept of the body at work in the Greco-Roman philosophical universe: see Martin 1999, xiii.

¹¹ This reconstruction is accepted by Norelli 1994, 242–243. In the recent edition by Blumell and Wayment 2015, 334 we found *de doxēi (d)e(k)tikon estin* (“That the glory is acceptable . . .”).

ekeinos tōi pneumati tōi agiōi lalei eis to plēthos kathōs ho kyrios bouletai, P. Oxy. 1.5 seems to omit *to plēthos* perhaps because the author intentionally wants to restrict the practice of contact with the supernatural to the activity of a mediator who speaks to equal mediators rather than to a multitude. This specialization of the visionary agency in a “Christian” sense implies a form of institutionalization of Christian groups that fosters a separation of roles and ritual activities as a self-definition strategy and builds this on a continuous process of re-appropriation and re-functionalization of authoritative past traditions. Thus P.Oxy. 1.5 seems to keep the meaning of the eleventh *Mandate* of the *Shepherd* restricted to the dimension of an in-group prophetic discourse, and in so doing it considers the reread text as a kind of generator for this “new” prophetic self-definition. Both the above-mentioned interventions on the text of the *Shepherd* may refer to “specialized” dimension of mediatory practices and their being “structured” in an institutional complexity that is parallel to other institutionalizing attempts in organizing in-group and out-group activities.

On this point, I will shortly go back to an element already referred *en passant*, that is the interpretive character of the intervention attested in P.Oxy. 1.5.¹² It is well-known that in polymorphic late-antique interpretive techniques and textual re-productions, even though the ancients did distinguish between different types of texts (as we also do, at least from a formal point of view), boundaries between different types of interventions and genres of interpretation of a pre-existent text were easily crossed (on what follows, see Schironi 2012). In this complex textual (and communicative) world, the genre of the commentary was generally supposed to follow a text line by line. Since in the ancient era there was no line- or paragraph-enumeration, the only way to indicate which lines were commented upon was to repeat those lines, either in full or by the incipit. The fragmentary status of P.Oxy. 1.5 does not allow us to evaluate the modalities of intervention as a whole, nor can it reveal whether there were other forms of insertion like those attested to in the preserved lines. An important element that we found in the text is the presence of the stock formula *to gar*, by which the

¹² As D. Batovici has suggested in a private conversation, since what in P.Oxy. 1.5 precedes the quotation is now lost, it is unclear whether this was signaled as a quotation from the *Shepherd*, or as a quotation from an unnamed text. Whether this was incorporated in such a manner that it would have looked like an undifferentiated part of the new text, is also not explicit. However, what clearly emerges from our fragment is a typical exegetical (cognitive) attitude: the adversative *to gar* in l. 9 immediately after the text from the *Shepherd* does indicate that a content of a different nature follows, whereas the sentence that starts with it reads as an explanation of, or expansion upon, the description from the eleventh *Mandate*. Thanks are due to Dan Batovici for his re-reading of paragraph 3.1 of this chapter.

explanation after the quoted text is introduced. This introductory formula leads to the interpretive digression concerning the *pneuma tēs theotētos* mentioned in the previous line; this aims at highlighting that Hermas’s words hint at something not directly said. F. Schironi has recently observed that modern scholars often have distinguished between “internal” allegory (when the text is conceived as an allegory by its own author) and “external” allegory (when the text is interpreted allegorically by a commentator independently from the real intention of its author. See Schironi 2012, 438–439). Most of the ancient commentators did not make such a distinction: many ancient commentators “firmly believed that their authors had ‘hidden’ some deeper meaning into the text and that their duty was to reveal those meanings to the ignorant reader” (Schironi 2012, 435). The modality of intervention attested in P.Oxy. 1.5 seems to be in line with the one applied on ancient “technical” or “scientific” texts, where the commentator considers himself as a later “colleague” of the original, allowing himself relatively more freedom with re-reading and commenting upon the text (Schironi 2012, 438–439). The agent who is behind P.Oxy. 1.5 seems to claim a kind of specialization in his interpretive intervention on the eleventh *Mandate* of the *Shepherd*, bearing witness to the particular time when the role of the contact with the other-world had presumably assumed a technical *allure*, in line with the particular institutionalization processes of the Christian churches between the 3rd and the 4th century CE.

The *Shepherd* of Hermas occupies a unique place in the literature of the first Christians (see Bagnall 2009, 41–49). Although the *Shepherd* ultimately was not enclosed in the Christian canon, at least his inclusion in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, as well as its mention in the Muratorian Canon, shows that it was considered in some circles as worthy of inclusion within the authoritative scriptures. Carlini, on the basis of a papyrological analysis, has stressed the less fixed nature of the text of the *Shepherd* in its transmission, if compared to other proto-Christian texts; in this regard, it is significant that 4 of the 23 surviving witnesses are rolls (see Carlini 1987; 2002; see also the assessment by Choat and Yuen-Collingridge 2010). In Carlini’s analysis, there was a high level of variability or of polymorphism in the first circulated texts of the *Shepherd*, considering also the separate diffusion in Egypt of the first four visions on the one hand, and of the rest of the book, starting with vision 5, on the other hand.¹³

¹³ Recently, Batovici 2016 has tried to reassess the validity of the argument according to which in the Egyptian transmission of the *Shepherd*, the first four visions have circulated separately from the rest of the book, also showing that four fragments (P.Oxy. 15.1783 and 15.1828, P.Amh. 2.190, P.Berol. inv. 6789), sometimes thought to be of two manuscripts, do not belong together. On the topics connected with Batovici’s discussion, I share the view expressed by Bagnall 2009, 48: “There is obviously no reason, moreover, why separate editions of the two

This is entirely consistent with the transmission and the diffusion of the visionary accounts in Late Antiquity: texts for which, very often, neither the fundamental structure of the book nor the details of its textualization were stably unified. Visionary accounts become thus more and more protean texts, and although this depends in many cases on the private dissemination of these texts, this does not necessarily mean that their transmission was always unauthorized (this is Carlini's hypothesis: see discussion in Bagnall 2009, 45). Authorization and private circulation are not in contradictory terms, if we keep in mind the malleability implied in practices of textualization, as well as the processes of reproduction/re-functionalization of textual media and the related forms of their "usability" (Rüpke 2014, 161). P.Oxy 1.5, a testimony so far rather overlooked in the scholarly debate, emerges as a crucial text for the subject under examination.

3.2 4 Ezra in the Codex Sangermanensis: from the visionary text to the "theological" treatise

According to the majority of the manuscripts of the Latin version of *4 Ezra*,¹⁴ the transition from the thirty-fifth to the thirty-sixth verse of the seventh chapter must strike even a superficial reader as singularly abrupt; the "lack" of an entire section of *4 Ezra* is confirmed by the text transmitted by the "Oriental" versions, as well as by other Latin manuscripts, where we find a long digression on the course of the

halves of the *Shepherd* cannot have continued to circulate after the omnibus edition became available, just as the establishment of the canon of the New Testament did not produce the disappearance of codices with a single book in favour of complete Bibles."

¹⁴ The major Latin manuscripts of *4 Ezra* are the following: the *Codex Sangermanensis*, 822 CE; the *Codex Ambianensis*, 9th cent. CE; the *Codex Complutensis*, 9th–10th cent. CE (Visigothic hand); the *Codex Mazarinaeus*, 11th cent. CE. According to the majority of scholars, the *Sangermanensis* seems to be the ancestor of the vast majority of the extant manuscripts: see Metzger 1983, 518; however, on this aspect, Bergren 1996, 114 has correctly underlined: "Since every manuscript lacking the 'missing fragment' must have descended, directly or indirectly, from S[angermanensis], none of these manuscripts is of independent value in the textual criticism of *4 Ezra*." Many manuscripts (Bergren lists eight manuscripts) contain the missing section, and four fragmentary ones are early enough to escape suspicion. The types of text of *4 Ezra* in these and other Latin manuscripts fall into two main families: the French group (represented by *Sangermanensis* and *Ambianensis*) and the Spanish group (represented by *Complutensis* and *Mazarinaeus*); in general, the French family is considered as the more accurate. For a convenient list of Latin manuscripts of *4 Ezra*, see Gry 1938, xi–xiii.

final judgment (7.36–105).¹⁵ The *Codex Sangermanensis*, a manuscript dated to 822 CE, formerly in the Library of the Benedictine Abbey of S. Germain-des-Prés at Paris and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, number 11505 Fonds Latin, seems to be the oldest known copy of the Latin version of 4 *Ezra* where 7.36–105 is expunged.¹⁶ This long passage in Latin came to our knowledge thanks to R.L. Bensly’s discovery (in 1875) of the *excerptum* in a 9th century manuscript, which was then in the possession of the communal library of Amiens.¹⁷ Since the expunged passage contains an emphatic denial of the value of prayers for the dead (in 7.105), it is probable that the excision was made for dogmatic reasons.

Before the Reformation, the authority of 4 *Ezra* had not been particularly disputed in the Roman Empire as well as in the processes of formation of the new national (“barbaric”) states.¹⁸ In the *Vulgata* manuscripts, 4 *Ezra*, usually placed between *Nehemiah* and *Tobit*, appears among inspired writings of more or less uncontested authority. As we shall see, the opinions of the “Church Fathers” are divided on this issue yet many of them seem to accept the text and quote it as an authoritative source. Clement of Alexandria cites 4 *Ezra* 5.35 verbatim with the formula “The Prophet Ezra says” (*Stromata* 3.16), and Ambrose often uses and quotes the apocalypse (see e.g. *De spiritu sancto* 2.6; *De excessu Satyri* 1.2), as in *De bono mortis*, especially when he concludes: “And who indeed is first, Esdras or Plato? For Paul followed the words of Esdras, not those of Plato. Esdras revealed, according to the revelation bestowed on him, that the just would be with Christ and with the saints” (11.51; English translation in McHugh 1972, 107; for the Latin text, see *Patrologia Latina* 14:591). A less enthusiastic consideration is that expressed by Jerome, who considers 4 *Ezra* as an

¹⁵ The passage is extant in Ethiopic, Arabic, and Syriac translations: see Bensly 1875, 2–3; Metzger 1983, 518–519; Bergren 1996, 107–113.

¹⁶ There is decisive evidence that the Latin version once contained the passage in Ambrose’s treatise *De bono mortis*, a text where the missing portion is often quoted and commented. It is not by chance that the Benedictine editors of Ambrose’s works were perplexed at references which they could not verify, and suggested that a solution might be found in the examination of new manuscripts (see Bensly 1875, 4). References to the section of 4 *Ezra* under examination in the *De bono mortis* are the following: 4 *Ezra* 7.32–35 / *De bono mortis* 10.45; 7.36 / 12.53; 7.80–87 / 10.47; 7.91–101 / 11.48; 14.9 / 11.50. For other Christian quotations of 4 *Ezra*, see Bergren 1996, 114 (and the bibliography quoted there).

¹⁷ See Bensly 1875. However, see Bergren 1996, 114: “It should be noted, however, that in 1826, almost fifty years before Bensly’s publication, J. Palmer discovered the complete version of [4 *Ezra*] in the Complutum manuscript [sc. the already mentioned *Complutense*] in the University Library in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. The discovery was kept private until 1877.”

¹⁸ On the reception of 4 *Ezra* in late antiquity, see Hogan 2013; on the reception of the text from the 15th to the 18th century, see Hamilton 1999.

apocryphal book, for which he has no devotion. In his dispute with the Priscillianist Vigilantius, Jerome declares that he did not read the text: “As for you, when wide awake you are asleep, and asleep when you write, and you bring before me an apocryphal book which, under the name of Edras, is read by you and those of your father, and in this book it is written that after the death no one dares pray for others. I have never read the book (*sic!*): for what need is there to take up what the Church does not receive?” (*Contra Vigilantium* 6; English translation in Schaff and Wace 1893, 419; for the Latin text, see *Patrologia Latina* 23:360). It seems that Jerome’s refusal is presumably one of the causes for the expunction attested in the *Codex Sangermanensis*: the denial of the intercession for the dead, together with both the use and the transmission of the apocalypse by Priscillianist circles, have received Jerome’s attention and his stigmatization of the “apocryphal” text.

Notwithstanding Jerome’s condemnation of the book as “apocryphal”, the entire *4 Ezra* is found in Vulgate and, consequently, in many medieval manuscripts (on Ambrose’s role in the process of inclusion of *4 Ezra* in the Latin version of the Bible, see Hogan 2013). This presence, and the debates documented by the Church Fathers, inevitably meant a shift in the interpretation of the apocalypse, from a visionary account of a direct experience of contact with the other-world to a theological meditation. The latter is thought to be based on an actual relationship with the supernatural; it is focused on the disparity between God’s promises to Israel and the people’s current predicament, and on the injustice of Israel’s punishment, granted that sin is an inevitable and universal human condition. In this context, the authority of the book appears as a very important element for its transmission. Nevertheless, the doubts expressed by Jerome, especially on the impossibility of the prayer for the dead, cannot be regarded as a negligible problem in monks’ religious activity. Why such an ambiguity? Why was an authoritative text, transmitted as a canonical one, omitting an entire section for which exegesis (or symbolic activity) was, if I may say so, absolutely useless? With this omission, we can see two important aspects of the RT model of interpretation, that of the evocation (when an information is reviewed and tested against the information in one’s long-term memory), as well as that of the “failure” of relevant background information (see Sperber 1978, 119–123). For the case of the *Sangermanensis*, at least after a certain point of the manuscript’s existence, the monk/scribe is unable to create his own pathways in memory, and this is why he can do nothing other than put in place the “extreme” operation of the “cut”.

The problem of the intercessory prayer does not belong to the theological disquisition only, at least under the Carolingian reign (which is when the *Codex Sangermanensis* was in use). A. Diem has argued that the transfer of this

intercessory power “from the holy man to a monastic institution” marks the beginning of a new monastic concept (Diem 2007, 557). Through this process, as M. Dunn has shown, the function of intercession became the pre-eminent feature of early medieval monasticism, which emerges as a type of monasticism (“intercessory monasticism”) distinctive to the West (Dunn 2000, 98 and 106). The transformation “received its final shape in the Carolingian monastic reforms” (Diem 2007, 522), when councils held during the reign of Charlemagne consistently declaring the duty of monastic communities to perform masses and psalms for the kingdom and the church. The fact that early medieval monasteries functioned in this fashion has encouraged scholarly attention along two particular areas of interest: gift giving and liturgical ritual (see Choy 2016, 4–5). In this context, J. Bossy’s sociological description of the mass has underlined (in Maussian terms) that the exchange of gifts for prayer were “total occasions”, with worldly and spiritual motivations, and social and legal factors, all simultaneously at work (Bossy 1983).

The monastic provenance of the *Codex Sangermanensis*, as well as its Carolingian date, are elements beyond all doubt. In 1865, as Bensly writes in his monograph (see Bensly 1875, 5–6), J. Gildemeister, who personally discovered the *Codex Sangermanensis*, wrote in a private letter that the “offending” page of *4 Ezra* had been cut out very early in the volume’s history, perhaps within a very few decades of its writing in 822. What we can say is that the text of *4 Ezra* was copied in its entirety (as the *Codex Ambianensis* clearly shows), and only after this was an entire page deleted. It is possible to hypothesize that a monk had considered it legitimate to copy the text of the apocalypse in its entirety; then another one made him aware of the question involved in the *4 Ezra* narration, and subsequently an entire page of the manuscript was cut out.¹⁹ The *Codex Sangermanensis* was clearly considered as a sort of self-representative instrument, and it was reputed as inconvenient to cancel only the last lines in a page.

In summary, the theological and political relevance of the issue of intercession was implicitly debated in a continuum between adherence to the correct transcription of an authoritative visionary text (as it is testified by both the *Codex Ambianensis* and the *Sangermanensis* before the deletion of *4 Ezra* 7. 36–105) and its theological meaning, viewed as an all-encompassing element

¹⁹ On this last aspect, a very important observation is found in Bensly’s monograph (Bensly 1875, 5). Gildemeister personally saw the Codex, discovering that *dormibunt* was the last word of one leaf and *primus* (with a small *p*) the beginning word on the next leaf – thus revealing the two words by which the lacuna is enclosed. This leads to the conclusion that this page was entirely sacrificed because of the last lines of the section.

for a specific context. The pairing information/long term memory, in this case, was impossible to encode; moreover, it was very difficult to make up for the prohibition, explicitly claimed in the text, by the means of an interpretive “gesture”.²⁰

4 Living visionary texts between exegesis, interpretation, and visionary *habitus*: towards a conclusion

I would like to conclude this paper by discussing the idea that the transmission of visionary texts could represent the legacy of a *longue durée* visionary *habitus*. The concept grows out of Pierre Bourdieu’s attempt to answer the question: “how is human action regulated?” – or more precisely, “how does human action follow regular statistical patterns without being the product of obedience to some external structure, such as income or cultural norms, or to some subjective, conscious intention, such as rational calculation?” (Swartz 1997, 95; see also Bourdieu 1990, 53). According to Bourdieu, *habitus* consists of deeply internalized dispositions, schemas and forms of know-how and competence, both of mental and corporeal nature, some of which are acquired by the individual through early childhood socialization. In ancient religions, visionary experiences are considered as actual and often ritualized possibilities to perceive the “divine”. Plutarch reminds us that if people “see a light blazing in the house at night, they consider it supernatural (*theion*) and marvel at it (*thaumazousi*)” (*Moralia* 762 d). In Plutarch’s opinion, this is a clear symptom of an irrational attitude. However, the philosopher also registers a widespread internalized disposition and a common form of know-how. In ancient Jewish groups, the Biblical texts have contributed to creating a specific religious and/or ritual role, i.e. the figure of the prophet, a man who tells people everything that YHWH commands him to say (cf. *Deut.* 18.18). In so doing, “Biblical” narrations have also distinguished the “true” from the “false” prophecy. Such an attempt emerges as a discursive practice

²⁰ See Bergren 1996, 113: “The transmission history of 4 Ezra in the Latin tradition is, however, an extremely complex one that goes far beyond the scope of the details given above. Moreover, the process of transmission in Latin can be assumed to have taken place entirely within a ‘Christian’ context. Thus, the Latin transmission history of 4 Ezra furnishes a remarkable model of the different types of influence to which an ‘originally Jewish’ pseudepigraphon could be subjected in the process of transmission in a ‘Christian’ context.”

aiming at “structuring structures”, or at absorbing non-authorized, or supposedly illegitimate, modalities of relationship with the divine.

On the basis of such elements, at a first glance the concept of *habitus* seems to fit a sociological view of the visionary *habitus* in antiquity as well as in Late Antiquity. Like a real *habitus*, visionary experiences generate perceptions, expectations and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of socialization. Nevertheless, many other questions remain unresolved. Bernard Lahire has remarked that the notion of “disposition”, which is central to Bourdieu’s theory of the *habitus* and which is widely employed in sociological research, is founded upon the idea that processes occurring at the level of social groups are general and homogenous in nature, an assumption which is never empirically tested (see Lahire 2003).

For a long time, scholars have considered apocalyptic texts as a monolithic platform for anti-Jewish considerations on the bifurcating ways between Judaism and early Christianity. The creation of an “apocalyptic monolith”, as a real Second Temple unitary “group” among others, has functioned as an inferior instrument of “apologetic” separation between Judaism and early Christianity (see *status quaestionis* by Koch 1970). Many scholars have deeply endeavored to deconstruct such a pseudo-historical view; they have emphasized the difficulty, on the basis of ancient apocalyptic texts, to extend a literary notion of “apocalyptic/apocalypticism” to the sense of a social uniformity or a linear diffusion of a specific ancient or late-antique group, also keeping in mind the widespread attestation of visionary patterns and experiences. In the current state of art, a *genre* definition of apocalyptic/apocalypticism seems to be tenable in its literary dimension, in spite of criticisms questioning the indiscriminate use of the problematic concept of “literary *genre*”, especially if rigidly applied to ancient cultures (see Newsom 2005).

On the basis of Jewish (and proto-Christian) “apocalyptic” texts, it emerges that visionary patterns and experiences were commonly used and conceived by different textual groups and individuals, also raising polemics and cultural dynamics of acceptance and/or refusal by other Jewish (and non-Jewish) religious agents. Thus, if we want to conserve the Bourdieusian concept of *habitus* in its analytical function, we should envision, as Lahire has methodologically remarked, that various religious agents have developed a broad array of context-dependent combinations between visionary dispositions, on one side, and other structuring principles acquired during the socialization process, on the other. In this domain, the intensity with which visionary dispositions affect behavior also depends upon the specific context in which cultural-religious agents interact with one another.

As a further avenue to develop this field, I encourage in-depth analysis of “apocalyptic” Jewish and proto-Christian texts within the larger context of ancient and late-antique visionary practices and discourses, assessing both similarities and differences not in relation to a singular imagined whole, but rather in comparison with actual activities and cultural-religious agencies. For example, the cases discussed in this essay considered the technical role of scribes and of scrolling monks, as well as the medieval marketing agents of intercessions within Carolingian monasteries. In this regard, textual practices documented in transmitted manuscripts, as well as their dissemination in various religious circles confirm the idea that the visionary *habitus*, as a pre-existing and traditionally grounded (at least for some individuals and groups in Late Antiquity) “structuring structure”, was re-adapted and manipulated according to many group- and individual-specific aims.

The forms of textualization documented in the manuscripts analyzed in this essay can hopefully cast light upon these processes of selection from and re-adaptation of the tradition. Ancient and late-antique visionary texts travel and circulate, being disseminated and diffused. They are uncompromisingly bound to movement along a diachronic transmission over time: the transmitter and the receptor do not always share a common religio-cultural setting. Simultaneously, they move along a synchronic transmission in which the transmitter is distanced from the “original” setting and attempts to make sense of the text through symbolic (cognitive) mechanisms like exegesis, interpretation, translation, adaptation, or other forms of “re-appropriation”. The examples provided and analyzed in this paper offer a key to understanding these processes of transmission and reshaping of traditions across time, space and religious contexts.

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Katell Berthelot

To convert or not to convert: the appropriation of Jewish rituals, customs and beliefs by non-Jews



Abstract: In Antiquity, non-Jews appropriated Jewish rituals, customs and beliefs in a way that defied clear-cut categorization and thus challenged group boundaries. Whereas the scholarly debate has traditionally focused on whether the term “Godfearers” (*theosebeis, metuentes*) was adequate to describe such individuals, and whether such a category or group existed at all in the ancient world, my aim in this paper is different. I examine how ancient literary and epigraphic sources differentiate between converts (or proselytes) and Judaizers, what kind of ritual practices or beliefs are attributed to these Judaizers, and whether they are described as participating in the life of local Jewish communities. Finally, I look at what rabbinic writings have to say about this phenomenon.

Only some of the sources provide information on Judaizing practices; in some cases we can merely conclude that certain non-Jews showed devotion toward the God of Israel, without being able to specify how this devotion manifested itself. It is highly probable that Judaizers were sometimes connected with a particular Jewish community, but not all Judaizers were necessarily taking part in synagogal or community activities. Judaizing attitudes belonged first and foremost to the realm of individual religious practices and were not codified by any particular group. As such, they were rejected by the rabbis, who praised the gentiles who venerated the God of Israel and were benevolent towards the Jews, but considered that the commandments of the Torah such as the Sabbath were given to Israel alone, and were not to be observed or imitated by non-Jews.

1 Introduction

The scholarly discussion about non-Jews who appropriated Jewish rituals, customs or beliefs without converting to Judaism often refers to these gentiles as

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“Godfearers” (and sometimes also as “sympathizers”).¹ The term “Godfearer” has been sharply criticized for its vagueness, and for the fact that the Greek and Latin terms used to designate these people, *theosebeis* and *metuentes*, are found in ancient sources in a wide range of contexts, which are not necessarily connected to Judaism. Many inhabitants of the Roman Empire feared the gods and could be labeled accordingly (Feldman 1950; Kraemer 2014). The Jews themselves could be characterized as “fearing God,” as being *sebomenoi ton theon* or *yirey shamayim*.² Moreover, even when the term is used to refer to Judaizing practices, Ross S. Kraemer is right to recall that “participating in the cultic practices of other groups, while continuing to maintain associations and identifications with one’s own group, appears to have been widespread in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean,” and should not be seen as a peculiarity of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews (Kraemer 2014, 62). In this paper I shall thus refer to non-Jews who appropriated certain Jewish rituals, customs or beliefs by using the term “Judaizers.”³ However, I shall not restrict my enquiry to the sources which use *ioudaizein* or *iudaizo*. Rather, I shall take into account any literary or epigraphic source that documents in one way or another the adoption of Jewish rituals, customs and beliefs by non-Jews.

Insofar as Judaizing attitudes are opposed to conversion, or at least distinguished from it, both in some ancient sources and in modern scholarly literature, we also need to clarify what we mean by “conversion”. In the context of ancient Judaism, “conversion” refers to someone’s affiliation to the people of Israel, a group that in Jewish, Greek and Roman sources is defined in both ethnic and religious terms.⁴ In Roman sources, for example, the Jews are a *gens* or a *natio*, but they are also characterized by their *religio*.⁵ As we shall see in some of the examples given below, converts are often described as having become Jews. The term “conversion”, however, has no precise equivalent in

1 See Lévi 1905–1907; Feldman 1993, 342–382; Lieu 1995; Levinskaya 1996, 51–126; Wander 1998.

2 This leads us to reconsider the evidence from epitaphs, which Pieter van der Horst and others too easily classify as belonging to non-Jews who worshiped the God of Israel, as soon as they see the word *theosebēs* or *metuens*. See Van der Horst 1991, 71–72 (in connection with *CIJ* nos. 5, 202, 285, 500, 524, 529, 619a, 642, 731e, 748, 754 and two inscriptions mentioned by Louis Robert [Robert 1937, 409–412]).

