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Self-Presentation and Identity in the Roman Empire, ca. 30 BCE to 225 CE

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Self-Presentation and Identity in the Roman Empire, ca. 30 BCE to 225 CE

by

Rhiannon Ysabel-Marie Orizaga

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
History

Thesis Committee:
Brian Turner, Chair
Patricia Schechter
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Abstract

The presentation of the body in early imperial Rome can be viewed as the manipulation of a semiotic language of dress, in which various hierarchies that both defined and limited human experience were entrenched. The study of Roman self-presentation illuminates the intersections of categories of identity, as well as the individual's desire and ability to resist essentializing views of Romanness (*Romanitas*), and to transform destiny through transforming identity. These categories of identity include gender; sexuality or sexual behavior; social status; economic status; ethnicity or place of origin; religion; and age. Applying the model of a matrix of identity deepens our appreciation for the work of self-presentation and its ultimate purposes. In this paper the practices and products used by Romans are described as vital indicators of self-identification, and as segues into Roman social semiotics, providing a more complete view of the possibilities for life in early imperial Rome. In the introduction, the use of queer theory and the function of the matrix model are outlined. Haircare, the maintenance of facial and bodily hair, the use of cosmetics, perfumes, skincare products, and beauty tools, the accessorizing of the body with jewelry, color, and pattern, and the display of these behaviors are examined in the main body chapters. The conclusion discusses the relevance of the matrix model to self-presentation studies in general and possible future uses.

Dedication

Para mi abeja melífera, y para mis abuelitos Ruth y Julius.

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List of Abbreviations

Oxford Classical Dictionary standard abbreviations are used when available. All others are mine.

Apuleius, <i>Metamorphosis</i>	Apul. <i>Met.</i>
Horace, <i>Satires</i>	Hor. <i>Sat.</i>
Juvenal, <i>Satires</i>	Juv.
Lucian, <i>Dialogues of the Dead</i>	Lucian <i>Alex. Dial. mort.</i>
Martial, <i>Epigrams (Spectacula)</i>	Mart. <i>Spect.</i>
Ovid	Ov.
<i>Amores</i>	<i>Am.</i>
<i>Ars Amatoria</i>	<i>Ars. am.</i>
<i>Medicamina Faciei Femineae</i>	<i>Medic.</i>
<i>Remedia Amoris</i>	<i>Rem. am.</i>
Petronius, <i>Satyricon</i>	Petron. <i>Sat.</i>
Pliny, <i>Historia Naturalis</i>	Plin. <i>HN.</i>
Suetonius	Suet.
<i>Divus Augustus</i>	<i>Aug.</i>
<i>Gaius Caligula</i>	<i>Calig.</i>
<i>Divus Claudius</i>	<i>Claud.</i>
<i>Domitianus</i>	<i>Dom.</i>
<i>Divus Iulius</i>	<i>Iul.</i>
<i>Nero</i>	<i>Ner.</i>
<i>Tiberius</i>	<i>Tib.</i>
<i>Divus Titus</i>	<i>Tit.</i>
<i>Divus Vespasianus</i>	<i>Vesp.</i>
Tacitus, <i>Germania</i>	Tac. <i>Germ.</i>
Tertullian	Tert.
<i>De Pallio</i>	<i>DP.</i>
<i>De Cultu Feminarum</i>	<i>DCF.</i>

Chapter 1: Romanitas, scholarship, practices, and products

Introduction

The presentation of one's physical body is a meaningful act of self-identification, aimed at the gaze of others. Roman people adorned their body with clothing, cosmetics, perfume, and hairstyles in order to place themselves in the world; they asserted *self* visually, recognizing the gaze of the public and insisting that it recognize them too. Bodies were used to express gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, or, encompassing all of these, worldview. Through a universally understood semiotics of dress, Romans were able to embody various identities, and the intersections of identities. The language of Roman dress can be understood by viewing Roman identity as a matrix of overlapping categories of identity. These categories are gender, sexuality/sexual behavior, ethnicity/place of origin, social status, economic status, religion, and age. As demonstrated in the literature of ancient Rome each of these identifiers comprised a spectrum from normative and good (Roman), to abnormal and bad (unRoman). Individuals were judged along these spectra with regard to the distance between their individual identity and the "ideal Roman," an imaginary perfect identity at the pinnacle of the matrix. Self-presentation in early imperial Rome was the practice of manipulating identity, with the result of repositioning oneself on the matrix.

As a means of bodily modification, the temporary nature of adornment is important; the wearer literally puts on a particular identity, and this transforms how others read them. It should not be surprising, therefore, that Roman people¹ often

¹ I use the terms "Romans" and "Roman people" in the broadest sense possible, to include all persons living within the Roman Empire, and this usage is specifically intended to complicate the

changed their appearance in ways that crossed boundaries and bent the rules of conventionally “Roman” dress. Elite Romans centered in Rome, the self-proclaimed cultural authorities of early imperial Rome, have left us with examples of what they thought was truly Roman, and what they thought was not, through the literature and art that they produced and preserved. The term *Romanness*, as it is used here, describes a way of being that embodied the highest level of excellence in all areas of identity. *Romanitas*, or *Romanness*, was something to strive for, rather than something that anyone was born with.² The works of these cultural authorities also demonstrate that the semiotics of bodily presentation was a high priority, and a source of deep angst in Roman society. Throughout the early imperial period, the elite definition of *Romanitas* functioned as the aspirational identity *par excellence*.

While it is tempting to describe forms of Roman self-presentation as either “Roman” or “unRoman” (“proper” or “improper”), as many Roman authors did, it is more useful to look for instances of resistance, transgression, and the assertion (or prioritization) of other aspects of identity. Individual taste and the freedom to choose clothes were certainly important to self-presentation, and may have mattered deeply to some individuals. On the other hand, self-presentation does not happen within a vacuum. The semiotics of Roman dress defined and encompassed all possibilities of dress and all possible interpretations. When Romans individually chose the styles they would embrace and reject, they also chose the social norms that they would break and uphold. In other

notion of what a Roman was and underscore the coexistence of various identities in Roman people.

² The amount of ink spilled over whether “*Romanitas*” is an acceptable word to use is a clear indication that this subject deserves serious attention. See below for a fuller definition of *Romanitas* and *Romanness*.

³ Patricia Hill Collins identified a “matrix of domination” consisting of race, gender, and class in

words, they were well aware of what their self-presentation could mean, as well as what it did mean. Often transgression was acceptable when it was slight rather than extreme, such as the inclusion of Celtic brooches on a Roman cloak, or the coloring in of eyebrows on an otherwise un-made-up face. At other times such hybridity was key in defining a subculture; combining normative and transgressive practices and products, individuals could present an identity that was only slightly transgressive or resistant to Roman mores. People living within the Roman Empire valued the means of expressing identity through self-presentation, and were actively engaged in manipulating hierarchies through the presentation of their bodies.

Studying the ways in which Roman people expressed their identity through their bodies in the early imperial period (ca. 30 BCE to 250 CE) can help us understand the diversity of Roman society and the extent to which culture was mediated by cosmopolitan values. The chronological scope of this study is based around the consensus of many historians that the semiotics of dress were mostly static in this period, as was dress itself, with the exception of a few notable changes, which are described here. There are two main avenues of investigation here: products and practices. The products enable the practices to be, while the practices create demand for products. Therefore, they are equally important and mutually perpetuating. Only by taking Roman practices and Roman products together can we appreciate the complexity and sophistication of Roman society. The primary sources, specifically the literature and art of the Romans, and the artifacts of daily life which have been excavated, are illustrative of a body of Roman fashion which, while stable over time (chronologically), was quite dynamic across society (laterally). This lateral dynamism is the focus of studies of self-

presentation, and secondary source material abounds. However, the lateral dynamism is not always fully represented, as individual and subgroup identities exist at the junction of several markers, or categories, of identity. Scholars of Roman clothing have often been remiss in not considering the intersections of sexuality/sexual behavior, religion, social status, age, and other hierarchies in their discussions of self-presentation. This will be discussed more fully below.

Theoretical perspectives of self-presentation

Critical theory provides new lenses through which historians can view self-presentation and Roman identity. Here, theory should be understood as a toolbox containing various lenses (perspectives) which can be taken in order to enhance our comprehension of Roman identity. The main theory used will be the Matrix of Roman Identity model, which is my own reimagining of another matrix model to suit the subject at hand. This model posits a socially constructed *Romanitas* as the pinnacle of a hierarchical system of measuring identity. Theoretical terminology is unavoidable, and the arguments presented here rely on not just one grand theory but draw from several of these “lenses.” **Table 3** shows Romanness as the center of a matrix comprised of seven intersecting categories of identity (gender, sexuality/sexual behavior, social status, economic status, age, religion, and ethnicity/place of origin), while **Table 1** describes these categories in more detail. The ideal identity resides at the exact center, while actual identities may fall elsewhere. Using intersectionality theory backwards, from the fact of the bodily presentation to its purpose, we can see what cultural expression was like in early imperial Rome.

Instead of talking about self-presentation as an act of social subversion or an act of belonging to one group, it should be examined as a universal act. It is not too risky to say that every free person living in the Roman Empire expressed identity through self-presentation. Slaves can generally be excluded from discussions of *self*-presentation, because many lived at the whims of their masters, but they should not be excluded from discussions of bodily presentation. For many of the poorer classes of Romans, the evidence is insufficient to make broad generalizations about how they presented their bodies; however, this is no reason to ignore cases where there is information about the poor. Looking at examples of poor and lower-class Romans' self-presentation is necessary if we are to understand the ubiquity of self-presentation practices and the power of a society's beliefs about the body and beauty ideals in shaping human behavior.

The act of expressing self through the body, its maintenance, and adornment, is a human response to what Kate Bornstein has called the "matrix of oppression," after Patricia Hill Collins' "matrix of domination."³ Hill Collins' work on African American women helps historians read for and document everyday resistance, practices that can accumulate social capital for individual and collective challenges to slavery, domination, and what she calls "controlling stereotypes." Bornstein's queer theorizing confronts the contemporary gender system by the deploying the body in subversive ways, (re)presenting it as unreadable or as an "outlaw" regarding the rules and norms of sexual identity. None of the figures in my study ever made critique, resistance, or law-breaking

³ Patricia Hill Collins identified a "matrix of domination" consisting of race, gender, and class in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990). Bornstein refined this to include categories such as age, sexual orientation, and religion. Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with naming intersectionality theory in 1989.

their explicit goal, however, feminist theory can alert us as readers to possibilities for negotiation—even play—in the relatively stable and predictable hierarchies of the Roman world.

Bornstein first identified ten categories by which human beings define and label other human beings, which she called “hierarchical systems of oppression”: gender, age, race, class, sexuality, religion, looks, ability, citizenship, and family status.⁴ The matrix is the totality of intersections of categories. At the pinnacle of the matrix is a corporate ideal which subsumes ideal gender, ideal age, ideal race, ideal class, and so forth. This is not a real person, but is a projection of society’s ideals overlapped onto one another. According to Bornstein, members of the society will either strive towards this ideal of perfection (and be congratulated) or deliberately reject it in whole or in part (and risk being condemned). All oppression is a manifestation of the other’s perceived failure to achieve or approximate the ideal. This model, and other possible models based on intersectionality theory, are important in the context of this thesis because they reveal *Romanitas* and “otherness” (imperfect or failed *Romanitas*) as complex. A simple binary posits *Romanitas* as the norm/ideal, and everything else as “Other”: slave, barbarian, female, poor, sexually marginal, Jewish, Christian, and so forth. Intersectionality theory corrects this by first concluding that the ideal does not exist in reality (there never was a perfect Roman, although the Romans may have believe there was), and then by placing varieties of otherness in relation to each other as well as to the ideal. Hierarchies overlap, so that while both an effeminate emperor and a barbarian slave woman fail the test of *Romanitas*, one is clearly higher up in the social hierarchy. Thus, to speak of how

⁴ Kate Bornstein. *Hello Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for teens, freaks, and other outlaws*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006).

“Roman women” or “Roman men” presented their bodies is inadequate. The limitations of language, time, and evidence may prevent the full expression of every possibility, but scholarly studies of Roman self-presentation should acknowledge the intersections of categories such as gender, sexuality, religion, age, social status, economic status, and ethnicity.

Of course, in applying Bornstein’s theoretical model, not all of the given categories will be equally useful. The primary sources used here demonstrate that the categories Romans concerned themselves with were ethnicity/place of origin, gender, sexuality/sexual behavior, age, social status, economic status (wealth), and religion. These categories are the basic measures of *Romanitas*.⁵ It is not necessary to subdivide every Roman individual’s experience *ad nauseam*, but it is worthwhile to emphasize the ways in which such categories interplay. The specific usefulness of the “matrix of oppression” model resides in its ability to demonstrate the many uses to which bodily ornamentation and the care of the body were put, and why they were employed. It is also important to note that this theory, when applied to Roman society, posits *Romanitas* as static rather than as constantly being negotiated. To some extent, the view of a static definition of Romanness is consistent with the limited information available to historians. If the ideal was constantly being negotiated, the literature does not demonstrate it sufficiently. To put it another way, the critiques that had power in 50 CE seem to have had power in 200 CE, and attest to the longevity of the conservative mores (and the longevity of certain “unRoman” practices).

⁵ I have constructed and named these categories based on the areas of identity which most concerned Roman authors. They can be said to have “emerged” from my study of self-presentation.

Certain discussions in the field of self-presentation, which have heretofore gone ignored, will be addressed here. The scope of self-adornment will be broadened, to really include Roman men. This is very important, since treating self-presentation as a “women’s history” issue implies that it is not relevant to mainstream (i.e., men’s) history. As our understanding of gender expands, so should our histories of gendered experiences. Major works on self-presentation, like Edmondson and Keith’s *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, while providing a great deal of useful information, treat gender as a simple binary, which has no intersection with ethnicity, religion, or class.⁶ The book is organized into sections on masculinity, femininity, and cultural poetics, although the articles in the section on cultural poetics deal with actual individuals self-presenting. The evidence from primary sources is sufficient to demonstrate that gender was complex, and clothing was not as strictly gendered as we pretend it is, in the past just as in the present.

Another important theme is that of universal self-presentation: Roman people were self-presenting even when they were not deliberately deviating from norms of personal appearance. This makes immediate sense for ritual costume, but it is also true of the wallflowers, those who upheld the status quo and embraced ‘invisibility’. It is especially true of those who did so *as a reaction* to the transgressors, as surely our satirists and rhetoricians did; their monochromatic togas proclaimed, “Look, I am a REAL Roman,” despite the fact that most Romans did not wear togas on a daily basis,

⁶ *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture* is fraught with problems of organization and language, especially as it pits “Investments in Masculinity” against “Fashioning the Female,” and puts Brennan’s article, which actually deals with transgressive masculinities, in the section on “Cultural Poetics.” While it could be merely that the authors wanted to organize the book into sections of even length, it is a perfect example of the insistence on a heteronormative binary that rejects and marginalizes aspects of Roman culture which confound modern category.

and many persons living in Rome were forbidden by law from appearing togate in public. The theme of upward social mobility and dress deserves fuller attention, as well. Romans were status-conscious, and while certain garments were legally permitted to a select few, Romans seem to have frequently broken them in practice. When these laws were followed, upper-class style was emulated in other forms, such as the wearing of silver anklets instead of gold by the plebs, to whom gold anklets were forbidden. Through cosmetics, perfume, clothing, and haircare, people of lower status could improve their perceived social status.

It must also be emphasized that the Roman Empire was made up of so many different people, of various religious and ethnic backgrounds, with varying traditions and values, that distinctions based on personal appearance were inevitable, while at the same time these distinctions could be mixed and matched to emphasize individuality (or hybridity). The place of the individual within the group is tricky to extract. Group identity is used against others, but never for others; an embarrassing son or wild sister can be taken as evidence for an individual's immorality, but a particularly admirable relative is hardly proof of the individual's goodness. This lumping together of people into groups is a rhetorical device that allows for these discussions (invective) to occur. Hierarchies existed, and individual choice was limited by one's position in the hierarchy, but rarely is the individual subsumed into the group. Instead we have Roman citizens choosing to be gladiators, Christian women deserting their husbands, and St. Augustine sailing away in the middle of the night to escape his overbearing mother, Monica. Because of this, it is crucial to stress the factor of individual choice in personal appearance. Above all, a comparative approach is necessary to gain a grand, inclusive perspective. *Romanitas* or

Roman-ness was defined through the contrasting of binaries, sometimes as obvious as *matrona* versus *meretrix*, and always as referential to the prevailing Roman ideal. The key to understanding the language of Roman self-presentation is to understand what the signs are, and what they signify. Thus the evidence presented here will be focused on the intersections of identities and how products and practices varied between groups, presenting the individual with more opportunities to play with and manipulate identity and the semiotics of dress.

Sources for the study of self-presentation in early imperial Rome

I. Primary sources

Written sources, art, and archaeological evidence comprise the primary source material that can be used to understand self-presentation in the ancient world. Literary sources are useful because they provide records of daily life and also of elite attitudes towards self-presentation. However, the literary sources are also considered elitist because they were mostly written by members of the privileged classes, and reflect the worldview of a limited number of Romans. Education was an expensive advantage that few could afford in the ancient world, and full-time writers relied on patronage. Other writers subsidized their own writing, but had to dedicate time and energy to managing their estates, staying politically involved, fighting in war, or pursuing other upper-crust careers. It is understandable that these authors would be biased and seek to maintain their privilege, since there would be no writing without privilege under such a system. The attitudes towards self-presentation and identity inherent in the literature can be read as the elites' collective position towards others as well as an expression of their collective

definition of *Romanitas*. This definition, however, does not truly encompass what it meant to be a Roman living in the Roman Empire. These values provide modern scholars with a basis of comparison, between what was thought of as “Roman” self-presentation and how Roman people presented their bodies; in other words, the literary sources serve as one discourse from which we can draw conclusions. While the literary and artistic sources from the Roman Empire generally function as a single discursive formation, they are distinguished here as separate discourses because the demands of the media shaped the discourse. My definition of discourse is clearly derivative, and I credit not only Michel Foucault, but also Edward Said, whose explication of the discourse of Orientalism is closest to my own definition, describing as he does the internal consistency of the discourse over time. Said provides the following definition of Orientalism as a discourse shaping knowledge:

The phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient... despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a ‘real’ Orient.⁷

The same could be said about *Romanitas*, that is, the phenomenon of *Romanitas* deals principally not with a correspondence between *Romanitas* and Rome, but with the internal consistency of *Romanitas* and its ideas about being Roman. The literature describing *Romanitas* displays a greater degree of consistency over time, to the point of obstinacy. Conversely, artwork depicting actual Romans demonstrates the existence of a handful of parallel regional traditions, which constantly adjust their ‘position’ about

⁷ Edward Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage, 1978), 1-3, 5. Louise Revell also cites Said in the same manner, which I was unaware of when I first made the comparison between Orientalism and *Romanitas*; Revell writes that “to be Roman was a discourse...based upon a shared idea of being Roman.” *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

Romanitas in accordance with the particular audience. The artistic sources may draw on ancient symbolism, but are less obsessed with preserving old-fashioned definitions of Romanness. With regard to self-presentation, the literature of *Romanitas* was bound to the semiotic language of dress that was carried over from the time of the Republic. The ideal of the farmer-citizen-soldier was significant in discussions of dress long after Roman society had shifted away from that model. Revell describes this gap as the divergence of discursive knowledge, which understands the high discourse of *Romanitas* and appreciates the power of elite authorities, and practical knowledge, which concerns itself with survival and how to prosper in society.

While the ancients before Tertullian did not use (in writing) the term *Romanitas*, they described the characteristics that made a Roman worthy and good. An ideal Roman, a Roman whose identity is perfect and whose self-presentation represents the pinnacle of Romanness, is: male and uncastrated; married and has sex only with those people to whom he is legally and socially permitted sexual access, and only in the prescribed ways; free, and a citizen, as were his parents; financially independent and has other dependents, including slaves and clients, for whom he can adequately provide; from an Italian family that has been Roman for generations; middle-aged; and of no distinctive religious background, although he has a reputation for piety and does what is expected, which may include serving as a priest. The characteristics of *Romanitas* are consistent in Seneca's *Controversiae*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratio*, and in the critiques of "unRoman" emperors

in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. In *De Pallio* 4.1, Tertullian put a name to the concept of a Roman way of being, calling it *Romanitas* for the first time.⁸

The particular literary sources used here present views of the Roman world, which differ in scope and focus. The most prominently used sources are Martial's *Epigrams*, Juvenal's *Satires*, Petronius's *Satyricon*, and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. The decision to use popular literature as the backbone of an argument about Roman lifestyles, was based on the fact that these sources offer more descriptions of life as it probably occurred, rather than prescriptions for how it ought to occur. Roman fiction is less self-conscious about the ways in which The Other is defined, and so it is a better measure of the everyday discourse of *Romanitas*. Furthermore, these sources represent perspectives from different parts of the Roman Empire; Martial was from Spain, but wrote about Rome, while Juvenal was from Rome, Apuleius was from North Africa, and Petronius was a courtier in Rome.

Martial's *Spectacula*, also known as the *Epigrammaton liber* or *Liber de spectaculis*, is a collection of short, witty poems (although Roman humor is often lost in translation or simply not funny to us) about everyday people in the city of Rome, dating from the last quarter of the first century CE (ca. 86-103). Martial may have been writing about specific people he knew, but it seems more likely that he created his own rogue's gallery of stock characters, such as Zoilus the tacky freedman, Phyllis the demanding mistress, Crispulus the dandy, and Galla, Caelia, Fabulla, and Laelia the fast and phony

⁸ Bernard Green, *Christianity in Rome in the First Three Centuries* (London: T & T Clark International, 2010).

girls-about-town.⁹ One character, Cosmus the perfumer, is mentioned a total of ten times by Martial; it is unknown whether this was the name of a real perfumer, or a perfumery brand name, or simply a euphemistic summary of the international origins of Roman perfumes. Whether the characters Martial named were real individuals, the overall repetitiveness of the criticisms made in his epigrams demonstrates that they were based on real social types. The believability of these characters is evidence of a stereotyping discourse.

Juvenal's *Satires*, satirical poems, are similarly focused on poking fun at the commonplace misfits and problems in Roman society. The *Satires* were published from 112 to 130 CE, and while they covered a span of time roughly twenty-five years after Martial's *Spectacula*, he presents the same character types and stereotypes as Martial. Juvenal focuses less on individuals and instead critiques groups and trends, such as the passion for all things Greek, or the popularity of foreign cults. The *Satires* are more xenophobic and less personal than the *Spectacula*, perhaps because they were written in the period in which the Empire was at its largest territorially, or perhaps because Juvenal was simply a xenophobe. The emphasis on foreigners and their negative influence on Roman society highlights the connection between Romanness and ethnicity, which could otherwise be seen as unimportant. Juvenal's tone is more moralistic than Martial's, even when he is having a laugh at social misfits. Both Juvenal and Martial wrote about life in the city of Rome, although Martial occasionally contrasted it with the Spanish countryside.

⁹ For Zoilus see Mart. *Spect.* 5.79, 11.30, 11.37, 11.54, 11.85, 12.54. For Phyllis see 10.81, 11.27, 11.29, 11.50, 12.65. For Crispulus see 5.61; see also Juvenal's "Crispinus" Juv. 4.24-5. For Galla, Caelia, Fabulla, and Laelia see 7.18, 7.58, 9.37; 7.30, 11.75; 6.12, 8.33, 8.79; 10.68, 12.23.

Petronius' *Satyricon* differs from both of these because it is intentionally fictitious; rather than catalogue the follies of society, it focuses on a handful of characters and their many adventures. The *Satyricon* is a picaresque novel, and employs outlandish plot devices, including shipwrecks, werewolves, and frequent orgies. However, the story follows the characters in mostly realistic situations, such as a debate at a school, the scenes at a bathhouse, and a Roman dinner party. The characters and situations in the *Satyricon* reflect elite attitudes towards Roman society, especially regarding sexuality and the class system, and the clash of foreign and domestic cultural influences. Another novel, the *Metamorphoses* of Lucius Apuleius, also follows a major character (Lucius, a man obsessed with magic who botches a spell and turns into a donkey) through scenes of daily life in ancient Rome, as well as the occasional picaresque absurdity. The *Satyricon* was written in the first half of the first century CE, while the *Metamorphoses* was composed over a century later, perhaps in the 170s-180s; Petronius was from Rome and his characters hail from the city itself, while Apuleius' story is set in his native North Africa. These novels, along with the *Liber de spectaculis* and the *Satires*, cover the first 200 years of the Roman Empire broadly, and demonstrate the stability and continuity of the semiotics of Roman self-presentation over time, in spite of the humorous and tolerant tone of the narrations. They also illustrate the varieties of self-presentation that existed in the Roman Empire, and the kinds of people who engaged in transgressive self-presentation.

Other literary sources for self-presentation in Roman society include histories, biographies, poems, and catalogues of products. The various *Lives* of the emperors, found in Suetonius and the anonymously authored *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*,

provide us with a glimpse into the semiotics of dress and politics, as nearly every emperor was at one point critiqued on his personal appearance. Such critiques were made as proof that a person was or was not fit to rule. In the late 70s CE, Pliny the Elder published his encyclopedic *Historia Naturalis*, which covered botany, metallurgy, mineralogy, and other topics, under which perfumes and other luxury goods are described. Ovid, a poet who lived in the earliest days of the Empire (ca. 43 BCE to 18 CE), published a number of small works that referred to cosmetic treatments and beauty products, including *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*, and *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*. My use of these sources is admittedly filtered through the secondary sources that cover them so completely.¹⁰

In addition to written sources, the Romans left behind many works of art, which can be used to understand self-presentation. Roman art comprises distinct traditions, of which imperial portraiture, scenes of daily life, the portraiture of ordinary people, and victory monuments are the most relevant to this study. The portraiture of imperial family members differs greatly from the portraiture of unknown and ordinary people, because imperial portraiture was designed to model ideal *Romanitas*. Images of daily life were popular in Roman society, and many wall paintings and mosaics show scenes of ordinary activities. Roman art also abounds with stereotypes, and so people are shown not just as they appeared, but according to conventions of age, status, gender, and ethnicity. Items of clothing and hair styles constitute especially prominent clues about the subject and his or her value as a model of *Romanitas* in statues. For instance, in statuary and relief,

¹⁰ Full citations will not be provided for classical texts which I am only referencing second-hand; however, if the evidence from a classical text is cited, the source will be provided. Kelly Olson has done an excellent job of gleaning information about perfumes, cosmetics, and jewels from both Pliny and Ovid, in *Dress and The Roman Woman* (2008) especially.

upper-class women are shown fully covered with practically no adornments, standing in the *pudicitia* pose, while in the Fayyum paintings upper-class women wear jewelry and cosmetics, and have a more open stance, indicative of pride in physical appearance. These visuals, and the discourse they present when taken together, are necessary for understanding how Roman people presented their bodies, and how their presentation did or did not fit what was expected.

