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The Representation of Poverty in the Roman Empire

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

Mik R Larsen

2015

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Representation of Poverty in the Roman Empire

by

Mik R Larsen

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Ronald J. Mellor, Chair

This dissertation investigates the cultural imagination of Roman elites regarding poverty in their society – how it was defined, how traditional and accepted images of poverty were deployed for rhetorical effect, and in what way elite attitudes toward poverty evolved over the course of the first century and a half under the Empire. It contends that the Roman conception of poverty was as a disordered discourse involving multiple competing definitions which frequently overlapped in practice. It argues that the inherent contradictions in Roman thought about poverty were rarely addressed or acknowledged by authors during this period.

The Introduction summarizes scholarly approaches toward Roman perceptions of poverty and offers a set of definitions which describe the variant images of poverty in elite texts. The first chapter addresses poverty's role in the histories of Livy, and the ways in which his presentation of poverty diverge from his assertion that the loss of *paupertas* was key to the decline of the Roman state. The second chapter analyzes rich and poor characters in Roman declamation, arguing that this genre's place in education impressed upon young elites a

vision of the poor citizen as noble and worthy of protection. In the third chapter I investigate poverty's place in the literary generation of Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus, concluding that their era saw the advertisement of a frugal, rustic identity among Italian and provincial aristocrats. My fourth chapter evaluates specifically urban poverty as seen in Roman satire; it argues that Martial and Juvenal construct their personas as eyewitnesses to poverty, but that only Juvenal views the Roman poor with compassion. My final section outlines the representation of poverty and labor in Roman art, concluding that, despite a general absence of poverty in domestic art, the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian saw a new trend of representing the poor as ideological symbols on state monuments and addressing their needs in public policy. The Conclusion suggests that the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE witnessed the increasing visibility of the poor in elite culture, with aristocrats of the era being more willing to portray the contemporary poor, and also willing to portray them in a positive light.

The dissertation of Mik R Larsen is approved.

Ra'anan Boustan

David D. Phillips

Amy Richlin

Ronald J. Mellor, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

*meo avo*  
*mercenario*

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### **-Language Work**

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Latin Translation for forthcoming volume by Alexander Gabrovsky, Palgrave MacMillan

## The Representation of Poverty in the Roman Empire Mik Larsen

*iures licet et Samothracum  
et nostrorum aras, contemnere fulmina pauper  
creditur atque deos dis ignoscentibus ipsis.*  
Juvenal 3.144-6

### Introduction

Elite ideas about poverty under Rome were never built upon the most stable of foundations. Many imagined *paupertas* as a moral cornerstone of their early society, an undeniable characteristic of their ancestors and a key element in the *mores maiorum*. Often these same men envisioned poverty as a force for chaos lurking in the mix of social classes, ranks, and status groups at the lower end of the social ladder. What in the abstract had been virtuous became a present danger when considered in reality. For some it seemed not at all paradoxical to praise frugal ancestors on the one hand, and, on the other, to present wealth and leisure as components which made the rich man inherently superior to his poor counterpart. They offer no resolution to these apparent inconsistencies, because indeed there was none, and no need for one. Poverty as a topic in the elite imagination was not conceived of as a coherent discourse, or as one which needed elaboration and definition. Instead, it and its constituent images occupied a space in a cultural network of ideas tied to morality, social hierarchy, and ancient tradition.

In this project I intend to investigate elite Roman attitudes to poverty over the course of the first hundred and fifty years of the Empire. I will navigate the interwoven nexus of ideas about poverty and, when possible, pull out and elucidate distinct strands of thought as embodied in the works of ancient authors. In doing so I will reconstruct examples of Roman social imagination concerning the meaning of *paupertas*, the cultural

images surrounding it, and the methods by which such images were employed and manipulated for rhetorical effect.<sup>1</sup> This will include offering several definitions for different subgroups within the Roman conception of *paupertas* and *pauperes*, while continually acknowledging that such definitions were unconsciously (and at times consciously) conflated with one another. Occasionally, related concepts such as *frugalitas* and *parsimonia* will enter into this discussion. I will focus on, as much as possible, moral thought and social imagination as present in the tight-knit culture of aristocrats living in and connected to the city of Rome. The end result should be a picture of how the idea of poverty operated within a fairly small and distinct community of Roman elites and evolved in parallel with political and cultural developments during the first generations under the Empire. While destitution rarely affected this group, the place of poverty in the vocabulary of moral virtues, and its inescapable presence in Rome and the empire, made it an invaluable tool for discussing the moral issues behind topics such as luxury, patronage and *amicitia*, social mobility, and the meaning of citizenship.

I have placed chronological limits for this project at roughly the beginning of the Principate in 27 BCE and at the end of the reign of Hadrian in 138 CE. Augustus' rise to sole power separated citizen status from the capacity for political power: the transition from Republic to Empire coincided with the practical evaporation of the individual citizen's ability to participate in the electoral process. With the tribunate restricted to the hands of the *princeps*, the structures which had attempted to ensure any form of parity in political power between classes had evaporated. The official fictions of mass elections

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<sup>1</sup> This project's original conception owes no small debt to a similar exploration of a concept in the social imagination in Rebecca Langlands' study of *pudicitia* in *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (2006). This introduction borrows, to some extent, her approach towards investigating a concept with several overlapping meanings: cf. Langlands 1-4.

would end under Tiberius. The ending date of my study results from a different sort of limit: afterwards comes a sharp decline in the number of available sources from elite authors centered on the city of Rome. This is quite possibly related to the diffusion of Roman identity and provincial self-representation throughout the Roman state, a topic I approach in the third chapter.

This project aims to survey attitudes to poverty which emerge from a specifically Roman cultural background, and largely focuses on prose sources: an additional chapter supplies an overview of visual representations of poverty and labor in art. In selecting material I have shied away from Greek and provincial sources except for occasional comparison or when they offer a firsthand account of Rome the city and Rome the cultural center.<sup>2</sup> In general I have eschewed poetry in favor of historical, epistolary, and rhetorical prose which purports to describe Roman society with some degree of realism, or, in the case of declamation, to provide evidence for the moral zeitgeist. One key reason for de-emphasizing poetry as material for this topic is the persistent assertion of “poetic poverty” on the part of the authors of lyric and elegy, a factor which contaminates efforts to examine Roman ideas of poverty on their own terms. I have, however, devoted a chapter to satire’s role in portraying Roman poverty, because the genre provides an invaluable resource for images and attitudes relating to the condition of the urban poor.

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<sup>2</sup> Seneca the Younger’s unique attitudes toward poverty (including what can be reconstructed from the lost *De Paupertate*) might fit well into a later expansion of this study. At this moment, the philosopher’s Stoic background, and his goal of placing himself outside his society in order to comment upon it, make his works difficult to fit into a project which aims to assess widely held cultural attitudes. Cf. Parkin 2001: 116-121.

## Definitions

It has been said that poverty is an easy condition to describe but not an easy condition to define.<sup>3</sup> The mind's eye can quickly conjure up an image, perhaps inspired by Juvenal, of the beggar on the Roman street, but the facets of that image do not necessarily translate so easily to concrete definitions and guidelines. In this manner things are not exceptionally different between the modern world and its preindustrial predecessors. Contemporary scholars, who have the advantage of a massive arsenal of statistical methods and analysis to bring to bear on the topic, frequently include in their attempts to define poverty the caveat that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing various conditions and the lack of access to various necessities.<sup>4</sup> Modern sociological methodologies cannot easily be applied to the ancient world. The data is too sparse and unreliable, the numbers too nebulous, the sources too biased – and largely expressed through rhetorical commonplaces refracted through the myopic lens of Roman elite culture and its foibles.

This is not to say that modern definitions are useless in thinking about how Roman poverty existed and affected interactions between various classes. Among others, Parkin, Morley, and Harris have applied the modern definitions of “structural” (poor via having no means of support) and “conjunctural” (poor via being only able to support oneself at a subsistence level) poverty to the city of Rome; they draw an additional line between poverty and destitution.<sup>5</sup> These terms analogize well to “deep” and “shallow”

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<sup>3</sup> Morley 2006: 27.

<sup>4</sup> Banerjee et al. 2006: xvi.

<sup>5</sup> Parkin 2001: 27, Morley 2006: 28-9, Harris 2011: 33.



poverty, definitions utilized in studies of medieval culture,<sup>6</sup> and hark back ultimately to debates over definitions at the beginnings of sociological thought on this phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> Shifting focus slightly, one might think of the status and clientage connections at the heart of Roman culture when considering Adam Smith's definition of poverty as the inability to participate fully in society, or the more recent formulation by Amartya Sen that poverty is the absence of basic capabilities needed to achieve minimal functioning in one's society, including education and political participation.<sup>8</sup> Obviously the last two items were not automatic rights in the preindustrial world; however, the basic concept that poor people could not share equally in civic life and its interconnections applies at least in part to what we know of status networks in the Roman city.

Formal economic divisions existed in Roman political culture from at least the early Republic. The centuriate assembly, which followed lines of military organization and elected top magistrates, was organized according to property qualifications: the greatest power was concentrated in the wealthiest centuries. During the reign of Augustus formal entry into the two highest status classes, the senatorial and equestrian orders, was dependent on the entrant possessing one million or four hundred thousand sesterces, respectively. These economic boundaries were policed through the mechanism of the censor, an official who conducted the namesake *census* and evaluated the economic and moral health of the state. *Census* came to serve as a term meaning not only the process of evaluating finances and moral strength, but also the amount of wealth a person had,

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<sup>6</sup> Brown 2002: 15.

<sup>7</sup> Himmelfarb 1991: 11, 171 on the differences between the definitional categories of "Very Poor," "Poor," and "Comfortable" in the 1889 work of Booth on conditions of poverty in England and the competing definitions of "primary" and "secondary" poverty in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century work of Rowntree.

<sup>8</sup> As cited in Deaton 2006: 10.

especially in the context of the minimum qualifications for the senatorial and equestrian orders. After the reign of Augustus, this power would lie entirely within the hands of the emperors, who exercised it to include or expel whom they wished, as we shall see in Chapter Two.

One problem with translating Roman conceptions of poverty across cultures is that Latin *paupertas* does not entirely correspond to modern English “poverty.” *Paupertas*, its derivative adjective/substantive noun *pauper*, and related words which denote poverty (*inops*, *egestas*, *egens*) all describe wide ranges of economic and social situations indiscriminately. While I am far from the first scholar to point out this interpretational problem,<sup>9</sup> there still remains an unfulfilled need for well-defined terms in our understanding about Roman thought on poverty and its place in their social fabric. The most concrete definition so far offered has been Prell’s ambitious definition of *paupertas* as a value-neutral term separate from the other lexical items denoting poverty:

*Paupertas* bedeutet "wenig haben" und "sich einschränken müssen." Die deutsche Übersetzung mit Armut is irreführend. *Paupertas* ist ein wertneutraler, an oekonomischen Kriterien orientierter Armutsbegriff. [...] *Pauper* gibt eher die relative, standesbezogene Armut wieder, *egens*, *inops* und *mendicus* verweisen auf die absolute Armut.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, this clinical distinction does not accurately describe how poverty operates in Roman sources. *Pauper* and *paupertas* in practice refer both to the destitute as well as

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<sup>9</sup> Yavetz 1969: 7, Prell 1997: 44, Brown 2002: 15, Morley 2006: 29, Harris 2011: 31 provide some examples.

<sup>10</sup> 1997: 49: “*Paupertas* means “having little” and “being constrained.” The German translation to *Armut* is misleading. *Paupertas* is a value-neutral, an economic criteria-dependent definition of poverty. ... *Pauper* is rather the relative, civic-related poverty, and *egens*, *inops*, *mendicus* refer to absolute poverty.” Punctuation is retained from the original.

to upper-class men in comparatively mild financial straits, as will be demonstrated throughout this study, and terms such as *egens* and *inops* were applied to a similarly diverse range of economic situations. At different times they indicated different, widely disparate things; their meanings were dependent upon the audience's knowledge of a mutually overlapping, and at times mutually incompatible, series of definitions evoked in the Roman language of poverty.

For *paupertas*, as expressed through elite Roman voices, I instead offer the following definitions:

- 1) The condition of free citizens at the bottom end of the social and economic scale who had to engage in physical labor, agricultural labor, various service occupations, or who solicited charity in order to provide subsistence-level living conditions. This includes independent yeoman farmers, such as the *pauper* of Roman declamation, wage laborers, artisans, and beggars.<sup>11</sup> It excludes slaves because of the distinctions of status and citizenship between them and the poor, although both the poor and slaves might work under similar labor conditions. I will refer to this definition as “common poverty.”
- 2) The condition of members of the Roman aristocratic classes, senators and *equites*, who were unable, or nearly unable, to meet the required wealth qualifications for their census categorizations and risked being removed from their place in the social hierarchy by the censor.<sup>12</sup> Examples of these can be

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<sup>11</sup> Although I do not devote significant space to ancient beggars, Parkin 2001 provides a useful and detailed analysis of their material conditions (44-63).

<sup>12</sup> Under the reign of Augustus the minimum wealth qualifications for the elite *ordines* were fixed as 400,000 HS for the equestrian order and 1,000,000 HS for senatorials. Cf. Dio Cassius 54.17.3.

found in Juvenal's occasional narrator, or in the cases of senators who were provided their census through the beneficence of the Emperor.<sup>13</sup> I will refer to this as "wellborn poverty."

- 3) A term applied (less frequently than the other two) to the condition of voluntary austerity practiced by members of the upper class in order to gain or fit a reputation for frugality and parsimony. In these situations it is often conflated with *frugalitas* and forms part of a traditionally moral standard of behavior. In many cases the morally pure agrarian heroes of the Republic are portrayed as inhabiting either this definition, the first definition, or an indeterminate space between the two. I will refer to this concept as "voluntary poverty."

The overlap between these various usages of the term, and the inconsistent ways in which ancient authors employ them, has caused much of the difficulty in approaching Roman views on poverty. As with any of the abstract nouns for central concepts in Roman society, *paupertas* had to do a lot of work, allowing for variant interpretations based on context as well as metaphorical usages. To confine the socially dictated meaning of this term to a single point of definition would be impossible.<sup>14</sup>

Problems with the instability of poverty as a discourse are critical to the way that we should understand this concept's viability in Roman elite society. I propose that we should consider the subject of poverty as a "disordered discourse," a topic in thought and

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<sup>13</sup> These occasions, and their representation in historical narratives, will be addressed in detail in the third chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Parkin 2001: 32 also acknowledges that poverty requires a complex definition in terms of how people in Roman society comprehended it, but does not offer one.

communication that had various images, associations, and *topoi* attached to it, but which never coalesced into a fully realized discourse in its own right in the way concepts like *luxuria* did. I have coined this term to apply to the conflicting and often mutually incompatible definitions which informed elite Roman thought on poverty. No text that survives sets out to discourse abstractly on the definition of *paupertas* or its meaning in society; rather, writers apply a set of images and ideas to specific contexts and with heterogeneous motives and aims. My formulation of “disordered discourse” elaborates on Woolf’s claim that there was no unified discourse of poverty, although I disagree with his conclusion that poverty can only be seen as “wealthlessness” instead of a separate discursive category.<sup>15</sup> On certain occasions the material conditions described in accounts of poor persons’ lives indicate a degree of realism which does not seem to be the result of wellborn fantasies or fears about life without money. The second and third definitions of poverty I offer both speak to the inaccuracy of considering poverty purely as “wealthlessness,” as do occurrences when those described as poor clearly possess at least moderate material wealth. Poverty, as elusive of a topic as the sources show it to be, should be addressed for its own sake, not merely as an addendum.

As previously stated, it is difficult to avoid generalizations often found in the sources and stemming from the variable definitions of *paupertas* and related lexical terms such as *inopia*, *egestas*, and *plebs*. I have endeavored to restrict taking vague references to the *ordo* of plebeians as evidence for poverty per se, reading them in such a way only when economic factors are clearly in play. It is common practice for ancient authors and, at times, modern scholars to treat social groups as monoliths, which complicates the task

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<sup>15</sup> Woolf 2006: 86, 92.

of reading against the grain to find out which descriptors refer to the poor and which refer simply to the non-elite residents of Rome. If I have employed occasionally repetitive terminology, it is only in the attempt to avoid falling into the same interpretational morass.

### **Prior Work on Roman Poverty**

Early classical scholarship which addresses issues pertaining to poverty largely focused on recovering the material conditions of the poor or the role of public beneficence in Roman life. Many of these approaches accepted the value-judgments of ancient authors at face value. In this line are Cauer 1899 and Neurath 1906,<sup>16</sup> which assess attitudes to the masses, as does Seiler's 1936 *Die Masse bei Tacitus*. Lower-class occupations form the subject of Loane 1938 and Maxey 1938,<sup>17</sup> a subject which has been substantially expanded upon by Joshel's epigraphy-focused 1992 *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome*. Carcopino's 1941 *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* and Mattingly's 1947 *The Man in the Roman Street* form useful compendia of details from Martial, Juvenal, and Seneca about specific words, objects, and mundane rituals, although their approach to their material is anecdotal and often insufficiently skeptical.

Bolkestein's 1939 *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege in vorchristlichen Altertum* contrasts the methods of civic benefaction in Greco-Roman philanthropy with Near Eastern societies. In the course of his fundamental argument that Judeo-Christian social giving centered on the poor and that Greco-Roman social giving did not, he claims that

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<sup>16</sup> Cauer, B. "Die Stellung der arbeitenden Klassen in Hellas u. Rom," *Neue Jahrbücher für klassische Altertumswissenschaft u. Paedagogik*, iii (1899); Neurath, O. "Zur Anschauung der Antike über Handel, Gewerbe u. Landwirtschaft," *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie u. Statistik*, xxxii (1906). Yavetz 1969 contains a more detailed discussion of these and other early 20<sup>th</sup> century works.

<sup>17</sup> Loane, H.J. *Industry and Commerce in the City of Rome (50 B.C.-200 A.D.)*, Baltimore, 1938; Maxey, M. *Occupations of the Lower Classes in Roman Society*, Chicago, 1938.

paganism lacked the concept of “the poor.” Veyne 1976 has already taken this point to task, stressing that the absence of exact congruity between terms does not erase the fact that certain imperial programs seemed to target the impoverished for relief. Although Veyne’s point is not entirely convincing, I would add to his argument that textual descriptions, if not universally, at times definitely associate poor persons with conditions of destitution. That the Romans had an entirely different conception of “the poor,” and one which lacked dogmatic consistency, did not mean they lacked the concept entirely. In contrast to Veyne, Hands’ 1968 *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* stresses the minimal role poverty played in Roman distributions, arguing for their self-centered, civic context rather than an economic one. This is certainly true for the most part, although his assertion that Greco-Roman terms for poverty rarely imply true poverty or destitution can be easily disproved with reference to declamation and satire.<sup>18</sup>

As opposed to Rostovteff 1957’s acceptance of Juvenal’s portrait of the apathetic masses, Yavetz’s 1969 *Plebs and Princeps* is among the first works to apply sociological approaches to the opinions of ancient writers on the masses. Yavetz acknowledges the Romans’ indiscriminate use of vocabulary in referring to poverty and the lower classes, for which his work provides a useful appendix regarding various terms for “crowd” and the adjectives attached to them. His introduction contains an exhortation to beware of generalizations about culture-wide sentiments based on casual quotations across large spans of time, advice I have attempted to follow.<sup>19</sup> Similar attitudes underlie the

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<sup>18</sup> 62. This book suffers from its imprecise blending of Greek and Roman texts and value systems, and relies excessively on Cicero as a source for the moral zeitgeist over centuries of empire.

<sup>19</sup> 2-3. This occurs in the context of a criticism of Friedländer’s overreliance on isolated paragraphs of Cicero and Herodian in his *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms* (1922), but easily applies to the *loci classici* for elite attitudes towards poverty in Rome, Cicero *De Officiis* 1.150-1 and Tacitus *Historiae* 1.4.

discussion of poverty in Finley's 1973 *The Ancient Economy*, which contextualizes at length Cicero's famous discussion of the indignity of various types of labor in *De Officiis* and distrusts its universal applicability. Finley also identifies paradoxes in Roman thought on poverty: that elites praised poverty while at the apex of wealth, and that they did so while "the very poor aroused little sympathy and no pity throughout antiquity."<sup>20</sup> I agree that a broader approach is necessary for assessing cultural attitudes, although I hope to complicate the issue of sympathy. Macmullen's 1975 *Roman Social Relations* also identified the conflict between the idealization of the concept of poverty and historical poverty as opposed to the actually destitute. His work's focus on the relationships between classes takes Cicero's perspective as indicative of upper-class attitudes, including a "Lexicon of Snobbery" which relies heavily on him and Tacitus for its Latin citations. I would argue that, while such a lexicon is useful, it loses sight of a greater range of available material which provides evidence for a greater variation in attitudes and changes in them over time.

Some works which are not explicitly about poverty still provide arguments about the place of the poor in Roman society. As mentioned, Veyne's 1976 *Bread and Circuses* argues, perhaps with excessive optimism, for poor persons as the true beneficiaries of imperial euergetism. He also claims that the rich did not think about poverty because of patrician pride and because it might inspire fear about the reversal of their fortunes, a point I find difficult to accept.<sup>21</sup> D'Arms' 1981 *Commerce and Social Standing in*

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<sup>20</sup> 39.

<sup>21</sup> 20. This idea would be later reformulated by Woolf 2006, who argues that fear about potential reversals of fortune informed much of elite attitudes towards poverty. It should be noted that, as Cornell 2001 and others have proved, "patrician" was not synonymous with "rich" even during the early Republic.



*Ancient Rome* describes in depth the interconnectedness of Roman elites and merchant enterprise within Rome, exploring the negotiability of moral concepts and downward-looking disdain when personal advantage could be gained. Once again, Cicero takes center stage as the exemplar of elite disregard for labor, even if D'Arms undercuts the absolutist nature of Cicero's rhetoric. Ste. Croix's 1981 Marxist analysis of Roman production and labor sees the Roman cult of legendary poverty as mere nationalist fantasy. Horsfall's 2003 *The Culture of the Roman Plebs* traces the opposition of city and country in classical thought from Horace and Vergil back to Xenophon and Hesiod, and identifies contempt for manual labor as a widely expressed socio-literary posture which was far from universally binding. While his examples mostly come from freedman and municipal evidence, he asserts rightly that "Even those arch-snobs, our surviving Latin authors, admit occasionally that not all lucre is equally filthy."<sup>22</sup>

In terms of the actual living conditions of the poor in antiquity the works of Peter Garnsey are of the greatest significance. His contributions to 1980's *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* argue for the inherent unreality of the cultural *topos* of the "peasant cult" and its genesis in the militarist character of the state. Portions of his 1998 edited volume *Cities, Peasants, and Food in Classical Antiquity* offer practical distinctions between the poor and very poor in terms of labor, although this is without a formal definition on either Roman or modern lines. In general his work is more concerned with the realities of the laboring life rather than in how it was imagined by contemporaries. A similar ethos guides the analysis of W.V. Harris in his 2011 collection *Rome's Imperial Economy*; his chapter on poverty and destitution critiques popular

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<sup>22</sup> 27.

methods used to classify Roman society, arguing for the *ordo* instead of the class structure as being more useful in distinguishing inequalities of wealth and power.<sup>23</sup> He argues that the ancient sources under-represent structural destitution, which was always more prevalent in rural than urban areas.

Marcus Prell's 1996 *Armut im antiken Rom* comprises perhaps the first thorough approach to the nature and character of poverty *in toto* in the Roman state. As mentioned above, I think his definition of *paupertas* untenable, although the book constitutes a worthwhile thematic journey through the position of the poor in the social fabric. It includes data on major identifying factors including appearance, diet, and occupation, and provides a good compendium of various sources on poverty and the basic *topoi* while often seeming more of an impressionistic catalog than an analytical argument or an account of the development of the concept over time.<sup>24</sup>

Peter Brown's 2002 and 2014 works on poverty in the Late Roman Empire and in more broadly conceived early Christian thought, respectively, form a coherent position on the differences between Roman and Christian conceptions of poverty and its social value. Brown describes how Christian leaders invented "the poor" as a social category which Christian leaders claimed to represent.<sup>25</sup> In doing so he refrains from offering a definition of the poor in pre-Christian eyes, while recognizing accurately that Latin terms for poverty serve indiscriminately for various ranges of economic situations.<sup>26</sup> I agree

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<sup>23</sup> Harris 2011: 18.

<sup>24</sup> Anneliese Parkin's unpublished 2001 Cambridge dissertation takes a similar approach to the subject, although it incorporates a large amount of useful comparative material and modern poverty theory to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about the living and working conditions of the ancient poor.

<sup>25</sup> Brown 2002: 9.

<sup>26</sup> Brown 2002: 15.

that any large-scale concept of the poor was nebulous in Roman society, but might argue that the predecessors of these notions were nested in Roman society more than Brown implies. Also useful for comparison is Evelyne Patlagean's 1977 *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e-7e siècles* as a useful source for the changes in social institutions under the Christian empire.

Atkins and Osborne's 2006 *Poverty in the Roman World* represents the most recent summation of modern arguments on the subject, to my knowledge. Osborne's introduction argues for minimal perception of the poor as a group, with poverty only seen as a problematic social issue during the turmoil of the late Republic. Poverty, in contrast, is imagined as an elite phenomenon, being the parsimonious life without the corruption of riches.<sup>27</sup> My work has incorporated this latter point as one of the definitions under which *paupertas* resides, and this work is in some way a logical extension of Osborne's point that the Romans saw poverty as "more often a topic for thinking with than a practical problem to be solved."<sup>28</sup> To some degree I have already explained the divergence in definitions between Greg Woolf's article in this volume and my thoughts on poverty. I have adopted and modified his conclusion about poverty lacking unified discourse, but diverge from his opinion that images of poverty, especially in declamation, are inherently tied to elite fears about losing one's wealth.<sup>29</sup> I would offer that this fear is occasionally, but not universally, applicable; as the second chapter will cover, declamation deserves more attention as a field in which the social imagination about poverty (and other moral

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<sup>27</sup> Osborne 2006: 9, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Osborne 2009: 15.

<sup>29</sup> Woolf 2006: 86, 91.

concepts) could run free. In a more general sense, the notion that Roman ideas about poverty are amorphous and undefined is partially true but also partially false. They could at times be entirely concrete, as in the moral lessons underlying the stories of legendary agrarian heroes. The problem, which ancient authors only occasionally show awareness of, was that poverty contained mutually incompatible definitions rarely elucidated in open discourse.

### **Historical Background**

Although such a topic deserves its own monograph, I shall here attempt to provide a minimalist overview of ancient thought on poverty before the principate. Roman thought on poverty diverges from Greek thinkers in form, if not in substance. Unlike the internal contradictions inherent in *paupertas*, the main Greek words for poverty (πενία) and destitution (πτωχεία) have much better-defined semantic ranges and were thought of as related, but separate, conditions.<sup>30</sup> In Aristophanes' *Wealth* a personified Poverty distances herself from Destitution, resisting the argument that they are sisters by stating that the former possesses at least a few possessions, thrift, and self-sufficiency.<sup>31</sup> While often used hyperbolically, this division remains clear across a range of texts, whereas Roman arguments along the same line are undermined by having to choose between mutually incompatible definitions of the same word.<sup>32</sup> In general Greece and Rome shared praise for agriculture and the hardiness it could bestow, but Greek texts rarely extol the lives of poor men as morally superior or exemplary.<sup>33</sup> Osborne has argued

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<sup>30</sup> Osborne 2006: 11. Cf. Harris 2011: 31.

<sup>31</sup> 552-4. Cf. Herodotus' comment that Greece and Poverty have always been siblings (7.102.1).

<sup>32</sup> Hands 1968: 54.

<sup>33</sup> Finley 1973: 123, Osborne 2006: 13.

that *luxuria* and its moral repercussions were a more serious conceptual problem in Roman thought; thinkers from both societies imagined wealth as an expedient of moral decay, although this often manifested in Greek thought as a conflict between Greek and “barbarian” modes of behavior.<sup>34</sup>

Moving to Roman genres, rich and poor men supplied major categories of characters in the plots of Roman comedy, although the place of wealth and inequality in Plautus and Terence, and their interconnectedness with Greek models, form too complex a topic to be easily or blandly summarized here.<sup>35</sup> Their characters did live on in the form of the stereotypes which informed the plots of declamation, which I will address in the second chapter. Texts which advocated proper practices in agriculture (Cato’s *De Agricultura* and Varro’s *De Re Rustica*), without necessarily addressing poverty as a social problem, helped to inculcate respect for farming as a common and virtuous vocation for the wealthy aristocrat and the small landholder alike.

When we move on to the first century BC we find the major examples of texts and authors which attest an elite Roman animus towards the poor, both common and wellborn. In Sallust the poor comprise the power base for the machinations of Marius and Catiline; common people lose their reason and elect the former, and with the latter impoverished aristocrats, Catiline included, stake their hopes on sedition.<sup>36</sup> The rise of Roman luxury and its impact on the national character form the backdrop to the ambitions of the rebellion, as well as the famous claim of Jugurtha that Rome would be

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<sup>34</sup> Osborne 2006: 13. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 338 for a discussion of luxury as a historically corrupting factor, perhaps due to Roman influence, in the works of Polybius, Posidonius, and Athenaeus.

<sup>35</sup> See Richlin *fc* on the free poor in the *palliate*.

<sup>36</sup> *Jugurthine War* 73.6, *Conspiracy of Catiline* 14.3, 18.5, 20.8, 20.15, 21.4, 28.4.

easily sold should it find a buyer. Additionally, Sallust's portrayal of the mob prefigures that of Tacitus; its inconstancy, lack of foresight, and willingness to follow flattering rhetoric lead it to support Catiline's coup and instantly shift back to loyalty to the state after his defeat. It is worth noting that such crowds are composed of the urban, not the rural, poor. The dichotomy of city and country informs much of the Roman rhetoric surrounding poverty: when in the hinterland, it is thrifty, noble, similar to aristocratic *otium* in the countryside, and entirely tolerable; when in the city, it is seen as disgraceful, degenerate, and, in some cases, deleterious to the safety of the state.<sup>37</sup>

The comments of Cicero about vocations and propriety have been the most thoroughly mined in reconstructing Roman attitudes to the poor. Of these the *locus classicus* is *De Officiis* 1.150-1, which describes as “stained” or “dirty” (*sordidus*)<sup>38</sup> professions which inspire *odium* in others because they handle money or put their bodies to work: performers, small-scale traders, artisans, and wage-laborers (*mercennarii*), whose “wages are the guarantee of their slavery.”<sup>39</sup> Since those who work for wages put themselves under the power of others, they cannot be their own men, and are forced into a quasi-servile status. Cicero's argument here aligns closely with that of Aristotle at

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<sup>37</sup> As Morley 2006 describes this issue, “One kind of poverty, the specifically rural poverty of the peasant yeoman, was idealised and the virtues associated with working a 4-*iugera* farm like Cincinnatus were assimilated to the landowning class, while urban poverty was pathologised, associated with rebellion, crime, and disease” (35). Horsfall 2003: “the life of the urban poor is less attractive to the Roman author than that of ploughmen or shepherds and it is almost miraculous that we know as much as we do about life in a Roman *insula*” (22). One idea that may inform such beliefs was that the urban poor, stripped of land to work, had lost their capacity for self-sufficiency (a point of pride for many aristocrats). Cf. Taylor 1966: 64-7 on the structural underrepresentation of the urban tribes in the Roman electoral system, as part of a disdain for the urban poor she argues is often replicated in the accounts of modern historians.

<sup>38</sup> An adjective frequently linked to the lowest stations in society, especially their clothing; it also refers to the color of Roman mourning garments. See Richlin 2014c: 282-8 for a discussion of the class aspects involved when upper-class Romans in mourning donned clothing traditionally reserved for the poor.

<sup>39</sup> 1.150: *Ipsa merces auctoramentum servitutis*.

*Politics* 8.2.1-2, which derides τέχνας that degrade the conditions of the body, including those that earn wages (μισθαρνικὰς ἐργασίας). Aristotle then expresses concern that actions taken not in pursuit of morality, friendship, or on behalf of the self would be menial and servile (θητικὸν καὶ δουλικὸν).

According to Cicero, the only exception to the disgraceful association of labor or industry is when the trade or profit motive is sufficiently sizeable, and not undertaken out of need, thus providing a safety valve for aristocrats to engage in such ventures without a loss of *dignitas*. He then observes that no pursuit is nobler for a gentleman than agriculture.<sup>40</sup> This passage, along with the description of the *plebs sordida* at Tacitus *Histories* 1.4, has been overvalued by many historians of this topic in forming their assessments of elite attitudes toward the poor.<sup>41</sup> It seems excessive to take this passage, as MacMullen encourages us to do, as “a true reflection of late Republican upper-class Roman morality.”<sup>42</sup> Finley treats Cicero’s applicability much more skeptically, qualifying its validity by describing just how archaic these thoughts are and that they are tied to a historical moment where the status-based model Cicero so vehemently defended was on the verge of breaking down.<sup>43</sup> The political and social turmoil surrounding the civil wars of the era, of a culture under tremendous stress, do not provide an unimpeachable

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<sup>40</sup> 1.151: *Omnium autem rerum, ex quibus aliquid acquiritur, nihil est agri cultura melius, nihil uberius, nihil dulcius, nihil homine libero dignius.*

<sup>41</sup> Among those who devote time to this passage, often in combination with *Histories* 1.4, are D’Arms 1981: 4-6, Mouritsen 2001: 39; Alföldy 1985: 135; MacMullen 1975: 115-6; Yavetz 1969: 42, and Parkin 2001: 1, for example. This is not to imply that all have taken Cicero’s text at face value, but rather to demonstrate the overreliance on one text and one author.

<sup>42</sup> 117.

<sup>43</sup> 43-61. Perhaps undervalued in discussions of this stance of Cicero’s is its similarity to ideas Greek in origin, such as in Aristotle’s *Politics*, as mentioned above, and Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*. Cf. Ste. Croix 121.

diachronic portrait of the Roman moral panorama. If, at the twilight of the Republic, Cicero pined for a stricter adherence to the memory of the peasant cult, that would be entirely understandable.<sup>44</sup>

Exempla concerning both agricultural and poverty-stricken heroes provided the basic material for spreading and cementing cultural values to young elites. The “peasant cult,” heretofore only alluded to, situated agriculturally-focused poverty as an essential characteristic of the early Republic and its virtuous statesmen. Archetypal figures such as Cincinnatus and Regulus were imagined to have worked tiny farms and voluntarily departed from them in order to serve the state. Added to these are stories like that of Gaius Fabricius Luscinus, who, according to Plutarch, refused a bribe from Pyrrhus, and other tales of early penury such as those contained in Valerius Maximus 4.4.<sup>45</sup>

Scholarship which has pointed out the contradictions and impossibilities of such legends<sup>46</sup> rightly points out their inherent falsity, but what matters is not the truth of such stories, but that they were told. Despite their practical estrangement from various aspects of social and political life, the citizen poor, at least in the abstract, were imagined as retaining ancestral moral fiber; this positive characterization separated them from other broadly disparaged groups such as foreigners and slaves. Praising peasant agriculture, carried out by the poor or by legendary heroes assumed to be poor, addressed

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<sup>44</sup> The prominence of this passage has also obscured to some degree the abundant material Cicero offers us on the poor and the social role of farming, which has yet to be thoroughly collected and analyzed. In addition to the *De Officiis*, he broaches the subject at *In Pisonem* frag. 9, *Letters to Atticus* 1.16, 11, 1.19.4, 14.9, *Pro Flacco* 18, *Republic* 2.40, 3.45, *Pro Murena* 1, 50-1, *De Oratore* 1.234-257, and variously in the *Cato Maior*. Cf. also Horsfall 2003: 84-94 for inconsistencies in Cicero’s depictions of the *plebs* and Taylor 1966: 28-32 for Cicero’s disparagement of the *plebs* in an electoral context.