3 As Paula Fredriksen notes, this term has both an emic and an etic dimension. See Fredriksen 2015.

4 On Judaism as an ethno-religion already in the Bible, see Schwartz 2001, *versus* Cohen 1999.

5 See for example Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.68–69 (*religio* in §68, *gens* in §69).

ancient Hebrew or Greek until Late Antiquity. The Greek term *metanoia* refers to an inner change and possibly to a change of lifestyle, but not to a change of affiliation. The Hebrew word *giyyur* (“conversion”), corresponding to the biblical term *ger* (which, in the biblical books, mostly refers to a stranger living in a permanent way among Israelites), is a late term.⁶ In spite of the relative lack of specific conceptual Hebrew, Greek or Latin terms to refer to conversion to Judaism, the latter is described, especially in Jewish and Roman sources from the end of the 1st century CE onward, as the fact of becoming a Jew, implying the acceptance of all the Jewish (or Mosaic) laws, including circumcision for men. The details of the conversion procedure or ritual, however, elude us to a great extent, and probably varied from place to place, and from one Jewish community to another. It is unclear, for example, how and when the ritual immersion of converts became mandatory in the conversion process. Within rabbinic literature, it is mainly in the Babylonian Talmud (Yebamot 47a-b), the final redaction of which dates to the 6th century CE, that we find information on the conversion procedure; the latter is also described in the tractate Gerim (“Converts”), which is post-Talmudic and thus even later.⁷ As for the term “convert,” whereas rabbinic literature uses the biblical word *ger(im)* with the meaning of “convert(s)”, Jewish works in Greek use terms that partly originate from the translation of the occurrences of *ger(im)* in the Septuagint, such as *prosēlutos* (hence the term “proselyte” in English, which in the cases examined in this paper designates converts to Judaism). Among the other Greek terms used in ancient sources to designate converts one may also find *epēlus* / *epēlutēs*. It must be emphasized that when dealing with conversion and converts to Judaism in Antiquity, we face a case for which we often lack emic technical terms, especially nouns, although the ancient texts describe cases of conversion (using verbs, for example), and provide information on the criteria used to define converts (acceptance of the Jewish laws and circumcision for men, mainly). This case shows that the lack of a term is not tantamount to the absence of a notion; moreover, the fact that a notion is not defined precisely in all its aspects (the conversion procedure, etc.) does not imply that it was not a lively reality in the eyes of the ancient authors.

⁶ The *piel* form of the verb *gwr*, with the meaning “to convert (someone)”, “to make a convert”, is attested for the first time in the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (Amalek [Yithro] 2), a 3rd century CE midrash, and in other 3rd century rabbinic sources.

⁷ Cohen 1999, chap. 7.

As Shaye Cohen writes, “Greco-Jewish literature is filled with stories about gentiles, usually kings and dignitaries, who witness some manifestation of the power of the god of the Jews and as a result venerate the god and acknowledge his power” (Cohen 1989, 15–16; see also Cohen 1987). Under the pen of Jewish authors, such stories may stem from a desire to see the superiority of the God of Israel recognized by the gentiles (see for example *2 Maccabees* 3:35–36; *Judith* 5:20–21 and 14:10). In any case, in a polytheistic world, acknowledging the power of a god was always safer than the opposite attitude. To engage in certain practices that were characteristic of the *ethnos* of the Jews was clearly going one step further, even if we have to keep in mind, following Ross S. Kraemer, that “For many, if indeed not most, persons in antiquity, practice was everything, and it was fluid and variable. Elite officials might strive to set boundaries; ordinary people ignored them” (Kraemer 2014, 84).

Both Judaizing practices and Judaizing beliefs are difficult to define, however. Shaye Cohen has suggested that we should distinguish between seven different stages of “attraction” toward Judaism or adoption of Jewish customs by non-Jews, ranging from mere admiration to full conversion leading to one’s integration into a Jewish community as a member of the people of Israel.⁸ Cohen himself grants that it is nevertheless difficult to draw clear-cut boundaries between the different cases he mentions (Cohen 1999, 171). This conclusion is in fact not surprising, as we are dealing with a phenomenon that was to a large extent individual, and to which different groups of Jews reacted in different ways. Some Jewish groups established rules concerning conversion, maybe as early as the Hellenistic period onwards, but the adoption of Jewish rituals, customs or beliefs by non-Jews who did not undergo full conversion eluded control and codification. As we shall see, this attitude could be praised or chastised, but it was hardly ever normalized. But let us first look at the evidence for the existence of such Judaizing attitudes or practices.

⁸ Cohen 1989, 14–15; Cohen 1999, 140–162. The seven different cases identified by Cohen are: 1) Admiring some aspects of Judaism; 2) Acknowledging the power of the God of the Jews; 3) Benefiting the Jews or being conspicuously friendly to Jews; 4) Practicing some or many of the rituals of the Jews; 5) Venerating the God of the Jews and denying or ignoring all other gods; 6) Joining the Jewish community; 7) Converting to Judaism and “becoming a Jew”.

2 The appropriation of Jewish rituals, customs and beliefs by non-Jews: a brief review of the evidence

2.1 The distinction between Judaizers and converts to Judaism

The difference between a Judaizer and a convert is reflected in the writings of Josephus, and is also found in Roman authors who were more or less contemporary with Josephus. As far as the Judean historian is concerned, in *Judean War* 2.454 for example he refers to a Roman officer who had been captured by the Jews at the beginning of the revolt in 66 CE, and writes that in order to save his life, the officer promised to Judaize “even to the point of circumcision” (*mechri peritomēs ioudaisein*). That circumcision was a decisive step equivalent to joining the Judean *ethnos* is also apparent in the narrative of the conversion of Izates, the king of Adiabene, in *Jewish Antiquities* 20.34–48.

Interestingly, this distinction is echoed in some Roman sources. The satirist Petronius alludes to the fact that a person would be excluded from the Jewish people if they were not circumcised: “The Jew (*Judaeus*) may worship his pig-god and clamor in the ears of high heaven, but unless he also cuts back his foreskin with the knife (*ni tamen et ferro succiderit inguinis oram*), he shall go forth from the people and emigrate to Greek cities, and shall not tremble at the fasts of Sabbath imposed by the law” (*Fragmenta*, no. 37, ed. Ernout; trans. M. Heseltine, LCL). The *Judaeus* described here could be a native Jew who had not been circumcised at birth, but it makes more sense to identify him as a Judaizer, who will become a member of the Jewish *populus* only if he agrees to be circumcised. Moreover, as Louis Feldman notes, “Such a passage . . . coming from a satirist, has force only if the situation is sufficiently frequent to be recognized by the reader” (Feldman 1993, 346).

Juvenal also testifies to the difference between a Judaizer and a full convert. In a famous passage from the 14th Satire, he writes:

Some happen to have been dealt a father who respects the sabbath (*metuentem sabbata patrem*). They worship nothing except the clouds and spirit (or: deity) of the sky. They think there is no difference between pork, which their father abstained from, and human flesh. In time, they get rid of their foreskins. And with their habit of despising the laws of Rome, they study, observe, and revere the Judaic code, as handed down by Moses in his mystic scroll, which tells them not to show the way to anyone except a fellow worshipper and if asked, to take only the circumcised to the fountain. But it's the father who is to blame, taking every seventh day as a day of laziness and separate from ordinary life.

(*Saturae* 14.96–106; trans. S. Morton Braund, LCL, 465–467, slightly modified)

The Judaizing father is characterized only by the fact that he “reveres the Sabbath” and abstains from eating pork, whereas the son is said to worship heaven (a reference to the identification of the God of the Jews with the heavens, and to the lack of representation of the deity in images), to abstain from eating pork, to undergo circumcision, and to observe the Jewish law, thus becoming a full convert. Moreover, the son is said to have become a stranger to the laws of Rome, to have changed not only religious, but also political and ethnic affiliations. There can be no doubt that, at least from the end of the 1st century CE onwards, Roman authors understood conversion to Judaism as being tantamount to a very real change of identity, and did not consider it equivalent to Judaizing practices.

Finally, the Stoic philosopher Epictetus also indirectly alludes to the difference between Judaizers and converts when he calls out to a man asking “why do you act the part of a Jew, when you are a Greek?” and makes the following observation: “. . . whenever we see a man halting between two faiths, we are in the habit of saying, ‘He is not a Jew, he is only acting the part.’ But when he adopts the attitude of mind of the man who has been baptized and has made his choice, then he both is a Jew in fact and also is called one” (Arrian, *Diss.* 2.9.20; trans. W. A. Oldfather, LCL, 267). Epictetus mentions baptism (immersion in a ritual bath) as the main rite for conversion, rather than circumcision, which applied only to men. This observation is in fact one of the earliest non-Jewish testimonies that we have for the immersion of converts.⁹ The main point here, however, is the distinction Epictetus draws between a convert, who has become a Jew, and one who is only “acting the part”. Moreover, the implication of Epictetus’ general remark is that such Judaizers were numerous. But what did Judaizing practices consist of?

2.2 What did Judaizing practices consist of?

Josephus writes in his polemical treatise *Against Apion* (*Ag. Ap.*):

What is more, even among the masses for a long time there has been much emulation of our piety (*eusebeia*), and there is not one city of the Greeks, nor a single barbarian nation, where the custom of the seventh day, on which we rest, has not permeated, and where

⁹ Tosefta Avodah Zarah 3:11 mentions circumcision followed by ritual immersion as a requirement for a male non-Jewish slave who was bought by Jews. However, the slave was considered a Jew only after having been manumitted. In the case of a female slave, only immersion was required, and she would also be considered Jewish only after manumission. See Hezser 2005, 35–38.

our fasts (*nēsteiai*) and lighting of lamps (*kai luchnōn anakauseis*) and many of our prohibitions with regard to food (*kai polla tōn eis brōsin hēmin*) have not been observed.

(*Ag. Ap.* 2.282; trans. Barclay 2007, 327–328)¹⁰

That Josephus is not talking here about conversions is made clear by another passage of *Against Apion* in which he defines converts as those who become members of the *politeia* of the Jews, using a political metaphor already found in previous Jewish texts written in Greek. What he describes in *Ag. Ap.* 2.282 can thus be characterized as Judaizing practices.¹¹ Whether these Judaizers were connected to a Jewish community in one way or another remains unclear. I shall come back to this point later.

It seems that numerous non-Jews did in fact observe the Sabbath in one way or another.¹² In fact, the lighting of lamps, which Josephus states was a Jewish practice imitated by non-Jews, is associated by Seneca with the Sabbath (*Epistulae* 95.47), and by Persius with “Herod’s day,” probably to be identified with the Sabbath as well (*Saturae* 5.180–181).¹³ Hence it is in all likelihood a reference to the custom of lighting lamps before the Sabbath began at sunset. In connection with the story of the translation of the Law of Moses into Greek, Philo writes that the Jewish laws “attract and win the attention of all, of barbarians, of Greeks, of dwellers on the mainland and islands, of nations of the east and the west, of Europe and Asia, of the whole inhabited world from end to end,” and he adds: “For, who has not shown his high respect for that sacred seventh day, by giving rest and relaxation from labour to himself and his neighbours, freemen and slaves alike, and beyond these to his beasts?” (*De Vita*

10 See also Josephus, *Judean (or Jewish) War (J.W.)* 2.463, 560; 7.45 (on which see below). Josephus also refers to specific individuals who adopted Jewish customs, without describing them as having become Jews. See for instance *Jewish Antiquities (Ant.)* 18.8 (concerning a Roman *matrona* called Fulvia), and the analysis of Daniel R. Schwartz (Schwartz 2007, esp. 96).

11 Similarly Barclay 2007, 328: “Josephus is here describing the imitation of particular customs, not the wholesale adoption of the Judean law.”

12 See Goldenberg 1979. In addition to the sources quoted below, one could mention a passage from Suetonius (Tiberius 32.2) referring to the grammarian Diogenes, who, at the beginning of the 1st century, used to lecture every Sabbath in Rhodes and who refused to come and lecture in front of the emperor Tiberius on any other day. When this same Diogenes came to Rome and wished to pay his respects to Tiberius, the latter responded that he’d better come back in the seventh year – probably an ironic allusion to the Sabbatical year. This reference to the practice of lecturing exclusively on the Sabbath is surprising. It has been interpreted by Louis Feldman as meaning that Diogenes was a Sabbath-observer (Feldman 1993, 345). The question that arises is: what kind of lecture would be given only on a Sabbath? Another question pertains to the identity of Diogenes, who may have been a Judaizer, but also a Jew.

13 For the opposite opinion, that Persius is alluding to a celebration connected to Herod, see Horbury 1991.

Mosis 2.20–21, trans. F. H. Colson, LCL, 459–461). Philo suggests that the Sabbath is observed universally, which sounds like wishful thinking, but could also be understood as an exaggerated way of expressing the same idea found in *Against Apion*. In §2.23–24, Philo also refers to the admiration expressed by non-Jews for the fast of the Day of Atonement (Kippur). In fact, it is probable that Josephus partly drew his inspiration from Philo, even if the descriptions of the former sound a bit more realistic than those of the latter.

That Philo's and Josephus' statements are not totally far-fetched may be deduced from a fragment of Seneca's *De superstitione* quoted by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* 6.11:

Along with other superstitions of the civil theology Seneca also censures the sacred institutions of the Jews, especially the sabbath. He declares that their practice is inexpedient, because by introducing one day of rest in every seven they lose in idleness almost a seventh of their life, and by failing to act in times of urgency they often suffer loss. But when speaking of the Jews he says: 'Meanwhile the customs of this accursed race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world. The vanquished have given laws to their victors.' (trans. W. M. Green, LCL, quoted in Stern 1974–1984, 1:431)

If Augustine's testimony is reliable, this quotation reflects the fact that numerous non-Jews had adopted Jewish customs and rites, although it remains unclear whether Seneca referred to Judaizers or full converts, or both. This distinction was probably irrelevant to him. Beyond the reference to the spread of Jewish customs, it is interesting that Seneca refers to Judaizers in connection with his criticism of the sabbatical rest.

Apart from the texts quoted so far, the best evidence we have for some kind of observance of the Sabbath by non-Jews who were not converts comes from the works of 1st and 2nd century Roman poets and satirists. These works are grounded in contemporary social realities, to which they refer only in passing, sometimes quite obscurely. I have already mentioned Petronius' remark on "the fasts of Sabbath imposed by the law." Tibullus is less clear; he writes that "Either birds or words of evil omen were my pretexts, or there was the accursed day of Saturn to detain me" (*Elegiae* 1.3.17–18; trans. J. P. Postgate, LCL, 207). According to most scholars, he is referring to the Jewish Sabbath.¹⁴ Tibullus' words are not to be taken literally, however, but are rather an indication that it was conceivable for a Roman to observe or revere the Sabbath. In *Sermones* 1.9.60–78, Horace features a certain Aristius Fuscus who claims that, because of the Sabbath, he cannot deal

¹⁴ See for instance Reinach 1894, 247; Stern 1974–1984, 1:319–320. On the association between the Sabbath and the "day of Saturn," see also Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4.4; Frontinus, *Strat.* 2.1.17; Cassius Dio 37.16–19; Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.13; Barclay 2007, 328.

with certain issues. The passage is difficult to interpret, but implies that Aristius Fuscus somehow observed the Sabbath of the Jews. Moreover, he presents himself as a superstitious man, which seems to imply that, in Horace's perspective, this Jewish custom was a superstition. A famous passage from Persius' fifth satire refers to the "day of Herod," which as mentioned above probably refers to the Sabbath, and contains a vivid description of it:

But when the days of Herod come, and the lamps, wearing violets and arranged along the greasy window, spew out a fatty fog, when the tail of tuna fish swims coiling round the red bowl, when the white pitcher is bulging with wine, you silently move your lips and turn pale at the circumcised sabbath.

(*Saturae* 5.179–184; trans. S. Morton Braund, LCL, 111–112, slightly modified)

The person Persius is addressing is clearly not a Jew himself, but rather a Roman who is presented as participating in the Jewish celebration. Here the Sabbath is associated with circumcision, a characteristic of the Jews in Persius' eyes. The meaning of "you silently move your lips" is unclear, and could be an allusion to the prayers that the Judaizing Roman is taking part in. Finally, as mentioned previously, Juvenal's 14th Satire refers to a man who rests on the Sabbath and whose son, as a result, becomes a full convert, but he does not give details on the practice itself (see §2.1 above).

Roman authors often associated the sabbatical rest with fasting.¹⁵ Based on the testimony of these Roman authors, Margaret Williams has suggested that Jews in Rome did in fact fast on the Sabbath, arguing that the Sabbath was associated with the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BCE and by Sosius in 37 BCE, and thus with the subsequent exile of Judeans to Rome.¹⁶ In *Against Apion*, Josephus refers to the ritual of Jewish "fasts," but he probably implies first and foremost the Day of Atonement, as Philo does in *De Vita Mosis*. It is unclear what Jewish practice was being imitated by the non-Jews who are described as engaged in a "Jewish fast". Moreover, it is possible that Jews like Josephus interpreted other people's fasts as an imitation of their own, but that this interpretation was mistaken.

In any case, some testimonies, like that of Juvenal, unmistakably refer to non-Jews who revered and observed the Jewish day of rest. What eludes us are the

¹⁵ On the association of the Sabbath with fasting, see Pompeius Trogus, *apud* Justin, *Epitome* 36.2.14; Petronius, *Fragmenta*, no. 37 (he speaks about "the fasts of Sabbath [*ieiuna sabbata*] imposed by the law"); Martial, *Epig.* 4.4.7; Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* 76.2. See Goldenberg 1979, 439 (he suggests that the association could stem from the fact that the Jews refused to light fires and cook on the Sabbath).

¹⁶ See Williams 2004. Goldenberg cautiously considers it a possibility, but leaves the question open (Goldenberg 1979, 439–441).

details of this practice and the connection these Judaizers may or may not have established with Jewish communities.

3 Judaizers and Jewish communities

A striking feature of the Greco-Roman sources mentioned previously is that they often refer to individuals. Horace mentions a Judaizer by name (Aristius Fuscus), Persius and Epictetus address an anonymous individual, Juvenal mentions the case of a father and his son, Josephus tells the story of individuals attracted to Judaism or sympathetic to the Jewish cult.¹⁷ Judaizing attitudes are thus generally presented as individual phenomena, even if Philo and Josephus boast of the numbers of non-Jews imitating Jewish customs, and occasionally make generalizing statements concerning the population of a city or even humankind as a whole.

We do not know many details concerning the religious practice of the Judaizers, however. In particular, we may ask the question whether these people observed the Sabbath (or other rituals) individually or in connection with a given community or household. Because of the evidence from the Book of Acts and the inscription from Aphrodisias, the scholarly discussion about the “Godfearers” has generally located them in the orbit of Jewish communities, even when scholars do not consider them to have been real members of these communities.¹⁸ But what light do these sources shed on the relationship between Judaizers and Jewish communities?

3.1 Josephus’ ambiguous testimony

The case of Helena and Izates, king of Adiabene, who ultimately converted to Judaism, illustrates the fact that in Josephus, too, most cases of adoption of Jewish customs are individual.¹⁹ Helena and Izates independently come to live according

¹⁷ One could also mention the testimony of Cassius Dio (67.14.2) concerning the consul Flavius Clemens and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, who under Domitian were accused of atheism, “a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned.” For Louis Feldman, they were Judaizers because as consul, Flavius Clemens could not give up Roman cults altogether and become a full proselyte. See Feldman 1993, 347.

¹⁸ See for example Stebnicka 2015. She talks about “pagans connected to the synagogue” (101).

¹⁹ The Judaization of the Idumeans from John Hyrcanus onward appears as an exception rather than a rule.

to the Jewish laws after having been in touch with a Jew (anonymous in the case of Helena; a man called Ananias in the case of Izates). At no point does Josephus state that they were in touch with a local Jewish community in Adiabene.²⁰ Ananias is a merchant and his encounter with Izates takes place outside Adiabene (*Jewish Antiquities* [*Ant.*] 20.34–36). Later on, Helena travels to Jerusalem, and has a palace and a funerary monument built there. Moreover, some of the descendants of Izates participate in the Judean war against Rome, which shows that the royal house of Adiabene had built a strong relationship with Judea. Still, the adoption of Jewish customs originally happened independently of a connection with a Jewish community.

Interestingly, in *Ant.* 14.110 Josephus mentions the wealth of the Jerusalem Temple and explains that it was due to the numerous offerings sent by Jews throughout the inhabited world and “those who worship God (*tōn sebomenōn ton theon*)”, from Asia and from Europe. In this case, the phrase “those who worship God” probably refers to non-Jews who showed devotion toward the God of the Jews, rather than merely kings who made offerings to the Temple. The fact that these non-Jews sent contributions to the Jerusalem Temple could imply that they were in some way associated (or at least in touch) with a Jewish community. Unfortunately, we cannot deduce anything further from this passing reference.

A passage of Josephus’ *Judean War* sheds a more interesting light on the issue of the participation of non-Jews in Jewish communities. Josephus reports that, before the war in Judea, the Jewish community in Antioch was numerous and enjoyed a prominent place in the city, so that “they (the Jews) were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies (*tais thrēskeiais*) multitudes of Greeks, and these they had in some measure incorporated with themselves (*kakeinous tropō tini moiran autōn pepoiēnto*)” (*J.W.* 7.45; trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL, 519). The Antiochean Jews had “somehow” (*tropō tini*) made these Judaizing Greeks, who participated in Jewish rituals, “a part of themselves” (*moiran autōn*). If Josephus is to be trusted, we have here a clear example of non-Jews who participated in Jewish religious practices within a community framework, and whom Josephus does not describe as converts but rather as Judaizers.²¹ This example, however,

²⁰ Michał Marciak considers that there must have been Jewish communities in Adiabene. This makes sense, but the fact remains that Josephus never mentions that the royal house of Adiabene was in touch with Jewish communities there. See Marciak 2014.

²¹ See Schwartz 2007, 98, for a similar conclusion.

remains quite exceptional in Josephus' work.²² And unfortunately (again), Josephus is vague regarding the exact way these non-Jews were considered part of the Jewish community. As a consequence, we cannot understand the details of this integration, nor answer questions such as whether they participated in the Jewish feasts, celebrated the Sabbath, joined the communal prayer, contributed to the money sent to Jerusalem for the sacrifices, etc. Yet, the idea that these Greeks had become part of the Jews implies that they were probably taking part in different festivals and community celebrations.

3.2 Judaizers in synagogues in the Book of Acts?

The Book of Acts is known for its numerous references to people who are not Jews, but show piety toward the God of Israel. When Paul visits Jewish communities in the Diaspora, he is said to encounter “proselytes” and “Godfearers” who participate in synagogal gatherings. At Antioch in Pisidia, on a Sabbath, Paul addresses the people in the synagogue in the following terms: “You Israelites [or: Israelite men], and those who fear God (*kai hoi phoboumenoi ton theon*), listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt . . . ” (*Acts* 13:16–17). Later in his speech, Paul again addresses the crowd in these terms: “My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s lineage, and those among you who fear God (*kai hoi en humin phoboumenoi ton theon*), to us the message of this salvation has been sent” (*Acts* 13:26). After Paul finishes his speech, the author adds this comment: “When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and the devout (or [God-]fearing) proselytes (*polloi tōn Ioudaiōn kai tōn sebomenōn prosēlūtōn*) followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God” (*Acts* 13:43). It is quite clear that, in the context of this passage, the “devout proselytes” (*sebomenoi prosēlutoi*) mentioned at the end are the people “who fear God” mentioned at the beginning of Paul’s discourse, the second category of people attending the synagogal gathering. In accordance with most occurrences of the term *prosēlutoi* in the Septuagint, the “proselytes” are certainly converts, who have fully joined the Jewish community, but are distinguished from the native Jews, those who are “descendants of Abraham’s lineage,” by their genealogy, their foreign origins. As a consequence, this passage cannot be

²² Josephus also mentions that the wives of the inhabitants of Damascus had gone over to the Jewish cult (*tē Ioudaikē thrēskeia*), but it is unclear how these women were related to the Jewish community. See *J.W.* 2.559–561.

used to demonstrate the existence of “Godfearers” alongside the proselytes, nor – obviously – the participation of the former in the life of the Jewish community. What we find in *Acts* 13 is a community composed of native Jews (*Ioudaioi* or *Israēlitai*) and proselytes, who are also described as devout.

We are then told that, as Paul’s teaching was being received favorably by the non-Jews in the city, the Jews “incited the devout women of high standing (*tas sebomenas gunaikas tas euschēmonas*) and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region” (*Acts* 13:50). This reference to “devout women,” who may have been the wives of the “leading men of the city,” recalls Josephus’ passages on Judaizing women among the Roman aristocracy or in the cities of Syria. In *Acts* 13:50, the “devout women”, who are not called “proselytes”, may have been converts or may simply have been attracted to Jewish beliefs and rituals. The extent of their adoption of Jewish practices remains unclear, as does the nature of their relationship with the Jewish community.²³

In the next chapter, Paul and Barnabas reach Iconium and again address the people at the local synagogue. The author briefly states that they “spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks (*Ioudaiōn te kai Hellēnōn polu plēthos*) became believers” (*Acts* 14:1). In verse 2 these Greeks are described as *ta ethnē*, a term the Septuagint and Jewish works written in Greek use to designate the nations, the non-Jews. This passage therefore seems to allude to the presence of non-Jews who were not converts at a synagogal meeting (whether it took place on the Sabbath is not specified).

Again, in Beroea, Paul preaches to the Jews in the synagogue, and we are told that “many of them therefore believed, including not a few Greek women and men of high standing” (*Acts* 17:12). These Greek women are not presented as “devout” as in *Acts* 13, but their presence in the synagogue testifies to their participation in the life of the community in one way or another. The question that arises is whether they were married to Jewish men, or should be considered “Judaizers” from outside the community.

