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Geography of Gender and the Gender of Geography in the Roman Imagination

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Gendered Geographies and the Geography of Gender in the Roman Mind

Austin Howard - Undergraduate

Dr. Brian Turner - Faculty

4 May 2016

Hypothesis and Conclusion

Hypothesis: The Romans formed a link between effeminacy and the East and South and manliness and the North

Conclusion: The Romans formed a link between effeminacy and the East (and sometimes South) and virility and the North and West.



Italy, Wisdom and *Virtūs*

“Italy, lying between the north and the south, is a **combination** of what is found on each side, and her preeminence is well regulated and indisputable. And so by her **wisdom** she breaks the courageous onsets of the barbarians, and by her **strength** of hand thwarts the devices of the southerners.” (Vitr. 6.1.11)

A Middle Kingdom, civilizer of barbarians?

Inherited Greek views of East and West.

In turn, orientalized the Greeks



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Eunuchs

Castrated, luxury servants or religious devotees

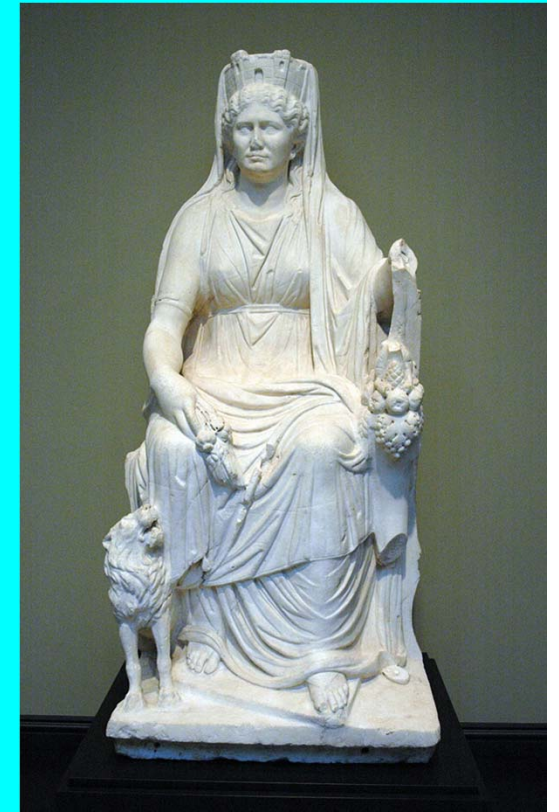
Introduced to Rome through Hellenistic kingdoms

Hellenistic kingdoms appropriated the Persian custom

Persian court eunuchs, Anatolian/Syrian cult eunuchs

Domitian outlaws the creation of Roman eunuchs, thus effectively

re-outsourcing the practice, though he kept a eunuch himself.



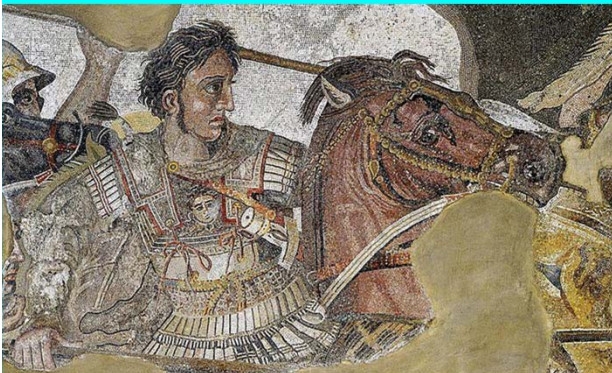
Cybele enthroned, with [lion](#), [cornucopia](#) and [mural crown](#). Roman marble, c. 50 CE. Getty Museum, photo by Marshall Astor

Macedonians to Hellenes to Orientalism

The Macedonians were seen by Rome as fierce fighters who went native and lost virility in the process

“The Macedonians who rule Alexandria in Egypt, who rule Seleucia and Babylon and other colonies spread all over the world, have degenerated into Syrians, Parthians, and Egyptians...” (Liv.38.17.16).

The notion that peoples degenerated and that it went virile to effeminate when Western peoples went eastwards



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Hispania

Martial's epigram: Martial, a Spaniard, talking to a Greek

Don't you call me "brother," or

I'll have to call you "sister."