<sup>45</sup> *Pyrrhus* 18; a version of Fabricius’ life without the bribery incident is contained in the mentioned section of Valerius Maximus.

<sup>46</sup> Garnsey 1998: 138.



one of Roman society's needs – the requirements of an agrarian population base to support Roman militarism and the constant reinforcement of the concept of a morally superior past.<sup>47</sup> This explains one reason why Roman aristocrats preferred to represent themselves as agriculturalists despite additional revenue streams, and why even the isolated epigraphic mentions of the poor involve self-identification as *pauper*.<sup>48</sup>

We should be aware that this manner of praise was not extended to events and people in the city. Urban and rural forms of poverty nearly always carried different moral connotations. As opposed to their rural counterparts, they often met with elite disdain or disgust. The difference between praiseworthy and shameful poverty rested in spatiality and in forms of labor: since poor persons in the city could *de facto* not farm, they shamefully (in the elite, or at least Ciceronian, perspective) had to hire out their bodies for labor in order to make a living. Additionally, their presence and imagined failure to adhere to elite standards of decorum and self-control led to them being characterized as a danger to social stability.

Praise of poverty and its concordance with agriculture functioned best in texts and genres that could frame poverty within idealized discourses about morality. Roman moral claims about poverty begin to show cracks and inconsistencies when included in grand historical narrative, as the first chapter will show in its analysis of poverty's place in

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 94, 137.

<sup>48</sup> The celebrated Mactar inscription in Tunisia (*CIL* VIII.11824) starts its first full line by stating *paupere progenitus* before describing its narrator's economic rise via agriculture. At Pompeii a fragmentary inscription (*CIL* IV.9932a) reads that the *pauperes* joined with the *unguentarii* to dedicate a small shrine. While the precise meaning of *pauperes* in this context invites speculation (Were they beggars? Is this meant to be humorous? Is this the self-effacing name of a *collegium* or *sodalicia*?), clearly they were secure enough in their group's name to publicize it. Cf. Parkin 2001: 48, who raises similar questions as to the meaning of this text, *contra* Macmullen 1975's more ambitious interpretation of it as referring distinctly to a group of beggars.

Livy. His preface includes the decline from pristine poverty as a key factor in Rome's moral degradation, a criterion by which I evaluate *paupertas* as an element across his entire text. Close examination reveals that Livy's noble, impoverished heroes are not as pure as they might be imagined to be. In addition, the chapter discusses the representation of "heroes of the poor" in the early Roman state and changes in the spatiality of poverty during the rapid expansion of the Roman *imperium*.

The second chapter addresses the role of the *pauper* in Roman declamation, the genre in which poverty comes closest to having a consistent discourse. It argues for consistency in declamation's portrayal of poor characters, which fit closely into the archetypes outlined by the heroes of the idealized past. The material conditions of the *pauperes* are examined, as are the claims which declamation makes about ideal relations between rich and poor members of society. It concludes by questioning the degree to which a social practice in which the rich ventriloquized poor men would have affected their attitudes towards social classes outside their own.

Texts from an interconnected circle of elite men in the time of Trajan supply the material for chapter three. Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius, contemporaries and friends, provide us a window into the attitudes of a single generation. My analysis investigates the degree to which economic factors and inequalities are present in Tacitus' portrait of the Roman crowd, Pliny's relationship with his tenants, and changes to the nature of poverty in the Flavian and Trajanic eras. I argue that this period saw a new locative dimension in the cultural discourse of poverty, as archaic ideas about rurality and virtue were modified and exploited by new generations of aristocrats, including Trajan himself, that attached them to Italian and provincial identity.

My fourth chapter will move into the city and discuss the few texts which explore poverty in urban conditions, specifically the satires of Martial and Juvenal. I address the core differences in their representations of the impoverished and their self-aware shifts between the different definitions of poverty in their portraits of themselves and others. In addition, I note how Juvenal spoofs and problematizes ideas of idealized *paupertas* in the Golden Age and connects the lot of the urban poor to memories of universal civic involvement in Roman politics. It concludes with an analysis of how (or whether) sympathy to the poor can be extracted from these authors, and of the difficulties of synchronizing their conditions of perspective and persona with the greater society.

In my final chapter I offer an overview of depictions of poverty and labor across the spectrum of Roman art.<sup>49</sup> This non-exhaustive sketch details how rural vocations occupied decorative space in sacro-idyllic art, as well as the surprising under-representation of agriculture and literary heroes in domestic decoration. It considers whether images of disfigurement converge with social attitudes to the poor and also the few Pompeian pieces which unambiguously include detailed or realistic images of lower-class individuals and labor. It concludes with a discussion of imperial art and architecture, arguing that the underclass of Rome and Italy became a point of emphasis in depictions of imperial generosity, advertising a new public consciousness of the emperor's position as benefactor and protector to the common man.

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<sup>49</sup> According to Kampen 1981: 18, representations of work in Roman art have not received a comprehensive study since Jahn and Gummerus in the 1860s. I do not pretend to offer one here, but this indicates the degree to which work remains to be done.

## Chapter One

### Livy: Searching for *paupertas* in the Early Republic

Defining the place of poverty in Livy's *Histories* involves working around the edges of a disordered picture. Incidents and anecdotes related to poverty do intermittently appear, but lack a consistent substance and resist efforts to condense them into a corporeal form. While he affords *paupertas* and *parsimonia* a prominent place in the Preface (10-11), he later rarely elaborates upon these concepts. Afterward they only appear in isolated characters or anecdotes, and are entirely absent from long stretches of the text. Even to deduce the poverty of the early Romans (as Livy perhaps intends the reader to do) is to make an argument from silence, omission, and problematic data. To imagine a consistent image of poverty in the text would be chasing ghosts; yet Livy repeatedly employs poverty as an argumentative tool. What emerges instead, when considering the place of *paupertas* and its place in the internal logic of the text, is that Livy rarely considers poverty as a historical factor, instead mostly employing it for rhetorical and narrative reasons in isolated episodes.

The poor do not often emerge from Livy's text. This partially results from lexical issues which complicate efforts, as in many texts, to specify exactly who the poor are: Livy mostly employs an indiscriminate vocabulary to describe non-elites, who do not constitute a legally distinct social group. He rarely employs specific terms related to poverty – *pauper*, *inops*, *egens* – to refer to underprivileged characters or groups in his *Histories*, despite the undeniable public presence of the poor. Most often he uses *plebs*. Major lexical markers of poverty occur only infrequently in Livy's text. Forms of *pauper/paupertas* occur 12 times; most will be discussed below. *Inops* only applies to the Roman underclass six times. Varieties of *egens* that refer to economic distinctions arise

24 times, *humilis* 21, *penuria* once. As a matter of comparison, Livy includes forms of *plebs* over 1200 times, *populus* over 1400.<sup>1</sup> These numbers are useful at least in establishing a sense of proportion. The statistics reflect varieties of verbal representation (and there are certainly times when the *plebs* are not poor), but also provide evidence for the way Livy's sheer mass of usage minimizes the presence of poor elements within Roman society. His comparative reluctance to use the specific words *pauper* and *paupertas* may indicate that Livy viewed poverty and wealth inequality as largely invisible forces in history, or that he preferred to understate it in favor of different forms of causality.

As a purely lexical approach cannot answer every question, restricting our approach to the relatively few unarguable mentions of poverty within the text would be both unwise and incomplete. Livy only intermittently describes the economically disadvantaged as poor in his text, instead preferring terms which can apply in context to poverty (especially the catchalls *plebs* and *populus*) but which in practice are used indiscriminately.<sup>2</sup> Livy, like many other authors, prefers not to use precise language even when stressing the contrasts between the wealthy and the poor. *Plebs* is often synonymous with *pauperes*.<sup>3</sup> At times the language of *plebs* and *pauperes* clearly draws a distinction in terms of financial strata; at many times it does not. By casting a slightly wider net, one can reach beyond the vagaries and inconsistencies of the vocabulary of class and wealth to analyze the place of paupers and poverty in Livy's narrative. The

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<sup>1</sup> Numerical figures provided from Packard's concordance to Livy.

<sup>2</sup> Yavetz 1969: 149.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 155.

contextually poor only intermittently manifest *paupertas*, and the conditions under which they do so matter in terms of the author's narrative. Poverty, its omission and emphasis, plays an important role in the saga of patricians and plebeians, and, later, of Romans and outside peoples.

While much work has been done on the interrelation of *plebs* and patricians in early Rome (Cornell 1995, Mitchell 1990), the subject of poverty in Livy has received little attention. Much of the major scholarship on Livy has focused on issues of structure, comparison with other historians covering the same period, and *Quellenforschung*. Walsh 1961 focuses on Livy's historical and historiographical methods, Luce 1977 on internal structure, especially in the last fifteen extant books. Articles by Briscoe, Burck, and Walbank in Dorey's 1971 volume address historical development and source specification. More recent scholarship on Livy has shown an eagerness to approach the *Histories* through various discursive lenses, although poverty has been among them.<sup>4</sup> Chaplin 2000 explores Livy's use and embedding of *exempla*; Jaeger 1997 addresses the interrelation of space and monuments in Livy's text and the physical city; Feldherr 1998 investigates Livy's creation of scenes of spectacle at various dramatic points. The commentaries of Ogilvie, Oakley, and Briscoe seldom deal with thematic material – poverty earns no discussion. Much remains to be done.

This chapter will trace the discursive function of poverty in three major sections. The first and third will trace how Livy obscures and emphasizes poverty in the characterization of two groups, the Roman *plebs* and foreign allies, in Books 1-10 and 33-45, respectively. The second section will follow a more thematic approach, explaining

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<sup>4</sup> I am reserving a discussion of the issues raised by the debate on the nature of the Republican aristocracy between Millar and Hölkeskamp, and the responses by Rosenstein and Morstein-Marx, for a further stage of this project.

the reciprocal relationships in play in Livy's accounts of aristocrats who court the affections of the *plebs* and the poor, and differences in images of poverty between the early Republic and later times. My approach will be partially lexical – analyzing *paupertas* and its synonyms when they do occur – and partially inferential: at times context clearly implies the discussion of poverty as a theme or impoverished people as actors, even if Livy does not include words that definitively point towards poverty. This will occasionally necessitate certain parcels of information being presented outside of chronological order, but this should not present problems for interpretation; poverty in Livy is part of a disordered discourse, and does not proceed in a straight line. While the text presents historical Roman poverty and its decline as a critical factor over the course of the Republic, that assertion loses coherence once subjected to scrutiny.

At the start of his account of the Republic, Livy includes several pieces of information which might indicate the pristine austerity of the earliest citizens. But the presentation is always problematic: the exemplars are less poor, or less important, than they might seem. Afterwards, poverty disappears as a theme, only resurfacing intermittently on the outskirts of other narrative. During the Struggle of the Orders, Livy omits poverty as a historical factor in order to present a more coherent thematic picture: the mob is virtuous when it supports virtuous aristocrats and reviled when it supports demagogues. When his focus expands to include the Greece and Asia Minor, Rome's reluctant allies become the new poor, contrasting with the excesses and immorality of the changing Roman state. *Paupertas*, despite being praised early on, does not form a major theme; instead, it occasionally surfaces as a narrative tool during conflicts between *plebs* and *patres*, statesmen and demagogues, or Romans and foreigners. *Parsimonia*, despite

being praised as the companion quality to *paupertas* in the Preface, almost never appears in the body of Livy's work.

### Searching for *Paupertas* in the Early Republic

Livy's Preface supplies his reader with an explicit message about the historical meaning of poverty. It fits snugly into his view of historical progression, which presents the current age as the lowest point of depravity. Notably, the term *paupertas* occurs in a passage that summarizes the entire text's moral trajectory:

*Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod vitas. Ceterum aut me amor negotii suscepti fallit, aut nulla unquam res publica nec maior nec sanctior nec bonis exemplis ditior fuit, nec in quam [civitatem] tam serae avaritia luxuriaque immigraverint, nec ubi tantus ac tam diu paupertati ac parsimoniae honos fuerit.*<sup>5</sup>

It is especially healthful and useful in the understanding of affairs to regard every exemplary bit placed in a shining monument; from there you will understand what you and the state should emulate, and what (foul at both the beginning and at the end) to avoid. As for the rest, either the love of the project I have begun is deceiving me, or no other state was ever greater or more pious or wealthier in good examples, nor which luxury and avarice infiltrated so late in its history, nor where poverty and parsimony were so long a source of honor.

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<sup>5</sup> Pref. 10-11. Luce 1977 translates *paupertati ac parsimoniae* as "modest wealth and thrift," which encapsulates to some degree the wellborn aspect of the Roman understanding of *paupertas*, and probably the version Livy intends here. Cf. Marincola 2009: 20 for moral focus and evaluation in Livy and other Roman historians.



Here Livy neatly abstracts the concept of poverty, pairing it with *parsimonia* as part of the pristine state of early Rome before the decline.<sup>6</sup> He sets up a framework through which he will communicate *exempla* with the aim of shaping and reinforcing the moral character of the reader in the present through diachronically constant values from the past.<sup>7</sup> The decline he describes incorporates poverty as a barometer of the character of the state: *paupertas* unmistakably points toward moral rectitude. If one took the Preface as a schematic for the entire text, one would expect Livy to champion men exhibiting *paupertas ac parsimonia* against the corrupting forces of *avaritia luxuriaque* throughout the text, at least until the “turn” in the Roman character. Poverty, presumably in as exemplified by poor, virtuous small landholders, should emerge as a central characteristic of Livy’s early, virtuous heroes of the state.

If this were true, then that would open the possibility of examining the entire text of Livy in light of the place and meaning of poverty within it. Yet Livy rarely emphasizes poverty as a principle of early Roman behavior: his *exempla* parading the concept are few and far between, and problematic in various ways.

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<sup>6</sup> While this section deals with the unexpected absence of *paupertas* in Livy’s presentation of history, *parsimonia*, it must be said, gets even shorter shrift. It occurs only four times in the entirety of the *Histories*, two of those instances paired with *paupertas* (Packard). Moore’s 1989 catalogue of values does not track *paupertas* at all (for reasons unmentioned), and, outside of Cato in Book 34, uncovers only a few examples for *parsimonia* (133-4). I suspect that *parsimonia* should be considered as a harsher version of *frugalitas* and as a virtue often linked to voluntary poverty, but will suspend judgment pending a lexical study on this topic.

<sup>7</sup> Chaplin 2000 examines how exempla operate within Livy as programmatic features and the ways in which characters within the text scrutinize and evaluate the past to draw meaning from history (2-3). Roller 2009 argues for exemplarity as a discourse with a coherent system of symbols by which duty and obligations were taught, and introduces a four-step model for the creation of an *exemplum*: a public act, a contemporary audience’s evaluation of that act, commemoration, and acceptance as normative (216-7). In terms of *paupertas* exempla, my understanding is that they create an image of a particular mode of behavior, and advertise that behavior as virtuous, normative, or both.

Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus provides the earliest apparent *exemplum* of the *paupertas* of famous men.<sup>8</sup> His station at the plow and residence in a *tugurium* (a form of hut or cottage) testify to his willingness to do yeoman labor, but several factors prevent an unquestioned acceptance of his image as an idealized *paupertas* portrait. One might expect Livy to trumpet the dictator as the triumph of *paupertas*, but the presence of poverty in his narrative is not lexical and only debatably thematic. The picture of Cincinnatus, called to a successful dictatorship from the fields (*agresti intentus*),<sup>9</sup> certainly aims to demonstrate virtue as symbolically linked to austerity and agriculture, but neither *paupertas*<sup>10</sup> nor any synonyms occur in the passage, during the account of his dictatorship, or at any other point in Livy's account of his life.<sup>11</sup> If the author intended his audience to make a connection between Cincinnatus' character and the *paupertas ac parsimonia* of his introduction, he did not emphasize it through his choice of vocabulary.

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<sup>8</sup> The first named poor person in Livy is Egerius, brother of Lucumo (1.34.3), so named (as Livy claims) because he received no inheritance. Livy only mentions his finances as a means of explaining the origin of his name, and makes no mention of poverty during the narrative of his later military career.

<sup>9</sup> 3.26. Ogilvie 441 and Oakley II.363 call attention to another Quinctius similarly called from the plow at 7.38-42 to lead a mutinous army; apparently the *gens* and this type of episode were strongly associated. The language here may have some interplay with Horace *Epodes* 2.1.156 (*intulit agresti Latio*).

<sup>10</sup> Walsh 1961:77 claims the tale emphasizes Cincinnatus' *frugalitas*, but the text does not mention this term explicitly, and *frugalitas* would presumably only be noble if undertaken of his own volition; see the following paragraph for the difficulties of this issue.

<sup>11</sup> A version of the Cincinnatus story also appears in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (10.17.4, 24.1), reduplicating the detail of him at the plow. Ogilvie's (1965: 416-8, 441) analysis of the divergences between the accounts, as well as details in Cicero, indicates that Livy exercised some freedom in his portrayal of the dictator's life. Dionysius omits the narrative of the trial of Kaeso, remarking upon it only when he introduces Cincinnatus (10.17.3) after he becomes consul in 460. Dionysius includes details of his sparse clothing but omits the toga detail, and repeats the plow detail in the account of Cincinnatus' first dictatorship in 459. In an additional detail in Dionysius, the people are so overjoyed at his dictatorial service that they offer to relieve his poverty (πενίαν, 10.25.3) with the plunder, but he refuses, preferring poverty as opposed to riches (μείζον φρονῶν ἐπὶ πενίᾳ ἢ ἄλλοι ἐπὶ πλούτῳ). Livy does not include any such direct praise of poverty.

The context behind Cincinnatus' agrarian retreat likewise detracts from understanding him as an idealized exemplar of poverty. His departure from the city was caused by the trial of his son Kaeso (461 BCE), an agitator for the patricians. Kaeso had been banished for committing manslaughter, a conviction Livy attributes to Kaeso's inurious behavior to the *plebs*. Cincinnatus' defense speech for his son does not malign the *plebs* (perhaps because doing so in that context would have been unwise), instead asking unsuccessfully for indulgence to the errors of youth.<sup>12</sup> Afterward, with the resultant fine "levied heartlessly" (*exacta crudeliter*) and his property sold, Cincinnatus retreats into his *tugurium* outside the city.<sup>13</sup> He behaves as if relegated by the censors out of his "proper" class (*veluti relegatus*), and separates himself from urban society.<sup>14</sup> Livy does not specify whether Cincinnatus undertook this action out of actual financial need or out of shame and spite. Neither option would lend itself to idealized poverty: his austerity was either involuntary, or undertaken out of bitterness. Despite Cincinnatus' apparent destitution, Livy does not account for how he remained politically active while outside of Rome, including winning a consular election the very next year. Perhaps Livy intended that detail to indicate that political participation was independent of financial status.

Cincinnatus' relationship with the *plebs* complicates notions of him as a representative of idealized voluntary poverty. Cincinnatus never championed the poor or the *plebs*; in fact, dissonance between his family and the *plebs* provided the cause of his retreat to the countryside. His dictatorship in 458 BCE came after an intervening period

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<sup>12</sup> 3.13.8.

<sup>13</sup> 3.13.10.

<sup>14</sup> Into the *aerarii*, who lost the rights of suffrage and military service.

where Cincinnatus' political actions included critiques of the excesses of both orders.<sup>15</sup> Cincinnatus' final career highlight was being called into action as dictator again in order to forestall the imminent insurrection of Spurius Maelius, who had achieved favor with the *plebs* through the distribution of free grain.<sup>16</sup> Cincinnatus' *magister equitum* Servilius killed Maelius while the latter was appealing to the protection of the *plebs*.<sup>17</sup> At the climax of the episode, after congratulating Servilius, then covered in the dead man's blood, Cincinnatus defends the extralegal murder of Maelius<sup>18</sup> before an assembly of the *tumultuantem multitudinem*; they are later bought off by Maelius' accuser Minucius.<sup>19</sup> As a result, we must re-evaluate Cincinnatus' position as a purely positive scion of *paupertas* because of his antagonistic relationship to the *plebs* and their champion. His approval of violence as a political solution (a forerunner to the Senate-approved killing of the Gracchi) contrasts with Livy's general praise of compromise and reconciliation between plebeian and patrician. If Cincinnatus does exemplify virtuous poverty, that poverty coexists with a surprising disdain for judicial procedure and inter-order harmony.

While Cincinnatus' career makes it difficult to automatically associate him with virtuous poverty, details of the first dictatorship narrative show how little *paupertas*

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<sup>15</sup> He harangues both classes at 3.19.4 (*non in plebe coercenda quam senatu castigando vehementior fuit*) and argues for the universality of community protection at 3.19.9. He shows no special sympathy to the lower classes. Evidently the demands of the farm were not demanding enough to prevent him from exercising political power. Vasaly 2009: 258 calls attention to the similar presentation of Cincinnatus and Titus Quinctius Capitolinus, from the same *gens*, as both fitting a brave and severe character type which opposes the excesses of both classes.

<sup>16</sup> 4.13.14

<sup>17</sup> 4.14.4.

<sup>18</sup> 4.15. Dionysius does not include this detail, only mentioning offhandedly in a speech by Servilius that Cincinnatus is dictator at all.

<sup>19</sup> 4.16.3.

factors into his story. His position, called up from the plow, would supposedly provide fertile ground for exhibiting *paupertas* as an idealized early Roma virtue, but the only figure to unambiguously display it is swallowed up by the Cincinnatus narrative. Lucius Tarquitiu, who appears in the episode as the dictator's *magister equitum* immediately after the plow scene, alone explicitly displays *paupertas*. Tarquitiu, Livy informs us, was a patrician who had served in the infantry *propter paupertatem* but had also received recognition for his personal worth: *primus longe Romanae iuventutis habitus esset*.<sup>20</sup> In his story, poverty (although Livy might blur which definition of *paupertas* should apply – Tarquitiu could have been just below the cutoff for the *equites* and thus possess a comfortable income) exists side-by-side with excellent social standing and recognition, although Livy mentions no causal relationship between the two. After this initial mention and a mention of Tarquitiu commanding part of the army several sentences later, he disappears from the narrative. Any presumed connection between Cincinnatus and *paupertas* actually appears rather problematic: he does not explicitly display it and the only man who does so in any proximity to his narrative vanishes without a trace.<sup>21</sup> Between these two men in Book 3 and Cato in Book 34, no *exempla* occur which epitomize poverty as a clear, praiseworthy individual virtue.

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<sup>20</sup> 3.27.1. Dionysius of Halicarnassus calls him Tarquinius, and also mentions his poverty; instead of being among the best of the youth, he is overlooked because of his poverty (ἡμελημένων μὲν διὰ πενίαν) but virtuous in war (τὰ δὲ πολέμια γενναῖον) (10.24.3).

<sup>21</sup> Exactly when a strongly emphasized poverty aspect creeps into the Cincinnatus exemplum is a matter of interest. It is certainly a crux of Machiavelli's version of the story (*Discourses on Livy* 3.25) and deserves further inquiry.

From Cincinnatus (450s) down to Cato (190s), Livy never applies *paupertas* to any specific individual;<sup>22</sup> the word instead functions as a marker for the entire *plebs* or a portion thereof. *Pauperibus* appear at 1.43 as a group relieved of the maintenance of cavalry horses by the Servian reforms (perhaps fitting the definition of poor aristocrats), but not until 2.9, when Livy describes concessions made on the eve of an Etruscan invasion (508 BCE), do they materialize as a group with any distinct qualities:

*Nec hostes modo timebant sed suosmet ipsi ciues, ne Romana plebs, metu percussa, receptis in urbem regibus uel cum seruitute pacem acciperet. Multa igitur blandimenta plebi per id tempus ab senatu data. Annonae in primis habita cura, et ad frumentum comparandum missi alii in Volscos, alii Cumas . . . portoriisque et tributo plebes liberata, ut diuites conferrent qui oneri ferendo essent: pauperes satis stipendii pendere, si liberos educent.*

Not only did they fear the enemy, but also their own fellow-citizens, lest the fear-stricken Roman *plebs* would allow the kings into the city and accept peace along with slavery. As a result the Senate heaped placatory benefits on the *plebs* throughout this time. Particular care was taken over the grain supply, and messengers were sent to collect grain at Cumae and among the Volsci . . . the *plebs* was liberated from port duties and tributes, so the rich would bear them; they had the ability to. The poor made enough of a contribution if they raised children.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This must of course acknowledge the possibility of exemplars of *paupertas* in the lost sections of Books 10-20 and other missing pieces. The Periochae do not provide accounts of any.

<sup>23</sup> Ogilvie 1965 claims this to be “a specious derivation of *proletarii*” (258); Livy’s anachronistic account allocates a certain role and place in the hierarchy for *pauperes*.

Here the *plebs*, or a portion of the *plebs*, are clearly referenced in the closing line as *pauperes*,<sup>24</sup> defining them by financial status.<sup>25</sup> Their difficulties as presented in the passage are economic (*portoriisque et tributo*) or related to subsistence living (*annonae ... frumentum comparandum*). In this passage one can also see the grafting of the general personality of Livy's *plebs* onto this clear subsection of the *plebs* (that is, the ones without grain reserves or financial stability): the plebeians are eternally panicky and changeable. Their impressionable state, dependent on the assistance of the *patres*, must be mollified by mediation from the elite class. The end result of the Senate's strategy is a total success: it alleviates the woes of the state to the degree that the kings are hated no more by the highest than they are by the lowest (*non summi magis quam infimi*) (2.9.7). Livy here acknowledges the concerns of poor citizens within the state (and their political power), in a fashion which posits them as, ideally, recipients of a benevolent paternalism by their social betters. The passage's final line suggests an ultimate function for the poor members of the state; not to be the tax base or pay tariffs, but simply to supply *liberos* for the good of the state. Livy does not clarify exactly what purpose these *liberos* are meant to fulfill; soldiers, yeoman farmers, or laborers might apply. His description identifies the poor as producers, raw material, breeding stock, as opposed to fully participating members of society.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> There may be a connection between the *pauperes* here and the description of the Tarquins earlier in 2.9 as *egentes*, both concerned, desperate, requiring outside assistance.

<sup>25</sup> Note also the parallel placement of the words *divites* and *pauperes* in the last two paired clauses.

<sup>26</sup> A further connection to this image of the lower classes can be seen in Canuleius' speech on his namesake law (discussed below). At 4.3.8, he argues that the patricians hate the plebeians simply because they are alive: *quod spiratis, quod vocem mittitis, quod formas hominum habetis, indignantur*. By his account the *plebs* here are not even entirely human and exhibit the shapes of men without being entitled to do so.

Given the prominence of the concept at the start of the work, and its relative absence (the examples above cover all the instances of *pauper(tas)* applied to individuals from the opening of the work to Book 34), we might imagine a contextual redefinition being employed in the text. Considering that the patrician Tarquinius displays the concept of *paupertas*, while the plebeians in 1.43 are described by the noun *pauperes*, one might assume a division of terminology based on social order. If so, the abstract noun *paupertas* would refer to an elite quality, and the noun/adjective *pauper* to the truly indigent, as it does on multiple occasions.<sup>27</sup> While this distinction might hypothetically explain such difficulties, no less a figure than Cato the Elder later uses *paupertas* as something the poor have and would like to conceal.<sup>28</sup> Another possible explanation would be to consider Livian poverty as a “negative” characteristic, in that later condemnations of luxury and greed imply an earlier and pristine *paupertas* to be understood as lingering in the background.<sup>29</sup> While this provides a partial explanation for Livy’s intermittent poverty episodes, it contrasts with Livy’s typical strategy of deploying moral virtues front and center, and does not explain the discrepancy between the visibility of *paupertas* in the preface and its general disappearance thereafter.

Due to the scarcity of examples, a purely lexical approach is insufficient to explain the whole of the concept in Livy’s text. We possess an incomplete picture, with

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<sup>27</sup> At 1.43, 2.9, 4.4, 34.4, and 34.54.

<sup>28</sup> 34.4.14.

<sup>29</sup> Feldherr 1998: “The absence of wealth was the absence of *cupiditas*” (11), marking a contrast between a clearly avaricious later era and a less well-defined past; however, this falls into the same difficulty of back-forming one concept by the absence of a different concept; *paupertas* is more than the inverse of *luxuria*. Cornell 2001 on the cultural image of early austerity: “The stories that were told about them are more revealing of later Roman ideology than of the economic conditions of the third century; in any case the later tradition was less concerned with the economic status of these men than the moral examples they set” (391).



sporadic, strong individual details, but no consistency. Where has the poverty gone? The accessibility of early Roman poverty as a fertile topic for moralizing was clear to Livy – if not, it would not inhabit such a privileged place in his introduction. The resultant difficulty is to explain why the advertised poverty does not occupy a larger space in Livy’s early Republic.

### **Understating Poverty in the Struggle of the Orders**

Livy’s approach to the internal discord of the first two centuries of the Republic involves blurring distinctions between various social groups in the Roman state. Modern scholarship about the Struggle of the Orders argues that economic and social classes were certainly not one and the same, but that substantial wealth disparity existed inside the plebeian ranks.<sup>30</sup> Livy’s argumentative strategy minimizes the visibility of economic issues in the years 508-367, rooting the tension in terms of the legal faculties conferred on the *plebs* and the strain between the competing aims of the orders.<sup>31</sup> This usually involves treating the *plebs* as a unified, socioeconomically undifferentiated whole. Few mentions are made of the wealth divisions within the *plebs* themselves – they either play the role of the entire economic underclass, as at 3.36.7,<sup>32</sup> or are treated as undivided from the patricians except by membership in their order. As an initial example, Menenius Agrippa’s metaphor of the *plebs* as the laboring hands and chewing mouth of the state (2.32) depicts the entire *plebs* as the “working-class” parts of the body. Livy

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<sup>30</sup> Cornell 2011: 242, Mitchell 1990: xii. Note also that Livy makes no historical argument about the origin of the *plebs* in the Roman state. They are first mentioned, apparently fully-formed, at 1.9; Ogilvie makes no comment on this development.

<sup>31</sup> Regardless of Livy’s actual knowledge of the internal divisions of each of the orders, he had the freedom to redirect the narrative to highlight specific moral virtues (as he often did).

<sup>32</sup> Appius Claudius attempts to seek favor by courting the *plebs*: *paulatim totus vertere in plebem coepit. Abstinebatur a patribus; in humiliores lubricinose crudeliterque consulebatur.*

accomplishes this through a deliberate blurring of the lines between different social groups in the historical Roman state: soldiers, *plebs*, laborers, and the impoverished.<sup>33</sup> Despite their practical differences, they all become the *plebs* for the furthering of the Struggle narrative. Robb remarks on Livy's declining to mention poor relief as an aim of the era's reformer figures: "Instead, he juxtaposes plebeians and patricians, constantly emphasizing the importance of harmony between the two to the constitutional order."<sup>34</sup>

Livy elides the subdivisions between social groups even in cases which focus specifically on the distribution of wealth. In the speech of Canuleius in favor of his namesake law (451 BCE), the speaker describes the patrician/plebeian split as independent of wealth:

*Verum enimvero lege id prohiberi et conubium tolli patrum ac plebis, id demum contumeliosum plebi est. Cur enim non fertis, ne sit conubium divitibus ac pauperibus?*<sup>35</sup>

"Certainly it is injurious to the *plebs* that this be prohibited by law, that marriage of patricians and plebeians is forbidden. Why do you not make it so there is not any marriage between rich people and poor people?"

Here, with patrician-plebeian intermarriage at stake, Canuleius compares the issue to the prohibition of marriage across wealth gaps, intending such an idea to seem ridiculous and contradictory to free will and social practice. This passage perhaps indicates a degree of

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<sup>33</sup> The flashpoint of the first Secession of the *Plebs* is the public appearance of a homeless former soldier impoverished by war, misfortune, and the compulsory tribute (2.23). Cornell 2011 identifies it as a commonplace and points out its anachronisms (267); Ogilvie 1965 connects this declamatory image to "classic 'stage types'" such as Achaemenides in *Aeneid* 3.590 and to similar accounts of soldiers' hardships at 3.58.8 and 4.58.13.

<sup>34</sup> Robb 2010: 141.

<sup>35</sup> 4.4.9.

respect towards the poor, as their legal right to marry across economic lines is unquestioned. The *pauperibus* are definitively not *plebis*; if they were, there would be no debate. This is perhaps the most explicit example in which Livy reveals that his own favored plebeian/patrician division is political rather than economic.<sup>36</sup> Notably, in a later passage, long after the Struggle ends, Livy unreservedly equates the orders with economic classes: *quid repente factum cur immisceri sibi in cauea patres plebem nollent? cur diues pauperem consessorem fastidiret?*<sup>37</sup> *Dives* and *pater*, as well as *plebs* and *pauper*, are presented as the same, with no indication that this is out of the ordinary.<sup>38</sup>

Debates over tax relief and the costs of war exemplify the degree to which Livy elides subdivisions within the *plebs* in favor of presenting them as a unified group.<sup>39</sup> In a discussion over the disposal of the war plunder from Veii (396 BCE), the senator Licinius argues that the spoils should be divided amongst the soldiers:

*satius igitur esse reconciliari eo dono plebis animos, exhaustis atque exinanitis tributo tot annorum succurri, et sentire praedae fructum ex eo bello in quo prope consenuerint.*

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<sup>36</sup> Note also the stock pairing *dives [et] pauper*. Cf. Chapter 2.

<sup>37</sup> “Why did it suddenly happen that the *patres* didn’t want to be mixed in with the *plebs* at the theater? Why should a rich man be fussy about sitting with a poor man?” (34.54.6-7) (194 BCE).

<sup>38</sup> One possible angle on this discrepancy might be that Livy thought that the orders had aligned along financial lines at some point in the intervening historical time, but he does not indicate this. It seems more likely that he no longer felt the need to distort the economic aspect.

<sup>39</sup> The topic of the *plebs* as the victims of taxation and those who bear the burdens of war recurs throughout the *Histories*; they provide most of the soldiers and incur most of the damages. Excessive burdens being borne by an impoverished *plebs* can be seen at 5.20, 26.26.10, and elsewhere. While one could hypothesize wartime sacrifices as a logical extension of the virtue of *paupertas*, Livy never does so explicitly. Perhaps involuntary *paupertas* factored less than voluntary in his thoughts about the concept.

Is it not better for the spirits of the *plebs* to be reconciled by this gift, to relieve those exhausted and emptied by so many years' tribute, for them to enjoy the spoils of the war in which they have grown almost old?<sup>40</sup>

This passage contains at least two forms of Livian narrative blurring: the *plebs* are equated with the soldiers, since the *plebs* are the ones who *consenuerint*, and are referred to as those in dire straits (*exhaustis atque exinanitis*). Certainly in this moment they are defined as among the impoverished part of the state, if they had not been at the war's inception. An earlier passage refers to tribute being levied on both orders,<sup>41</sup> but only the plebeians require any lessening of their burden; this draws attention to an economic distinction between the two orders. Livy's cutting use of *exhaustus* and the rare *exinanitus* fit the state the destitute plebeians find themselves in: all the economic juice has been squeezed out of them.<sup>42</sup> But, despite the presence of these economic markers, Livy never explicitly describes the prospective recipients of this tax relief as poor; he describes all in relation to the two orders.

Despite Livy's lexical whitewashing of the undercurrents of the debt issue, he does include several passages where the *plebs* are described in financial terms. At 6.27.6, in a passage where the tribunes rebuke the Senate for avoiding the debt issue, the debt-ridden commons are described as *obaeratam plebem*. The plebeians in question, despite being called only *plebs*, are portrayed as more economically vulnerable. Later in the same chapter, the incentive towards civil discord is referred to metaphorically as the *merces*

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<sup>40</sup> 5.20.8.

<sup>41</sup> *ut eo minus tributi plebes conferret* (5.20.5).