Archaeological finds have begun to be more fully incorporated into discussions of Roman self-presentation in recent years. Items of self-care such as combs and *unguentaria* (small vials and containers) are now given due recognition, and some have even been the subject of monographs, such as the cosmetic grinders from Roman Britain.¹¹ Scholarly debates over the evidence for identity in archaeological finds have given way to conversations about self-presentation, as scholars have come to recognize that people living in the Roman Empire adopted and adapted items of adornment to suit their own tastes and purposes. Small finds are significant because they can confirm the artistic and literary records, as well as establish the incidence of products and practices outside the Empire's major cities.

II. Secondary sources

A. T. Croom's *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, published in 2000, was the first comprehensive monograph on civilian dress in ancient Rome since the 1930s.¹² The study of Roman clothing has come a long way since 2000, but scholarship on the use of

¹¹ Ralph Jackson, *Cosmetic Sets of Late Iron Age and Roman Britain*, British Museum Research Publication vol. 181 (London: British Museum Press, 2010).

¹² Croom (2000).

other forms of bodily adornment has lagged behind, a fact lamented by some scholars.¹³

Up until the late 1990s, self-presentation was hardly studied; books like Lillian May Wilson's *The Clothing of Ancient Romans*, published in 1938, were standard secondary sources. Concerning cosmetics and perfumes, the academic output was even thinner. William Arthur Poucher's *Perfumes, Cosmetics and Soaps: the Production, Manufacture and Application of Perfumes*, first published in 1923, was reprinted until 1997, and *Toilet and Cosmetic Arts in Ancient and Modern Times*, by Arnold Cooley, was originally published in 1866 and reprinted as late as 1970. Many of these early works on self-presentation repeated the words of Roman authors without comparing the literary sources to artistic representations or archaeological finds. It is not the case that they were standard texts on Roman history; rather, the subject of Roman self-care was not considered sufficiently important to warrant serious investigative effort until recently. Even when advances in knowledge were made by archaeologists and art historians, these outdated catalogues were considered sufficient sources and reprinted with little to no updating. However, the growing interest in social histories made possible a new field. In the 1990s, new studies of Roman clothing began to appear, and by the 2000s, the study of Roman "self-presentation" was a growing field.

The significance of clothing in the ancient world is now widely recognized in studies of self-expression. Haircare, cosmetics, and perfume have been given less attention; a handful of "definitive" sources exist, and that is all. In the past decade, a few scholars have defended the value of these forms of adornment to the study of social

¹³ Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith, "Introduction," in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Batten (2010).

history, notably Kelly Olson and Susan Stewart, but also Eve D'Ambra, Janet Stephens, and Elizabeth Bartman.¹⁴ All of these scholars have focused on women's use of adornments, with the exception of Olson's unpublished work on Roman dandies.¹⁵ Some efforts have been made to recapture the history of Roman men's self-presentation, centering on particular circumstantial groups, such as Emma Dench's work on soldiers, and Eric Varner's on male cultic cross-dressing.¹⁶ These sources represent a budding interest in how men enacted identity through the use of beauty products, clothing, and accessories. Roman cosmetics and haircare are still frequently described as the domain of rich women, despite a growing body of evidence to the contrary. However, Janet Stephens has effectively demonstrated that even the most elaborate haircare was accessible to the lower orders of society, and Susan Stewart has pointed out that cosmetics were also more broadly available. Considering the prevalence and economic force of self-care products and practices in all societies, it is a wonder that they would ever be excluded from "serious" scholarship.

A certain bias against adornment still exists, which may be anachronistic, and is definitely unconstructive. For instance, D'Ambra's discussion of *cultus* in *Roman Women* (1998) emphasizes the role of cosmetics, perfume, and accessories in delineating

¹⁴ Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman: self-presentation and society* (London: Routledge, 2008); Kelly Olson, "Cosmetics in Roman Antiquity: Substance, Remedy, Poison," *Classical World* Vol. 102, No. 3 (2009), 291-310; Susan Stewart, *Cosmetics & Perfumes in the Roman World* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007); Eve D'Ambra, *Roman Women* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Janet Stephens, "Ancient Roman hairdressing: on (hair)pins and needles," *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Vol. 21, fasc. 1 (2008), 110-132; Elizabeth Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment," *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 105 No. 1 (2001), 1-25.

¹⁵ Kelly Olson, "Masculinity, Appearance, and Sexuality: Dandies in Roman Antiquity" (Forthcoming).

¹⁶ Dench (1998); Eric R. Varner. "Transcending Gender: assimilation, identity, and Roman imperial portraits" in *Role Models in the Roman World: identity and assimilation*, ed. Sinclair Bell and Inge Lyse Hansen, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, Supplementary Volume, 7 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

social status and their potential to erase the boundaries of status. In a review for the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, Rachel Meyers described D'Ambra's work on self-presentation in regressive and unflattering terms: "The matter of a Roman woman's personal grooming will be especially interesting to college students (part of the intended audience of the book), who spend plenty of time, effort, and money on their own appearances."¹⁷

Thus far, there have been no monographs focusing on self-presentation in the context of Early Imperial religion, ethnicity, or sexuality. The intersections of these identity markers have not gone unnoticed, but identity is generally conceived of as a set category rather than a complex matrix of categories. The gap that needs filling is the connection of these categories as overlapping layers of Roman identity. Where studies of Roman women, soldiery, and religious personnel emphasize the distinct nature of the group in question, it is my intent to place them in the context of what it meant to be male, female, young, old, a slave, a peasant, a citizen, an alien, a worshipper of a particular deity or follower of a particular sect, married, unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual.¹⁸

Organization of the present work

Examining Roman dress from the perspective of intersectionality is challenging, because organizing an argument demands the division of categories into discrete subsections. Given the difficulty of maintaining a broad view of the possibilities of identity while providing convincing illustrations of how certain aspects of identity were

¹⁷ Rachel Meyers, review of *Roman Women* (Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2007.08.56).

¹⁸ The nuances of Roman sexual categories aside, there is a distinction that can be made in some cases, between a person who actively seeks homoerotic attention and one who does not. The majority of the evidence will center on Roman males, but not all of it; Bernadette Brooten has done an excellent job of reconstructing female homosexual lives in *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

embodied, the argument will occasionally focus closely on a single category. The purpose is to illustrate the semiotics of Roman self-presentation, and of course no single example is definitive of an entire group of people. The present work will be divided into four chapters, the first of which explores identity contexts, including gender, sexuality, religion, culture, and social status. The purpose of the first chapter is to set the stage for the following three, which will explore identity expression through the practices and products that pervaded the Roman market. The second chapter will focus on practices surrounding haircare, and the ways in which hair could be manipulated in presenting identity. The third chapter will deal with beauty products, including skincare, cosmetics, and tools, and their semiotic possibilities. The fourth chapter will focus on the color, pattern, fabric, and jewelry that comprised Roman dress. In this chapter the possible meanings of these products will be examined, as in previous chapters, but there will also be a section dedicated to the act of self-presentation in public spaces, which will incorporate the material from previous chapters to demonstrate self-presentation in action. This paper will conclude with a summary and a discussion of the Matrix of Roman Identity as a transferable model for understanding self-presentation in historical societies.

Chapter 2: The sexual, gendered, religious, cultural, and social contexts of Roman identity

The practice of self-presentation discussed here covers a period of approximately 250 years, from the beginning of the Roman Empire to the early third century. In this period, the Roman Empire grew to encompass Egypt, all of Spain, the Alpine regions, Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia, Galatia, Moesia, Judaea, parts of Germania, Cappadocia, Mauretania, Britain, Thrace, Lycia, Pamphilia, Nabatea, Dacia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria, and lands beyond the Danube.¹⁹ In the same period, many of the conquered lands were lost in whole or in part, but the conquests by Rome brought many new people into the Roman Empire. Therefore, in addition to the span of time, there is a geographical span which affects the meaning of “self-presentation” in the Roman Empire. In general, the practices described are those of people who lived in Rome, the city, itself, or other large cosmopolitan urban centers. Rome was a large cosmopolitan city and people from all over the Roman Empire lived there; it was also where many products and practices of self-presentation have been observed and recorded. As such, the city of Rome and other major urban centers function as a limited microcosm of the Roman Empire. However, there are instances where evidence from outside of the cities is necessary and useful. In the case of artwork in particular, there is such a plethora of evidence that to ignore it would be absurd. For example, the Fayyum portraits cover the same span of time as this paper and are an excellent source of information about how

¹⁹ Ancient place names are given to emphasize the diversity and number of states that were conquered by the Romans. The modern place-names can be misleading, because the number of states and distinct peoples has been reduced.

North African Romans presented their bodies, especially in their best clothes. Using the semiotics of dress, these images made distinctions of social status, age, and gender that are comparable to those made in the literature. Funerary reliefs are also very telling, because they were erected by people of all social standings, from slaves to artisans to elites. These monuments depict a variety of self-presentations, and are useful because they show the deceased as they wanted to be remembered, not just as they appeared daily. In addition to these artistic self-representations, there exist representations that distinguish Romans from non-Romans. Images of conquered, dead, or dying non-Romans are fairly common. Some of these statues and monuments show native and provincial dress as perceived by the Romans and as demonstrative of non-Roman identity. Whether or not they are accurate, they are visual representations of the semiotics of dress that defined *Romanitas*.

By comparing visual records to literature, we gain a fuller picture of Roman self-presentation. Over time, visual records also reveal slight changes in fashion, which the literature glosses over. For instance, the Romans consistently described male age in terms of beardedness or beardlessness, but true beards were not widely fashionable until the early second century, after which point they were ubiquitous. Prior to the rule of Hadrian (Emperor from 117 to 138), Roman men expressed their *Romanitas* by presenting clean-shaven faces, and imperial portraiture reflects this. Only one emperor, Nero (ruled 54 to 68), is portrayed with a beard, in the chin-strap style (and he was generally acknowledged to be a bad example). Besides this emperor, all of the Roman Emperors before Hadrian are shown clean-shaven. After Hadrian, they are consistently shown with beards. Furthermore, childhood and manhood were distinguished by ritual

and self-presentation, not actual age.²⁰ Hadrian's paramour Antinous is consistently represented as a beardless youth, despite the maturity of his body.²¹

Using the visual record as well as Roman written sources allows a more precise picture of Roman self-presentation practices over time. Archaeological data are also very significant, as they demonstrates the area over which a practice was spread. Finds of items related to self-presentation, such as cosmetic containers, combs, brooches, and cloth, allow us to compare the self-presentation practices in different parts of the Roman Empire. Major trends, patterns, and changes are easy to see over time and space, but must also be placed into context. Certain events and social movements shaped the way Roman people presented their bodies, which also affected events. For this purpose, it is important to remember that self-presentation always occurred within a cultural context. For many Romans, self-presentation was political. They presented their bodies in accordance with their sense of who they were religiously, culturally, economically, socially, and sexually; transgressing the ideals of *Romanitas* could be subversive, unRoman, or even anti-Roman. For others, who had no control over their own bodily presentation, their lack of control was seen as unRoman, regardless of who they felt they were inside.

The Sexual Context of Self-Presentation

Studies of Roman sexuality and gender are often the basis of exploration in the area of self-presentation, especially when the identity being presented is explicitly

²⁰ See Fanny Dolansky, "Togam Virilem Sumere: Coming of Age in the Roman World," in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 48.

²¹ **Figures 11 and 12.**

masculine or feminine. Much of the initial impetus for self-presentation studies came from scholars on Roman women, who have sought to reclaim women's daily practices as important historically. However, variant sexuality has been carefully (and perhaps, purposefully) omitted from the conversation. While it is broadly acknowledged that Roman sexual norms were different from modern Western heteronormative standards, studies of Roman dress tend to reaffirm the centrality of marriage and family to Roman society, and especially to Roman women, at the expense of other lifestyles. One of the effects of this constant reassertion is the equating of all women with the "*matronae*" (upper-class married women) of the literary sources.²² Thus all the Roman women are described as brides-to-be or married mothers. They are not described as single, as homoerotically inclined, as consecrated virgins, as old women, as slave women, or as resident aliens. Furthermore, Roman men and masculinity are presented as fairly consistent across society,²³ despite the stark differences between the lifestyle, expectations, and power of the *paterfamilias* (head of the household) and other types of men, such as bachelors, thieves, eunuchs, and slaves.

The Religious Context of Self-Presentation

The particular religious context of this thesis is the divergent practices of three major faith communities in Rome: the Jews, the ascetics (including, but not limited to, Christians), and those who participated in traditional Roman religions, including mystery cults. The division is incomplete, and in no way represents all of the people living within the Roman Empire. It does, however, encompass many of the people for whom the

²² Olson (2008), and D'Ambra (2008), *passim*.

²³ Knapp (2011), 11.

evidence is strongest, and who had an especially “felt” presence in the city of Rome.

While Roman Jews were small in numbers in Rome, they seem to have been a visible minority, although the exact nature of their visibility is unclear. They paid special taxes, had a special legal status, and were noticed by other Romans.²⁴ Even in contexts where a person’s Jewishness seems insignificant to the story, it is mentioned, such as in Juvenal’s Eighth Satire, where the excessively adorned host at a tavern is implied to be a Jew from Syria.²⁵ If the host had been a Gentile from Italy, he still would have been wearing too much perfume, yet Juvenal finds it worthwhile to point out that he is Jewish (and oriental).

Ascetics are grouped together, both Christian and non-Christian, because the evidence demonstrates that they shared common values, such as a rejection of earthly goods, which resulted in similar self-presentation practices. The bulk of the evidence used here for ascetics does come from the Christian tradition, but it must be remembered that within this tradition were sects such as Marcianites, Gnostics, and Montanists, which eventually fell by the wayside (or were suppressed). Roman Christians and other ascetics were numerous in the first two centuries of the Empire, and they were recognizable by their self-presentation as well. While not all Christians were ascetic, the literature of early Christianity presents an alternative set of values that operated alongside Roman norms.

Finally, in grouping what used to be called “pagan” Roman religions under one heading, “traditional” Roman religions, I am simply creating a useful heuristic for combining practices into a discussable group, which did not preclude other beliefs and

²⁴ Tertullian, *De Corona* 4.2

²⁵ Juv. 8.159-161. Juvenal describes the man as a “*Syrophoenix*” or Syrian, and “*incola portae [Idumaeae]*,” or resident of the gate area in Idumaea, a Palestinian district. It is also implied that this “host” is an encourager or participant in sexual hijinks of the sort inappropriate to adult men.

practices and did not have any teachings that *indirectly* affected self-presentation. Many of these religions, on the other hand, did have *specific* teachings which *directly* affected self-presentation, such as ritual clothing. Religious differences in the Roman Empire did not make anyone more or less “Roman” in a real sense, but they created distinctions of *Romanitas*. All religious practices can be said to have affected self-presentation in one way or another. However, the disparity can be seen as being between those which required specific dress in a ritual context, such as traditional Roman religions, and those which broadly created a context for daily self-presentation, such as Judaism and Christianity. The model is limited in its usefulness, but generally speaking, traditional Roman religions did not demand extreme asceticism in personal appearance, nor did they exercise the same power of social mediation that *halakha* did, over all members of the faith. Furthermore, there is a lively debate over how strongly *halakha* influenced the self-presentation for Jewish Romans.²⁶ All Romans dealt with the daily reality that clothing and self-presentation could be seen as honoring or dishonoring, regardless of whether they were monotheistic or polytheistic, and had to navigate the intersection of religious group identity and their broader social identity.

Alicia Batten mentions the evidence for Jews in Roman Judea wearing typical Hellenistic and Roman clothing in “Clothing and Adornment,” a paper which calls for further study on the topic, and Alexandra Croom’s *Roman Clothing and Fashion* features depictions and a brief discussion of Jewish clothing from the Roman period.²⁷ Croom

²⁶ The debate is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

²⁷ Alicia J. Batten, “Clothing and Adornment,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40, no. 3 (2010): 148–159, 153; Alexandra Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion* (Stroud: Amberley, 2000), 130–132.

discusses Jewish clothing briefly, and admits to relying heavily on Lucille A. Roussin,²⁸ who argued that Jews were recognizable by their distinctive costume, although they too wore tunics and restricted the number of colors men could wear. Both Jewish men and women may have worn the *tallit*, a *pallium*-like garment which went over the *haluq* (tunic).²⁹ In many cases clothing did not set Jewish Romans apart from other Romans; however, if Jewish Romans wanted to distinguish themselves from gentiles through their self-presentation, they had the means to do so, and could rely on prescriptive texts to support their actions. Chana Safrai³⁰ has also commented on the use of cosmetics by Jewish women, who considered makeup normative, and a lack of makeup strange and potentially shameful; similar evidence is put forth, but not fully developed, by Cynthia Baker, who focuses on unmarried women's lack of support for wearing cosmetics.³¹

Roman Christians' and other ascetics' dramatic use of self-presentation also remains an under-developed area of study, although the debate about the use of the veil is a recurring theme, appearing in Bruce Winter's monograph³² on 'new women' in the church, and Peter Brown's *The Body and Society*.³³ Asceticism, because of its emphasis on rejecting the world, gave rise to many self-presentation practices. Some early

²⁸ Lucille A. Roussin, "Costume in Roman Palestine: Archaeological Remains and the Evidence from the Mishnah," in *The World of Roman Costume*, ed. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonafonte (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

²⁹ Roussin (1994), 184.

³⁰ Chana Safrai, "Beauty, Beautification and Cosmetics: Social Control and Halakha in Talmudic Times," in *Jewish Legal Writings By Women*, ed. Mikah D. Halpern and Chana Safrai (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 1998).

³¹ Cynthia M. Baker, "'Ordering the House': on the domestication of Jewish bodies," in *Parchments of Gender: deciphering the bodies of antiquity*, ed. Maria Wyke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

³² Bruce Winter. *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003).

³³ Peter R. L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Christians, coming from a variety of philosophical backgrounds, abandoned what they saw as excessive concern for bodily presentation (and what others saw as basic hygiene), adopting instead a carefully fashioned image of holy humility. The abandonment of jewelry, cosmetics, and fine clothing was a common and dramatic effect of women's conversion to Christianity. This movement was especially popular in the eastern half of the empire, and perhaps more shocking in light of the fact that Jewish, Egyptian, and other women from the eastern provinces considered ornamentation a normative practice.

A few studies of self-presentation emphasize clothing worn in specific religious ceremonies. Fanny Dolansky, mentioned above, discusses a special tunic worn by Roman boys during the Liberalia ritual, in which they quite literally came of age. Laura Gawlinski's " 'Fashioning' Initiates: Dress at the Mysteries," and Maura K. Heyn's "Sacerdotal Activities and Parthian Dress in Roman Palmyra," both deal with the types of clothing worn in a specific religious context, although they do not discuss instances of those being worn outside the ritual. Still, the hierarchies within mystery cults and the presence of others imply that ritual clothing reflected conscious self-presentation.

The Ethno-cultural Context of Self-Presentation

As mentioned above, the Roman Empire was mostly expanding in the first two centuries CE. As Rome expanded, the number of ethnicities and cultures³⁴ added to the Empire increased; at one point, so many were added by one military campaign that the emperor was granted a triumph over an unspecified number of peoples, as many as he

³⁴ The terms "ethnicity" and "culture" are used in the broadest sense, and as a contrast to the "mainstream" Italo-Roman ethnicity and culture; as with *Romanitas*, I try to use distinguishing terms in the way that the Romans themselves did.

pleased.³⁵ The new influx of new ethnic and cultural groups meant that the ethnic makeup of Rome was constantly changing; however, the Romans measured *Romanitas* not by blood, but by practice. If a person acted the part of a Roman, he or she could be seen as a Roman, in theory. At the same time, the Romans were quick to point out negative characteristics stereotypically associated with non-Italian ethnic groups, even when those groups had been (politically speaking) “Roman” for quite some time. The Romans first invaded Hispania (Spain) in 218 BCE, and maintained a presence there for the next two centuries. In 19 BCE, most of Iberia was under Roman control. However, as late as 98 CE, when Trajan became the Emperor of Rome, the fact of his being Spanish was still noted as a potential flaw. Dio seems to have thought Trajan’s predecessor, Nerva, was being generous by choosing him for his qualities, in spite of his ethnicity, seeing as he was the first “foreigner” to become Emperor.³⁶ The next emperor, Hadrian, was also a Spaniard, but in his biography took pains to present him as being of Italian descent originally.³⁷ From these few examples alone it is evident that ethnicity was tricky in ancient Rome, and cannot be directly correlated to modern understandings of culture. While the Romans were aware of ethnic differences, they tended to embrace all peoples who embraced *Romanitas* as the highest way of life. Having Italian ancestors never hurt, though.

In addition to the fluid boundaries between Roman and Romanized, there remain the clear boundaries between groups which were seen as culturally Roman and groups

³⁵ Cass. Dio. 68.29.2.

³⁶ Cass. Dio, 68.4.1-2. Trajan is referred to as one of the “ἄλλοεθνῆς,” or “peoples of other nations.”

³⁷ SHA. *Hadr.* 1.1. Aelius Spartianus, the author attributed with the biography, claims to use Hadrian’s autobiography as his prime source, and insists that Hadrian’s family was originally Italian, although they settled in Spain hundreds of years before his birth, as Hadrian said.

which were seen as culturally not-Roman. The distinction is felt most harshly in the frequent Roman use of the catch-all term “barbarian.” Germans and other so-called barbarians are described in terms of not only their physical characteristics, but their supposedly bizarre bodily presentation, to the point that light-colored hair became associated with barbarianism. Roman women who dyed their hair blonde or red were criticized for supposedly wanting to look like barbarians and slaves.³⁸

The areas of the Empire which were Hellenized before the Roman conquest were not perceived in the same way. North Africans, Greeks, and West Asians were seen as more refined than Italians, to the point of effeminacy and vice. People from the Hellenized parts of western Asia were often brought into Rome as slaves, according to Juvenal and Martial. These slaves were used for status display as serving boys and litter carriers, perhaps because they had been used to a refined life before being enslaved, or perhaps because they were thought to be more attractive (the two need not be mutually exclusive). Juvenal writes of a man whose pierced ears and earrings prove that he was “born beside the Euphrates,” that is, that he was brought to Rome as a slave from the Eastern provinces.³⁹ Juvenal also blasts Greeks who became successful enough to wear purple,⁴⁰ Egyptian dandies,⁴¹ foreigners who preyed upon the piety of Roman women with their weird and fraudulent religions,⁴² Asians of equestrian status,⁴³ and Rhodesians and Corinthians who wore too much perfume.⁴⁴ Not only are peoples from the eastern

³⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 8.33

³⁹ Juv. 1.104-5

⁴⁰ Juv. 3.81

⁴¹ Juv. 4.24-5

⁴² Juv. 6.532-86.

⁴³ Juv. 7.15

⁴⁴ Juv. 8.113-5

portions of the Roman Empire described in terms of their indulgence in luxury, but they seem to be, in Juvenal's mind, the foreigners most likely to succeed.⁴⁵ Even those who arrived in Rome as slaves often ended up as priests, knights, and wealthy men.

Elsewhere, Juvenal compares Asian slaves to African slaves in terms of their worth, concluding that a Saharan or Moor is good enough to serve a pauper, but the wealthiest deserve a cupbearer from Asia. Describing a dinner party in which guests are given a lower quality of food, wine, and service than that which the host receives himself, he wrote:

You will receive your cup from a Saharan footman, or the bony hand of a black-faced Moor, a character whom you would rather not meet in the middle of the night... The flower of Asia waits on the host, bought for a figure beyond the total assets of the valiant Tullus and Ancus, beyond (to be brief) the paltry junk of all the kings of early Rome... A lad who costs so many thousands cannot pour for a pauper.⁴⁶

Juvenal, unlike other Roman authors, seems to have a particular dislike of African people, so this piece may not be indicative of a general perception of African slaves as less worthy.⁴⁷ However, this passage does illustrate the perception that Roman West Asians were seen as refined and beautiful, and were used to display the wealth of their masters. Elsewhere, Martial confirms this,⁴⁸ but Martial also seems to think that African slaves were pretty fashionable.⁴⁹ Roman Africans are not, generally speaking, associated with either slavery or luxury, but they are associated with less conventional dress, perhaps indicative of a greater freedom of gender expression. Tertullian, an influential

⁴⁵ This can be seen as an orientalist fantasy as well as perhaps a self-fulfilling prophecy; if slaves are placed in relatively amenable conditions, they may indeed have a better chance of success in life.

⁴⁶ Juv. 5. 52-61.

⁴⁷ See also Juv. 6.59-601.

⁴⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 6.77, 9.2, 9.22

⁴⁹ Mart. *Spect.* 12.24

Christian theologian who lived from about 160 to 225 CE, wrote a treatise, *De Pallio*, on the costume of North Africans, in which he complained that effeminacy in self-presentation was widespread. He wrote *De Pallio* in defense of his decision to adopt the philosopher's garb instead of the Roman toga or other, more outlandish Graeco-Roman styles of self-presentation. He condemned the adoption of practices by men such as depilation, tweezing beards, styling the hair, consulting mirrors, and wearing silk and trousers.⁵⁰ He also complained that freedmen, slaves, poor urbanites, and peasants dress as well as the men he addresses, whom we can presume to be free, upper-class citizens.⁵¹

Despite evidence that Roman fashion varied regionally, the Empire was a cosmopolitan culture in which people practiced the same types of self-presentation as elsewhere. Tertullian's complaint about depilation and tweezing was not unique to North Africa, nor was the use of silk, or the subversive pretense to higher social status through dressing "upward." Martial and Juvenal have the same complaints about Romans living in Rome. In Rome, as well as in other major cities and populous areas of the empire, the finest self-presentation tools, methods, and styles were very available. Women in the Fayyum portraits may not have resembled the statues of women of the imperial family, which were meant to be examples of *Romanitas* to all women in the Roman Empire, yet

⁵⁰ Tert. *DP.* 4.1, 4.2, 4.6. In 4.1 he asks "Whence with rough and hirsute men, the resin so rapaciously [attacks] the arse, and the tweezers the chin?" (*Unde apud hirtos et hirsutos tam rapax a culo resina, tam furax a mento volsello?*) In 4.2 he condemns a man, using him as an example of the current fashions, who took to "building up the hair, fashioning the skin, [and] consulting a mirror" among other faults (...*comam struere, cutem fingere, speculum consulere*...). In 4.6 he mentions "*sarabara*," which were Median trousers, and silk (*serico*), as styles having conquered the conqueror of the Medes. (*Vicerat Medicam gentem, et victus est Medica veste... in captiva sarabara decessit... et ut mollius ventilante serico extinxit*).