-Trans. Dorothea Wender

Celtic, Iberian, Greek, and Punic influence

Overall virility, with Brittonic and Gallic,

But also African and Asiatic connections



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Confounded at Every Steppe: Scythian Mysteries

Relations to Parthians

Yet confusion with Germans and Celts:

Caracalla's bodyguards:

Dio 78.5.5-6 refers to Scyths and Celts

Whilst Herodian 4.7.3;13.6 refers to Germans.



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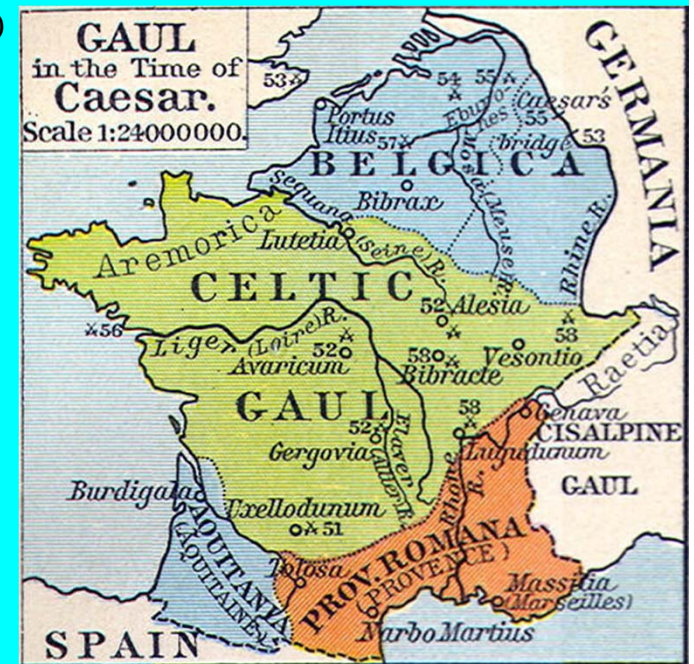
Gauls

[T]he Belgae are the bravest, because they are furthest from the civilization and refinement of [our] Province, and merchants least frequently resort to them, and import those things which tend to effeminate the mind; and they are the nearest to the Germans, who dwell beyond the Rhine, with whom they are continually waging war; for which reason the Helvetii also surpass the rest of the Gauls in valor (Caes. Gal. 1.1)

Rapid Romanisation following conquest, degeneration

Opposition to Germanic peoples

Galatians turned Asian



William Shepherd (1911)

The Germanic Peoples

Sustained virility contrasted with degenerated Gauls

Extreme peoples contrasted with all mediterranean peoples

The Suebi “on no account permit wine to be imported to them, because they consider that men degenerate in their powers of enduring fatigue, and are rendered effeminate by that commodity.”
(Caes. Gal. 4.2)



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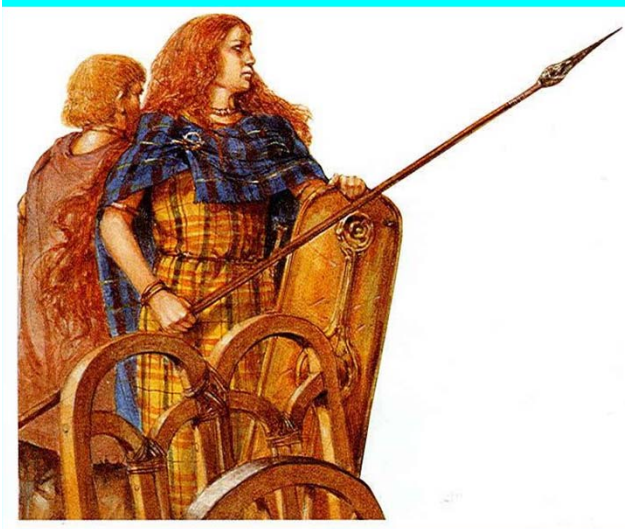
Britons and Picts

Boudicca's speech, mocking Roman weakness.

“-if, indeed, we ought to term those people men who bathe in warm water, eat artificial dainties..” (Dio 62.2)

“this Mistress Domitia-Nero reign no longer over me or over you men” (Dio 62.5)

A Graeco-Roman writer putting words in the mouths of Britons



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Questions?