<sup>42</sup> Not the only example of *exhaustus* being used in a monetary sense; it also occurs at 1.57.1 (Tarquin's treasury exhausted by public works), 26.35.5, and 27.9.2.

*seditionis* (6.27.9). This attribution, aimed at the representatives of the lower class, might bring to mind sentiments that held working for a wage (*merces*) to be inherently disgraceful. A further example occurs at the climax of the story, where Appius Claudius sarcastically reproaches the prorogated tribunes for not seeking political change without *mercede magna* (6.40.8). Appius uses *merces* again (6.40.9) to conclude that the wage they receive will be the acquisition of countless offices and thus a subversion of the principles of government. While perhaps these lines can be read as sly acknowledgement of a different perspective on the situation, they only hint at the poverty angle, and never diverge from the terminology of plebeian and patrician.

During the narrative of the Licinio-Sextian Laws (368-7 BCE, Book 6.27, 31-42), the subject matter – the repercussions of the progressive impoverishment of the lower classes – epitomizes Livy’s abstention from using poverty as an issue during the Struggle of the Orders. While the political conflict erupts from increasing indebtedness and *nexum*, which would logically affect the poor, Livy describes the problems as affecting all portions of the *plebs*:

*itaque cum iam ex re nihil dari posset, fama et corpore iudicati atque addicti creditoribus satisfaciebant poenaque in uicem fidei cesserat. adeo ergo obnoxios summiserant animos non infimi solum sed principes etiam plebes...*<sup>43</sup>

Therefore when nothing was able to be given then from the principal, [the debtors], tried and given into bondage, paid off their creditors with their bodies

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<sup>43</sup> 6.34.2-4. A similar case occurs at 10.6, where a quarrel initiated by the tribunes (eternal scapegoats in Livy’s model of class conflict, perhaps because of his experience or historical memory about flagrantly ambitious tribunes in the civil wars) sees the tribunes seeking to inflame not the *infimam plebem*, but the *capita plebis*. This shows, at least when Livy is willing to reveal it, an explicit wealth/status gap within the plebeians themselves. This gap could be predicated on wealth or moral character, but more likely, as with the ideological portraiture of elites, these concepts are intertwined.

and good names, and punishment paid off the debt in lieu of their credit. To such an extent, then, had not only the lowest but even the chief men of the *plebs* submitted their subjugated souls [that they gave up all attempts to gain offices, which looked to remain forever in the hands of the patricians.]

The misery incurred by the *plebs* from the unremitting wartime taxation is not suffered only by the lower or middling sorts of *plebs* (or suffering patricians, whose existence is unmentioned), but even by the *principes plebis*: it affects the entire order. Instead of the social unrest originating with the bottom layer of the plebeians, or with influential plebeians intervening on behalf of their poor cousins, it is presented as consuming the entirety of the order. Livy writes the plebeians here as a social caste completely absorbed by the poverty issue; they are the have-nots and the patricians are the haves.<sup>44</sup>

Yet Livy never employs the vocabulary of poverty in his handling of the *nexum* and debt issues. While the issue of debt-slavery is tied unavoidably to wealth and the exercise of social power through wealth, he chooses throughout to emphasize the class issue. The language used to describe the victims of the debt crisis is entirely plebeian.<sup>45</sup> at no point are the *plebs*, despite the frequent restatement of their fiscal peril and oppression via the policies of the legislature, described with any of the nouns or adjectives typically associated with poverty. *Pauper(tas)*, *egens*, *inops*, and variant forms simply do not occur in Livy's account of the conflict over the laws, or for that matter, in

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<sup>44</sup> This dichotomy persists through much of Livy, as remarked upon by Briscoe 1971: 8-9, Mitchell 1990: 5, 15, 132. The general lack of acknowledgement of economic disparity within the Livian *plebs* is discussed in Develin 1986: 350-1 and Von Ungern-Sternberg 1986: 366; the latter discusses Livy's rare acknowledgement of the wealth and honor gap in the *plebs* at 22.34.

<sup>45</sup> 6.27.7 *terrant plebem*, 27.8 *animus plebi*, 27.9 *consensu plebis*, 31.5 *laxamento plebi sumpto*, 32.2 *coacta plebes*, et al.

nearly all of Book Six.<sup>46</sup> The usual standby, *populus*, does occur, but only infrequently compared to *plebs*: ten times as opposed to nearly one hundred. This lexical emphasis in the entire passage dealing with the laws - seven full chapters, plus other assorted sections – defines this culminating moment as one tied wholly to the relationship between the orders. Livy glosses over the intertwined nature of economic and order-based issues behind the Licinio-Sextian laws (the difficulties of *nexum* and access to public land, plebeian representation in the consulship) in favor of a simpler explanation which posits the *plebs* and the *pauperes* as the same group.

Livy's choice to represent the Struggle as clash of status groups, rather than economic groups, can be confirmed by the sudden reappearance of economic descriptors in his vocabulary once the zenith of the Struggle has passed. His presentation of the Licinio-Sextian episode as a conflict between orders is followed by the reemergence of poverty-marked language after the triumph of the tribunician proposals in 6.42, the finale of Book Six. Despite the curtailing of usury in 367 BCE, the issue of debt-bondage arises once again, and “those without wealth were ruined and entered into *nexum*, (*obruebantur inopes nexumque inibant*) despite the adoption of a one-percent interest rate.<sup>47</sup> Once the narrative has moved on from its climax, the lexicon of poverty enters the story once again, even when it handles the same social issue as before.<sup>48</sup>

Livy's description of the Licinio-Sextian laws, and indeed of the entire Struggle of the Orders, foregrounds differences between *plebs* and patricians at the expense of

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<sup>46</sup> The sole instances of “poverty vocabulary” in Book 6 are a vague use of *humilis* at 6.41.3 and *egestas* as a hypothetical threat resulting from mass debt at 6.11.8 as part of the Manlius Capitolinus episode.

<sup>47</sup> 7.19.5.

<sup>48</sup> Forms of *inopia* also occur at 7.37.10 and 7.29.4, describing Samnite opponents of Rome.

economic considerations. Livy presents the narrative as if the impetus behind the tumult was entirely based on patricians and plebeians. Why? In explicating the subdivisions within the *plebs*, and the coalition that must have existed within those subdivisions and concerned patricians in order to achieve the passage of this legislation, Livy would have undermined one of the central themes of his first decad.<sup>49</sup> He presents the Struggle of the Orders as entirely that; a conflict predicated on the interdependence and tension between two equally monolithic groups which culminated in the compromises that laid the foundation for the Middle Republic. Presenting the situation in light of the *divites plebes* and the *pauperes plebes* (not to mention middling sorts and other factions) would have complicated the picture and reduced the weight of Livy's accumulating argument.<sup>50</sup>

### **Friends of the People**

Plebeians are not entirely passive actors in the *Ab Urbe Condita*, and the beneficence of compassionate aristocrats is not entirely unreciprocated. Rarely in the history do the plebeians initiate political action on their own, and when they do, Livy portrays their actions as disorganized and chaotic, characterized by rashness, indecisiveness, and gullibility. Despite the general political incompetence which formed part of Livy's portrait of the *plebs*, they stood at the center of critical social issues and had genuine grievances to express. When they could not effect change on their own, they sought intermediaries from those higher on the social ladder. Of their own volition, in response to sympathetic legislation and political action, they chose favorites from among

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<sup>49</sup> Cornell 2001's reconstruction of the early Republic posits the *plebs* as a group identity rising out of conditions in the 490s and irrevocably split in the 360s with the Licinio-Sextian Laws. It may be impossible to know whether Livy had access to better information regarding the makeup of the early Roman population than what he presents.

<sup>50</sup> This is not an isolated narrative tactic: Walsh 1955 points out where Livy changes or distorts an emphasis in terms of *clementia*, *disciplina*, and *pudicitia* (383).



their social betters, beacons of moderation in an occasionally vicious relationship between the orders. These figures gain prominence at key moments regarding the well-being and social welfare of the early *plebs*; they serve the interests of cohesion within the larger community by crafting solutions to political strife, ending unfair social conditions, saving the city from outside aggression, keeping manpower available for the army, or providing for the well-being of individual disadvantaged members of the state.

In the early years of Livy's portrait of the Republic, these patrician figures provide the means of intercession to a class that did not yet possess it. They quickly disappear after the introduction of the tribunate. "Friends of the *plebs*," as Livy portrays them, legitimized the political needs of the *plebs* and allowed the negotiation of political rights and representation to continue without making it appear that the *plebs* could completely extort the state into compliance. They provide a medium through which the political and economic underclass could focus political power in a productive way, and one amenable to Livy's habit of depicting elites as the only righteous political agents;<sup>51</sup> in the author's mindset, they alleviate the problem of popular interests and agitations directing the policy of the early Republic. Via their interactions with reliable patrician leaders, popular energies are redirected into positive, productive directions.

The biographical elements of these men tend to occur in typified patterns depending on their location within the *Histories*. In episodes from the dawn of Roman history, figures receive symbolic rewards for the services they rendered to the lower order and the state in general, whether by titles like Publicola or through public financing of

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<sup>51</sup> This is not to present Livy's picture of plebeian-patrician relations as entirely one-sided; both patricians and plebeians do despicable things, but social and political action in the early years is best accomplished by patricians.

their funerals.<sup>52</sup> Their intervention, using wisdom and good counsel to pacify the lower orders and ensure measured social change, earns them the respect and appreciation of the lower classes. Never are they described as negative influences on the stability or character of the state. As the narrative progresses out of the mythologized past into a nearer period of historical memory, men who might have become Publicolae instead earn the titles of demagogue or *popularis*, and idealized, moderate conflict resolution morphs into populist dangers to the stability of the oligarchic state. The pivot of this process is the former hero-cum-demagogue Manlius Capitolinus, whose early status as savior to the state devolves into revolutionary ambitions before he is thrown off the Tarpeian Rock (384 BCE).<sup>53</sup> By our text's end (and presumably, in the lost narration of the last century of the Republic), figures sympathetic to both sides have disappeared, replaced by slumming patricians stoking their political ambitions via the power of the urban masses.

Aristocratic funerals, as Livy says, supplied important cultural events at which the Roman poor could show their allegiance and gratitude to these members of the elite. In general, such spectacles in Livy served as an opportunity for symbolic social interaction and reciprocation between the orders. The poor would benefit from distributions and various forms of entertainment, while elites could measure their reputation and the allegiance of their client base by the attendance and acclamation of the crowd, and

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<sup>52</sup> The proto-example of an aristocrat with the common touch may be found in Servius Tullius, who divides land amongst the citizens and receives a unanimous vote of approval (1.46). At one point Tarquinius calls him an abettor of the lowest class of humanity (*fautorem infimi generis hominum*) and one who plunders the wealthy to aid the destitute (1.47.11-12). But this last description comes from a hostile character whom Livy clearly disapproves of, and Servius' servile origins complicate efforts to define him as an aristocrat.

<sup>53</sup> 6.18.

perhaps ensure future political success.<sup>54</sup> The repeated *exemplum* of the grateful *plebs* paying their respects to a beloved aristocrat by donating coins for his funeral presents an intersection of the idealized past and later concerns about populism and the validity of government. Considering their position within the narrative, occurring at very early stages before the first “popular” politicians gain prominence, these episodes can be interpreted as, if not normative, at least expressions of popular power tolerable to Livy. If it were distasteful for him to present the *plebs* as achieving political action on their own at the expense of the patricians, he could make such episodes easier to swallow by introducing an elite agent who mollified the plebeian id. Livy appears to present these events as examples of the ideal mode of interaction between the orders, as part of a gentle paternalism with reciprocated *pietas*. Should we then see this type of funeral as part of a stereotyped *paupertas* narrative? Is this simply a characteristic of the life of a Publicola/early *popularis*, integrated with the course of such men’s lives as a stereotyping detail - that welfare-oriented patricians of the early centuries were said to have had a funeral of this sort as a means of creating a stock character? Certainly Livy’s exemplary *modus operandi* should alert us to these possibilities.

Publius Valerius Publicola provides the first and perhaps most notable example of how and why Livy’s aristocrats establish connections to the common people.<sup>55</sup> After the death of his fellow consul Brutus (509 BCE) in battle, Valerius initially runs afoul of the *mutabiles volgi animi* (2.7.5) because of his failure to call an election to create a

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<sup>54</sup> An example of the political reciprocation possible from a funeral as expressed in Livy is the election of the tribune M. Flavius (8.22) after distributing meat at his mother’s funeral (329 BCE).

<sup>55</sup> The possibility exists that Livy’s picture of Publius Valerius Publicola has some connection to his contemporaries Lucius Gellius Publicola (cos. 72 BCE), who fought in the Third Servile War, and/or his son Lucius Gellius Publicola (cos. 36 BCE), who fought at Actium. Yet these men came from a different *gens* than Valerius, and no clear link has presented itself.

replacement, which stirs up fears about the recently-disposed-of monarchy, only exacerbated by his locating his house in a natural citadel. Despite this initial rift, he redeems himself in the public eye, and re-establishes a secure base of support, by addressing the people with lowered *fascēs* (implying that the symbols of his power, and his power itself, are lesser than the authority of the citizen assembly) and denying any desire for a monarchy or any wish to curtail the *libertas* of the people (2.7.9-11).<sup>56</sup> Changed in self-presentation if not in character, he responds to the suspicion by resituating his house at the bottom of the Velia (2.7.12),<sup>57</sup> holding an election that fills the vacant consulate (2.8.3), and sponsoring a law allowing for *provocatio* to be made to the people as opposed to the magistrates (2.8.2). Livy gives the passage of this law, and its counterpart mandating prosecution of aspirants to kingship, as the genesis of the cognomen in question: *Inde cognomen factum Publicolae est* (2.8.2).<sup>58</sup> His service in expanding the rights of the powerless earns him a permanent and public marker of his special relationship with the *populus*, an example of how elite reputations could be magnified by the common touch.

Valerius' prototypical example provides a useful point of comparison for instances when Livy later approves or disapproves of populist measures. One must note that, in the same passage where Valerius earns the title of Publicola, he is first described

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<sup>56</sup> Dion. Hal.'s first mention of his character stresses his frugality (5.12.3), and this trend continues throughout his career (5.48.2). His funeral is paid for only by the state (5.48.3-4).

<sup>57</sup> The Velia is the NE spur of the Palatine; Cicero at *Har. Resp.* 16 claims Publicola was given a house there by public subscription (Ogilvie 1965: 251), which indicates Livy's presentation of a variant version.

<sup>58</sup> Ogilvie 1965 states the popular etymology "can hardly be correct" (253) and surveys possible alternatives without much zeal for any. The name was confined to the *gens Valerius*. It was generally seen as positive, although not universally: Seneca disparagingly referred to Julius Caesar as *ille publicola, ille popularis* (*De Ben.* 5.16.5, in Griffin 25).

as a *popularis*: *leges . . . verterent ut popularem etiam facerent* (2.8.1).<sup>59</sup> However, his characterization differs greatly from that of Manlius Capitolinus, whom Livy calls the first person to act as a *popularis*, 120 years later (6.11).<sup>60</sup> The discrepancy might be situated more in Livy's appraisal of their character than in their politics.<sup>61</sup> Where he stresses the innocence of Valerius regarding the *mutabiles volgi animi* (2.7.5), the narrator outright denounces Manlius as defective by nature (*vitio...ingenii*, 6.11.6).<sup>62</sup> How can the policies, and the portraiture, of these two populists be differentiated? Valerius expands the rights of the *plebs*; Manlius reaches out to debtors and sells his own estate to alleviate their *egestatem ... et ignominiam* (6.14.10, 6.11).<sup>63</sup> These actions serve the same goal: to alleviate inequalities in wealth and social power amongst the lowest classes.

Several facets of the passages might provide some insight into the varying presentations of these popular figures. In a way not found in the language surrounding Manlius, Valerius does not have *agency* in the verbs which describe the passage of his

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<sup>59</sup> Notably, Cicero's depiction of Publicola in his *Lucullus* describes him as someone, along with other agrarian-bill proposers, whom the contemporary *populares* cite as a forbear. Cf. Robb 2010 : 78-80.

<sup>60</sup> *primus omnium ex patribus popularis factus cum plebeiis magistratibus consilia communicare*. Oakley 1997 remarks "L. seems to have forgotten some of his earlier remarks" (498) and includes numerous other instances, both before and after this episode, where *popularis* occurs with both the meanings of "pleasing to the *populus*" and "patrician approved of by the *plebs*." Cf. Robb 2010: 128, 131 on Livy's varying usage of the term *popularis*; Scager 1977's assertion that Livy's hostility to all *populares* was uniform and extreme (390) is too broad a generalization.

<sup>61</sup> I see no great degree of moral difference between Valerius' expansion of political rights for the *plebs* and Manlius' attempts to solve the debt issue.

<sup>62</sup> There are many points of comparison between the portrait of Capitolinus and the vitriol Livy unleashes much later against G. Terentius Varro (22.25), *sordidus* in birth and company, who becomes *popularis* by contradicting Fabius the dictator (22.26.4) and serves as the ultimate scapegoat for Cannae.

<sup>63</sup> In doing so, Manlius subjects himself to a voluntary *paupertas* for the good of the state, yet Livy describes his actions as negative. This might indicate that his ideal *paupertas* is not based on beneficence or communality, but instead a solipsistic self-denial.

statutes - the laws themselves, not Valerius, make him *popularem*, and might also be credited with making him *Publicola* as well. Their creation in a passive phrase (*latae deinde leges*, 2.8.1) smoothes over his agency as their sponsor. Taken from this angle, the populism of Valerius is presented not as a conscious or ambitious choice, but as the natural result of well-meaning practice aiming at communal harmony. Or is it a matter of *intention*? *Publicola* seems to have no particular ambitions (his second law curses any man who plots to assume the kingship) and reached the apex of the *cursus honorum* without any wishes for further power. In fact, the text treats the shift to *popularis* as an unintended swing of popular opinion from Valerius' original PR situation: *non solum quae regni suspicione consulem absolverent, sed quae adeo in contrarium verterent* (2.8.1).<sup>64</sup> Publius Valerius' image is pure because his motives are pure, unlike those of later, more mercenary populists. Manlius Capitolinus, according to the story, aims at nothing less than kingship, although he seems to do little more than cultivate a clientage amongst the lowly and address them at his home;<sup>65</sup> he only plans a revolution after being arraigned and imprisoned by the dictator (6.15). It seems that Livy makes a distinct narrative choice to paint Capitolinus in revolutionary colors. Or is it a question of *consistency*? The incessant scheming of Manlius Capitolinus after he turns *popularis* earns him condemnation from Livy; there is no later mention of any pro-commoner legislation or action on the part of Valerius after he becomes *Publicola*. Perhaps his behavior is more easily excused as a one-time response to a period of legitimate concern,

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<sup>64</sup> “[Laws] which not only absolved the consul of suspicion of aiming at ultimate power, but which even worked to the opposite end.”

<sup>65</sup> While the text of his addresses to his impoverished clientele in Book 6 is, perhaps, treasonous, how their content would have reached Livy is hard to imagine. They are obviously invented.

especially in the formative, paranoid years of the Republic. Publius serves as a paternal guardian figure for a *plebs* that cannot manage its own *libertas*, an incessant theme in Livy's handling of the Struggle of the Orders;<sup>66</sup> Manlius, like later tribunes and demagogues, goads the *plebs* into a disproportionate and unhealthy lust for an excessive share in the governance of Rome.

Valerius Publicola's funeral, a prototypical example for Livy in discussing other funerals of popular figures, displays the effect of *concordia* as a balancing force in the early Republic.<sup>67</sup> After his death, the treasury pays for the ceremony because his personal wealth was inadequate. The disparity between Publicola's social worth as measured by reputation (*gloria ingenti*) and his financial status (*copiis familiaribus adeo exiguis et funeri sumptus deesset*) is leveled by the munificence of the state (*de publico est datus*), in the same way that he himself settled a crisis where financial and legal status had engendered a disparity.<sup>68</sup> Yet seeing Publicola himself as a representative of Roman destitution, as opposed to "wellborn" *paupertas*, might be excessive. The terms Livy uses to express Publicola's lack of disposable income – *copia* and *sumptus* – are not words typically associated with poverty and perhaps, given the tradition (whether historical or

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<sup>66</sup> *Libertas* and its political cachet has been the subject of a long discussion in modern scholarship. Wirszubski 1950 (contra Kloesel 1935 and Syme 1939) defines the term as "the capacity for the possession of rights, and the absence of subjection" (1), which conforms nicely with Livy's image of the *plebs* consistently mishandling *libertas* and overreaching for rights which would upset any political balance.. The general picture is that the *plebs* receive *libertas* at the expulsion of the kings (Mouritsen 2001: 11, Sailor 2006: 348), but guidance by prudent aristocrats before they can enjoy it in a controlled manner (Luce 1977: 246); early efforts to expand their rights under demagogues threaten *libertas* and look to bring about *regnum* (Scager 1977: 379, Connolly 2009:191-2).

<sup>67</sup> Briscoe argues that Livy's zeal towards *concordia* here and elsewhere refutes charges that he is "over-schematic" in following sources (10); on Livy's *concordia* cf. Walsh 1966b: 118, Walsh 1961: 69.

<sup>68</sup> 2.16.7. Ogilvie 1965: 275 believes this to be an expanded obituary from the mention of a public funeral in the *Annales*. Cf. Seneca *Suasoriae* 6.21, where a *contio* atypically narrates the deeds of Cicero at his funeral.

not, Livy projects tenets of aristocratic life back into the archaic age), we should read this passage as indicating not that Publicola could not afford a funeral at all, but that he could not afford the funeral his *gloria* deserved. His implied *paupertas* is most likely tied into a wholly aristocratic mode of representation.

Second among the posthumous recipients of the generosity of the *plebs* was the consular Menenius Agrippa, who successfully coaxes the *plebs* off the Sacred Mount during the First Secession (494 BCE). Livy's eulogy for Menenius doubles as a programmatic statement of the author's idealized intermediary figure, one who bridges the gap between the interests and personalities of the different social orders - *vir omni in vita pariter patribus ac plebi carus, post secessionem carior plebi factus. Huic interpreti arbitrioque concordiae civium, legato patrum ad plebem, reductori plebis Romanae in urbem sumptus funeri defuit* (2.33.10-11).<sup>69</sup> Solid in reputation among both citizen classes, he contributes to *concordia* and maintains civic harmony in a troubled time without venturing to either political extreme.<sup>70</sup> His successful deployment of a bodily metaphor, based on the discursive style of fables or proverbs, worked because he phrased a political problem in terms both classes could understand.<sup>71</sup> Although Menenius becomes *carior* to the *plebs* after defusing the secession, he is no partisan figure, no Publicola, no *popularis*.

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<sup>69</sup> "A man equally dear to *plebs* and *patres* through his entire life, made dearer to the *plebs* after the secession. The mediator and arbitrator of concord between citizens, legate of the *patres* to the *plebs*, who returned the Roman *plebs* to the city, but who could not afford his funeral."

<sup>70</sup> Note that Menenius' act of coaxing the *plebs* off the Sacred Mount does not constitute the only available version of the story; recovered *elogia* from the Forum of Augustus state that M. Valerius Maximus did so (Luce 1965: 131). This adds to our understanding of the choice Livy exercised in the narratological construction of this historical figure.

<sup>71</sup> Horsfall 2003: 69-82 argues for these genres appealing to both elites and common people, with examples of use in various contexts by aristocrats and others.



Menenius' introduction occurs in the same sentence that announces the death of Publius Valerius Publicola.<sup>72</sup> Menenius' entrance into the text (503 BCE) comes without much fanfare, as part of a standard annual consular introduction, but the passage's placement raises some interest, especially as Menenius himself receives no special comment. The proximity of these important names creates an image of continuity that directs the reader from one proto-*popularis* to the next; considering the malleable chronology of the early Republic, this might have been the most thematically appropriate time to place Publicola's death. Given the fame of the Menenius Agrippa story and the common link of liaison to the *plebs* (as well as the brave death of Publius' brother Marcus Valerius in battle against the Latins at 2.20), we might read an element of narrative *deixis* in the passage between these two men, pointing from one popular figure to the other.

Unlike Valerius, Menenius receives no reward from the state for any favor towards the poor during his lifetime, but still merits a popularly-funded funeral, where the *plebs* each contribute a sextans (2.33.11).<sup>73</sup> But why is Menenius presented as receiving this honor from them? No solid justification for the appreciation of the *plebs* is provided beyond the narrative of the Menenian analogy on the Sacred Mount. Livy's eulogy only mentions his *arbitrioque concordiae*, without referring to any specific actions, official or otherwise. The analogy of the body and the stomach on the Mount<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 2.16.7. This is not replicated in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' narrative.

<sup>73</sup> Ogilvie 1965: 320-1, as with P. Valerius Publicola (I), believes this is an expansion of an obituary in the *Annales*. Dionysius expands the incident, positing a frugal manner of life for Agrippa and the danger of an obscure funeral because of poverty (*πενίαν*), with both Senate and citizens (not merely the *plebs*) contributing large sums to the funeral, with some going to the war orphans as well (6.96).

<sup>74</sup> Itself part of a literary tradition of similar analogies, evidence pointing to some or all of the episode being manufactured by Livy or an earlier source. Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 2.3.18, Polyaeus 3.9.22, Aesop 197, Cicero *De*

did not solve the political crisis, only bring the *plebs* to the negotiating table. The secession narrative attributes none of the political developments to Agrippa's agency, instead employing passive and impersonal language: *Agri deinde de concordia coeptum concessumque in condicione ut plebi sui magistratus essent sacrosancti, quibus auxilii latio adversus consules esset, neve cui patrum capere eum magistratum liceret* (2.33.1).<sup>75</sup>

This presents a problem of causality. The evidence which would naturally lead to Menenius receiving this signal honor is missing, unless the reader is meant to take the strength of his negotiation as enough to win the enduring love of the *plebs*. It seems possible that the posthumous adulation is invented by Livy to reward Menenius for his moderation and foresight.

A further inquiry into Livy's presentation of Menenius Agrippa's personal relationship to the *plebs* complicates the plausibility of his narrative. When the senators select Menenius as their representative, Livy presents him as *quod inde oriundus erat, plebi carum* (2.32.8). Needless to say, the likelihood of a plebeian senator this early in the Republic seems low,<sup>76</sup> especially since Menenius' first appearance in the text, as consul for 503 BCE (2.16.7), makes no mention of his origin; a striking omission, if he was indeed plebeian and in high office at that early date. Livy does not include Menenius' background in his encomium in 2.33, instead calling him *legato patrum ad plebem*. It

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*Off.* 3.5.22 (Ogilvie 1965: 312-3, with a detailed bibliographical note). Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in his much lengthier account of the passage, describes Agrippa as choosing to speak in the manner of the fable, indicating that perhaps his register, his ability to use lower-class/plebeian speech, was a key factor in both his persuasiveness and his accord with the poor – a point which could apply equally well to Livy's version.

<sup>75</sup> "They began to discuss concord and it was allowed in an agreement that the plebeian magistrates would be sacrosanct, through whom the bearing of aid against the consuls would occur, and it would not be permitted for the *patres* to acquire this magistracy."

<sup>76</sup> B.O. Foster mentions this point in his 1919 Loeb. Cf. Cornell 252ff. on plebeian names in early, supposedly patrician-only offices. Ogilvie 1965 suggests that the Menenian gens had always been plebeian (275).

seems odd to mention him as the envoy to the *plebs* if he were plebeian himself. This discrepancy over his status might be evidence for variant readings contaminating each other in the account of his life.

Clearer reasons, historically and thematically, attend the awarding of the final *populus*-funded funeral to Publius Valerius Publicola (II) in 460 BCE.<sup>77</sup> Livy writes Valerius' narrative as one of self-sacrifice for the cohesion of the state: Publius dies retaking the citadel from the Sabine leader Appius Herdonius, who had seized it while leading an army of slaves and exiles. His actions embody the restoration of proper order after an episode of social disruption; the composition of the opposing force threatens an inversion of the social hierarchy. This links thematically to the state of affairs before the attempted coup, since there had been a general undermining of inter-group balance: young patricians had tried to insinuate themselves with the plebeians, and conspirators among the elder patricians were using this infiltration to plan to massacre the *plebs* and abolish the tribunate (3.15.2-3). Livy's portrayal of the mistrust between *plebs* and patricians as deleterious to social cohesion can be seen in the aristocratic reaction to Herdonius' subterfuge :

*consules et armare plebem et inermem pati timebant, incerti quod malum  
repentinum, externum an intestinum, ab odio plebis an ab seruili fraude, urbem  
inuasisset; sedabant tumultus, sedando interdum mouebant; nec enim poterat  
pauida et consternata multitudo regi imperio. Dant tamen arma, non uolgo,  
tantum ut incerto hoste praesidium satis fidum ad omnia esset.*

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<sup>77</sup> The son or grandson of the abovementioned Publicola (Broughton 2, 37). Ogilvie 1965 argues that the influence of Valerius Antias on Livy resulted in "the adulation of the *gens Valeria*" throughout, culminating in a positive depiction of Sulla (14-15); Oakley 1997 corroborates this (91).

The consuls were afraid about arming the *plebs*, or leaving them unarmed, as they were unsure what sudden misfortune, external or internal, whether from the hatred of the *plebs* or slavish deceit, had invaded the city; by trying to settle the disturbance, they increased it; nor was the terrified and confused multitude able to be controlled by *imperium*. At last they distributed arms, not indiscriminately, but only enough that there would be trustworthy enough security for all matters, as the enemy was hard to determine.<sup>78</sup>

Only with delay do the consuls arm the *plebs*, suspecting that the attack is caused by plebeian treachery; the helpless commoners fear a military coup. Only when the true source of the discord is revealed does the aristocracy abandon their suspicions of the slaves, tribunes, and the lower classes.<sup>79</sup>

In Livy's narrative, Valerius (II) transcends the chaos by using his *auctoritas* as consul, along with the family reputation encapsulated in his cognomen, to stitch back together the quarreling parts of the citizen body. At the critical moment he makes an appeal to the *populus* that seeks to obscure the boundaries of social class: *Non quidquid patrum plebisque est, consules, tribunos, deos hominesque omnes armatos opem ferre, in Capitolium currere, liberare ac pacare augustissimam illam domum Iouis optimi maximi decuit?* (3.17.5).<sup>80</sup> His appeal brings together all the component parts of the Roman community, including the gods, connecting them in order to heal the breach in the

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<sup>78</sup> 3.15.7-8.

<sup>79</sup> *Multi et uarii timores; inter ceteros eminebat terror seruilis; tantum superantibus aliis ac mergentibus malis nemo tribunos aut plebem timebat* (3.16.3-4).

<sup>80</sup> "Would it not be fitting to both patricians and *plebs* for consuls and tribunes, gods and all armed men to bear aid and run to the Capitoline, to liberate and bring peace to that most august home of Jupiter Optimus Maximus?"

integrity of the state. He ends the speech by claiming to emulate Romulus (3.17.6) in retaking the citadel from a foreign power, an act which not only reintegrated the space of the city but concluded with a social reconciliation that brought together two disparate groups into the SPQR, and calls the *Quirites* (3.17.7) to arms, reminding the reader of the title shared by both upper and lower orders. The chapter ends with Valerius' argument taking root, as, despite the obstruction of the tribunes, the *patres* allay dissent by reminding the *plebs* of their shared gods and common interests (3.17.10-11). At the climax of the episode, before the assault on the citadel, Valerius promises to the assembled troops that he will solve the preexisting political crisis (brought about by an agrarian law dispute),<sup>81</sup> and invokes the memory of the previous Publicola (I) and the empathy for the *plebs* that the name represented (3.18.6).<sup>82</sup> The narrative emphasizes his heroism in unifying disparate groups, while the social problem behind the crisis, the question of land for the poor, is only mentioned in passing.<sup>83</sup>

His funeral narrative, while clearly patterned on earlier examples, deviates from them in its succinctness. After Valerius' death storming the citadel, he receives no *elogium* as do the two previous recipients; since his funeral is stationed at the end of a lengthy narrative in which he provides the reconciliation that saves the city, Livy probably decided the preceding passages has sufficiently demonstrated his virtues. His funeral merits only a single sentence: *In consulis domum plebes quadrantes ut funere*

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<sup>81</sup> The agrarian dispute would not be resolved for some time thereafter, despite the respect accorded to Valerius' memory.

<sup>82</sup> *memorem se maiorum suorum, memorem cognominis quo populi colendi uelut hereditaria cura sibi a maioribus tradita esset.*

<sup>83</sup> Ogilvie 1965 underlines the thematic resonance of the year's consulate being shared between the "democrat" Valerius and the patrician Claudius as a significant stage in the Struggle of the Orders (423).

*ampliore efferretur iactasse fertur* (3.18.11).<sup>84</sup> It follows the pattern of Valerius Publicola (I) and Menenius Agrippa in that it occurred after his mediation of a class-centered schism in the state, and in that the gratitude of the people provided money; however, no mention is made of any financial need on the consul's part, only that the donated coins provided for a better funeral than had been planned (*funere ampliore*). The *plebs* tosses money of their own volition, without the necessity of doing so. One might, at this point, infer that this practice became a traditional way of showing fondness for a sympathetic aristocrat. But it never happens again in Livy's histories.<sup>85</sup>

Taken as a whole, these three scenes are tied together loosely by lexical and thematic considerations. The passages do not generally imitate each other in vocabulary; Livy is not working from a template, nor did he with funerals elsewhere in the *Histories*.<sup>86</sup> However, the use of the word *sumptus* is common to all three funeral notices: it occurs in the sentence before the summary of Valerius Publicola's (II) funeral, in the context of the price paid (*sumptum supplicium*) by captured enemy soldiers.<sup>87</sup> It remains unclear whether this is coincidence, although it might explain why the term does not occur in the following sentence. The term *sumptus funeri* occurs in the other two passages, which do not otherwise seem to be linked in structure or vocabulary, and may indicate a bit of technical vocabulary; additionally, it may mark an intertextual

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<sup>84</sup> Dionysius does emphasize Publicola's relationship with *concordia* during his life, but makes no mention of a funeral after his death (10.16.7)

<sup>85</sup> A possibility is that Livy had conflated the funeral story of the earlier P. Valerius Maximus with this one (or vice versa) and included the detail in both lives. The closest any later funeral comes to the early model is one in *Periochae* 55 (c. 140 BCE), where a tribune (whose name has been lost) worked *pro commodis populi* and had his funeral escorted by a gathering of the *plebs*.

<sup>86</sup> Pomeroy 1988: 172.

<sup>87</sup> 3.18.10.

relationship between these passages.<sup>88</sup> Specific coins are included in the stories of Agrippa and Valerius (II) as the units donated, a *sextans* for the former and a *quadrans* for the latter. Why the coins differ between the narratives is unclear; it is noteworthy that these are among the smallest denominations available.<sup>89</sup> Regardless of the specific coinage, the image of a multitude each contributing a small coin emphasizes the universality of affection, causing the reader to imagine the number of people necessary to pay for an elite funeral through tiny offerings; while perhaps not historically accurate, the process as described illuminates the power of even poor citizens in large numbers.<sup>90</sup>

If we look to contemporaneous parallels, Livy's account might draw resonance from multiple instances of monetary gifts to the *princeps*. Suetonius relates the contributions citizens made to rebuild Augustus' house after it was destroyed by fire: a variety of organizations offered heaps of coins, as well as "every sort of person" (*e cetero genere hominum libentes*), but Augustus took only a single small coin from every pile.<sup>91</sup> Well-wishing men "of all classes" (*omnes ordines*) were accustomed to throw coins into the Curtian Lake on Augustus' birthday.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, the yearly *strena* (new year's gifts)

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<sup>88</sup> A cursory inquiry into funeral literature has not uncovered any special meaning to *sumptus funeri*; *sumptus* in general refers to cost, outlay, or expenditure.