Finally, we read that in Athens, Paul “argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout (or [God-]fearing) ones (*kai tois sebomenois*), and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there” (*Acts* 17:17). Contrary to *Acts* 13, nothing in this passage helps clarify whether these God-fearing persons were proselytes (that is, converts) or non-Jews participating in

²³ *Acts* 16:14 mentions another woman who was “fearing God,” Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from Thyatira. However, the encounter between Lydia and the apostles takes place outside the city of Philippi, near a river, and it is unclear whether this place was a spot where the Jewish community gathered.

a synagogal meeting out of piety toward the God of the Jews, or both, and to what extent the latter adopted Jewish customs.

Ultimately, the evidence from the Book of *Acts* does not really clarify to what extent and in what ways Judaizers were connected to Jewish communities. If its testimony is historically reliable, it documents the presence of proselytes (i.e. converts) in some communities, as well as the presence of non-Jews (not described as proselytes) attending synagogal gatherings, in such places as Iconium or Beroea. That the latter were also practicing Jewish rituals is indeed possible, but not certain. In any case, the details elude us, as well as the nature of the relationship: did they participate regularly or occasionally in Jewish celebrations? Was this participation passive or active? Were they taught to practice certain things but forbidden to adopt other types of practices? Were these non-Jews supposed to convert after a time? Most of our questions remain unanswered.

3.3 The synagogue “of the Jews and the Godfearers” in Pantikapaion

An inscription from the region of the Bosporan kingdom, dated to the 1st century CE – roughly the same period as Josephus and the Book of *Acts* –, pertains to the manumission of a slave in the context of a *proseuchē*, under the supervision of “the community of the Jews and the Godfearers” (*tēs sunagō- / gēs tōn Ioudaiōn kai theon / sebōn* [probably to be corrected to *theon sebomenōn*], *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* [CIRB] 71, lines 8–10; alternative reading: *theo<n>sebōn*). Elizabeth Leigh Gibson translates the inscription as follows: “... I release in the prayerhouse my slave Elpis in order that she is undisturbed and unassailable by any heir, except for service to the prayerhouse (*proseuchē*), as a guardian, the synagogue of the Jews and the godfearers.”²⁴ This means that the community of the Jews and Godfearers is in charge of supervising the implementation of the manumission act. In similar inscriptions from Pantikapaion such as CIRB 70 and 72, reference is made only to “the community of the Jews,” without any mention of the Godfearers. Some scholars have suggested understanding *theon sebōn* as referring to the slave who is manumitted, who should commit to continuing to worship the deity.²⁵

²⁴ Leigh Gibson 1999, 161; she follows the interpretation of Bellen (1965–66). Greek text taken from Lifschitz 1975, 173.

²⁵ This is the suggestion made by the editors of *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis. Vol. 1: Eastern Europe*, David Noy, Alexander Panayatov and Hanswulf Bloedhorn. See *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis (IJO)* 1:282–283.

However, the syntax would be very difficult. Bellen and Leigh Gibson are thus probably right that we are dealing here with a community composed of both (native) Jews and Godfearers.²⁶ Whether these Godfearers were proselytes, as in Acts 13, or non-Jews who worshiped the God of Israel with the Jews without undergoing a formal conversion (which may not yet have been codified in this Bosporan context), we simply do not know. However, the fact that they were jointly responsible for the implementation of the manumission acts does indicate that their implication in the community was deep and long-lasting.

3.4 The Case of the Theosebeis in Aphrodisias

A tall marble block discovered in Aphrodisias provides us with an inscription documenting the life of a Jewish community in the city, probably during the 4th century CE. According to the original editors, Joyce Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, the inscription – which mainly consists of lists of names and was carved on adjoining faces of the marble block – runs from face a to face b (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987). This conclusion has been challenged by Angelos Chaniotis, who considers that we are dealing with two separate inscriptions (Chaniotis 2002). He notes that the one engraved on side b, which he calls face I and considers the oldest one, is more clearly written and more properly arranged on the stone. The inscription on side a, which Chaniotis calls face II, was added later, after the stone had already been erected, making the engraving work more difficult. As a consequence, the lists on side b (face I) should not be read as a continuation of the list on side a (face II). Chaniotis argues that the beginning of the list on side b (face I) is now lost because the stone is damaged, which prevents us from understanding the circumstances that led to the erection of this commemorative stele.

First, let us look at the inscription(s) according to the interpretation proposed by Reynolds and Tannenbaum, keeping in mind that even if the inscriptions were engraved successively, they nevertheless both probably date from the 4th century CE.²⁷ One side of the stone (side a in the edition of Joyce Reynolds and Robert

²⁶ Irina Levinskaya mentioned to me in a private conversation that an unpublished manumission inscription from the Bosphorus area, dated to the beginning of the 2nd century CE, refers to “the synagogue of the *Ioudaioi* and the *theosebeis*”. I look forward to the publication of this document.

²⁷ Its first editors, Joyce Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, dated the inscription to the beginning of the 3rd century CE, whereas Angelos Chaniotis dates it to the 5th century CE. The arguments later put forward by Gilbert Gary in favor of a 4th century dating – not excluded by Chaniotis himself – seem decisive to me (Gary 2004).

Tannenbaum, face II in Chaniotis' interpretation) mentions the activity of a group calling itself the *dekania*, which aims to provide relief from affliction (*apenthēsia*) for the *plēthos*, identified either as the Jewish community or as the people of Aphrodisias (this second possibility seems to me less likely).²⁸ The *dekania* is defined as “the decany of those who love to learn, (also known as) those who fervently praise (God) (or: those who worship [God] constantly),” and who are also responsible for the memorial. The inscription then records a list of donors, or, more precisely, two lists separated by a *vacat*, if one follows the interpretation of Reynolds and Tannenbaum. The first one names 19 individuals on side a and 56 individuals on side b, most of whom are apparently Jewish, according to their names, which are sometimes followed by their patronymic, or a title (such as *presbeutēs*, elder), or an indication of profession. On side b, after a *vacat*, we then have a second list of 50 individuals, which is introduced by the words *kai hosoi theosebis* (to be read *theosebeis*), “and those who are Godfearers.” This second list first mentions the names of nine *bouleutai*, or elected members of the city council, and then various additional names with their patronymic, or a title, or an indication of profession. As Pieter van der Horst notes, it is remarkable that this list contains the names of nine city councilors, and “as a matter of fact we can see that the jobs done by the Godfearers, of which some 22 are given in the inscription, cover a wide range of occupations only very few of which indicate lower social status” (Van der Horst 2015, 39). That these *theosebeis* are not proselytes is made clear by the fact that in the first list (on side a, lines 13, 17 and 22), three proselytes (*prosēlutoi*) are explicitly mentioned. However, the first list (side a, lines 19 and 20) also contains the names of two *theosebeis*, Emmonios and Antoninos, mixed together with the other names. If the two sides of the stone are to be read as a single inscription, as argued by Reynolds and Tannenbaum, then we are left wondering why two persons explicitly characterized as *theosebeis* feature in the first list, whereas another group of persons is presented as *theosebeis* separately.

If, however, we follow Chaniotis' analysis of the stone, side a and side b have to be interpreted separately, and in this context the fact that *theosebeis* are mentioned on both sides of the stone is no longer problematic. We then have a list of donors to a charitable organization of some sort, on the one hand (side a), and probably another list of benefactors divided into two categories – Jews and

²⁸ For the second interpretation of *plēthos*, see Gary 2004, 170 n. 3. According to Reynolds and Tannenbaum, the service provided by the *dekania* was a sort of soup kitchen for the needy. Others have suggested that it was a burial society. See in particular Williams 1992, 307.

non-Jews – on the other hand (side b). That non-Jews acted as benefactors towards Jewish communities is well attested in other literary and epigraphical sources.²⁹ It is quite clear that this attitude was seen as a mark of piety by the Jews, and probably by the donors themselves (even if other issues were at stake in their euergetism). The list of *theosebeis* on side b, starting with the names of nine *bouleutai* of the city, should thus certainly be interpreted as a list of non-Jewish benefactors. It may be compared with an inscription commemorating the donation made to a synagogue in Acmonia (in Phrygia) by a non-Jewish woman named Julia Severa, who served as priestess of the imperial cult, and whose *eunoia* and *spoudē* the inscription celebrates (*Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis [IJO] 2: 348–355, no. 168*). Or it may be compared to another inscription commemorating a woman named Capitolina, who made a donation to a religious building and is described as *theosebēs*, and who may have been the wife of a Roman senator and priest for life of Zeus Larasios in Tralles (in Caria) (*IJO 2:140–143, no. 27*). However, as Ross Shepard Kraemer emphasizes,

even if this inscription commemorates donations to a synagogue by a non-Jewish woman benefactor, whether it testifies to a specific attachment to Jewish practice, alluded to, if not indicated by the term *theosebēs*, cannot be determined. It might simply indicate that gifts to a Jewish synagogue could be construed as a general form of piety (remembering that for Gentiles, the Jewish god was still a god).
(Kraemer 2014, 77)

Similar caution should be taken in the case of the *theosebeis* on side b of the inscription from Aphrodisias. Whether these benefactors venerated the God of the Jews to the point of adopting certain Jewish practices remains hypothetical.³⁰ Moreover, there is in fact no reason to suppose that all these individuals necessarily had similar ideas and practices.

²⁹ In *Acts* 10:2, we are told that the centurion Cornelius “was a pious man who feared God (*eusebēs kai phoboumenos ton theon*) with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God” (NRSV, slightly modified). Here we have a case (no matter how fictional it may be) that combines veneration and prayer to the God of Israel with euergetism or charity. *Luke* 7:5 also records a Roman centurion in Capernaum who was benevolent toward the Jews and had a synagogue built there; he is not described as *theosebēs*, but implicitly as pious, and later on Jesus himself praises him for his exceptional faith. See Van der Horst 2015, 31–32; Kraemer 2014, 73–79. However, in the synagogue of Sardis, the inscriptions that mention *theosebeis* – 6 out of a total of approximately 80 – refer to pious Jews, according to Marianne Palmer Bonz (1994). For Ross S. Kraemer, the *theosebeis* from Sardis may have been pious Jews, or pious non-Jews who merely donated to the synagogue, or Judaizers (Kraemer 2014, 74). The inscriptions from Sardis date from the 4th to 6th century CE. See *IJO* 2.67; 2.68; 2.83; 2.123; 2.125; 2.132 (also catalogued as *I. Sardis* 8, 9, 22, 57, 59, 66).

³⁰ For a similar conclusion, see Kraemer 2014, 80–81.

The case of the two *theosebeis* (Emmonios and Antoninos) mentioned on side a in the list of members of the *dekania* is different. Marianne Palmer Bonz has argued that we are dealing here with two pious Jews, rather than with “Godfearers” in the sense of pious non-Jews somehow related to a Jewish community (Palmer Bonz 1994, 292–293). This interpretation, however, is not likely, because nearly all the other names in this list are followed by a patronym, a title or a profession.³¹ In my opinion, in this context *theosebēs* is a title indicating a particular status, like *prosēlutos*. What is remarkable is that in this particular instance, we know for certain that these two *theosebeis* were part of the Jewish community, or at least part of the group known as the *dekania*.³² The beginning of the inscription states very clearly that the names listed on the stone are those of “the members of the decany of those who love to learn, (also known as) those who fervently praise (God)” (lines 2–5). Emmonios and Antoninos, the godfearers, were thus part of a group involved in study (probably of Jewish sacred texts) and worship (probably of the Jewish God) together with those who were apparently native Jews (Yael, Joshua, Samuel, etc.) and several proselytes (Samuel, Joses, Joseph). The fact that Samuel the proselyte was president of the *dekania* shows that proselytes were not considered inferior in rank compared to native Jews, and may help explain the openness of the *dekania* to non-Jews who were willing to learn and worship with the Jews.

All in all, then, the literary and epigraphic sources document Judaizers (non-Jews involved in the practice of Jewish customs or rituals) and individuals generally described as Godfearers who are closely associated with Jewish communities: they may contribute financially to the community buildings or charity associations, act as witnesses and guarantors in manumissions performed in a *proseuchē*, and even participate in religious activities such as prayers or the study of sacred books. Not all these activities can be characterized as “Judaizing” acts. Financial contributions, material or even political support could stem from individuals who acted as *euergetes* or aimed to behave piously toward all the gods,

³¹ The only exception is Ioudas *eukolos* on line 16, “Judas the good-tempered,” which sounds like a nick-name (if we consider for instance Menander’s *duskolos*).

³² In *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* II, Walter Ameling writes that „Die Aphrodisias-Inschrift macht klar, daß die *theosebeis* von den Juden als Teil ihrer Gemeinde betrachtet wurden – wie locker die Verbindung in den Augen der *theosebeis* auch gewesen sein mag“ (Ameling 2004, 18). On p. 18 he also quotes with approval the English revised edition of Schürer 1973–1987, III/1, 166: “It would be difficult to imagine clearer evidence that *theosebeis* could be categorized as a formal group attached to a Jewish community, and distinguished both from Jews and from full proselytes.” The problem is that these scholars do not make a distinction between the *theosebeis* on side b, who were probably not part of the Jewish community, and the *theosebeis* on side a.

including the god of the Jews, but without adopting Jewish customs or beliefs. In certain cases, however, the use of the term *theosebēs* is associated with Judaizing practices such as prayers or study – attention should be paid to the fact that in the case of the godfearers Emmonios and Antoninos, Judaizing practices are clearly attested, whereas the verb *ioudaizein* is not used, which again shows that we face a great deal of terminological flexibility in the ancient sources.

Contrary to the picture that emerged from the Latin literary sources, the Judaizing practices alluded to in the inscription from Aphrodisias seem to have taken place in a community setting, a point which the testimonies of Josephus and the Book of Acts confirm only in part. If we take all the evidence into account, a good case can be made for connecting the Judaizers with Jewish communities in certain contexts, but we cannot exclude that Judaizers occasionally developed individual or household practices, without participating in the cultic life of a Jewish community.

4 The rabbis' attitude toward the Judaizers

Philo and Josephus both referred to Judaizers with pride, as proof of the superiority or the rationality of Jewish Law. Such statements were coherent with the apologetic perspective of their works. But let us now look at the phenomenon of the Judaizers from a different (though still Jewish) perspective, that of the rabbis. Rabbinic texts occasionally refer to “Heaven-fearers” (*yirey shamayim*), whom most scholars identify as pious non-Jews who worshiped the God of Israel and imitated Jewish practices, but without undergoing full conversion.³³ Moreover, most scholars consider that the rabbis viewed these Judaizing gentiles – often described as “sympathizers” – in a positive light.

The issue is quite intricate. First, there are very few references to *yirey shamayim* in rabbinic literature from the Land of Israel up to the 5th century CE – no more than a dozen.³⁴ As far as the Babylonian Talmud is concerned, nearly all the occurrences of *yirey shamayim* refer to pious Jews, not to Judaizers (Feldman 1993, 353).

Second, the meaning of the expression *yirey shamayim* varies from text to text. Just as Jews or Greeks or Romans can be *theosebeis*, in rabbinic literature

³³ See Lévi, 1905–1907; Lieberman 1994, 68–90; Siegert 1973, 110–119; Feldman 1993, 353–356; Levinson 2000.

³⁴ For the sake of comparison, in the same corpus there are around five hundred occurrences of the term *ger*, “proselyte”.

Jews can be *yirey shamayim* too, and in this case the phrase refers to Jewish devotion toward the God of Israel.³⁵ In some cases the expression could also refer to converts. This is at least the way *Numbers Rabbah* 8:2 (a late midrash or biblical commentary) interprets an earlier midrashic passage, *Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael* Nezikin 18, which mentions both converts and Heaven-fearers.

Third, even when the *yirey shamayim* are not to be identified with Jews or converts, in most cases the fact that individuals are designated as such does not allow us to determine what kind of Jewish practices they adopted.³⁶ In some cases, it looks as though *yirey shamayim* could also be gentiles who protected Jews, or merely expressed admiration for the God of Israel. However, one tradition, found in three parallel passages of the Jerusalem Talmud, evokes Heaven-fearers wearing broken sandals (a sign of mortification) on the Day of Atonement.³⁷ These texts can be compared to Philo's and Josephus' testimony concerning the non-Jews who fast on the Day of Atonement. But this is almost everything we are told about the Judaizing practices of these Heaven-fearers.

Finally, an important aspect of the rabbinic traditions concerning the Heaven-fearers, to which no attention has yet been paid, is that these traditions feature in haggadic texts and not in halakhic ones. Halakhic texts represent the core of rabbinic Judaism, because they deal with the Law and the way Jews should practice the divine commandments. By contrast, haggadic texts include anecdotes, theological or eschatological speculations, legends, ethical discussions, etc. Even if a few haggadic passages refer positively to gentiles who were devout toward the God of Israel, this does not imply that the rabbis viewed non-Jews who imitated Jewish practices with favor. A closer look at the rabbinic evidence in fact shows that the contrary is true.

First, the *yirey shamayim* are absent from the halakhic texts that discuss the different groups constituting Israel (priests, Levites, Israelites, converts, freed slaves, etc.), which means that *yirey shamayim* were not part of Israel. Second, several halakhic texts define what the path of righteous non-Jews should be: they should observe the seven commandments of the descendants of Noah, which include the rejection of idolatry and blasphemy, the necessity of establishing courts of justice, the condemnation of murder, theft, illicit sexual relations, and cruelty towards animals (Tosefta Avodah Zarah 9:4; see Novak 2011). These commandments do not include any specific Jewish custom, such as the Sabbath, the fast of Kippur, abstinence from eating certain food, etc. In fact, the rabbis came to see the

35 See for example *Genesis Rabbah* 49:2 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 12:2.

36 See for example *Genesis Rabbah* 28:5 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 3:2.

37 See Jerusalem Talmud, Megillah 1:10 (72b); Megillah 3:1 (74a); Sanhedrin 10:3 (29c).

commandments of the Torah (the Law revealed by God) as the exclusive property of Israel and those who underwent a full conversion “for the sake of Heaven”. Non-Jews who did not convert – who did not become Jews – were forbidden from observing Jewish customs. Hence, a passage from the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 58b) attributed to the 3rd century Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish, teaches that a non-Jew who rests on the Sabbath deserves death (see Feldman 1993, 356).

From the rabbinic perspective, which differs greatly from that of Philo or Josephus, Jewish monotheistic beliefs may be shared by non-Jews, who will be praised for their belief, and are expected to renounce idolatry if they are to be considered righteous, but it is impossible for the commandments (*mitzvot*) of the Torah to be shared with non-Jews or observed by non-Jews who do not convert. Even if dissenting voices can be heard in rabbinic texts, on the whole, rabbinic Judaism is tantamount to a deep rejection of the appropriation of Jewish rituals and customs by non-Jews, as opposed to the appropriation of Jewish beliefs.

This, however, does not mean that the rabbis were able to stop non-Jews from practicing Jewish rituals or participating in synagogal gatherings. As Seth Schwartz and Hayim Lapin have shown, the rabbinization of the Jewish world was slow, and may not even have been fully completed until the Middle Ages, if ever (see Schwartz 2001; Lapin 2012). Moreover, numerous cases of Judaizing Christians or non-Jews more generally, even up to modern times, show that the phenomenon is an enduring one.

5 Conclusion

The literary and epigraphic sources examined in this paper pose numerous problems of interpretation. However, the cumulative evidence nevertheless shows that non-Jewish individuals did in fact adopt Jewish beliefs, customs and rituals without undergoing conversion, strictly speaking. What is most prominent is the observance of the Sabbath, the practice of fasting (either on the Sabbath or at certain festivals like the Day of Atonement), giving up certain foods such as pork (these practices are mentioned mainly in literary sources), participation in synagogal gatherings, prayer, and even the study of sacred texts (in the case of the *dekania* of Aphrodisias). Judaizers did sometimes send financial contributions to Jewish communities or the Jerusalem temple (before 70 CE), but such gifts could also be sent by pious or benevolent non-Jews who did not engage in Judaizing practices; therefore this behavior is not really helpful to identify Judaizers. The latter were not necessarily connected to a Jewish community, but there are hints that some were, even if we do not know the exact nature of the relations between these Judaizers and the Jewish communities, and even though these relations probably varied

greatly from place to place and over time. Whereas some inscriptions, such as those from Pantikapaion and Aphrodisias, testify to such a connection, rabbinic writings, which allude only marginally to the existence of Judaizers, tend to forbid non-Jews from practicing specifically Jewish rituals and customs, while encouraging them to adopt Jewish monotheistic beliefs and to give up idolatry. In contrast with the writings of Philo and Josephus and epigraphic testimony, rabbinic literature develops a normative discourse on Jewish religious practices that tends to control, exclude and establish boundaries between those who partake in the Sinaitic covenant and those who do not.

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Douglas Boin

Emperor Julian, an appropriated word, and a different view of 4th-century “lived religion”

Abstract: That the Greek word “Hellenismos” was used in antiquity to signify the broad concept of a “pagan religion” has long been an accepted notion in studies of the 4th-century Roman Empire despite the fact that the term was not value neutral. A word initially designed to wound, it had been coined during the tense time of the Maccabean period, where it was deployed by Jews to smear the identity of Jewish friends and neighbors for “acting Greek” and, six hundred years later, was similarly used by Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean, who used it to denigrate their own fellow believers for what they deemed to be an excessive accommodation to Roman ways. That situation changed during the mid-4th century when the Emperor Julian – raised a Christian but vilified by churchmen as an “apostate” – described his beliefs with the word “Hellenismos” in a letter sent to a pagan priest. Although it has been suggested that this document was forged, based on Julian’s puzzling use of the term, this chapter argues for the letter’s authenticity. I propose that Julian appropriated a known slur in order to transform it into a positive idea and suggest that it was Julian’s effort to embrace a Christian faith grounded in pluralistic Greek and Roman values that ultimately earned him his infamous sobriquet.

1 Introduction

On or around February 19, 362, the stone architrave of a building was hoisted into place near the Roman city of Bostra.¹ Today, walled above a doorway in the nearby

¹ I would like to thank the volume’s editors, the organizers of the conference in Eisenach, Germany, for their invitation in April 2017, their generous support and, above all, for their encouragement in my research. My thanks, as well, to all the participants for such productive conversations before, during, and after the sessions. I also need to express my gratitude to my graduate research assistant, Joel Cerimele, at Saint Louis University for helping with bibliographic matters and editing. Finally, although a full re-evaluation of Julian’s reign would take an entire book, I believe that a succinct, targeted study of a specific topic can still be helpful for pointing out potential new directions; for that reason, the bibliography here is concise but by no means exhaustive.

Syrian village of Umm Ir-Rammân, it measures slightly more than one meter long, some forty inches, and it commemorates in five short lines, carved in Greek, the performance of sacrifices and the renovation of a local temple. Many citizens in Bostra, in the province of Roman Arabia (modern Syria), were perhaps justly impressed and grateful for these expensive gifts. The man under whose authority the project took place was credited in the inscription's opening lines; he was Rome's *imperator* and newly proclaimed Augustus, Flavius Claudius Julianus, Emperor Julian (Conti 2004, 59: VII.1.1 Arabia, no. 1).² Julian's policy of supporting the life of the empire's shrines, temples, and sanctuaries of traditional Mediterranean worship would earn him few Christian admirers.

Temples and sanctuaries had lived many lives by the time the Roman Empire reached Julian's day in the mid-4th century CE. For centuries, going back to the Republic, town people had seen sacred buildings erected; many had also watched them fall into disrepair. Later generations watched them be rebuilt. The people of the empire had seen this cycle of renewal, renovation, and revival many times before. Yet for some historians, the actions which the Emperor Julian took during his short, three-year reign, such as the decision to rebuild in Bostra, are still shocking enough to deserve extra scrutiny. Coming almost a generation after the Edict of Milan, a momentous decision that brought Christians out of the legal shadows, Julian's support for the old traditions of Rome has seemed, to some ancient and modern commentators alike, like a vain attempt at "revival" in the face of Christianity's increasing social successes.³ Even in antiquity, judgment could be harsh. The fact that Julian had been raised a Christian gave rise to claims by some followers of Jesus that the emperor had "apostatized", or renounced, his faith.⁴

Julian's own words have not helped his cause (Rosen 2006; Goldsworthy 2003, 143). The emperor's archives, one of the most extensive literary treasure chests to survive from Rome's imperial palace, shed light on a highly-educated man from a wealthy political family, whose far-reaching yet complicated political, diplomatic, cultural, and military decisions provide a fascinating look at

² The stone measures 31 x 103 cm and the full text, including the local dating formula in line five, is translated from Conti's publication as follows: "In the reign of Flavius Claudius Julianus, *imperator* Augustus, sacrifices were renewed and the temple renovated and hallowed in the 5th day of Dystrus in the (local year) 256 [19 February 362 CE] (*Epi krateseos Fl[avio] Kl [audiou] Ioulianou | autokratoros Augoustou | anithe ta iera kai anoikodo|methe kai apherothe o na/los, en et(ei)sns, Dus[t]rou e.*)".

³ Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* 22.5.2 (*restituere*). For evaluations of Julian's reign along these lines, Watts 2015, 109–126, with 123–124 ("revival"); see also Bowersock 1978. For another presentation, Nesselrath 2013.