⁵¹ Tert. *DP.* 4.8 "Freedmen in the clothes of knights, subversives (?) in those of gentlemen, the surrendered in those of the free, louts in those of the cultivated, clowns in the those of lawyers, and hicks in those of soldiers..." (*Libertinos in equestribus, subuerbustos in liberalibus, dediticios in ingenuis, rupices in urbanis, scurras in forensibus, paganos in militaribus*).

they fit the descriptions found in the literature pretty exactly, and archaeological finds of clothing and jewelry verify the accuracy of the portraits. The clothing of the Roman Empire can be studied as a general style of self-presentation, with differences expressing individual identity. Trends, such as the growing-out of beards after Hadrian, were fashionable across the entire Roman Empire. Over time, men's fashions seem to have changed more than women's. Jewelry and status display became more acceptable in the first three centuries CE, and by the sixth century, the Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodosia were openly depicted in rich, colorful fabrics and pearls. The sixth-century mosaic of Justinian and Theodosia⁵² is, of course, much closer to a medieval aesthetic about status display than a Roman aesthetic; however, the trajectory of the first few centuries is towards greater and greater variety and expressiveness of dress.⁵³

The question of ethnic identity is discussed in studies that deal with how Romans and other ethnic groups interacted. Emma Dench, in "Austerity and Excess in Italy,"⁵⁴ discusses the adoption of 'barbarian' clothing by Roman military personnel, despite the prejudices of Roman society against foreigners, who they saw as immoral and effeminate. This article illustrates wonderfully the Roman tendency to conflate traits that they saw as undesirable into a tangled knot of generalized negativity. Femininity (effeminacy), barbarism, poverty, immorality, greed, excess, and other such qualities became almost synonymous. As Dench points out, exotic clothing may not have been considered effete

⁵² Croom (2000), plate 1.

⁵³ Ellen Swift, "Personal Ornament," in *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use*. Ed. Lindsay Allason-Jones. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 207; Croom (2000), 176.

⁵⁴ Emma Dench, "Austerity, excess, success and failure in Hellenistic and early imperial Italy," in *Parchments of Gender: deciphering the bodies of antiquity*. Ed. Maria Wyke. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.)

for a soldier; it may also be the case that because he is a tough, aggressive man, a Roman soldier can get away with more. Dench does not exclude the possibility that individual soldiers were ambitious, and used outlandish fashions to improve their image. In many cases, Roman soldiers were the first to have contact with outsiders, and military camps were the site of exchanges of clothing and adornments.

Chapter 3: Hair and self-presentation

The important role played by hair in society is often overlooked, perhaps because hair is so ubiquitous. Everyone has hair; that some people care about it more than others can be taken for granted and easily dismissed, as it often is. In early imperial Rome, hair care, facial hair, and bodily hair were an important means of expressing identity, and often signified the measure of a person's *Romanitas*. The many hairstyles worn by Romans in the first three centuries CE are well-documented.⁵⁵ Perhaps the most recognizably "Roman" style is the short, forward-combed style seen on portraits of the Julio-Claudian emperors (and later resurrected by Constantine as a throwback fashion statement); this style is an example of how hair fits into the Matrix of Roman Identity. Ideal Romans would be recognizable by their hair as well as other qualities which placed them on the good/Roman half of the equation, and therefore closer to the ideal of the *Romanitas* matrix. Portraits from the ancient world show how hair looked, and literary sources describe how it was cared for; embedded in both are cues that distinguish "Roman" hair from the hair of others. The semiotic difference between "Roman" hair (hair that demonstrated *Romanitas*), and Roman hair (the hair of persons living in the Roman Empire), must be stressed, because it is a subtle yet deeply significant difference. Roman authors and artists left records of the guidelines and ideals for haircare, and in so doing, they also provided glimpses into everyday self-presentation practices. Because they also recorded examples of "wrong" haircare, it is possible to see the connection between haircare and identity in the Roman world, and how hair functioned semiotically.

⁵⁵ An excellent summary is given in Croom (2010), 74-78, fig. 23-24, and 113-120, fig. 46-48.

Roman men and women adopted haircare practices that suited them and expressed their identity. Through hairstyles, they were able to demonstrate belonging to specific religious sects, ethnic groups, social classes, and sexual categories. Through descriptions and images of hair, Roman authors were able to mark people as members of certain groups. This chapter's discussion of hair in ancient Rome will encompass hairstyles, facial hair, body hair, products related to hair, and practices involving hair, because many Romans self-consciously used all of these forms of self-expression. Although it was never formally restricted, hair could be contentious in certain contexts, such as when a person adopted a practice that transgressed the norm.⁵⁶ Several Roman authors make clear the association in Roman society between haircare, character, and personality, equating transgressive hair with general instability and untrustworthiness. Bodily and facial hair, as well as the hair of the head, were used to express personal identity, life circumstance, and group identity. The individual's hair informed the gaze of the crowd; for instance, a life event such as the death of a loved one was shown through purposeful carelessness of appearance and disheveled hair.⁵⁷ Because such practices were encoded with meaning, they could be and were manipulated. Understanding Roman self-presentation practices through the lens of the matrix allows these symbols to be examined both for what they were supposed to mean and how they were actually used.

The practice of caring for one's hair carried meaning for the individual, and it is often through descriptions of hair that we see Romans of all walks of life transgressing

⁵⁶ Olson (2008), 100-103). The *Lex Oppia*, which restricted women's adornment, was a temporary response to a state crisis; there was an informal council of noblewomen, however, called the *conventus matronarum*, who attempted to limit the adornments of women according to status. This council had no formal power and it is not clear that they concerned themselves with haircare.

⁵⁷ Juv. 3.213, 9.12-15; Mart. *Spect.* 1.24.

social norms of moderation with flamboyant self-expression. In Roman society, flamboyance was transgressive because the Romans had complex feelings about being ‘on display;’ being put on display was characteristic of slaves, actors, gladiators, prostitutes, and other low-status people. For upper class women it was especially transgressive to put oneself on display, since there was supposedly no honorable reason for a woman to be noticeable. Obviously, ‘display’ is not so simple, since all self-presentation is at its core aimed at the gaze of others.

For males among the upper echelons of Roman society, the necessity and appeal of being on display, in the form of public speeches and commemorative portraiture, clashed with the necessity of embodying Roman values and setting a good example for the lower orders. Portraits of the imperial family were often displayed across the Empire in major cities and towns, and these portraits served to demonstrate *Romanitas*. This type of display was clearly a form of privilege, as well as one of responsibility and power. However, ‘display’ for the majority of the people meant exposure and a lack of privacy, which was a real privilege in the ancient world. Because privacy was a hallmark of high living, display and ostentation were viewed with suspicion, at least by the self-appointed moral authorities of ancient Rome. Many ordinary people who were on display were powerless to prevent the display of their bodies, such as prostitutes, gladiators, and actors. They were vulnerable not only to others’ gaze but to various forms of violence, including state-sponsored violence. For those ordinary Romans who were not on display, the level of privacy available in daily life was probably low, since they shared small living quarters, baths, changing rooms, and workspaces with others. Furthermore, the possibility of losing what protection they had from unwanted display must have seemed

much more imminent than the possibility of being elevated to the status of a national hero or model emperor. At times, display may have been complicated even for those living the high life; Antinous, the emperor Hadrian's lover, was one of the most displayed persons in ancient Rome. He occupies a position in Roman art akin to the world's first supermodel. Yet Antinous' display was not his choice, and his image, while it instigated a major movement in the fashion world, was not used to demonstrate Roman perfection. Instead, Antinous was displayed by Hadrian, at Hadrian's whim, and ultimately, to Hadrian's purposes. His image provided a foil (the beautiful boy) to the ideal Roman (the mature, bearded man). Thus, being on display was never unequivocally positive, nor was it associated with power in the Roman imagination.⁵⁸

Organization of chapter

Previous studies of Roman hair have tended to focus on the elaborate styles of elite women, especially in the Flavian era.⁵⁹ However, along with women's hair, men's hair deserves examination, since Roman men were able to express various masculinities through how they wore their hair. Likewise, the hair of children, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and slaves was important because hierarchies were reinforced through their hair. Often the products used in haircare were the same products used in treating the skin, and certain practices, such as shaving and depilation, were achieved through a variety of products and methods, including wax, resin, razors, and tweezers. In this chapter, key determinants of *Romanitas* will inform the organization of the discussion of

⁵⁸ For some people display may have been an expression of power, however, for the ordinary person whose social reality I am attempting to reconstruct, this was not likely.

⁵⁹ See Stephens (2008), Bartman (2001), Olson (2008), and D'Ambra (2007).

haircare in early imperial Rome. These key determinants include femininity, masculinity, baldness, beardedness, and bodily hair. At the core of every distinction is the question, is this good (Roman) or bad (unRoman); these binaries are most apparent in the dichotomies of “proper” femininity and masculinity, age, status, and sexual proclivities. Between the sections on femininity and masculinity, haircare products will be discussed, since they were usually gendered and created distinctions about the wearer’s gender and sexual self-expression. It is important to restate that these distinctions were socially constructed by a discourse of *Romanitas* that privileged certain groups over others. In a discussion of ideal femininity, it is important to remember that in the Matrix of *Romanitas* male trumps female, and therefore ‘ideal’ femininity is much less strictly defined than ideal masculinity, because femininity is by default not the ideal.

Women’s Haircare and the Mundus Muliebrum

Hair was a key marker of feminine beauty in the Roman world. Women living in the Roman Empire invested thought, time, and money into having beautiful hair, an effort which established their respectability. Social status was one of the main forms of identity expressed through hair; theoretically speaking, the more complicated the coiffure, the higher the status of the woman wearing it must be, since she would need professional help. While women’s hairstyles⁶⁰ varied from very simple to very elaborate, all involved concise parting and elements of rigid control, as Elizabeth Bartman has pointed out.⁶¹ Tziona Grossmark tells us that haircare, along with cosmetics, was categorized as female

⁶⁰ The term “hairstyle” is used here to describe hair that is dressed, rather than cuts.

⁶¹ Bartman (2001), 2-3, 6.

adornment (*tahshitei nashim*), akin to women's jewelry in halakhic discourse.⁶² For Jewish and non-Jewish Roman women, the styling of the hair was a key element of feminine gender performance.

There are no specific ways of styling hair which are seen as essentially Roman or unRoman. However, Roman women typically did not wear their hair short or unstyled, as that was considered unRoman, even barbaric. The sculpture known as "The Dying Gaul and His Wife" (Figure 8) shows a stereotypical "barbarian" (Gaulish) woman, with short, unstyled hair. Her hair is in stark contrast to the hair in myriad portraits of "Roman" women, whose hair is controlled. This portrait exemplifies an intersection of identities, in which her ethnic identity is shown as more notable than her gender identity (her husband has nearly identical hair). Her hair is not just unRoman, it is unfeminine by the normative standards of Roman women's hair, which is carefully styled. Excessive styling, however, was seen as unRoman, just as its opposite, the loose, unstyled hair of the Gaul, was. There is no reason to suppose this portrait is accurate, or that Gaulish women had hair like the subject's. The portrait tells us what the sculptor wanted us to know about the subject(s), and their essential difference (according to the sculptor) from Romans. Both the practices and the products of women's haircare were sometimes described with disapproval by elite authors, such as dyeing hair, wearing wigs, adorning the hair with too much perfume or jewels, and curling hair with a *calamistrum* (curling iron).⁶³ Overall, Roman authors disapproved of women's haircare that seemed

⁶² Tziona Grossmark, "Jewellery: The Literary Evidence," *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (Oxford University Press, 2010), 385.

⁶³ Stephens (2008), 114-115.

excessively grandiose, foreign, or artificial; Juvenal, for instance, found plenty of reasons to complain about women's hair in his lengthy critique of women.⁶⁴

The ideal hair for a Roman woman varied over time and space, but it is likely that the portraits of the empresses and other women of the imperial family served as models for women to emulate. They may have been trend-setters as well as exempla, because their images were so ubiquitous. Taken as evidence of popular hairstyles, the Fayyum portraits confirm that wealthy women in North Africa wore their hair in the same styles as the imperial women of Rome. These portraits are some of the best examples for ordinary Romans, because they are attentive to detail, vary in quality, and made for private consumption. Many of the women in the Fayyum portraits have their hair in the same styles that are typical of Roman imperial family portraiture. The styles of women's hair shown in imperial portraits are illustrated in a series of diagrams in Croom's *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, demonstrating possible changes over time.⁶⁵

As mentioned above, the complexity of hair could denote social and economic status. The hairstyles of the imperial Flavian family, rulers from AD 69 to 96, are noteworthy examples. The "Flavian" hairstyles vary in complexity, as seen in Figures 1 and 6, where the same style appears in varying degrees of intricacy. The most elaborate styles were undoubtedly designed to express status. Not only could these styles literally increase a woman's stature, but some required serious time, effort, and product to create and maintain, which marked the wearer as a person of means and leisure.⁶⁶ Arguments about the self-presentation of non-elite women are scarce. Janet Stephens believes poor

⁶⁴ Iuv. 6.50, O 15, 491, 495-7, 502.

⁶⁵ Croom (2000), 116, fig. 46, and 119, fig. 47.

⁶⁶ Bartman (2001), 4; Olson (2008), 71.

women and women of middling wealth tried to conform to the same beauty ideals as the rich, and emulated the upper classes. Stephens, through an article on Roman women's hairstyles, as well as several recreations of the hairstyles shown in imperial portraiture,⁶⁷ has demonstrated that most hairstyles, even the famously elaborate Flavian styles, were available to poorer women. A woman's hair could be styled by a family member, friend, neighbor, or the wearer herself. Since the hair was sewn into place, the style could be worn for several days without being damaged. In some cases, the wearer might need help cutting the wool thread that held her hair in place, but could otherwise handle her hair by herself; daylight was not even necessary. For many working women, the most important factor of hair may have been simply keeping it out of the way. Combs, needles, and pins made complicated hairstyles accessible to even the poorest women, provided that they could snatch a half hour of time to get their hair done. This would, of course, be a matter of how important hairstyling was to that woman. The quality of the style and its ultimate effect would depend on the products used in the hair, the technical skill of the individual woman, and the time she allotted to that work. Any well-styled hair, especially when combined with the apparent use of products, could create an effect of wealth, leisure, and style, which was, as far as feminine ideals went, the pinnacle of female *Romanitas*. For Jewish women, not just styling, but veils and other head coverings were essential to proper femininity.⁶⁸ According to Tertullian, Jewish women in North Africa were

⁶⁷ Stephens (2008); see also Janet Stephens, "Agrippina the Younger," Video uploaded Nov. 29, 2010, and "Faustina the Younger," Video uploaded September 4, 2010, at <http://www.youtube.com/user/jntvstp>.

⁶⁸ Dafna Shlezinger-Katsman, "Clothing," *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (Oxford University Press, 2010), 371, 373-4.

recognizable by their veils.⁶⁹ Ultimately, symmetry and control made hairstyles properly feminine, achieved through accessories such as the needle-and-thread, clasps, pins, and hairnets.⁷⁰

For women of the lower classes, imitating the hairstyles of elite women was a way to express not just femininity, but high status, luxury, and ease. Given that elite women were safer in Roman society,⁷¹ because their status ensured them a higher degree of protection, emulation may have been beneficial in more tangible ways. Passing for a higher-class woman lent a respectability to women who may have otherwise been treated less well (not that attempts to pass were always successful). Still, women of high social and economic status would have had the advantage of being able to wear more styles and in more elaborate manifestations, rendering them “more feminine”. Despite the concept of the *mundus muliebrum* (the idea that self-adornment comprised a “women’s world”) and the importance of proper hair to female *Romanitas*, women remained, in the Matrix of *Romanitas*, less perfect than men. To put it another way, even women with proper hair were criticized, basically because they were women and not men. Roman social ideals proceeded from the assumption that men were better than women, and Roman authors felt justified in critiquing women for their haircare, even while demanding that it meet specific criteria.

A common critique of women’s haircare was that it was wasteful in terms of time, labor, and money. Some elite women had *ornatrices*, hair-stylist slaves, although many undoubtedly had to settle for the help of an ordinary slave, or another member of

⁶⁹ Tert. *De Corona* 4.2.

⁷⁰ Bartman (2001), 104; Juv. 2. 96; **Figure 13** shows a demure young woman with a hairnet.

⁷¹ Brown (1974), 315-316.

her household. Having a slave whose sole job was to take care of one's hair was considered financially extravagant, although why this was considered so especially extravagant is unclear. Certainly the hairdresser was a luxury, not a necessity, but so were all slaves. Scenes of women attacking their hairdressers underscore the tyranny supposedly inherent in women with *ornatrices*. Juvenal describes a woman tearing the hair and clothes of her slave, who has made a mistake, while Martial has a woman beating her hairdresser for similar reasons.⁷² The possibility that such a slave could rise in the ranks of society was also offensive to these conservative authors. The professional *ornatrix* worked her way up from assistant to senior stylist, and her skilled labor was valuable.⁷³ It is likely that many *ornatrices* sold their services outside of the home, as highly skilled Roman slaves often did. In the first *Satire*, Juvenal complains that his old barber (ex-slave?) has become a rich man, and Martial snarkily jokes that a self-employed female barber may be moonlighting as a prostitute.⁷⁴ Martial may be expressing dissatisfaction at the commercial success of a low status person by playing the oldest of chauvinistic cards. He may also be upset because the female hairdresser has horned in on a job traditionally reserved for males- that of shaving and cutting men's hair. His reasons for critiquing the barber aside, the fact remains he has identified a woman working independently in the field of haircare, and does not find that to be remarkable in and of itself.

Meanwhile, Roman visual art portrayed women's toilet scenes as a positive and proper feminine occupation, as seen in several monuments. The first, a scene from the

⁷² Juv. 6; Mart. *Spect.* 2.66.

⁷³ Juv. 6.495-7

⁷⁴ Juv. 6.26-27; Mart. *Spect.* 2.17.

Elternpaarpfeiler monument in Neumagen, shows a woman sitting in a chair while several other women attend to her toilet. The second, a funerary relief of a potter and his wife, shows the potter at work while his wife sits and mirror-gazes. The last, a fresco from Herculaneum, has women of various ages working together on a single woman's hair.⁷⁵ Such scenes of women with several attendants, styling their hair as well as arranging other elements of their appearance, are common in Roman art. This kind of image is clearly meant to show the ideal of the *mundus muliebrum* as a matrix of wealth, leisure, and femininity. Even the potter's wife, as shown on her funerary monument, is portrayed as a partaker of *mundus muliebrum* culture. As Bartman put it, "hairdressing scenes appear so frequently in the context of women's tomb reliefs... that they may be said to represent the essence of female life itself."⁷⁶ However essential hairdressing was to Roman femininity, it was also subject to attack from misogynist critics of popular culture.

In addition to the expense of the stylist or *ornatrix*, Roman authors saw the cost of hair products and the ornaments worn in the hair as the results of the personal immoderation that was typical of women. Expensive hairpins and hair ornaments with gold, silver, pearls, and jewels were worn by women with means, and hairpins have been found made of "crystal, gold, silver, and painted bone" with "glass beads or pendants, decorated heads, [and] carved ends," some of which pendant pieces made noise.⁷⁷ Some of these hair pins are still in excellent condition, and show a high level of artistry. A good number of the Fayyum portraits of well-to-do women show them with gold hairpins

⁷⁵ Croom (2000), plate 13; D'Ambra (2007), 25; Derks (2010), fig. 7.

⁷⁶ Bartman (2001), 105.

⁷⁷ Olson (2008), 75-76.

on the right side of the head, indicating that this was the fashion over an extended period of time, since the portraits themselves span four centuries.⁷⁸ Women portrayed in the Fayyum portraits also wear the *strophium*, a small headband described by Pliny in *HN*. 21.3. Many of the substances used on or in the hair are described as having foreign imported ingredients, even when the ingredients could have been locally produced; thus, Martial alternately describes a hairdye (made from beechwood ash and goat fat) as “Battavian foam,” “Mattan soap,” and “Chattan foam,” all names that indicate the supposed foreign origins of the dye.⁷⁹ Wigs and “false” hair pieces (real hair but not the wearer’s own) were imported from India and Germania for their beautiful hues of red, blonde, and black, and may have been rather costly.⁸⁰ Roman authors were critical of these for their expense as well as their alleged phoniness.

Haircare products

Hair accessories and hair products were common in the Roman world, and were mostly associated with women and the *mundus muliebrum*. However, the tools and products of haircare are not as clearly gendered as they are often said to be.⁸¹ For instance, most people would have owned or had access to a comb and a razor, since basic hygiene in the Roman world included combing, trimming, and shaving. Hair accessories, including pins, clips, headbands, hair extensions, wigs, toupees, combs, fillets, and

⁷⁸ Most of the portraits were produced from the first century BCE to the third century CE.

⁷⁹ Olson (2008), 73. Batavia is the name for a region of the Netherlands, “Mattan” refers to a settlement in Germany, and “Chattan” may refer to a collection of Celtic tribes in Scotland.

⁸⁰ Olson (2008), 74.

⁸¹ Ton Derks and Wouter Vos, “Wooden combs from the Roman fort at Vechten: the bodily appearance of soldiers,” *Journal of Archaeology in the Low Countries* 2-2 (2010). Derks and Vos argue that the association of toilet articles with women in the ancient world is an ongoing problem, although it is implicit rather than explicit (5).

hairnets, may have been worn by males and females. Haircare products, including tools, such as curling tongs, combs, brushes, parting devices, and mirrors, and coloring or styling agents, such as dyes, oils, and perfumes, were also employed by both sexes. Only women were typically buried with their favorite haircare accessories.⁸² Roman authors who described haircare as a specifically feminine preoccupation were attempting to make an association between women and *luxuria*, irresponsible spending, and the proclivity for foreign styles. Phrases like “*mundus muliebrum*,” when used in the context of a discussion of haircare, are subtly excluding men from self-care practices, despite the fact that men, too, practiced hygiene and self-care.

The accessories of the wealthy tend to survive because they are made with more durable materials, such as metals, while the accessories of the poor, made of wood, clay, or bone, are less frequently found. Gold and silver hairpins have been excavated in burials, and commonly shown in portraiture, as seen in **Figures 1, 3, and 4**; however, hairpins are rarely mentioned in literary sources, suggesting they were somehow less problematic. Gold hairnets were worn by both women and men, but considered to be more acceptable for women. The men who wear gold hairnets in Juvenal’s second Satire are transgressing multiple gender norms, which serves to underscore the strangeness of men with hairnets.⁸³ Wool fillets, twisted into hair, were used by brides and Vestal Virgins, and associated with Ceres and other female, feminine deities.⁸⁴

⁸² Oliver (2009), 115-117, 120.

⁸³ Juv. 2.96.

⁸⁴ D’Ambra (2007), 74; Juv. 6.50.

Another form of accessory was false hair. False hair, either as wigs, toupees, or simply clip-in or weave-in locks, was fashionable and the imported hair of Germans and Indians was sought after for its exotic appeal. In Epigram 5.68, a lock of “German hair” is sent as a gift to a lover.⁸⁵ Realistically, any blonde, red, or black hair could have been described as “foreign,” or “exotic,” despite its probable natural occurrence in Rome. Having a false hair piece that looked foreign and exotic may have been a way of showing one’s status, or of looking exotic. The use of exotic hair is well-attested, and Grant Parker and Elizabeth Bartman consider it an expression of cultural dominance and imperialistic cosmopolitanism.⁸⁶ It is also used damningly in one scene, where the Empress Messalina is said to have used a blonde wig as a disguise when cheating on her spouse (Claudius).⁸⁷

Haircare products also varied, but the most common were probably oils. Olive oil, as well as other oils, is useful for smoothing hair and preventing frizz, holding hair in place, giving it sheen, keeping it healthy and stimulating growth. Perfumed oil is frequently mentioned as a hair product used by men and women alike.⁸⁸ Plain olive oil was likely to have been a household product that even poor people could access, and it may have been scented with homegrown flowers and herbs. Henna was used to make hair softer and thicker as well as to tint it red or black.⁸⁹ The affordability of various haircare products and practices is hard to pinpoint, but it should not be assumed that any practice or product was restricted to women or the upper classes.

⁸⁵ Mart. *Spect.* 5.68.

⁸⁶ Grant Parker, “Ex Oriente Luxuria: Indian Commodities and the Roman Experience,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2002), 49; Bartman (2001), 14.

⁸⁷ Juv. 6.120.

⁸⁸ Olson (forthcoming), 20-21; Olson (2008), 76.

⁸⁹ Bartman (2001), 11.

Men's Hair, Haircare, and Masculinity

Roman art provides us with numerous models for comparison between conservative masculine hair and other male hairstyles. Thus far, no studies have been devoted exclusively to the hair of the Roman male. The closest and most detailed account of Roman men's hair is a table in *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, which compares the styles worn by emperors from 30 BCE to CE 211.⁹⁰ Assuming that the emperors' hairstyles were representative of the fashions of the time (or established a precedent in fashion), the table demonstrates the changes in masculine appearance over the first three centuries of the Empire. These changes can be seen as exempla of the changing nature of what it meant to be Roman and to have 'Roman' hair. According to this table, Roman men's hairstyles were fairly stable over the centuries, gradually increasing in length, curliness, and volume until ca. 200, then tapering back down to the length of the first century.

The most common hairstyle for Roman men is the short style epitomized in portraits of Julius Caesar, who was said by Suetonius to have brushed his hair forward to give the impression of fuller hair, since he had male-pattern baldness.⁹¹ Roman men's hair is frequently juxtaposed with the hair of barbarians, children, the elderly, and the effeminate. Often the categories of difference overlap with each other, as with the acceptability of more feminine styles for young boys, because ultimately, to be a fully "Roman" man was to be not just male, but also middle-aged, upper class, civilized, married, and moderate. Portraits of Roman emperors were consistently designed to demonstrate this ideal, no matter how the subject himself was said to have looked. This

⁹⁰ Croom (2010), 116.

⁹¹ Suet. *Iul.* 45.

ensured that the status quo definition of masculinity remained in place, regardless of who was in charge. It was politically expedient for an emperor to appear not only proper, but normative. For example, in portraits of Claudius, it is hard to see the physical and mental deficiency described by Augustus in his correspondence with Livia.⁹² Likewise, while Caligula is described as bald in Suetonius' biography,⁹³ his portraits show him with a fine head of hair, as in **Figure 10**. The abnormalities of self-presentation were usually disregarded during the emperor's lifetime, either because the emperor demanded it, the authorities felt it was necessary to set a good example of Romanness, or perhaps even because the artist was operating under a generic understanding of what the emperor looked like. The conservative nature of normative men's hair in the early centuries of the Empire is striking, if the styles worn by the emperors are taken as representative; however, these images only represent ideal Roman masculinity.