<sup>89</sup> Both *sextantes* and *quadrantes* were proverbially small coins; Livy applies them anachronistically to a pre-monetary economy (Ogilvie 1965: 320). Coins might have had a symbolic link to funerals and death in general via the practice of placing a coin in the deceased's mouth to pay the ferryman (Toynbee 1971: 49).

<sup>90</sup> One aspect which might merit further study is how these incidences might look forward to famous funerals closer to Livy's time; the *Periochae* describe the burning of Caesar *a plebe* (P 116). A longer and more socially disruptive account is contained in Appian 2.146-8, with the gathered *demos* performing versions of traditional funeral protocols, amid lurid details such as the waving of Caesar's bloody robe, before running riot through the city. Appian is often hostile to the urban *plebs* (cf. 2.113 and 2.120). Yavetz 1969: 53 argues for Caesar's self-representation as *plebicola*.

<sup>91</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 57. Dio does not include a precise date, but his account of this event seems to place it to between 10 BCE-8 CE (55.12.4). Roller 2001: 202 places this event in 4 AD, for reasons of which I am uncertain.

<sup>92</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 57.

were an offering of money to the emperor on the Kalends of January, which Augustus always reciprocated.<sup>93</sup> These incidents may not prove a direct connection, but demonstrate that dedicatory offerings of individual coins were a living cultural practice in Livy's time. His funeral episodes suggest that this act was traditionally a respectable way of expressing devotion to a beloved leader, or at least as a well-known symbolic practice by which the loyalty and appreciation of the "little people" could be articulated.<sup>94</sup>

Funerals likewise provided a medium for meaningful cross-class interaction. The symbolic resonance of the publicly-funded funeral operated in tandem with the social meaning of the funeral at large - generally an opportunity for elites to display and reinforce their status, lineage, and wealth. Elite funerals contained overt efforts to attract and entertain the public; Flower 1996 attests as common components preliminary announcements by heralds, banquets, the public *laudatio*, theatrical performances, games, gladiatorial shows, and the funeral procession/parade, complete with actors and dancing.<sup>95</sup> By drawing substantial crowds, the family of the dead evoked their power and prestige within the aristocracy and their support base in their *clientes* and the *populus*. The popular-funeral motif removes and inverts the normal element of self-promotion, so

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<sup>93</sup> Roller 2001: 200.

<sup>94</sup> Augustus does not provide the only latter-day example of this phenomenon: Dio 48.53.4 records that in 37 BCE Marcus Oppius became impoverished and the masses collected money for him.

<sup>95</sup> Flower 1996: 92-123. For a general view of Roman aristocratic values, see Rosenstein 2010. For how funerals fit into the larger scheme of how Romans understood collective cultural memory, see Hölkeskamp 2010.



that even the impoverished members of the state can show their power and appreciation and, in an alternate fashion, advertise the virtues and reputation of the deceased.<sup>96</sup>

Via this model of reconciling tensions within the state, the moderate, image-conscious patrician could earn the gracious reciprocation of a (temporarily) controlled proletariat through symbolic acts which reinforced social statuses but also publicly acted out affection between different sectors of the state. Through the mediation of such idealized, self-sacrificing figures, Rome could be returned to a harmonious state, with both orders acting as one, from periods of factional turmoil. The perversion of these themes can be seen in the downfall of Manlius Capitolinus, who parlays his status as savior of the state into an ill-fated coup attempt, or the character assassination of the disgraced G. Terentius Varro, seen as a demagogue *sordido ortus*, defender of *sordidis hominibus*, cultivator of a *turba*.<sup>97</sup> In terms of Livy's presentation of *paupertas* as antique virtue, these passages provide examples of Livy's undercurrent of *paupertas* in the early Republican narrative, rarely on the surface, but occasionally working in accompaniment with other virtues, in these cases *concordia*.

The afterlife of "public" funerals (that is, after 460 BCE) in Livy provides a few examples of how popular sentiment and the institution of the funeral interacted, if perhaps in less distinct ways. As mentioned above, Marcus Flavius secured election by distributing meat at a family funeral;<sup>98</sup> Livy includes an unflattering report that he might

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<sup>96</sup> Milnor 2005: 34-5 describes how lower-class opinion could be expressed in public participation in public performance at funerals, such as Caesar's cremation in the Forum. Flower uses the term "advertising" for the cumulative effect of display and reputation management that funerals accomplished.

<sup>97</sup> 22.25, 26, 40.

<sup>98</sup> 8.22. Oakley 1997: II.626-7 notes that only four other *viscerationes* are definitely known for the whole Republic: M. Flavius' story is repeated at Val. Max. 8.1, *abs* 7, Suet. *Iul.* 38.2 (after the victory at Munda),

have been repaying them with a *mercedem* for an acquittal on an adultery charge. The passage does not include any explicit moral judgments (except for the possibly negative connotation of *merces*), but provides evidence for the effectiveness of funerary spectacle in shaping public opinion. In addition to the aforementioned funeral honors paid a tribune by the *plebs* at *Periochae* 55, *Periochae* 116 records the public cremation of Julius Caesar *a plebe* before the Rostra.<sup>99</sup> While Livy's exposition on the life and reign of Caesar does not survive, Caesar's tumultuous career (not to mention the actions of other prominent tribunes during the period of the civil wars) might perhaps supply a fragment of the explanation for why Livy confines his virtuous *publicolae* to the distant, unknowable past.

### **Situating Poverty Outside the Borders of Rome**

As the geographic frame of Livy's narrative moves away from purely Rome and Italy to cover the Mediterranean scope of Rome's growing empire, the figures described by the central descriptors of poverty (*pauper(tas)*, *inops*, *egens*) also undergo a spatial shift. In the first three centuries of the Republic, poverty had been an inconsistent part of Livy's portrait of the Roman people, though generally focused on the city and its nearby environs. Poverty in *Ab Urbe Condita* had been present outside the Roman sphere even in the earliest days, but only in a subsidiary, scattered manner. As the scene changes from Italy to other parts of the Mediterranean, all subsequent poverty episodes take place in the provinces or past the frontiers, where Romans interact with conquered, client, or enemy

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the death of Fabius Rullianus in *Vir. Ill.* 32.4, and in Livy 39.46.2 and 41.28.11. The further Livian examples do not mention the masses.

<sup>99</sup> Flower 1996: 123n134 mentions that Caesar could have requested a publicly funded funeral in his will; he had a history of putting on fine shows (124) and his funeral was a grand public spectacle (125). The cultural memory of this moment, displayed in a more acceptable light, might have provided a basis on which Livy based the funerals of his unarguably virtuous early populists.

peoples. The transference of poverty from the city to outsiders symbolizes the change in the moral character of the Roman state, as Livy attributes to the objects of Rome's imperial policy the original, but now lost, virtue of the Romans. The formerly poor Romans have become the economic aggressors. Changes in the representation of poverty, when considered in conjunction with the moral connotations of poverty, indicate the loss of moral fiber among the Roman elites, if not the entire populace.

Even from the Preface, the theme of the decay of a formerly pristine state dominates the text. Poverty, while certainly not the only measure of this progression, can serve as a useful index. While Livy does not specify a precise "turn" in the character of the Romans in the surviving portions of his text, using poverty as a barometer for moral fiber implies that the transformation begins during the Second Punic War or shortly thereafter.<sup>100</sup> During the war the victims of poverty appear on both sides; afterwards they emerge entirely from those opposing the Romans.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, *paupertas* and its synonyms, when employed in appeals for sympathy by browbeaten client states, receive no respect from Roman leaders and generals in the field. Time and again they disregard claims of impoverishment in order to exploit the resources of nominal allies. This trend can perhaps be summarized as an elite Roman loss of understanding as to the place the poor should have in their society. Instead of they themselves exemplifying poverty's virtues, or recognizing the need for empathy and reconciliation between haves and have-

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<sup>100</sup> This differs somewhat from, for instance, Sallust's moral chronology of the Republic.

<sup>101</sup> Luce 1977: 250-94 claims the decline in the Roman character can be seen across Books 34-45 as they come into contact with rich Greek kingdoms. Luxury is in a sense a byproduct of cultural contact, not an internally developed flaw of the Romans.

nots, they lose their cognizance of the compromises which can ensure social harmony going forward.

Although the diminution of Roman virtue/appreciation for *paupertas* cannot be traced to a single moment in Livy, it is clearly fully developed by the time Livy reaches Cato's life in Book 34. Cato's strength as an exemplar works because he stands apart from his contemporaries as the embodiment of virtues that the other members of the state, or the state itself, no longer manifest. In Livy's coverage of Roman activities after Cato, only the imperialized live in poverty, amidst repeated tallies of massive amounts of treasure flowing into the city. Only select Greeks and Asians retain *paupertas*, although Livy argues not that they are bastions of virtue, but that the Romans no longer retain the benefits of austerity. Livy depicts the foreign poor as powerless, but frequently also as pathetic or barbarous. His overall focus remains mostly on changes in the Roman character, as the contrasting circumstances of foreign foes only demonstrate that Roman society has lost its virtue.

### **Early Materials**

Livy does not depict poverty as an exclusively Roman virtue even in the early portions of his text, although descriptions of destitution outside the city occur only infrequently. In these isolated episodes foreign actors are rarely presented as sympathetic characters, instead being described in the lexicon of poverty for various narrative effects. In the earliest mention of "outside poverty," Sabines receive military aid against Rome in the form of poor Etruscan mercenaries.<sup>102</sup> The mention of their wages (*merces*) highlights their lack of financial independence and might depict them in a negative light. After his

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<sup>102</sup> 1.30.7: *apud vagos quosdam ex inopi plebe etiam merces valuit.*

expulsion, Tarquin bewails his impoverished status (*egentem*) to the Etruscans in order to arouse their sympathies;<sup>103</sup> Samnites stranded outside a captured town return home *spoliati atque egentes*, a laughing-stock to their own people and strangers.<sup>104</sup> Tarquin's fall from his proper social station earns him pity from Lars Porsenna, who empathizes with the misfortunes of a fellow aristocrat, but probably not from the reading audience who have been informed of the indignities Tarquin visited upon Rome.

Most of the instances of early poverty in Livy outside of Rome apply to the Samnites. After the Romans refuse a peace treaty during the Second Samnite War (321 BCE), the Samnite general Pontius states that "if, in dealing with the *potentiore* [the Roman], the *inopi* [Samnite] are left no human rights, I can still take refuge in the gods who will vindicate their intolerable pride."<sup>105</sup> Even in a council of his community members, the Samnite commander still portrays himself as a member of a poorer and weaker people. Shortly after this episode, the Samnites capture and humiliate a Roman army at the Battle of the Caudine Forks (9.4-6). Livy does not mention the wealth disparity between the cultures as a contributing factor in the battle,<sup>106</sup> but does note that the ceaseless belligerence of the Romans proved the critical factor, as it led them into the Samnite trap. After the war swings in Rome's favor, Samnite uprisings in Lucania, led by

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<sup>103</sup> 2.6.2.

<sup>104</sup> 8.26.5. This occurrence interacts with a larger theme in Livy (and perhaps historiography in general) in which *egens* and *inops* occur in non-poverty-related contexts, often of those undergoing privation in siege narratives, as at 21.11.12 and elsewhere. Armies are likewise often described as *egentes*, mostly concerning food, as with Hannibal's troops at 22.9.3, or with money at 22.61.2.

<sup>105</sup> 9.1.8: *Quod si nihil cum potentiore iuris humani relinquitur inopi, at ego ad deos vindices intolerandae superbiae confugiam.*

<sup>106</sup> The Caudine Forks narrative is also noteworthy because Livy does not include a particular scapegoat for the disaster, as he often does for Roman defeats.

*plebeis et egentibus ducibus*, are crushed by the proconsul Q. Fabius.<sup>107</sup> It seems quite likely that the consistent portrayal of the Samnites as an impoverished people serves as a passive factor in explaining the bitterness of the Samnite Wars and Rome's vicissitudes of fortune therein; Livy certainly did not invent the idea that the hardness of a people and their martial valor were proportional to the humility of their origins.<sup>108</sup> These episodes also testify to the presence of the historical Samnites in the late Republican imagination as a people associated with rustic, indigent life, as opposed to the more urbane and civilized historical Romans.<sup>109</sup>

Livy's portrait of the Samnites as an impoverished people displays only modest consistency. While "common" Samnite poverty is frequently on display, their towns yield a surprising amount of wealth to their Roman conquerors. Livy himself explains this in part by mentioning Samnite hoarding of resources in cities because of the war.<sup>110</sup> Livy only fully departs from the general picture of the humble Samnites at one key narrative moment. When confronting the Romans in 308 BCE, the Samnites appear in battle array, decked out in brilliant gold and silver armor.<sup>111</sup> As E.T. Salmon has argued, these outfittings do not conform with the material evidence or our knowledge of the historical

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<sup>107</sup> 10.18.8.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Dench 1995: 126-9 for a discussion of "environmental determinism" in the Greco-Roman portraits of the peoples of the central Apennines.

<sup>109</sup> This viewpoint corresponds in general with Salmon 1967's picture of the ancient Samnites, esp. 48-53, 57, 65-6, 77. Cf. Dench 1995: 5-8 for later critiques of Salmon, including the argument that re-overemphasizes the role of Roman-Samnite conflicts in defining the Samnites.

<sup>110</sup> 9.31.5, 10.17, 10.39.4, 10.45.14 (the explanation). The Samnites were also able to summon enough money to attempt to bribe Dentatus, a detail of the type often credited to early virtuous Roman statesmen (Dench 1995: 101; her n. 56 contains a more detailed ancient bibliography on this matter). Part of the wealth derived from the Samnite Wars came from the sale of Samnite slaves (Salmon 1967: 65).

<sup>111</sup> *Acies sua fulgeret novis armorum insignibus . . . duo exercitus erant; scuta alterius auro, alterius argento caelaverant* (9.40.1-2).

Samnite people: “this entire account can be dismissed at once as fanciful.”<sup>112</sup> Livy perhaps introduces this outlandish detail to provide contrast, introducing the idea of the stern and simple Romans humbling a much wealthier people - and reversing the text’s entire portrait of the Samnite culture. Livy deliberately contorts his own portrait of the Samnites in order to build a narrative of poor Romans defeating their opulent enemies, when in reality the Romans enjoyed an equal, if not superior, economy.

### **The Turn**

The Second Punic War provides the fulcrum upon which the theme of poverty tilts in Livy’s text. It functions as the last time that the Roman people display *paupertas* or its relevant synonyms in any significant way.<sup>113</sup> At 25.1.8, *egestas* drives the country people into Rome as refugees, where they fall victim to magicians, charlatans, and fortune-tellers. This is perhaps the first clear scenario where the urban poor are contrasted with the rural poor, who have remained on their farms. As mentioned in the Introduction, the urban poor, since they do not fulfill the useful social role which the rural poor do, are characterized as foolish and socially disruptive. Their capacity for panic and superstition, as described in this episode, correlates closely with the personality of the mob as seen in,

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<sup>112</sup> Salmon 1967: 102. Salmon visits this episode at 64-5 and 102-5, the latter arguing how Livy’s description of Samnite arms comes from contemporary gladiatorial gear rather than historical fact. Dench 1995 reads this passage as part of a complex portrait by Livy, based on Greco-Roman ideologies, of Italian barbarism (45), and also indicates that Livy’s account of their shining armor may have some basis in historical evidence, given artistic representations of resplendent Samnite battle dress (100).

<sup>113</sup> Never past the first decad are any specific Romans beyond Cato ever described as *pauper*. In the few times Livy includes the term in a Roman context later on, he uses it to describe one element in a pair of simplified categories inside Roman society, that is, *dives et pauper* (26.2, 34.54): the first instance details Gnaeus Fulvius’ reacceptance into society as an example of the difference in legal treatment between *diti ac pauperi*, the second occurs in the context of Livy criticizing Scipio Africanus’ attempt to separate seating at the theater by order and/or rank (Livy uses both *populo/senatus* and *dives/pauper* to contrast the two groups, blurring any distinction). The criticism of social stratification being visually reinforced by theater seating should be read against Augustus’ successful attempt to classify society in this way in Livy’s lifetime (Zanker 1988: 151). Cf. Richlin 2014c: 217n52 for a reading of this text in terms of reconstructing Plautus’ audience and Scipio’s character.

for example, Tacitus, although they are rural folk and the mob is most often urban. When these citizens resist the involuntary *paupertas* forced upon them by the war, it might hint at the progressing moral corruption of Roman society, as the common folk no longer can tolerate an inherently virtuous poverty. This incident might also mirror the historical processes of Livy's own time, in which the presence of landless poor in the city, wanting food and opportunity, affected political matters. Later, mutinous soldiers revolt in Spain over the difficulties of living restrainedly (*artiores*) in peace,<sup>114</sup> displeased with the prospect of returning from a life of plunder to one of (presumably) agriculture.

*Paupertas*, even from a class which should be accustomed to it, fails in the face of luxury. This process will only continue with the consistent rapacity of Roman soldiers in Greece and Asia later on.

Despite these examples, the Roman populace does not provide the main referents of poverty in the war narrative. Instead the allied peoples feel the pinch most often. Poverty among the allies provides a key component of two different trends that arise in Livy's war narrative. First, the presence of revolutionaries from the lower classes in allied cities energizes their treachery against the Romans; allied *plebs* (as opposed nearly always to allied *patres*) consistently serve as the revolutionary/traitorous parties in the war narrative.<sup>115</sup> Second, the destitution of the allies as the war progresses leads to

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<sup>114</sup> 28.24. Scipio criticizes the leaders of the revolt as men "who had never [even] had a slave to whom they might give orders" (28.27.14), situating them as members of the economic underclass and making clear associations about social position and the capacity for virtuous leadership (despite Scipio's capture of the rebel commanders by deceit).

<sup>115</sup> Badian 1958: "It is difficult to make out whether Livy's accounts of class divisions in Italy during the War (with the upper classes favouring Rome and the lower classes Hannibal) truthfully represents a state of affairs due to political affinity and collaboration or is a second-century myth, invented to uphold oligarchy in Italy: on the whole, the latter seems more likely" (147). Badian argues that, because of this general point, the examples which contradict it are more likely to be historical, and that this era sees a comparatively



tension in their relationships with Rome, as Livy suggests that the Romans overreached reasonable bounds in vigorously exacting tribute of various kinds from their allies.

When allies contemplate breaking away from allegiance to the Romans and joining forces with Hannibal, the allied *plebs* are always to blame. Livy frequently describes the composition of other states in the terminology of Rome's division, *plebs* and *patres*. As civil discord erupts, the underclass pushes for the breaking of political and social bonds, and for revolutionary, often violent, change in the state of affairs. For example, the *infimae plebis homines*, along with Roman deserters, plot to install permanent Carthaginian rule in Syracuse;<sup>116</sup> the *licentia plebis*, along with *popularis* leadership, aids in overthrowing the previous regime in Capua, a process Livy describes as overflowing with lust, prodigality, and unrestrained liberty.<sup>117</sup> When they rebel and deliberate on a new government, the Capuans turn on and taunt each other with shameful conduct and "low rank and sordid poverty and disreputable sorts of employment" (*humilitatem sordidamque inopiam et pudendae artis aut quaestus genus obicerent*).<sup>118</sup> These men, described as poor, deride each other for being so; the disparagement of others based on social status is not limited to aristocrats alone. This scene shows how Livy imagined hypothetical rule by the lower classes: they show no fidelity, breaking their treaty with the Romans for the sake of material gain. Rule by the lowly is fractious, shallow, and susceptible to being misled by charismatic rulers, as happens to the Capuans

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equal relationship between Romans and allies shift to something more analogous to patrons and clients (147-8).

<sup>116</sup> 24.23.10. 24.31 also comments on the fickle nature of the Roman-hating mob (*volgus, multitudinis*).

<sup>117</sup> 23.4.5.

<sup>118</sup> 23.3.11. Note the adjective *sordidus* and the focus on one's employment as a feature of impoverishment.

under Pacuvius Calavius, a *popularis* who had gained prominence for his *malis artibus*.<sup>119</sup> Their poverty is not noble, or even miserable, but the basis for squabbling and dissent.<sup>120</sup> Livy conceivably intended this passage to provide a warning about possible repercussions of similar events at Rome.

Hannibal's devastation of Roman allies and Latin colonies places them likewise in opposition to the aims of the Roman state. At 27.9.6 the Latin allies complain of exhaustion, arguing that that events are leading *ad ultimam solitudinem atque egestatem* for them, and wishing for peace. Soon thereafter, twelve of the thirty colonies decline to send men and money to Rome, claiming total exhaustion.<sup>121</sup> The consuls show no sympathy to the impoverished state of the allies, interpreting this message as revolt (*defectionem*).<sup>122</sup> Livy gives the impression that Rome would probably have intervened militarily to force their acquiescence if not for its own desperate straits; the consuls decline to take action, instead deciding henceforth to ignore, but not punish, allied legates.<sup>123</sup> The narratives of both episodes include arguments within the councils of the overwhelmed city-states, where they conclude that prolonged alliance with the Romans might be more damaging than neutrality or alliance with Hannibal (a moment perhaps

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<sup>119</sup> 23.2.2.

<sup>120</sup> This raises the question of whether poverty is inherently more or less honorable when inflicted by others. Rome's early poverty seems to exist in a void, detached from foreign affairs. Livy presents the impoverished allies, and of later poor enemies of Rome, as variously honorable and disgraceful. I would argue that Livy does not offer a coherent theory about causes of poverty in this regard.

<sup>121</sup> 27.9.7.

<sup>122</sup> It might be tempting to read this revolt, or later examples of resistance to Roman rule, as a Livian reaction to the Pannonian-Illyrian revolt of 6-9 CE, caused also by the exaction of exorbitant tribute (Zanker 1988: 237). However, the dates do not match up unless Livy rewrote passages to reflect later events, a conclusion I am not suggesting.

<sup>123</sup> 27.10.10. If Livy's account has any truth, his version of the scene probably covers over a Roman inability to subdue its intransigent colonies at the time.

foreshadowing Roman imperialism and its discontents). Locrian allies later complain of their ill-treatment at the hands of avaricious Roman soldiers, claiming they suffered more severe depredations at the hands of the Roman garrison than of the preceding Carthaginian one.<sup>124</sup> The moral failings of the state and of the army, whether from ruthlessness, insensitivity, or greed, come to visit poverty onto its nominal allies.

We can see the psychological template of the allies during the Second Punic War as a prototype for the sufferings of the imperialized later on in Livy, during the early second century BCE. Poverty, paralleling the change in Livy's narrative frame, moves from Italy to other regions of the Mediterranean, and afflicts groups under the Roman aegis rather than the Romans themselves. As with the allies, the aim of this narrative strategy is not to engage in sympathy for the destitute, or in complex characterization of non-Romans, but to illuminate changes in the Roman character. Their penury is intended to reflect the mutating state of Rome's moral climate, as revealed in excessive exactions, brutal *Realpolitik*, and the plunder inflicted upon supposed allies. The victimized allies function as harbingers of a watershed change in Roman mores, as the original virtues of the state are no longer embodied in noble Romans.<sup>125</sup> That is, with one exception.

### **Cato the Censor**

Cato appears in Livy's history as a man transported forward from a pristine age. The concepts Cato represents – *gravitas* and *parsimonia*, among others - are increasingly absent from Livy's Rome in the second century BCE. He reminds the reader that the

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<sup>124</sup> 27.19.4-8. They presented themselves to the consuls *obsiti squalore et sordibus*, wearing clothing associated with poverty and mourning. On the use of mourning dress as a political tactic in the Roman Republic, see Edmondson 2009: 31.

<sup>125</sup> Livy's Scipio Africanus definitely displays heroic qualities, constantly compared against a series of transgressions – his tendency toward luxury, populism, and his rivalry with the conservative Cato. Cf. his portrayal in Sallust and elsewhere.

Roman character has changed, and functions as an exemplar of the virtues of the archaic age, virtues endangered in his contemporary times (and which, perhaps, Livy thought deserved champions in his own time).<sup>126</sup> Cato's stature within the text increases because of the contrast he provides with his historical background.<sup>127</sup> This does not mean that the legend of Cato originated with Livy; his harsh and thrifty persona was cultivated by the man himself, and persists through his appearances in Latin literature; and Livy utilizes this image as part of a narrative strategy.<sup>128</sup> Cato's harsh *parsimonia* dominates this image, which also includes the trappings of *paupertas* and the idea that Cato replicated the humble lifestyle of the ancestors. The historical process that leads to the dissolution of the Roman character forces the essential traits of the early, virtuous Romans into other vessels; Cato embodies the absent spirit of bygone times.

Livy interrupts his chapter on the particulars of the censorial election of 184 BCE to deliver a lengthy exposition on the career and virtues of Cato, who had already appeared in the text in Book 34. The description, while worshipful in tone, does not align Cato with any single categorical virtue; rather, *huic uersatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natum ad id unum diceres, quodcumque ageret*.<sup>129</sup> He represents all virtues

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<sup>126</sup> He was not alone in this regard: cf. the contrast between the spread of luxury gardens and villas with the *Romuli/praescriptum et intonsi Catonis/auspiciis veterumque norma* at Horace *Odes* 2.15.

<sup>127</sup> I have posited the Second Punic War as the turning point in the Roman character, at least in terms of the place of poverty in the narrative. Livy never explicitly says the Struggle of the Orders ends (Mitchell 1990: 228). Ogilvie 1965 sees "Livy's annalistic source" choosing 187 BCE as the turning-point (29), which coincides with Livy's account of Rome first receiving Greek luxuries that year (39.6.7); if so, that positions Cato nicely in proximity to the change in the Roman character. Chaplin points out that the foreign luxuries Cato castigates in his speech on the Lex Oppia (195 BCE) had not yet arrived in Rome per Livy's narrative (98).

<sup>128</sup> Astin 1978 *passim*. Plutarch's *Cato Maior* describes Cato as pointed down the path of frugality early in life by the example of Manius Curius (2.1-2).

<sup>129</sup> "His versatile talent applied equally to all things, so that you would say he had been born to do whatever he was currently doing" (39.40.5). Livy includes comparable character sketches for M. Valerius Corvus

personified. *Paupertas* is not specifically mentioned, but, after an account of his military and oratorical prowess, Livy includes one sentence on his *parsimonia*, emphasizing not financial thriftiness, or a Spartan lifestyle, but fortitude of body and mind: *in parsimonia, in patientia laboris periculique ferrei prope corporis animique, quem ne senectus quidem, quae solvit omnia, fregerit.*<sup>130</sup> Moore’s analysis of *parsimonia* in Livy as “one of the virtues which distinguishes the early Romans from their corrupt descendants” is especially applicable here.<sup>131</sup> When it comes to the moral rectification of the state, Cato’s expressed aim as censor is not the pursuit of a specific quality or qualities, but “to chastise new vices and revive the ancient character.”<sup>132</sup> The necessity of revivifying ancient mores speaks to their disappearance (a sentiment which might have been useful to exhibit in the Augustan age).

He wins the election to the censorship against the opposition of the nobility, which raises the question of why Cato would receive political support from the rest of the body politic (*homines*).<sup>133</sup> Why would the citizenry feel any affinity for Cato? He had never been any sort of populist. It cannot be entirely because his stingy persona would result in an antagonistic stance toward the nobility, considering that he did advertise a

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(7.33), L. Papirius Cursor (9.16), Hannibal (21.4), and P. Licinius Crassus (30.1). Walsh 104 claims that Livy imitates stylistic features of Sallust in these descriptions. Cf. Briscoe 351.

<sup>130</sup> “He had in parsimony and endurance of effort and danger a nearly iron will and constitution, which not even old age (which weakens everything) broke” (39.40.11). Cato likewise exhibits *parsimonia* at the head of his army in Spain at 34.18.5.

<sup>131</sup> Moore 1989: 133.

<sup>132</sup> *Castigare . . . nova flagitia et priscos revocare mores* (34.41.4).

<sup>133</sup> 39.41.1. Livy claims his anti-aristocratic stance never wavered through Cato’s entire life (*omni vita*), not explicitly presenting his rationale, but implying that Cato’s contempt for opulence did not sit well with other members of the Senate.

“free and courageous” (*liberam et fortem*) censorship.<sup>134</sup> His command in Spain had included a willingness to mix with the common soldiers and to share their exertions.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps his adoption of *parsimonia*, combined with the fame and reputation derived from his military successes, helped to win the affection of the plebeians.

While the circumstances of Cato’s censorial election present no clear picture of his relationship to *paupertas*, the debate over repeal of the Oppian Law (195 BCE) presents him as its clear exponent. This law, originally passed in 215 BCE during the Second Punic War, was a wartime sumptuary measure restricting the ability of women to own gold, wear ornate clothing, or to ride in carriages. In this exchange, more than at any other point, Livy emphasizes how the downward trajectory of *paupertas* has undermined Roman *mores*. Cato, then consul, implicitly contrasts his own moral virtues with those of the women of his time, stating that for them “the worst shame comes from stinginess or poverty” (*pessimus quidem pudor est vel parsimoniae vel paupertatis*).<sup>136</sup> *Paupertas* stands as a touchstone of the decline of Roman moral qualities in a larger sense, as Cato’s hypothetical women feel humiliation at experiencing a formerly laudable status; the perversion of *paupertas*’ proper place in the Roman mindset makes it the cause of a reprehensible *pudor*. Cato’s wealthy women are invested in flaunting class divisions and the wealth gap, displaying themselves at the top of the social heap: they wish the *paupertas aliarum* to be on display, the better to make visible the status inequality

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<sup>134</sup> 39.41.3.

<sup>135</sup> 34.18.5.

<sup>136</sup> 34.4.13. Ogilvie 1965 connects the *avaritia/luxuria* vs. *parsimonia/paupertas* split at 34.4.2-13 with the end of the Preface (29), although he wrongly dismisses the terms as “conventional rhetoric”; Livy again uses the two latter adjectives in combination, linking Cato here to the primary virtues at the very start of the work.

between themselves and their poorer counterparts.<sup>137</sup> The impoverished women are no different in their awareness of class-consciousness, striving to conceal their common poverty through even ruinous expenditure.<sup>138</sup> Operating in the background of this whole scene is the image of Cato, stalwart and constant, representing the values whose lack he derides in his contemporary world. Even the opposition admits morality's historical decline:<sup>139</sup> the speech in favor of the repeal by Lucius Valerius praises Roman women for their wartime sacrifices, but proclaims unmistakably that times have changed and that finery and overt displays of wealth now constitute part of the culture.<sup>140</sup>

Livy's account of Cato's censorship (184 BCE) paints him as a representation of antique morality attempting to remake the state in his own image.<sup>141</sup> He was partnered with Lucius Valerius Flaccus,<sup>142</sup> described by Cato as the only man who could accompany him in the chastisement of new vices and the rejuvenation of antique morality.<sup>143</sup> Against bitter opposition they removed seven members from the Senate and an untold number from the *equites*, including a Scipio, with Cato giving denunciatory

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<sup>137</sup> 34.4.14.

<sup>138</sup> 34.4.15. Poor women will ruin themselves by spending beyond their means "lest they be despised for their poverty" (*pauperes, ne ob hoc ipsum contemnantur, supra vires se extendant*). A similar rhetorical *topos* appears in Juvenal 6. Cf. the assertion (by a lower-class woman) that aristocratic women similarly oppress lower-class women at Plautus, *Cistellaria* 21-37.

<sup>139</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 2008 sees this entire passage as Livy projecting backwards onto the 190s the anticipation of issues, centered around the rise of historical luxury, that will come later (334).

<sup>140</sup> 34.7.

<sup>141</sup> Astin 1978: 98n82 and Appendix 6 detail the wealth of scholarship concerning this issue, especially whether the censorship represented a misguided effort to "turn back the clock."

<sup>142</sup> A different Lucius Valerius from the tribune above. Livy includes plural verbs for some of the censorial actions, and attributes road and dike construction to Flaccus (39.44.6), but keeps Cato the main object of attention.

<sup>143</sup> 39.41.4. Briscoe 2008 notes that the tone of the passage is reminiscent of Pref. 9-10 and the *Res Gestae*.

orations.<sup>144</sup> Livy does not give reasons for the expulsions in the majority of cases, save that of the consular L. Quinctius Flaminius for egregious moral turpitude.<sup>145</sup> The greatest spirit of *parsimonia* comes in the form of property appraisals. Elements of luxury – jewelry (echoing Cato’s failure to restrict its display during the Oppian Law controversy), women’s clothes and carriages, and young slaves – were all over-assessed and subject to special taxes.<sup>146</sup> Livy describes the censorship as harsh toward all orders (*aspera in omnes ordines*),<sup>147</sup> but the assessments he lists would only hinder the upper classes; the numerous infrastructure improvements and the founding of colonies as seen in 39.44.4-10 benefited the entire populace. Restrictions on luxury could only harm the classes that could afford it. Cato’s infliction of *parsimonia* aimed to make unwilling Catos out of the Roman aristocracy.

Cato’s censorial policies attempted to impose *paupertas et parsimonia*, but the details of his own life as told by Livy present a murkier picture.<sup>148</sup> His unquestionable status as an exemplar of antique moral virtues in Livy does not coincide with the presence of details about the austerity of his personal life, examples of which appear in

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<sup>144</sup> 39.42.5, 39.44.1. Note that the passage on the relegation of various figures comes immediately after an account of the pounds of gold and silver taken from defeated standards – a juxtaposed historical push-pull of a cause of luxury and the reaction to luxury.

<sup>145</sup> 39.42.

<sup>146</sup> 39.44.

<sup>147</sup> 39.44.1. This might call into question the earlier assertion that Cato enjoyed the support of the lower classes, unless the *ordines* are interpreted, in the Ciceronian vein, as “senators and equestrians.” Livy says Cato’s support of the Cincian Law (34.4.9) aimed to free the commons of financial obligations to the aristocracy.

<sup>148</sup> This aspect of Cato might invite comparison with Augustus and his efforts to recreate facets of antique morality in terms of his own persona, his family, and aristocratic society.



Plutarch's *Life*<sup>149</sup> and in Cato's own writings.<sup>150</sup> According to Livy, his administration in Sardinia quashed usurers and cut down on the expenses of the office, but these measures aimed to preserve the finances of the state, not Cato himself or the poor.<sup>151</sup> *Periochae* 48 provides the closest and most direct link to poverty, as it claims that Cato spent very little on his son's funeral because he was poor (*nam pauper erat*). Astin says the text is "an obvious and ludicrous gloss" (3); Flower claims "Livy's explanation in terms of Cato's poverty should not be taken at face value" (121n134).<sup>152</sup> I would agree, although the descriptive *pauper* could easily refer to voluntary poverty as part of Cato's ostentatious austerity. If poverty, whether affected or real, formed a large portion of the historical Cato's character, Livy squanders opportunities to describe it.<sup>153</sup> The presentation of Cato writ large aligns with the pattern employed by Livy in the first decad, soft-pedaling the distinction between wellborn and common *paupertas* in his portrait of the early Roman state. Livy's account tells the reader that Catonian *parsimonia* set a good example, without giving a clear impression of what actual *parsimonia* should look like. While his connection to *paupertas* blurs around the edges when broken into component parts, the

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<sup>149</sup> Plutarch emphasizes the obscurity of his origins and describes a time 'when he was still poor' (1.1, 21.3) and the cost of the items he bought in life (4.4ff.). Astin 1978 says the description of his origins is "contrived and unreliable, and in any event poverty itself is a relative term" (3); he argues that Cato and the historical tradition retrojected his famously stingy character onto his origin story.

<sup>150</sup> Cato ORF Fr. 128 states he spent his youth *in parsimonia atque in duritia atque in industria*, but this "proves neither poverty nor humble status" (Astin 1978: 3). Cato served in the cavalry and might have been an equestrian; he grew up on an inherited estate next to the villa of M. Curius Dentatus. Cato's early self-claimed *duritia* functions symbolically, and in any case, his assertion, coming from a *novus homo*, would have been accepted or at least understood by his peers: his poverty was comparative, not absolute.