⁴ Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.1 ("apostate"). For context, see Elm 2012, 336.

how early Christianity affected the upper echelons of 4th-century society. Whereas much “patristic” literature can be looked at with an eye towards the history of asceticism, evangelism, or homiletics, the emperor, raised in a Christian house, gestures towards a world of religious pluralism in flux and of Christians themselves locked in social debates about their faith. In one speech, assessing the widespread cultural importance of Helios, the emperor boldly claimed he was a “follower”, or perhaps supporter, of the god.⁵ In another text, written in response to followers of Jesus who read the Genesis story and assumed its literal truth, he was ruthlessly savage, mocking their inability to specify in what language the serpent spoke to Adam and Eve.⁶ And in a third document – a letter, written to a priest of Asia Minor in perhaps June of 362 – he articulated a political vision that, on its surface, seemed to relish the idea of excluding Christians from the imperial community. Citizens who did not find a way to support the civic cults, the emperor explained, were to be counted among the “atheists”.⁷

In that letter, the emperor discussed his ideology using a singularly fascinating word, *Hellenismos*, a concept which scholars have almost unanimously translated with the stately English noun “Hellenism”.⁸ I will offer a different translation for this term in a moment; but before I do, I should say that that one English word has become something of a lasting brand of Julian’s vision for the mid-4th-century empire. And yet, amid the dizzying number and wide geographic range of temple, statue, and sanctuary dedications that date to the emperor’s rule, like the one commemorated at Bostra in February 362, the Greek word appears nowhere in the epigraphic record. If Julian had hoped to articulate and enforce an empire-wide set of traditional worship practices to counter Christianity’s rise, why is his powerful branding statement absent from the material evidence?

5 “*opados*”, Julian, *Or.* 4 in Wright 1913, 352. It is worth keeping in mind that Helios appears in many Jewish synagogue mosaics which have been dated to the 4th through 6th century CE. This evidence suggests that a non-Christian community could speak the visual language of the sun god while at the same time not betraying their monotheistic beliefs.

6 Julian, *Contr. Gal.* in Wright 1923, 323, discussed in Greenblatt 2017, 75.

7 Julian, *ep.* 22 in Wright 1923, 69. I have kept this discussion of Julian’s writing succinct since it is background to my study, not the focus. For an alternative numbering of the letters, see Bidez 2004. Some believe this letter is a forgery because of its sketchy transmission history; see Rosen 2006, 301. I address this point below and in another forthcoming article, also referenced below.

8 “*Hellenismos*”, Julian, *ep.* 22 in Wright 1923, 66–67.

2 Overview of the argument

Following the theme of the Eisenach conference, this chapter explores one aspect of “lived religion” in antiquity, focusing on the life of emperor Julian in the mid-4th century CE. In it, I argue that Julian’s concept of *Hellenismos* is missing from the material record because, in Christian contexts of Julian’s day, it did not yet carry the broad, sweeping, positive connotations which Julian hoped to associate with it. The problem lay in the fact that Julian died less than a year after writing this letter at a time when the word he used was still largely understood to be a pejorative one by many 4th-century Christians.

Among both Jewish and Christian audiences, the term had never exactly been value neutral, not even at its inception. As a word carefully designed to wound, it had been coined during the tense time of the Maccabean period, where it was deployed by Jews to smear the identity of Jewish friends and neighbors for “acting Greek” (Schwartz 2001, 32–35). Because of that Second Temple context, I have proposed that *Hellenismos* was a word whose faith-based, insider nuances had a fairly limited reach even in subsequent Christian conversations, notwithstanding the word’s eventual ability to declare a general affinity for Greek culture in conversations during the 2nd-century Roman Empire onward. Followers of Jesus who savaged their own peers for “acting too Greek” – the word is more effectively translated as a gerund, or verbal noun – were the sad inheritors of this strident debate from five centuries before, when the Second Temple still stood (Boin 2014).

Julian’s radical desire to encourage 4th-century Christians to “act Greek” by embracing, indeed, appropriating this once hurtful word, was not, then, an attempt to voice to the empire’s sixty million inhabitants a coherent vision that could stand in opposition to Christianity.⁹ A word of more limited reach, something akin to jargon used during in-house Christian conversations among Ignatius of Antioch, Eusebius, Athanasius and others – it was an epithet that would come to have a certain fascination for Julian when he decided to clean off its harmful connotations and embrace it. Indeed, understanding Julian’s mid-4th century social setting is a crucial first step in appreciating the emperor’s decision to transpose its meaning. Julian’s wish to switch the code in this ferocious Christian conversation, wresting a term of disparagement away from

⁹ Scholars who would characterize Julian’s vision as a forceful, deliberate response to the successes of the Christian church, to my mind, miss the nuance in Julian’s language here; for an example of this approach, which for me remains too mired in dichotomous reconstructions of the 4th century, see Greenwood 2017, 20–21 (“a deliberate counter to Christianity”; a “state-supported paganism” to match Constantine’s “state-supported Christianity”, 21).

hard-liners, may have been an attempt to turn the tables in the debate about who had the power to define what it meant to be a “real Christian” and who would be slandered for having purportedly crossed non-negotiable cultural divides.

A motley group even during Julian’s time, as is well illustrated by the extent of their theological divisions, Christians of the mid-4th century were certainly divided socially and politically. They were engaged in debates about whether to participate in Rome’s continuing civic sacrifices, whether to attend the arena and the games where the gods were honored, and even whether it was necessary to worship with other Christians in public or at home. All of these complicated social components of a Christian identity, in the aftermath of Constantine’s reign, had continued to feed the mid-4th-century conversation about who among the group deserved to be called a “Christian” (Boin 2015, 89–128). Social divisions like these, in addition to ongoing theological ones, would certainly shed light on what one contemporary historian wrote about Julian’s own lived reality: “Experience had taught him that no wild beasts are such dangerous enemies to a man as Christians are to one another.”¹⁰

This chapter develops a snapshot of social, cultural, and political disagreement among Rome’s 4th-century Christians in two ways. First, it argues that emperor Julian’s rule marked a transformational shift in Roman politics because, for the first time, a man who had been raised a Christian was reclaiming the disparaging epithet of “*Hellenismos*,” turning it against his detractors, and asserting it as a positive model for Christian engagement with Roman culture. Second, it explores how the “presence of an absence” in the material record can, paradoxically, help support this same historical reconstruction.

In the end, this chapter suggests that historical analysis built on Julian’s supposed “apostasy” or even on his alleged “hatred for Christians” are too imprecise, or theologically biased, to be useful. Julian – an emperor born in a Christian household, a lector in the church, and conversant in long-running social identity disputes within Christianity – may more profitably be studied for the way his own “lived religion” found innovative ways to seek out and promote a different kind of Christian identity in the decades after the Edict of Milan.¹¹ These may have been insider debates among Jesus’ followers, but they were not inconsequential. At their essence were large, pressing questions about the health of the empire’s pluralistic society. Christians had been full participants in that pluralistic endeavor from the first generation of the Jesus movement, but the pressing political conversation after Constantine was whether

¹⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus 22.5.1 (trans. by W. Hamilton [London: Penguin Books, 1986] 239).

¹¹ Socrates, *Church History* 3.1 (lector at Nicomedia).

Christians would continue to support Rome's long-established ideals of toleration or if factions of Christians would insist on abandoning it. I would like to begin my discussion with what the material culture evidence can tell us.

3 Statement of the problem: the absence of evidence from material culture

This chapter opened with the vignette of the building being erected in Roman Bostra because it helps visualize how traditional religion was lived in the mid-4th century. It also helps us eavesdrop on a wider conversation about the language of contemporary religious places and practices, such as the ideas of “shrines”, “temples”, even “renovation”. For inscriptions, as Antony Eastman has described it, communicate, not only in what they say, but in the decisions that may have led to “choices of script, scale, location, spatial organization, letter style, clarity and legibility”; these, too, are aspects that shaped their message.¹² Eastman's observations are worth keeping in mind as we consider inscriptions from Julian's age which relate to worship and belief.

During Julian's short reign, dedications in Maktar in modern Tunisia and Timgad in modern Algeria were erected by imperial cult priests, the *flamines perpetui* to restore local buildings.¹³ In Asia Minor, Julian was declared the “greatest and most divine emperor”¹⁴ and was praised for overseeing a reign which was expressive of the “highest love for his fellow human beings.”¹⁵ He was regaled with the language of Rome's imperial cult, with dedications to the gods made “on behalf of his well-being.”¹⁶ In Thessaloniki, the emperor himself was called *theophilestatos*, a man who could claim to be “the most loved by the gods”; the superlative is an unquestioned rarity in the epigraphic record.¹⁷ And, at many road markers in Roman Syria, such as three from Jerash in

¹² Eastman 2015, 1–11, with the quotation from page 1; also good on these points is Cooley 2012, 220–228.

¹³ “fl(amen) p(er)p(etuus)”, line 7, Byzacena (Maktar, Tunisia) no. 153 at Conti 2004, 104; “fl(amine) p(erpetuo)”, line 7, Africa (Timgad, Algeria) no. 174–175 at Conti 2004, 175–176.

¹⁴ “*ton megiston kai theiotaton Autokratora Augouston*”, lines 7–8, Asia Minor no. 34 at Conti 2004, 83, from Iasos, with extensive bibliography.

¹⁵ “*philanthrootaton basilea*”, lines 3–4, Asia Minor, no. 34 at Conti 2004, 84.

¹⁶ “pro salute imp(eratoris) . . .”, line 2, North Africa, no. 132 at Conti 2004, 150. The inscription was found at Bou Arada, Tunisia, and is currently in the archaeological museum there.

¹⁷ “*theophilestatou . . . Claudio Iouliano*”, lines 1–8, Macedonia, no. 54 at Conti 2004, 96. The inscription is Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki inv. 7359.

modern Jordan, Julian was invoked in the context of the greatness of “one god”, a phrase which, in Nicole Belayche’s view, says very little about the supposed spread of monotheism and much more about the cultural practice of how to acclaim the emperor’s unique stature.¹⁸

The clearest indication that any inscription comes to giving a name to this diverse “religious system” of the ancient world comes from a text dedicated in North Africa. In it, Julian is praised for his contributions to the world of “Roman worship”, “Ro[manae] religion[is]”.¹⁹ This inscription comes the closest of any surviving piece of material culture in trying to fix a definitive label on the cultural world of worship and belief that dominated in the ancient Roman Mediterranean. Even if we choose not to accept the editor’s restoration – note his preference for the genitive singular, *religionis*, instead of the plural – the choice of the word, *religio*, was hardly a radical or unorthodox one. The Latin concept of *religio*, or a “socially-acceptable form of worship”, was the same flexible, albeit contested ideal that had kept Rome’s social fabric together for centuries, even in the heart of the constitutional reforms enacted by Constantine and Licinius, in 313 (Kahlos 2007a; 2007b, 93–112; Beard, North and Price 1998, 211–44).

To sum up, the epigraphic evidence is clear. Neither Julian nor any local figure throughout the empire ever made reference to the emperor’s alleged program of *Hellenismos* in monuments or dedications set up at temples, shrines, or sanctuaries anywhere during Julian’s reign. So how should historians account for this silence (in the material record) when Julian’s own voice (in the textual record) seems adamant that *Hellenismos* was his passionate concern? One scholar has gone as far as now proposing that Julian’s letter must be a forgery (Van Nuffelen 2002, 138–139). In the remainder of this chapter, however, I would like to move this conversation in a different direction.

4 A discussion of method: material culture and the presence of an absence

What does it mean for something to be missing from the material record? One way of understanding of how material culture works would deduce that, because the word *Hellenismos* does not appear in the Greek epigraphic record of

¹⁸ “*Eis theos*”, line 1, Oriens, no. 3, 7, and 8, at Conti 2004, 60; see also Belayche 2010, 164.

¹⁹ Lines 10–12, Africa, Numidia (El Madher, Algeria), no. 167 at Conti 2004, 170–171, with bibliography.

Julian's day, the concept must have been far less socially, culturally, or historically important at the time than historians have made it out to be. I do not ascribe to this seemingly straight-forward, deductive way of interpretation. Instead, I follow the lead of theorists like Scott Hutson and Ian Hodder who have assembled a more carefully calibrated lens with which to examine these kinds of questions. For them, it is "the 'presence' of an absence" here which calls out to be the "focus of research" (Hodder and Hutson 2003, 175).

Although safe, traditional, and conservative methodologies would not try to make judgments from the "absence" of evidence, I believe Hodder and Hutson are correct in drawing a distinction between an argument *from* silence and an argument *about* silence. Silences matter, and in their writing Hodder and Hutson provide a useful illustration by asking readers to imagine studying an ancient society whose people are famous, archaeologically and art historically, for painting their ceramics. A historian of this hypothetical culture could ask research questions that are based around the obvious issue, like "why pots are decorated," but a subtler level of analysis might also want to explore broader patterns in the material record, asking, for example, "why only pots are decorated." As the two writers explain:

This is . . . a matter of identifying the particular framework within which action has meaning. If pots are the only type of container decorated in one cultural context, this is of relevance in interpreting the meaning of the decoration. . . Archaeologists need, then, to be alive to difference and absence. (Hodder and Hutson 2003, 175–176)

Following Hutson and Hodder's lead, in my work, specifically, I have explored how these theories and methods can be applied to questions about early Christian material culture in the ancient Mediterranean (Boin 2013, 41–43).²⁰ One guiding principle for me has been to explore how social stigma can explain, historically, those key moments in Roman history when we should expect to see Christians in the material record but do not.

There is, for example, no explicitly Christian art that can be dated to the 1st or 2nd century CE, and it takes nearly two centuries from Jesus' execution by the Roman government for the remains of a Christian worship space (what would come to be called a "church") to appear in the archaeological record, at Dura Europos. Instead of falling back on theological crutches to explain the peculiarities of this evidence – a supposed aversion to "graven images" or pious presumptions about the poor or humble origins of Jesus' followers – my work

²⁰ See also Boin 2015, 40–43, on the irrelevance of the Second Commandment and on wealthy members of the early movement.

has tried to explain these silences by pointing to social factors. Foremost among them has been the issue of how individuals “managed” the stigma that was associated with their identity as one of Jesus’ followers, both before and after the Edict of Milan (Goffman 1963). Although the nature of stigma could and often did change depending on social circumstances and the unique nature of social, political, and cultural developments across the centuries, this work, in general, has helped to shift the focus away from instances of overt social conflict, such as that promoted by the martyr stories, towards the reconstruction of a social world where Jesus’ followers made their place for themselves through passing, covering, and other creative, moderate ways, balancing their Roman identities with their Christian commitments.

What is important to conclude here is that the absence of *Hellenismos* from the epigraphic record – in the narrow window from 361–363 CE – does not have to be treated as a problem for understanding the context of Julian’s letter to Arsacius. Perhaps the decision by a Greek or Roman priest or local benefactor *not* to use the word might have been an act of negotiation to build a more inclusive public space, a realm of open-ended performance where rigid identity labels were shunned in favor of specific demonstrations of religious behavior. If so, many Christians may have responded comfortably to the invitation, creatively finding ways to live alongside this non-Christian culture. We also cannot rule out that many worshipers of traditional Greek and Roman religions, being unfamiliar with the long history of the word in Jewish and Christian circles, chose not to use the term *Hellenismos* because they simply did not understand the sectarian way that Julian was using it. Consequently, there would have been no reason to include the word on their dedications of a new statue or a restored temple, especially if they wanted to avoid wading into the details of an intra-Christian debate. In short, many things can be left out of the historical record and for many reasons, but silence can be meaningful, too.

5 From stigma and silence to an act of appropriation and transposition

The picture from Julian’s perspective looks slightly different. The emperor’s decision to appropriate the originally-negative idea expressed by *Hellenismos*, or “acting Greek,” as a positive model for 4th-century Christian behavior had a long precedent. The process by which Christians had negotiated their place in the Roman Empire began with their decision to appropriate the derogatory word “Christian” itself, a word that Jesus’ followers embraced from their detractors in

the late 1st or 2nd century (Treblico 2012, 3–4, 272–297), and the process by which Julian later came to embrace the concept of *Hellenismos* would have sat perfectly within the long, complicated story of Christian identity management. That is the topic I will explore in this last section. My argument is that it was the silence of many moderate Christian voices throughout Rome’s history that ultimately inspired Julian to articulate his vision for the 4th century empire.

As the literary legacy of the word *Hellenismos* suggests, throughout the 2nd through 4th centuries CE, many of Jesus’ followers did want to be socially integrated into the empire, not stand apart from it (Boin 2014). And some perhaps did want to ensure, like Julian, that Christians would hold one place among many in Rome’s diverse world. In antiquity, however, very few leaders, if any, ever rose to champion these people’s voices – just the opposite, in fact. For two centuries, the Christian men and women who held these views were pilloried by their more zealous peers for “acting too Greek.” Eusebius stands at the front of this group for his passionate attempt to warn followers of Jesus, in the early 4th century, that “being openly Christian” (*Christianismos*) was not about “acting like a Greek (*Hellenismos*).”²¹ At the 4th century’s end, this internal Christian conversation was ongoing, with bishop John Chrysostom cautioning his congregation not to fall into the same cultural snares: of going to banquets, races, games, or temples – which he associated with acting “like a Greek.”²²

It is the mounting weight of this stigma, brought to bear in the years after the Edict of Milan – when everyone could act Christian however they wished – which caused a crisis for many 4th-century Christians and which led to Julian’s own writing. As the charge of “acting Greek” picked up during this time, foisted by Eusebius, in particular, Julian took the derogatory word and transformed it in his plan for greater social integration amongst the empire’s Christians:

My vision that Christians be able to ‘act Greek’ without fear of being mocked (*Hellenismos*) is not yet having the success I wish, and it is the fault of those who profess it. For the matter of the gods is on a splendid and magnificent scale, surpassing every prayer and every hope.²³

Although it may seem stretched, support for this interpretation could come from the fact that the emperor never named his Christian political opponents as

²¹ Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 1.21; also reiterated at Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.5.12.

²² A good example is John Chrysostom, *Catechesis* 6.15–16; Sandwell 2007, 66–75, discusses the meaning of “Hellene” within a positive cultural frame of reference. I have suggested (Boin 2014) that Chrysostom is using it with the negative, in-group Maccabean intent.

²³ Julian, *ep.* 22 in Wright 1923, 66–67, with my elaboration.

“Christians”. In this letter, specifically, he lumps them together as “atheists” and “impious Galileans”.²⁴ The subtlety of Julian’s language would suggest that what was at stake in this debate was the reward of being able to claim the name “Christian” without needing to justify it to the self-appointed guardians of group identity.²⁵ Further support for this reading may come from the fact that the emperor is appealing to a community whom he calls “*Hellenists*”, a term that had a long, inside-group history in Christian circles, where the same word was used to differentiate Greek-speaking Jews from “Hebrews” during the New Testament period (*Acts* 6.1). In the same way that both words described members of the Jewish community, “*Hellenists*” and “Hebrews”, Julian’s recommendation – “Teach the *Hellenists* to contribute to public service” – may be signaling the emperor’s vision for a broad, specifically-Christian form of public engagement that embraces the value of “acting Greek without fear of being mocked.”²⁶

In a contribution to a volume on rhetoric and religious identity in Late Antiquity, I explore some of the ways that linguistic reclamation can be beneficial for the people who engage in that act.²⁷ Since I had the fortune of sharing some of that research with the conference participants in Eisenach, I would like to end this contribution by summarizing some of it here – and then expanding upon it. “A historian’s job,” I have written, “is not to take sides in internal identity disputes like the ones . . . described in the Maccabean period or the social landscape of 4th-century Rome” (Boin (forthcoming)). When sources are characterized by examples of in-group bickering, it is incumbent upon historians to pay careful attention to those intra-group dynamics. Studying the process of linguistic reclamation can be one way to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of Rome’s 4th-century social and cultural history.

Farah Godrej, in her political science research, has written about reclamation as “a tool for disarming the power of a dominant group to control one’s own and others’ views of oneself, to categorize oneself or one’s group in a totalizing way” (Godrej 2011, 112). For Godrej, the issue of appropriation goes to the essence of owning “one’s life narrative,” a process which is “only meaningful if the world responds positively to this self-reconstruction, instead of denying or

²⁴ “*dussebeis Galilaiou*”, Julian, *ep.* 22 in Wright 1923, 70–71.

²⁵ For example, *pace* Kaldellis, who suggests “Galileans” is “what the Apostate called Christians to belittle them” (Kaldellis 2008, 144).

²⁶ Julian, *ep.* 22 in Wright 1923, 70–71, with my translation of *Hellenists* for Wright’s “those of the Hellenic faith” (*Hellenistas*).

²⁷ This summary and other examples are taken from Boin (forthcoming), which also offers a deeper social-historical look at the details of Julian’s reign and its historiography.

ignoring the stories one chooses to tell” (Godrej 2011, 118–119). Other researchers, such as linguist Arthur Spears in his work on U.S. history, have written poignantly about how African-Americans have “defanged” the hurtful n-word to reclaim their own stories, as well (Spears 1998, 241).

What these instances of reclamation, appropriation, and transposition illustrate is a phenomenon that Judith Butler has also written about in her work: the power of language to hurt and the power of language to undo that same injury (Butler 1997, 1). In Butler’s analysis, the act of taking language out of its original context and turning it into something else is what gives rise to “the basis of an ironic hopefulness that the conventional relationship between word and wound might become tenuous and even broken over time” (Butler 1997, 100). “Ironic hopefulness” might strike readers as too-modern a concept to apply to the ancients, but I do not think it is beyond the imagination to think that many 4th-century Christians might have looked to Julian for something very much like it during his short reign. It might even more accurately be called, in simple terms, “hope”. And it may have been the hope that what we would call their Christianity would not be consumed by the far-different political vision of their peers.

From Paul to Julian, from the 1st century to the 4th, there is an unbroken chain of evidence that suggests Jesus’ followers could and did find innovative ways to incorporate their belief in Jesus into Rome’s pluralistic society. At every turn in Rome’s history, however, it was that group which was written out of the history of the church. At Corinth, Jesus’ followers attended sacrifices and were chastised for it. In North Africa, Christian serving the army who paid their respect to the emperor’s family were called out for their behavior by men like Tertullian. In Syria, home renovators in Dura Europos remodeled a domestic residence, “making noise” at a time when other Christians felt the pressure of the local authorities (Boin 2015, 15–56); in short, the story of Christianity is replete with examples of Jesus’ followers who *worked within* the social structures of the empire to gain political status for their group. Certainly the long history of their highly personal decisions – finding ways to be both Roman and Christian at the same time – might even suggest that Christians accused of “acting too Greek” may have been the silent majority of their own group.

That, I think, is ultimately what must have given Julian’s attempt at reclamation such power. The emperor, as a Christian, was taking sides against those Christians of his day who rejected long-held Roman values, like pluralism and toleration, in their attempt to define being “Christian” in as narrow a way as possible. In this debate, Julian lost. This reconstruction of 4th-century society, with Christians throughout the empire fighting to define their religious history at the same that some Christians were growing increasingly uncompromising in

their beliefs, nevertheless, puts the changes wrought on the empire during the late 4th and early 5th century in a much sharper focus. And as a historian, I believe Julian and his appropriation of the word *Hellenismos* can play a part in documenting that crucial conversation.

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Katharina Bracht

The appropriation of the book of *Jonah* in 4th century Christianity by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Jerome of Stridon

Abstract: The book of *Jonah* (c. 430–330 BCE) is one of the Old Testament books that was received in its Septuagint version in Early Christianity. This paper deals with the two earliest extant commentaries on the book of *Jonah*: the Greek commentary by Theodore of Mopsuestia (written in the last quarter of the 4th century) and the Latin commentary by Jerome (396 CE). Written independently at about the same time, both comment verse-by-verse on the whole book of *Jonah*. We will investigate and compare the two authors' communicative strategies within a triangle of pretext, readership, and commentary, i.e. which techniques they employ in order to appropriate the c. 800 year old, canonical book of *Jonah* to its contemporary readers, how they interpret their current situation by means of reception of the ancient text, which norms and values they derive from it, and to what extent they attribute to it a formative effect concerning Christian identity in their own times.

1 Introduction

The book of *Jonah* (c. 430–330 BCE) is one of the books of the Hebrew Bible that was received in its Septuagint version in Early Christianity, though in quite different aspects: *Matthew* 12:39–41 (c. 80 CE) offers a Christological interpretation of Jonah's three-day stay in the belly of the fish, whereas the fresco paintings and sarcophagus reliefs in the Roman catacombs (3rd century CE) apply Jonah's rest under the plant to the eschatological rest of the individual Christian.¹ These divergent traditions of *Jonah*-reception form the background of the two earliest extant commentaries on the book of *Jonah*: the Greek commentary by Theodore of Mopsuestia – the most important exegete of the School of Antioch (written in the last quarter of the 4th century) – and the Latin commentary by Jerome (396 CE). Written independently at the end of the 4th century CE, both comment verse-by-verse on the whole book of *Jonah*.

¹ For an overview, see Dresken-Weiland 2010, 96–118; Paul 1970.

Both traditionally are titled *Commentarius in Ionam prophetam* (abbreviated *Ion.*). This paper will investigate and compare the two authors' communicative strategies within a triangle of pretext, readership, and commentary: which techniques do they employ in order to appropriate the c. 800 year old, canonical book of *Jonah* to their contemporary readers;² how do they interpret their current situation by means of the reception of the ancient text; which norms and values do they derive from it, and to what extent do they attribute to it a formative effect concerning Christian identity in their own times?