Roman men did not all conform to the ideals regarding hair length, nor did they always embrace the ideals regarding haircare and the use of products. Through their hair, men living in the Roman Empire could express ethnicity, sexual availability and proclivities, and religious identity. Social status and age were also expressed through hair, or the lack thereof, although this was more often imposed on the wearer rather than freely chosen. Despite the prevalence of conventionally masculine images in artwork produced in Rome, there is evidence from literary works and provincial art which shows that Roman men embraced a variety of ways of being masculine, and embraced hairstyles and haircare practices which did not fit the conservative stereotypes.

⁹² Suet. *Claud.* 4.

⁹³ Suet. *Calig.* 35, 50.

Ethnicity and place of origin played a key role in how men living in the Roman Empire wore their hair. Roman authors were scrupulous in their descriptions of the hair of non-Romans, and saw hair length and style as indicative of cultural and ethnic identity. While men across the empire adopted traditional Roman self-care practices, hair seen as ‘typical’ of other ethnic or cultural groups was described in written sources and depicted on monuments, such as on Trajan’s column. The “Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife” (**Figure 8**) depicts a man and woman with hair about the same length, which was longer than the typically portrayed Roman male hair, and shorter than the typically portrayed Roman female hair. Another portrait of a Gaul shows him with shoulder-length hair (**Figure 15**); the image is a second-century Roman copy of a Greek original from the 250s BCE. Whether this is an accurate depiction of Gallic men’s and women’s styles or not, it demonstrates styles of hair that had social meaning to its audience, as well as the endurance of stereotypes about Roman and unRoman hair. Another example of stereotyping is found in Suetonius’ biography of Caligula, in which a triumph was faked by having Gauls grow their hair out and dye it red and pretend to be German.⁹⁴ This suggests that by the reign of Caligula, Gauls had to make an effort to look like non-Romans, which makes sense considering that they had had intimate contact with Rome for over a century (long enough for cultural exchange to occur). It also illustrates current stereotypes about Germans and their hair; namely that it was long and red. German people were described by Tacitus as all having red hair, among other distinct physical traits, in the late first century CE.⁹⁵ Obviously, this was not a verifiable fact, but an impression that probably carried weight with less well-traveled Romans. The trade in

⁹⁴ Suet. *Calig.* 47.

⁹⁵ Stewart (2007), 45, 60; Tacitus, *Germania*, 4.

“German hair” and hair dyes, including henna, in the imperial period indicates that looking German was not always considered a bad thing; even barbarism seems to have held an exotic appeal. Among one group of Germans, the Sueves, a distinct hairstyle was used to indicate rank.

The use of actual styling was decidedly unRoman, according to the ideal of *Romanitas*, because Roman men didn’t wear coiffures.⁹⁶ Suevian men wore a knotted hairstyle⁹⁷ which distinguished them from other Germanic peoples, and maintained this style throughout their lives; unless, of course, they no longer wanted to appear Suevian for whatever reason. It stands to reason that a non-Sueve could pass as a Sueve by adopting this style, and vice versa. Since it also distinguished slave from free in Suevian society, it could also be adopted to demonstrate freed status.

Romans from North Africa tended to embrace African influences on their hair, especially with regards to children, who maintained the Egyptian tradition of a shorn head with a lock of hair to the side, as seen in one of the Fayyum portraits.⁹⁸ Additionally, boys tended to appear more “effeminate” (by Roman standards) in Africa than they would in Rome, and some of the portraits may demonstrate that African Romans were less concerned with gender-specific presentation in children, despite the influence of cosmopolitan Roman fashion across the empire.⁹⁹ Martial describes his ideal lover as an Egyptian boy with flowing locks that caress his neck.¹⁰⁰ The Fayyum

⁹⁶ Julius Caesar’s coiffure (never shown, but described by Suetonius) was described as a clear indication of his effeminacy. Suet. *Iul.* 45.

⁹⁷ Tac. *Germ.* 38.

⁹⁸ **Figure 16.**

⁹⁹ D’Ambra (2007), 16, 20; **Figure 17.**

¹⁰⁰ Mart. *Spect.* 4.42.

portraits demonstrate a variety of possible hair styles for men, including short afros, neck-length shag cuts, hair cut to ¼ inch in length, and baldness.¹⁰¹

Hair was also a means by which Roman men could express sexual availability, and by extension, proclivities. Long hair was described as effeminate, and young boys who had long hair were portrayed as objects of sexual interest to adult men. The range of sexual expression available through long hair is perhaps encapsulated in the contrast between the phrases “bellus homo” and “lascivi capillati,” and the moniker “Crispulus.” All three phrases come from Martial’s Epigrams. The phrase “bellus homo” (literally “pretty man”) from Epigram 3.63, describes a man who is beautiful, but because he works at being attractive, he is thoroughly trifling, troublesome, or tricky (*pertriosa*); perhaps he is a gigolo or demanding “mistress.”¹⁰² The “lascivi capillati” (singular *lascivus capillatus*) are beautiful young men or boys who make life on Faustinus’ farm sweet, as described in Mart. 3.58. *Lascivi capillati* literally translates to “lascivious long-haired [boys].” Along with these lascivious long-haired boys who delight to obey him, the farmer employs a delicate eunuch for light work (*delicatus... eunuchus*). The purpose of these long-haired young males is clearly to provide sexual gratification. Finally, “Crispulus” is the nickname given to the young man who stands a little too close to Marianus’ wife in Mart. 5.61. “Crispulus” literally means “curly-haired,” and often implies that a man takes a *calamistrum* to his hair. Crispulus is also a type in Roman satire: the lustful dandy. Thus in Mart. 5.61, Crispulus makes Marianus a cuckold.

¹⁰¹ See Euphrosyne Doxiades, *The mysterious Fayyum portraits: faces from Ancient Egypt*. (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1995).

¹⁰² Mart. *Spect.* 3.63.14.

There was a double standard about male attractiveness; the “bellus homo,” with his beautifully arranged hair, is a trouble-maker and a drama queen. His activities include gossiping, spending time with women, and writing love notes. Likewise with “Crispulus,” who entices women away from their husbands with the help of his gorgeous locks (the implication is that he has this hair for this very purpose). On the other hand, the long-haired youths are the privilege of the adult Roman man; in the baths Trimalchio plays ball games with such young boys, and even confesses to having been one himself.¹⁰³ There is no condemnation of the Roman man who admires effeminate *capillati*; however, there is disapproval for the free, citizen, elite Roman man who would *be a capillatus* or Crispulus. *Romanitas* entails being the penetrator, not the penetrated, and the close association of long, curly hair with sexual penetrability is another example of an association between sexual behavior and self-presentation in the Matrix of *Romanitas*. Long hair, curled hair, and styled hair were signals that the wearer was hip, youthful, sexy, and sexually available. In the portrait known as the Antinous Mondragone, Antinous is shown with long, curling hair.¹⁰⁴ Unsurprisingly, these styles upset conservative elites, who did not want Roman males to put themselves on display or behave like women. Nevertheless, some Roman men engaged in elaborate haircare practices, including carefully curling and perfuming their hair.¹⁰⁵ They dyed their hair and wore gold hairnets, if they so pleased.¹⁰⁶ Julius Caesar and other “effeminate” men were even said to have scratched their head with one finger, so as not to disturb their

¹⁰³ Petr. *Sat.* 27, 89.

¹⁰⁴ **Figure 11.**

¹⁰⁵ Juv. 2.15.

¹⁰⁶ Juv. 2. 85-101; Mart. *Spect.* 3.43.

coiffures; this may have been a code for soliciting homoerotic connections.¹⁰⁷ In *Satyricon*, Encolpius grows his hair out and wears it in a wavy style when he prostitutes himself out under the name of Polyaenus.¹⁰⁸

Kelly Olson has pointed out that many young men, “dandies,” in ancient Rome regularly curled their hair and used hair products.¹⁰⁹ Males with long hair were attractive to both men and women, and the ancient sources frequently refer to the appeal of long-haired gladiators and athletes to women.¹¹⁰ While long hair was considered effeminate, it was unlikely that dandies actually wore women’s hairstyles on a daily basis. Rather, comparing their hair to the hair of women was a means of establishing their failure of *Romanitas*. According to the Christian theologian Tertullian, who lived and wrote in the late second and early third centuries, all men are naturally inclined to practice the arts of self-beautification. He complained that the Roman men he knew often cut their beards sharply, removed bodily hair, and styled and dyed their hair.¹¹¹ Tertullian regarded this behavior as a symptom of spiritual deficiency. While his reasons for condemning male vanity are of a spiritual nature, he is concerned with the self-presentation of ordinary men, and is invested in the preservation of conventional masculinity. The character of the dandy, or *bellus homo*, appears frequently enough in Roman literature to demonstrate a social reality. In addition to dandies, other men embraced overt effeminacy in the way

¹⁰⁷ Juv. 9.133; Rabun Taylor, “Two Pathic Subcultures in Ancient Rome.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Jan. 1997, vol. 7, no. 3, 339-40. Taylor cites Lucian, Plutarch, and a lesser-known fragment of Roman poetry, as sources which describe effeminate men using this gesture. He also cites Ovid *Ars.Am.* 1.137-8 as a source describing such coded gestures being used by courtesans.

¹⁰⁸ Petr. *Sat.* 126.

¹⁰⁹ Olson (forthcoming), *passim*.

¹¹⁰ Juv. 6.103, 106, 356; also in Mart. *Spect.* 7.58, Galla is said to like long-haired *cinaedi*.

¹¹¹ Tert. *DCF* 2.8.2.

they presented their hair. Some may have been expressing a pathic identity, as Taylor suggests.¹¹²

Eunuchs are consistently described as dressing effeminately, and it is unknown whether some eunuchs passed as ordinary men, or even tried. There is some speculation that the priest Origen was a eunuch,¹¹³ which could indicate that they occasionally conformed to conventional masculine standards of self-presentation. More frequently, eunuchs are described as dandies and womanizers who pretended to be harmless but shamelessly pursued married women, such as in Juvenal's sixth Satire, or pretended to be religious personnel.¹¹⁴ Some even became eunuchs for the very purpose of sleeping with women; if castrated as adults, they remained fully functioning but were rendered sterile, so that castration was used as birth control by adulterous men. In other instances, non-castrated men were said to have cross-dressed and disguised themselves as women in order to attend religious rites forbidden to men. Wearing wigs of women's hairstyles would have formed a crucial part of the cross-dressing, since men's hair would be a dead giveaway. The implication of these stories (which may have no basis in reality) is that the women-only cults involved some sort of sexual display or behavior, and that men who snuck in were engaging in ritual orgies or interrupting something salacious and taboo.¹¹⁵ If men did sneak into women's rituals, and in other instances of religious cross-

¹¹² Taylor (1997), 324-8, 338-71.

¹¹³ Brown (1988), 168.

¹¹⁴ *Apul. Met.* 8.27.

¹¹⁵ The supposedly sexual content of women's rituals may be nothing more than male fantasy about and jealousy of exclusively feminine spaces. There was one well-documented and infamous case in which Publius Clodius Pulcher entered the rites of Bona Dea in drag, but was discovered and prosecuted for sexual immorality, including having sex with his own sister and being too attractive to men and women altogether (his name, Pulcher, means "Gorgeous"). This event took place before the time of the early Empire, in 62 BCE.

dressing, they probably would style their hair, or wear wigs or false hair pieces, in order to look like women or like eunuchs. Finally, there were men who engaged in effeminate haircare for legitimate religious reasons. The followers of Bona Dea and the priests of Cybele, known euphemistically as “Galli,” cross-dressed as part of their worship.¹¹⁶ Other cults, such as the cult of Hercules, required men to cross-dress during certain rituals.

Hair loss and status

Baldness was another important measure of Romanitas and social status in the Roman Empire. Roman satirists were quite mean in their descriptions of the balding and elderly. In three epigrams, Martial pokes fun at the lengths men will go to to cover their bald heads, including stealing napkins and feigning illness.¹¹⁷ The marginalization of baldness made wigs and toupees necessary for some men, who were ridiculed for being vain as well as bald.¹¹⁸ Women who wore fake hairpieces or extensions were mocked as well.¹¹⁹ Baldness was also associated with slavery. Slaves were shaved by their owners, as a way of marking them as property, making scars from labor, fetters, and branding more visible, and denying them the right to present their bodies how they wanted to. Thus, it was imperative that free persons not appear bald.¹²⁰ In the *Satyricon*, when the two young men Ascyltus and Giton are hiding on the ship belonging to their enemies,

¹¹⁶ In Iuv. 9.62 eunuch, “cymbal player” and *gallus* are equated; Martial also uses *gallus* interchangeably with eunuch at 1.35, 3.24, and 11.74. Because such terms are used interchangeably, it is often difficult to be certain if an individual is a eunuch, a priest, an effeminate, a drag queen, or some combination thereof.

¹¹⁷ Mart. *Spect.* 12.29, 12.45, 12.89.

¹¹⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 6.57; Suet. *Iul.* 45, *Calig.* 35, *Galb.* 20, and *Dom.* 18.

¹¹⁹ As with Fabulla, Mart. *Spect.* 6.12

¹²⁰ Juv. 5.172

they shave their hair and eyebrows to look like slaves, so that they won't be recognized as the thieves that they are. This disguise is ultimately ineffective, but the shame of having a bald head is remarked upon multiple times, and it is not long before a kind-hearted soul gives them wigs and fake eyebrows to cover their shame.¹²¹ Inflicting baldness as a shaming device was a means of negating identity that groups other than the Romans also used and recognized. Tacitus describes the punishment of adulteresses in Germanic culture, which begins with cutting or shaving off the woman's hair.¹²² Loss of hair was semiotically understood to be related to loss of power, status, and dignity.

Facial Hair

Romans also imbued facial hair with meaning, and they observed rituals with shaving and cutting this hair. A Roman male's first official shave was a crucial rite in the journey to manhood. Adult men also sometimes delayed shaving for ritual reasons, such as mourning.¹²³ For the Romans, facial hair had deep significance for male sexuality. A beard, or the ability to grow one, was the dividing line between a "youth" and an adult man. Roman authors distinguish between the bearded, or those capable of growing a beard, and the beardless, or those incapable of growing a beard. Detached moustaches did not become popular until the third century, when German and Gothic fashions gained influence, so in general, to speak of facial hair is to speak of beards.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Petron. *Sat.* 103, 110. They are reluctant to shave their heads, and later embarrassed by their lack of hair.

¹²² Tac. *Germ.* 19.

¹²³ Suet. *Iul.* 67; In Suet. *Calig.* 10, Suetonius claims that Caligula rushed through his coming-of-age at a later date, instead of having elaborate rituals like his brothers did, implying that his parents devalued and delayed the rite of passage for this particular boy.

¹²⁴ Croom (2010), 76; see also **Figure 15**.

Many of the portraits of Roman men from the first century AD show them smooth-cheeked, because they shaved, and yet they were recognizable as adult men to their intended audiences. Clearly an actual beard was not always the sign of adulthood, and Romans were reading other cues. The presence of stubble, even if incipient, is immediately recognizable. Furthermore, since coming-of-age rituals involved shaving and cutting the beard, having a cut beard or shaved face was the sign of “beardedness,” rather than an actual beard. Portraiture can erase this in the interests of aesthetics, which in turn makes it difficult for the scholar to demonstrate what a man’s cheeks really looked like based on the extant artwork. It makes sense that the subject would not want to be portrayed negatively, and so the artwork is meant to convey manhood, without recourse to showing a five o’clock shadow.

Actual beards could signify different identities, and Romans were capable of “reading” men based on their beards. In literature, a long, scraggly beard was often one of the stock characteristics of a philosopher, along with his mantle or *pallium*. Philosopher’s beards were rarely described in attractive terms, even after the turn of the second century, when beards were in fashion. In Lucian’s *Νεκρικοὶ Διάλογοι* (*Dialogi Mortuorum*, or *Dialogues of the Dead*), a humorous collection of short stories written in the middle or late second century, a philosopher is required to lose his beard before entering Hades, along with other garments that comprise his identity, some of which are metaphorical.¹²⁵ His beard, according to Charon, makes him look like a goat. Comparing someone to a goat is a common Roman insult that implies they are smelly, unkempt, and unRoman. In most cases it was armpit hair that warranted goat jokes, so

¹²⁵ Lucian. *Dial.mort.* 10.

the philosopher's beard is also being compared to armpit hair.¹²⁶ The emperor Hadrian (117-138) was the first Roman emperor to wear an actual beard, perhaps as a symbol of his preference for classical Greek culture, or perhaps to cover blemishes,¹²⁷ and he became a fashion icon because of it. After him, nearly every emperor was portrayed with a full beard until the 300s. However, Hadrian's beard is much more attractive than the goat-like chin hair of a philosopher, and is more Greek hero than Greek sage. Hadrian's beard also signifies manliness, maturity, and authority, especially when considered along the boyish shaved cheeks of his young lover, Antinous, another fashion icon in his own right.

Antinous and other Roman men exploited beardlessness, as a symbol of youth and beauty, to their own ends. They adopted the sartorial pose of the *eromenos*, or beloved boy, of an *erastes*, or older male lover (Hadrian, in the case of Antinous). Every image of Antinous shows him as beardless, despite the fact that he was in his late teens and in all other respects, shown clearly as a fully developed man.¹²⁸ Hadrian's deep affection for Greek culture was famous, as demonstrated by his nickname, "Graeculus."¹²⁹ Hadrian's fashion sense presented a bold new direction after the reign of Trajan, who was almost ascetic in his humdrum soldierly appearance. Hadrian and Antinous were not, however, creating new ways of being fashionable, but building off of old conventions. Whether Antinous was self-presenting or Hadrian was presenting Antinous as the beloved is unknown, because the nature of Antinous' status is unclear.

¹²⁶ Catull. 69.6. See also Suet. *Calig.* 50, Caligula reportedly forbade mentioning goats in his presence, because he was sensitive about his own bodily hairiness.

¹²⁷ SHA, *Hadr.* 26.

¹²⁸ **Figure 12** demonstrates the contrast between Antinous' beefy muscles and baby face.

¹²⁹ SHA. *Hadr.* 1.

Keeping one's face free of even the hint of a beard through depilation was a way to remain youthful, and remaining youthful enabled men to participate in more forms of sexual congress. Not only were youths considered more attractive as potential sexual partners (according to all of our sources), it was more acceptable for youths to have relationships with other men and play the receptive sexual role.¹³⁰ Staying beardless, therefore, was a means of staying sexually available to older men. Juvenal criticizes Otho "the pathic" for using skin creams that prevented his beard from growing in,¹³¹ and Martial criticizes Pudens and Encolpos, because Encolpos is too old to be Pudens' lover, but through careful haircare, Encolpos remains youthful.¹³² Giton, in *Satyricon*, is described as about sixteen years old, but also as self-presenting effeminately and with long hair;¹³³ while Giton's status (slave or free) is unclear, what is clear is that he is considered gorgeous by just about every other character. Giton is a perfect example, then, of the ideal of youthful sexual freedom; he flits from Encolpius to Ascyltus to Triphaena and back to Encolpius, while also flirting with Eumolpus and others, and banking on others' appreciation of his genitals and beauty to end quarrels.¹³⁴ While Giton is old enough to have some facial hair, he is consistently described as the beardless, youthful ideal. Elsewhere in the *Satyricon* Ascyltus sleeps with a freeborn Roman youth, which was forbidden under Augustan law. However, because of the youth's age it is not considered too problematic in the story; after all, a beardless youth could have sexual

¹³⁰ I avoid the term "passive" to describe the receptive sexual role, because it unjustly implies a lack of activity. In contrast, the Latin language allows for active and passive forms of all verbs describing sexual activity, so that even "receptive" actions are given in active forms.

¹³¹ Juv. 2.104-107.

¹³² Mart. *Spect.* 1.31.

¹³³ Petron. *Sat.* 81, 105.

¹³⁴ Petron. *Sat.* 108, 80. Giton threatens to cut his own throat (80), and to castrate himself (108).

relations with another male without losing his *Romanitas*.¹³⁵ Although it was against the law for a grown man to seduce a freeborn boy, and in the passage Ascyltus and the boy worry about the boy's father finding out,¹³⁶ it is treated as the sort of commonplace seduction that Ascyltus' audience would relate to and not find morally reprehensible. Perhaps this moral laxity derives from the boy's willingness to be seduced, or perhaps it is a symptom of Roman appreciation for the aggressive sexual behavior displayed by Ascyltus.

Since having a beard made a man an adult, and therefore 'unsuitable' for receptive sexual intercourse, it could have been a slave's ticket out of sexual abuse. Trimalchio, the freedman in *Satyricon*, describes using lamp oil on his face to grow facial hair when he was young, so that his master would stop abusing him.¹³⁷ Whether this always worked or not is unlikely, but it is interesting because it highlights the lack of concern Romans had about consent in sexual relationships. Sex, to the Romans, was about hierarchies.¹³⁸ It is unknown whether Antinous enjoyed being Hadrian's *eromenos*, just as it is unclear whether Giton is a free agent in the *Satyricon*. In Epigram 12.75, Martial tells of his favorite sexy boys, Polytimus, Hymnus, Secundus, Dindymus, and Amphion, who all desire to become men so that they will be free of the attention of older men such as himself. In Epigram 12.84, he describes how his initial reluctance to cut

¹³⁵ Petron. *Sat.* 85-87.

¹³⁶ Petron. *Sat.* 85, 87.

¹³⁷ Petron. *Sat.* 75.

¹³⁸ Although certainly it was also about love and reproduction, appropriate sex was defined in terms of the social hierarchy, with the person of higher social status having the right to penetrate the person of lower social status. Non-penetrative sex acts, therefore, were considered bizarre, disgusting, confusing, and unnatural. Sex between equals was also taboo, at least in theory.

Polytimus' hair gave way to his appreciation for Polytimus's new, grown-up look.¹³⁹

Elsewhere he prays that a youth will remain pretty after he cuts his hair and becomes a man.¹⁴⁰

Bodily Hair and Hair Removal

The removal and growth of bodily hair was another key element in expressing sexual identity. Some bodily hair, like armpit hair, was considered dirty, and both men and women removed it. On the other hand, there is a strong tendency of Roman authors to equate the removal of other bodily hair (such as on the arms or legs) with femininity or effeminacy, so it can be assumed that women often did remove this hair.¹⁴¹ There is no reason to suppose women shaved off their bodily hair; when authors describe hair removal and women in the same breath, they speak of plucking and depilation. Certain methods of hair removal, as well as the removal of hair from certain regions of the body, were gendered. Pubic hair was also removed, and the extant images of nude women show them without pubic hair.¹⁴² In the wall paintings from Pompeii, women are shown without any body hair. Not only are they hairless in images of overt sexuality, such as the cunnilingus scene from the Pompeiian bathhouse, but also in more elegant scenes, such as the fresco of the Three Graces in the house of Titus Dentatus Panthera.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Mart. *Spect.* 12.75, 12.84; of course, Martial also had a deep appreciation for manly men, as he mentions in 2.36, 12.39.

¹⁴⁰ Mart. *Spect.* 9.17.

¹⁴¹ Olson (2008), 65-66.

¹⁴² **Figures 19, 20, and 21.**

¹⁴³ **Figure 22.** Men, on the other hand, were depicted with bodily hair, as in the statue of Trebonianus Gallus, D'Ambra (2006), 110, and on a relief, D'Ambra and Metraux (1998), 106.

Because depilation was associated with sexual attractiveness, it was associated with sexual availability, especially for men. Roman men normally shaved or plucked their armpits, just as they shaved their faces, because it was considered basic hygiene.¹⁴⁴ However, beyond that, males removing bodily hair were always treated with suspicion or as laughingstocks by Roman authors. In Mart. 2.62, Martial asks Labienus, who has tweezed his arms, chest, and legs, and shaved his groin for his girlfriend, why he has also had his anal hair removed, implying that he was not only unfaithful to his girlfriend, but that all of his hair removal was perhaps done for some boyfriend. Juvenal condemns the hypocrisy of a man who is hairy everywhere visible, but has waxed his anus smooth for his lover¹⁴⁵ (one wonders how he knew this). In other places, depilation of the arms, legs, and pubic regions are described as attractive to women as well as men, and the depilated anus is mentioned elsewhere.¹⁴⁶ Hairy legs are taken as a sign of how far the formerly beautiful gigolo, Naevolus, has let himself go; his once-smooth legs were pleasing to men and women alike.¹⁴⁷

Levels of bodily hairiness were also associated with specific ethnic groups. Greeks from Rhodes and Corinth were said to have waxed their legs out of sheer decadence, while Gauls, and, less frequently, Phrygians, were stereotypically conflated with the eunuch priests of Cybele, who were assumed to have removed bodily hair among other effeminate traits.¹⁴⁸ In contrast, Spaniards are described as generally

¹⁴⁴ Sen. *Ep.* 114.14.

¹⁴⁵ Juv. 2.11-12.

¹⁴⁶ Mart. *Spect.* 2.62; Juv. 8.15-16; Tert.*DP.* 4.1.

¹⁴⁷ Juv. 9.12-15.

¹⁴⁸ Juv. 8.113-115, 9.62, 2. 85-101, 104-107; Mart. *Spect.* 2.45, 1.35, 3.24.

hirsute.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps no passage describes better the gap between *Romanitas* and hair removal than Epigram 9.27. Chrestus is condemned for daring to speak of ancient Roman families as if he were a real Roman, while his mustache is plucked, his genitals are depilated, and his legs are hairless.

Conclusions about hair and identity

The inclusion of Roman haircare in the historical narrative began with explorations of the lives of upper-class Roman women, mostly members of the imperial family or important political and religious figures. From that context, the history of Roman haircare has expanded to include other Roman social groups. This work pushes the boundaries out even farther, seeking to find clues to identity and exploring the ways in which individuals living in the Roman Empire manipulated the semiotics of haircare in their daily lives. A broader context is presented by including bodily hair and the practices of hair removal, in which it is apparent that grooming, as a bodily “taming” project, was more closely associated with women and the civilized life. The Roman penchant for moderation is also underscored, as the “other” is consistently described as too hairy or too hairless, and insofar as *Romanitas* is embodied in a happy medium between the extreme haircare practices of other peoples, as Seneca described it to be.¹⁵⁰

Previous discussions of hair have engaged with critical theory. In the book *Off with her head! the denial of women’s identity in myth, religion, and culture*,¹⁵¹ the different meanings accorded male and female heads in ancient Rome are discussed.

¹⁴⁹ Juv. 8.116; Mart. *Spect.* 10.65; D’Ambra (1998), 119.

¹⁵⁰ Sen. *Ep.* 114.14.