<sup>151</sup> 32.27.3-4. Cf. Astin 1978: 21.

<sup>152</sup> It should not be forgotten that the *Periochae* were authored by a later epitomator.

<sup>153</sup> The critique of Scipio's luxury in 29.8-9, 16-22 in Livy has no Cato, while Plutarch's version of the scene does (13-4). Livy includes no origin story or home life for Cato.

overall meaning is clear. Cato's contrast with his surroundings stems from the degeneration of the Roman character, as he represents former aspects of Rome that have disintegrated as a result of luxury, inescapable laws of historical decline, and empire.

### **Poverty on the Periphery (Or: The Outsourcing of Roman *Paupertas*)**

Poverty as a narrative tool in Livy migrates to the periphery as a result of the growth of Rome's control over the Mediterranean in the early second century BCE. It ultimately serves several functions in the last extant books, all providing comparison between two phases in the development of the Roman character. Never again are Romans described as experiencing *inopia* or *paupertas*; these descriptors apply solely to outsiders interacting with the Roman state.<sup>154</sup> Lexical examples of poverty occur not only in Livy's descriptions of other peoples, but also as elements in the rhetoric of enemy or client states attempting to defend themselves from being exploited or subjected to extortion by Roman power. In place of displaying poverty, soldiers, generals, and administrators attack those who lay claim to it. Luxury and avarice are presented as the reasons which underlie Roman foreign policy, with the narrative foil of *paupertas* emerging among the enemy.<sup>155</sup> In these cases poverty functions as a touchstone of the city's moral status. The colonized Greeks and Asians, self-described and otherwise contextualized as poor, function as symbols intended to remind Rome of its earlier self and what had been lost in the acquisition of empire.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Livy does explain that the government approved of foreign wars to distract from social tensions between *plebs* and the aristocracy, but never uses the vocabulary of poverty in these episodes. Cf. Konstan 213.

<sup>155</sup> Luce suggests that moral decline caused by luxury forms a dominant theme from Book 34 on, especially in Books 38 and 39 (Luce 1977: 263).

<sup>156</sup> Konstan 1986 asserts that Roman foreign policy in this period relies upon displacing social struggles on the home front: "In later books of Livy there is a tendency to interpret foreign wars as a means of resolving or displacing internal tensions either between rich and poor or within the nobility, wars which in turn make

As during the Second Punic War, allied states in this later era claim their progressive impoverishment has been caused by their assistance to the Roman state.<sup>157</sup> The Romans, as before, show no pity towards outside *paupertas*; they treat envoys from poverty-stricken cities unsympathetically. At 44.14 (169 BCE) the Rhodians argue *superbe* that Rome forced them into war with Macedon (breaking a preexisting treaty of friendship between Macedon and Rhodes), and that war expenditures have reduced their home to an *inopem insulam*.<sup>158</sup> The Romans respond negatively to Rhodian attempts to negotiate either a lesser contribution from themselves or an end to the Macedonian conflict: the Senate accuses the ambassadors of treason and strips Rhodes of its mainland possessions.<sup>159</sup> Later on in the narrative, Rhodian envoys appear in Rome in mourning clothes (*veste sordida*) and beg forgiveness.<sup>160</sup> Why are the envoys, and the claims of poverty, met with so little sympathy?<sup>161</sup> Livy does not indicate, as he does in other situations, that the allies overstated or falsified their allegations. Instead, their political actions override any other considerations, as their transgression of their bonds with their

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available new sources of wealth and power and thus rekindle civic dissension” (213). Konstan’s point is generally correct, although the language on the domestic front is in terms of *plebs*, not paupers.

<sup>157</sup> As in the Second Punic War narrative, the condition of allied cities contains encompasses not only poverty as a theme, but aspects of servitude, as they cannot leave their coalition with Rome.

<sup>158</sup> 44.14.10.

<sup>159</sup> 44.15.1. This retains features of the Roman responses to such claims by allies in the Second Punic War, which were universally unsympathetic, if not punitive. One implication is that *inopia*, or other mitigating factors, cannot excuse prior obligations of *amicitia*.

<sup>160</sup> 45.20.10. *Sordidus* typically refers to mourning garb, but also has symbolic connections to the clothing of the poor, as seen in Tacitus’ *sordida plebs*. Despite an apparent social stigma against men showing grief in Roman society, men conventionally made a display of mourning when they wanted to enlist public sympathy for their own plight (Richlin 2014c: 272).

<sup>161</sup> Luce 1977 calls Livy’s failures to appreciate non-Romans disappointing, callous and indifferent, with some truth: “When allies, friends, or neutrals are mistreated, their visible suffering is not as important as the invisible hurt to the moral character of the Romans” (286).

imperial benefactor in negotiating with Macedon becomes the only issue at stake.

Exhaustion, true or false, caused by destitution or not, does not excuse their departure from the Roman entente. Livy drops the poverty angle in favor of depicting the Rhodians as traitors.

Groups arguing for their poverty do not arise only within the Roman camp, but from ones on the edges – principalities forced into diplomatic contact and compulsory tribute. Dealing with pressure verging on blackmail, they complain that the Roman presence threatens them with impoverishment. Moagetes, tyrant of Cibyra, a non-allied city in Asia Minor, responds to Roman pressure to contribute war funds (c. 190 BCE) by dressing as a moderately wealthy man (*modice locupletis*) and lamenting the poverty of his cities (*urbiumque suae dicionis egestatem querentis*).<sup>162</sup> He presents a golden crown to the Romans and offers to pay them 25 talents, to which the consul replies that he must contribute 500 talents to avoid the devastation of his lands and city; Moagetes persists in his “tenacious simulation of poverty” (*pertinaci simulatione inopiae*) and negotiates the price down to 100 talents.<sup>163</sup> Yet, despite Moagetes’ resistance to Roman extortion, Livy repeatedly judges him negatively, as “a faithless man, troublesome in every way” (*homine ad omnia infido atque importuno*), of “groveling and effeminate speech” (*oratio fuit summissa et infracta*), and one who haggles with false tears (*simulatis lacrimis*).<sup>164</sup> Several factors are at play in understanding why Moagetes, acting in his city’s best interests, can be so vilified by Livy while “performing poverty.” The first is the act of

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<sup>162</sup> 38.14.9.

<sup>163</sup> 38.14.10-14.

<sup>164</sup> 38.14.3, 9, 14.

performance itself: not an honorable one in the elite Roman imagination, especially not for someone atop a social hierarchy. A nexus of negative associations are signaled in the passage, such as the costume, Moagetes' Eastern origins, and the effeminate nature of his speech. Added to this is the fact of Moagetes' falsity; although Livy does not expound on the actual financial status of Cibyra, the king changes his customary dress in order to make his appeal.<sup>165</sup> The ultimate effect is to present neither side in this unequal negotiation as particularly virtuous. Situated within a longer narrative of the Romans extracting plunder from subjugated states,<sup>166</sup> the greedy legates are countered by cowed Eastern potentates. Neither side deserves praise for their approach – Moagetes might if he could plead poverty honestly.

Livy uses the idea of antique poverty in his characterization of Perseus of Macedon, who struggles with understanding the state of Roman poverty during his war with Rome (171-168 BCE). Perseus does not comprehend the economic state of the world he inhabits. When, in an address to his soldiers, he envisions the status of the Roman army, he conceives of its regular soldier as the *pauper miles*, as opposed to his own lavishly equipped troops.<sup>167</sup> This detail demonstrates Perseus' lack of comprehension as to his military and political situation, as he misapprehends the state of the world (at least, as Livy has built it); the *pauper miles* had built the Roman army, but in following eras Roman soldiers had become accustomed to plunder and avarice. He

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<sup>165</sup> This replicates practices attested for Roman oratory, in that defendants and others could appear in mourning clothes, change their appearance, and display various aspects of personal appearances that indicated distress. It is unclear why Moagetes' employment of Roman oratorical tropes earn him such scorn from Livy; the historian perhaps reveals his bias against both sides in the affair.

<sup>166</sup> For example, Gnaeus Manlius extorts money and grain from a variety of Asian cities from 38.12-15; this procedure occurs repeatedly during the Roman interventions in the East.

<sup>167</sup> 42.52.11.

imagines the Roman army as it was at the start of the Republic, not in its contemporaneous form.<sup>168</sup> Little wonder, then, that he loses the war. If anything, the *pauperes* in his situation are Greece and Asia themselves, compared to an increasingly opulent Rome. This state of affairs later comes back to haunt Perseus, as he initially fails to recruit the Illyrian Labeates as an ally simply because Macedon did not want to fund an ally who was *barbarus inops*.<sup>169</sup> As fellow members of the “impoverished” part of the world, in Livy’s appraisal, they should presumably have made natural allies.

Perseus later draws motivation from the possible shame that would result from living in poverty. The coming of the Roman juggernaut presents the Macedonian king with only two options: poverty or defeat. Before entering battle with the Romans, his advisors ask whether, with defeat looming, he wants to flee into exile on an island where “he might grow old amid scorn and poverty” (*in contemptu atque inopia consenescat*), or fight the battle bravely and win.<sup>170</sup> Perseus chooses to fight, as the alternative would be *turpius*. His response to this imagined poverty harks back to an earlier confrontation between Perseus and his brother Demetrius, a tragic figure who describes himself as *circumventum solum inopem* (40.12) when outmaneuvered by his conniving brother in an argument over their father’s affections. If Perseus had subscribed to Roman conceptions of virtuous poverty, shame should not have been associated with it. As with Moagetes

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<sup>168</sup> This may be connected to Wallace-Hadrill 2008’s observation, using Livy Book 40 as evidence, that Rome was thought to be an object of mockery in the Macedonian court during this era because of its undeveloped private and public spaces, using evidence, thanks to the appearance of the city itself, still undeveloped in its public and private spaces (269).

<sup>169</sup> 43.20. Perseus later caves in at 44.23 and spends enough to coax the tribe into war. This episode is adapted from Polybius 28.8-9, where the Illyrian king Gentheus functions as the recipient; Perseus eventually pays him in 29.2.3. Polybius does critique Perseus for being stingy in advancing money to possible allies (28.9.4-8).

<sup>170</sup> 42.50.8.

above, these hellenized princes all are presented in ways which combine their poverty with shame: Moagetes is shameful because of his false haggling, Perseus for his possible cowardice, Demetrius for his political defeat.<sup>171</sup> Livy presents a difference between archaic Roman and Eastern ideas of poverty: only Greeks, Asians, and bad Romans (such as Cato's women in the Oppian Law debate) feel shame at being poor. Romans adhering to the *mos maiorum*, and barbarian groups without luxury, accept an impoverished status out of moral superiority and necessity, respectively.

In the expanded frame of post-Hannibalic Livy, the barbarian peoples become the new poor.<sup>172</sup> Before this point, Gauls and uncivilized groups never display poverty markers; afterwards, lack of wealth serves as a major descriptive marker of the tribes and cities living in Rome's new sphere of influence. Instances of poverty in later Livy often come from his ethnographic description of peoples outside Roman lands, frequently involving variations of *inops*. This coincides with descriptions of these tribes as formidable opponents, reminding a Roman audience of the contrast between the effects of *luxuria* and *paupertas* on a population. Livy describes the Asian Gauls as poor in land

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<sup>171</sup> The concordance of Greek/Asian fears about *paupertas/inopia* and xenophobia in Livy (they feign poverty, or fear it, when no idealized Roman would have done so) may be fruitful for further study.

<sup>172</sup> Even when presented with situations analogous to episodes from their own history, Livy's expansionist Romans have no respect for those who resolve class tensions. Nabis, defeated tyrant of Sparta, defends his regime himself against Roman accusations of tyranny (195 BCE) by claiming "I establish [my] needy *plebs* upon the soil" (*in agros inopem plebem deduco*) and that he "brought a land distribution to to the destitute" (*egentibus divisum agrum attinet*) (34.31). These accusations do not factor into the Roman deliberations on the war with Nabis at 33.45 or 34.22. While he does not explicitly say so, Nabis' policies mimic land distributions which occurred on numerous occasions throughout Roman history. This charge occurs in tandem with the accusation of freeing slaves, which could parallel Rome's abolition of *nexum*. The Roman response states that these distributions were in fact serious crimes (*egentibus hominibus agri divisi crimina . . . nec ipsa mediocria*), indicating that these actions offend the Roman interlocutor (34.32.9). In the Roman mindset, Nabis sins by assisting the poor, demonstrating the distance between the internal mechanisms of imperialist-age Romans and their ancestors. The Romans, instead of according him respect for his care for the *egens* component of his own state, treat his land distributions as a mark against him. Their insistence on gain and subservience clouds their vision of the virtues of their own past. Badian 1958 comments on this exchange that Nabis refers to a *vetustissimum foedus* he had with the Romans, which they not deny, making their position a shaky one (58).

(*inopia agri*) before embarking on a catalogue of their conquests, noting that they later became soft in opulence; the tough Ligurians live in an *inops regio* and are persistent in war because of their *domesticam inopiam*.<sup>173</sup> *Inopia* drives European Gauls and the Labeates (as above) into or out of conflict with the Romans, and the Histrians fight a brutal conflict despite being *gente inopi*.<sup>174</sup> The formulation that poor peoples inherently produce good soldiers casts a shadow on the wealth flowing into Rome from her myriad military campaigns.<sup>175</sup> Beyond the ethnographic information included in these passages lies a historical judgment about the decline of the Romans themselves. As money and sophistication flow into Rome, so by association poverty, and the virtues associated with austerity, are abandoned.

The effect of empire upon Rome's forces, and Rome itself, lurks in the background to these descriptions. Poverty as an indicator of martial and moral virtue, now situated outside of Rome's borders, emphasizes the threats imperialism poses to Rome going forward. The Roman desire for plunder in the East, their abandonment of their adherence to poverty and its attendant virtues, and the subsequent damage they inflict upon their subdued neighbors, indicates their decline from ancient morality.

Livy's portrayal of the "poor" Greeks and Asians includes more variation than the moral chiaroscuro of earlier Roman figures, as outside peoples can be victims of natural

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<sup>173</sup> 38.16-17, 39.1. Livy emphasizes at 39.1.6 the *parsimonia* which desolate Liguria forces upon the troops, in contrast with the opulence of coinciding Asian campaigns (Moore 1989: 134).

<sup>174</sup> 39.54, 43.20, 41.10-11. As above, this trope applies to the portrayal of the Samnites during their conflict with Rome, with both sides playing the poor role at different times. Livy has not invented this idea; the interrelatedness of luxury/poverty, moral fiber, and the quality of soldiers persists as a concept throughout ancient historiography, most obviously in Herodotus on the Spartans. There are certainly points of comparison with, for instance, Tacitus' *Germania*.

<sup>175</sup> In a corrupt passage at 38.28.6, the Cephallanians supply hostages to Rome "weak in proportion to the strength of that people" (*pro viribus inopes populi*), which might bear on this issue.



poverty, have poverty thrust upon them by Roman depredations, or construct themselves as poor in a vain search for empathy. Some function as foils to the rise of *luxuria*, others display their own weakness while the text frames the rising place of greed in the Roman disposition. None of them succeed in their attempts to find empathy, as their Roman opponents either do not recognize their ancestral virtues reflected back at them or react to them with cynicism. This is not to say that the Greeks necessarily exemplified *paupertas* either: most of their self-attributions of poverty are presented as rhetorical ploys. The decline of Roman poverty as seen in this process aligns with larger trends within the last extant books of Livy, as money flows in from the provinces and spurs the growth of unproductive military ambition. In the absence of substantial interstitial material, we might envision this trajectory coming to fruition in the lost books, as an aspect of the unrestrained violence of Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and perhaps even Caesar, Antony, and Octavian, all of whose troops turned against their fellow citizens or the state.

### **Livy and the Augustan Age**

For many years, drawing potential connecting threads between Livy's work and the life of Augustus, the central figure of the age, has been a popular scholarly pursuit, but one without a convincing answer. As Andrew Feldherr declares, the topic "has yielded an astonishing variety of conclusions."<sup>176</sup> They range from Livy's "joyful acceptance" of Augustan ideology as in Syme (and, in a qualified manner, in Barck) to Luce's pronouncement that the two figures had "little common ground."<sup>177</sup> Clearly the moral emphasis of Livy's work has some connection to the zeitgeist of the Augustan age,

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<sup>176</sup> Feldherr 1997: 410.

<sup>177</sup> Syme 1959: 75, Burck 1971: 278, Luce 1990: 137. Cf. Walsh 1966b: 119, Walsh 1961: 11, Luce 1977: 290, Peterson 1961 *passim*.

even if the specifics allow for much debate. Livy intended his work to provide an instrument for social change, and both his and Augustus' attempts (like Cato) to impose a similar moral framework on Roman politics, history, and society had real-world impact.<sup>178</sup> Both subscribed to the exemplary value of history and its value in creating such a framework.<sup>179</sup> Both created an idealized social structure based on pointed re-imaginings of the antique past which aimed to re-imagine the present. The publication of Livy's Preface and first decad coincided more or less with the start of Augustus' unquestioned reign, despite continuing debate over the exact dating.<sup>180</sup> While anecdotal evidence suggests the emperor knew who Livy was, Augustus allowed him a free hand in his history's composition, even when he contradicted the version the emperor preferred.<sup>181</sup> How, or if, the public affirmation of antique virtues in the reign of Augustus had an influence on Livy's text, including the presentation of poverty, remains an open question.

Assessing the degree to which public memorialization of *paupertas* or *parsimonia* as a virtue affected Livy's text, or was affected by it, presents a thorny problem. While many virtues occupied a place in the public sphere, *paupertas* seems to have received very little emphasis beyond the ostentatious austerity of the emperor himself. Augustus occupied a space between public splendor and private (though publicly asserted)

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. Walsh 1966a: 13-14, Luce 1977: 290, Galinsky 1996: 280, Suet. *Aug.* 89.

<sup>179</sup> Luce 1990: 137, Cooley 2009: 40, Chaplin 2000: 9. Augustus used exemplary epigraphs (the *elogia*) on the statues of famous Romans in his Forum to provide models of righteous leadership and *Romanitas*. Cf. Chaplin 2000 chapter 6, Zanker 1988: 210-5. The *Res Gestae* attest to outright the public validity of exempla: *multa exempla maiorum . . . reduxi* (8.5).

<sup>180</sup> Luce 1977: 19-27; Burton 2000.

<sup>181</sup> Flower 2009: 75. Galinsky says attempts to narrow the interaction of the two down to political adherence "are unduly limiting" (281), preferring to see both as transformational figures.

*paupertas*, as embodied in the anecdotes of him wearing homespun clothing<sup>182</sup> – as he embraced the third definition of *paupertas* I advance in the Introduction. Similar gestures included eschewing his right as Pontifex to live in the Domus Publica and forgoing public attempts to rebuild his house.<sup>183</sup> He tried to replicate this model of conspicuous adherence to antique morality within his family by having his female descendants learn to work wool and by attempting to publicly control their *mores*.<sup>184</sup> That said, despite presenting himself as an exemplar, he never embarked on a project to recreate this image of private simplicity on a grander scale.<sup>185</sup> The surviving *elogia* of the Augustan Forum never mention *paupertas* or its synonyms as a virtue.<sup>186</sup> A mention of *penuria* of the grain supply is the closest the *Res Gestae* come to mentioning poverty (5). Austerity would only fit awkwardly into these texts: both the *elogia* and the *Res Gestae* likewise celebrate

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<sup>182</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 72.

<sup>183</sup> Feeney 1992: 2, Milnor 2005: 83, Suetonius *Augustus* 57. Galinsky 1988 comments extensively on the contradiction between splendor and austerity under Augustus, calling it one of the central tensions of the Augustan Age (98-9). Zanker: “Visitors reported on the simplicity and old-fashioned modesty of his private rooms at home. It was said that he had melted down the last gold dinner plate, and it was well known that he had no use for luxury villas (though he did, however, retain all of Capri as his private refuge)” (160). Peterson 1961 and Milnor 2005 draw connections between Augustus’ house and the *egenis* surroundings of Evander. In the early years of the regime, this may have been meant to overtly contradict the image of Anthony’s Alexandrian excesses.

<sup>184</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 64. Milnor’s 2005 *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus* discusses the Augustan expression of state-sanctioned morality through the advertised image of the female members of his household in detail (83-88, 148-153). Cf. also Richlin 2014: 87, 92-7 on subversions of this moral regime through the character of Julia the Elder.

<sup>185</sup> Galinsky 1988: 99. Zanker repeatedly refers to *simplicitas* as emblematic of Augustan-age mental images of the legendary past, but Livy does not use the term in a moral sense (it can mean “straightforwardness” or “simple-mindedness”) and only rarely attributes it to Romans. Moore 1989 claims the absence of this term as applied to early Rome happens “perhaps in part because Livy takes for granted the *simplicitas* of the earliest Romans” (133). I am more inclined to believe its faint pejorative connotations make it an unsuitable descriptor.

<sup>186</sup> The most applicable surviving fragment describes the debt relief performed by M. Valerius Maximus (*CIL* 11.1826). Cf. note 69.

the precise sums acquired for or expended on the Roman state.<sup>187</sup> No evidence currently supports taking Augustus' regime as a model for Livian *paupertas*.

This is not to say that Livy, in advancing such a concept, would be disagreeable to the emperor. Livy apparently had an acquaintance with the imperial family and would have known the publicly projected image of Augustus' austerity at home.<sup>188</sup> Certainly the concept of *paupertas* in Livy would have raised no red flags with Augustus, even if the emperor did lightheartedly label the historian a "Pompeian."<sup>189</sup> The historian's Republican sympathies "were in no way inconsistent with allegiance to the Principate," as both book and state aimed to preserve Republican institutions.<sup>190</sup> The moral-didactic elements of Livy's *Histories* aligned well with the traditionalism of Augustus' own accoutrements and the state promotion of ancestral religion and morality.

But Livy's intermittent and inconsistent use of poverty does not lend itself to reading the concept as a major ideological force in the text. Poverty appears in key exemplary moments, but acts as an auxiliary part of other, larger themes. Considering Livy's situational, intermittent deployment of poverty as a narrative tool, and the comparative infrequency of its lexicon in the text, it seems impossible that he intended poverty to be part of the overarching framework for his *Histories*. Neither Augustus nor Livy have could borrowed the austerity model from the other, since neither provided a coherent and consistent definition of what *paupertas* meant in the revitalization of the *mos maiorum*. Livy might have adopted some ideological material from the Augustan

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<sup>187</sup> *CIL* 6.40963 and 6.37048, *RG* 15 and *passim*.

<sup>188</sup> Luce 1986b: 124, 128.

<sup>189</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.

<sup>190</sup> Wirszubski 1968: 127.

moral package, but the evidence does not indicate anything substantive. The emperor might play at Cincinnatus, but if he did, it was his own idea.

## Chapter Two

### *Quid est Pauper?* Rich and Poor in Roman Declamation

#### Introduction

Perhaps no written genre during the first centuries of the Roman empire contains more characters overtly defined as poor than declamation. This genre of rhetorical exercises gave students and experts from various backgrounds an arena for negotiating moral dilemmas and applying the models from *exempla* to hypothetical scenarios – and the *pauper* was often at the heart of such discussions. But considering that declamation remains on the fringes of the classical canon and has been under-researched as a source for cultural attitudes to social history, some prefatory details are in order.

The art of declamation occupied a space at the apex of Roman education. Within, adolescents who had passed through preliminary exercises (*progymnasmata*) and the intermediate exercises known as “persuasions” (*suasoriae*) would sharpen their eloquence in a fake courtroom setting, arguing for one side or another of a hypothetical legal situation (*controversia*) populated by stock characters, prominent among whom were the rich man (*dives*) and the poor man (*pauper*). Rhetoric “monopolized secondary education,”<sup>1</sup> and all previous training and educational resources were meant to contribute to declamatory practice. A prize declaimer would manipulate the flow of logic, as well as the passions and emotions of the audience, by the employment of moral rhetoric and pointed *exempla* from Roman history and legend. The presumptive result of years spent training under the *rhetor* would be to mold the young student into a skilled, articulate speaker, ready to craft speeches for court. The ideology which supported rhetorical

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<sup>1</sup> Kennedy 1972: 428.

training assumed that students would emerge as morally upstanding citizen-statesmen through their familiarity with the traditional moral principles espoused in the exercises.

While declamation functioned primarily as a preparatory exercise, its influence crept far beyond the schoolyard. Seneca the Elder, in his survey of famous declaimers and arguments, mentions the schoolhouse only infrequently and often depicts scenes of declamatory contests and recitals as part of elite Roman life.<sup>2</sup> Interest in declamation among adult men was high enough for Pliny the Younger to drop in on school declamation practices (where he says he was not the only mature man there).<sup>3</sup> Declamation developed into a public practice, where star orators competed and exhibited their skills in public, drawing audiences which included even the emperor Augustus.<sup>4</sup> The development of this performative genre also spawned critique and complaint from conservative orators who attacked declamation for being functionally useless, solipsistic,<sup>5</sup> and relying on increasingly unrealistic topics.<sup>6</sup> Despite the chorus of dissent, declamation had a pervasive influence as a developing factor in the acculturation of young elites from the first century CE onward. As Gunderson's *Declamation, Paternity, and Roman*

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<sup>2</sup> Gunderson 2003: 3. Gunderson's fourth chapter concerns prominent Romans who participated in declamation, although he perhaps overstates how disconnected from the classroom works like Calpurnius Flaccus might be. As will be discussed below, the definition of "elites" as participants in declamation becomes rather fuzzy upon closer inspection: Wallace-Hadrill 2008 argues that declamation created its own version of the elite through the demanding training which opened up the discourse of declamation to its students, in a group "defined and constituted by the process of education itself" (256).

<sup>3</sup> Pliny *Epistles* 2.18.2. Cf. Clarke 1971: 33.

<sup>4</sup> At *Controversiae* 2.4.12-13, Seneca relates how Porcius Latro embarrassed himself in front of the emperor and Agrippa by using unflattering figurative language about ancestry. Augustus' interest in the moral zeitgeist meant declamation might naturally be of interest to him.

<sup>5</sup> Parks 1945: 64.

<sup>6</sup> Quintilian 2.10.4-5 denounces unreal themes such as magicians, plagues, oracles, and wicked stepmothers. Cf. Kennedy 1972: 460.

*Identity* declares, if you want to know how (elite) Romans thought, you must read their declamations.<sup>7</sup>

## Origins

By the time of the early Empire, declamation had evolved from its origins in Greek rhetoric to become a different and thoroughly Romanized genre. According to Philostratus, declamation's roots trace back to Aeschines and his school on Rhodes in the 330s BCE;<sup>8</sup> Quintilian records that imitative themes date back to Demetrius of Phalerum (350-280 BC) or thereabouts.<sup>9</sup> Greek *rhetors* used an educational package based on *progymnasmata* encompassing various other types of exercises such as deliberative *hypotheses*, the Greek antecedents to Latin *controversiae* and *suasoriae*. Seneca the Elder claimed in the 30s or 40s CE that the form of declamation his work collects originated in Rome during his own lifetime, while Plotius Gallus started the first known Latin school of rhetoric in 92 BCE.<sup>10</sup> Whether or not these authors correctly trace the history of declamation in Rome, substantial Greek influence in the genre persists - in the presence of implausible situations and stock characters derived from Greek New Comedy and its Roman counterpart, including frequent conflicts between fathers and sons and characters of different classes.<sup>11</sup> Yet Roman declamatory practice did not entirely mimic Greek originals: Roman declamation possesses considerable Roman elements in the form of

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<sup>7</sup> 25.

<sup>8</sup> Book 1, Section 481. Cf. Sussman 1978: 2, Bonner 1969: 12. According to Bonner, these declamations were possibly little more than *loci communes* and not intricate exercises.

<sup>9</sup> Sussman 1978: 3, Bonner 1969: 12.

<sup>10</sup> Clarke 1971: 31, citing Suetonius *DGR* 25. Cicero wanted to attend, but instead was pushed into studying Greek (*De Oratore* 2.2).

<sup>11</sup> Winterbottom 1974: xiii, Bonner 1969: 37. Bonner includes in his description of stock elements riotous young men who involve themselves with *meretrices* or live lives of reckless abandon (*Contr.* 2.4, 3.1, 4.1).



references to Roman history, law, and social practice;<sup>12</sup> it also addresses notably different subject matter, focusing on hypothetical rather than historical themes.<sup>13</sup> By the time Seneca described the state of the genre in his day, it constituted not a mere adaptation or pale imitation of Greek models, but a hybrid of Roman institutional myths and Greek educational foundations.<sup>14</sup>

Surviving sources for Roman declamation begin with the *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* of the Elder Seneca, of which only the former includes *dives et pauper*. His text can be more or less reliably dated to between 37 CE and his death before 41, and collects snippets of declaimers he claims to remember from his lifetime, including his hero Porcius Latro.<sup>15</sup> Of later but less certain dating come the two collections of *Declamations*, Major and Minor, attributed to Quintilian, but which were unlikely to have sprung from his pen.<sup>16</sup> The 145 surviving *Minor Declamations* provide our closest approximation to actual school texts and perhaps date to the second century CE; the *Major* declamations may or may not be later.<sup>17</sup> Seneca's collection describes declamation in the context of spectacle and public performance, as opposed to Pseudo-Quintilian's educational exercises.<sup>18</sup> Calpurnius Flaccus' under-studied collection of 53 declamations dates from the reign of Hadrian and presents us a set more suffused with conflicts

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<sup>12</sup> Bonner 1969: 37.

<sup>13</sup> Clarke 1971: 42. Seneca's early *Suasoriae* provide the exception to this rule; historical themes crop up extremely rarely in Pseudo-Quintilian and Calpurnius Flaccus.

<sup>14</sup> Corbeill 2001: 262.

<sup>15</sup> Winterbottom 1974: xx, xxii.

<sup>16</sup> The reasons for this claim are well provided by Sussman 1987: v-ix.

<sup>17</sup> For *Min.*, Bloomer 1997: 65; for *Maj.*, Sussman 1987: ix.

<sup>18</sup> Winterbottom 1974: xi.

between rich and poor than other anthologies. This perhaps, although not certainly, indicates a greater interest in the poor and wealth inequality by the author, if not by the audience for declamation.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Valerius Maximus fits within any overarching study of the genre, since his work was designed to serve as a treasury of *exempla* and anecdotes for insertion into declamatory speeches.<sup>20</sup> Completed in 31 CE,<sup>21</sup> his text was contemporary to Seneca the Elder and catalogues a variety of stories concerning social mobility and cross-class relations,<sup>22</sup> including an entire section (4.4) dedicated to Poverty.

### **The Moralistic Function of Declamation**

Advanced rhetorical education not only instructed the student in the ways of speaking, but also of conducting oneself in a morally upright fashion. Mature scholars envisioned declamation as a powerful and effective tool for instilling cardinal virtues appropriate for a Roman man into the young orator. Early in the *Institutiones* Quintilian stresses that morality is inseparable from oratorical practice.<sup>23</sup> Thorough repetition pushed the young *rhetor* toward traditionally accepted behavior; declamation encouraged him to recombine and manipulate core concepts of the genre into an organized argument aligning the hypothetical case or client with normative moral values. Education instilled the idea that traditional sentiments and conventional arguments, skillfully deployed, could meet any hypothetical challenge. Its appeal as moral instruction perhaps even

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<sup>19</sup> Attributing interest in any topic to the author of these collections is made difficult by the fact that the texts, besides Seneca's anthology, do not describe who wrote the topics or the speeches connected to them. The author might have done so or simply collated the collection.

<sup>20</sup> Bloomer 1992: 1.

<sup>21</sup> Walker 2004: xiii.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* xiv-xvi.

<sup>23</sup> 1.2.3.

superseded its purpose as rhetorical education. The medium, as Beard has argued, provided the elite with a moral mechanism, a social and cultural focus where moral principles could be spelled out in speech and, if necessary, corrected by the instructor.<sup>24</sup> As its popularity outside the schoolroom attests, declamation provided a living mode of discourse in which speakers and listeners participated in conversations about traditional values by consuming, redeploying, and renegotiating them in the public arena.

Rhetoric's correlation with morality culminated in the notion that the orator must be a good man, a *vir bonus (dicendi peritus)*.<sup>25</sup> This phrase originates the elder in Cato,<sup>26</sup> is picked up by Cicero in the *De Oratore*,<sup>27</sup> and features heavily in Quintilian, who repeats it no fewer than seven times throughout the *Institutiones*.<sup>28</sup> Roman rhetorical theorists emphasized the creation of moral fiber, insisting that the process of oratory instilled character improvement that would reach its apex with the "good man."<sup>29</sup> The *vir bonus* would rightly reflect traditional moral ideals of Roman elite culture and express his knowledge of those ideals in the form of arguments, characters, and passages which clearly delineated right and wrong, good practice and bad practice, morality and immorality. This viewpoint was by no means universally held, but formed one major camp within attitudes about the value of declamation. If the belief that oratorical

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<sup>24</sup> Beard 1993: 54. I would add that the social sphere of declamation was not exclusively populated by members of the elite, but that star declaimers came from a variety of status backgrounds; see my discussion of Suetonius *DGR* below.

<sup>25</sup> "A good man, skilled in speaking."

<sup>26</sup> *De Agri Cultura* Pref., 144, 145, 149. Cf. Clarke 1963: 11.

<sup>27</sup> *De Oratore* 2.85. Cf. Bonner 1977: 73.

<sup>28</sup> 1.Pr.9, 2.15.3, 3.7.25, 4.1.7, 5.10.82, 6.3.35, 12.1.1. Cf. Sussman 1978: 85.

<sup>29</sup> Note also that, as mature orators themselves, the authors mentioned were implicitly connecting themselves with the abstracted *vir bonus*.

education would result in a morally upright citizen might be somewhat unrealistic, it was no less unrealistic than the imaginary setting in which declamation operated.

### **Social History and Declamation**

Declamation operated within a "mercolanza di realtà e invenzione,"<sup>30</sup> incorporating elements of the legendary Roman past, the Hellenistic city, and elements from New comedy, along with distinctively Roman social structures. Russell describes the Greek version of this unreal setting as "Sophistopolis," a world that exists out of time. Its Roman incarnation relies on the cultural memory of the agrarian, Republican past, including as plot elements kings and tyrants, Republican social institutions, an emphasis on farming as the default profession, and persistent ideas of an inherently virtuous past society.<sup>31</sup> There are stereotypical heroes and villains, attacks on the lazy and corrupt, presenting the speaker's goal as returning society to perfect balance – a balance assumed to be within reach. Stereotyped characters abound, but the genre also offers unusual insights into the world of private life, class issues, affection within families and interpersonal relationships, and attitudes toward self-indulgence. It creates an image of paupers less as the frequently fickle mob of Livy or Tacitus and more as a class with definite values and aspirations.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Tabacco 1980: 97. Cf. Langlands 2006: 250.

<sup>31</sup> Russell 1983: 22. Sophistopolis and its characteristics form the basis of Russell's entire second chapter (21-39). His analysis of rich and poor in Greek declamation (27-30), involving sources either much later or contemporary to only our latest Latin counterparts, describes their struggle as a "political" one (27) and presented in entirely "black-and-white" terms (28). Some exercises copy or transmute examples from Roman sources (Minucianus RG 8.408 modifies *Decl. Min.* 301). As this analysis will show, *dives et pauper* in Roman declamation clashed in more than political arenas, and their interactions display more nuance than Russell attributes to their Greek counterparts.

<sup>32</sup> Walker 2004: xvii.