2 The biblical pretext: the book of *Jonah*

The book of *Jonah* is included within the Hebrew Bible in the so-called *Book of the Twelve Prophets*. In the Hebrew canon, it occupies the fifth position in between the prophets Obadiah and Micah. Contrary to the other eleven books of the 'Minor Prophets,' it preserves no prophetic word, but rather belongs to the genre of narrative.³ YHWH calls Jonah to announce his judgment against the city of Nineveh. However, Jonah does not want to carry out God's mission, preferring to flee on a ship to Tarshish. After Jonah flees God's mission, a life-threatening storm arises, the lot cast by the sailors determines his guilt, and the sailors throw him into the sea (*Jonah* 1). YHWH appoints a great fish to swallow him, and it is in that fish's belly where Jonah remains for three days and three nights. During this period of time, Jonah thanks God for his salvation (*Jonah* 2). After the fish has vomited him back up on land, God commissions Jonah a second time to proclaim his judgment against Nineveh, which will be executed within forty days. This time Jonah obeys. From his brief pronouncement of judgment, people, cattle, and king repent of their evil. Because of their repentance, God decides not to execute the impending disaster he had planned for the city (*Jonah* 3). When Jonah becomes angry with God on account of his kindness, God appoints a castor-oil plant to grow up near Jonah's booth in order to shade him from the sun; however, a worm and the scorching sun cause the castor-oil plant to wither the next day. Through the destruction of the plant, God shows Jonah

² Jörg Rüpke points out the benefits of "searching for the readers" for finding out more about lived ancient religion, see Rüpke 2015, 95–98.

³ For a short, yet thorough general introduction on the Old Testament book of *Jonah*, see Zenger 2016, 664–671.

that just as he mourns the loss of the castor-oil plant that he did not create, so also God would mourn if he had to destroy the great city of Nineveh with more than 120,000 inhabitants (*Jonah* 4).

The Hebrew book of *Jonah* was written during the Second Temple period, possibly around 430–330 BCE.⁴ For the early Christians, however, *Jonah* was not known in the original Hebrew edition but in the Greek Septuagint translation (LXX), which was translated together with the entire *Book of the Twelve Prophets* most likely in Egypt – possibly in Alexandria – during the 2nd–1st century BCE, and must have been present, at the latest, in the first half of the 1st century BCE (see Schart 2011, 2282–2283). Within the LXX, the book of *Jonah* was moved to a new place within the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* and it resides in the immediate neighborhood of the book of *Nahum*, which itself is about the city of Nineveh.⁵ The translator strives to produce an accurate but understandable translation. In addition to some minor variants, there are a few significant changes in *Jonah*^{LXX} when compared to *Jonah*^{Hebr}: *Jonah*^{LXX} 2:1f. 11 replaces the fish by a sea monster (*kétos*). In *Jonah*^{Hebr} 1:9, *Jonah* calls himself ‘a Hebrew’ (*‘bry*; cf. *Jonah*^{MT} *‘ibry*); in *Jonah*^{LXX}, however, he calls himself ‘a servant of the Lord’ (*dúlos kyríu*).⁶ According to *Jonah*^{Hebr} 3:4, *Jonah*’s proclamation of judgment against Nineveh will not take place for another forty days. This period of time, however, is shortened to only three days within *Jonah*^{LXX} 3:4.⁷ Instead of a castor-oil plant (*Jonah*^{Hebr} 4:6 *qyqywn*; cf. *Jonah*^{MT} *qiyqāyōn*), it is a type of gourd (*kolokýnthē*) in *Jonah*^{LXX} 4:6. The translator also creates a new *Leitwort* network by translating the interior of the ship (*Jonah*^{LXX} 1:5), the sea monster (2:1), and Hades (2:3) with the same word, *koilía* (see Heckel 2011, 2395).⁸ The following remarks will show the significance of the different details of the Hebrew or Greek pretexts for the later reception of the book of *Jonah*.

⁴ Golka 2001, 569. See Zenger 2016, 669, who assumes that it was written in the 2nd half of the 4th century or in the beginning of the 3rd century BCE.

⁵ Thus, within the Hebrew canon *Jonah* is in the fifth position – between *Obadiah* and *Micah* – in the *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, but it is in the sixth position – before *Nahum* – within the LXX canon.

⁶ This change, however, occurs because of an error in reading the Hebrew text: the translator read the consonants of the Hebrew text *‘bry* as *‘bdy* and understood it as an abbreviation for *‘bdy yhw*. See Heckel 2011, 2399.

⁷ According to Heckel 2011, 2402, a Christian interpolation in the LXX cannot be excluded.

⁸ Heckel 2011, 2395.

3 A metatext: Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Jonah* (c. 375–400 CE)

3.1 Introductory questions: author and writing

Theodore was born around 350 CE in Antioch of Asia Minor. He initially studied there with the famous pagan rhetorician Libanius before he entered, at the age of 20 – together with his study friend, John Chrysostom – into the monastery (*askētērion*) of Diodorus (who later became the Bishop of Tarsus; see Theodoretus of Cyrus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.40.1). From Diodorus, the founder of the Antiochean exegetical school (Führer 2002, 199–200), Theodore and John Chrysostom learned to be wary of an exclusively allegorical-mystical interpretation of Scripture and also learned the method of literal-historical exegesis, which Theodore uses in his *Jonah commentary*.⁹ In 392/93, he was ordained bishop of the Cilician city of Mopsuestia and occupied this position for 36 years. In 553 CE, he was posthumously anathematized which led to the almost complete destruction of his dogmatic literature in its original Greek.¹⁰ His *Jonah commentary* is part of a larger work, the *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, which he wrote during the last quarter of the 4th century.¹¹ Theodore wrote this commentary during his time as a monk in the Antiochian monastery, and it is his only work that has been completely preserved in the Greek original (Bruns 2002). Theodore's work is the oldest, completely preserved Christian commentary on the entire book of *Jonah* (Dassmann 1998, 681).

3.2 The reader community in Antioch

The term “reader community” is to be understood in two respects: (1) Theodore writes his *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* for a concrete reader or listener about whom he provides no information (see Hill 2004, 15). I assume that he looked first to his fellow monks in the monastery in Antioch as an audience and to his school context (see Schäublin 1981, 763–764) as the commentary's *Sitz*

⁹ For an extensive treatment of Theodore's method, see Schäublin 1974, 84–155.

¹⁰ It is only thanks to the already existing Syrian translation that Theodore's dogmatic writings remain intact. See Bruns 2002, 678.

¹¹ See Duval 1973, 57, 212. Perhaps it is, as Robert C. Hill suspects, a work from his youth, which he wrote before his ordination as a priest and appointment as a bishop. See Hill 2001, 107–129; compare Hill 2004, 4: “this piece of juvenilia”; 15: “before his being ordained priest in his thirties.”

im Leben. (2) Theodore feels that he is connected with his Antiochian Christian audience or readership,¹² as is evidenced and expressed by his occasional use of the inclusive ‘we,’ to form a community that received the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* as authoritative for and written to them.¹³

Theodore presents the biblical book of *Jonah* in the LXX translation,¹⁴ the text version that possessed canonical standing as the “Bible of the first Christians.” That Theodore attaches such authority to the Greek edition of the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* is confirmed by the fact that he treated it as a closed text and reproduced it within his commentary unchanged (see Sprenger 1977:1, 72; Assmann 1995, 28–30).¹⁵ Accordingly, Theodore and his audience expected that this old text would have a normative and formative effect for their community, which is not, however, able to naturally unfold because of the “expansion of the communicative situation” (“Zerdehnung der Kommunikationssituation”, see Assmann 1995). The temporal distance – around 800 years in reference to the writing of the Hebrew book of *Jonah* and 500 years in reference to its Greek translation – between the canonical pretext and Theodore’s contemporary audience is too vast and the religious differences between the original audience of the Hebrew book of *Jonah* or the early Jewish audience of the LXX and the actual Christian audience (Theodore and his addressees) are too large.¹⁶ The need arises, therefore, to explain the canonical (closed, unchangeable) text with the help of a meta- or paratext in order to produce the normative and formative effect that is expected from it (Assmann 1995, 28).

From other sources, there are some things – not altogether too many – to be said about the situation of the Antiochian “reader community”. In the second half of the 4th century, Antioch was “a vital metropolis . . . where the cultural and economic forces of the East (as far as Persia) and the West (as far as Rome) met” (Kondoleon 2000, 4). Two generations had already passed since the so-called

12 For antiquity we have to assume hearers more often than readers, because texts used to be read out for a community of listeners, see Bracht 2014, 125–126, specifically n. 109; Rüpke 2015, 97.

13 See, for example, Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ion. prooem.* (169,14–20 Sprenger); *Ion.* 3.2 (185.19 Sprenger).

14 His biblical text is the oldest textual witness to the Lucian recession. See Sprenger 1977:1, 63.

15 However, Theodore’s pretext follows the canonical order of the Hebrew Bible (i.e. *Jonah* stands in the fifth position within the *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, before *Micah*); see also Hill 2004, 16. Despite the fact that his pretext reflects the canonical order of the Hebrew text, Theodore nevertheless references the book of *Nahum*. See *Ion. prooem.* (176,14–21 Sprenger).

16 The geographical distance between Alexandria and Antioch, about 1500 km, plays a comparatively small role in the cultural context of the surrounding Mediterranean area.

Constantinian shift and the end of Christian persecutions. Within Antioch, there existed one of the largest Jewish diaspora communities of late antiquity (see Hahn 1996, 62f.). Its influential leadership was Greek (Hahn 1996, 69–71). The contact between Jews and Christians was so good¹⁷ that a large number of Christians practiced their religion in community with the Jews of the city. John Chrysostom, in his sermons, polemically opposes what he considers as Jewish tendencies in the Christian community,¹⁸ criticizing that his parishioners were unaware of the fundamental differences between Jewish and Christian faith and unconscious of having a specific Christian identity. Thus the question of the relationship between Jews and Christians struck a chord with the Christians in Antioch at the time of Theodore's *Jonah commentary*.¹⁹

3.3 The commentary

3.3.1 Description of the text

Theodore's *Jonah commentary* consists of two parts. It begins with an exceptionally long *Prooemium*, which comprises a total of more than a third of the printed text²⁰ (a total of 21 printed pages in Sprenger's edition), followed by a cursory verse-by-verse-commentary. In this part, Theodore usually selects a

17 This information can be gleaned from the eight sermons of John Chrysostom's *Adversus Ioudaios* (PG 48, 843–942); for a treatment of these texts, see Hahn 1996, 72 n. 42.

18 John Chrysostom objects in vain to the fact that Christian parishioners attend Jewish festivals, participate in Jewish fasting practices, and some even allow themselves to be circumcised according to the Jewish ritual. See Fürst 2011:3, 298–300; Hahn 1996, 74–76, and for supporting evidence 74, n. 48.

19 The decision of the so-called apostolic council (appr. 50 CE) that Gentile converts were not obliged to practice circumcision (*Acts 15, Galatians 2*) paved the way for a parting of the ways of Judaism and Christianity. According to Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* (before 165 CE), the essential difference between Jewish and Christian believers concerned the question whether Jesus of Nazareth was to be regarded as the Messiah. For further discussion on this theme, see the overview by Lindemann 2001. The question in dispute is when the separation between Church and Synagogue should be dated: Dunn 1996, 243 assumes on the basis of his study that “by the end of the second Jewish revolt, Christian and Jew were clearly distinct and separate” (i.e. c. 130/135 CE). The Jewish scholar Daniel Boyarin, however, maintains that the borders between Judaism and Christianity were fluid for much longer and assumes that the separation of “these two complexly intertwined religions and social formations” only was completed as late as in the 4th century, see Boyarin 1999, 114. Our observations on Theodore's *Jonah commentary* presented in this paper support the dating by Boyarin.

20 Sprenger 1977:2, 169–190 *In Ionam*; 169,1–176,28 *Prooemium*.

lemma within the scope of a partial or an entire verse and offers a brief comment as a paratext. Yet, as a metatext, the comment refers so precisely to the pretext that it is clear that the lemma was chosen by Theodore himself and not added later by a redactor.²¹ However, there are a few verses which Theodore does not quote literally but rather paraphrases them. An epilogue or a concluding doxology are absent, just as they are also absent in Theodore's commentaries on the other books of the *Twelve Prophets* (see also Hill 2004, 16).

3.3.2 Strategies of appropriation

Following the expectations of ancient readers, the *Prooemium* of Theodore's *Jonah commentary* establishes a framework for understanding the comments that follow in the remainder of the work. Even with the first, extensive sentence, Theodore sets the parameters within which, in his view, the biblical book of *Jonah* should be understood, and with the first dozen words he poses the problem and the thesis he desires to undertake: "The God of both the Old and the New covenant is one" ²² The matter which is up for debate is the relationship between the Old Covenant (in which the biblical book of *Jonah* originates) and the New Covenant (in which Theodore and his contemporary "reader community" read the book of *Jonah*); the thesis is that both covenants are connected to one another by the *one* God, Lord, and Creator, who always has the goal of his plan of salvation (*oikonomía*) in view and guides his people there.²³ Set against the background of the pluralistic worldview of contemporary Antiochene society is the current question of the relationship between Jews (those who belong to the Old Covenant) and Christians (those who belong to the New Covenant) as well as the question of what relevance the book of *Jonah* as a text of the Old Covenant might have for Christians.

After addressing the relationship between the covenants, Theodore sketches a clear and precise dogmatic framework that he axiomatically presupposes: God's plan of salvation (*oikonomía*) consists of his in-advance presentation to the people of the Old and the New Covenant about the future eschatological goal that he had provided for them. On the one hand, they would thereby better recognize the magnificence of the good things they will receive in comparison (*ek*

²¹ Sprenger 1977:1, 64–66, proves that the lemma text is "firmly integrated into the comment" (66).

²² *Heís kaí ho aytós té te palaiás kaí néas diathékēs hypárchōn theós*; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Jon. prooem.* (169,8f. Sprenger; translation Hill).

²³ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Jon. prooem.* (169,10.12f.26 Sprenger).

parhathéseōs) to the present state. On the other hand, it thus becomes clear that from the beginning God both foresaw and foreshadowed the coming of Jesus Christ, which consequently meant that there is no innovation or change within God's plan of salvation.²⁴ In Christ, what God promised Abraham and David was fulfilled in a true way (Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ion. prooem.* 169,8–29 Sprenger).

In what follows, Theodore clarifies both terminology and other matters: the events (*prhágmata*) of the Old Covenant were not only beneficial to the people at that time – implying that they historically took place – but were also of a “type,” that is a typological foreshadowing of later events (the New Covenant). The former events had a certain resemblance (*tis mímēsis*) to later ones – inasmuch as they were useful in their time – and were sure and fast announcements (*tis mēnysis*) of the future events. Although similarities existed between the type and the antitype, the two events were not identical. Instead, the later events would exceed the former to the utmost extent (i.e. with an intensified meaning).²⁵

After illustrating this first axiomatic thesis with his typological interpretation of the Exodus (*Exodus* 12:22f.29) and with quotations from *First Corinthians* 10:11 and *Hebrews* 9:13f., Theodore portrays the accounts of the biblical book of *Jonah* within this interpretive framework: “What happened in the case of blessed Jonah, the Prophet, was similar” (Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ion. prooem.* 172,6f. Sprenger; translation Hill). The goal of his interpretation of the book is to present Jonah as a type of Christ (Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ion. prooem.*; 173,6–11; 174,15–18 Sprenger) and, thereby, to manufacture the book's relevance for both himself and his Christian readership. It is of central importance that Theodore's typological interpretation of scripture gains its plausibility through the historicity of the types: Only the factual similarity (*tis mimesis tōn prhagmátōn*; 172,22–23 Sprenger) of the

²⁴ With this line of reasoning, Theodore claims the proof-from-antiquity argument (“Altersbeweis”) for the Christian faith. This particular argument, which always carried with it a ring of plausibility within the ancient world, regarded antiquity as a proof of truth. See Pilhofer 1990, 7–9, as well as the entire subsequent investigation, which includes supporting proofs.

²⁵ See Goppelt 1939, 18f.: “Eine typologische Deutung dieser Objekte (sc. geschichtlicher Fakta) liegt vor, wenn sie als von Gott gesetzte, vorbildliche Darstellungen d.h. ‘Typen’ kommander, und zwar vollkommenerer und größerer Fakta aufgefasst werden. Fehlt zwischen Typ und Antityp die Steigerung, stellt also letzterer nur eine Wiederholung des ersteren dar, so kann von Fall zu Fall nur bedingt von Typologie geredet werden.” As Ostmeier 2000, 112–131, has shown, this definition does not hold true for the New Testament texts and other Greek-speaking Church Fathers; it does, however, hold true for Theodore. Goppelt also correctly highlights: “Gegenstand typologischer Deutung können nur geschichtliche Fakta, d.h. Personen, Handlungen, Ereignisse und Einrichtungen sein, Worte und Darstellungen nur insofern, als sie von solchen handeln.” See also Horbury 1988, 766–767.

type and the “antitype”, of the foreshadowing and the predicted event, makes it possible to compare both side by side and thus (*ek parhathéseōs*; 172,12 Sprenger) observe the intensification (see Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ion. prooem.*; 172,22–23 Sprenger). Accordingly, it is essential to understand the type (i.e. the historical events of the time) in order to understand the “antitype”. Theodore’s hermeneutical framework provides the reason for why he explains within his commentary “the things that happened at that time” (*tá tote gegonóta*; 176,22–28 Sprenger) and also his “attempt . . . to construct a plausible and logical course of events” (Köckert 2011, 4). He achieves this through rationalizing and psychologizing paraphrases or providing supplements to the events reproduced in the biblical text. Two further characteristics of Theodore’s interpretation of *Jonah* are intended to explain the biblical text on the literal level and to make the historicity of the narrative plausible: (1) the emphasis on divine providence and care and (2) the effort for a “godlike interpretation” that depicts God as omnipresent, omniscient, and gracious (see Köckert 2011, 4–8). Accordingly, Theodore presents an intellectual, scientific explanation of his pretext,²⁶ which – by clarifying not only the central hermeneutical questions in the *Prooemium* but also by addressing detailed questions on the course of events within the actual verse-by-verse commentary – succeeds in overcoming the “expansion of the communicative situation” for both himself and his intellectual audience or readers in the Antiochian *askētérhion*. He is thus able to both overcome the distance that separates him from his pretext and appropriate the old text for himself and his community.

As Theodore already made clear in the first lines of his commentary, his interpretive concerns – possibly due to the concurrent socio-religious situation in Antioch – lie chiefly in the relationship between the Old and the New Covenant, between Jews and Christians. Towards that aim, in the commentary’s *Prooemium* he selectively highlights the features of the *Jonah* narrative that are fruitful for this line of inquiry, and neglects other aspects that are nonetheless present within the biblical text.²⁷ The foundation for his interpretation comes at the very beginning of his exposition of the narrative: “when Jews were unbelieving and reluctant to heed his prophecies, God had him go instead to the nations.”²⁸ Though it does not appear in the biblical book of *Jonah*, Theodore claims that Jonah was motivated to

²⁶ The scientific aspect also manifests itself in individual stylistic features of the diatribe (e.g. 173.12–13 Sprenger) and in the examination of other research opinions (177.30–12 Sprenger).

²⁷ In the *Prooemium*, Theodore e.g. highlights Jonah’s appointment and flight, but does not mention Jonah’s prayer in the sea monster’s belly at all.

²⁸ *húto dé kai tá kata tón makárhion gégonen Iónán tón prhophétēn, hón Iudaíōn apeithúntōn kai prhosiesthai tás prhophēteías uk ethelóntōn, epí tá ethnē meteltheín parheskeúasen ho theós*; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ion. prooem.* (172,7–8 Sprenger; translation Hill).

go to Nineveh because he was despised in his homeland and among his own people. He further explains that Jonah's mission "to the peoples" (*epi tá ethnē*; 172.8 Sprenger), to Nineveh, was God's reaction to Israel's unbelief.

With these significant, supplementary framing details in place, Theodore meticulously carves out the structural parallels between the typologically predictive events in the Jonah narrative and the pre-announced events concerning Jesus Christ: just as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster and preached a message of repentance to the Ninevites, which they responded to with repentance, the same is also true of Jesus Christ, who spent three days and three nights in the earth (*Matthew* 12:40) and, after his resurrection, granted salvation to all peoples on account of their repentance (*sōterhian*; 172.15 Sprenger). Furthermore, just as the Jews rejected salvation through repentance in Jonah's day, so also it is now with the Jews who do not believe in Christ.²⁹ The intensification of the type with the "antitype" – from "the belly of the sea monster" (*en tēi koiliai tú kētus*) to "the heart of the earth" (*en tēi karhđiai tēs gēs*; cf. *Matthew* 12:40) and from the inhabitants of Nineveh to "all peoples" – cannot be overlooked. Theodore provides the structural parallels with a teleological meaning that is in accordance with God's divine economy, care, and providence: the events at that time occurred as typological foreshadowing in order that (*hina*; 172.12) "we" who recognize the foreshadowing *ek parhathéseōs* – analogous to the Ninevites – do not react with unbelief in Christ and his preaching of repentance.

Although the fate of unbelieving Jews does not at all appear in Theodore's pre-text, he spends significant time on the subject within the *Prooemium*. The fact that he draws this information from outside of the text and proceeds to interpret it suggests that herein lies his true interest in the book of *Jonah*. Accordingly, in a psychological way Theodore places in Jonah's heart the belief that the "Jews" or Israelites who do not repent – in contrast to Nineveh's repentant response to Jonah's message – deserve the utmost punishment; so also the Jews who remain unbelievers – in contrast to the piety of the nations, which have been affected by the proclamation of Christ – are guilty of an even greater rejection (*tēn apobolēn*) of God than those in Jonah's time (174.29–175.16 Sprenger). The way Theodore portrays Jonah's reaction to Nineveh's repentance also seems to be of significance: he feels grief and lamentation (175.17–22 Sprenger). Theodore even assumes these emotions to be Jonah's motive to flee from God: by his flight, Jonah would attempt to avoid preaching to the inhabitants of Nineveh and, thereby, break the chain of events that would lead to the punishment of the Jews (176.7–10 Sprenger).

²⁹ Theodore uses the same term (*Iudaioi*) to describe both the ancient Israelites in Jonah's time and the contemporary Jewish population of Antioch.

Theodore, on the basis of his interpretation of the biblical book of *Jonah*, determines the relationship between Jews and Christians by clearly showing that unbelieving Jews have been rejected and that salvation belongs to believing Christians. In a situation where Christians within their religious context in Antioch could not distinguish the difference between Judaism and Christianity, Theodore draws clear boundaries with his interpretation of the book of *Jonah*. Thus, he provides a formative contribution to the profile of the Christian identity of his readership. This interpretation, however, does not lead Theodore – in contrast to John Chrysostom – to a polemical or perhaps hostile tone against the Jewish population of the city. Instead, it leads him to an attitude of regret, even an attitude of pain and lament.

4 Another metatext: Jerome of Stridon, *Commentary on Jonah* (396 CE)

4.1 Introductory questions: author and writing

Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus (Jerome) was born a few years before Theodore (c. 347 CE) in Stridon, which is located in the western part of the Roman Empire near Dalmatia. He was a “wanderer between worlds” because, during the first approximately 30 years of his life (up until 374 CE), he received his education within the metropolises of the Western Empire (Rome, Trier, Aquileia). In Rome, he might have seen the representations of Jonah in the catacombs.³⁰ Afterwards, he moved east in 380 CE, where he – interrupted only by a short Roman interlude during the years 382–385 – became acquainted with Antioch and Constantinople, Palestine and Egypt. Finally, he founded a monastery in Bethlehem in 386 where he presided for almost forty years up until his death in 419/420 CE. In the 34 years he spent at the monastery, he devoted himself to asceticism and science³¹ – in this way he was similar to young Theodore of Mopsuestia.³² While in Bethlehem, he translated the book of *Jonah* from Hebrew into Latin (probably between 390 and 393)³³ and in 396 authored his *Jonah commentary* (*Commentarius in Ionam*

³⁰ Risse 2003, 11.

³¹ Jerome took his extensive library with him to Bethlehem, which included ancient authors, Christian works, Bible editions, and Bible commentaries. His library may be considered “one of the most important private collections of antiquity.” See Fürst 2011:1, 28–30, citation from 30.

³² Fürst 2002, 323–324.

³³ According to Gryson 1994, XXIX–XXX, Jerome translated the *Prophets* from the Hebrew between 390 and 405; according to Rebenich 2002, 54, the *Prophets* were translated up to 392/93,

prophetam), which belonged to a larger commentary on the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* that he wrote amid several interruptions.³⁴ According to this date and the date for Theodore's *Jonah commentary* (see above), Jerome's work was published after Theodore's. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Jerome knew of its existence (see Köckert 2011, 1 n. 3).

4.2 The reader community in Bethlehem, Aquileia, and Rome

In his *Jonah commentary*, Jerome addresses a learned readership residing in the Western Roman Empire. Like Theodore, Jerome feels that he is connected with his readership to form a community that received the biblical book of *Jonah* as authoritative for and written to them. We can see this, for example, in his use of the cohortative in his *Commentarius in Ionam prophetam. Prooemium* 2.10, with which he calls both himself and his readers – “us” – to lead a sinless life: “We understand what the Savior promised for our salvation in his passion. Let us not ‘make Jesus a liar’ (1 John 1:10). Let us be ‘pure’ (Isaiah 1:16), and separate from the filthiness of sins, so that he might offer us to God the Father as the sacrifices which he had vowed” (translation Hegedus).³⁵ This inner connection exists despite the vast spatial distance between Jerome, in the “semi-barbaric” province of

as were the *Psalter*, the *Books of Samuel and Kings*, and *Job*, taking into account that “[b]oth the relative and the absolute chronology of his translations of the books of the Old Testament are controversial.” The dating of Jerome's translation of the book of *Jonah* proposed here follows from the fact that he spent three years with other publications (Jerome, *Ion. prooem.*; 160. 1–8 Duval) and the fact that he references a reaction to his *Jonah* translation, thus indicating that Jerome made the translation before he wrote his commentary on *Jonah* (*Ion.* 4,6; 296. 132–298.143 Duval). In his tasks of translation and commentary, Jerome – as *vir trilinguis* – puts his gift for languages to use (see Fürst 2011:1, 30). The question “how well could Jerome read Hebrew” is always and continually discussed within the research. We can assume, along with Risse 2003, 37, that Jerome “had a sufficient knowledge of Hebrew.”