¹⁵¹ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, eds, *Off with her head! The denial of women’s identity in myth, religion, and culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz¹⁵² sees the female head as eroticized by cultural practices of adornment, thus eliminating the mental aspect of women. Molly Myerowitz Levine and Mary Rose D'Angelo also discuss the control of hair and the covering of the head as means of silencing women's voices in antiquity (specifically the ancient Mediterranean and imperial Rome).¹⁵³ All of these authors engage with psychoanalytic, gender, and postmodern theory. The problem with Eilberg-Schwartz's introduction is that it accepts a view of ancient practices in which the gender binary and the heteronormative male gaze determined everything in self-presentation. Self-presentation addresses a gaze, to be sure, but whether the heterosexual elite male gaze is the only gaze it addresses is highly doubtful. Queering the gaze, that is, seeing the possibility of an alternative gaze or of multiple, coexisting gazes, allows us to acknowledge that gender performance is not always an act of submission to majority culture and power, even when it appears to be so. Specifically, assuming that Roman women styled their hair expressly to please elite heterosexual Roman men *and no other groups who might also 'gaze'* is not only lacking in imagination, but requires a denial of the reality that 'feminine' appearance was also considered quite attractive to Roman women. Not only did women probably dress to

¹⁵² Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "Introduction: The Spectacle of the Female Head," in *Off with her head! The denial of women's identity in myth, religion, and culture*, eds. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹⁵³ Molly Myerowitz-Levine, "The Gendered Grammar of Ancient Mediterranean Hair," in *Off with her head! The denial of women's identity in myth, religion, and culture*, eds. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity," in *Off with her head! The denial of women's identity in myth, religion, and culture*, eds. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

impress each other, but some likely also wanted to attract other women.¹⁵⁴ Concerns with male effeminacy arose from the reality that effeminate males had broad sexual appeal. Particular haircare practices which were attractive both to men and women, and on men and women, were troublesome when they did not uphold social hierarchies. The Matrix of Roman Identity model acknowledges the possibility of alternative gazes, and of self-presentation that was demonstrably enacting something other than *Romanitas*. The model of a matrix of *Romanitas*, or Romanness, is only one such possible model.

¹⁵⁴Martial and Juvenal mocked such women at Mart. *Spect.* 1.90, 7.67-70 and Juv. 6.320-322; for an overview of the ancient perceptions and anxieties regarding female same-sex attraction, see Brooten (1996).

Chapter 4: Beauty products, the mundus muliebrum, and identity

Roman people, especially urban people, had access to a wide variety of beauty products which could be utilized to distinguish identity. Roman authors frequently referred to these products collectively as the *mundus muliebrum*, or “world of women.” The term *mundus muliebrum* can be thought of as not only these products, but as a conceptual space that encompassed what it meant to use beauty products, and what inspired an individual to use beauty products. ‘Beauty products,’ like the *mundus*, is a catchall phrase with limited usefulness. Here, it specifically refers to temporary and topically applied products, including facial cosmetics, skincare products, skin colorants and whiteners, perfumes, and face patches (*alutae* or *splenia*). Beauty tools are included in this discussion because they were thought of as part of the *mundus muliebrum*, and because they were used with the beauty products. All of these products were used to express identity, and evidence for their usage can tell historians a good deal about how Roman men and women chose to present themselves.

In addition to carrying meaning about gender, and being gendered, beauty products in the ancient world carried religious, social, ethnic, and sexual connotations. The products and practices were part of the semiotic language of self-presentation, and each had specific meanings in the context of Roman society. Not all of these meanings were synchronous; that is, they did not all mean the same things always. Rather, beauty products carried different signification depending on the person wearing them and their specific social context. The semiotics of beauty products in ancient Rome are discussed here, and the variety of meanings are demonstrated.

The Romans' terminology for beauty products were not always 'makeup' specific. Two common descriptors are *medicamentum* and *unguentum*, words which have retained their vagueness in the English language. Both are used to refer to substances which have one or more properties or uses for health, hygiene, and beauty. *Medicamentum* is often translated as "skin treatment," "remedy," "cosmetic," "poison," "medicine," "substance," or "drug," depending on the context in which it appears. Likewise, *unguentum* can refer to any perfume, oil, salve, lotion, or cream. Any Roman container in which either a medicament or unguent was stored or transported, or truthfully, any small household container, can be called an *unguentarium*.

With such vague terminology, it may seem impossible to gain certainty about how Roman beauty products were used; however, the apparent openness of Roman language regarding beauty products is actually a window into the theoretical space that they occupied in the Roman mind. Terms like *mundus muliebrum*, *medicamentum*, and *unguentum* highlight the various uses to which a single product could be put, or the various manifestations of a single basic product. For instance, a person today might have olive oil in a glass bottle in the kitchen, which they use for cooking, and in an aerosol can in the bathroom, which they use to tame frizzy hair; both are olive oil, but one is definitely a beauty product, while the other may or may not be. The aerosol can of olive oil may also be a clue about the householder's identity, since this product is marketed towards the African-American community.¹⁵⁵ This raises another possibility about beauty products; that they may have been marketed towards a particular demographic or community. It is possible that some Roman vendors served specific communities.

¹⁵⁵ For example, Organic Root Stimulator Olive Oil Sheen Spray is marketed as a beauty product for African Americans.

Evidence for Roman markets indicates that multiple vendors of beauty products were grouped in the same area of the market.¹⁵⁶ However, this begs the question, whether there was a “Jewish” beauty retailer, or a “eunuch’s” beauty retailer? Were the same products packaged (literally or figuratively) for different audiences, such as “men’s” hair dye today? According to Deborah Green, perfumed oils were sold by spice vendors in Roman Palestine; however, Brun’s study seems to indicate that perfume shops were distinct entities.¹⁵⁷ While some of these questions cannot be answered with certitude yet, it is clear that many products used in ancient Rome performed various functions within the household. Archaeologists cannot classify every *unguentarium* as a cosmetic container, because it is not always possible to discern what a container held.

There are, however, enough examples of unequivocally cosmetic containers to demonstrate the widespread use of beauty products in ancient Rome. The ‘test-tube’ *unguentarium*, so called for its distinctive test-tube shape, is one such container. Test-tube *unguentaria* contained eyeliners and shadows, which were dipped into with applicators, most commonly glass swizzle sticks or long, narrow spoons called *ligulae*. These distinctive containers appear as single tubes or as multiple-barreled tubes, allowing for a variety of colors to be sold together. Cosmetics were typically stored in special boxes called *pyxis*, *arculae*, *scrinia*, *cistellae*, or *myrothecia*, which varied in quality and costliness.¹⁵⁸ Many *pyxis* were suspended from chains, allowing them to be transported

¹⁵⁶ Ardle MacMahon and Jennifer Price, *Roman working lives and urban living*, (London: Oxbow Books, 2005), vi; Brun (2000), 299.

¹⁵⁷ Green, Deborah A. *The Aroma of Righteousness: Scent and Seduction in Rabbinic Literature*. 28. Green does not cite her sources for this information; Brun (2000), *passim*.

¹⁵⁸ Stewart (2007), 74.

easily, as in the mosaic showing a family attending the baths, from Piazza Armerina.¹⁵⁹

Palettes and grinders for cosmetics have also been found, and were identified as cosmetic implements by Ralph Jackson, the foremost expert on the pieces, long after they had been excavated.¹⁶⁰ The cosmetic grinders from Roman Britain are especially significant because they demonstrate that while Britons may have been using the same cosmetic products as the Romans, they had a distinctive British tradition of cosmetic usage and continued to use traditional British cosmetic implements. By wearing a British cosmetic grinder on a necklace, the user demonstrated fidelity to native tradition, while perhaps embracing new forms of self-beautification.

The Romans also distinguished perfume containers by calling them *alabastrum*, because alabaster was the best material for containing perfume, even if glass was cheaper and more common.¹⁶¹ All of these containers were used to store and transport the various objects of the *mundus muliebrum*, including beauty tools, facial cosmetics, skincare products, skin colorants, perfumes, and face patches, which are discussed below.

A description of Roman beauty products

Roman beauty products varied in type, quality, and purpose, and there was a greater variety of products available to Roman people than might be expected by the non-specialist. The Roman Empire had trade connections stretching from China in the east to Britain in the west, and from Germany in the north to Ethiopia in the south. Hygiene and beauty products were some of the most common commodities of the first few centuries

¹⁵⁹ Croom (2000), plate 8.

¹⁶⁰ Ralph Jackson, "Cosmetic Sets from Late Iron Age and Roman Britain," *Britannia* 16 (1985), pp. 165-192; Jackson (2010).

¹⁶¹ Stewart (2007), 76. Alabaster is the least porous material and prevents evaporation of scent.

CE. Beauty tools, including mirrors, combs, razors, tweezers, strigils, brushes, applicator wands, and *unguentaria* were necessary implements for all kinds of Roman people.

Basic beauty tools were carried on chatelaines which could be attached to belts or worn on chains.

In addition to these tools, there were tools which carried nuances of identity, including the British cosmetic grinders, and gender-specific tools such as curling irons, cosmetic applicators and palettes, and the elaborate containers that were so important to status display. While women were not the only users of cosmetics and perfumes, such beauty products were strongly associated with women. The men who used them, therefore, may have been identifying themselves either as transvestites, dandies, or young lovers. It must be remembered that so little happened in true privacy in the Roman world; many Romans' daily ablutions occurred in public baths or in semi-private spaces where family members, slaves, and others would be present. When Juvenal describes transvestites applying makeup and mirror-gazing, he is describing a scene that Romans were likely to witness, rather than an obscure private ritual.¹⁶² Again, while Roman authors unanimously condemned male vanity and males who delighted in adornment, their opinions may not have carried much weight with men outside of their social status. The average Roman man benefited little in life from adhering to stringent guidelines of Roman identity. It may have been more rewarding, overall, to present himself as he pleased, and in ways that carried more concrete rewards. Finally, the element of status display that cosmetic containers and beauty tools afforded cannot be underestimated.

¹⁶² Juv. 2.85-101. Juvenal may have made the scene up, but the humor in his description relies on the dissonance that arises when men act like women. Either way, he had to have witnessed someone applying makeup at some point in order to create such a scene, which demonstrates the lack of privacy in the Roman world.

While attending the public baths was the right of every Roman, it was also an opportunity to show off one's wealth and worldliness through the bathing kits and other materials used at the baths.

Many of the beauty tools which have survived are of superior quality, involving mixed media and elaborate decoration. Three *pyxides* demonstrate this point. The first, a blue, gold, green, and white glass *pyxis* from the early first century, on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, shows off the artistry available in a simple shape; the colors are swirled in a marbled pattern, a style which was popular before glass-blowing became common and inexpensive.¹⁶³ A terra cotta *pyxis* from the Flavian-Antonine era is decorated with a raised pattern of dots and swirls.¹⁶⁴ A small *pyxis* in the British Museum, found in a grave in Essex, is made of bronze with colorful enameled decoration.¹⁶⁵ The relative value of these objects indicates a broad spectrum of status display; while the terra cotta is attractive, there is no doubt that it was inexpensive. Likewise, the enameled box, because it covers a semi-precious material with even more materials, and "required the specialist skills of the bronzesmith, the glassworker, and the gem-cutter," was undoubtedly expensive.¹⁶⁶ Anyone in possession of such an object was obviously wealthy (or lucky, or a thief).

¹⁶³ "Mosaic glass *pyxis* with lid." Metropolitan Museum of Art (web).

<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/130006195?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=Roman+pyxis&pos=2>. Accessed 2/5/2012.

¹⁶⁴ "Terra cotta *pyxis* (box) with lid." Metropolitan Museum of Art (web).

http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/130007922?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=* &what=Pyxides&pos=20. Accessed 2/5/2012.

¹⁶⁵ "Pyxis: Roman Britain, 2nd century AD. From a grave at Elsenham, Essex." The British Museum (web).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_prb/p/pyxis.aspx. Accessed 2/1/2012.

¹⁶⁶ "Pyxis: Roman Britain, 2nd century AD."

Of course, mirrors, strigils, and other implements were also made in a variety of materials, which demonstrated wealth. In the *Satyricon*, Petronius' characters meet up in a bathhouse before dinner, in which the host, Trimalchio, is showing off. Trimalchio's exaggerated wealth is illustrated in his use of a silver bottle for urinating, which his slaves holds for him.¹⁶⁷ Whether such an item existed is questionable, but the passage effectively demonstrates the way vessels were used to display status in the baths. Compared to the simple bath kit of Figure 34, made of glass and iron, a silver vessel is conspicuous consumption indeed.

The Roman markets were also the source of imported and domestic cosmetic products in their final and raw states. Foundation, eye makeup, and rouge were the three most commonly worn cosmetics in ancient Rome, as the means to achieve the desired look of glowing white skin, large eyes, and a youthful, rosy complexion in the cheeks and lips. *Cerussa* or *psimithium* (sugar of lead/white lead), salt, *creta*, chalk, and *melinum* (white marl) were used as foundation, to whiten and even the tone of the face.¹⁶⁸ A small tin canister of cream-to-powder foundation, dating from the second century, was unearthed in Britain at the Tabard square temple site. The face cream, or foundation, was comprised of animal fat, starch, and tin.¹⁶⁹ The survival of such a commodity is rare, and analysis revealed it to contain ingredients similar to those described in Roman literature.

Rubrica (red ochre) and other ochres of various hues, spices such as cinnamon and saffron, rose and poppy petals, *fucus* (orchella weed dye), *morum* (mulberry juice), cinnabar, *minium* (red lead), and *purpurissum* (murex-dyed powder) were used to color

¹⁶⁷ Petron. *Sat.* 27. Trimalchio also uses a silver toothpick at dinner, just because he can (33).

¹⁶⁸ Olson (2008), 60-61; Stewart (2007), 40-42.

¹⁶⁹ Stewart (2007), 35-6, 37 fig. 16.

the cheeks.¹⁷⁰ For the eyes, there were shadows and liners made of *stibium* (kohl), *fuligo* (soot), lamp-black, *collyrium* (lead sulphide), antimony, rose-oil, ashes, saffron, and ochres of various colors, and sold as loose powder or in cakes.¹⁷¹ Romans also colored in the eyebrows, perhaps even painting in a unibrow.¹⁷² While some products had to be mixed later on, many were sold in their final state. Extant kohl tubes, compacts, and containers show what they looked like and how they worked in their final state. Makeup containers were made of wood, bone, or glass, and the applicators of wood, glass, bone, or ivory.¹⁷³

While Roman art does not emphasize “made-up” faces, almost all art shows women with fair skin, rosy cheeks and lips, and dark eyes, which were the attributes makeup was supposed to produce. There are also images in which women are clearly wearing makeup, such as the Fayyum portrait of a young woman with orange eye makeup, cranberry lips, and black-lined eyes (Figure 3), or the family portrait from Brescia, which shows a girl with eyeliner.¹⁷⁴ While in Roman portraiture, cosmetics appear as subtle and flattering, or not at all, Roman literature is not so kind, and describes women’s faces as caked with bizarre substances that render them hideous.¹⁷⁵

Beauty products for improving the health and quality of the skin were another common type of commodity. Recipes for various skin treatments, utilizing mineral, animal, and vegetable ingredients, can be found in Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis* and Ovid’s

¹⁷⁰ Olson (2008), 61; Stewart (2007), 42-3.

¹⁷¹ Olson (2008), 61-3; Stewart (2007), 59.

¹⁷² Olson (2008), 62-3.

¹⁷³ Olson (2008), 62; See Stewart (2007), 76, figs. 23 & 24.

¹⁷⁴ See Stewart (2007), 32, fig. 14.

¹⁷⁵ Olson (2008), 63.

Medicamina Faciei Femineae.¹⁷⁶ Skincare products were used to reduce or eliminate wrinkles, freckles, and stretchmarks, to soften skin, and to clear up blemishes. Some were also used for healing wounds, and there were cleansers, exfoliators, moisturizers, and other products which might be categorized as hygienic in function, rather than cosmetic. Lotions for the face and body were made from almond, palm, ben, sesame, and olive oils. Animal products, such as bear, duck, lion, swan, or goose fat, stag horn, and asses' milk, were also used.¹⁷⁷ Romans used kaolin and other cleansers to wash their faces, and exfoliated with salt, *caccilia* (made from grains and wax), and a compound of "barley, eggs, stag horn, narcissus bulbs and honey." Saffron, cardamom, reed, honey, wine, myrrh, balsam, gum resin, and *omphacium*, the juice of unripe grapes and olives, were common plant ingredients used in skincare.¹⁷⁸ The Romans also had skin treatments for removing tattoos, which were probably highly valued by former slaves as they began to exercise agency in their bodily presentation.¹⁷⁹

Skin whiteners were also popular in ancient Rome, because of the value placed on having pale skin for women. Pale skin was a sign of a life spent indoors, and was admired in women. The same was not true for men, whose skin was not supposed to demonstrate delicacy or a leisurely life. However, some ascetics thought pale skin was a sign of holiness, since people who fasted and prayed often were paler than those who did not. There were also products for coloration of the skin. Gold was painted onto parts of the

¹⁷⁶ Plin. *HN*. 20.9, 20.125, 20.185, 22.98, 28.108-9, 28.183, 30.28-30, 30.75, 32.65 and elsewhere; Ov. *Med.* 5.16, 6.5.1, 67-8, 73-4, and elsewhere, cited in Olson (2008), 64; Stewart (2007), 36-8.

¹⁷⁷ Stewart (2007), 35, 38-40; Olson (2008), 64-5.

¹⁷⁸ Stewart (2007), 40.

¹⁷⁹ Stewart (2007), 109, 58, 59.

body, such as the nipples.¹⁸⁰ *Glastum*, or woad, a blue dye, was used to color the skin by some of the indigenous people of Britain, and *cyprinum* (henna) was brought from India to Rome, though it is unlikely that Romans other than those in Britain regularly colored their skin. The practice of coloring skin with *glastum* or *cyprinum* was most definitely an assertion of non-Roman, British identity. Another skin colorant that demonstrated non-Roman identity was the use of chalk to color the feet of slaves,¹⁸¹ which, along with branding, scarring, and tattooing, was a form of bodily presentation imposed upon one by another, rather than a form of self-presentation. The marking of slaves by masters is a reminder of the significance of self-presentation to self-actualization, and the importance that self-presentation had in the lives of freed persons.

Because the Romans placed such a high premium on being clean, as evident from the number of public baths, perfumes were a vital part of everyday life; smelling good was a sign of good health and perfumes were valued for their aromatherapeutic and medicinal properties.¹⁸² Perfumes in the ancient world were not just liquid scents, as we define them today; a Roman perfume could be a hygienic product (such as a deodorant, a mouthwash, or the scented oil used to clean skin), or it could be a drink mixer (used to scent wine), a medicine, or an air freshener (as with the spices brought by the women to Jesus' tomb).¹⁸³ The Romans also associated perfume with pleasure and luxury, although they used many perfumes on an everyday basis. All types of perfume were sold together in common areas of the Roman market, and often by the same perfumer, who made them

¹⁸⁰ Juv. 6.123.

¹⁸¹ Juv. 1.111.

¹⁸² Stewart (2007), 54-57.

¹⁸³ Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1.

on-site by pressing oil and mixing it with scents, fixatives, and sometimes dyes.¹⁸⁴

Perfumes came in liquid, powder, and oil forms, made from mixing dry or moist ingredients, or macerating spices in oil;¹⁸⁵ essential oils were extracted with oil, wine, water, or milk and honey.¹⁸⁶ For color, the root of a Syrian plant called *chroma* was added to some expensive perfumes; for cheaper perfumes, *anchusa* (a type of borage) root was used, producing a purplish-red color.

Some perfumes were made from expensive imported ingredients, such as frankincense and Judean balsam, while others were made from local flora, such as iris and rose, and still others were scented with simple herbs, such as marjoram.¹⁸⁷ The most expensive perfumes, such as *regalium*, *metopium*, and *kyphi*, were made of many ingredients, including exotic and rare scents. As a general rule, the more complex the recipe was, the more expensive the perfume was.¹⁸⁸ Complex perfumes were also associated with femininity and luxury, although certain pricey scents were thought to be masculine as well.¹⁸⁹ Lighter blends were also associated with men.¹⁹⁰ All perfume could be used to demonstrate an urbane and civilized identity, since it was associated with cleanliness, the civilized life, and the presence of trade and markets. Ancient public spaces were undoubtedly rather smelly, making any sweet scent a welcome addition.

¹⁸⁴ Olson (2008), 76-8.

¹⁸⁵ Guiseppe Squillace and Theophrastus, *Il profumo nel mondo antico* (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 2010), 214, Tabelle I.1, C., D.: *Diapasmata (polveri profumate)*, *sostanza secche unite a sostanze secche*; *Myra (sostanze profumate liquide)*, *sostanze umide unite a sostanza umide*; *Chrismata (oli profumati)*, *macerazione di spezie in oli*.

¹⁸⁶ Squillace (2010), 214, Tabelle I.1, E and I.2. *Anchusa* is described as being used in “*tutti i profumi scadenti e a buon mercato*.”

¹⁸⁷ Olson (2008), 78.

¹⁸⁸ Stewart (2007), 125-6.

¹⁸⁹ Olson (2008), 78.

¹⁹⁰ Squillace (2010), 218, Tabelle I.5.

Perfumes could also be used as signs of sexuality and sexual availability. Despite the variety of functions performed by perfume, the association of perfume with romance and sexual availability was strong. Women were said to wear perfume specifically to distract men, and men who wore too much perfume were sexually suspect.¹⁹¹ Gifts of perfumes, such as balls of amber, were given to male and female lovers.¹⁹² Wall paintings from the House of the Vettii, that show cupids engaged in perfume production, illustrate the romantic connotations of smelling good.¹⁹³ In Delos, perfume press-beds with a heart-shaped design cut into them, have been found; the heart may represent a brand mark, and emphasizes the association between perfumes and romance.¹⁹⁴ In contexts of romantic literature, perfume is listed along with visual elements as the essence of feminine beauty.¹⁹⁵

A final category of beauty product, which is similar to facial cosmetics, is the temporary tattoo called the *splenium* or *aluta*. A small patch of cloth or soft leather, the *splenium* began as a bandage used to patch over blemishes and scars on the face. Presumably, makeup was sometimes applied over the patch and blended to create a seamless effect. They may have been considered fashionable, like a beauty mark. *Splenia* were cut into crescent moons and likely other shapes, and worn even on unmarred skin.¹⁹⁶ The crescent is, incidentally, the shape used to indicate senatorial status on shoes, as well as a common shape for the *bullae* of female children; whether this is coincidental or

¹⁹¹ Olson (2008), 78.

¹⁹² Juv. 9.50-51

¹⁹³ Olson (2008), 77, fig. 2.4.

¹⁹⁴ Jean-Pierre Brun, "The Production of Perfumes in Antiquity: The Cases of Delos and Paestum." *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (April., 2000), 283, 287. The hearts could be a maker's mark, since other Roman products, including bricks, carried maker's marks.

¹⁹⁵ Stewart (2007), 64.

¹⁹⁶ Olson (2009), 302.

deliberate is unknown.¹⁹⁷ The closest modern equivalent to the *splenium* is the face tattoo, popular in *harajuku* fashion, which comes in various shapes and is typically worn on the cheek. The uniqueness of this product is its double duty as both concealer of flaws and jaunty accent. It is an especially useful facial modification for a culture where slaves were branded and scarred, yet manumitted frequently. Freedmen would be able to cover the signs of their enslavement. Martial wrote of a well-dressed man covering his brand marks in Epigram 2.29, and mentioned a man of senatorial rank with *splenia* in 8.45. *Alutae* may also have come in handy for concealing wounds that resulted from domestic violence, as Augustine mentions in his *Confessions* that some women's faces were disfigured from abuse.¹⁹⁸ The literature surrounding *splenia* and *alutae* reveals that they were associated with people of inferior status and sad lives. The shape of these beauty products may indicate a desire to associate them with higher status, since the crescent was a status symbol, both for young girls and for senators.

People living in the Roman Empire had access to an incredible variety of beauty products, especially if they lived in a city or near a market. There were both local and imported versions of cosmetics, skin care, and perfumes, and there were expensive and inexpensive tools and products. The Romans themselves were sufficiently impressed with the variety of bodily modifications available that they catalogued them again and again.¹⁹⁹ The ubiquity of these products is attested by their presence in archaeological

¹⁹⁷ Olson (2008), 17.

¹⁹⁸ August. *Conf.* 9.9, cited in Jerry Toner, *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 68.

¹⁹⁹ Ovid wrote out recipes and descriptions of products in the late first century BCE, in the *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, and in *Ars Amatoria* at the turn of the century; Pliny did the same in the *Historia Naturalis*, published in the late 70s CE and imitating the catalogue style of Theophrastus, who catalogued scents a couple centuries before.

sites across the Empire. It is clear that the Romans, as a broad culture, were very much invested in the beauty products industry. However, it must be acknowledged that even the term “beauty products,” as broad as it is, is insufficient to encompass the entirety of what facial and skin modifications embodied. A modification may not always be a product or practice that results in beauty. Still, in cases where the individual is actively engaged in utilizing a product, it can be useful to think of their self-expression as a form of beautification or improvement, with an end goal of self-actualization. In any case, the purpose of presentation is to semiotically move the body from the negative/generic to the positive/specific. Most Roman bodily treatments were designed to create an impression of wealth, leisure, and pleasure, through color, scent, and texture.²⁰⁰

Roman women and religious context

While other scholars have explored the importance of beauty products in the lives of Roman women, the role played by the *mundus muliebrum* in relationship to religious identity has been overlooked, and Jewish and Christian women’s experiences have not been examined. Polytheists were certainly bound by the conflicting attitudes towards cosmetics in the Roman world. On the one hand, the results obtained from the use of beauty products were seen as essential to maintaining feminine prestige. Many Roman women must have felt justified using cosmetic treatments, since they were expected to have white, glowing, youthful complexions, soft skin, dark eyes, and a pleasant body odor. On the other hand, too much adornment was viewed with suspicion and considered

²⁰⁰ Although others were designed to mark the wearer as low status, and some products, such as chalk, were beautifying on the faces of women, and humbling on the feet of slaves.

unRoman. Beauty products were also associated with adultery or impurity in women.²⁰¹

How did Jewish and Christian women fit into this equation, though?²⁰² Both Jewish and Christian attitudes towards cosmetics, reflected in religious writings, influenced the way some Roman women experienced the *mundus muliebrum*. In “Beauty, Beautification, and Cosmetics: Social Control and Halakha in Talmudic Times,” Chana Safrai explores cosmetics and beauty products in the context of first- and second-century Judaism.²⁰³ Safrai finds that rabbinic sources not only support the use of cosmetics by women, but assume that women will wear cosmetics, and discourage them from not using cosmetics. The attitude towards beauty products represented in Jewish writings is generally positive (that is, beauty products are good, and should be used, according to these sources). As with the sources for ascetic Christians, these sources represent the worldview and desires of the spiritual authorities, rather than of ordinary men and women. They do not describe everyday experience per se. These sources are important to this study, however, because they demonstrate alternative value systems regarding self-presentation, and distinctly religious input on the question of personal adornment.

Among the many Jewish communities in the Roman Empire, rules and attitudes regarding cosmetics varied, but overall, women were strongly encouraged or even required to wear cosmetics, at least according to the prescriptive and authoritative

²⁰¹ Juv. O 17-34; 6.457-465.