Declamation presents the reader with a window into the moral imagination of Roman elite life. Its collections of traditional elements in a living genre created a discursive structure in which declaimers acted out performances of Roman psychic life: what mattered in terms of morality, what could convince audiences, and reflections and re-shapings of real opinion. If we, as Bonner puts it, “descend to detail,” and place aside (but not out of sight) suspicions about rhetoric, the stereotypes and subversions of declamation can provide a window into contemporary Roman life and attitudes during the first two centuries of the Empire.<sup>33</sup> While its material should never be taken at face value, one must bear in mind Quintilian’s repeated assertion that “declamation . . . should resemble the truth.”<sup>34</sup> Langlands uses this evidence to argue that declamation broadly followed real legal principles, in a simplified fashion compared to actual practice.<sup>35</sup> The genre’s relationship to contemporary legal practice notwithstanding, declamation was a battleground on which students and orators fought to win over audiences; declamations reflect real Roman thought.

Class issues filter into declamation not only through the frequent inclusion of *dives et pauper*, but also through our portraits of the professors of rhetoric. From its Republican origins rhetorical education and performance had been a method of social mobility. According to Corbeill, freedmen formed the majority of declamation’s teachers in the Republic, with the exceptions being men of dubious status or unfortunate freeborn men.<sup>36</sup> By the time of the early Empire, the lucrative nature of rhetorical education drew

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<sup>33</sup> Bonner 1969: 36; Tabacco 1980: 97.

<sup>34</sup> 2.10.9, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Langlands 2006: 254.

<sup>36</sup> Corbeill 2001: 268 (citing Treggiari 1969, and Christes 1979 as a corrective to Treggiari).

in ambitious men, including many talented freedmen, such as the ones who form the majority of the *grammatici* in Suetonius' *DGR*.<sup>37</sup> Martial and Tacitus describe radical success stories in which members of the lower orders amassed wealth through their silver tongues.<sup>38</sup> The cultural value of education became prominent enough that the emperor Vespasian established subsidized chairs of Greek and Roman rhetoric, among the first of whom was Quintilian, with a salary of 100,000 sesterces.<sup>39</sup> The money to be made in rhetoric, and the corresponding place of lower-status men in practicing and teaching it, should engender questions about how *rhetors* influenced the education they transmitted to their students: whether their exercises peddled the dominant ideology or framed it according to their life experience.

Conflicts between *dives et pauper* occupy a large space in the world of declamation.<sup>40</sup> The prominence of poor men in the world of declamation provides potential for examining how the discourse of poverty can provide a window onto social issues of the first and second centuries CE.<sup>41</sup> These *pauperes* are in general sympathetic figures, cast in opposition to their economic opposites, the *divites*. In the most common

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<sup>37</sup> Clarke 1963: 86. *Rhetors*, as purveyors of more advanced study, earned more than grammarians (Clarke 1971: 9; Juvenal 7.217). Suetonius includes the names of far fewer *rhetores* than grammarians in the *DGR* because of the fragmentary nature of the text, but his list of them still includes at least one freedman (3: Lucius Votacilius Plotus).

<sup>38</sup> Parks 1945: 57-9. This continued to spiral, to the point that the emperor Claudius imposed an upper limit on the fees one could charge (59).

<sup>39</sup> Clarke 1971: 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> In general the theme occupies roughly fifteen percent of all of declamation's themes. Rich and poor men appear together in five of seventy-six in Seneca, eight of fifty-three in Calpurnius Flaccus, nineteen of one hundred and forty-five in the *Declamationes Minores*, and four of nineteen in the *Declamationes Miores*. *Dives* or *pauper* only occur apart from one another nine times.

<sup>41</sup> Sussman 1994: 2.

form of this conflict, rich men wrong hapless poor counterparts, and the framing narratives mostly indicate that the poor man takes the rich to court.

*Pauperes* in declamation overwhelmingly serve as victims and disadvantaged parties in their quarrels with the *divites*. The rich man nearly always commits the moral wrong, disrupting the life or destroying the property of the impoverished plaintiff.<sup>42</sup> The poor man consistently suffers because his counterpart acts without respect for laws or the cohesion of the citizen body.<sup>43</sup> Considering its prominent status among the declamatory themes, the rich man-poor man conflict should prove fertile ground for investigating what the Romans taught themselves about the nature of wealth and poverty. It might seem illogical that wealthy students and performers of declamation frequently engaged in exercises where they attacked members of their own class in the defense of commoners, especially considering negative elite stereotypes and attitudes towards the poor in contemporary Roman society.<sup>44</sup> These frequent occurrences might naturally lead us to inquire why a genre which played such a large part in the education of young elites would so frequently cast poor men as the victims of elites.<sup>45</sup> Yet, perhaps because of some degree of cognitive dissonance, or because of the fruitfulness of the exercise, the

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<sup>42</sup> While the portraits of the poor as moral and the rich as cruel are not universal - as counterexamples do exist that play with and creatively invert the norm (such as the villainous and avaricious poor man of *Decl. Min.* 332) - the genre as a whole stands on the poor man's side. For statistics on the subject, see pages 123-124.

<sup>43</sup> If freedman *rhetoires* were responsible for crafting the topics of declamation, such themes might indicate their class-conscious influence on the genre.

<sup>44</sup> Russell 1983 likewise attempts to answer the questions prompted by this paradoxical formulation. He hypothesizes that the championing of the poor gave creditable moral warnings, established the orator as a moral actor, employed the poor as images of "underdogs"; he argues that the orator was able to show how skill can overcome resources and social capital.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

similarity of the rhetorical image of the rich man and the social position of the declaimers simply goes unacknowledged.

Conflicts between rich and poor contributed greatly to the moralizing aspects of declamation. The characterization of the poor man worked to reinforce traditional ideas of upright behavior which could be best expressed through the person of a virtuous, wronged member of the lower classes. The typically-virtuous *pauper* proved an enduring cultural symbol; as a romanticized figure who embodied everything right about the early character of Rome, declaimers could use him as a protean template for the discussion of myriad moral and social issues, including wealth, class, traditional virtues, and social inequalities. His stature in declamation, and the inventive variety of ways in which the cultural vocabulary centered on him was deployed, makes declamation an unusually fruitful arena in which to investigate attitudes about the poor. Speaking in the poor man's voice allowed declaimers to expound on the virtues of frugality and notions of legal fairness, as well as to make comparative judgments about simple pleasures as enjoyed by poor men and the problems of arrogance, belligerence, and selfishness as often embodied in the *dives*.

### ***Frugalitas***

In perhaps the most straightforward of the moral precepts they have to offer, *pauperes* and the dispossessed frequently display frugality. This virtue does not occur in a vacuum. Throughout the range of collections we possess, declaimers almost always contrast the virtues of *frugalitas* with misbehavior brought on by luxury. A father upbraids his *luxuriosus* son by stating that money can only be kept by *frugalitas* and hard



work;<sup>46</sup> when a formerly normal father starts to live the high life (*luxuriari coepit*), his spendthrift son complains that he no longer has a father anymore, preferring the earlier, thrifty model (*frugaliter vixi quamdiu patrem habui*).<sup>47</sup> For our declaimers, frugality operates as a tool with which to bring *luxuria* into relief.<sup>48</sup> In the *Institutiones* Quintilian lists *frugalitas* and *luxuria* as examples when describing the rhetorical tactic of basing an argument on opposites: “frugality is a good thing, since luxury is an evil thing.”<sup>49</sup> The opposition of these two principles, and their connection to economic status, made declamation’s conflicts between rich and poor a natural battleground on which to fight against the bogeyman of encroaching luxury.

*Controversiae* 2.1 provides a fitting example for how the *frugalitas* of the poor contrasted with the behavior of the rich:

A rich man disinherited his three sons. He asks a poor man for his only son to adopt. The poor man is ready to comply; when his son refuses to go, he disinherits him.<sup>50</sup>

Taking the side of the son, Arellius Fuscus Sr. attacks the mercenary affections of the *dives*, concluding that the *dives* only knows aimless, irrational desires, ones tied to financial security instead of a harmonious family. The millions bequeathed in wills are

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<sup>46</sup> *Decl. Min.* 245.6.

<sup>47</sup> *Controversiae* 2.6.2.

<sup>48</sup> One deviation from this trend occurs in *Decl. Min.* 330, where a son uses his father’s money to feed his divorced mother (under the pretext that he was courting a prostitute) and claims that his *frugalitas* should be rewarded because the money did not go to waste, before moving on to other arguments. Here *frugalitas* only forms a circumstantial point before the speaker moves on to more substantial matters, in this case *pietas*.

<sup>49</sup> 5.10.73: *frugalitas bonum, luxuria enim malum*.

<sup>50</sup> *Dives tres filios abdicavit. Petit a paupere unicum filium in adoptionem. Pauper dare vult; nolentem ire abdicat*.

burdens instead of joys to their inheritors; measureless lands cannot compensate for a lack of offspring; riches offer no solace in times of illness or exhaustion. In the end the rich man's social position conditions him to misunderstand the traditional virtue: "What in our house is frugality (*frugalitas*) counts as abjectness (*humilitas*) there."<sup>51</sup> The *dives* loses his comprehension of *frugalitas* (and perhaps of other virtues as well) because his single-minded focus on his economic status makes him misrepresent and misunderstand its value. The *pauper*'s correct interpretation of core virtues leads him to have "correct" desires, to the point that Arellius seeks to redefine the meaning of poverty by asking, in reference to his family, "Can we be poor (*ita nos pauperes sumus*) if we have something that rich men ask for?"<sup>52</sup>

In contrast to our other sources, Valerius Maximus never uses the term *frugalitas* in the subsection of his work concerning poverty *exempla*, instead incorporating his examples of *frugalitas* into the separate "Lust for Wealth" subheading (4.3) directly preceding "Poverty" (4.4). His anecdotes, locked into historical time unlike most scenarios in declamation, both complement the frequent contrasts between *frugalitas* and *luxuria* and follow theories about the moral decline of Roman civilization during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Each of his instances of exemplary frugality takes place before any generally held date for the perversion of Roman morality by outside influence. In them, the statesmen Manius Curius (270s BCE), Fabricius Luscinus (270s) and Sextus Paetus Catus (190s) refuse the opulent gifts of Samnite and Aetolian envoys.<sup>53</sup> Outside of these

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<sup>51</sup> 2.1.4: *Quae apud nos frugalitas est, apud illos humilitas est.*

<sup>52</sup> 2.1.4: *Ita nos pauperes sumus, qui habemus quod divites rogent?*

<sup>53</sup> 4.3.5, 4.3.6, 4.3.7. Paetus' section directly contrasts the ethics of a prior age with the contemporary one: "if only later ages had wanted to follow his example of frugality" (*si frugalitatis eius exemplum posterior aetas sequi uoluisset*).

men, only Cato the Elder is explicitly associated with *frugalitas*, and when Valerius makes this link,<sup>54</sup> his language emphasizes how atypical Cato’s behavior is: he tolerated a parsimonious budget as a provincial governor and the ordinary food of soldiers “most patiently, because that welcome habit of frugality held him in that sort of life with the greatest sweetness.”<sup>55</sup> His sparing nature contrasts with the general tenor of the age, presenting the morals of the time as, if not degenerate, certainly not equivalent to Cato’s perfection.

*Frugalitas*, however, never factors into Valerius’ chapter detailing anecdotes of noteworthy poverty (4.4). It only appears in 4.3, while *paupertas* occurs three times in both 4.3 and 4.4. This puzzling omission, considering the connection of *frugalitas* to the declamatory *pauper*, seems to indicate that Valerius follows a separate conception of *frugalitas* from standard declamatory practice. Without mentioning frugality, the introduction to his poverty chapter describes poverty as “the lowest misery” (*ultimo miseriarum statu*) and “scruffy” (*horridior aspectus*) while simultaneously claiming that “a man who longs for nothing obviously has everything.”<sup>56</sup> This crafts a definition of the poor as legitimately wretched and deprived, as opposed to the men of *frugalitas* above, who refuse the ability to gain wealth while always possessing a comfortable fortune. The examples of 4.4 never have wealth at their disposal: Atilius Regulus relies on his farmland to prevent his family’s starvation (4.4.5), the sixteen Aelii live in a tiny house

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<sup>54</sup> Valerius uses material which, if not adapted directly from Livy (34.180), shares many of the same sentiments.

<sup>55</sup> 4.3.11: *atqui ista patientissime superior Cato toleravit, quia illum grata frugalitatis consuetudo in hoc genere uitae cum summa dulcedine continebat.*

<sup>56</sup> 4.4 Pref: *omnia nimirum habet qui nihil concupiscit.*

(4.4.8), and Valerius argues that the funerals of Valerius Publicola and Menenius Agrippa indicate how poor they must have been.<sup>57</sup> While he does embrace the traditionalist sentiment that both qualities were essential to the state,<sup>58</sup> Valerius manifests the preconception that men had *frugalitas* by choice, and *paupertas* by fate.

Valerius' portrayals of *paupertas*, despite his emphasis on the difficulties of poverty, indicate that his examples were financially comfortable. He describes the extreme (wellborn) poverty of Marcus Aemilius Scaurus (cos. 115 BC), who had only six slaves and 35,000 sesterces at the time of his death; his comment that "we revile a modest fortune as if it were the principal misfortune of the human race" speaks to a specific understanding of "modest income."<sup>59</sup> Scaurus, if Valerius' information is correct, was poor in terms of wellborn *paupertas*, in that he could not meet the equestrian census. Valerius' fictive image of poverty comes through in his statement that "extremely rich men" (*praediuites*) were called from the plow to become consul, shortly after which he claims that their agricultural lifestyle occurred not through pleasure or amusement, but because "the meanness of their estates forced them to live like farmhands."<sup>60</sup> The unlikelihood of "extremely rich" men performing manual labor out of need requires little comment, but the episode does show Valerius' devotion to his moral messages. Valerius

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<sup>57</sup> With language obviously derived from Livy: cf. my discussion of "poor" aristocratic funerals in the early Republic in chapter 1.

<sup>58</sup> 4.4.9. In this section he argues that poverty and wealth should be balanced in a strong society, and that his examples "prefer[red] being poor men in a rich empire rather than the opposite" (*quisque . . . pauper . . . in diuite quam diues in paupere imperio uersari malebat*).

<sup>59</sup> 4.4.11: *modicam fortunam quasi praecipuum generis humani malum . . . laceramus*.

<sup>60</sup> 4.4.4: *angustiae rei familiaris . . . bubulcos fieri cogebant*.

values the impact of legendary austerity to the extent that he can blithely ignore his self-contradictions.

### **The Poor Man's *Aequitas***

The fact that declamation in practice involved speaking in the voice of poor litigants meant that our *declamatores* utilized every argument that might conceivably win them sympathy, including attacks on the foibles of their own justice system. Fairness, or *aequitas*, is only natural for courtroom discussion, but in the context of *dives et pauper* it takes on a distinct class aspect. Poor interlocutors in declamation show a consistent awareness of the fraught nature of judicial fairness across class lines within Roman society, and openly speculate as to whether social inequalities will affect their own ability to win a verdict. *Aequitas* emerges as a frequent bone of contention: battles over the meaning and importance of *aequitas* occur repeatedly in our declamations about the *dives* and *pauper*, focusing on the ability of wealth to skew *aequitas* away from poor citizens and favor the wealthy.

Discussions of *aequitas* in declamation come in two major varieties. The first type of argument about the nature of judicial *aequitas* asserts the fundamental evenhandedness of the judicial system, claiming that, despite the gap in social power between rich and poor, paupers could and would receive fair judgment. Seneca 5.5 expresses such an attitude, when a *pauper* baldly says to a *dives*: “There is no difference at law between you and a poor man.”<sup>61</sup> Arguments in this vein create an image of the legal system as an idealized structure (at least in declamation’s fantasy world), where citizens of whatever standing can receive proper *aequitas* no matter their opponent. The poor plaintiff of *Decl.*

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<sup>61</sup> *Nihil inter te et pauperem interest, si iure agamus.*

*Maj.* XIII asserts that he should find equality in the law; likewise, the poor plaintiff of Pseudo-Quintilian *Decl. Min.* 301.2 asserts that “we [the poor] have equal freedom of speech and action against the rich” (*esse nobis aequam etiam adversus divites libertatem*).<sup>62</sup> We might question the realism of such talk; even *Decl. Maj.* XIII only expresses an optimistic claim for fairness, alongside anxiety about the danger of assailing a rich man in court.

The vast majority of discussions about *aequitas* argue that the legal system cannot guarantee it, calling into question the notion of *aequitas* in a society where elites monopolize power and influence. This comes from a more pragmatic sensibility, and we can imagine these moments as places where contemporary issues have become intertwined with the legendary fabric of declamation. These two apparently contradictory positions – either that the system is fair, or innately unfair – both aim at a similar result, to convince the (imaginary) jury or magistrate that the best solution would be to resolve the case based on a standard of fair treatment for both sides. This, of course, would nearly always result in a positive outcome for the oft-wronged *pauper*; as the more frequently wronged party, impartial justice would benefit him most.

Numerous examples from the contests of *dives* and *pauper* focus specifically on the unfair advantage rich men possess in the legal system. One *pauper*, anticipating being swindled by a rich rival out of the hand of the woman he rescued from captivity, asks “Is the gleam of riches so potent against truth?,” expecting a “yes” answer.<sup>63</sup> This presents to the audience a realistic threat: that bought influence will undermine his legitimate

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<sup>62</sup> Tabacco 1978: 44.

<sup>63</sup> *Decl. Min.* 343.15.

position; the theme sets out in no uncertain terms that the poor man rescued her. Similarly, the poor man of *Decl. Maj. XIII* imagines the jury would be shocked because “I, a humble and poor man already, even before I lost whatever I had, would have dared to challenge a rich man in court . . . an enemy dangerous because of the extensive resources of his high rank.”<sup>64</sup> In this mindset, a poor plaintiff technically has the right to bring a rich defendant to trial, but the expected backlash would hypothetically, and perhaps in reality, prevent a *pauper* from doing so. In an interesting reformulation of this argument from the opposite side, the rich defendant of *Decl. Min. 379* claims that he could not have murdered his poor enemy because the poor man could not have been his enemy – since enemies stand on equal terms and his rival was “a poor man, with no power in the Senate-house or assembly” (2). Even one who can exploit the disparity in power between classes comments on it openly.<sup>65</sup>

Speakers who emphasize the power disparity across class lines posit the judiciary as the force which can restrain exploitation and keep society in balance. The wronged *pauper* of *Decl. Maj. XIII* claims: “if we are set loose into free combat . . . the common people, subject to the unrestricted power of the few, will suffer bitter slavery.”<sup>66</sup> According to this line of argument, the laws and the judiciary alone prevent the greater influence of the elite from trampling the poor; behind this point is the implication that the poor naturally exist in a state of slavery to the rich (in declamation, their natural

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<sup>64</sup> XIII.1.

<sup>65</sup> Valerius Maximus provides the most explicit condemnation of disparities in legal power by including the *sententia* of Anacharsis that “the law oppresses the humble and the poor but does not bind the rich and powerful” (7.2 ext14): *humiles et pauperes constringi, diuites et praepotentes non alligari*.

<sup>66</sup> XIII.11; *si ad arma mittuntur . . . paucorum dominio subiecta plebes triste servitium perferet*.

enemies), a result only prevented by leveling social structures, such as law. Calpurnius Flaccus 6 states that a rich man has been elevated above the status of equality (*peraequationem*) proper for a private citizen.<sup>67</sup> Present in these narratives of power differential is the notion that money upsets ideal civic institutions, disrupting the natural state of *aequitas* which should be present in the ideal state. The speaker exhorts the hypothetical jury to move towards restoring “proper” society by making the correct decision and ruling in his favor.

In this formulation, all power lies in the hands of the jury and the elite *declamator*’s ability to influence it: can the poor man do anything himself? Some mentions of inequality hypothesize the ability of poor men to mobilize social power in order to counterbalance the legal advantages of the rich. Electoral processes provide one avenue. In *Decl. Min. 252*, the orator scorns the power of money a rich man possesses, arguing that “in elections poor men often have a bigger sway. The wealth of you and your kind is not all-powerful; money is not mistress of everything.”<sup>68</sup> According to this line of argument, the electoral power of poor citizens in large numbers can counteract presumably wicked elite influence. Yet we should note that all of our sources for declamation date from the early Empire or later: in line with the mytho-historical setting of declamation, this line of argument presupposes a Republican-era setting when popular elections occurred and were not dominated by the upper classes. The argument continues in claiming that wealth and property only carry weight in private contexts, while good

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<sup>67</sup> 6.19-20: *supra civilem hanc peraequationem divitiae tuae elevaverunt.*

<sup>68</sup> *Decl. Min. 252.18.*



faith and innocence matter most in public business.<sup>69</sup> This ignores the historical *Realpolitik* of Roman civics in favor of a fantasy where average citizens overwhelmed the voices of the rich in controlling public affairs – an idealization of the impotence of the elite in public life, paradoxically coming from the oligarchic class.<sup>70</sup>

The poor's assumed ability to exercise social power over the rich was not limited to the courtroom or the *saepa*; they could also, at least hypothetically, exploit social protocols to their advantage. *Decl. Min.* 301 sets up a confrontation in domestic space: a *pauper* invites a *dives* to dinner despite the economic distance between them. The declaimer states, speaking as the *pauper*, that he held the dinner because the poor “need to stake a claim on you rich men's power,” using *amicitia* as a barrier against exploitation, injury, and unfair litigation.<sup>71</sup> In attempting to level the social gap between the two characters, he asserts that each can exercise reciprocal favors and obligations upon the other – an optimistic view shattered when the rich man rapes the poor man's daughter under the impression that she is a slave. This setup aims to create compassion for the *pauper*; the narrative depicts his attempt to create a connection with a member of a higher social class and assert a measure of equality as nothing but sympathetic (note that there is no counterargument attested in the voice of the *dives*), a man who strove for upward mobility and symbiotic class interaction, but whose attempts to narrow the gap failed due to the rich man's voraciousness.

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<sup>69</sup> 252.19.

<sup>70</sup> As above (n.63), the argument of *Decl. Min.* 379 phrases the argument in reverse with a more contemporary, and historically accurate, statement that poor men lack power in the *curia* or the assembly.

<sup>71</sup> 301.11.

The other form of compensation for the lack of legal *aequitas* was the poor man's ability to mobilize public shame against the rich. This provides the setting for

*Controversia* 10.1:

A man who had a son and a rich enemy was found killed, but not robbed. The youth, dressed in mourning, followed the rich man around . . . the rich man lost an election and accuses the poor man of slander.<sup>72</sup>

One should note that the theme clearly implies that the rich man committed the murder, or at least is the prime suspect. However, the *pauper's* son elects against bringing the matter to court, because of the implicit understanding that the rich man's resources will decide the verdict. His alternative plan - to engage in public mourning in proximity to the supposed killer - draws attention to the rich man with the intention of lowering his stock in the eyes of the community.<sup>73</sup> While the story is, of course, fictional, the result, that the rich man loses an election, testifies to the belief that such tactics would prove effective.

Two separate declamations on this topic address the need for the poor to find alternative methods of justice. Albius Silus straightforwardly cites the disparity in influence as the reason for the poor son's silence, claiming death would be the penalty for speech (*adhuc vivo quod tacui*).<sup>74</sup> If the poor son had not avoided the legal system and brought the case into public space, he would risk the threat of physical harm without

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<sup>72</sup> *Quidam, cum haberet filium et divitem inimicum, occisus in spoliatus inventus est. Adolescens sordidatus divitem sequebatur . . . Cum peteret honores dives, repulsus accusat iniuriarum pauperem.* Cf. Edmondson 2009: 31 and Richlin 2014c: 272.

<sup>73</sup> The poor son's strategy in this declamation might have a connection to real acts of ritual abuse that could be undertaken by the disadvantaged in Roman society. In *Decl. Min.* 364, a poor man jeers (*conviciari*) at a rich man's house and is murdered; the 12 Tables forbade anyone to recite defamatory songs, perhaps because they could lead to riots (Garnsey 1970: 192). Cf. Kelly 1966: 22-4 for a discussion of early mob justice and the mobilization of public opinion.

<sup>74</sup> 10.1.1.

retaliation. This line of thinking implies an understanding that the rich have the power to act directly upon the bodies or property of the poor without fearing retribution. Porcius Latro's version begins with praise of the virtuous, deceased father, including his stubborn sense of his own innocence in the face of "proud riches."<sup>75</sup> Yet that sense of security backfired because he mis-estimated whether or not he was seen as a threat: the rich man thought the poor were harmful, while the poor thought they were harmless.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, the rich man proved correct – in that the poor could actually impugn the rich man successfully in public space – although the son did not actualize that power until spurred by his father's murder. While the social world Latro describes does not have power balanced precisely between the two groups, as rich men still use their "throng of clients and parasites to squash the poor," the rich do not monopolize the exercise of social power.<sup>77</sup> If they choose to utilize it in specific ways, ones which take place in the public sphere – both to draw attention and insure safety – the poor of declamation, and the elites representing them in court, possess the ability to implement, or at least invoke, a democratization of *aequitas*. In actual legal practice, across the span of this study, those of lower legal status were discouraged from charging those of higher status in court and could be subject to greater punishments if they lost.<sup>78</sup> The only option for the

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<sup>75</sup> 10.1.6: *contumax adversus fastidium divitiarum innocentia*.

<sup>76</sup> 10.1.7. Note a similar statement in *Decl. Maj.* 13.7, where the *pauper* mentions that "Rich men insult us poor people in this way as well: we seem so insignificant to them that they do not trouble to deny our charges" (*habent divites hoc quoque contra nos contumeliosum, quod non tanti videmur, ut negent*).

<sup>77</sup> 10.1.7: *Venit iste cum turba clientium ac parasitorum et adversus paupertatem totam regiam suam effundit*. For a detailed discussion of the interrelation of *pauperes*, the *parasitus*, and *reges* both rich and royal, see Richlin *fc* on kings in comedy.

<sup>78</sup> Garnsey 1970: 34-5. Even if they attempted to litigate against the rich, the evidence suggests that few cases would ever reach court, as the lower-status defendants could be easily refused a trial (41, 186).

hypothetical poor defendant would be to mobilize a patron, or, possibly, the social conscience of a larger community.<sup>79</sup>

It seems unmistakable that declamation students and educators, whether elites or lower-class educators instructing them, acknowledged the disparity between the ideal *aequitas* and real practice, and recognized that this created some difficulty for poor citizens. Fairness proved a malleable subject; the ventriloquized poor man could cleverly play it either way, either by appealing to the model egalitarianism of Sophistopolis' legal system, or by bemoaning its inequalities and pleading for sympathy. As we can see simply by the survival of these arguments, both approaches could and did score points toward his overall rhetorical goal, the approval of the audience – their value as declamations were not so much moral positions as expressions of how words and values and ideas could be represented to serve different rhetorical aims.<sup>80</sup>

Although, as with most rhetorical texts, the arguments cannot be taken at face value, the prominence of this theme lends credence to the idea that rhetorical students were actually compelled to compensate for the innate inequalities of the legal system. The implication behind warnings about disproportionate power is that (under ideal conditions) the legal system should provide solace for poor men who cannot obtain equitable treatment, and that elite advocates should correct this discrepancy. They could do so either by, when in real-world legal practice, intervening on behalf of the “David” versus the wealthy, elite “Goliath,” or by themselves contributing to decisions based on

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<sup>79</sup> Garnsey 1970: 191-2.

<sup>80</sup> Langlands 2006: 264.

*aequitas* which could support victimized poor litigants.<sup>81</sup> While the material of declamation does not make this clear, we can imagine this process mostly being carried out through the patron-client relationship. *aequitas* itself was looked on in a positive light; by introducing competing notions about the state of *aequitas* within its unreal world, declamation engendered discussions of equality, forcing students to push, at least in the courtroom, toward an idealized, egalitarian process. Responsibility lay with the elites, the audience and performers of declamation, to counterbalance the influence of wealth by consciously favoring (or at least listening to) the claims of the underclass. By aiming toward parity in legal representation, declaimers exhorted their hypothetical juries to repair legendary “Roman” society, imagining, at least for the sake of argument, a world where rich and poor interacted as equals.

### **The One Thing a Poor Man Owns**

Not all morally charged conflicts in declamation distill the merits of the poor into individual abstract nouns. Speakers often contrasted the priorities of the rich and poor man by focusing on the poor man’s belongings, or rather, belonging, because poor men in declamation frequently possess only a single item of value – usually an object, but also expressed in the person of a beloved family member. These “lone possessions” served as a locus for the poor man’s care, affections, and aspirational ambitions; the destruction of these possessions often provides the reason why the hypothetical *pauper* has brought the case to court. These objects often originated in the declamation’s theme and were fixated on by the declaimers as useful metaphors for the condition of poverty. Declaimers manipulated “lone possessions” with the aim of encapsulating the *pauper*’s moral

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<sup>81</sup> In the abstract, this mode of thinking has strong similarities to the image of the emperor as universal benefactor and protector of the weak in the High and Late Empire.

sentiments at the heart of the case, in opposition to the avarice and recklessness shown by the *dives*.

*Decl. Maj. XIII*, which involves a *pauper* whose rich neighbor poisoned his bees, provides a strong example of how the “lone possession” model operates. The poor man’s opening statement refers to a period before the crime “before I lost whatever I had,” stressing from the outset that the *dives* destroyed everything the poor man possessed: the bees.<sup>82</sup> He hammers the point home by remarking “nearly nothing is now left for me to lose” and “however insignificant the property taken from me by the rich man, what he left is even less” within the speech’s first paragraph.<sup>83</sup> Only after the point has been made twice is the emphasis softened to “nearly everything” in the third mention. The focus on the totality of the destruction not only establishes the rich man’s inconsiderate nature, but also opens up avenues for exploiting cultural images of the poor. If the poor man makes the transition from honorable apiarist to destitute beggar, the declaimer can utilize the *pauper*’s loss of dignity to his advantage. Before the crime, he can describe the *pauper* as the epitome of traditional, virtuous yeoman peasantry, and argue that the rich man’s acts prevented the moral uprightness of the poor man from being properly rewarded by good fortune; afterward, he can focus on his *pauper*’s destitution and the meagerness of his personal effects.

In situations where the possession is an object, the possession performs a financial or psychologically comforting purpose for its owner. The *pauper* of Pseudo-Quintilian

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<sup>82</sup> XIII.1: *ante quam quod habebam perdidit*.

<sup>83</sup> *prope nihil iam relictum est . . . sed quantum est, quod abstulerit mihi dives, minus est, quod reliquit*. This sentiment has some similarity to Juvenal’s portrait of the poor man Cordus, who “loses all his nothing” in an apartment fire (3.208-9: *perdidit infelix totum nihil*).

XIII mentions three times that the bees provided a potential escape from destitution in old age because the honey “would look after [his] poverty.”<sup>84</sup> When a *dives* burns down a poor man’s tree in *Controversiae* 5.5, the despondent *pauper*, after describing how he could not do without the tree, expounds at length about how the tree helped him imagine the forests owned by the rich (*sub hac arbuscula imaginabar divitum silvas*); he later contrasts his meager vista with the opulent villas and unnatural amusement parks of the wealthy. It is noteworthy that the speaker devotes more time to the tree that was burned than to his own house, which also was destroyed in the fire. As in the case of the bees, the poor man’s tree functions as an aspirational item: it becomes an imagined gateway into a carefree, wholesome, yet still pastoral, life – an image which the speaker contrasts with the power of the rich to rebuild nature for their own pleasure. Despite the moral difference, the *pauper*’s ambition to possess as much as his wealthy neighbor hints that the elite author of the declamation thought the poor envious of his neighbor’s social position. Even while performing in the persona of the virtuous poor, the speaker imagines the wealthy life, if lived in wholesome fashion, as the most desirable.

Most often a single family member provides the solitary object of the poor man’s affections. After a rich man’s parasite rapes a poor man’s daughter in *Decl. Min.* 252, the *pauper* states that he has “lost an honor, the poor man’s most precious asset; I have lost my daughter’s virginity.”<sup>85</sup> He immediately continues with an argument about the difficulties of finding her a husband, pointing to marriage’s value as an instrument of social or financial advancement ruined by the *dives*. Similarly, the *pauper* of *Decl. Min.*

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<sup>84</sup> XIII.3: *fetuque placidi gregis paupertatem tueri*.

<sup>85</sup> *Decl. Min.* 252.23: *Perdidi sine dubio honorem, pretiosissimum pauperum censum; perdi virginitatem filiae meae*.

337 speaks of the “hope for [his] children” which allowed him to suffer a rich man’s hatred until the rich man burned down his house with his family inside.<sup>86</sup> As with our first example, a daughter’s unfulfilled marriageability in *Controversia* 8.6 signifies the *pauper*’s stifled hopes for future success, as the *dives* marries a shipwrecked *pauper*’s daughter without her father’s consent.<sup>87</sup> When a rich man adopts and corrupts a poor man’s three sons in Calpurnius Flaccus 11, the *pauper* states that the *dives* has “taken away all the potential there was for a poor man.”<sup>88</sup> He protests that his hopes were entirely invested in his children, as they presented a (suitably vague) future benefit which the rich man snatched away. The end result, as always, is to leave the poor man stripped of all resources and hopes, except the possibility of seeking recompense through the skills of the declaimer.

This model, beyond evoking sympathy for the impoverished plaintiff, places in contrast the competing priorities of aggressor and victim as well as the concepts they hold dear. For instance, declaimers’ emphasis on the value of familial connections highlights the recklessness, lack of compassion, and disrespect for “family values” brought about by wealth. The bereaved widower of *Decl. Min.* 337 describes how his wife and children brought pleasure to his life,<sup>89</sup> which he contrasts with the uncouth and unnatural pleasures, sex with slaves and catamites (*illa ministerial, illi imitati feminas pueri*),

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<sup>86</sup> 337.16: *Adhuc odia illa quae contra me cotidie acuit fortius sustinebam spe liberorum.*

<sup>87</sup> A variant form occurs in Calpurnius Flaccus 29, where the *dives* takes advantage of a hero’s reward to marry one of a poor man’s two daughters, then asks to marry the other one after the first daughter commits suicide.

<sup>88</sup> *Quicquid esse potuit in paupere, totum dives accepit.*

<sup>89</sup> 337.14: For the father’s hope in his children, see above; as for the wife, he says she soothed his mind when he was exhausted from his rivalry with the *dives* (*quando me aemulatio nostra in foro fatigaverat, erat quae exciperet coniunx*).



enjoyed by his rich enemy.<sup>90</sup> A dying father at *Decl. Maj.* 9.8 reveals his willingness to lose his hands (the speaker, using the “lone possession” motif, calls them “the only resource of poor men”)<sup>91</sup> in exchange for securing his son’s ransom. The poor men value and understand kinship connections more than their rich counterparts.<sup>92</sup>

The deployment of this rhetorical trope presents a rhetorically charged image of the *pauper*’s economic situation. He owns only a miniscule amount more than nothing. His lone, cherished object symbolizes his moral superiority over a tyrannical plutocrat, as declaimers used the core concepts they could make the poor man signify – freedom, love of family, honest ambition – as tools to construct a negative portrait of the *dives* and what he symbolized. One result of this model is the seeming impossibility of declamation’s *pauper* having even a moderate income. This might simply be a function of the rhetoric – it would presumably undermine the declaimer’s argument if his poor subject were financially comfortable - but it nonetheless contributes to a one-dimensional image of the poor. They have only one possession in the entire world of any worth (and if the theme does not allow them that, then nothing). If they have only a single thing to lose, they live

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<sup>90</sup> 337.14.

<sup>91</sup> *quod unum pauperibus praesidium est, manus habeo*. Note the significance of the hands in connection with his poverty - as indispensable for manual labor, as creative tools, as thus containing the power for future earnings and success.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Bernstein 2009: 337-343 on the rich men of declamation commodifying human beings: “Speakers in the character of poor fathers or their children frequently claim that rich men’s economic circumstances discourage them from attaching too much affect to any single familial relationship. In comparison to poor men, rich men enjoy an increased ability to purchase or rent the sexual labor of other human beings. Thanks to their felicitous economic circumstances, they can also remarry more easily than the poor, bring up a greater number of children, and attract prospective adoptees without difficulty. As a result, according to the poor characters impersonated by Roman declaimers, they do not love their children or their wives as well as poor men do, as they can expect to compensate more readily in case of bereavement or disaffection” (337-8).

continually on the edge, with only the intervention of the elite patron or orator to preserve them from destitution.