34 That Jerome interrupted his work on his commentary on the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* for three years and gave priority to numerous other publications (Jerome, *Ion. prooem.*; 161.1–8 Duval) shows that the *Jonah commentary* had no particular occasion but that Jerome worked on it as a part of a scientific commentary project. According to Rebenich 2002, 54, this “vast program of commentaries” was provoked by the criticism which his recourse to the *Hebrew* Old Testament (instead of the LXX) engendered.

35 Jerome of Stridon, *Ion.* 2.10; 256.381–385 Duval: *Cernimus qui in sua passione Saluator pro nostra salute promiserit; non 'faciamus mendacem' Iesum (1 John 1,10). 'Mundi' (Isaiah 1.16) simus et ab uniuersis peccatorum sordibus separati, ut nos Deo Patri offerat uictimas quas uouerat* (translation Hegedus).

Palaestina prima (see Ronnenberg 2015, 104), and his reader community in Rome and Aquileia.

This is due to the fact that, although Jerome spent the second half of his life in the East, he nevertheless continued to orient himself to the West and maintained close relations with Roman nobles, who financially supported his scientific work and provided for the dissemination of his writings, which Jerome sent to Rome for publication (see Fürst 2011:1, 30). Even the official addressee of his *Jonah commentary* resided in the West: Chromatius, the bishop of Aquileia, was known to Jerome from the time of his residence in Aquileia (367–374; see Risse 2003, 11–12). He was a professional colleague, who also published numerous sermons in the form of a verse-by-verse exegesis with a typological-allegorical interpretation (Dümler 2002, 147).

Although Jerome only mentions Chromatius by name within his *Jonah commentary*, his intended readership was broader and can be characterized somewhat more precisely: he calls his readers “educated” and “clever” (*eruditus/prudens lector*; *Jon.* 1.3b). He presupposes that his readers have been classically educated, which is evidenced by his citations of the Andromeda myth (*Jon.* 1.3b)³⁶ and Virgil (*Jon.* 1.8 quoting *Aeneis* 8.112–114), and Ovid (*Jon.* 2.2).³⁷ The use of foreign Greek words and technical terminology³⁸ also points to the level of education which he presumed his readership possessed. Concerning topics that his actual readership

³⁶ See Ronnenberg 2015, 103–106. As Ronnenberg shows, Jerome draws from Josephus, *De Bello Iudaico* 3.9.3 and from his own point of view; see Jerome, *Epistulae* 108.8.2 (CSEL 55.314).

³⁷ This passage, in which Jerome refers to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, is of particular interest to the question of readership. In it, Jerome anticipates in a diatribic manner the possible objection contemporary readers – believing or unbelieving – might have to the book of *Jonah* that it is impossible for a man to remain unharmed within the stomach of a sea monster (*in utero ceti*). Jerome points the believing *Jonah* readers to the still greater challenges to the faith such as the three youths in the furnace (*Daniel* 3), the crossing of the Red Sea (*Exodus* 14:22–29), and the deliverance of Daniel from the lions’ den (*Daniel*^{Vulg} 14:31). For the unbelieving *Jonah* readers, however, he suggests that they should read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the entire Greek and Latin history, naming specifically a few “shameful fables” that they – as he polemically writes – believe and defend on the basis of the Almighty God, whereas they would not be able to attribute the same worth to the virtuous things as well (. . . *cum turpibus credant potentiaque dei uniuersa defendant, eandem uirtutem non tribuunt et honestis*; *Jon.* 2.2; 226.74–76 Duval). The distinctive polemic of this passage demonstrates that Jerome does not address his work to the unbelieving *Jonah* reader, but only desires to give his own Christian readership arguments for similar disputes. See the analysis of Jerome’s Ovid argument in Ronnenberg 2015, 132–135, who, however, erroneously assumes “critical voices” only “from the ranks of his Christian readership.”

³⁸ See for example Jerome, *Jon.* 1.9: *hoc est perhâtês*; *Jon.* 2.4a: *iuxta anagôgên*; *Jon.* 3.6–9: *metaphorhikôs*; *Jon.* 4.6: *propter philokolôkynthôn*.

are interested in, Jerome learns of them second hand and can, therefore, only take a position some time after the fact, as is true of his dispute with a certain Canterius in Rome, who accused his translation of *Jonah* 4:6 (“Ivy”) of being sacrilegious (*Ion.* 4.6).

4.3 The commentary

4.3.1 Description of the text

Jerome’s Latin commentary on the book of *Jonah* contains a *Prooemium*, which comprises around 6% of the entire commentary, and a cursory, verse-by-verse commentary. In the verse-by-verse commentary, as a rule Jerome offers the biblical pretext as a lemma within the range of a verse, which is then followed by the actual commentary as paratext. The lemma is twofold: it consists of a Latin translation of the Hebrew text of *Jonah* as well as a Latin translation of the Greek LXX-translation that is occasionally replaced by a concise comment: “LXX: *similiter*.”³⁹ Generally, the verse-by-verse commentary, now regarded as a metatext, is also divided into two parts: First, Jerome provides an explanation of the particular verse according to its historical sense⁴⁰ and then according to its spiritual sense.⁴¹ Often the verse-by-verse commentary follows the diatribic style,⁴² which itself reveals the conceptual background of a scientific school enterprise. The final feature of Jerome’s commentary is the fact that it comes to an abrupt end without epilogue or doxology.

³⁹ See for example Jerome, *Ion.* 1.3a; 172.37 Duval.

⁴⁰ See for example Jerome, *Ion.* 4.6; 300.161 Duval.

⁴¹ Also referred to as tropological (for example Jerome, *Ion.* 1.1–2; 170.15 Duval), anagogical (*Ion.* 2.4a; 232.130 Duval), mystical (*Ion.* 2.11; 358.391 Duval), or proper sense (*Ion.* 3.3–4a; 262.44 Duval). These different expressions are largely synonymous in Jerome, see Risse 2003, 54.

⁴² Diatribe includes the stylistic device of the rhetorical question (Jerome, *Ion.* 1.9; 200.328 Duval; *Ion.* 1.14; 214.466–467 Duval), preemptive objections (*Ion.* 2.2; 224.56–58 Duval; *Ion.* 2.4a; 232.138 Duval), exclamations (*Ion.* 1.13; 212.436 Duval; *Ion.* 1.14; 212.457 Duval), adhortives (*Ion.* 1.15; 216.494 Duval; *Ion.* 4.6; 298.144 Duval), and imperatives (*Ion.* 2.1b; 222.40 Duval; *Ion.* 3.6–9; 274.176 Duval; *Ion.* 3.10; 278.234 Duval), as well as discussion of other research opinions (*Ion.* 2.1b; 222.28–37 Duval; *Ion.* 3.3–4a; 262.39–43 Duval; *Ion.* 4.10–11; 284.271–273 Duval).

4.3.2 Strategies of appropriation

Like Theodore, Jerome also establishes the framework for his commentary within the *Prooemium*. He understands that his task as a commentator is “to briefly and frankly (*breuiter aperteque*) explain that which is obscure” and to thoroughly discuss the meaning (*sensum*) of that which he interprets (*Ion. prooem.*; 162.21–25 Duval). In the course of his commentary, he adds the principle of *breuitas*, which he introduces as a generic feature of commentaries (*Ion. 3.6–9*; 276.185 Duval).⁴³ The goal is to make the reader more confident in the text’s interpretation.⁴⁴ Immediately after his brief explanation of the circumstances surrounding the commentary’s composition – its delayed publication due to the priority of other works – Jerome presents the most important guideline for his interpretation: Jonah is a *typus Saluatoris*, a “type of the Savior” and, by his stay within the belly of the sea monster, he depicted the resurrection of Christ (*praefigurauit*; *Ion. prooem.*; 160.10–12 Duval) in advance. In addition to this spiritual-typological interpretation⁴⁵ is Jerome’s second pillar of interpretation: the explanation of the “historical foundations” (*historiae fundamenta*; *Ion. prooem.*; 166.66 Duval). The historical events recorded in *Jonah* function as the necessary foundation on which Jerome builds his spiritual interpretation.⁴⁶ Finally, using stark “them” versus “us” language, Jerome sums up the entire book of *Jonah* by referencing the highest authority, Christ himself (*Matthew 12:41*): Unbelieving Israel, which is lost (them), is condemned, whereas repentant Nineveh, which has been made alive in Christ (us), will be saved (Jerome, *Ion. prooem.*; 166.76–168.89 Duval).

43 In his later *Commentary on Daniel* (407 CE), Jerome not only refers to the principle of *breuitas* – as he does in the commentary on the *Twelve Prophets* in reference to a commentator’s responsibility to briefly explain the text – but also to the lemmata, which he produces, with omissions, *per interualla* (Jerome, *Commentarius in Daniele prophetam. Praefatio*; 775.81–86 Glorie); see Courtray 2007, 123–126.

44 This can be inferred from Jerome’s description of a misunderstood commentary, which leaves the readers more uncertain (*multo incertior*) about the meaning of the text than before they read it (Jerome, *Ion. prooem.*; 162.17–21 Duval).

45 According to Jerome’s own terminology this mode of interpretation is called “tropology” (*tropologia*, see Jerome, *Ion. 1.1–2*; 170.15 Duval); see Risse 2003, 52–55.

46 See Risse 2003, 39. Stylistically, both “pillars” form a kind of framework around Jerome’s comments on the task of the commentator. In this way, Jerome creates a greater distance between the first-class typological interpretation and the second-class (although foundational) historical interpretation. Jerome discusses the historicity of the person of Jonah within the *Prooemium*, both clarifying his genealogy by reference to other biblical sources and Jewish tradition and identifying the concrete, traditional location of Jonah’s grave (*Ion. prooem.*; 162.26–166.65 Duval).

Jerome's strategies for appropriating the old text, therefore, exist on three levels: (1) the level of the pretext, (2) the historical level, and (3) the typological-spiritual interpretation. First, Jerome painstakingly strives to establish the authoritative version of the pretext. Towards this goal, he places within the *lemmata* section of the commentary both the Hebrew text of the book of *Jonah* and the LXX-version. He then offers his readers – who prior to his translation would have had only a *vetus latina* translation of *Jonah*^{LXX} at their disposal – a new Latin translation of both the Hebrew and LXX-version.⁴⁷ Also, in regard to authority, Jerome places the *hebraica veritas* above that of the LXX text⁴⁸ and decides, on the basis of reasoned arguments,⁴⁹ in favor of the text of the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁰ In this way, he enables his readers to comprehend his judgment concerning the significance of the variants, even though they probably were not able to read either Hebrew or Greek. Ultimately, the result is a philological “production” of the authoritative text, which – in case there are divergent manuscripts or translations of the pretext circulating – forms the basis for every appropriation.

Second, on the historical level of interpretation of the scriptures, Jerome uses different means of explanation with which he both clarifies factual uncertainties that exist within the pretext or that have emerged as a result of the lengthy temporal distance between its origin and reception, and also illuminates the sense of the pretext at the literal level.⁵¹ For example: (a) He provides possible explanations of words or matters. (b) He employs his method of explaining Holy Scripture with Holy Scripture, a method that interprets the unclear passages in the book of *Jonah* with help from other biblical passages. (c) The psychological deepening of the narrative beyond what is contained within the pretext, usually in the form of a paraphrase or dramatization, transports the reader directly into the narrated event and

47 Jerome, *Jon.* 1.3b; 2.1a; 3,4b; 4.6 (among other places); see Risse 2003, 31–35; for information on Jerome's way of translating, see Risse 2003, 24–26.

48 Jerome, therefore, rejects the belief that the LXX is the inspired version, a view traditionally accepted in Early Christianity, see Schade 1910, 141–157.

49 A well-known and often discussed example in research is his translation of the word for the plant that provides Jonah with shade (*Jonah* 4:6) – in Hebrew *qiyqāyōn* (castor) and in Greek *kolokýnthē* (*cucurbita*/gourd) – with the Latin word *hedera* (ivy); see Jerome, *Jon.* 4.6; 296.122–300.170 Duval. See also Fürst 2011:2, 315–322.

50 See, for example, the contradictory details where Jonah predicts in *Jonah*^{Hebr} 3:4b that Nineveh still has 40 days to repent until its destruction but gives Nineveh only 3 days in the LXX version (see for example Jerome, *Jon.* 3,4b; 264.59–266.76 Duval). Astonishingly enough Jerome does not discuss the difference between *Jonah*^{Hebr} 1.9 and *Jonah*^{LXX} 1.9, but restricts himself to discussing the wording in *Jonah*^{Hebr} 1.9.

51 See the more detailed presentation in Risse 2003, 45–49.

makes it comprehensible to him.⁵² (d) As a bridge to the typological-spiritual interpretation of scripture, Jerome often expounds upon the meaning of names. The most prominent example in his *Jonah commentary* is the double meaning of the name *Jonah*: on the one hand it means “dove” (*columba*) and, therefore, pre-figures Jesus Christ, on whom the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove; on the other hand it means “the sufferer” (*dolens*) and, therefore, also predicts Jesus Christ, who suffered by “our” injuries (Jerome, *Ion.* 1.1–2; 170.18 Duval). Jerome is putting this in a nutshell by saying: *Dominus noster Ionas* (Jerome, *Ion.* 1.1–2; 170.15 Duval). For this explanation, Jerome draws from a lexicon of the meaning of biblical names, which he had translated in 389.⁵³

Third, on the typological-spiritual level of interpretation – the supreme aim of his *Jonah commentary* – Jerome interprets, verse-by-verse, the wording of the pre-text which he by now has established (level 1) and explained (level 2) as a typological foreshadowing of the Christ event. He, therefore, stands in the Alexandrian tradition of the multiple senses of scripture and probably draws from Origen’s *Commentary on Jonah*, of which he possessed a copy.⁵⁴

Because of his belief in the multiple senses of scripture, he is open to the possibility of multiple meanings of a biblical passage. Accordingly, he understands Jonah’s flight as a type of the incarnation of Christ, which he interprets as a “flight from heaven” (*Ion.* 1:3a; 176.86–88 Duval). A little later, however, he claims that Jonah’s flight refers to mankind’s rejection of God’s commandments and its (mankind’s) flight from God (*Ion.* 1.4; 186.185–189 Duval). As an experienced commentator, Jerome is aware of the limitations of typological interpretation, which is evident by the fact that he does not relate every verse and every detail of the biblical book of *Jonah* to Christ, but allows that some passages “have their own interpretations” (*haec testimonia suas interpretationes habent*, *Ion.* 1:3b; 184.167 Duval).⁵⁵

In addition to his interpretation of Jonah as a type of Christ, Jerome’s spiritual-typological – in his own terminology: tropological – interpretation of the city of Nineveh is important for understanding his appropriation of the biblical

52 Occasionally, he chooses the first person singular for this aim; cf. Jerome, *Ion.* 1.12; 206.391–208.398 Duval, where Jerome deepens the meaning of *Jonah* 1:12 (i.e. Jonah’s request that the sailors cast him into the sea).

53 *De nominibus Hebraicis* (CCL 72.59–161).

54 See Duval 1985, 13. Although Jerome refutes Origen’s apokatastasis doctrine (*Ion.* 3.6–9; 272.139–276.187 Duval), he considers himself “wealthy like Croesus” because he owns Origen’s *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* (see *ibidem*).

55 See also Jerome, *Ion. prooem.*; 166.66–69 Duval.

book of *Jonah*.⁵⁶ With help from the explanation of the description of Nineveh as “the beautiful (city)”,⁵⁷ he interprets Nineveh as the world of the peoples resp. the non-Jews (*mundus gentium*, *Ion.* 1.1–2; 170.15–24 Duval). As Jerome explains, Jonah was sent to the non-Jews in order to preach to them a message of repentance (*Ion.* 1.1–2; 168.8–10 Duval); typologically, this means that the Lord, the true Jonah, was also sent to preach to the world/the non-Jews (*Ion.* 3.4b; 266.77–78 Duval). Since the Ninevites repent and believe, Jerome can interpret the city of Nineveh as the Church (*Ion.* 4.10–11; 314.310–311 Duval), the community of believers. The textual pragmatic that Jerome sets forth through his commentary on the book of Jonah lies in the affirmation (*Vergewisserung*): just as God preserves Nineveh from destruction because of its repentance and faith, so also will he preserve the Church from destruction because of its repentance and its belief.

Jerome also draws out the other side of this tropology with scientific consistency: on the historical level, he argues that the repentance of the inhabitants of Nineveh (i.e. those who believed Jonah’s sermon) led to Israel’s condemnation because they, in contrast to Nineveh, remained in their wickedness (*Ion.* 1.1; 168.8–10 Duval). Jonah, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, knew about this state of affairs (*Ion.* 1.3a; 172.38–39 Duval). On the tropological level, this would mean that the belief in Jesus Christ is the decisive factor determining salvation or condemnation, and that the believing Church will receive salvation and the non-believing Jews will receive condemnation. Jerome, however, only formulates this sharp distinction in the *Prooemium* (see above). In the verse-by-verse commentary, directed by his pretext, Jerome elaborates that the historical sense of the passage teaches that Jonah mourned over Israel’s condemnation (for example *Ion.* 4.1; 286.5–10 Duval) and that – on the spiritual-typological level – Christ also weeps over Jerusalem (*Ion.* 4.9; 308.247–250 Duval; see *Ion.* 4.1; 286.16 Duval; *Ion.* 1.5a; 188.210–211 Duval).

5 The appropriation of the book of *Jonah* by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Jerome of Stridon

Theodore and Jerome, two different authors in two different places, receive the same text – the biblical book of *Jonah* – at about the same time. This means

⁵⁶ Hier. *Ion.* 1.1–2; 170.15 Duval: *Iuxta tropologiam* . . .

⁵⁷ Jerome hints at the Greek word *kósmos* for *mundus*, stating that in Greek the world was called *kósmos* because of its beauty, see Jerome, *Ion.* 1.1–2; 170.22–24 Duval.

that they face the same challenge of adapting the old, at times incomprehensible, text which not always seems to be immediately relevant for the present age but is nevertheless canonical, and also demonstrates to their readership the possibilities of appropriation.

Both authors know and use both the historical and the typological-spiritual interpretations of scripture. For Theodore, this forms the framework within which he draws his historical commentary; Jerome, however, endeavors to consider the interpretation of both contexts side-by-side since the superior spiritual interpretation of scripture is built upon the foundation of its historical interpretation. Jerome is particularly interested in the production and translation of the authoritative pretext because his readership must, as a first step in appropriating the text, overcome the hurdle of its foreign language. For Theodore's Greek speaking readership, this issue does not exist because his commentary is based only upon the LXX text. For both authors, the clear profiling of the relationship between Jews and Christians is a central theme against the background of identifying and affirming the character of the Christian community. Theodore, on the basis of his methodological procedure, reads the book of *Jonah* more selectively than Jerome with regard to this specific question; Jerome's interpretation is more complete, differentiated, and intrinsically inconsistent by virtue of his double interpretation of every single verse. This is seen, among other places, in his interpretations of Israel and the Jews where he – along with Theodore – expresses grief for the lost people of God, but in other places, depending on the verse interpreted, chooses formulations “of a biting sharpness.”⁵⁸

In many ways, both commentaries demonstrate that the individual appropriation of the old, canonical book of *Jonah* by Theodore and Jerome is based on the elevation of a spiritual, Christian sense, which follows from a specific, dogmatic framework of typology. The spiritual interpretation not only takes place beside the historical interpretation, but also takes the historical sense into its service. Thus, the old biblical text gains a wholly new meaning and relevance for its Christian readership in the 4th century CE.

58 Risse 2003, 75.

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Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli

Weapons of the (Christian) weak: pedagogy of trickery in Early Christian texts

Abstract: Confrontational behaviors do not tell the whole story about resistance. Among other things, Jesus of Nazareth seems to have taught his disciples how to cheat the dominant. What the *reddite Caesari* scene probably depicts is a peasant prophet befuddling some proxies of the ruling class by playing dumb and making riddles. This teaching was not lost. Double-sided expressions, ambiguous speeches, and code-switching practices are found throughout early Christian literature, where they feature as polysemic figures suggesting forms of noncompliance other than life-threatening acts and gestures of negation. Building on Homi K. Bhabha's notion of mimicry, James C. Scott's theory of in-fra-politics, and Michel de Certeau's analysis of poaching, this paper browses through Early Christian texts in order to unearth a "pedagogy of trickery" – i.e. possible instructions about how to take advantage of the susceptibility of the dominant elite in the here and now and how to get away with it.

1 Introduction: how non-compliant were the early Christians?

Rethinking the dissidence of early Christians is no easy task since it affects a whole social imagery. In fact, when searching through the past for bright examples of resistance to socio-political and cultural domination, Western-educated people rarely ignore the case of the early Christians in the catacombs¹ and circuses of the ancient Mediterranean world. Widespread both outside and inside academia, this time-honored cultural assumption about the early Christians' unconventionalism² ensures that concepts such as "voluntary servitude"

1 See, for example, Martin Scorsese's last movie (*Silence*, USA 2016).

2 This assumption can serve different, even conflicting, worldviews and political agendas. Quietist positions can find in early Christian escapism a model for their inward-looking attitudes and their stances of ideological disenchantment and socio-political aloofness. Secular and Christian liberals regularly laud the "Christian difference" as a quintessential trait of the historical religion that harbored modern secularism, since it presupposes an inner tabernacle of freedom that denies the claim to obedience of any overwhelming temporal power. Finally, searching for credible figures to revive the post-'89 revolutionary agenda, radical leftist thinkers are particularly keen on buying into Paul's political theology; its messianic core has

(Boétie 1975 [1576]), or Gramsci-styled formulae such as “hegemonic incorporation” (Gramsci 1971), could never impinge on the commonplace representation of the early follower of Jesus as an *underground* worshipper: a strong-willed practitioner of an unauthorized cult besieged by hostile powers. Admittedly, it would not be possible to disprove this popular narrative by demonstrating that early Christians were, all things considered, conformist people who would have scored high on Adorno’s “Authoritarian Personality” test (Adorno et al. 1950, 744–783). No qualified team will ever be able to assess a sufficient cross-section of these past believers in order to determine their degree of uncritical receptivity to the material and symbolic power of Roman apparatuses.

However, what is impossible to deny is often equally impossible to demonstrate conclusively. For instance, when looking at the most recent research on this topic, it seems that the image of the confrontational, “protesting” type of early Christian martyr, that is, the very opposite of a conformist individual showing an “authoritarian personality” (Adorno et al. 1950, 774–776 and 771), no longer predominates. Quite the contrary, the current trend in non-apologetic scholarship is to confine the exercise of the existential option of martyrdom to intermittent, local, and small-scale episodes before 250 CE, supplemented by short periods of legislative and judicial repression after 250, the duration and intensity of which vary from West to East. While the Christian rights to the invention of martyrdom (practice and discourse) are still debatable,³ the historical import of such faith-signaling events has been considerably reduced⁴ and the reliable literary accounts limited to a handful of artfully manufactured narratives (Moss 2013, 16).⁵ Martyr-making appears now to have been anything but a priority for Roman rulers. Rather, making-up martyr texts stands out as a major group-building and protreptic strategy among pre-Constantinian Christian writers, on the one hand, and a critical advertising and political enterprise for post-Constantinian religious leaderships (Grig 2004), on the other. Historians engaged in emptying the martyrdom scene resort not only to textual criticism but also to sociology and theory of identity (Rebillard 2012; Boin 2015). Crude numbers, too,

been turned into an insurgent headquarters from which reverence to territorializing forces is resisted and by reference to which a world-shattering culture can take its bearings.

3 See the three representative positions of Bowersock 1995, Boyarin 1999, and Van Henten and Avemarie 2002.

4 According to Bremmer, a time-honored practical principle still drives the scholarly debate on the number of martyrs: “somewhat simplifying, we can say that the less sympathetic a historian is to Christianity, the lower the number of martyrs will be” (Bremmer 2010, 20).

5 For the slippery notion of authenticity in relation to this literature, see most recently Rebillard 2017.

weigh heavily on the decreasing importance attributed to historical martyrdom: as long as one admits that “intensity is not the cruising speed of everyday life” (Veyne 2000, 65), “quieter Christians” who “juggled” (Boin 2015, 5) between Rome and Jerusalem must have outnumbered their more militant fellows, the “rigid” types and the border-makers.

Of course, the relativization of martyrdom as a confrontational behavior does not necessarily lead to the complete normalization of pre-Constantinian Christ religion as a conventional movement with no critical quality. The list of nonconformist early Christian icons is long. What about the ascetics, the virgins, and the overgenerous donors? Above all, what about the apocalyptic⁶

However mimetic its language, and however symmetrically authoritarian its ideology might appear (Pippin 1992; Royalty 1998; Moore 2006), there are still reasons to credit apocalyptic literature with discomfiting the well-adjusted (Maier 2002), capitalizing on “relative deprivation” (Collins 1984),⁷ and, eventually, calling for (more) justice against differently interpreted forms of oppression.⁸ On the one hand, a religious script does not have to harbor feminism and preach social egalitarianism (Elliott 2002) to be deemed subversive by power-holders; on the other, doomsayers and millenarian authors are fairly unambiguous in claiming that Christ religion must have no part in the conventionally customized Mediterranean culture. No matter their interested use of apocalyptic literature to gain authority – for instance, by advertising a persecuted self as a “viable identity” and writing “relatively elite literary product[s]” (Rollens 2019) – the fundamental idea is that being Christian is being dissident while being insurgent is not an option.⁹

Flashing an impending end, oppositional apocalyptic literature was designed to bolster radical one-sided spirits who were attuned to the welcomed event. By contrast, scenarios of doom offered very few instructions for the routines of daily life that would occur “in the time that remain[ed]” (*1Cor.* 7.29; see

6 For a sketch of the “apocalyptic opponent” as an early Christian “style of political subjectivation,” see Urciuoli 2017, 686–688.