²⁰² Although women of various ascetic movements may have engaged in the same practices described here, my sources for these women are exclusively Christian.

²⁰³ “Talmudic Times” may refer to the period after the redaction of the Mishnah (the era of *amoraim*, or interpreters) but the rabbinic teachings precede the Mishnah itself, and so are reflective of first- and second-century law and practice (the period of *tannaim*, or teachers).

texts.²⁰⁴ Three basic assumptions underpin the tannaic teachings on the use of cosmetics. The first is that married men are entitled to attractive wives. The second is that married women are entitled to the means of presenting themselves attractively, including to their own standards, as well as by normal standards of society. The third assumption is that cosmetics make women more attractive, therefore, they are a crucial component of healthy marriages.²⁰⁵ Husbands were given limited powers to dictate how their wives self-presented, but were required to provide for their wives' toilette; this was as important as providing food, clothing, and shelter for a wife.

There were local variations in practice, but overall Jewish women in the Roman Empire, especially those marriageable or married, were expected to use cosmetics, and are believed by some scholars to have adhered to wider social norms of self-presentation.²⁰⁶ In all likelihood, this would mean that they did not over-indulge where excess was frowned upon, but neither would they dress down just because their non-Jewish neighbors frowned upon beautification. In certain instances and according to specific rabbinic teachings, women were forbidden the use of cosmetics, such as when in mourning for a husband's relative, when widowed, and while menstruating, but these practices were localized, and the general practice for marriageable or married Jewish women was to wear facial cosmetics.²⁰⁷ It is not known whether or not they used *splenia*,

²⁰⁴ Baker (1998), 239. The problem remains that these texts are products of a religious elite and may not reflect ordinary people's lives; however, they provide enough of a contrast with elite Roman sources that they are worth examining as alternative authorities in the lives of women.

²⁰⁵ Safrai (1998), 42.

²⁰⁶ Joseph Geiger, "The Jew and the Other: Doubtful and Multiple Identities in the Roman Empire," *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz. (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 145-6; however, Roussin believes that Jews observed notably different dress codes, Roussin (2001), 184, 186, 188.

²⁰⁷ Safrai (1998), 42-4.

but foundation (whitener), rouge, and eye makeup were commonly used. For Jews there was a clear correlation between cosmetics and attractiveness, and cosmetics were not considered immodest or suggestive of impropriety. However, cosmetics did retain an association with sexuality, since they were expected to be worn by married women and prostitutes; clearly the rabbis had a different attitude towards sexuality as well. The adoption of cosmetic usage by young Jewish girls was a sign that they were becoming adults, and ready for marriage.²⁰⁸ The use of cosmetics by widows could be a sign that they desired to make a living by prostituting themselves.²⁰⁹ In addition to facial cosmetics, Jewish Romans had a positive attitude towards perfumes. Roman Palestine was a center of perfume production, and perfume was a prominent commodity produced by the Jews for centuries before the Roman conquest. Roman Jews used perfume for religious reasons, but also associated perfume with beautiful heroines, such as Ruth and Esther.²¹⁰

According to Safrai, a woman who refused to wear cosmetics could have been considered a deviant, and her non-usage could be grounds for divorce.²¹¹ It is more likely, however, that Jewish women followed the fashions where they lived, and dealt with the same conflicting messages about adornment that other Roman women dealt with. There is not enough evidence to prove that Jewish Romans adorned especially different than Romans,²¹² but it is clear that this was an option and that Jewish Romans were involved in mediating their identities as both Romans and Jews. The normalcy of

²⁰⁸ Safrai (1998), 40.

²⁰⁹ Safrai (1998), 43.

²¹⁰ Brun (2000), 279-80.

²¹¹ Safrai (1998), 41, 44.

²¹² Nor do I possess the expertise required for this argument.

beauty product usage in Roman society is demonstrated in the artwork of so-called pagan Romans. While elite Roman authors expressed approval of women who did not wear cosmetics, Roman art depicts the *mundus muliebrum* in a very positive light, and both Roman art and literature promote the beauty standards of youth, good hygiene, and the leisurely arts of adornment. Therefore, for both Jews and non-Jews living in the Roman Empire, personal neglect was not normal; it was an act of mourning and expression of loss. “Neglect” in this case means making a concerted effort to appear extraordinarily unkempt. Mourners did not simply roll out of bed and skip their morning ablutions; they messed their hair up, wore their shabbiest clothes, and strove to appear as downtrodden as possible. This was a common trick in Roman law cases, as well; plaintiffs manipulated their personal appearance to garner pity from the jury.²¹³ The fact that presenting as mourning was grounds for divorce²¹⁴ underscores the statement made by calculated neglect.

Early Christian ascetic women exploited the appearance of mourning and neglect to express their religious identity. Most of the information about early Christian women comes from sources which describe women’s lives in terms of distinct before-and-after phases, and emphasize the renunciation of worldly pleasures.²¹⁵ Like the rabbinic sources, these may be based more on the fantasies of religious personnel than on everyday reality, but the fact remains that they describe new value systems for religious Romans. In these stories, women who had formerly used beauty products regularly put

²¹³ See Bradley (2008) for a discussion of Apuleius’ trial and his self-presentation.

²¹⁴ Safrai (1998), 44.

²¹⁵ For a complete discussion of this phenomenon, see Bruce Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdsman, 2003); Brown (1988).

them away as a sign of holiness or a break with the old life. The cease-use of cosmetics, then, became a means of self-presentation that was dramatic enough to command attention. To demonstrate her asceticism, a Christian woman might sell all her jewelry and colored garments, wear all black, and refuse to style her hair as well as cease to use cosmetics.²¹⁶ According to Peter Brown, this was an expression of her rejection of conventional society and its focus on the outer person. However, paleness was just as fashionable among ascetics as it was in mainstream society (conveniently), with the key difference that among ascetics pale skin was desirable for both genders, as a sign of fasting (instead of upper-class leisure).²¹⁷ Given that skin-whiteners were extremely common, it would have been tempting to enhance or even fake the look of holiness. In the second Satire, Juvenal confronts a group of men who “affect [an ascetic] lifestyle” while secretly “[living] a Bacchic orgy.”²¹⁸ It is likely that some ascetics ‘made themselves up,’ whether by using cosmetics or by refusing to use them, in order to appear more spiritual and create an appearance of neglect, especially since self-neglect was anathema to Jews, and excess of any kind was anathema to traditional Romans.²¹⁹ In *De Cultu Feminarum* (*On the Presentation of Women*),²²⁰ Tertullian exhorts Christian woman to stop using cosmetics for their husbands’ sakes,²²¹ since good men value inner beauty more than outer beauty; this is nearly the opposite view as that taken by the rabbis of the time, who asserted that women should beautify themselves for their husbands.

²¹⁶ Brown (1988), 263, 300, 324, 332; Stewart (2007), 15.

²¹⁷ Brown (1988), 202.

²¹⁸ Juv. 2.3.

²¹⁹ Safrai (1998), 44, 48.

²²⁰ The title is literally “On the cultivation of women,” meaning the ways in which women presented their bodies. It is a prime example of the use of the word *cultus* to signify civilization and refinement in regards to the care of the body.

²²¹ Tert. *DCF*. 4.1.

Tertullian claimed that wives who make themselves up may catch the eyes of other men, causing their husbands to be jealous. He also cautioned women against embracing a look of extreme neglect, or wildness;²²² his Roman sense of propriety demanded that even a rejection of norms must be moderate.

Roman males using beauty products

While the Romans associated beauty products with women through their use of the term *mundus muliebrum*, the reality was that men also used beauty products, just as men also styled their hair and depilated at times. It should not shock us to know that many Roman men engaged in ‘effeminate’ bodily practices, yet there are no studies dedicated to the topic of male self-presentation or adornment in the Roman world. Roman men used beauty products for a variety of reasons, some of which were religious. For example, certain religious cults required males to become eunuchs or to cross-dress as part of their religious practice. As with styling the hair, making up the face would have been essential to successful cross-dressing. Eunuchs, including those who were priests of Cybele, regularly dressed and adorned themselves as women, effectively taking on a feminine identity, as part of their everyday costume. There were also men who participated in cults for which cross-dressing was only occasionally required. Male worshippers of Bona Dea and Juno are described as wearing eye makeup and eyebrow liner in Juvenal’s second Satire.²²³ In certain cults, such as those of Hercules and Isis, men wore women’s clothing and adornments only for specific rituals. The sarcophagus of Titus Flavius Trophimus, shows a scene of transvestism which may be part of a

²²² Tert. *DCF*. 5.1.

²²³ Juv. 2.85-101.

ritual.²²⁴ In one image, the deceased and his friend are working as shoemakers, which was their trade in life. In another scene, one of them is dressed in women's clothing and both are engaged in some sort of ritual. Men are also said to have cross-dressed in order to sneak into women's rites, although this could be unfounded slander.²²⁵ Cross-dressing could also be used as a disguise, at least in novels, and an adult man would surely need more than a change of clothes to fool anyone.²²⁶ In the *Satyricon*, Giton is said to have lived as a woman, wearing women's clothing, and perhaps even makeup. Petronius gives no explanation of why Giton lives as a woman, and is clear about Giton's gender identity (male).²²⁷ Perhaps his audience would have recognized in Giton a category of male which defies conventional understandings of the Roman social hierarchy; neither slave nor prostitute, but of no social consequence, Giton enjoys his male lovers, is loved by all, and seems content to go through life as an effeminate. On the other hand, in the *Metamorphosis*, the main character Lucius is punished for his interest in physical transformation through the use of cosmetics; he applies an unguent to his body as part of a spell to make himself an owl (an animal associated with wisdom) and is turned into a donkey instead.

Most scholars choose to ignore the possibility that Roman males used beauty products for the sheer joy of self-adorning. Kelly Olson is the only historian to write a work completely on male adornment, entitled "Masculinity, Appearance, and Sexuality: Dandies in Roman Antiquity." This meticulously researched work, written by one of the

²²⁴ Varner (2008), 194.

²²⁵ Juv. 6. 336-41, O 26-34.

²²⁶ Apul. *Met.* 7.8.

²²⁷ Petron. *Sat.* 81. In Federico Fellini's film version, *Satyricon*, all of the characters are very literally interpreted, and Giton is highly made up.

top scholars of Roman self-presentation, demonstrates not only that some men wore cosmetics, but that in fact it was a much more common practice than scholars have ever considered. Using cosmetics was one way young men could make themselves attractive and demonstrate sexual availability, as Giton undoubtedly did. Keeping one's face youthful allowed men the freedom to engage in sexual relationships with other men without being judged. As mentioned above, beauty products were available to maintain beardlessness.²²⁸ A fresh, rosy complexion was attainable through the use of skin treatments. This was also attractive to women, as mentioned above.²²⁹ Roman literature abounds with examples of men who delighted in their appearance and loved to be noticed.²³⁰

In addition to dandies, however, there are other categories of Roman men who deserve to be mentioned, since they comprised a large section of society when taken all together. Male prostitutes and certain slaves were also men who regularly used cosmetics and perfume, both by choice and through a lack of agency. Encolpius, the main character of the *Satyricon*, used cosmetics to prostitute himself out; the cosmetics, along with other encoded aspects of his self-presentation, indicated that he was sexually available, for a fee.²³¹ Like female actors, male actors also needed to wear stage makeup. Often, men played the parts of women on the stage; some were especially convincing, according to Juvenal.²³² Many men used beauty products such as skin treatments for hygiene and

²²⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 1.31, 2.36, 5.48.

²²⁹ See Chapter 3.

²³⁰ Mart. *Spect.* 2.12, 2.29, 2.57, 3.43, 3.63, 3.82, 4.36, 4.42, 5.41, 5.61, 5.79, 6.57, 8.47, 8.77, 10.13, 10.19, 11.39, 12.38, and 13; Juv. 2 *passim*.

²³¹ Petron. *Sat.* 126. He is described as shameless with cosmetics (*facies medicamina attrite*) and sauciness (*petulantia*).

²³² Juv. 3.90-100.

health purposes, choosing not to see these products as forms of female adornment (although others were quick to point out that that was what they were). Perfume was used by men as freely as by women, although some scents were considered more suitable to men; the overuse of perfume was scorned, but that did not seem to stop some men. According to Juvenal, the emperor Augustus made fun of his friend Maecenas for wearing so much myrrh-scented oil in his hair. However, Augustus was a hypocrite and wore his own fair share of scent.²³³ Other emperors were accused of an excessive use of perfume; Caligula, who ruled from CE 37 to 41, bathed in entire baths of perfumed oil, and Nero, who ruled from CE 54 to 68, had perfume sprayed from the ceiling of his dining room on all the guest, according to Suetonius.²³⁴ While it is impossible to verify any of these claims, about the emperors, they demonstrate the popularity of perfume and its association with *luxuria* and vice in Roman society.

Beauty products and age

Discussions of Roman females tend to cluster around *matronae* and young to middle-aged adult women, because of limited evidence. Roman art depicts women in this way, and Roman literature focuses on women in the context of their adult years. There is a lack of specific visual and literary references to women of very few or very many years wearing cosmetics. In *Dress and the Roman Woman*, Olson discusses unmarried women under the heading “The Roman girl,” and finds it complicated to speak authoritatively on female children in particular. The Romans did have a concept of girlhood, although girls are sometimes portrayed as miniature women in art, such as in

²³³ Juv. 2.29-33, 41.

²³⁴ Suet.*Calig.* 37; Suet.*Ner.* 31.

the Ara Pacis. Childhood had a unique status as a time full of promise and independence from adult responsibility.

The use of cosmetics may have functioned as a means by which Roman girls were encouraged to grow up; while not an actual rite of passage, the practice of self-adornment could have been introduced in the puberty years, and in the context of becoming a woman. Safrai, following rabbinic sources, describe cosmetics as a symbol of adulthood or incipient adulthood.²³⁵ Upper-class Roman burials of young girls often included items of adornment, such as mirrors, while those of older women did not. Andrew Oliver argued that this was because these items formed part of the girls' dowry, and were buried symbolically, along with her hopes of a marriage, whereas older women passed their jewelry and adornments on to friends and family members.²³⁶ In a similar fashion, Earinus, the boy lover of Domitian, dedicated his mirror, an object of the *mundus muliebrum*, to the god Aesculapius when he became a man.²³⁷ The implication is that as a youth, it was acceptable for him to use a mirror and even to count it as a prized possession. In many images, children are portrayed with little or no indications of gender; perhaps there was an age at which children were seen as genderless.²³⁸ In any case, it would seem that the attitudes towards and restrictions on beauty products were aimed at adults, and the use of beauty products by children was a matter for their parents.

There is likewise little positive evidence for elderly men or women wearing cosmetics. Aside from elderly men dyeing their hair to appear younger, there are

²³⁵ Safrai (1998), 40. R. Shimon b. Yochai, Rav Yehuda, and Shimon b. Menasha refer to cosmetics as the sign that indicates a girl is becoming a woman.

²³⁶ Oliver (2000), 115, 117, 119, 120.

²³⁷ Mart. *Spect.* 9.16, 17. See Dolansky (2008) for more on boys' coming-of-age.

²³⁸ Varner (2008), 195.

virtually no references to old men using beauty products, presumably because they had passed the age at which looks mattered. Elderly women were often made fun of for daring to attempt to be attractive through the use of beauty products.²³⁹ In one poem, Martial says he can love a mature woman, but not Matrinia, who is a corpse; he compares her to Hecuba and Niobe after their transformations, implying that women entirely transform as they age.²⁴⁰ He also contrasts old women with young girls, emphasizing the flaws of advanced age.²⁴¹ In another epigram, old age is used as a foil to youth, to enhance one woman's appearance.²⁴² More to the point, Martial's epigram to Vetustilla describes her as someone entirely inappropriate for sex and romance because of her great age, since she has *tres capilli* (three hairs), *quattuor...dentes* (four teeth), and *araneorum cassibus pares mammas* (breasts like cobwebs), among other bodily faults.²⁴³ Many of this poor woman's faults are, in theory, combatable with the use of beauty products. In another rather rude epigram, Martial tells an old woman to give up depilating her genitals, since they should rightfully be out of commission.²⁴⁴ The emphasis on physical appearance as the main justification for sexuality is distinct from the Jewish tradition, in which marital status justified both sexuality and personal beauty. In other places, elderly women and widows are praised for not adorning themselves. Seneca the Younger, a statesman and philosopher who lived in the first half of the first century CE, praised his mother for her modesty, which was her only ornament, and her refusal to "pollute" (*non*

²³⁹ Presumably men in their later years were empowered enough to not need their looks, while women's value remained intrinsically tied to their physical appearance. So little has changed.

²⁴⁰ Mart. *Spect.* 3.32.

²⁴¹ Mart. *Spect.* 4.20, 5.45

²⁴² Mart. *Spect.* 8. 79

²⁴³ Mart. *Spect.* 3.93.

²⁴⁴ Mart. *Spect.* 10.90.

polluisti) her face with cosmetics.²⁴⁵ There are many images of elderly Roman women in Roman art, but they are not shown adorning themselves; instead, elderly women often appear on funerary memorials that praise their modesty and goodness as wives and mothers.

Although women portrayed putting on makeup in the visual arts are usually young adult women, matronly virtue and beautification were not always seen as compatible. Cosmetics are frequently associated with frivolous young flirts, not mature women. Cosmetics and cosmetic implements were seen as a girl's first 'adult' possession and proof of her marriageability, rather than of her status as a wife.²⁴⁶ They were also associated with adultery and women who sought multiple lovers. Valeria Messalina, Empress from CE 41 to 48, is described as having used beauty products to conceal her identity so she could shamelessly flaunt her body and engage in sexual peccadilloes in brothels.²⁴⁷ There is a strong correlation between beauty products and prostitution,²⁴⁸ and prostitutes are rarely described as having an age in the same way that other ("respectable") women did. Jewish widows who became prostitutes were encouraged to use cosmetics, while those who remained single and lived off an allowance from relatives were encouraged to cease using cosmetics.²⁴⁹ It would seem that the most appropriate time for a woman to use beauty products was the rather brief phase of her life between marriageability and marriage, unless she was Jewish, in which case her entire marriage would be appropriate, or Christian, in which case there may have never been a good time.

²⁴⁵ Sen. *Helv.* 16.4.

²⁴⁶ Stewart (2007), 108; Safrai (1998), 40.

²⁴⁷ Juv. 6.117-125.

²⁴⁸ Stewart (2007), 110-111.

²⁴⁹ Safrai (1998), 43.

For many Romans, beauty products were part of every day life, despite the strictures of elite authors.

Beauty products and cultural identity

As mentioned before, beauty products were one way in which Jewish women expressed their Jewishness, and the cease-use of beauty products as well as actual beauty products allowed wealthy Christian women to visually enact their new identities as ascetics. Certain beauty products were also used to express other cultural identities. For instance, woad (*glastum*) was used by Britons before the Roman conquest, and some still used it during the Roman occupation. Cosmetics were a long-standing tradition in Egypt, and it is possible that Egyptians had fewer qualms about making their faces up. When they applied cosmetics, they did so in the context of a tradition dating back thousands of years. The Fayyum portraits attest to the joy North African Roman women took in presenting themselves beautifully. It has been suggested, too, that the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire, where cosmetics were viewed more positively, influenced Roman dress and appearance.²⁵⁰ Cosmopolitanism was a form of cultural identity, as being seen as *cultus*—both civilized and cultivated— was increasingly desirable in the first and second centuries. Wearing cosmetics from around the world gave the impression of being a citizen of the world, as indeed many Romans would have been. Susan Stewart believes that many *ornatrices* were captives from the farther reaches of the Empire, and were valued for their knowledge and skill in beauty products.²⁵¹ While wearing cosmetics could be seen as Roman or not, the use of specific beauty tools for cosmetics could

²⁵⁰ Stewart (2007), 32.

²⁵¹ Stewart (2007), 18.

indicate identity, such as in Britian, where zoomorphic cosmetic grinders were popular.

While it is not always possible to discern cultural identity based on the use of beauty products, they should not be overlooked as a means of conveying cultural identity.

Beauty products, and social status

The emphasis on leisure in association with the use of beauty products can lead some historians to assume they were an upper-class prerogative. However, poor and working women probably also wanted to be seen as participants in the cult of femininity. Cosmetics were one way of presenting that enabled a poor person to embody a status or visually lay claim to a lifestyle that was not theirs. In Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 80b, Rav Yehuda comments that “the poor [girls] apply white washing paint, the rich ones apply fine flour, and the daughters of kings apply oil of Myrrh.”²⁵² In other words, the more money a girl had, the less improvement she needed. A wealthy woman would have pale skin, which a poor woman would have to fake with “white washing paint.” Pale skin was an indicator of status because it implied a life lived indoors, rather than a life spent working and running errands outdoors. Pale skin was also positively associated with femininity and a tan positively associated with masculinity. Poor women, who most likely spent a good portion of their lives working and being outside, needed more makeup to achieve the look of refinement. Women with money, however, needed only a little powder to achieve the same effect. The very richest already had perfect skin, and only needed a little perfume to set it off. This comment also reveals that there were beauty products designed specifically for different economic groups with different needs, a fact

²⁵² Safrai (1998), 40; I rely on her translations of the Hebrew.

commented on by Kelly Olson and Jean-Pierre Brun.²⁵³ Oil of myrrh was the most expensive cosmetic listed here, while “white-washing paint” was probably *cerussa* or another such common Roman foundation.

In addition to the distinctions made between rich and poor in the Talmud, there are other indicators that many cosmetic products were affordable and widely available. Among the products listed by Pliny the Elder and Ovid, there are several made from plants and other materials which were abundant in the Mediterranean. These local or homespun products would be available to most women with an interest in using them. While Susan Stewart acknowledges this variety, Stewart argues that making up was a time-consuming activity which women of lower-status were unlikely to be engaged in; “there was no five-minute beauty routine for women in antiquity.”²⁵⁴ Although, as she argues, many cosmetic products took time to prepare and apply, it seems a stretch to say that poor women were incapable of applying cosmetics due to time constraints. Many products were stored in tiny vials and *unguentaria* that could be kept in a pocket; they were probably sold in the same containers, in a prepared form. Some products may have been easy to apply alone. Unless women spent every minute of their day working, eating, and sleeping, they would have had some leisure time in which to apply cosmetics. The fact that rich women had several slaves who specialized in applying different products only demonstrates that these women were incredibly rich, not that the product type was particularly onerous to apply. Indeed, certain products were associated with low-class groups, such as prostitutes, who were lowest on the social hierarchy and associated with

²⁵³ Olson (2009) 296-99; Brun (2000), 290.

²⁵⁴ Stewart (2007), 116.

cosmetics and perfumes in general.²⁵⁵ Many women also had access to expensive products through their work, such as those who worked in the cosmetics industry. Women who worked in the markets alongside the sellers of beauty products could have traded wares; perfumes and beauty products could also be stolen, or received as gifts.²⁵⁶ They also may have worn the products they were selling as a form of advertisement.

At the bottom of the social scale were slaves, and it is worthwhile considering whether they, too, used cosmetics and beauty products in their daily lives. Many slaves were not free to self-present, but some may have had a degree of agency. Other slaves were presented by their masters, to reflect the master's prestige, such as the *capillati* and favorite cupbearers of rich men. The slaves of a rich woman may have been made up and perfumed, especially if they were *ornatrices*, since their bodies, when seen in public, functioned semiotically as an extension of her body. Slave girls and women in the circuses were put on display with no choice as to how to present themselves.²⁵⁷ There were many reasons why a person would be presented with beauty products, even if she did not want to be, but almost all relate to the belief that cosmetics, skin treatments, and perfumes increased one's visual appeal. In the case of a free person, visual appeal was linked to status, especially for women. The visual appeal of slaves was a boost to the prestige and status of their master. Beauty products, whether domestic or imported, expensive or inexpensive, were a critical means by which Romans sought to enhance their images. Even the cease-use of beauty products could produce a powerful impression of holiness, provided that the person in question had regularly used them

²⁵⁵ Stewart (2007), 110-111.

²⁵⁶ Mar. *Spect.* 11.27, 11.50, 12.65; Martial gives his mistress, Phyllis, perfume and other expensive gifts, after she sends him her empty *pyxis* as a hint (11.50).

²⁵⁷ Brown (1988), 315-316.

beforehand.²⁵⁸ Beauty products were a powerful tool for identity expression in Roman society.

²⁵⁸ It is always less impressive for a homely peasant to reject worldly fashions than it is for a rich and beautiful person who once embraced them.

Chapter 5: The semiotics of Roman clothing and accessories (in action)

Historians commonly discuss the practice of self-presentation with a focus on clothing.²⁵⁹ Clothing is the fundamental mode of presenting the body available to human beings, and is the means most widely employed. Ancient Romans, like modern people, understood how to “read” a complex semiotics of clothing. Many scholars have done a very good job of reviewing the meanings of Roman garments, especially that quintessentially Roman garment, the toga.²⁶⁰ The toga is inarguably one of the main measures of *Romanitas*, and one of the primary means by which Romans distinguished between Roman and non-Roman. It was, however, formal menswear, and is of limited use to the historian of Roman dress semiotics.²⁶¹ The basic garments worn by all Romans were simple tunics and dresses, which to the modern eye may seem indistinguishable from those of other cultures. Traditional clothing from many of the provinces resembled Roman clothing in cut and usage, with few exceptions. Tunics, dresses, cloaks, hoods, belts, buskins, sandals, socks, and shoes were common garments in the ancient world.

The colors, fabrics, and cuts of clothing were easily recognized and translated perceptually into clues about the wearer. Additionally, the way clothes were worn could

²⁵⁹ See Edmondson & Keith (2008); Olson (2008); Croom (2010)

²⁶⁰ For studies of the toga, see Chapter 1.

²⁶¹ Some sources suggest that prostitutes and/or convicted adulteresses were required by law to wear a toga, so as to distinguish them from other women. The extent of this practice is debatable, but it does complicate the concept of the toga as solely a men’s garment. Children also wore a form of toga, called the *toga praetexta*, on occasion. See Mart. *Spect.* 2.39, 10.52 on adults wearing togas. See Croom (2010), 145, and Olson (2008), 15, 17, on children’s clothes.

be informative; such as when the ends of garments were pulled up and over the head.²⁶²

As with haircare and cosmetics, clothing could express social status, cultural identity, gender identity, sexual identity, and religious identity, all of which in turn could be judged on a spectrum of *Romanitas*. Because many garments were not particularly Roman in nature, accessories were used widely. Accessories augmented clothing then as today, by allowing for a greater arena of expression. By accessorizing, a person living in the Roman Empire could express multiple coexistent identities; that is, accessories made it possible for a Romano-British woman of the upper classes to “wear” her Britishness, Romanness, femininity, and devotion to a patron deity in a single outfit.