### **The Figuration of Poverty in Declamation, or, “What is a poor man?”**

*Quid est pauper?* Trimalchio’s irruption in the *Satyricon* brings Agamemnon’s abortive declamation to a halt,<sup>93</sup> and not without good reason. While the joke means to illustrate Trimalchio’s ostentatious distance from his past life on a low rung of the social ladder, it still punctures the façade of declamation, asking for clarification of what the declaimer, as a matter of practice, takes for granted. Accepting the stock characters as unchanging and as not requiring elaboration stands among the first principles of declamation, and Agamemnon understandably balks at the question even being posed. Faced with his host’s challenge, the orator recoils at the first bit of resistance or alteration to his rehearsed peroration. But while perturbed Agamemnon does not actually answer his host’s joking outburst, only responding that it was clever (*urbane*), Trimalchio’s rhetorical question deserves an answer.<sup>94</sup> While Agamemnon might not have imagined that the figure of the poor man would require explanation, actual *pauperes* in declamation display an unexpected degree of variety. The *pauperes* of declamation characterization, disordered, multifaceted, and inconsistent, shifts several modes of behavior, fulfilling stereotypes at some points, and occasionally providing evidence for more complex modes of social interaction than his formulaic conflicts with the *dives* might initially imply.

Defining the circumstances of the declamatory poor involves separating component elements from an indeterminately mixed cocktail of attributes. The first part

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<sup>93</sup> *Satyricon* 48.

<sup>94</sup> If Agamemnon had been bold enough to answer, his response might have been along the lines of “Of course someone as rich as you wouldn’t be familiar with the *pauper*.” I am indebted Amy Richlin for her dissection of the issues at play in this passage.

of this section discusses elements of the poor man that fall under the category of “character” – images of the personality and living situations attributed to declamatory *pauperes*. These bits of information, repeated and modified through generations of students and performers, crafted and maintained an image of the poor that borrowed from prior literature and cultural tropes. The second part delves into the interactions of paupers with the upper classes, providing perspective on what elites thought about their own relationships with clients and poor people in general, including whether or not the classes should, or could, peacefully mix. Issues of voice and autonomy occur with some frequency, considering that declamation included headstrong poor persons representing themselves, if only through the medium of the declaimer. Given that the genre aimed to train its students for legal advocacy, the ventriloquizing of the poor raises the question of whether students and practitioners of declamation believed they should be allowed any voices of their own.

### **The Poor Men**

By and large, the paupers of declamation fit in with pictures of poor men whose economic situations correspond to common poverty. They largely fall into two varieties of representation, either as hardscrabble, virtuous, blue-collar folk or as destitute beggars starving to death. Examples from the first group, the yeoman-farmer class, include *pauperes* with surprising amounts of capital: some have moderate means, but none are aristocratic. Among them are the maligned poor host of *Decl. Min.* 301 (who owns a house and has sufficient resources to invite a friend to dinner), who expounds at length on his meager means (4) and describes foods which he can buy (10), not without mention of

the kindness he has shown despite the need for *frugalitas* (10).<sup>95</sup> Likewise, the poor man of *Decl. Min.* 332 has possessions to leave to his rich friend in his will. Other *pauperes* have enough wealth to own their own farms<sup>96</sup> and, in one case, devote a daughter to a priesthood.<sup>97</sup> Clearly poverty could encompass a wide range of conditions, including men of substantial resources, although none seem to occupy wellborn or voluntary poverty.

Poor men of means exist simultaneously with portraits of *pauperes* as destitute,<sup>98</sup> filthy,<sup>99</sup> or as beggars.<sup>100</sup> Declaimers often focused upon these characteristics – as at *Controversiae* 1.1, describing the sufferings of a father unsupported by aid from his children:

He approached, with his beard untrimmed and his hair disheveled, his limbs trembling not with age but with hunger, with a low, thin voice stifled by hunger so as to be barely audible, scarcely raising his sunken eyes.<sup>101</sup>

Such moments presented an opportunity to showcase one's rhetorical ability by skillfully describing the impoverished body. This portrait, of a destitute man barely clinging to life, presents a disturbing alternative to the comfortable yeoman farmer.<sup>102</sup> Declaimers

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<sup>95</sup> 301.10: *Alicuius humanitatis est nostra frugalitas.*

<sup>96</sup> *Controversiae* 5.5, *Decl. Maj.* XIII et al.

<sup>97</sup> *Decl. Min.* 252.

<sup>98</sup> *Decl. Maj.* 1.17, 9.19 et al.

<sup>99</sup> *Decl. Maj.* 5.9, *Controversiae* 1.1 et al.

<sup>100</sup> *Decl. Maj.* 5.1, 6, 9.18, *Decl. Min.* 368, *Controversiae* 6.8, et al.

<sup>101</sup> 1.1.8: *venit immissa barba capilloque deformi, non senectute sed fame membris tremantibus, summissa et tenui atque elisa ieiunio voce, ut vix exaudiri posset, introrsus conditos oculos vix allevans.*

<sup>102</sup> While this duality has been expressed elsewhere in the context of the difference between urban and rural poverty, declamations rarely include enough background information to fix the action in a specific place. Although the default setting might be assumed to be the Hellenistic city, details occasionally fix the action in a rural or agricultural setting.

recognized the distinction between different images of poverty, and occasionally exploited the wide gap between them, as in the elder Arellius Fuscus's line "I find it easier to praise poverty than to tolerate it."<sup>103</sup> The statement invokes idealized poverty, while undercutting it by including the more realistic, if sensationalistic, angle that poverty includes physical torment and deprivation. This coincides with episodes in the "lone possession" model where declaimers consciously employ both stereotypes by presenting the *pauper* as moving from the "subsistence poor" to the "destitute poor" as a result of the rich man's transgressions.

The possibility of social mobility largely goes unmentioned through declamation as a genre, despite numerous factors that might have spurred such a discussion: the traditionally-acknowledged virtues of the poor, the presence of slave and freedman *rhetoires* and *grammatici*, and the presence of social mobility within Roman culture. Seneca does mention how the brilliant and vicious star declaimer Titus Labienus suffered from "great poverty" (*summa egestas*); presumably his sparkling eloquence allowed him to transcend any financial need, although Seneca does not describe his social status.<sup>104</sup> But in declamation the constraints of the genre restrict the *pauper*'s access to social mobility. They cannot be rewarded for their virtue or compensated for their victimhood, because declamation replicates courtroom speeches but not verdicts. Aspirations such as the escape from poverty imagined by the beekeeper and the owner of the felled tree rank

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<sup>103</sup> *Controversiae* 2.1.18: *Facilius possum paupertatem laudare quam ferre.*

<sup>104</sup> *Controversiae* 10. pr. 4. This Labienus notably had his books burnt during the reign of Augustus; Seneca does note that he committed suicide in the tomb of his ancestors, indicating that Labienus belonged to the old nobility.

among the rare incidents in which poor men imagine a fate beyond their initial status.<sup>105</sup> Freedmen appear only once in all of declamation, in *Decl. Min.* 318, where one of the criteria in choosing an heir amongst multiple freedmen is determining who has lived more frugally.<sup>106</sup> Much as in numerous examples of the declamatory *pauper, frugalitas* matters when evaluating the lone *libertus*, probably by analogy to the poor man.

We might imagine freedman influence on the content of declamation in *Decl. Min.* 333, in which a poor young man travels to Athens and becomes a successful orator (with the necessary funding provided by a rich man), eventually finding a life of leisure (*otium*).<sup>107</sup> A social outsider earns a living through his proficiency in speech, much like the freedmen instructors associated with the genre. The author stresses the unlikelihood of the young man's circumstances; he describes his devotion to rhetoric as "contrary to what my means indicated,"<sup>108</sup> positing his success as exceptional and certainly beyond expectations for the typical *pauper*. Most declamatory poor men remained ensconced in mytho-historical poverty.

### **Rich Men, Poor Men**

The opposition of rich and poor men forms a key component of the invented world of declamation. The phrase *pauper et dives inimici* opens numerous declamatory themes, and animosity between the two characters is implicit in many themes that do not

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<sup>105</sup> *Decl. Min.* 13.2.5, *Controversiae* 5.5.

<sup>106</sup> 318.11: *uter vestrum frugalius vixerit*.

<sup>107</sup> 333.6.

<sup>108</sup> 333.6: *contra facultatum rationem mearum infelicis huius eloquentiae studiosus*.

state it directly.<sup>109</sup> While the hatred seems to be mutual, only the rich man normally acted upon it. Declamation's *divites* continuously abuse their greater social capital – they exploit the weakness of the poor by destroying their property, stealing their children, or murdering them in the streets.<sup>110</sup> Within the context of the moral education envisioned as a critical part of declamation, the ubiquity of this theme suggests a message to elite youth to avoid oppressing the helpless, despite their ability to do so (while not explicitly equating the student with the *dives*). That motivation would be further reinforced by having the students personally act out the role of advocate/*pauper* and accuse the wealthy transgressor. Given the frequency of the rich-poor enmity motif, antipathy between rich and poor, envisioned perhaps as natural, formed a core tenet of the declamatory mindset, a hatred that the idealized justice of the declamatory court worked to mollify. This class-based enmity was inherently disruptive to the ideal society, one of the greatest problems “Sophistopolis” had to solve.

Poor men in declamation overwhelmingly function as targets of violence and source of resources to be exploited by the rich. Out of the thirty-nine declamations which feature rich and poor men, our texts feature eleven murders of poor men (another one attempted),<sup>111</sup> four rapes of poor people<sup>112</sup> (plus three “thefts of children,” which includes

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<sup>109</sup> This phrase was enough of a cliché during the mid-first century CE to be the opening line of Agamemnon's interrupted declamation at *Satyricon* 48.

<sup>110</sup> *Decl. Maj.* XIII, *Controversiae* 8.6, 10.1, respectively.

<sup>111</sup> *Decl. Min.* 305, 337, 364, 379, *Decl. Maj.* 7, 11, *Controversiae* 10.1, Calpurnius Flaccus 6, 7, 17, 28 (attempted), 53. Note that I have counted multiple murders, as in the murder of both of the poor man's sons in Calpurnius Flaccus 7, as one instance of murder.

<sup>112</sup> *Decl. Min.* 252, 301, 343, 370.

one potential rape),<sup>113</sup> two destructions of the poor man's property,<sup>114</sup> two scenes of torture,<sup>115</sup> two times where the poor man is enslaved (one attempted),<sup>116</sup> and one cuckolding.<sup>117</sup> The genre presents the *pauper* as the repeated victim of socially disruptive acts, with only occasional reciprocal actions taken by the *pauper* against the *dives*. This trend highlights the ability of the rich to take direct action against others in order to achieve their wishes, as opposed to the poor, who must rely upon the intervention of the justice system or some other protector. In isolated incidents the poor man does attack the rich man, but such aggression is met with disproportionate retaliation, as in *Decl. Min.* 364, where a poor man jeers at a rich man and is later found murdered. Very rarely is the poor man the villain; at *Decl. Min.* 337, the poor man's accusations directed at a rich general lead to a mob murdering the general's family. Even this does not lead to the rich man invoking social mechanisms to solve problems of reciprocal violence: the general has his army burn the poor man's house down with his family inside. This trend figures social disruption as a largely one-way conduit: the rich abuse the poor. As included in a theme about a rich man who forced two poor exiles to fight each other to the death, rich men enjoy the "pleasure of excessive behavior" (*impotentiae voluptas*),<sup>118</sup> indulging their whims on the helpless. This formulation largely presents the *pauper* as morally superior to his wealthy counterpart, trapped on the receiving end of a society-wide feud.

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<sup>113</sup> *Controversiae* 8.6, Calpurnius Flaccus 11, 29.

<sup>114</sup> *Decl. Maj.* 13, *Controversiae* 5.5.

<sup>115</sup> *Decl. Min.* 269, *Decl. Maj.* 7.

<sup>116</sup> Calpurnius Flaccus 14, 17, 36 (attempted).

<sup>117</sup> *Decl. Min.* 279.

<sup>118</sup> *Decl. Min.* 305.1.



In terms of non-mediated actions between rich and poor, declamation presents violence and exploitation as the norm. Yet declamation also includes a striking number of cases which subvert this tendency, staging rich and poor as friends, romantic partners, or at least behaving courteously and considerately to one another. These cases lie primarily in the Pseudo-Quintilianic corpus; neither Seneca's collection nor that of Calpurnius Flaccus present the *dives et pauper* as anything but enemies.<sup>119</sup> This discrepancy might be explained by thematic unity imposed by or reflecting the preferences of a single compiler, author, or school of rhetoric, or perhaps a change in subject matter over time, as the Pseudo-Quintilianic corpus dates from later than our other sources. The presence of these scenarios in Pseudo-Quintilian, and Pseudo-Quintilian alone, might signify a greater interest in the place of poor persons in society, their relationship to those in power, and the will to ensure peaceable interactions between both classes.

As direct counterexamples to the more popular *inimici* opening, two declamations open with the blank statement that a rich and poor man were friends (*pauper et dives amici erant*).<sup>120</sup> In *Decl. Min.* 332 the attachment between the two men transcends even the rich man's death: the argument concerns the terminology of friendship contained in the two men's wills. The rich man bequeathed to the poor man whatever the poor man bequeathed to him, and when the poor man's will was opened, it is revealed that the poor man had left the rich man "all his possessions" (*omnium bonorum*). Squabbling ensues between the various inheritors, but the *amicitia* of the *dives et pauper* never comes into question, even though the poor man himself worried his affection will be doubted

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<sup>119</sup> The lone exception is *Controversiae* 2.1, where a poor man demonstrates his willingness to let his son be adopted by a rich man.

<sup>120</sup> *Decl. Min.* 269 and 332. In addition, the sons of rich and poor men establish a friendship in *Decl. Maj.* 9.

because of the difference in social class: “poverty has this disadvantage, that whenever it enters into friendship with a superior, it brings a degree of doubt about whether the fondness is sincere or self-interested.”<sup>121</sup> The declaimer makes the point that the power disparity between *dives et pauper* induced a constant anxiety in both minds, but that the revelation of true affection in the will dispelled all doubts.<sup>122</sup> Clearly, despite the general atmosphere of antipathy in declamation, friendship between the classes was not unthinkable.<sup>123</sup>

Situations where rich and poor become involved in romantic connections further undermine the norm of hostility between the two. Most often it involves the children of the rich and poor men; only once does the *dives* or *pauper* himself enter into marriage.<sup>124</sup> When rich loves poor, declaimers acknowledge that their acts break social barriers and arrange their rhetoric to defend the virtue of cross-class marriage. In *Decl. Min.* 259 the poor man rescues the rich man’s daughter after a shipwreck and pretends to have raped her in order to necessitate a marriage, to which the daughter agrees; when it comes to

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<sup>121</sup> 332.3: *Habet autem hoc incommodi paupertas, quod quotiens ad amicitiam superioris accessit, adfert aliquid dubitationis fide an utilitatibus amet.*

<sup>122</sup> 332.3-4: *tenuitas mea adferebat hanc ei dubitationem . . . mortem esse quae de animis diceret verum.*

<sup>123</sup> A less absolute version of cross-class friendship occurs in *Decl. Min.* 269, where tensions over money complicate an initial relationship of trust between rich and poor. When a tyrant comes to power, he assumes that a poor man is safeguarding a rich friend’s savings and tortures him and his sons; after the tyrant’s death, the rich man returns from exile and claims he had deposited his money with his poor friend, submitting his own slaves for torture to prove his claim. One might note the parallel between the torture here used to indict the poor man and the theme of *Decl. Maj.* 7, where a *pauper* offers to undergo torture in order to convict the *dives* of murdering the poor man’s son. While the theme does not imply which side tells the truth, the declamation assumes that at least one side has broken faith. The text of the declamation (which presents the rich man’s case), unlike 332, does not imply that social tensions undermined their friendship, but simply that the poor man lied about the money. His status as possible villain challenges the ubiquity of the rich man’s place in that role. That said, the text, unlike 269, expresses no skepticism as to the ability of members of the two classes to be friends.

<sup>124</sup> *Decl. Min.* 259. The circumstances of these situations, wherein the children of two men in opposition come together in a relationship culminating in marriage, owes its setup to, at the very least, Plautus’ *Aulularia*.

light that she had not been violated, her father wishes to disown her. The argument, defending the girl's position, ignores any notion that poverty should in any way undermine the legitimacy of their marriage, instead focusing on the faithfulness of the poor man in rescuing her (9), and the miracle of her safety (13-14). In the solitary section where his poverty enters the argument, she rebukes admonitions that she should leave her poor husband, stating that his poverty "did not count against him before. . . . I will not leave him nor call him poor. For in marriage we share all things."<sup>125</sup> His virtue overrides his financial situation, and she derides the descriptor "poor" (*pauperem*), either by assuming it herself and denying its ability to cause shame, or by presupposing that her inheritance would improve his finances and propel him into the propertied classes. In both hypothetical formulations their affection, with or without financial rewards, overcomes the economic distance between them.

A similar situation, where marriage serves as an unexpected tool to pre-empt predicted arguments about class, arises in *Decl. Min. 257*, when a poor man's son uses the dowry from a rich man's daughter to ransom his father from pirates. He is then disowned. In the voice of the poor son, the speaker rebukes his poor father's assertion that he and his wife make a bad match (*negat idoneam esse matrimonio meo locupletem*), asserting the moral innocence of his bride and the finality of the marriage.<sup>126</sup> He argues that he was not prejudiced against his bride for her riches, and his rich father-in-law did not hate him for his poverty, and denies any intimations of natural enmity between

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<sup>125</sup> 259.22: *Pauper est. Non solebat hoc illi apud te nocere . . . <nec> relinquam nec dico pauperem; nam in matrimonio quidem <bona sunt quodam modo communia>*. The last phrase is a reconstruction, but must refer to a positive relation between marriage and their disparate material statuses.

<sup>126</sup> 257.7: "She is still your daughter-in-law, and even you admit she did nothing wrong" (*quam nihil peccasse tu quoque confiteris*).

the rich and the poor.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, he denies that wealth has negatively affected his bride's character,<sup>128</sup> claiming that both classes are inherently decent despite the bigotry of the elder generation. His defense of his *dives* bride also anticipates any potential attack on *luxuria* and seems to aim towards an inclusive and less-stereotyped view of class affairs, with both sides as morally equivalent.

A similar setup occurs in *Controversiae* 5.2, where a poor son marries a rich man's daughter when the poor father is rumored to have died overseas. When the poor man returns and disinherits his son, the son fights back against preconceptions about the *dives-pauper* conflict, arguing that "hatred of wealth is an empty sort of fame."<sup>129</sup> Much like the denial that poverty should cause shame, this argument casts the "empty" attacks on wealth as flaccid stereotypes – which would prove a useful opportunity for the declaimers to advertise their skills by pointing out the clichés of their genre and crafting new and nuanced arguments. In a certain sense, this line is a microcosm of arguments spurred by deviations from the "*dives vs. pauper*" norm. According to these episodes, marriage between classes is at least acceptable, if not beneficial.<sup>130</sup> However, as with all our examples, the possibility of marriage only happens when an outside incident removes one *inimicus* from the picture or gives a golden opportunity for the lovers to present a *fait accompli*. Implicit in these formulations is the idea that either the rich or poor men would

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<sup>127</sup> 257.8.

<sup>128</sup> 257.8: "She is rich." So you can say: "She will be arrogant and put on airs?" a mocking question which implies that such a character change would be ridiculous ("Dives est." Numquid ergo hoc dicere potes: "Superbior erit et fastidiet?")

<sup>129</sup> 5.2: *Vanum gloriae genus odium divitiarum.*

<sup>130</sup> This, of course, only applies to marriages which occur by misunderstanding or with the complicity of the marrying parties, if not their families. In situations such as Calpurnius Flaccus 29, where the rich man uses force or legal chicanery to marry his poor enemy's daughter (shades of the Verginia story), the marriage earns great opprobrium.

have interfered and prevented the lovers from engaging in wedlock unless abnormal events had intervened.

Leaving behind the realms of *amicitia* and *coniugium*, declaimers also stress the positive associations caused by charity and kindness from the rich to the poor, setting a model for ideal social interactions in Sophistopolis. A rich young defendant in *Decl. Min.* 260 is accused of harming the state for maintaining disowned persons at his own expense. He defends his actions by claiming an emotional motivation, binding his own happiness to the well-being of the needy. He asks “What am I to do with my feelings? . . . Every time I see an unlucky man, lacking even the necessities of life, I can’t hold back my tears.”<sup>131</sup> *Decl. Maj.* 5.6 parallels this formulation of charity as a natural component of human kindness, stating that “What even among children and parents is so common and universal as the idea that each person should dispel the hunger of another? God the maker himself . . . intended us to help each other and render assistance for our common good.”<sup>132</sup> We might see complementary evidence about the common and, ideally, frequent nature of beneficence in *Minor Declamations* 333 and 344, where, respectively, a rich man sponsors a poor man’s rhetorical education, and a rich young man purchases a prostitute on behalf of his poor counterpart.

To return to *Decl. Min.* 260, the declaimer’s emphasis on the “common good” connects not only to a conception of ideal society incorporating reciprocal friendship (despite its separation into rich and poor), but also to an atmosphere of cooperation and

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<sup>131</sup> 260.10: *Quotiens infelicem vidi aliquem et necessarij etiam victus egentem, lacrimas tenere non possum. Controversiae* 10.4.19-20 similarly features an array of women paying alms to beggars, because they imagine such vagrants might be their abandoned sons.

<sup>132</sup> *Quid etiam inter liberos ac parentes tam commune, tam publicum, quam ut alicuius famem proximus quisque depellat? Voluit nos ille mortalitatis artifex deus in commune succurrere et per mutuas auxiliorum vices in altero . . . asserere.*

mutualism in the perfect city. His arguments stress that maintaining the destitute is an honorable act (*non potest honestiore via impendere*) (8), pointing out that neither he nor they should suffer any shame because of their social position, they for being poor, he for being rich and helping them (17-18). Additionally, the civic character of beneficence matters: his actions preserve the lives of citizens as well as their dignity (*dignitatem civium servasse*) (14). By assisting the poor, he provides a public benefit along the lines of municipal or imperial euergetism.<sup>133</sup> His summation of the civic-minded platform - “A man has put his wealth to the public good if, when he is rich, nobody is poor, nobody in want”<sup>134</sup> – posits an ideal relationship between *dives et pauper* in Sophistopolis, an ideal contradicted by the picture of the rich often brutalizing the poor.

While acts of civic euergetism might provide an abstract method of reconciling the image of rich and poor as enemies, they also deny the ability of the poor man to create his own fate. The limited options available to the poor to seek justice, retribution, or vindication form a persistent element in declamatory narratives. Reciprocal violence against the rich man is rarely asserted as an option. The *pauper* must seek justice through the assistance of an elite man, the proxy of the declaimer, in order to appeal to an admittedly unreliable legal system. The only additional option, rarely deployed, is, at great personal risk, to rouse the community’s sense of shame against the rich (as in *Controversiae* 10.1). To obtain any justice, the poor man must rely on the assistance of one elite man versus another.

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<sup>133</sup> Considering the imperial nature of mass beneficence in Rome, especially after the first century CE, this claim might represent a quiet assertion of support for the principate and its social policies.

<sup>134</sup> 260.16: *Opes suas in publico posuit quo locuplete nemo pauper est, nemo eget*. Note the use of “*pauper*” – a status which, if the rich were to fulfill their obligations, should not exist.

## The Poor Man's Voice

Declamation's array of speeches made in the voices of the victimized poor implies that elites believed poor persons had the capacity to successfully and eloquently speak for themselves in court. Yet declamation as a form of performance problematizes the question of whether *pauperes* have any substantive voice. When they speak out in court, their plea, via the rules of declamation, comes in an elite man's voice. The puppeting of brave speech from the poor man rubs against the tautology of the exercise – of course the poor man can speak for himself, because he is speaking, in the form of the elite *declamator*. In declamatory practice few, if any, poor men would have the opportunity to lend their voices, or authentic experience, to the *faux-pauperes*. While I would hesitate to connect declamation with the actual experiences of the poor, the genre does not present an optimistic picture of their ability to defend themselves.

Modern commentators on the social history of declamation have pointed out the threat of voicelessness which affects declamation's poor litigants. Bloomer 1997 states that declamation equates itself with “the possibility of speech” (68) by supplying voices for the physically wronged and the socially dispossessed.<sup>135</sup> Tabacco 1978 insists that the poor man of *Decl. Maj. XIII* commits an act of social rebellion just in appealing to the courts,<sup>136</sup> although the text does not overtly describe his act in such terms. Even if it refutes the silence imposed by elite paternalism,<sup>137</sup> the ubiquity of the declamatory *pauper's* speech would undermine any understanding of it as rebellious; it seems more

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<sup>135</sup> Bloomer 1997: 68.

<sup>136</sup> Tabacco 1978: 50.

<sup>137</sup> Bloomer 1997: 70 argues that the act of the elite in giving voices to the poor resists the letter of the law and refutes the silence imposed by paternal speech, but the result of declamation-as-speech-act is the same: “poor” voices and words are replaced by “rich” counterparts.

likely that, in declamation's fantasy world, the poor could simply speak their minds regardless of the way the world outside of declamation operated. Clearly this topic deserves a closer look, and a focus on what the declaimers thought about the possibility of poor people's speech.

Threats of voicelessness did not often affect the *pauper* and his ability to express himself. Rarely do declaimers, talking as poor men, express an unwillingness to speak. Although one could point to the patterns of violence perpetrated against the poor as evidence enough, the excerpts collected in *Controversiae* 10.1<sup>138</sup> constitute the only examples of the *pauper* revealing any reticence in speaking. Albucius Silus's speech has the pauper say that fear keeps him from making an accusation, an argument also contained in Porcius Latro's question "Do you wonder that a poor man has not summoned up the courage to accuse a rich man?" (*Si pauper accusandi divitis animos non sumpsit, miramini?*) as well as in a similar turn of phrase by Julius Bassus.<sup>139</sup> In this situation fear of bodily harm motivates the *pauper* to consider keeping silent. Concern for niceties and class boundaries never enter the conversation; paupers never comment that they should not speak, or that social graces prevent them from doing so.<sup>140</sup>

Several episodes explicitly state that poor men possess an innate freedom of speech which they can and do use against the rich. The *pauper* of *Decl. Maj.* 9.3

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<sup>138</sup> As above, part of a declamation based upon the danger a *pauper* might incur from a public accusation of a *dives*.

<sup>139</sup> 10.1, 6, 2. In the *colores* on this theme some speakers openly attacked the rich man, some said nothing against him, and some took a different path, such as asking the rich man to help with the investigation (10). The case presents a variety of options, only one of which involves a discussion of the possibility or impossibility of speech. The poor man was not "forced" to attack the rich man – the declaimer had other choices.

<sup>140</sup> The logical end result of this line of thinking might be a portrait of the ideal courtroom as a place of free, equal speech, which would fit with the conceptions of *aequitas* discussed above.



describes *parrhesia* as a natural result of the circumstances of poverty: “For it is natural for a poor man, since he lacks other possessions, to speak freely.”<sup>141</sup> *Decl. Min.* 301 expresses the same sentiment in similar language.<sup>142</sup> Since poor men have no property to lose,<sup>143</sup> the impotence of possible retribution means that they alone have the power to speak out against abuses of power committed by the rich man. *Decl. Maj.* 11.2 has the rich speaker interpret the poor man’s freedom of speech in a negative light, describing a man who “because of his own destitution took up vicious speech against his social betters, a man who thought it a form of liberty to hate the best men.”<sup>144</sup> Even when the exercise of free speech defies good civic behavior, the speaker is not compelled to deny it to the poor. Whether for good or ill, it seems that an unlimited freedom to voice grievances falls within the purview of declamation’s *pauper*.

Outside the stereotyped world of declamation, Quintilian’s *Institutiones* support the notion that people outside the ruling class could express themselves through public speaking. Quintilian refers intermittently to the speech of poor people and rustics, providing evidence for a possible connection between the claims of declamation and actual practice. He claims that even an illiterate peasant (*rusticus illiteratusque*) aware of his case will speak better in the courtroom than an unprepared orator.<sup>145</sup> Although presented as only a potentiality, it is substantiated further by a later comment that even

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<sup>141</sup> *nam et paupertatis est proprium, quando alia deficiant, exercere libertatem.*

<sup>142</sup> 301.1: *esse nobis aequam etiam adversus divites libertatem.*

<sup>143</sup> A point which contradicts the “lone-possession” model described above.

<sup>144</sup> *Homo, qui omnem adversus superiora rabiem de sui vilitate sumebat, qui genus libertatis putabat odisse maiores.*

<sup>145</sup> 2.21.16.

*rustici* do not use vulgar hand gestures when delivering speeches.<sup>146</sup> While perhaps only a figure of speech, this clause suggests the possibility that Quintilian had experience with people he considered “peasants” speaking in public, as corroborated by his statements that “hyperbole is employed even by the mob, rustics, and the uneducated”<sup>147</sup> and that *indocti et rustici* do not hesitate to address important subject matter at the start of speeches.<sup>148</sup> Admittedly the historicity of Quintilian’s comments on unlearned speech cannot be fully trusted, but he does not present peasant speech as out of the ordinary, and certainly not as a breach of social convention or boundaries.

In this regard Quintilian seems to agree with declamation’s elementary claims about the character of the poor. If his assertions were based on facts, then they corroborate the underlying thesis of declamation that the poor were able to defend themselves effectively in court against the abuses of the powerful. But despite the respect afforded the poor as speakers, and the idealized vision of a legal system that would listen to them, the purpose of poor speech in declamation was not really about the poor at all. Expressions of universal verbal freedom were vocalized by aristocrats in training for careers where, at best, they might occasionally speak on behalf of a working-class community. Declamation did not aim to allow the poor to speak for themselves. The voices of the poor in Sophistopolis were specters of a past that had never existed, part of declamation’s antiquarian fantasy of how a society should work.

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<sup>146</sup> 11.3.117.

<sup>147</sup> 8.6.75: *usu vulgo quoque et inter ineruditos et apud rusticos.*

<sup>148</sup> 10.3.16. Admittedly the terms *rustici*, *ineruditi*, and *indocti* are not entirely congruous with *pauperes*, nor does Quintilian use *pauper* in conjunction with this topic (he does use poverty-coded words in the *Institutiones*, but always in figurative senses); yet the subject groups he does credit with the qualities mentioned in this paragraph do map fairly well onto how an elite man might picture the non-elite Roman world.

## Conclusion

A series of distances - the span between declaimer and ordinary people, between legal exercise and judiciary practice, between the quasi-legendary setting of declamation and the contemporary “present” of imperial Rome - must ultimately inform our understanding of declamation’s contribution to social history. The moralized past (as with Livy) creates an ahistorical ideal which provides a model of simplified laws and situations for declaimers to play within. As Beard argues, declamation functions as a living mythology, framing an image of a quasi-historical, legendary Roman state whose moral components can be modified and fruitfully rearranged.<sup>149</sup> In terms of class relations, this environment incorporated the traditional idea of the virtuous *pauper*, although the character of the *dives* is more of a surprise. He is often unabashedly evil, and the poor man in these situations deserves nothing but sympathy. While this setup is not universally applied, the exceptions underscore the stock scenario – *dives et pauper* as fundamentally opposed in social position and moral fiber. In these cases the poor must be given fair consideration as a counterbalance to uncivilized behavior, in the form of the *aequitas* which the legal system should ideally provide to its citizens.<sup>150</sup>

Declamation’s frequent critique of the legal system, and the continual violence between different economic classes, depicts enmity between rich and poor as a social problem to be resolved via the speaker’s rhetorical skill. While it might remain an open question to what degree declaimers self-identified with declamation’s *divites*, the

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<sup>149</sup> Beard 1993: 60.

<sup>150</sup> Declamation, despite its links to New Comedy, tends not to concern itself with questions of citizenship; it is probably safe to assume that all free characters in the genre, unless specified otherwise, possess Roman citizenship; otherwise they would not be eligible for the Roman legal system.

constant aggression of the rich man provided a reminder that the unabashed exercise of the power concordant with wealth disrupted the community and aggrieved citizens who had at least a theoretical stake in the workings of the state. Declamation's focus on the ramifications of class discord seems to promote several points to young declaimers: one, that the poor frequently were, or were in danger of being, victimized by their social superiors; two, that the poor deserved legal protection and compensation for bearing the brunt of elite aggression; three, that the legal system by itself might prove inadequate to rectify the social rift and restore order; and four, that it was the duty of rich patrons and advocates to act in the interests of the poor and uphold a vision of society that was, if not as devoted to justice and ideals as "Sophistopolis," a more pragmatic version thereof. In doing so it educated them in how to represent others, including, but not only, clients of lower social background, while acclimatizing them to the position of patron.<sup>151</sup>

While perhaps the impact remains unquantifiable, declamation as a whole presents the poor as virtuous characters who deserve justice and beneficence. Never is it questioned that they should receive justice, and declaimers consistently argue that the poor lead virtuous lives and embody traditional virtues. Poverty does fall under attack on several occasions, mostly in relation to poor men being corrupted by the need for income,<sup>152</sup> but even in these situations they are presented as sympathetic characters forced into bad circumstances. Poor citizens in declamation are presented as worthy of

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<sup>151</sup> Gunderson 2003, approaching this problem, posits asymmetrical power is a basis for many of the common types of speech (233). Almost all Romans had to concern themselves with how to deal with badly behaving social superiors, but also being themselves superior to another person – and declamation fits this paradigm. Perhaps the emphasis on offering charity, and the necessity of maintaining nominally fair treatment towards the lower classes, form the lone bright spots in this tale of stolen voices.

<sup>152</sup> *Decl. Min.* 325, 345, and 363.

respect, and the beggars among them as worthy of the charity of others.<sup>153</sup> Declamation worked to instill the notion of charity as part and parcel of the virtuous elite life. Much of the social support imagined was filial: in many declamations sons have the duty to support fathers in order to fulfill familial obligations;<sup>154</sup> but beneficence was also extended to the declamatory poor. Its prominence supported the notion that elites were duty-bound to construct and maintain support systems for those less well off – not just kin, but also community members outside the family unit. Charity to the disadvantaged was a major part of declamation’s ideal society, and perhaps acclimated young aristocrats with participating in various forms of real-world beneficence.

If the utopian vision underlying the intellectual world of declamation hypothesizes a community with egalitarian justice and a scrupulously maintained equilibrium between rich and poor interests, it assigns the responsibility of maintaining this relationship to members of one segment of the community. Participants in declamation, who were limited to those with the financial means to pay for an education, were prepared to speak in the voices of the poor, for the poor, but in ways which replicated and reinforced actual social divisions. We might note that late declamations such as those of Calpurnius Flaccus and Pseudo-Quintilian were operating in a society where legal distinctions, such as the split into *honestiores* and *humiliores*, were becoming more rigid.<sup>155</sup> In such environments orators might be prompted towards advocacy for the

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<sup>153</sup> Declamation’s version of *paupertas*, as in other places, establishes no lexical difference between the two.

<sup>154</sup> This relationship is at the heart of Gunderson’s analysis of declamation and Roman identity.