7 For a critique, see Reed 2010, 120–124.

8 For an overview of recent research arguing that specific violent social or political conflicts lie behind Revelation’s contours, see Rollens 2019.

9 Rhetorically inflated figures (see e.g. Tertullian, *Apology* 37.4–8), Christian mutineers are imaginary to the point that no real Christian uprising has left a trace in our sources. Assuming its historicity, the interpretation of the popular riot in Carthage reported by the *Passion of Lucius and Montanus* (second half of the 2nd century; see *Pass. Montan.* 2.1), as a situation in which some Christians acted forcefully as a group in response to the execution of their bishop (Cyprian), is far from convincing. See Rebillard 2012, 57, *contra* Barnes 2010, 86–92. The riot is dated to 259 CE.

Agamben 2005). Furthermore, the implications of apocalyptic scripts for the here-and-now were hardly rebellious: while providing the dominated believers with religious compensation, these visions of cosmic upheaval offered the Laodicean-like “rich” (*Apoc.* 3.17) a last chance “to discover oneself in trouble” (Maier 2002, 33)¹⁰ and eventually attain salvation by supplying churches with material income and other patronage benefits.¹¹ Seen from this perspective, even a belligerent book like the canonical *Apocalypse* of John was no manual for day-to-day guerrilla actions and counter-conducts. Practical everyday resistance, past and present, needs more handy and flexible weapons than the destructive arsenal of the four horsemen. It demands resources for imaginative actions that apocalyptic imagination fails to provide, due to its excess of utopian spirit, structural fixation on binarism, and lack of timing. Cosmic dramas usually have nothing very instructive to say about how to take advantage of the dominant elites’ susceptibility here and now and get away with it. Far from investing impulses and projects of rage in an open confrontation, early Christian apocalyptic texts worked as “revenge banks” that stocked believers’ “thymotic” savings for the soothing of wounds and the cooking of indignation.¹² The show-down is deferred until victory is assured. In the meanwhile, the daydream of a world turned upside down could even operate as a source of encouragement to continue to bend and maintain the necessary façade of conformity.

Having made this point concerning martyrs and apocalyptics, I would prefer not to dwell further on other prestigious categories of early Christian dissidence in order to test each against expectations. Rather, I will turn to a different approach, one that favors *a praxeological insight into non-confrontational forms of resistance*. There are two reasons underlying this shift of perspective.

First, a more systematic conceptualization of Jesus followers’ *non-confrontational* counter-conducts will help in revealing the most common features of their non-conformism and in weighing their practical significance. The aim is to show that disobedience was not confined to a spatially segregated and periodically erupting rumor concerning the transience of the Roman social order. Nor was it

¹⁰ Maier 2002, 33.

¹¹ This seems to be the practical aim of the doctrine of a post-baptismal repentance in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Rome, second quarter of the 2nd century CE). For the *Shepherd* as an apocalyptic text supporting religious authorities, see Frankfurter 1998, 431.

¹² “The Christianization of the wrath of God leads to a transcendent bank for the purpose of depositing deferred human thymotic impulses and deferred projects of rage whose global design lies beyond the conceptual horizon of the employees of these banks. [...] The bank undertook these transactions in the form of speech acts, which emphasize the existence of divine rage as well as the reasons to take it seriously” (Sloterdijk 2010 [2006], 99).

limited to the sort of contemptuous retreats pursued by dropouts, as if Christian dissidents “(t)ook up residence” in a sort of religious Grand Hotel Abyss facing Greco-Roman absurdity.¹³

Second, a more *praxis-focused* approach to the non-compliance of the early Christians will ensure that early Christ religion appears less introspective than a “feel-good spirituality” (Carrette and King 2005), less pacifying than a provider of “cathartic adjustment(s) to existing social conditions” (Gardiner 2000, 160) and less submissive than a politically sanitized way of signaling distinction via religious consumption (Martin 2014). What this analytical strategy has to offer is the uncovering of a “pedagogy of trickery” that was safer than martyrdom but much more timely than cosmic revolution, more flexible than fury, and more modest than reclusion.

Aside from banking on rage and sponsoring life-disparaging investments, Christian texts store tricks and offer counselling services that can be used to cheat the power(s). In a nutshell, they teach *micro-resistance*. In the last three decades of research on the early Christians, three authors in particular have helped historians to begin the work of uncovering such a pedagogy of trickery: Homi K. Bhabha with his theory of mimicry, James C. Scott with his surveys of infrapolitics, and Michel de Certeau with his focus on tactics, poaching, and everyday cunning. An Indian postcolonial theorist, an American anarchist political scientist, and a French Jesuit philosopher and social scientist, each of these authors has already been brought to bear by other scholars working on the detection of dissent. This paper sets out to bring these *three major chords together* in order to produce a hermeneutical *arpeggio* called “early Christians’ micro-resistances”.

2 Mimicries

Ever since Daniel Boyarin began to transfer Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial take on the Lacanian notion of mimicry (Bhabha 1994 [1984], 85–92) to modern Jewish and ancient “Judeo-Christian” culture, the use of the language of “mimicry” and its cognates (e.g. “mimic man”) has spread quite rapidly among scholars of early Christian literature. These categories have shed light on “the ways that the most apparent complicity with the colonizer turns into resistance” (Boyarin 1997,

¹³ Thus, the famous derisive description of the Frankfurt School given by Georg Lukács (1971, 21).

271–312; also Boyarin 1999). Yet such a spread of mimic men,¹⁴ mimetic discourses, and replicating practices could not help but amplify the original thorny issue of agency that underlies Bhabha’s concept. As Robert Young put it in *White Mythologies*, “is Bhabha describing a forgotten moment of historical resistance, or does that resistance remain inarticulate until the interpreter comes . . . years later to ‘read between the lines’ and rewrite history?” (Young 1990, 190). To put it another way, is the colonial subject’s mimicry conscious or subconscious (Segovia 2005, 12)? And, if the latter is the case, is it dug up and charted, or rather desired, sought after, and projected back onto the text by the exegete? The impression that the subversive potential entrusted to the first mimic Christians is often less a previously undetected textual message than a *previously unintended* exegetic production bespeaks the same “ambivalence” that Young and others have pointed to.

A supplementary, though related, difficulty lies in the scope and significance of such resistances. Looking for cracks in hegemonic discourses, alternative histories in teleological narratives, and discursive disturbances in established textual systems, the postcolonial understanding of apparently pacifying Christian texts as mimics of imperial/colonial relations of domination has certainly rescued a wealth of resistance. Textual materials hitherto viewed either as politically conciliatory, such as the portrait of the Roman Empire in the first chapters of the *Gospel of Luke* (Jacobs 2012, 31–34), or as politically neutral, such as the geographic itinerary of Paul’s journeys in *Acts* (Nasrallah 2008), have been seen through the lens of mimicry, politicized (anew), and turned into oppositional scripts.¹⁵ Yet, at the same time, the postcolonial perspective on early Christian texts might also have ended up over-estimating the threats that the ambivalence, mimicry, hybridity, and so on, of early dominated subjects posed to the dominants, eventually making “such resistance powerless” in the face of the imperial systems as a whole (Boer 2005, 16). After all, when everyone mimics, nobody flatters and consents anymore, because everybody *can be said to be* subtly engaged in reproducing the hegemonic appearance by avoiding breaking the surface of compliance. This explains why scholarship can either eulogize (as parodies and mockeries) or chastise (as supportive duplications) early Christian replicas of

¹⁴ For Justin as a mimicker, see Nasrallah 2010, 122.

¹⁵ Stagnant forms of scholarly consensus within the Western interpretive tradition have thus been challenged by “recovering, reasserting, and reinscribing identities, cultures, and traditions that colonial Christianity had erased, suppressed, or pronounced ‘idolatrous’” (Moore and Segovia 2005, 6).

Roman systems of meanings, thus wavering strikingly between positive and negative understandings of mimicry.¹⁶

In view of these difficulties, I will focus here on a particular case of early Christian mimicry that presents at least three advantages. First, being a normative construct, it is clearly conscious. Second, it is graspable by contemporary fellow Christians as a between-the-lines pedagogy of everyday camouflage. Third, the disturbing effect of mimicry on the authority of the dominant discourse is expected to be put to use in daily micro-resistant acts.

5. For Christians are no different from other people in terms of their country, language, or customs. Nowhere do they inhabit cities of their own, use a strange dialect, or live life out of the ordinary. They have not discovered this teaching of theirs through reflection or through the thought of meddlesome people, nor do they set forth any human doctrine, as do some. They inhabit both Greek and barbarian cities, according to the lot assigned to each. And they show forth the character of their own citizenship in a marvellous and admittedly paradoxical way by following local customs in what they wear and what they eat and in the rest of their lives. They live in their respective countries, but only as resident aliens; they participate in all things as citizens, and they endure all things as foreigners. Every foreign territory is a homeland for them, every homeland foreign territory. They marry like everyone else and have children, but they do not expose them once they are born. They share their meals but not their sexual partners. They are found in the flesh but do not live according to the flesh. They live on earth but participate in the life of heaven throughout all the limbs of the body; Christians are spread throughout the cities of the world.

6. To put the matter simply, what the soul is in the body, this is what Christians are in the world. The soul is spread throughout all the limbs of the body; Christians are spread throughout the cities of the world. The soul lives in the body, but it does not belong to the body; Christians live in the world but do not belong to the world. The soul, which is invisible, is put under guard in the visible body; Christians are known to be in the world, but their worship of God remains invisible. The flesh hates the soul and attacks it, even though it has suffered no harm, because it is hindered from indulging in its pleasures. And the world hates the Christians, even though it has suffered no harm, because they are opposed to its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, along with its limbs; Christians love those who hate them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, but it sustains the body; Christians are detained in the prison of the world, but they sustain the world. The soul, which is immortal, dwells in a mortal tent; Christians temporarily dwell in perishable surroundings but await that which is imperishable in the heavens. The soul grows stronger even when mistreated by what the body eats and drinks; Christians increase daily even when punished. God has appointed them to such a position, and it would not be right for them to abandon it.

(*Diognetus* 5–6; trans. Ehrman 2003, 139–143)

16 For the *Gospel of Mark* as a negative example of “colonial mimicry” that reinscribes colonial domination, see Liew 1999.

Scholars have read chapters 5 and 6 of the *Epistle to Diognetus* (around 200 CE) as a little early Christian masterpiece in either appeasing (Norelli 1991, 33–35) or challenging (Rizzi 1996) Roman affirmative political theologies. The question has been whether the text is here buttressing or undermining Stoic-like elite discourses of identity formation, in which a “universalizing . . . language of ethnicity” (Perkins 2009, 29) is deployed to create a cosmopolitan subject position that aligns with the social order. My argument is that, if taken as mimicry, such an uncanny portrait of the Christian presence in the Roman-ruled world may escape the alternative poles of these two readings. Neither an ideological reinforcement via imitation nor a theological debasement via mockery, this text “heeds the colonizer’s preemptory injunction to imitation, but in a manner that constantly threatens to teeter over into mockery” (Moore 2005, 87). Moreover, rather than the semiotic potential of the text for modern readers (Rizzi 1991), or the articulation of its identity-making strategy through juxtaposing racial and cultic languages (Buell 2005), what is important for my purposes is *the way* in which the text puts the ambivalence of mimicry into practice *at the time* and *for insiders*.¹⁷

Taken as a guide for living and making a living as a Christian by eluding (too) watchful eyes, the practical core message of *Diognetus* can be rendered, in Bhabha’s terms, as the desire to be the “subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 1994, 86). Here to “be” concretely and comprehensively means to “talk”, “wear”, “marry”, “run a business”, “eat and drink”, “conform to the public-political rules of the game”, and so on. Eulogized as a “marvelous and admittedly paradoxical (*thaumastēn kai homologoumenōs paradoxon*)” lifestyle, the Christian difference is nothing but this ambivalent production of a “slippage”, an “excess”, and a “difference” (Bhabha 1994) with respect to behavioral standards. In *1 Corinthians* 7.29–31,¹⁸ Paul, too, had sponsored a normative messianic identity that produced mimic effects. Yet the *Diognetus* departs from Paul’s interim pedagogy of *hos mē* (“as if . . . not”) in that the slippage-effect produced by mimicry is signified in a much less eschatological

17 For *Diognetus*’ “devious route between affirmation and denial”, see Lieu 2004, 234–235. Building on the examinations of the text by Lieu and Buell (2005), but drawing contrasting conclusions to them, Perkins makes explicit reference to Bhabha’s description of mimicry. Yet she mobilizes it in a more general way to account for the identity-making strategy pursued by the text.

18 “I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away” (*1 Corinthians* 7.29–31).

manner.¹⁹ Since the end of the Roman-dominated world is not impending, mimicry more directly relates to what Bhabha calls “ironic compromise” between the dominant discourse’s synchronic “demand for identity [and] stasis” and the diachronic counter-pressure of history, which implies “change and difference” (Bhabha 1994). The narcissistic expectations of Roman elites, rather than anti-Roman messianic hopes, account for the ambivalence of the Christian identity advertised by the text.

In principle, Roman rulers, their local proxies, and their intellectual *chiens de garde*, refused to treat Christians like other religious groups and traditions, insofar as Christ-believers, in turn, refused to conform to the required standards of religious recognition. No matter how “cosmetically conspicuous” they were, non-Roman religions were expected to be “functionally identical” (Martin 2014, 50) when it came to *obsequium* to the state. Tapping into the established trope of the “heavenly citizenship” (Urciuoli 2013, 216–222), the Christian camouflage displayed by *Diognetus* capitalizes precisely on the forked nature of this Roman-sponsored, formatted imagery “of the Other deprived of its Otherness” (Žižek 2003, 96). It takes place within “this area between mimicry and mockery, where the . . . civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double” (Bhabha 1994, 86).

Two considerations can be added. First, even though a bold “coming out” strategy is not recommended, the text neither advertises a “situational” Christian identity (Rebillard 2012; following Lahire 2011) nor suggests that its audience attempts to “pass for” non-Christians (Boin 2015; following Goffman 1961). What the little tract actually promotes is an all-encompassing Christianness whose *imperative* and *unaffected* quality consists precisely in being, all the time, a *partial* figuration of what Roman elites want human identity to be. The markers of “sameness” (language, clothing, diet, marriage, and reproduction strategies) are fully onstage, whereas the traits of “not quite-ness” are mostly invisible to the public eye, as they map onto the blind spots of the Roman representation system. Features indexing Otherness, such as the treatment of infancy, sexual habits, and other moral imperatives, are dictated by a transcendent law-source whose nature the Roman law-givers may have difficulty working out on a criminal base and efficiently prosecute. Second, the text shows no divided self-perception, since there is no *essential* identity behind the mask. Christianness is no double-faced recital of split personalities²⁰ but, rather, a partial (everyday) presence

¹⁹ See the only plain and vague reference to the *parousia* in *Diognetus* 7.6.

²⁰ In the sense of both the Sartrean notion of “bad faith” (Sartre 2003 [1943], 70–94) and Fanon’s “white masks” (Fanon 1967 [1952]).

whose *trompe-l'oeil* is only possible against the “mottled background” (Bhabha 1994, 85) of Roman disciplinary authority.

Concretely, such a mimic agenda for an everyday untroubled Christian life can serve two different (and class-related) purposes: (a) it might help deter wicked gossips from potentially raising social issues that could lead to material harassments;²¹ or (b) it could make tricky career paths possible. I will focus only on this latter aspect.

The full integration of Christ believers into the economic life of the Roman Empire is a historical given. Even Tertullian, who can hardly be said to be a myopic sympathizer of Roman domination, extols the industrious lifestyles of Christians (Tertullian, *Apology* 42.1–3). Conversely, the role that some Christ-believing individuals actively played in the more specialized business of public-political administration is much less intuitive. This prejudice is mainly due to the one-sided nature of the extant sources, which show an almost perfect alignment between a few early Christian religious leaders’ statements about Christians’ indifference/hostility towards politics and some even fewer non-Christian authors’ complaints about their political disengagement.²² Nevertheless, it can be proved that being politically responsible, while remaining a Jesus follower within increasingly clergy-dominated congregations, was a sensible option, a feasible task (see Urciuoli 2018), and precisely the kind of business that required a few tips about mimicry.

My argument is that *Diognetus* provides a record of such a practical knowledge. The pretty obscure statement that Christians “participate in all things as citizens, and they endure all things as foreigners (*metechousi pantōn ōs politai kai panth’upomenousin ōs xenoi*)” has been interpreted in a variety of ways. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the French Catholic scholar and anti-Nazi militant, Henri-Irenée Marrou, interpreted the phrase as an invitation “not to shirk public-political responsibilities, yet to accomplish them with aloofness (*détachement*)” (Marrou 1951, 63).²³ If interpreted this way, *Diognetus* would represent the sole Christian text before Constantine that covertly sympathizes with the public-political engagement of believers, albeit not unquestioningly. It

²¹ For the relation between the urban layout and density of Greco-Roman cities and the quick spread of rumors, see Maier 2020.

²² On the Christian part see Tatian, *To the Greeks* 11.1; Tertullian, *Apology* 38.3; 46.13; *The Pallium* 5; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31.6; Origen, *Against Celsus* VIII 75. On the “non-Christian” part see the fictive Caecilius (in Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 8.3); Celsus (in Origen, *Against Celsus* VIII 75). On this issue, see Urciuoli 2017, 667–670; Urciuoli 2018, 48–96.

²³ Marrou’s translation reads as follows: “Ils s’acquittent de tous leurs devoirs de citoyens, et supportent toutes les charges comme des étrangers”.

is worth noting that Diognetus, the formal addressee symbolizing the target audience of this speech, is a person defined as “most excellent (*kratiste*)”, which is to say that he might stand for the kind of educated and well-off people who potentially pursue local career goals by sitting on councils and serving their towns.²⁴

Yet what could an “aloof engagement” mean in practical terms? I suggest that the anonymous author is recommending a general attitude towards politics that consists in avoiding both careerist behavior and nonpolitical escapism. The former impels the individual to run for prominent offices and magistracies that might end up jeopardizing any religious concern they have for a heavenly citizenship; the latter might catch the eye of the individual’s social peers by casting suspicion on their detachment and their possible ideological motivations for escaping civic duties. Therefore, the best option is a kind of backseat political presence, away from the spotlight and as harmonized as possible with the background.²⁵ A possible textual parallel for this sort of camouflage strategy is offered by some of Seneca’s instructions for a safe retirement motivated by the desire to undertake a philosophical retreat:

Now I return to the advice I’d begun to give you, that your retreat should be unobtrusive. You needn’t label yourself ‘Philosophic Recluse’. Give your purpose another name (*non est quod inscribas tibi philosophiam ac quietem: aliud proposito tuo nomen inpone*): call the motive ill-health, bodily weakness, indolence. To make a vaunt of your seclusion is ostentatious in idleness. Some animals conceal themselves by making a network of their own tracks round their actual lair, and so must you, or you’ll never be rid of pursuers.

(Seneca, *Letters* LXVIII 3–4; trans. Barker 1932, 233)

Seneca seems to make explicit what our author only adumbrates. Whatever the reasons for shying away, precautions should be taken to ensure that *mimicry* (“a difference that is almost nothing, but not quite”) does not overtly turn into *menace* (“a difference that is almost total, but not quite”; Bhabha 1994, 91) and end up being criminally treated as such.

3 Politics of disguise

In many academic fields it is common to think of socio-political order and disorder in terms of simple alternatives. Either people accept and acquiesce in the established order

²⁴ Despite being aware of the elasticity of the title, Marrou (1951, 255–256) takes it literally as an official translation of the Latin *egregius vir* and makes Diognetus a Roman procurator.

²⁵ I sketched out this set of strategies in Urciuoli 2018, 267–301.

or they protest and rebel. In the absence of rebellion, people are assumed to have been relatively content (the ‘happy slave’).

(Horsley 2004, 7)

This, Richard Horsley continues, was largely the way in which biblical scholars used to think of the power dynamics of elite and non-elite interaction before James Scott’s work on domination and resistance began to find its way across the discipline’s border. Shortly before Jacob Taubes’ radical politicization of Paul began to question the apostle’s alleged social conservatism and fuel his reappraisal by leftist European philosophers (Taubes 1993),²⁶ Scott-driven understandings of Jesus and his earliest followers had already vindicated them from the intermittent charge of political quietism.²⁷ The “vast territory” between quiescence and revolt, which Scott calls “infrapolitics of the powerless” (Scott 1990, XIII), was no more a waste- and/or indecipherable land. Mediating between symbolic products and material-life circumstances, socio-spatially sequestered and culturally “cooked” emotional reactions to domination (e.g. indignation, anger, humiliation, fantasies of revenge) began to surface and matter (Scott 1990, 119). In consequence, as in the case of “mimic” texts, several liberating messages stored in supposedly traditionalist – or traditionally sanitized – materials have been unsealed.

James C. Scott has sharpened his pivotal categories in the course of time. His classic volume *Domination and the Art of Resistance* (1990) presents a stronger theoretical orientation with respect to Scott’s initial location of popular resistance in the slippage between the peasants’ normative values (“little tradition”) and the corresponding patterns of the same society’s urban elite (“great tradition”, Scott 1977). While basically cataloguing the non-elite forms of resistance into two main categories (declared and undeclared), the book proposes a cross-cultural and trans-historical dyad of *concealed types of dissent*: the “hidden transcript” and the “politics of disguise”.²⁸ The former takes place offstage, the latter onstage. Together they represent the two low-profile registers through which dominated people say what they think about the power-holders but are too intimidated to express openly. In the time since 1990, studies on resistant meanings and practices in New Testament materials and early Christ religion

²⁶ See Badiou 2003; Agamben 2005; Žižek 2003. For a critical overview, see Crossley 2010, 99–114. Also Caputo and Alcott 2009.

²⁷ See e.g. Horsley 1987 and 1989; Horsley and Hanson 1985; Crossan 1991. See other references in Horsley 2004, 2.

²⁸ The latter includes both the anonymous and the ambiguous onstage versions of the former. See Scott 1977, 18–19 and 136–182.

have begun to value the potential importance of these categories (Horsley 2004; already Wimbush 1997; West 1999).

Since my interest in the micro-resistances of Jesus followers is only coterminous with Scott's rethinking of resistance as "impression management in power-laden situations" (Scott 1990, 3), the analysis here will be restricted to the arts of disguise and, among them, to those attributed to, or performed by, *non-anonymous individuals*. Contrary to the boldness of anonymous singular and mass actions, these "partly sanitized, ambiguous, and coded version(s) of the hidden transcript" take place "in public view but (are) designed to have a double meaning" (Scott 1990, 19). The underlying idea is that Christian texts store techniques of deception, ritual codes, instructions on how to play dumb, ask riddles, and utter veiled and double-sided sayings that are rooted in an inexpressible hidden transcript of resistance. This scattered pedagogy of trickery could be appropriated by readers and adapted to their circumstances, *either according to or against* the purposes of the texts themselves. As with mimics, what I am really interested in is the personal gain that vulnerable Jesus followers could achieve by tapping into this material when confronted with all kinds of annoying, undesirable, or risky social interactions with more powerful non-Christians.²⁹

3.1 Consenting is not conforming

A good starting point may be the following passage from the *Martyrdom of Peter*, originally belonging to the non-canonized *Acts of Peter* (Asia Minor, end 2nd century CE). It describes a group of Roman power-holders conspiring to execute the apostle Peter as a troublemaker:

As they planned this, Xanthippe heard of the conspiracy which her husband had with Agrippa and sent word to Peter to inform him so that he could leave Rome. Also the other brethren, together with Marcellus, exhorted him to leave. Yet Peter said to them: 'Shall we run away (like slaves), brethren?' And they said to him: 'No, but as long as you can still serve the Lord, please stay alive for our sake'. Persuaded by the brethren, Peter left Rome alone by saying: 'None of you will come with me, but I will go away alone and in disguise (*metamphiasas to schēma mou*)'.

(*Martyrdom of Peter* 6.1–3. My translation. Greek text: Zwierlein 2009)

²⁹ There is no way to grasp the onstage comedy without gaining access to the offstage (Scott 1990, XII). It should be clear, however, that, contrary to Scott's materials, offstage opinions here are almost all we have. Not only is there a documentary predominance of the hidden over the public transcript, but the representation of onstage situations is also manufactured according to what Christian writers consider to be of interest to the offstage audience.

In his Scott-inspired book on martyrdom, Boyarin interprets Peter's abortive attempt to escape from Rome in disguise as a refutation of "tricksterism" (Boyarin 1999, 45). This is certainly correct since, in the following scene, Jesus appears to Peter immediately outside the gate of Rome and counters him with a riddling performance in order to convince him to walk back and accept crucifixion (*Martyrdom of Peter* 6.4). In contrast to Peter's abandoned attempt, tricksterism is, indeed, much more suited to the successful stereotyped stratagems that, around that time, other non-canonized *Acts* were ascribing to Christian aristocratic women tormented by wicked and sexually voracious husbands (Perkins 2002).³⁰ Note that, whereas such female tricksters are eulogized as heroines of a faith preserved through cunning – that is, mainly via camouflage and mistaken identity –, Peter's escape in disguise is stopped, as he is assumed to be cheating his Savior along with the heathens.

The orientation of the hagiographical agenda towards the famous "*Quo Vadis* scene" (P: "Lord, where are you going?"; J: "I go to Rome to be crucified") should not obscure the fact that Peter's brethren raise some sound arguments in favor of tricksterism that may be summarized as follows: to dodge martyrdom by camouflage and/or by flight is a sensible behavior to adopt if one wishes to keep on serving the Lord. This choice is especially commendable for people who have social – i.e. parental, financial, ecclesiastical – responsibilities (see *Martyrdom of Peter* 7.1). Even more important for my purposes is that, overcome by a heroic self-sacrificial resolution in the text, such a textually articulated hesitation can lean towards life-preserving options *outside* texts.