A thorough discussion of all the accessories and garments worn by Romans in the first two centuries would comprise a work of multiple volumes, so the discussion here will be limited to the use of fabrics and jewelry in self-presentation, specifically for the purposes of expressing gender, ethnicity, cosmopolitanism, and status. First, I will present an overview of how common and otherwise unremarkable garments could be used to express identity through colors, patterns, and fabrics. Next, examples of gendered accessories, specifically jewelry, will be presented. Continuing with jewelry and fabrics, ethnicity and cosmopolitanism will be explored; finally, I will discuss status display with a focus on fabrics and jewelry in the context of public spaces (namely, the Roman public bathhouse). There are numerous types of dress accessory for which great arguments about self-presentation can and have been made; Roman shoes, hats, leg coverings, and socks were used to express identity. However, they will be included only

²⁶² In a ritual context; the priests called *flamines* wore the toga over the head, and artistic representations of women in the *pudicitia* pose (a pose demonstrating womanly virtue) mostly show the *stola* over the head. The same is true for accessories.

when they are directly relevant, and the main focus will be on those accessories that may also be classified as jewelry.

Color, pattern, and cloth: the significance of fabric in Roman dress

Roman people liked to wear brilliant colors, and in all parts of the Empire, subtleties of color and the semiotics of color were broadly recognized. Certain colors were associated with particular groups, individuals, social classes, and ethnicities. For a sense of the full spectrum of colors available, Croom's color plates in *Roman Clothing and Fashion* are invaluable; they include reproductions of Roman garments, as well as spectra of undyed and dyed wools that were common in ancient Rome (Plates 26 and 27). Many of the colors shown in plate 27 appear in the portraits from the Fayyum, including light blue (Figures 2, 5), pink (Figure 3), and persimmon orange (Figure 4). Kelly Olson listed colors identified by Roman authors as suitable for women's clothing:

Plautus (Epid. 230-5) mentions sky-blue (caesicius), marigold-yellow (caltula), red-orange (crocotula), sea-blue (cumatilis), walnut brown (carinus), and waxy or pale yellow (cerinus). Ovid, writing two hundred years later (*Ars* 3.169-92), begs women not to wear purple continually, and suggests instead colors that complement the complexion: sky-blue (aer), sea-blue (unda), golden (aureus), yellow (croceus), wax-yellow or pale yellow (cereus), dark green (Paphiae myrti), amethyst (purpurae amethysti), pale pink (albentes rosae), gray (pullus), acorn or dark brown (glandes), and almond-coloured or beige (amygdala).²⁶³

The most famous color in the ancient world was Tyrian purple. This purple, made from murex shells, was always given the moniker "Tyrian," and distinguished from other shades of purple such as amethystine, violet, and "Tarentum red," a magenta.²⁶⁴ Tyrian purple was associated with the imperial family, and at times was an imperial privilege.

²⁶³ Olson (2008), 11-12.

²⁶⁴ Olson (2008), 11; Croom (2010), 25.

Purple was also used to demonstrate rank, such as in the use of purple borders on bright white togae; the Romans appreciated high contrast as much as they appreciated brilliant color. Literary evidence suggests that many people wore Tyrian purple or something similar in an attempt to appear wealthy and high-status. In Martial's epigrams, socially pretentious purple wearers include Phasis and Bassus, who pretend to knighthood for better seats in the arena, the mule-driver Incitatus, and Martial himself.²⁶⁵ In Juvenal's first satire, it is the slave-by-birth, Crispinus, who wears purple inappropriately.²⁶⁶ Other shades of purple are common in images of women from the Fayyum. A Pompeiian wall painting²⁶⁷ depicts two men and a young boy dressed in purple buying bread at a bakery; one of the men has a gold cloak. The baker is wearing a white tunic with a purplish-brown cloak. The men in the picture wear clothes of varying value, yet they are running errands a slave could perform; perhaps they are the well-dressed servants of a wealthy man, or perhaps one or all of them is wealthy and choosing to run errands for himself. The baker's clothing is ordinary, yet his cloak approximates purple. Purples may have been very common in the city of Rome, since Martial jokes about poor people dressing in purple, and boasts that there are no purple garments in his native Spain.²⁶⁸ In Judaea, Jewish men were discouraged from wearing purples, although they could have purple patterns and borders on their clothes.²⁶⁹

Greens, yellows, blacks, and reds also carried social significance. Green was generally considered a woman's color, and "green" was used metonymically to mean

²⁶⁵ Mart. *Spect.* 5.8, 5.23, 10.76, 11.39.

²⁶⁶ Juv. 1.27.

²⁶⁷ Croom (2010), plate 3.

²⁶⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 1.53, 5.8, 8.10, 10.76, 12.38; also 12.63. Presumably in Spain people were not important enough to wear purple, and were aware of their own rusticity and insignificance.

²⁶⁹ Roussin (2001), 184, 185.

“effeminate.”²⁷⁰ Yellow, being the color of a bridal veil, was also a decidedly feminine color. The *cinaedi* in the *Metamorphosis* wear yellow or gold shoes and saffron-colored robes, as signs of their femininity and dedication to the goddess.²⁷¹ Cicero claims that Clodius Pulcher wore saffron-yellow clothes when he cross-dressed and snuck into the rites of Bona Dea.²⁷² Red, as Croom points out, was recognizably different from shades of maroon, wine, and purple, although many translators render them as interchangeable terms. Martial says that Gauls, children, and soldiers liked red clothing,²⁷³ and a surviving child’s tunic from Egypt held at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle demonstrates the bright scarlet color of a child’s garment.²⁷⁴ In the *Satyricon*, the *cinaedus* at Quartilla’s and the servants in Trimalchio’s household wear both reds and greens,²⁷⁵ while Trimalchio himself wears several garments in red hues, and his wife wears red.²⁷⁶ Olson tells us that the colors Fortunata wears, light yellowish-green (*galbinus*) and cherry-red (*cerasinus*) were seen as garish and low-class. The maid Fotis also wears a red belt.²⁷⁷ Martial’s epigram 14.131 warns against wearing *prasinus* (light green) and a cloak of *coccinus* (scarlet) together, perhaps because they are low-class, or because they are effeminate, or both.

²⁷⁰ Olson (2008), 13; *Mart.* 1.96, 2.36, 3.82, 5.23.

²⁷¹ Apul. *Met.* 8.27, 11.8. I use the term “*cinaedi*” (meaning “effeminate men who like to receive anal penetration”) because it is the term Apuleius used, and because there is no true English equivalent. While they are supposed to be eunuch priests of Cybele, they are actually frauds, so it is probable that they have not been castrated (which may be why the townspeople are shocked when they find them *in flagrante delicto* with the peasant at 8.30).

²⁷² Cicero, *De Haruspicum Responsis* 44.

²⁷³ *Mart. Spect.* 14.129.

²⁷⁴ See Croom (2010), plate 21.

²⁷⁵ Petron. *Sat.* 21, 28. The *cinaedus* wears *myrtea*, or myrtle-green, while the hall-porter’s livery is *prasinus* (light green) and *cerasinus* (cherry-red, or cerise).

²⁷⁶ Petron. *Sat.* 27, 28, 32, 67. Trimalchio wears *russeus* when they first meet him (27), *coccina* in his litter, and *coccina* at dinner (28, 32). Fortunata wears *cerasinus* (67).

²⁷⁷ Apul. *Met.* 2.7.

According to Roussin, Jewish women associated the color red with menstruation and with Gentile women, so they did not wear it; however, they did wear dozens of other colors.²⁷⁸ The Jewish aversion to red garments may also have been underscored by the color's association with the Roman military.²⁷⁹ However, Roussin says that Jewish men sometimes wore red, and Croom says that while Jewish men were supposed to wear only white, they did not follow this rule too closely.²⁸⁰ White, especially white linen, was also the color for both sexes in many religious rituals, as in the *Metamorphosis*, during the worship of Isis.²⁸¹ Brown, probably from undyed wool, was acceptable for all and perhaps even popular in Rome.²⁸² It certainly would have been common for poorer people to wear natural, undyed wool. Black was thought of as two colors, dull black (*ater*) and glossy black (*niger*), and was associated with mourning, as were dark colors in general.²⁸³ The dull blacks probably were fabrics made of undyed wool, while the glossy blacks may have been dyed, such as silks. Because there were so many beautiful colors available, ascetics often wore dull blacks and dark colors to emphasize their indifference to worldly notions of beauty and their poverty, humility, and grief.²⁸⁴ Black is conveniently flattering to the Mediterranean complexion; early Christian women who were encouraged to reject beautification may have taken comfort in the donning of

²⁷⁸ Roussin (2001), 186.

²⁷⁹ Croom (2010), 27.

²⁸⁰ Roussin (2001), 186; Croom (2010), 157; again, Geiger believes that Jewish Romans did not typically dress differently than gentiles.

²⁸¹ Apul. *Met.* 11.8.

²⁸² Mart. *Spect.* 14.127, 129.

²⁸³ Croom (2010), 27.

²⁸⁴ Croom (2010), plates 26 and 27 demonstrate the difference between dyed and undyed wools. The ascetic pretension to mourning and poverty is well-documented; see Croom (2010), 28; Brown (1988), 281, 284; Olson (2008), 91.

austere black.²⁸⁵ Black as a mourning color was also manipulated by others to inspire sympathy in their audiences.²⁸⁶

The variety of cloth color in ancient Rome is impressive. Roussin tells us that Jewish women wore at least 34 different colors, and Shlezinger-Katsman points out that archaeological finds of clothing show that Jewish men wore light or undyed fabric, while Jewish women wore brightly dyed garments.²⁸⁷ Artwork from the Fayyum shows a variety of colors within the purple-amethystine color family, including mauves, pinks, wines, and lavenders, as well as many other colors, including blues, white, cream, yellows, peach, oranges and greens. In many cases, women are shown with a *palla* that matches the dress, which has led some scholars to conclude that for the wealthy, at least, clothing was worn in sets.²⁸⁸ However, in other images *pallae* are complementary colors, so it may have been a matter of taste, or women may have owned more dresses and tunics than *pallae*. The semiotics of color allowed women to utilize greater variety without seeming vain; aside from purple, few colors are mentioned in connection to luxuria or vanity. Christian authors were the only ones who seemed to find colorful clothes problematic for women. Roman men, however, were supposedly bound to stricter standards; many colors were considered incompatible with *Romanitas*. Jewish men, Gauls, and military men seem to have embraced red, and many others undoubtedly did. Men who presented as women would not have bothered with rules of male dress. The use of ‘effeminate’ colors could enhance a man’s or youth’s desirability, as well as

²⁸⁵ The modern equivalent being goth fashion, whereby individuals express an identity of mourning-lite; existential angst, a rejection of the world, and a subculture of fashion.

²⁸⁶ As in Bradley (2008).

²⁸⁷ Roussin (2001), 186; Shlezinger-Katsman (2010), 369.

²⁸⁸ Croom (2010), 107.

symbolize his rejection of normative dress codes. Beautifully-dyed and exotic fabric could also suggest wealth and a cosmopolitan style. Encolpius and Ascyltus may have sneered at Trimalchio, but within his own circle of friends his ostentatious dress was admired, as it symbolized how far he had come.

Patterns and borders also lent color and variety to Roman garments. Contrasting stripes called *clavi* were woven into dresses, extending downward from the collarbone on the left and the right. These stripes were originally indicators of equestrian and senatorial status, with the senatorial stripe (*laticlavus*) being wider.²⁸⁹ *Clavi* came in a variety of colors, but were mostly purple on men's light garments and black or gold-edged black on women's garments, as seen in the portrait of Isidora (**Figure 1**). Other colors include blue, red, brown, and green.²⁹⁰ Stripes along borders were also common, as in the portrait of the woman identified as Hypatia (**Figure 4**) and the Tondo of the Two Brothers (**Figure 7**). *Clavi* and gamma-patterned borders were common in Judaeen costume.²⁹¹ Some Jewish men's mantles had distinctive tassels called *tzitzit*, and tassels and fringes were also worn by non-Jews.²⁹² Checks or diamond-patterns were also common, but carried a strong gender association. Juvenal describes the cross-dressed men in Satire 2 as wearing checkered or green clothes, and Apuleius, in the *Metamorphosis*, describes the clothing of the *cinaedi* (effeminate men) as varicolored, having purple spangles on a white background.²⁹³ Multicolored clothing also shows up in the *Satyricon*; when Ascyltus is searching for Giton, he wears varicolored clothes (so

²⁸⁹ Paul Roberts, *Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (London: The British Museum Press, 2008), 23.

²⁹⁰ Croom (2010), 33.

²⁹¹ Shlezinger-Katsman (2010), 367.

²⁹² Croom (2010), 157; Cohen (1999), 33.

²⁹³ Apul. *Met.* 8.27.

much for sneering at Trimalchio's self-presentation).²⁹⁴ Not only is he searching for his male lover in this scene, but it comes just five chapters after he goes home with a knight, mid-search, to have sex with him. While none of Ascyltus' actions make him a *cinaedi* (and it is assumed he plays the penetrating role with the aforementioned knight), he is presented as an effeminate dandy. Embroidery, including the fastening of gems onto clothes, was another form of decoration that distinguished wealth. Three examples of embroidery appear in the *Metamorphosis*: the first in Birrhaena's clothing, the second in the clothing of her waitstaff, and the last in the robes Lucius is given as a high priest of Isis.²⁹⁵ Both the clothing of Birrhaena and of her servants is adorned with gems. The embroidery on Lucius' robe is elaborate and portrays dragons, griffins, and other images. All of these clothes are meant for ostentation, and Lucius' is religious. The servants at Birrhaena's are called *pueri calamistrati*, a variation on the Ganymede-ish *capillati* mentioned above, but with the distinction that they have had their hair curled with an iron (*calamistrum*). All of the examples of embroidery given by Apuleius associate it with femininity.

Clothing materials were also encoded with value and distinguishable to Romans. Wool and linen were common fabrics in Rome and the provinces, and the best wools were seen as indicators of sophistication and urbanity. Silk was considered the most exquisite fabric, due to its high price. Country people, as well as the urban poor and slaves, wore coarse wool or wool of lower quality. Martial mentions several types of wool by their site of origin, and ranks them according to quality.²⁹⁶ Furs and wild animal

²⁹⁴ Petron. *Sat.* 97. He leaves off his search for Giton in 92.

²⁹⁵ Apul. *Met.* 2.2, 2.19, 11.24.

²⁹⁶ Mart. *Spect.* 14.155, 156, 157, 158.

skins were characteristic of ‘barbarians,’ and people living at Rome generally did not wear them unless they were expressing Germanic or British identity. Given their usefulness in certain climates, it is logical that animal skins would be popular despite their supposed barbarism. Leather and goatskin were used for shoes, of which the Romans had quite a variety. Martial considered goatskin an unusual choice for a hat, perhaps because it was used for shoes.²⁹⁷ hats, cloaks, and briefs are mentioned by Martial.²⁹⁸ Leather briefs have also been found in Britain, and Croom provides an image of reconstructed leather briefs based on the original.²⁹⁹ Croom believes that the briefs were worn by women in the bathhouse, as illustrated in the mosaic of girls exercising from the Piazza Armerina.³⁰⁰ Linen was also considered very pure, and was often the fabric of choice for religious celebrants, as well as being associated with Egyptians.³⁰¹

The fact that the Romans recorded the meanings of colors, patterns and fabrics is proof that these were socially significant means of presenting the body, and that they felt that people needed to choose colors, patterns, and fabric in accordance with who they were. When someone’s dress violated the acceptable norms, it was a cause of anxiety. In Book XIV of the *Epigrams*, Martial describes the rich gifts given by hosts to guests at feasts, including one of Canusian wool (elsewhere, he described Canusian wool as an expensive cloth that greedy people lusted after.³⁰²

Gender, accessories, and transgression

²⁹⁷ Mart. *Spect.* 12.45.

²⁹⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 7.35, 14.50, 14.130.

²⁹⁹ Croom (2010), plate 17.

³⁰⁰ Croom (2010), 111.

³⁰¹ Apul. *Met.* 2.28; Juv. 6.532-41.

³⁰² Mart. *Spect.* 14. 127, 129, 9.22.

The measure to which items of personal presentation are gendered is the measure to which gender transgression in self-presentation is possible. The Romans gendered certain items of clothing and accessories as much as haircare and beauty products. Jewelry was proudly worn by both men and women, and unlike clothing, there does not seem to be a gendered color code for gems and other materials. However, certain types of jewelry were associated with males or females. Ellen Swift has written extensively on the jewelry found in Roman Britain as well as in other parts of the Empire,³⁰³ and has found that the Romans commonly wore rings, brooches, bracelets, necklaces, pins, earrings, and less commonly, elaborate belt buckles, headbands, and body chains. The gendering of these forms of adornment dates to at least the early Roman period (ca. 40s CE).³⁰⁴ Rings and brooches were gender-neutral, but most other jewelry was considered to have a gender. Some jewelry had an age, as well; amber beads, trailed-glass beads, bells, and apotropaic amulets were worn by children in their “pre-gendered” years, and later abandoned as they ritually became men and women.³⁰⁵

Necklaces were generally considered women’s accessories. Roman women wore multiple necklaces at a time. If they could afford them, they wore necklaces made of precious materials. Gold and pearls were the most desirable and expensive materials. Necklaces were often made of worked gold, copper alloy, silver, iron, bone, onyx, carnelian, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, pearls, lapis lazuli, garnets, jet, glass, faience, and

³⁰³ Ellen Swift, *Regionality in Dress Accessories in the Late Roman West* (Montagnac: M. Mergoïl, 2000); *Roman Dress Accessories*. Princes Riseborough: Shire, 2003; “Late Roman necklaces and bracelets.” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* vol. 16 (2003) pp. 336-49; “Personal ornament,” in *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use*, ed. by Lindsay Allason-Jones, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁰⁴ Swift (2011), 207.

³⁰⁵ For boys, this was the Liberalia festival; for girls there seems to have been a point at which dolls were formally put away and they began to acquire the items of the *mundus muliebris*.

amber.³⁰⁶ Glass beads were an inexpensive alternative to gems, which allowed women to express themselves in many colors, and would probably have been owned by women from various social and economic levels. Glass workshops have been excavated in Trier, Germany, which was the “heartland of Roman glass production,”³⁰⁷ and in many other parts of the Roman Empire, from Chichester in England to Noricum (modern Slovenia) and Judaea. Glass beads were manufactured in large quantities in Germany, and Trier is the only excavated site in which a factory dedicated to making beads has been found. The beads were often blue and green in color, but also yellow, clear, black, red, and white.³⁰⁸ Such colorful beads could be worn in sets that matched an outfit, or to contrast it; the layering of many strands of different colors would have created a rainbow effect appealing to the ancient taste for color. Beads came in many shapes, and could also have gold flecks inside of them or be diamond-faceted; such shine and luster would also have been appealing to the Roman taste, and these items are likely a middling point on the cost scale, along with carnelian, coral, and jet beads. Women’s necklaces of all materials tended to be segmented; pendants were either worn in conjunction with segmented necklaces (see **Figure 1**) or women’s necklaces could be composed with multiple pendant parts, as Aline’s is (**Figure 2**). The solitary pendant worn around the neck was typical of amulets, which were less gender-restricted.

³⁰⁶ Stout (1994), 79; Croom (2010), 136-7; Olson (2008), 54; Swift (2011), 197.

³⁰⁷ Swift (2003), 9.

³⁰⁸ Swift (2003), 36; see figures 31, 34, 35 on pages 33, 36.

The Roman *bullā* is one such amulet; worn by young free boys, it protected them by signifying their status as freeborn boys, as well as providing spiritual protection.³⁰⁹ A *bullā* consists of a fine wire or chain with a hollow pendant in the front. *Bullae* waned in popularity after the first century,³¹⁰ but children continued to wear amulets. Phallic amulets were also worn by soldiers.³¹¹ Some amulets were shaped as clenched fists, Gorgons' heads, snakes and deities.³¹² Aside from *bullae* and other amulets, there is only one other kind of necklace that proves an exception to the rule that necklaces were considered women's wear: the torque, or torc. Torques were metal rings, either closed or open, that were first worn by Celts and later integrated into Roman military fashion.³¹³ Images of torques are most commonly seen on slaves, gods, and barbarians; the statue known as the "Dying Gaul" shows a Gaul wearing nothing but a torque and a mustache, and as such is a prime example of ancient Roman ethnic typology.³¹⁴ Many Roman women also wore amulets, often crescent-shaped.³¹⁶ In general, jewelry worn around the

³⁰⁹ Fanny Dolansky, "Togam virilem sumere: Coming of Age in the Roman World," in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. J. C. Edmondson and Alison Keith (University of Toronto Press, 2008), 48-50.

³¹⁰ Croom (2010), 84.

³¹¹ Swift (2011), 198.

³¹² Joanna Bird, "Religion," in *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use*, ed. Allason-Jones, Lindsay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 290-291.

³¹³ Croom (2010), 85.

³¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of the Dying Gaul, see Marvin, Miranda, "The Ludovisi Barbarians: The Grand Manner," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, Supplementary Volumes*. 1, *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity* (2002): 205-223. The image is believed to be a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original, and represents "barbarian" with its longish hair, mustache, trumpet, and torque, rather than "Gaul" specifically. Stereotypical images remained common even as the Romans had frequent contact with the peoples they stereotyped, says Marvin, on page 211.

³¹⁶ Swift (2011), 197.

neck was associated with women, and necklaces can be seen in many of the Fayyum portraits, which resemble archaeological finds of Roman necklaces.³¹⁷

Earrings were also worn almost exclusively by women, although provincial soldiers may have worn them, as well as men from the eastern portions of the Empire and beyond.³¹⁸ Earrings were introduced by the Romans to the western parts of the Empire.³¹⁹ While earrings were made with as great a variety of materials as necklaces, one of the most well-attested styles is the expensive gold-and-pearl ‘trident’ style seen in the Fayyum portraits. These earrings consist of a pearl with a horizontal gold bar or other flat gold piece attached, from which four gold ‘prongs,’ ending with pearls, dangle. Like the necklace worn by Aline, these earrings were very mobile, and drew attention to the expensive and beautiful materials they were made of through their tinkling movement. Kelly Olson wrote that women delighted in the sound of so much wealth rattling around on their ears.³²⁰ Isidora’s (**Figure 1**) trident earrings have four prongs, making them an unusually expensive pair. In no other image are 4-pronged trident earrings seen; all other images of the type are of two- or three-pronged tridents.³²¹ The woman portrayed in **Figure 4** wears these type of earrings as well. Aline (**Figure 2**) and the woman in **Figure 3** both wear earrings consisting of large pearls hung from wire. The women in **Figures 5** and **6** have earrings of pearls and emeralds, alternated on a single strand. While only the wealthiest could have afforded the types of earrings shown in these portraits, it is likely

³¹⁷ Croom (2010), plate 20; see also Stout (1994); Catherine Johns, *The Jewellery of Roman Britain: Celtic and Classical Traditions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996).

³¹⁸ Swift (2003), 50. In the *Satyricon*, Giton asks “why not perforate our ears, so we can imitate the Arabians?...” (*Quidni... pertunde aures, ut imitemur Arabes*); *Satyricon*, 102.

³¹⁹ Swift (2011), 210.

³²⁰ Olson (2008), 88.

³²¹ Comparing the images from all of the books cited here.

that glass beads and other cheaper materials were used in earrings, since they were used in necklaces.

Body chains were much less common than other accessories, and as such, they may have been used to demonstrate wealth. Certainly a large amount of precious metal was required to construct what was essentially a doubled necklace of waist length. One body chain was found in the Hoxne Treasure, a hoard of silver and gold items deposited in Hoxne, Suffolk, in the fourth century. Concerning this find, Ellen Swift wrote that “this was a very high-status item in gold and it is unlikely that examples were ever made in other materials.”³²² Despite the late date of the Hoxne body chain, such items were portrayed in Roman visual art much earlier.³²³ In an image from the baths at Pompeii, a woman receiving cunnilingus is wearing a body chain.³²⁴ Body chains may have been associated with sexuality especially, because they also appear in two other erotic scenes; one is on a bronze mirror, dating from ca. 69-79 CE, in which a woman with a tall Flavian hairstyle, a necklace like Aline’s, and a body chain is entwined with a man.³²⁵ The other is a fresco from the House of the Chaste Lovers in Pompeii, in which a man and woman are banqueting semi-nude. In this instance, the woman wears a body chain over her tunic.³²⁶

However, body chains are also pictured in contexts which do not seem to be erotic. A small terracotta from Egypt also shows a woman wearing a body-chain, and a silver statuette of the god Harpocrates, wearing a gold body chain, has been found near

³²² Swift (2011), 202.

³²³ Johns (1996), 96.

³²⁴ **Figure 19.**

³²⁵ Varone, Antonio. *Eroticism in Pompeii*. trans. Maureen Fant. (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), 68, fig. 65.

³²⁶ Varone (2001), 44, fig. 39.

London.³²⁷ The Harpocrates with a body chain is especially interesting, because Harpocrates was a male child god. Perhaps his age made it acceptable for him to be shown with a woman's ornament, or perhaps his association with other child-deities, like Eros and the young Horus, informed how artists presented his gender. In any case, it is a rare example of a male wearing a body chain in Roman visual art.

The variety of materials and styles of Roman bracelets is admirable. Roman bracelets were made of glass, ivory, precious metals, bone, jet, shale, iron, and strung beads. They varied from simple glass bangles to zoomorphic cast iron, openwork gold, and woven wire cables. They could be open or hinged, and many were decorated with patterns.³²⁸ In addition to wrist bracelets, Romans wore armbands and anklets.³²⁹ Bracelets and anklets seem to have been gendered for the most part. According to Swift, bracelets were worn “invariably” by women in the first few centuries CE.³³⁰ Many of the images and writings support the idea that bracelets were considered feminine or effeminate; Martial refers to bracelets worn by girls and catamites,³³¹ and Petronius' Trimalchio and his wife, both of questionable morality (*Romanitas*), wear bracelets and anklets. Instances of men wearing bracelets and anklets are evidence that men were not afraid to present their bodies in opposition to the narrow vision of the vocal minority that was elite Roman authorship. However, bracelets' association with femininity is borne out in archaeology, where bracelets are more often found in female or eunuch (“third

³²⁷ Johns (1996), figs. 5.10, 5.18.

³²⁸ Swift (2011), 195-6.

³²⁹ Petron. *Sat.* 126; Berg (2002), 48.

³³⁰ Swift (2003), 50.