At the same time as its author was penning the *Acts of Peter*, the question of the proper behavior under "persecution" was already "an active issue among Christians" (Boyarin 1999, 45).³¹ Religious leaders and writers did not necessarily agree on the answer to this question.³² Referring to these debates, Boyarin hints at the unenthusiastic attitudes to martyrdom ascribed to some conventionally

30 Peter is also wanted for having brainwashed Roman *matronae* with the idea of sexual abstinence. See *Martyrdom of Peter* 4–5.

31 It is, incidentally, now clear that most Christians who neither fled nor hid did not necessarily play the confrontational role of Scott's "Baaad Nigger" (Boyarin 1999, 50; Scott 1990, 41): they simply conformed to the requirements of their circumstances.

32 Note the diverging positions on flight taken by Tertullian (*Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting* and, even more radically, *Flight in Persecution*) and Cyprian (*The Lapsed* 3 and 10). For faithful hagiographic justifications of Cyprian's actual flight under Decius, see Pontius, *Life of Cyprian* 7.

labeled “Gnostic” groups (Boyarin 1999, 59).³³ Largely, but not exclusively, reported by anti-Gnostic contemporary testimonies,³⁴ this alternative Christian discourse on the insanity of verbal confession and provocative deaths is of considerable interest. First of all, it shows that Christians who *consented* did not necessarily *conform*. More interestingly, it also suggests that what ancient polemicists and modern apologists repetitively chastised as “theology of cowardice” (Orbe 1956, 268), and what secular specialists now more dispassionately and accurately describe as a “toning down of Christian sociopolitical deviance” (Williams 1996, 105; analogously Filoramo 2000, 45–46), can be interpreted as the offstage script of a public and non-actionable politics of trickery. Trained by the anti-martyrdom and anti-sacrificial wisdom expressed in texts such as the *Testimony of Truth*, the *Gospel of Judas*, and other lost treatises (Pagels and King 2007, 56), some “spiritual” believers were in a position to stage this tricksterism in the public eye. In the *Testimony of Truth*, we read:

The foolish – thinking [in] their heart [that] if they confess, ‘We are Christians,’ in word only (but) not with power, while giving themselves over to ignorance, to a human death, not knowing where they are going nor who Christ is, thinking that they will live, when they are (really) in error – hasten towards the principalities and the authorities. They fall into their clutches because of the ignorance that is in them. For (if) only words which bear testimony were effecting salvation, the whole world would endure this thing and would be saved. [But] in this way they [drew] error to themselves.

(*Testimony of Truth* [NHC IX,3] 31.22–32.19; trans. Giversen and Pearson 1990, 450–451)

In an attempt to resolve the incongruity between so-called world-rejecting worldviews and socio-political quiescence on an everyday practical level, some scholars have opted to dismiss the former (Williams 1996, 103–106). According to this view, far from being radically antisocial recluses, Valentinians and others with similar ideologies, such as those addressed by the *Testimony of Truth* (end 2nd century – beginning 3rd century CE) were socially adequate people who “‘fit’[ted] in more comfortably with surrounding society” than did

³³ At the same time, in order to sharpen his argument for a normative contrast between the “orthodox” Christian stance towards martyrdom and the rabbinic Jewish openness to tricksterism, Boyarin *de facto* restricts the analysis of this “antimartyrdom discourse” to the statements and deeds of the rabbis: “Rabbinic Jews and Christians were debating the same question of deception, flight, or martyrdom through the third century, but only Christian textuality seems bound to answer the question “Quo vadis?”. For the Rabbis, the destination can remain open” (Boyarin 1999, 66).

³⁴ See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I 24.6 (on the disciples of Basilides); III 18.5; IV 33.9 (on Valentinian groups); Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* IV 16.3 (on Valentinians?); IV 81.1–83.2 (on Basilides); IV 71–72 (on Heracleon); Tertullian, *Antidote for the Scorpion’s Sting* 1.5 (on “Gnostics” and Valentinians), etc.

other Christ-believing groups. Their distaste for martyrdom was only one piece of evidence among others. Insofar as they did not show up on the public stage as radical deniers of the Roman public transcript of reverence, these individuals manifested themselves as more hegemonically incorporated than other “more rigid” Christians (Williams 1996, 105, quoting Frend 1954, 29).

Yet the excerpt reported above may suggest a slightly different understanding of these “unheroic conducts” (Boyarin 1997). In situations of local hostility, or even state-sponsored “persecutions”, in which people have even less control than usual over what happens in their lives, socio-political compliance cannot be gauged but offstage, that is, out of the power-holders’ eyes. Moreover, once forced to stage their feelings, individuals can perform acts of acquiescence as acts of resistance, in so far as they possess the right code and know the way it communicates the hidden transcript of dissent. In the case of tested Christians, the *Testimony of Truth* assumes that Roman rulers have property rights over this corrupted world, including the visible bodies of the believers and their audible signs, such as the verbal confession: “I am Christian!” Theatrical denials of reverence conducive to tortures and death penalties are therefore dismissed as vainly suicidal pretenses of purging the worldly (i.e. demiurgical-archontic) stain from both carnal bodies and spiritually empty words. To prevent this tragic fail, the text insinuates the idea of respectfully returning the coin of the individual’s bodily survival to its legitimate administrators, the earthly rulers. Questioning salvation, that which really matters, is far beyond their means. In the end, just as Jesus is said to have befuddled some proxies of the ruling class by making up a riddle concerning the tribute (Herzog 2004),³⁵ so several Jesus followers might have been able to dupe the archons’ delegates in a similar equivocal manner.³⁶

3.2 Linguistic tricks

A second set of examples concerns *linguistic* disguises, such as two-faced speeches and wits. Once again, Boyarin makes a good point by noticing that, somewhat paradoxically, martyrdom literature teems with ambiguous

³⁵ Note this Scott-driven interpretation of *Mark* 12:13–17: “Trapped into making a statement about the payment of tribute, Jesus uses a coded, ambiguous and elusive form of speech that communicates in the hidden transcript of resistance while appearing to show appropriate deference to Rome and its quislings” (Herzog 2004, 59–60).

³⁶ By gesturing at the infrapolitical space between the toning down of outward deviance and the experience of socio-political conformity, I am not suggesting that any reader of this text used such a pedagogy of trickery as a motivation to act, only that it was possible to do so.

statements that are used to ensure the martyr's fate. Contrary to the pro-life logic of Scott's infrapolitics, pro-martyrdom writers make tricksterism team up with death (Boyarin 1999, 51). Once again, I argue that the extra-textual reality may well have been different, thereby reasonably wedding tricks and survival.

According to the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*,³⁷ the future saint Polycarp was sitting in a carriage on his way to martyrdom when the police captain and his father asked him: "What harm is to say 'Caesar is lord (*Kurios Kaisar*),' and to sacrifice and so forth, and to be saved?" (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8.2; trans. Rebillard 2017, 95). Note that, in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott's first "elementary" example of arts of disguise is the slave saying "Yes, Master!" in a "slightly sarcastic" way (Scott 1990, 139). Could not a Christian on trial spit out "Caesar is lord!" in the same passing and deceitful way? Was "Caesar is lord!" a more compromising statement than, for instance, the decision to wear the laurel crown as some Christian soldiers were prepared to do (Tertullian, *The Crown* 1.6)? Lastly, was Jesus himself not the ultimate Trickster, in that he publicly, though cryptically, recognized Caesar's mundane rulership (*Mark* 12.13–17)?

It is worth recalling that, before the edict of Decius (250 CE), the performance of sacrifices in the presence of the jurisdictional authorities was not the ordinary acid test of a standard procedure of interrogation.³⁸ Furthermore, Roman governors and proconsuls were not, as a rule, as zealous as the depictions of insinuating officials in the martyrdom narratives might have it. Insofar as religious deviants were not so high on the list of the local rulers' concerns, the judges were far more lenient (Tertullian, *To Scapula* 4–5; see Moss 2012, 10). Their smooth-talking behavior was not aimed at triggering the martyrs' fervor; in many situations, verbal performances of reverence on the part of the defendant were probably sufficient to secure the dismissal of a case and escape from a more brutal test of sincerity. We can be sure that most officials were not as scrupulous as Pliny, who dictated selected prayers to the gods evidently for the purpose of preventing ambiguities and slippery phrasing (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* X 96.5; see Moss 2013, 142).

With regard to witty verbal performances, Polycarp was later requested to recant by pronouncing the simple formula, "Away with the atheists (*Aire tous*

37 Traditionally dated back to the late 160s, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, in its extant form, has recently been assigned a date no earlier than the Decian period. See Moss 2013, 94–104. According to Rebillard (2017, 84), since there is no *terminus ante quem*, "any dating of the composition of the text based on its content remains very tentative".

38 "... prior to 250 there was no legislation in place that required Christians to do anything that might lead them to die. Even the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan provided guidelines only for Pliny, not for the entire empire" (Moss 2013, 145).

atheous)” (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.2). What an atheist is, though, depends on the religious preferences of the speaker and, indeed,

with a stern countenance Polycarp observed the whole crowd of lawless pagans that were in the stadium and, gesturing at them with his hand, he groaned and looked up to heaven, and said: ‘Away with the atheists.’

(*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.2; trans. Rebillard 2017, 97)

When one is weaker than one’s interlocutor, language with a double meaning is preferably used to trick and not, as here, to provoke. We should imagine a trial setting in which the exploitation of double meanings to save one’s own skin would be much easier than using them to irritate an already enraged audience. Such a context would roughly correspond to the standard stage of Christian abjurations, since Jesus followers were usually interrogated in less crowded and spectacular courtrooms. When performed in small and separated chambers (*secretaria*) within the governor’s residence (see e.g. *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 1; *Acts of Cyprian* 1),³⁹ or even at the bottom of much broader basilica halls, bombastic rhetoric and gesturing could not produce the same theatrical effects they generated in the amphitheater.⁴⁰ Therefore, the kinds of witticisms that are artfully disambiguated by the narrative to ensure the martyr’s fate might have tapped into a “well cooked” pedagogy of trickery for achieving the opposite aim: survival. Just as the legendary exploits of the folk heroes of North American slaves mimicked the survival strategies of real slaves (Scott 1990, 163), I argue that martyrdom plots, too, drew on coded techniques of disguise and concealment that actual believers most likely adopted to sustain life, postpone heavenly rewards, and, perhaps, to gain the approval of fellow-Christians for their agility. In the texts, these artifices are redirected towards a glorious, memorable, and exemplary death. The last example provides further support for this hypothesis.

In the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*,⁴¹ the dialogue between the North African martyr Speratus and the proconsul Saturninus is an artfully crafted

39 Fences and curtains could serve to cordon off the *secretarium*, thereby restricting access and limiting or obstructing the show. See Ebner 2001, 315.

40 For the long-lasting theatricality of courtroom dramas and the importance of “largely free-floating, paradigmatic narratives” for the modelling of the judicial scenes, see Grig 2004, 59–68.

41 The exact location of ancient Scillium within modern Tunisia is unknown. The *Passio* is usually said to represent “the closest of all our extant Acts to the primitive court records” (Musurillo 1972, XXII). Although it is very likely that some Jesus followers from Scillium died as martyrs at the end of the 2nd century CE, the *communis opinio* about the “authenticity” of the text is debatable.

case of mismatch between public and hidden transcripts which rapidly peaks with the open declaration of the latter. For a while, the powerful and the powerless talk past each other (Moss 2012, 128). When the governor refers to the possibility of obtaining the pardon of “our lord the emperor (*domni nostri imperatoris*)”, Speratus answers,

We have never done wrong, we have never given ourselves over to wickedness. Never have we uttered a curse, but when abused, we have given thanks, for we hold our emperor in honor (*propter quod imperatorem nostrum observamus*).

(*Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 2; trans. Rebillard 2017, 357)

According to Scott’s taxonomy of “elementary forms of disguise” (Scott 1990, 138), the last sentence is a “euphemism”, that is, a varnished message “expressed in a power-laden situation by an actor who wishes to avoid the sanctions that a direct statement will bring” (Scott 1990, 152). Euphemisms, Scott continues, “continually test the linguistic boundary of what is permissible and . . . often they depend for their intended effect on their being understood by powerholders” (Scott 1990, 153). With respect to this case, however, we might add that the success of euphemisms could be undermined by the speaker’s ultimate determination not to escape the sanction and to be punished instead. The actual identity of Speratus’ *imperator noster* is unveiled less than ten lines later. After a bureaucratic solicitation to repentance, the proconsul utters a clear invitation to sacrifice and gives a peremptory demand for an oath. The “political *cordon sanitaire*” (Scott 1990, 19) immediately breaks:

Speratus said: ‘I do not recognize the imperial authority of this world. Rather, I serve that God whom no man has seen, nor can see, with these eyes.’

(*Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 6; trans. Rebillard 2017, 357)

In extra-textual situations, the provocative potential of euphemism might have remained confined to Speratus’ previous oblique reference to God in a non-actionable statement. Then it would have been up to the judge to decide whether to keep this ambiguity alive or not: that is, if the double-entendre is understood, whether to bring pressure to bear on the defendant in order for the veiled intention to be revealed or disavowed, or rather to be content with the innocuous original formula and simply let the suspect go.

4 Poaching

Objects work as *categories of objects* which, in the most tyrannical fashion, define *categories of people* – they police social meaning, and the significations they engender are rigidly controlled. In their proliferation, at once arbitrary and coherent, objects are the best possible vector of a social order that is equally arbitrary and equally coherent, and, under the banner of affluence, they indeed become a most effective material expression of that order.

(Baudrillard 1996 [1968], 191)

Following up on Baudrillard's reflections in *The System of Objects*, one might say that the modern industrialized "consumer society" has optimized, systematized, spectacularized, and – certainly "for the first time in history" – "philosoph[ized]" in terms of "self-fulfilment" (Baudrillard 1996, 184) a cross-temporal impetus: the drive towards, and the pressure on, the hegemonic integration of the population via the standardized semiotics of everyday goods and artifacts. Meanings, past and present, are caught up in objects and people are caught up in both by consumption. Produced in a city workshop, a statue of Caesar contained and conveyed symbolic contents that were automatically absorbed by the buyer; this latter, in turn, was socially *classified* (also) through the integration of the statue into the gamut of objects and goods he/she bought, possessed, and consumed (Baudrillard 1996, 19). Wherever it was staged, in a public square or in a private house, the exchange-value of the statue was a commodified means through which a metaphysically justified socio-political order was disseminated and consumed by a ruled population situated at varying degrees of distance from the state's headquarters. If the statue of the emperor fell down and broke into pieces, as happens in a scene of the *Acts of Peter*, it had to be repaired, since people might otherwise suspect that the power entrusted to the ruling Caesar was questioned and endangered along with the integrity of the item.⁴² As a rule, things-advertising-power are removed, smashed, and taken down when people rise up, or as soon as the hated government is toppled.

Most of Michel de Certeau's work is aimed at countering neo-Marxist and post-Marxist theses on the absolute passivity of consumers, and, more specifically, the idea that practices of consumption *passively* reflect the socio-spatial proximity or distance of specific categories of individuals to or from the location of power – and almost nothing else. De Certeau thus shares with Bhabha

⁴² In *Acts of Peter* 11, we see the apostle Peter exorcising a demon in the house of the wealthy senator Marcellus. As it departs, the demon breaks a statue of the emperor and, instead of marveling at the power of God, Marcellus fears imperial reprisals. A scholar rightly comments: "Once again he [Marcellus] is caught up in social obligations that conflict with loyalty to Christ. Peter reassures him and restores the statue" (Stoops 1986, 98).

and Scott the fundamental assumption that confrontational behaviors and acquiescent attitudes do not tell the whole story about power relations, the location of the agency of change, and the resistant quality of everyday life. In the end, the famous Certeauian notion of the “tactic”⁴³ suggests that critical imagination is neither a privilege of cultural producers nor a prerogative of social rebels. Far from being ineradicably invested in commodities, symbolic values are continuously negotiated through their uses and during their whole life-cycle. If usage is creative and consumption is a tacit production, then semiotics implies a day-to-day “guerrilla warfare” (Eco 2014, 134). However uneven the distribution of signified-weapons, top-down decisions on meaning, functions, and values do not have the last word on the processes of signification.

From the wide array of the “ordinary man’s” tactics displayed in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau 1984 [1980]), I will pick up what de Certeau calls the art of “poaching”. He connects this art paradigmatically with the practice of *reading* (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 165–176), thus taking the latter as the equivalent of consumption in a society’s “scriptural economy” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 131–153). Reading is a most accessible act of hermeneutical and ideological non-commitment, dissent, and creation of unanticipated meanings among literate and semiliterate populations. Now, the level of literacy among early Christians is generally considered to have been as low as that among other non-elite religious associations (Gamble 1995, 10). Yet, however problematic the formula of “textual communities” (Stock 1983, 88–240) may be, the considerable acquaintance of both literate and illiterate Jesus followers with a variable and multifarious set of authoritative scripts provided them with a distinguishing textual stock to poach from. The more the individual was conversant with the scriptural literature, the more his/her poaching could generate new significations from the increasingly patrolled meanings of scriptural writings.

In a recent essay, Harry O. Maier has persuasively interpreted Paul’s imperial imaginary and vocabulary as a way of poaching from a whole “repertoire of political ideas in order to redeploy them for the idiosyncratic aims of his own Christ communities” (Maier 2015, 39). Yet the risk in applying the notion of poaching to

43 “. . . a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. [. . .] It takes advantage of ‘opportunities’ and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. [. . .] It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. In short, a tactic is an art of the weak” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 36–37).

intellectual *writing* is that almost any conceptually relevant line penned by any Christian writer was an act of poaching from the cultural property of an established literary tradition. Inside the “scriptural economy”, poaching could range from the micro-level of terms, concepts, and ideas, through the meso-level of the genre (e.g. Greek novel, epistle, etc.), and up to the macro-level of the cultural technostructure (e.g. philosophy) of a written message. Poaching can, in a word, broadly define the way Christian writers navigated the whole literary process. Outside the scriptural economy, the material-cultural hunting reserve within which one could poach was even wider. Christ-believing individuals poached and counter-poached in any “crack that particular conjunctions open[ed] in the surveillance of the ‘proprietary powers’” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 37), as we can call the social powers who ratified the meaning of any given cultural item: cult images, military emblems, sacrificial meats, etc. Like mimicry and other conceptual tools for illuminating everyday micro-resistances, poaching, too, can be heuristically undermined by its all-embracing descriptive potential.

In consequence, Christian poachers will not correspond here to some talented writers and/or readers “insinuating their inventiveness into the cracks in a cultural orthodoxy” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 172). Nor will they be represented by a limited group of creative exegetes contesting “literal meaning [as] a product of a social elite” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 170). My only example will concern *non-intellectual writers*, that is, ordinary people engaged in everyday businesses that involved writing and led them to use scriptural acts differently from their implicated meanings.

In chapter 23 of *On Idolatry* (Carthage, around 198–206 CE), Tertullian deals with the danger of idolatry as a threat lurking in both “deed and word”, and specifically with the problem of oaths sworn by non-Christians gods. In line with the general strategy of the book, he wants to *create* this problem by challenging other quieter Christians (Rebillard 2012, 9–33). In this sense, the whole tract on idols can be read as an artfully manufactured confrontation between minimalist poachers (the Christians Tertullian dislikes) and maximalist counter-poachers (Christians like Tertullian). The battlefield is the common semiotic territory where Greco-Roman material and literary culture, on the one hand, and Christian authoritative textuality, on the other, meet and sometimes clash. The selected passage reads as follows:

But there is a certain species of that kind (of hidden idolatry) in deed and word, double-edged and threatening on both sides. [...] When they borrow money from the heathens under pledged securities, they give a guarantee under oath, though they deny to be conscious of this; but, of course, this knowledge is required by the time of the legal proceedings, the place of the law-court and the person of the president (... *iurati cavent, etsi*

negant se scire; volunt scilicet tempus persecutionis et locus tribunalis et persona presidis).⁴⁴ Now Christ prescribes that swearing is forbidden. ‘I have written,’ one objects, ‘but I have not said anything; it is the tongue, not the letter which kills.’

(Tertullian, *On idolatry* 23.1–2; trans. Waszink and van Winden 1987, 67)

Let us set aside, for the time being, the question concerning the truthfulness/authenticity of the objection in its given form. The direct involvement of an officer as high as the governor (*praeses*) of the province – here the *proconsul Africae* – in a matter such as the drafting and the signing of a private loan contract is “hardly imaginable” (Waszink and van Winden 1987, 286 following Schöllgen 1985, 240). Normally, in the case of simple contracts of lease, sale, etc., there was no need to be granted a hearing before the governor because the contracts were stipulated in the presence of witnesses.⁴⁵ At the same time, the information that written pledges might have contained oaths to non-Christian gods as “supplementary – but not legally binding – guarantees” (Schöllgen 1985, 241) for the recipient is credible. In this case, the borrower was eventually asked to sign scribally-redacted declarations containing descriptions of guarantees sealed by oath formulas.⁴⁶ Even more likely is the possibility that Jesus followers used to receive money on loan, just as did anyone else in financial distress. Tertullian’s hope that, in early 3rd-century Carthage, credits and debts would be conferred only among “brethren” (*On Idolatry* 23.7) is a counterfactual matter of faith (*credo quia absurdum*).

The opponent’s ironical distortion, most certainly manipulated by Tertullian, of the Pauline argument⁴⁷ that “it is the tongue, not the letter which kills” (*Lingua, non littera occidit*) – which is further clarified as “the silent voice of the pen and the mute sound of the letters do not count (*Non valet tacita vox in stilo et mutus in litteris sonus, On Idolatry* 23.5)” – is of paramount interest here. In order to procure a loan without betraying the faith, this Christian in need is said to

⁴⁴ Waszink and Van Winden do not follow the alternative reading of the text as emended by Oehler in his 1853–1854 edition: *Pecuniam de ethnicis mutuantes sub pignoribus fiduciati iurati cavent et se negant; se scire volunt scilicet tempus persecutionis et locus tribunali set persona presidis*.

⁴⁵ Yet the editors suggest that: (a) no matter the actual presence of the governor, the document could have been “‘adorned’ with official features in order to give more weight to it”; (b) in the legal-jurisdictional domain, the term *praeses* “seems not to be restricted to the governor of a province” (Waszink and van Winden 1987, 286). The word might then designate inferior jurisdictional figures, such as the “president” of a smaller court assigned to treat minor legal cases.

⁴⁶ Schöllgen (1985, 241) explains that the content of the oath may either be the promise to pay or that the deposit is the debtor’s property – or both.

⁴⁷ *2 Corinthians* 3:6. A conflation with *James* 3.5–10 (on the evil of tongue) is possible.

poach in the gap between the written and the oral side of a Roman legal institution in a way that de Certeau fails to consider: the resistance of underdogs may lie in writing, and not in reading, a *pre-fabricated* text. Assuming that the “literal meaning” of a legal text is “the index and result of the social power” of “socially authorized professionals” (de Certeau 1984, 171), there is, nevertheless, a basic physical-material layer to this literality that is free from proprietary powers: the letters themselves as culturally established stains on the paper. This case eventually shows that the autonomy of a graphic sign from both its mental⁴⁸ and verbal pronunciation can offer a tactical escape: “I am *just* signing. *I am not saying* what is written, *I am not stating* what is signed.”

Two sensible objections can be raised. First, Tertullian’s opponents are likely to be imaginary antagonists and the whole treatise a “dialogue in disguise” (Waszink and van Winden 1987, 9). In order for Tertullian’s strategy to be successful, the reported protests against his own maximalist agenda must relate in some way to the audience’s ordinary experience. Yet the rhetorically adorned line of arguments in *On Idolatry* 23 is hardly imaginable as a sequence reflecting an actual debate. Second, what these exchanges primarily reveal is that “Christians did not routinely activate their Christian membership” when they had to borrow money. Rather, “it is Tertullian who challenges them to do so” (Rebillard 2012, 30).

Nevertheless, for my purposes, it suffices to consider the following series of arguments: (a) according to a minimalist understanding of a Christian allegiance, giving a guarantee under oath was a sensible behavior; (b) articulated as a rejection of the “legal gods”, Christianness – the quality of being Christian – was a possible motivation to poach across a written legal document; (c) despite its maximalist agenda, Tertullian’s treatise itself contains instructions on how to consume a prefabricated document without fully adhering to the whole gamut of cultural meanings attached to it; (d) by looking at our own daily experience, the practice of technically fulfilling the terms of a document, without subscribing to its worldview,⁴⁹ is quite a common way of performing cultural acts the structures of which are pre-established, uniform, and unchangeable (at least from the perspective of the consumer); (e) like subordinate workers, past and present, who are expected to sign contracts whose words potentially conflict with their own worldview and eventually ratify their social weakness, early Christians were in a position of deliberately poaching in the

⁴⁸ Tertullian cunningly appeals to the workings of human consciousness in order to argue for the impossibility of such an action: “the hand cannot write anything which the soul has not dictated” (*On Idolatry* 23.2).

⁴⁹ In cases of minor importance, even without reading through the text.

gap between graphic signs and their established interpretations. Once again, in doing so they show that the “construction of the social text” by cultural producers does not correspond to its reception by those “who are supposed to be satisfied to reproduce the models elaborated by the manipulators of language” (de Certeau 1984 [1980], 169). Like mimickers and tricksters, poachers, too, make clear that the battle of meaning “is not to be won where the communication originates, but where it arrives” (Eco 2014, 142).

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