³³¹ Mart. *Spect.* 11.21, 11.100

sex”) graves.³³² The connections between jewelry and excess, and jewelry and ‘barbarian’ self-presentation, underscored the femininity of women’s jewelry, since *luxuria*, barbarism, and femininity were all considered oppositional to *Romanitas*. To the prejudiced observer, males wearing necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and body chains were insufficiently Roman, but to the modern scholar, it is sufficient to say that men wore them, too, even if they did so slightly differently and were not buried with them. Clearly, *bullae*, torques, and phallic amulets³³³ are necklaces for men, just as signet rings and brooches, while being functional, were flashy gems for men. Wearing earrings may have been common among certain groups of males, such as Arabs and provincial soldiers (see note 46 above), which complicates the notion of “gendered” jewelry since it only applies to certain Romans. Female ornaments of all kinds were adopted by eunuchs,³³⁴ who while being biologically male, can be seen as a separate gender; children also seem to defy the gender binary by having a wider range of adornments available for “proper” self-presentation.

Cosmopolitanism and provincialism

Unlike other forms of jewelry, brooches and rings were never considered the domain of any particular gender with regard to self-presentation. Men, women, and everyone else wore brooches because they were useful, and rings were worn by all as official symbols of status or attractive accessories. Rings, like earrings, were a Mediterranean product that spread westward with the Roman conquest. Intaglios, scenes

³³² Swift (2011), 207.

³³³ Swift (2011), 198.

³³⁴ Berg (2002), 30.

carved into the central flat surface of rings, could be used as personal seals, as well as reflect the wearer's favorite Graeco-Roman myth, religious figure, or subject, which demonstrated *Romanitas*, or at least "familiarity with Roman culture."³³⁵ Brooches also served the practical purpose of fastening cloaks and other items of clothing in place of buttons or zippers, and were worn in the provinces before the Roman conquest. Many brooches in Roman Britain continued to utilize Celtic technology, design, and subject matter after the Roman invasion,³³⁶ perhaps signifying the persistence of pre-Roman identity or the adoption of Celtic styles by Romans. Possible tension between provincial forms of self-presentation and self-presentation that demonstrated *Romanitas* was further complicated by cosmopolitanism. Across the Empire, adoption of non-Roman styles could be construed as an act of subversion or as a means to demonstrate worldliness and the power of the Roman Empire as the absorber of other cultures. When Juvenal complains of the trendiness of everything Greek,³³⁷ he is commenting on Roman cosmopolitanism. He is not complaining that Romans are cultured, he is complaining that they are going overboard in their passion for worldly fashions. One way of thinking about this distinction is to use the Latin adjectives, *cultus* and *ornatus*, which were used to describe these two states of being.

Ria Berg explains the difference between *cultus* and *ornatus* in the Roman mind. *Cultus* is to be cultured, to practice good hygiene and present one's body as clean and civilized. *Ornatus*, on the other hand, is to be decked out in gaudy ostentation, which,

³³⁵ Swift (2011), 210.

³³⁶ Swift (2011), 211.

³³⁷ Iuv. 3.81, 6.185-191.

while being the hallmark of wealth and power, was considered barbaric.³³⁸ The Romans certainly enjoyed taking baths, wearing garlands and perfume at dinner parties, and dressing up for triumphs; none of these practices were in and of themselves excessive, but on the contrary demonstrated *Romanitas*. However, overindulgence of any sort, be it too much care of the body, too fine of clothes, or too much ornament, was frowned upon. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the images of members of the imperial families, since, regardless of how the literary sources describe them, they tend to be fairly modest and unadorned. These images served as moral exempla, and they demonstrate what was seen as proper Roman appearance. On the other hand, images of ordinary Romans, who had no formal influence, show Romans as *ornatus*. The women in imperial portraits do not wear jewelry or gold accessories, while the Fayyum portraits present women proudly adorned in their finest. However, the women of the imperial family were shown with elaborate hairstyles, suggesting that the styling and control of the hair for women was *cultus*; the same should be said of men's shaven faces before Hadrian, and neat beards after Hadrian. It is not known whether all the statues, when painted, showed the imperial family in brightly colored clothes, or wearing cosmetics.

Status display, luxuria, and sexuality: self-presentation in the public baths

Petronius' character Trimalchio is a freedman, who stands in as a parody of wealthy freedmen who delighted in ostentation and the ability to be generous patrons. His costume, as well as the costumes of other members of his household, are meant to be as ridiculous as possible. Trimalchio flosses at the dinner table, provoking awkward

³³⁸ Berg (2002), 23-5.

laughter: “To show off even more of his jewellery, he had his right arm bare and set off by a gold armlet and an ivory circlet fastened with a gleaming metal plate.”³³⁹ Later on, he boasts that his wife’s anklets, bracelets, and gold hairnet equal over six pounds of gold.³⁴⁰

The Roman bathhouse, more than a place to get clean and socialize, was an arena for public displays of status and wealth. Bathhouses may have offered several cosmetic services, like modern salons and spas; massages and hair removal services are known to have been offered at the baths.³⁴¹ At the bathhouse, Romans of all levels of society came together in an ostensibly equalizing environment. Because public baths were open to upper and lower class alike, many took advantage of the opportunity to express their social status through the tools, products, and services they brought and bought. Juvenal describes women as demanding “camps and shells to be moved” every day for their baths.³⁴² In one of the mosaics from Piazza Armerina,³⁴³ the attendants carry containers of bathing-related paraphernalia: one woman has a red purse slung across her shoulder and carries a *pyxis* on a chain. Another has a jug tucked under one arm, and another carries a box with a change of clothes, including a garment with purple clavi. In Petronius’ *Satyricon*, Trimalchio demonstrates his wealth and power at the bathhouse in absurd and rather crude ways. His slaves wait on him hand and foot, even holding up a silver vessel for him to urinate in. After washing his hands, he dries them on a slave

³³⁹ Petron. *Sat.* 32.

³⁴⁰ Petron. *Sat.* 67, “*Sex pondo et selibram debet habere*,” Trimalchio says of his wife’s jewelry. 6.5 Roman pounds is roughly 4.7 American pounds.

³⁴¹ Stewart (2007), 54; Toner (2009), 130; Sen.*Ep.* 56.1-2.

³⁴² Juv. 6.418-9, (*conchas et castra moveri nocte iubet*). “Shells” is, I take it, a reference to the shell-shaped compacts that held cosmetics—see D’Ambra (2008), 6, a shell compact made of amber; Oliver (2000), 16-17, a silver scallop shell compact.

³⁴³ Croom (2000), plate 8.

boy's head.³⁴⁴ Trimalchio's disgusting behavior is meant as parody, but demonstrates the excessive nature of display in baths.

By engaging in overt status display at the public baths, Romans could maintain their social distance even in a supposedly equalizing setting. On the other hand, humbly bathing with commoners was a means by which the emperor Titus endeared himself to the people.³⁴⁵ The paraphernalia of wealth and the slaves to carry it all were common modes of status display in Roman baths. A basic bath kit consisted of an oil flask, a pan for scooping and pouring water, and a strigil for scraping oil and water off.³⁴⁶ Towels and spare clothes could also be brought to the baths, although after stripping, washing, and scraping, a person could put the same clothes back on. Many people were certainly in the habit of doing so, and bringing a change of clothes demonstrated one's wealth. Clothing could be stolen at the baths, as in Martial's epigram 8.48, when a cloak of Tyrian purple went missing. Curse tablets aimed at clothing thieves and dedications to gods of regained clothing demonstrate the commonness of this problem and the value of clothing.³⁴⁷ Slaves were employed in watching their master's clothing at the baths, and as such, were another means by which bathers could show off their wealth. Martial tells of a man who was once poor, and could afford only two old and crippled slaves to accompany him to the baths and watch his clothes; upon getting rich, the man bought five long-haired (i.e., young) slaves to do the same job.³⁴⁸ The baths were also a place in which some attempted to conceal their identity. Martial tells of one man who wore a type

³⁴⁴ Petron. *Sat.* 27.

³⁴⁵ Suet. *Tit.* 8.

³⁴⁶ **Figure 18.**

³⁴⁷ Yegul, Fikret. *Bathing in the Roman World*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, 14.

³⁴⁸ Mart. *Spect.* 12.70

of jockstrap used by actors while exercising, only to have it fall off and reveal his circumcision, and therefore, his Jewish identity.³⁴⁹ He may have concealed his religious identity to avoid taxation,³⁵⁰ or simply to fit in. Others may have pretended to be of a higher social status by hiring goods and services that they could not afford to own, such as the hair-removal which would have been done by an *ancilla* or *ornatrix* at home.

Gender expression was also made possible through public baths. While women who ordered the nightly transportation of “camps and shells” were seen as unRoman in their excess, love of luxury, and overdone femininity, they could also be condemned for being too masculine, because they put themselves on display. Women who exercised at the bathhouses or gymnasia were perceived as challenging the gender status quo. Martial refers to playing catch in scanty garments³⁵¹ in his description of Philaenis, a *tribas* who also exhibits other masculine behaviors, such as penetrating young boys.³⁵² Juvenal also describes women exercising and wearing exercise clothes in terms that imply masculinity and gender inversion.³⁵³ The famous mosaic³⁵⁴ of girls working out in “bikinis,” or loincloths and *strophia* to be more exact, may be a reference to a type of girl who flaunted her butch identity through engaging publicly in conventionally masculine activities. In the mosaic, the girls are depicted running, throwing a ball back and forth, and lifting weights. One even wears a cloak, with nothing underneath. Both ball-tossing

³⁴⁹ Mart.*Spect.* 7.82; recently this interpretation has been called into question by Cohen (Appendix B).

³⁵⁰ Suet.*Dom.* 12.

³⁵¹ Mart.*Spect.* 7.67; Yegul (2010), 14.

³⁵² Mart.*Spect.* 7.67; Philaenis also performs cunnilingus on girls, an action which is not seen as particularly masculine.

³⁵³ Juv. 6.245-67. The women wrestle and hack at tree stumps; however, even their post-exercise cloaks (*endromida*) are purple.

³⁵⁴ From Piazza Armerina; see Varone (2001).

and weight-lifting are described in the above-mentioned passages from Martial and Juvenal. While there is no compelling evidence that suggests such women were expressing a homoerotic sexual identity per se, it is plausible to consider their athletic endeavors as expressions of a sexual or gender identity—they are not just girls working out, they are *the kind of girls* who work out. Their active lifestyle stands in sharp contrast to the life of leisure and mirror-gazing commemorated in other images of women. It also goes against the norms of Roman exercises, which were generally light ball games, not strenuous athletic training such as the Greeks practiced.³⁵⁵ Elsewhere, the *strophium* (breast-band) worn by such ladies is visually associated with young, sexually available women. In many of the erotic images from Pompeii, catalogued by Antonio Varone, *strophia* are shown on young lovers.³⁵⁶ It is possible that the breastband, like the body chain, carried erotic overtones and was used to denote the female equivalent of the dandy in Roman art. This could mean that women who appeared in the public baths with “bikinis,” rather than wearing them for modesty, were wearing them as a statement of identity, which was underscored by their behavior.

Conclusion: accessorizing in the Roman world

The semiotics of dress in early imperial Rome are one of the best indicators of the extent to which people living in the Roman Empire strove to present *Romanitas*, or conversely, presented according to traditional provincial identities. Colors, patterns, and clothing materials were used to express identity, as were various forms of jewelry,

³⁵⁵ Yegul (2010), 15-17.

³⁵⁶ Varone (2001), 32, fig. 27, 36, fig. 32, 51, fig. 46, 57, fig. 48, 58, fig. 49, 62, fig. 57, 66, fig. 62, 84, fig. 85. A wealthy noblewoman also removes her *strophium* before having sex with Lucius, Apul.*Met.* 10.21.

including those that were gender-neutral. The use of the bath as a public space in which to express status and other identity markers was available to Romans from all walks of life, and therefore can tell us much about the ways in which self-presentation was publicly declared. Encoded in the garments worn to, from, and at the baths were messages about the wearer's ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual proclivities, wealth, and social standing. At the baths, the products and services consumed were visible displays of identity as well. While the evidence of Roman clothing shows it to be strongly gendered, with the greatest variety permitted to females, there is strong evidence that many Romans subverted these dress codes as often as they could. The most significant lesson of this evidence is that the goals, dreams, and intentions of ordinary Romans were not in line with the prescribed roles laid down for them by conservative authors. *Cinaedi*, for instance, are the butt of many a joke in Roman literature, and yet the very authors who describe them as deviants are perfectly comfortable with male homoerotic activity, and the *cinaedi* themselves are often portrayed as having a niche in society that suits them just fine. Dandies of both sexes may have been laughed at for their curled hair and gaudy dress, but they seem to be having a grand time in all of the Roman texts. Rather than viewing Roman society as narrow, and focusing on the constraints imposed by and upon the upper classes, we can see that Roman society was open and had room for all people. At the same time, there was a common movement towards belonging that manifested in the presentation of the body along lines of mainstream *Romanitas* or Roman subcultures. These subcultures could be based on something as specific as religious belief, or as broad as a love of ostentation. They could be the result of a shared experience, such as the freedmen depicted in the *Satyricon* at Trimalchio's dinner party, who socialize almost

exclusively with other freedmen. Regardless of the social goal in question, self-presentation was a common means to various ends.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Using the theoretical model outlined in the first chapter, the Matrix of Roman Identity, this paper has demonstrated that ordinary Romans were actively managing their identities through self-presentation. Romans used various aspects of self-presentation, specifically haircare practices, beauty products, and clothing accessories, to place themselves on spectra of gender, ethnicity, religion, social status, economic status, and sexuality. The lack of real privacy in the ancient world, combined with the centrality of public spaces like the bathhouse complex to Roman society, enabled people to literally present themselves to their communities, fully engaged in the semiotics of self-presentation.

The material culture, the written words, and the artistic representations left behind by persons living in the Roman Empire reveal the varied and competing value systems of Roman identity. Understanding that Romanness, or *Romanitas*, exists as a socially constructed ideal, which stands next to the reality of Roman people, challenging them to “belong” and to be good, yields a deeper appreciation for the richness and possibilities life had to offer in the Roman Empire, as well as limitations of choice that constricted life. Thus, Roman people are seen to have been working within a system, using and abusing codes, and finding ways to belong even when they failed to live up to the ideal. The myth of the togate Roman *paterfamilias* as the consummate Roman is shown to be just that—a myth, and there is no longer a need to measure Roman people by this antiquated standard. While ancient writers spoke of, and ancient artists portrayed ideal *Romanitas*, the deconstruction of the Matrix of Roman Identity reveals that there is “no

such thing as a Roman,” or, in other words, that “Roman” is a more complex category than historians have hitherto imagined.

In Chapter 3, the semiotics of hair- of the face, head, and body—were outlined, and the means of expressing identity through presentation of hair detailed. The hair displayed in Roman art as prototypical or exemplary often differed from the hair of ordinary Romans, because the portrait artist and the individual Roman set out with different goals in mind. Beginning with women’s hair, a much-covered topic in Roman dress studies, the connections between hair and femininity were examined through the Matrix of Roman Identity. Women’s hair was a symbol of their unique feminine beauty, but like females, had to be tamed (according to elite Roman male thinking), and so was consistently portrayed styled with a part. Roman women found ways to express themselves, choosing styles that suited their individual looks, accessorizing hair, and using products such as hair dye, hair extensions, and *calamistra* to express themselves. Many of these practices were labeled excessive and otherized by males, through language that equated elaborate styles with immoderacy, luxury, foreignness, and falsehood. The narrow space for expression created by these elite males demonstrates the attempt of elite males to control Roman self-expression: women were encouraged to style their hair, but not to waste time, money, or effort on styling their hair. The reaction against so-called foreign and expensive hair can be read today as anger about female self-expression and the efforts of females to subvert the male gaze by acknowledging other potential ‘gazes’. This in turn allows the scholar today to acknowledge that Roman society had multiple ‘gazes,’ or ideals, and that for many Romans, the approval of those authors familiar to us meant very little. Furthermore, haircare was not only a means of placing oneself on the

matrix, it was a visual method of social climbing, by which the poor could emulate the rich.

Men's haircare is also discussed in Chapter 3, a much-needed addition to the conversation about hair in the Roman world. Roman art presents a narrow segment of the male population, thus creating a false image of men's hair as static over time and space. However, Roman literature describes a variety of hair styles worn by males, many of which relate to specific social stereotypes. For instance, just as provincials were contrasted with 'real' Romans, and depicted with long, unkempt hair as barbarians in Roman art, serving-boys, eunuchs, and *cinaedi* are depicted with long, curly or artificially curled hair in Roman literature. So-called effeminate, hair which was especially groomed and styled, was used as a symbol of so-called sexual passivity, with no real distinction between slave and free other than an utter disregard for the enslaved and a moral disgust for the free. At the opposite end of the spectrum baldness was also seen as undesirable. Baldness is associated with shame, slavery, and old age, all examples of failed *Romanitas*. Because ideal *Romanitas* was expressed in moderately short, moderately groomed hair, anything that fell outside of these limitations was suspect. The impossibility of the standards and the inconsistency of records demonstrates the constructed nature of *Romanitas*. A prime example, discussed above, is Julius Caesar, who manages to look just right in his portraits, but to be accused of baldness and excessive grooming in Suetonius' biography. Non-elite images from Roman North Africa also provide a glimpse into the styling practices of ordinary Roman males, who embraced variety in length and style.

In addition to the hair on people's heads, facial and bodily hair carried meaning in the Roman world. Facial hair was used symbolically as a key distinction between youth and adult male, which carried sexual meaning. Since sexually 'passive' acts (allowing oneself to be penetrated) were appropriate for youths but not for adult males, males could manipulate facial hair to suit their sexual preferences. The Lupercalia was a ritual that closed doors to certain sexual opportunities for young men, so if they wanted to remain sexually available in this way, they could depilate their faces to remove any trace of beard. Hadrian's lover, Antinous, and Domitian's lover, Earinus, both seem to have deliberately stayed beardless in order to continue relationships beyond what was otherwise the appropriate age. On the other hand, a beard could be used like a veil, to close oneself off from the gaze of adult males. Trimalchio tries to make his beard grow in order to escape what was for him, as a slave, a sexually abusive situation. Similarly, bodily hair removal could indicate sexual availability, for both men and women, and certain feminine or 'effeminate' hair removal could specific proclivities. The popularity of these practices again demonstrates that many Roman people were seeking something other than the ideal *Romanitas* as presented by elite authors. In effect, they were creating their own ideals, plotted on a matrix of identity which had the same categories, but valued them differently. For many Romans, the semiotics of hair could be used for greater freedom, not only of expression, but of sexual opportunity. Using queer theory to 'queer the gaze' is particularly valuable in studies of Roman haircare, because it sheds light on the variety of gazes that coexisted in the Roman world.

In Chapter 4, the semiotics of beauty products, practices, and paraphernalia are considered in light of how they functioned within the Matrix of Roman Identity, and how

they were used to subvert it. The Romans used the term *mundus muliebrum* to describe the products themselves, the use of the products, and the atmosphere surrounding beauty practices. The association is unequivocally feminine; Romans saw beauty products as being literally the domain and prerogative of females. However, there existed beauty products that had nothing to do with gender, and others which were used by men regardless of elite perceptions. In addition to femininity, beauty products were symbolic of wealth, leisure, luxury, youth, sexual availability, and beauty, all identifiers which fit onto the negative side of the matrix, as failed *Romanitas*. While elite male authors appreciated beauty, sexual availability, and youth, they did not see these as ideal ways of being. Beauty products could be subversive in the sense that Roman males and females could use them to achieve results which did not express perfect *Romanitas*. Skin whiteners lent an appearance of indolence or extreme asceticism, while skin colorants were used to express provincial identity. Perfumes were worn to convey luxury, attract sexual partners, and for sensual pleasure, which was perceived as an Oriental and foreign affectation. *Alutae* and *splenia* were used to cover the scars and blemishes of a harsh life, a quite forgivable form of pretense. Cosmetics were widely associated with women, but Jews, Christians, and other Romans had different attitudes towards them, which demonstrates competing value systems and competing ideals for female beauty. Male usage of cosmetics often subverted elite values, and was common for a number of social groups, including *cinaedi* and dandies. Certain males valued self-expression over conforming to the ideals of *Romanitas*. While cosmetics were held in low esteem by many elites, ordinary Romans, who wanted to express higher status or alternative ideals, appreciated their value and usefulness.

Chapter 5 deals with the semiotics of cloth and jewelry, and their placement on the Matrix of Roman Identity, or in other words, how well cloth and jewelry represented *Romanitas* and other possible identities. It also discusses the importance of display in the bathhouse, a public space in which the gaze was confronted and the Matrix of Roman Identity actively manipulated. The color, pattern, and fabric of clothing carried various messages about the wearer's position in the Roman hierarchy. Tyrian purple, silk, and fine wool were high-status, while coarser fabrics and dark colors were associated with poverty, mourning, and a sad life. Neutral shades were considered more masculine, while bright and pastel colors were feminine. Certain colors, like yellow and green, were considered especially effeminate, and only a very effeminate man would wear them. Red was seen as garish in many instances, and characteristic of children, soldiers, and Gauls, groups who were seen as having abnormal or special rules of dress. Certain colors were also anathema for religious reasons, such as the rejection of red by Jewish women, or of gaily colored clothes by ascetic Christians. The use of many colors at once also appears in several negative contexts, as effeminate, foolish, and luxurious. Patterns, borders, stripes, and embroidery were used to distinguish clothing even more, and could indicate social rank (*clavi*), religious identity (gamma-patterns and *tzitzit*, priestly embroidery), or gender identity (diamond-patterns, checks, embroidery).

Roman jewelry was also encoded in a variety of ways. Many items of jewelry were divided along the gender binary, despite their essential sameness; women wore necklaces, while men wore torques and male children wore amulets or *bullae* (pendant necklaces). Others were gender neutral, such as brooches and rings, and yet others were divided along lines of age, such the beads for children and the beads for adult women.

Rings could be used to signify status officially, as they marked political rank, or unofficially, as intaglios demonstrated the education and *cultus* of Roman men. Brooches and other jewelry could be used to show fidelity to a pre-Roman identity, as with the continued popularity of Celtic designs. The materials used in jewelry could indicate wealth, however, there were fake jewels and imitation gold for the poorer people, and when gold anklets were denied to non-elites, they wore silver. Furthermore, some materials were broadly worn by Romans of all levels of wealth, such as colored glass, carnelian, coral, and jet. Chapter 5 ends with a discussion of self-presentation in the Roman bathhouse. Because baths were a public space dedicated to self-care, they provide an excellent window into the self-presentation practices of ordinary Romans. In the baths, the gaze was confronted in a way that it was not in other places. Products, practices, and paraphernalia were displayed for all to see, and even bought and sold.

The Matrix of Roman Identity, as a model, has its limitations. Perhaps the most obvious limitation is its non-applicability to rural people. The gaze is essentially an urban phenomenon, despite the prevalence of imperial imagery in smaller Roman towns. Cosmopolitanism is also a product of urban living, with its access to markets with foreign goods and non-native population. There may have been large portions of the Roman population for which the Matrix of Roman Identity is meaningless, based as it is on elite criticism of the *plebs*. It is also difficult to ascertain the extent to which asceticism defined Christianity, although other scholars have certainly equated the two. Early Christians may have written extensively about extreme asceticism and rejection of ‘worldly’ standards of hygiene, but the Christianization of the Roman Empire occurred simultaneously with increasing acceptance of the type of *luxuria* that characterized

medieval aesthetics. There are also instances where more information is needed before the Matrix of Roman Identity can be fully applied as a useful theoretical model. The evidence for Roman Jews is relatively scarce, and has been included here simply because it is valuable to consider Jews as Romans, operating under multiple semiotic systems, rather than as outsiders to the Roman experience. The same is true for Roman provincials, slaves, and sexual minorities. Each of these groups deserves closer study, and the Matrix of Roman Identity will surely be of great value.

The broader implications of this study are manifold. Not only can the Matrix of Roman Identity be used to examine subgroups within early imperial Rome, but it can be applied to other times and places. Rome was a different place in the later imperial period, and the values held by elites regarding identity were different. Fashion itself changed, as the provinces rose in prestige and formerly provincial fashions became mainstream. A matrix of Late Roman Identity, or of Late Antique Identity, could potentially be formulated, which would reveal the diversity of those societies. The matrix model is useful to all times and places, when adjusted, just as it has been here, to fit the values described by elite authors. The model allows historians to see the extent to which self-presentation relied on semiotics of presentation established by elite authorities, and created pathways for subversion through alternative matrices. It also provides a lens for viewing a culture without requiring it to translate neatly into modern categories of identity, a problem many have struggled with, especially regarding slavery, sexuality, and religion in the ancient world. In future studies of resistance and power, the matrix model will be indispensable as a means of reading the semiotic language of dress and understanding self-presentation as the embodiment of political ideology. Studies of the

invective tradition, as punishment by public humiliation, will be given new life by this model.

The people of ancient Rome were largely aware of the value system imposed by elites, which divided categories of identity into good or bad, with the good pointing towards *Romanitas* and the bad pointing away from it. They were aware that the ideal Roman was an Italian male in the prime of life, wealthy, of a good family, a *paterfamilias*, moderate in his appetites, conventional, and essentially, unrealistic. The authors whose works have been preserved to the present time also saw perfect *Romanitas* as both ideal and unreal; thus, they were critical not so much of those who failed to be that ideal, but those who refused to try. Their criticism was for those who refute this ideal, and embrace other, alternative ideals for the sake of personal happiness. They were also critical of anyone who sought to go beyond her station in life. The Matrix of Roman Identity is a useful tool for those researching Roman self-presentation, and a valuable contribution to the field, since it provides a specific formula for the kind of evaluation of identity that is already happening.

Tables

Table 1. Romanness and defining markers of Roman identity

Table 2. Identities as relationships between self, others, and social hierarchies

Table 3. The Matrix of Roman Identity Model. View the image as a series of intersecting lines, with each line representing a spectrum of possibilities. At one end of each spectrum/line (the apex, or center) is “Romanness,” or in other words, the ideal of Roman identity, “by the standards of the top’s own claimed perfection.” Each individual’s identity can be understood as a distinct apex, which varies from the ideal to some degree.

Images

Clockwise from top left: Figure 1 (Isidora); Figure 2 (Aline); Figure 3 (woman with eyeshadow); Figure 4 ("The Jewelry Girl"); Figure 5 ("Hypatia"); Figure 6 ("The European").

Clockwise from top left: Figure 7 (Tondo of the Two Brothers); Figure 8 (Dying Gaul and His Wife); Figure 9 (Augustus of Prima Porta); Figure 10 (Gaius Caligula); Figure 11 (Mondragone Antinous); Figure 12 (Capitoline Antinous).

Clockwise from top left: Figure 13 ("Sappho Fresco"); Figure 14 (family portrait); Figure 15 Portrait of a barbarian, representing a German or a Celt; Figure 16 Portrait of a child with Egyptian hair; Figure 17 Portrait of a North African child; Figure 18 (oil flask & strigil).

Clockwise from top left: Figure 19 A fresco depicting cunnilingus; Figure 20 A fresco depicting a threesome; Figure 21 A fresco depicting sexual intercourse; Figure 22 Fresco of the Three Graces.

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