<sup>155</sup> Garnsey 1970 argues that the legal division between *honestior* and *humilior* was not officially in place during the reign of Hadrian, although some examples do attest a dual-penalty system (157-161). The unclear dating of the Pseudo-Quintilianic corpora does not allow a clear indication of whether or not the *honestior/humilior* system applies to them; however, the complex calculation of human worth based on

poor in order to prepare them for the needs of the rhetorical “market,” or to fill a deficit in legal representation in the greater society. Along the way, they were prompted to be generous and understanding to their social inferiors – mimicking, perhaps, the image of the emperor as beneficent patron.<sup>156</sup> The higher orders of society, represented in Sophistopolis as the hardhearted *dives*, but in declamatory practice as magnanimous advocates, were both the poor man’s best friend and his worst enemy. The result is the paradoxical status of the rich within declamation as responsible for the ills that befall the poor, but also, in the person of the declaimer, the one who can ensure for them justice and protection. The ultimate fate of the *pauper*, for good or ill, lay in the ability of the elite students of declamation to curb, reward, or replicate the actions of the malignant *dives*.

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birth, economic status, and social position behind such a system had its roots in Roman upper-class methods of determining personal worth. Even without a formal division, the power of wealth could override other factors (Garnsey 1970: 23-5). If the *honestior/humilior* division does apply, it is no wonder that declamation figures the fundamental difference between this pair of litigants as *dives et pauper*, not plebeian and patrician, or some other formulation.

<sup>156</sup> I discuss monumental iconography related to this concept in Chapter Five. Cf. also Veyne 1990 and Yavetz 1969.

## Chapter Three

### Poverty and Provinciality: Looking Downward in the Time of Trajan

#### Introduction

With the end of the Julio-Claudian era comes an observable change in the elite social imagination concerning poverty and its place in society, specifically tied to new aspects of self-representation and new groups in power. At the end of the first and early second century CE, poverty emerged as a thread in Roman public discourse, as an element of imperial benefaction and as a way to advertise oneself vis-à-vis previous trends in statecraft. After the civil war of 68-9, a new dynasty brought a new paradigm to the business of imperial government and the rhetoric of poverty in political space. In contrast to the extravagance of Nero, the Flavians exploited their relatively humble Italian roots to create a palatable image for the new regime, emphasizing *frugalitas* in the work of government. Vespasian's fiscal prudence, summed up in *pecunia non olet*,<sup>1</sup> provided a lasting theme for the dynasty. Doing so played upon associations of life outside Rome (in this case, Italy) with virtuous, agrarian, early Roman society. He, and others aristocrats of the Flavian and early Antonine eras, mixed Italian and, to some degree, provincial identity with pre-existing attitudes about virtues tied to industrious country life. This new conceptual interconnectedness of outsider identities and morally virtuous frugality, a combination I will refer to as "provinciality," took hold among a particular generation. Vespasian was not the only man outside the traditional families of the Senate looking for a share of power in Rome. Foreign and Italian aspirants to

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<sup>1</sup> Suetonius, *Vespasian* 23.

senatorial positions and the imperial court attempted to manipulate Roman cultural images of rural life, and the public images of the new government, to their advantage.<sup>2</sup>

The age also saw a new wave of public support directed downwards. While public welfare in the form of *frumentationes* and other benefactions to Roman citizens had been a part of life in Rome for generations, Trajan (perhaps continuing a policy of Nerva) implemented the *alimenta*, which ostensibly aimed to provide financial support for the needy outside the capitol. Institutions of public welfare that had previously only benefited the urban *plebs* now existed, in a subcontracted form, throughout Italy. Trajan's benefactions were not unprompted; he latched onto pre-existing forms of municipal euergetism and created a more systematic network of support, encouraging large landowners and rural magnates to do the same. Pliny the Younger followed in the footsteps of his emperor, forming a new alimentary scheme for his hometown and utilizing it to advance his personal prestige. Provinciality and its connections to the virtues of *paupertas* entered into the world of the elite as a concept to be exploited for public and professional gain. Poverty and its attendant virtues proved their use to emperors and aristocrats alike.

The survival of texts from several authors who not only commented on and, to some degree, participated in this social trend offers an excellent opportunity to explore how provinciality was negotiated during this era. Latin prose from in and around the reign of Trajan forms a concentrated corpus of texts during a narrow span of time (90-130 CE), which provides a window for understanding the attitudes and ideas of, if not an entire generation, at least a particular social circle. As surviving correspondence proves,

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<sup>2</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 333 makes a similar observation, although he claims that their ideological stance was essentially anti-Neronian.



Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny the Younger knew one another well and maintained reciprocal social bonds.<sup>3</sup> While their views on the new developments around them might not align precisely, they were products of the same world. Delving into the representations of poverty and its place in their texts provides a opportunity to understand the new trajectories of poverty's disordered discourse in an era where *paupertas* and its attendant virtues had found a greater prominence in affairs of state.

### Questions Concerning Terminology

*Paupertas* and *frugalitas*, in contrast with their meaning for Livy, do not form integral parts of these authors' ideological platforms. Suetonius and Tacitus rarely focus upon poverty as a particular point of interest. Pliny's appropriation of *frugalitas* as part of his self-portrait as model aristocrat, and his financial beneficence in the form of his *alimenta* and rebates to his tenants, never overwhelms the rest of his self-presentation. A general glance at how our authors use the vocabulary of poverty, especially *paupertas*, seems to indicate that its most prevalent associations were wellborn poverty: former elites who had lost their former wealth. This proclivity perhaps speaks to the greater visibility of those nobles who could not maintain their traditional social station in this era. This does not exclude occasional discussions of the poor and of economic differentiation.

Turning first to Suetonius: the terms *pauper(tas)* and *inopia* are almost entirely absent from the *Twelve Caesars*.<sup>4</sup> Caligula falsely claims *paupertatem* after the birth of

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to the famous letters between him and Tacitus about the eruption of Vesuvius, Pliny refers to Suetonius as his *contubernalis* (a term he frequently uses to describe his friendly associates), and secured for him the coveted *ius trium liberorum* (10.95). Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1990: 4.

<sup>4</sup> Pliny's presentation of *paupertas* links too closely to his self-presentation as a judge of *frugalitas* to be easily separated from this chapter's discussion of that topic, which follows below.

his daughter as a scheme to bilk money from the Senate.<sup>5</sup> Julius Caesar is reported to have lent money or given generous gifts to anyone who requested them, except for criminals, prodigals, and the destitute (*quos inopiae vis urgeret*).<sup>6</sup> Beyond these mentions *paupertas* does not occur, and *inopia* is used only to indicate non-economic deficiencies. The only exceptions to this tendency are from the narratives of the childhoods of Nero, Titus, and Domitian, who all are recorded as experiencing poor living conditions in early youth.<sup>7</sup>

Poverty and social mobility emerge as critical components in several of the short biographies in the *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*. Although the text (as mentioned in Chapter Two) thoroughly demonstrates the power of rhetoric and language as tools for achieving fame and fortune,<sup>8</sup> grammarians who had reached the apex of success are frequently attested as living in poverty. The prolific author Marcus Pompilius Andronicus, *inops atque egens*, was compelled to sell his masterwork; the freedman Publius Valerius Cato was buried in a hovel “in the deepest poverty and almost destitution” (*in summa pauperie et paene inopia*).<sup>9</sup> When assessing the function of poverty in these texts, several possible answers arise: Suetonius’ data may be factual; his inclusion of details about scholars and poverty might call attention to their dependence upon inattentive and unreliable patrons; the frequency of mentions of social mobility and

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<sup>5</sup> *Cal.* 42.1.

<sup>6</sup> *Jul.* 27.2: *nisi quos gravior criminum vel inopiae luxuriaeve vis urgeret.*

<sup>7</sup> *Nero* 5.1, *Titus* 1.1, *Dom.* 1.1. The phenomenon of recorded impoverished births for several emperors of this age will be addressed in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1990: 32 addresses the real-world impact of the rhetorical schools on social mobility, effects of which we see recorded in the *DGR*.

<sup>9</sup> *DGR* 8; 11.3.

low-status origins may indicate that they had ossified into typical details for such mens' lives. Finally, one might suspect the influence of poetic images of poverty in several of the *Lives*, as in the detail about Lucius Orbilius Pupillus that his own books admitted his poverty (*pauperem se*) and that he lived "under the tiles" (*sub tegulis*).<sup>10</sup> Included in the *Life of Publius Valerius Cato* sits a poem of Bibaculus which refers to meager living arrangements: a small shingled house, a country garden, and rustic foodstuffs (such as cabbages), all of which play into Roman associations of idealized life in the poor, rural countryside.<sup>11</sup> The sum of these observances, while not conclusive as to a single explanation, certainly leaves open questions about the social positions of such men and their economic status.

Compared to his contemporaries, Tacitus' use of the terminology of *paupertas* exhibits much greater variation. In his ethnographic works poverty appears as an occasional characteristic of non-Roman peoples: the Fenni are "strangely beastlike and disgustingly poor" (*Fennis mira feritas, foeda paupertas*), and the Osi and Aravisci tribes display "destitution and freedom equally" (*pari ... inopia ac libertate*).<sup>12</sup> In this second example the attribution of poverty and freedom to barbarian tribes supports Tacitus' strategy of pointing out flaws in Roman society through comparison with their uncivilized neighbors. Roman elites can enjoy luxury, but only within a culture of fear, whereas the tribes can act as they wish amidst their *inopia*.<sup>13</sup> Calgacus' speech in the

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<sup>10</sup> *DGR* 9.2. The reference is to living in the top floor of an *insula*, a cheap but unpleasant place to reside. Cf. Juvenal 3.

<sup>11</sup> *DGR* 11.3. The overall image presented by these details is similar, for instance, to the *Moretum*.

<sup>12</sup> *Germ.* 28.3, 46.3.

<sup>13</sup> This concept also occurs in Tacitus' extended discussion of the Fenni in 46, who abstain from money altogether, preferring to entrust themselves to fortune and fear rather than farm-labor or construction: *Sed*

*Agricola* also places *paupertas* outside the Roman frontier, in his statement that the Romans “behave greedily against the rich enemy, and covetously against the poor” (*si locuples hostis est, avari, si pauper, ambitiosi*) in his description of their insatiable desire for expansion.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not one chooses to interpret the speech as an honest critique of Roman imperialism, the speech’s context clearly establishes the tribe in the *pauper* camp, as opposed to the vast and destructive wealth of Rome the conqueror.

Tacitus includes numerous mentions of poverty in episodes from his histories which discuss social mobility. This is rarely considered a positive transition. As in the *DGR* of Suetonius, Tacitus attests to the tremendous power of rhetorical ability, in rags-to-riches narratives. In the *Annals*, Cassius Severus transcends his *sordida origo* through his speaking ability;<sup>15</sup> in the *Dialogus* Aper explicitly comments on eloquence and its effects on social mobility:

The more sordid (*sordidius*) and abject their birth, the more notorious the poverty (*paupertas*) and the difficult circumstances at the start of their lives, so much more brilliant and lustrous they are as examples of the usefulness of an orator's eloquence. [They succeed] without the recommendation of birth, without the support of riches.<sup>16</sup>

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*beatius arbitrantur quam ingemere agris, inlaborare domibus, suasque alienas fortunas spe metuque versare* (5). At 24.2, Tacitus stresses that the Germans hold spectacles not for profit (*quaestum*) or *mercedem* but only for the enjoyment of the audience, probably a comment on the state of affairs at Rome. Cf. Chamberland 2007: 142n30 and 136 for Tacitus on *merces*.

<sup>14</sup> *Agr.* 30.5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ann.* 4.21.

<sup>16</sup> *Dial.* 8.3: *Nam quo sordidius et abiectius nati sunt quoque notabilior paupertas et angustiae rerum nascentis eos circumsteterunt, eo clariora et ad demonstrandam oratoriae eloquentiae utilitatem inlustriora exempla sunt, quod sine commendatione natalium, sine substantia facultatum.* Cf. Goldberg 2012: 160 on Aper’s own brashness and pragmatism, and his pride in his rise from obscure origins in Gaul to high position in Rome.

This statement echoes Suetonius' repeated narratives of the lowliness of an orator's early status contrasting with his later glory; it comments on and criticizes those involved in this cultural trend. The potential for social mobility appears as a cause for concern elsewhere in the *Dialogus*, where Aper laments that the rich, childless, and powerful place their confidence in the young and poor, thus taking money away from the proper social class.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the *delator* Caepio Crispinus, who began life *egens ignotus*, used guile to undermine his military commander Granius Marcellus; he and others, according to Tacitus, left behind an example where the poor and shameless became rich through villainy.<sup>18</sup> Finally, poverty and social mobility appear as political farce when Claudius commends his freedman Pallas for his "early-life poverty" and "antique frugality" in an official decree, despite the fact that Pallas had three hundred million sesterces.<sup>19</sup>

The main picture of poverty, both common and wellborn, in Tacitus is as a factor that incites its sufferers to criminality, immorality, and cowardice; poverty, in a sentiment that would be familiar to Cicero and Sallust, induces the betrayal of traditional moral principles. When Gaul rises in revolt in 21 CE, the rebels are characterized as "those for whom poverty or fear from guilt gave the greatest stimulus to crime" (*ob egestatem ac metum ex flagitiis maxima peccandi necessitudo*).<sup>20</sup> Tacitus explains the bribing of the Vitellianist general Fabius Valens by the city of Vienne in light of Fabius' unlucky

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<sup>17</sup> *Dial.* 6: *ipsos quin immo orbos et locupletes et potentis venire plerumque ad iuvenem et pauperem.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ann.* 1.74: *dedit exemplum, quod secuti ex pauperibus divites.* See Syme 1958: 326, 562 for his discussion of Crispinus and other *delatores*, as well as the sordid origins of Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus at *Dial.* 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ann.* 12.53: *intra priorem paupertatem subsistere...possessor antiquae parsimoniae laudibus cumulabatur.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ann.* 3.40.

financial history. When he had hit upon a windfall, he indulged “the desires inflamed by lengthy poverty” (*accensis egestate longa cupidinibus*) and sank into criminal behavior.<sup>21</sup> This parallels Tacitus’ posthumous praise of Cneius Lentulus, in which the narrative emphasizes his innocent attainment of wealth after tolerating poverty, the implication being that he resisted a natural urge to depravity when in that condition.<sup>22</sup> We can see that “urge to depravity” in the famous passage at *Histories* 1.4, where the *sordida plebs*, the mob connected to the theater and arena, grow sad at the news of Nero’s death.<sup>23</sup> Their sympathy for Nero, exemplar of imperial excess, derived from his support for them even when they wasted their property. When Nero courted the mob during the races of 59, he brought onstage descendants of noble families, who sold themselves because of their destitution (*nobilium familiarum posteros egestate venales in scaenam deduxit*).<sup>24</sup> In a repurposing of the notion that poor persons are untrustworthy because their penury leaves them open to the highest bidder, so the impoverished nobility disgraced themselves through venality in a way which equated them with their social inferiors: one type of poverty meeting another. While one might question Tacitus’ appraisal of these aristocrats’ motivations, it is clear that, for him, poverty serves as a method of explaining their disgraceful behavior. For Tacitus both poverty and luxury can serve as forces which draw people away from moral rectitude.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Hist.* 1.66.

<sup>22</sup> *Ann.* 4.44: *bene tolerata paupertas, dein magnae opes innocenter partae et modeste habitae.*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Haynes 2003: 41.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 14.14.

<sup>25</sup> The senator Gallus Asinius’ defends contemporary luxury at *Annals* 2.33, arguing that antique parsimony existed only because of the state’s humble resources at that time. Tacitus as narrator clearly disapproves of Asinius’ argument, dismissing it as specious and as a confession of the Asinius’ failings (*confessio*

Questions of definition become blurred in the isolated moments where Tacitus attributes positive behaviors to the poor. The only indisputable moment of praise for *pauperes* occurs at *Annals* 15.54, where Tacitus, in a moment similar to Sallust's account of the diverse followers of Catiline, wonders at how people of diverse social groups, including rich and poor (*dites pauperes*), kept the Pisonian conspiracy secret for so long.<sup>26</sup> While undeniable, approval for the poor in particular is here diffused by the numerous other groups he names alongside *pauperes*, such as both sexes, and persons of every *ordo*. During the Great Fire, Tacitus includes an extended description of the anguish of the urban crowd, including those who save others from the inferno, "dragging free the infirm or waiting for them."<sup>27</sup> Additionally, some choose to perish instead of attempting to escape because of their love for kin who had perished. While this episode reveals virtues rare among the mob, it depends on a critical issue of definition in assessing Tacitus' perspective on the poor. Substantial sections of his two histories are concerned with mob psychology and the harsh characterization of groups from the lower orders, but often without making clear distinctions between slaves, freedmen, free citizens, foreigners, or any sort of economic classes.<sup>28</sup> Can we reconcile the Tacitean mob with any coherent picture, any coherent attitude, toward poverty and the poor?

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*vitiorum*); in general, this treatment falls in line with cultural attitudes imagining early Rome as a haven of virtuous, humble frugality.

<sup>26</sup> *Sed mirum quam inter diversi generis ordines, aetates sexus, dites pauperes taciturnitate omnia cohibita sint.* Obviously Tacitus' sympathy towards the goal of the conspiracy colors his appreciation of it. Martin 1981: 183-4 discusses various motivations amongst the participants, as well as the cross-class aspect included by Tacitus in quoting the last words of a centurion and a freedwoman alongside those of the elite philosopher Seneca.

<sup>27</sup> *Ann.* 15.38: *quique sibi quique aliis consulebant, dum trahunt invalidos aut opperiantur.*

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Mellor 1993: 36, 56-7, 81 on Tacitus' invariably harsh judgments of people acting in groups, especially the mob, and the way such judgments play into issues of class: "Tacitus' contempt for slaves, freedmen, and the lower classes displays the traditional Roman connection between morality and social

## Is The Mob Poor?

Tacitus generally regards the mob as an amorphous mass, without leaders, factions, or internal divisions. This is not to say, however, that the mob resists all definition.<sup>29</sup> In the *Annals* and *Histories* the mob has a “character,” a personality with distinct traits and tendencies, as well as a consistent uniformity of opinion (however inconstant that opinion may prove). Crowds never argue amongst themselves; the mob always acts as a unified entity. There appear to be few differences between mobs: one crowd often behaves like any other. Tacitus describes mutinies in the army in terms similar to urban mobs, as during the account of the near-sack of Aventium by a Vitellianist army at *Hist.* 1.69, when he mentions that “as usually happens, the crowd (*vulgus*) was vulnerable to sudden impulses, and prone to pity as much as it was excessive in cruelty.”<sup>30</sup> This accumulation of people, like the Roman mob, is described as a *vulgus* and subjected to a universalizing assumption about mob psychology.

While variations on this theme do exist in the historical works, the central mob in Tacitus’ works is the specifically Roman mob, rising from the population of the *urbs*. Numerous aspects of its “personality,” all negative, easily emerge: it is shallow, accusatory, obsequious, licentious, inconstant in its loyalties, unreliable, easily manipulated, credulous, greedy, prone to gossip, bloodthirsty, and in its lone attempt to exercise power over the future of the state (in support of Vitellius’ faction), cowardly in

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station” (57). Also, Martin 1981: 71, 91; Syme 1958: 194, 531-2, 562 on Tacitean contempt toward crowd behavior.

<sup>29</sup> For fuller discussions of the mob in Roman literature and history, see Millar 1998, Fagan 2011, and Yavetz 1969.

<sup>30</sup> *ut est mos, vulgus mutabile subitis et tam pronum in misericordiam quam immodicum saevitia fuerat.*



arms.<sup>31</sup> In the rare moments where Tacitus allots positive attributes to the mob, he qualifies them by mentioning how the mob's faults undermine its good intentions: its initial vigor decays into lassitude, and its unity of purpose quickly subsides.<sup>32</sup> These characteristics form a fairly consistent picture throughout Tacitus' surviving narratives, but one would hesitate to extrapolate that Tacitus he they applied to any specific social class beyond the most general notion of "the non-elites of Rome."<sup>33</sup> In characterizing the Tacitean mob and its relationship with *paupertas*, we must investigate to what degree the mob is figured as an economic class, rather than as a vaguely applied *turba*.

Tacitus is not generally inclined to portray the mobs of his histories in economic terms. Still, several occasions arise where he describes the urban proletariat using specific words which denote poverty. After the Great Fire, Nero opens his gardens and public buildings to the "destitute multitude" (*multitudinem inopem*) and moves to secure food supplies for them;<sup>34</sup> during a sudden flood of the Tiber the destruction of inns, flophouses (*tabernis et cubilibus*), and apartment-buildings (*insularum*) coincides with a deluge of hunger, "unemployment," and scarcity of provisions (*fames in vulgus inopia quaestus et*

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<sup>31</sup> *Ann.* 1.39, 2.41, 14.14, 14.15, *Hist.* 1.32, 1.33, 1.76, 2.72, 2.78, 3.58, 3.55 et al. The failure of the civilian army during Vitellius' attempt to hold Rome fulfills the prophetic statement of the leaders of the Gallic rebellion, who claimed that Rome's city populace was unwarlike (*Ann.* 3.40). Cf. Mellor 1993: 56 for the use of sexual vocabulary (*pellexit*) to narrate how Augustus and others "seduced" the mob into betraying their birthright via cheap grain.

<sup>32</sup> *Hist.* 3.58, 1.33. The first example refers to the joint action of Vitellius and his supporters from the urban mob, but is expressed as a generality.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mellor 1993: 57 for a discussion of Tacitus' opinions on slaves, freedmen, and the lower classes, including his branding of Sejanus as a *municipalis adulter*. Apparently the "Italianizing" of the Roman offices was not entirely a positive for Tacitus.

<sup>34</sup> *Ann.* 15.39.

*penuria alimentorum*), in a passage swimming with poverty-related terminology.<sup>35</sup> It is clear from the context that sudden disasters pushed the urban poor (here called *vulgus*) beyond the brink of their meager resources and into complete helplessness. Tacitus' awareness of urban unemployment as a historical phenomenon in the city of Rome has been argued for by Bourne<sup>36</sup> but denied by Veyne.<sup>37</sup> I do not intend to weigh in on this issue; however, one might legitimately question whether these two examples can properly indicate the economic status of the mob, considering that they describe abnormal situations; at the very least, they reveal that a significant portion of the Tacitean mob (enough to be called a *vulgus* or a *multitudo* on its own) lived on the brink of economic collapse.

A more consistent indicator of the mob's economic status may be found in the prominence Tacitus accords their anxieties about the grain supply and their dependence on free and subsidized grain. During the civil war of 69 the *vulgus* was beset by anxiety about grain ships delayed by weather, fearing that a rebellious governor had closed the ports.<sup>38</sup> This episode reveals their reliance upon short-term food supplies and includes the additional detail that they were accustomed to buy provisions daily (*alimenta in dies mercari solitum*). Perhaps this is meant to indicate their lack of forward planning for

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<sup>35</sup> *Hist.* 1.86: *rapti e publico plerique, plures in tabernis et cubilibus intercepti. Fames in vulgus inopia quaestus et penuria alimentorum. Corrupta stagnantibus aquis insularum fundamenta, dein remeante flumine dilapsa.* We might note the fairly sympathetic tone of this and the previously cited passage, as Tacitus does not deride the victims of these misfortunes for their social status.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bourne 1969: 205 and Bourne 1950: 35-6, claiming that unemployment was "chronic" and the populace "poverty-stricken," a condition they alleviated only through attaching themselves to the nobility.

<sup>37</sup> Veyne 1990: 391-3. His argument, that the infrequency of grain distributions could not support the urban proletariat if grain was usually subsidized, has some validity but ignores the possibility that many poor Romans eked out an existence through piecework combined with government support.

<sup>38</sup> *Hist.* 4.38. This passage is perhaps the most faithful to daily reality of any account in Tacitus of the urban *plebs*, their lifestyle, and their living conditions.

famine; it seems more probable that it instead demonstrates the unreliability of their finances. If they possessed sufficient money to do do, they would have stocked up. Earlier, during the rebellion of Vindex, the common people (*vulgus et . . . populus*) only took interest when political events raised the prices of food, a change they were very sensitive to.<sup>39</sup> Even outside times of discord, the Roman people were concerned about scarcity of grain, which Tacitus calls their “chief anxiety” (*praecipua cura*).<sup>40</sup> This phenomenon supports a picture of the Tacitean crowd as perpetually on the brink of economic despair, well attuned to any threat to their subsistence-level diet.

Their dependence (as least as constructed characters) on distributed and subsidized grain implies their low economic status - their common poverty. Even if they are not explicitly described as such, their concern over short-term stability in the grain supply would logically define them as “poor.” This would imply a conclusion that the Tacitean mob is “poor,” or at least in narratives which discuss the flow of grain to the city. We can compare Tacitus’ picture of grain-dependent urban poverty with corroborating chapters of Suetonius, which depict the Roman crowd as extremely sensitive to the availability of grain: when Caligula closes the granaries, the people (*populo*) go hungry;<sup>41</sup> a mob (*turba*) pelts Claudius with bits of bread when a drought threatens the grain supply;<sup>42</sup> Nero attracts popular resentment due to his grain profiteering

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<sup>39</sup> *Hist.* 1.89.

<sup>40</sup> *Ann.* 15.36. In this passage Tacitus refers to the underclass as *plebs*, but gives no indication as to how this might differ from *turba* or *vulgus*.

<sup>41</sup> *Caligula* 26.6: *ac nonnumquam horreis praeclusis populo famem indixit.*

<sup>42</sup> *Claudius* 18.2: *medio foro a turba conviciisque et simul fragminibus panis ... infestatus.*

and the misuse of grain ships.<sup>43</sup> While the terminology used in these episodes does not map perfectly onto the vocabulary of poverty, it points toward the conclusion that the mob was poor, even if words explicitly denoting poverty were not often used. The importance of grain to the urban poor also explains the popularity attributed to the praetorian prefect Faenius Rufus, who, according to Tacitus, held the favor of the crowd (*vulgi favore*), which he had gained because he supervised the grain supply without profit to himself.<sup>44</sup> Such officials would have been most important to the people to whom an immediate supply of grain was the most important: the poor, who had no surplus.<sup>45</sup>

Still, we should note that crowds concerned over the grain supply do not necessarily equate with the targets of grain distributions, or of other forms of mass beneficence, such as the *congiaria*. In Tacitus the vocabulary of giving differs between these two groups: *congiaria* in Tacitus are distributed to the *plebs* (*Ann.* 3.29, 13.31), whereas grain-hungry groups are most often *vulgi*. This is not to claim that Tacitus' bias against the crowd does not extend to *plebs*, most notably the *sordida plebs* of *Hist.* 1.4, but instead that these two groups are figured in different fashions. Suetonius likewise opts not to employ crowd-related vocabulary for mass distributions, relating that emperors' gifts went to the *populus* or the *plebs*.<sup>46</sup> Unsurprisingly, acts of agitation and popular

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<sup>43</sup> *Nero* 45.1: *Ex annonae quoque caritate lucranti adcrevit invidia; nam et forte accidit, ut in publica fame Alexandrina navis nuntiaretur pulverem luctatoribus aulicis advexisse.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ann.* 14.51: *Faenium Rufum ex vulgi favore quia rem frumentarium sine quaestu tractabat.* Cf. Syme 1958: 226 on the importance of the equestrian positions in Rome, including the *curator annonae*.

<sup>45</sup> It almost goes without saying that this phenomenon – public goodwill towards providers of grain – functioned as a tool for emperors in managing popular opinion. Cf. Hopkins 1983 1-30, Yavetz 1969, and Veyne 1990 *passim* for public space as an arena for negotiation and confrontation between populace and emperor.

<sup>46</sup> *Augustus* 41, *Nero* 10, *Domitian* 4. Despite public blowback, Suetonius describes Augustus' attempts to revise the grain-distribution system (*Augustus* 40) with impartiality and does not impugn the *plebs*.

discord were seen as more troubling and worthy of disdain than benefaction from the top down. If the *plebs/populus* here is not as poor as the mob, this evidence supports an argument in modern scholarship which claims that the free-grain dole was exploited by those who did not necessarily need it to survive.<sup>47</sup> The language of Tacitus and Suetonius does admit this possibility. Yet this does not obviate the ability of the dole to address multiple ends; free or cheap grain could function as a perquisite for the citizen body as a whole as well as useful assistance to the citizen proletariat. Both forms of assistance, maintenance of the grain supply and public distributions, aided the Roman poor, despite the fact that only concerns over grain drew Tacitus' ire.

While the actual persons in the Tacitean mob may be poor, and while Tacitus does describe them in numerous circumstances with vocabulary and contextual clues that indicate they are poor, Tacitus downplays economic factors when characterizing the crowd. Tacitus occasionally draws attention to the mob's material needs, but never in a way that affords them rational motives beyond hunger, desires beyond vice and amusement, nor does he draw any meaningful subdivisions within the crowd.<sup>48</sup> Poverty does occasionally emerge as a distinguishing factor, but almost never as a topic worth further thought or as a social problem to be addressed in the way wellborn poverty might. Competent or flawed management of the grain supply, or support of the traumatized *plebs* in times of disaster, reflect on the quality of the emperor and his officials, not on social issues in the city. Poverty and the voices of the poor are not a problem to be dealt

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<sup>47</sup> Veyne 1990: 30 et al.

<sup>48</sup> *Hist.* 1.4 stands out as a rare counterexample, with its distinction between the *pars populi integra* and the *sordida plebs*, where allegiance to great houses and theater patronage form the key differences.

with in Rome, but a symptom of troubles which affect, at least for Tacitus, the most important segment of the Roman population, the aristocracy.

### **Providing for Poor Aristocrats**

Texts from this period draw attention to an imperial policy which provides a real-world aspect to the previously vague and intermittently attested idea of “wellborn poverty,” which I have offered as my second definition of Roman *paupertas*. As part of their role as censor, emperors used imperial funds to maintain certain senators and families who did not possess the necessary census in their social rank. These unfortunate members of the elite are frequently described as “poor,” and vary widely in moral rectitude. This “social maintenance” policy, as it will be referred to henceforth, became a fixture under the Julio-Claudians. Elite authors reacted to this practice with ambivalence. Imperial support for traditionally noble families reflected well on an emperor’s respect for history and the prestige of others. But this policy was not unanimously considered a positive one: unlike poverty among the mob, wellborn poverty caused unease among the elite not only because of financial distress, but because of its consequences for elite dignity and independence. If you relied on the emperor to sustain your privileges, you were no more than his client. While divisive, social maintenance of this sort constituted the greatest degree to which cultural ideas about *paupertas* had a tangible effect on the Roman elite in this period.

The continuity of social maintenance can be traced from the very beginnings of the Principate into the Flavian Age and perhaps beyond. Emperors had no qualms about showing generosity to artists, poets, and favorites,<sup>49</sup> but their powers as censor, and their

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<sup>49</sup> Veyne 1990 *passim*, Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 85.

tremendous personal finances, spurred their consideration of whether the same liberality could be applied to senators who could not meet the qualifications for their census class. Suetonius leaves us no record of the occurrence of this process under Julius Caesar or Augustus, although Cassius Dio mentions that the latter provided the minimum census for a staggering number of senators, as well as to *equites*.<sup>50</sup> Both Suetonius and Tacitus mention Tiberius' generosity to senators.<sup>51</sup> Nero donated a grant to the "virtuous poverty" (*paupertatem innoxiam*) of the consul Valerius Messalla as well as to two less shining aristocrats.<sup>52</sup> This continued under the Flavians, as Vespasian offered grants to senators who could not meet their property qualifications as well as annual pensions to impoverished (*inopes*) consulars.<sup>53</sup>

While this policy could play into propaganda touting imperial *liberalitas*, it most likely arose in response to a perceived demographic problem. Emperors, first Augustus, and then others following his model, attempted to shore up a slowly collapsing old order. This happened for several reasons: deaths in the civil wars, a declining birthrate, and the thinning-out of old bloodlines by occasional purges.<sup>54</sup> There had been no safety net during the Republic; the pre-existing model of taking occasional *novi homines* in the

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<sup>50</sup> 55.13. He includes both young senatorial and equestrian men as those who were poor (*ἐπένοντο*) through no personal fault and mentions that Augustus increased the holdings of 80 men to 1.2 million sesterces, although he does not make clear how many of the 80 were from either group (*ἐπειδὴ τε συχνοὶ τῶν νεανίσκων ἕκ τε τοῦ βουλευτικοῦ γένους καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἱππέων ἐπένοντο μηδὲν ἐπαίτιον ἔχοντες, τοῖς μὲν πλείοσι τὸ τεταγμένον τίμημα ἀνεπλήρωσεν, ὀγδοήκοντα δὲ τισὶ καὶ ἑς τριάκοντα αὐτὸ μυριάδας ἐπηύξησε*). Cf. Hopkins 1983: 75 and Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 168.

<sup>51</sup> *Ann.* 1.75, 2.37, 2.48. Cf. Mellor 1993: 43 and Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 41-2 on the overall generosity of Tiberius' early reign and his use of *moderatio* as an imperial slogan.

<sup>52</sup> *Ann.* 13.34.

<sup>53</sup> *Vespasian* 17.1.

<sup>54</sup> One might note the irony in the fact that while Republican censors were supposed to exclude senators for poverty, emperors often (but not always) rewarded them for it.

Senate was replaced by the inclusion of wealthy men from new sources, Italian and abroad.<sup>55</sup> By supplementing the coffers of historically noble families that had fallen into ruin, emperors attempted to use the weight of tradition and history to maintain the eminence and prestige of the senatorial order. Yet “social maintenance,” or acts similar to it, did not only affect grandfathered-in senators; the emperor’s favor provided an avenue, perhaps the only avenue, by which an ambitious provincial might secure a spot in the Senate. Imperial liberality could make a man, much as the private liberality of a senator could make someone an equestrian.<sup>56</sup> Through funding their favorites, emperors achieved the dual objectives of maintaining the Senate’s ancient esteem and filling its ranks with talented or hand-picked men from outside arenas.<sup>57</sup>

Not all emperors handled this policy identically. While compassion might have been a logical cause for funding poor aristocrats, Tiberius could and did treat those receiving such pensions with disdain. Tacitus records the emperor’s reaction to the appeal for aid from Marcus Hortensius, scion of a noble family that had included the orator Q. Hortensius Hortalus, his grandfather.<sup>58</sup> In the *Annals* Hortensius pleads several reasons for his poverty (called both *paupertate* and *inopia*): he had raised four children on Augustus’ advice (and had apparently received money from the emperor for that

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<sup>55</sup> Hopkins 1983: 74-6.

<sup>56</sup> Veyne 1990: 356-7. According to Chastagnol (cited 356), provincials did not have the right to run for public honors without imperial approval. For private funding of the equestrian census, Pliny *Letters* 1.19, Martial 4.67.

<sup>57</sup> Evidence for these demographic problems can be inferred from the attempts of Pliny and Suetonius to secure the benefits of the *ius trium liberorum* without the necessary requirements (*Letters* 10.95, Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 4, Hoffer 1999: 95).

<sup>58</sup> Suetonius does mention that a Hortensius Hortalus required aid, and that Augustus had encouraged him to raise four children, but states that shame and pride prevented him from applying (47). He also corroborates Tacitus’ statement that Tiberius disapproved of social maintenance but left ultimate decision-making to the Senate.



purpose); he possessed no eloquence; his distinguished family deserved to remain in their social station.<sup>59</sup> He distinctly asks for pity (*misericaordiae*), but Tiberius opposes both his appeal and the favorable bias of the Senate towards Hortensius. His speech of opposition proposes a fairly rational stance against beneficence and social maintenance in general: the state could not remedy the poverty of every needy man (*pauperum*); no Republican precedent existed; such grants sapped the industry of noble men; Augustus' initial gift did not guarantee continuous financial support.<sup>60</sup> Although he scolded Hortensius at length, he left the decision to the Senate as to whether or not to award a moderate sum to Hortensius' male children.<sup>61</sup> Afterward the Hortensii "sank into disgraceful poverty" (*prudendam ad inopiam delaberetur*); perhaps Tiberius' opinion of their *industria* had been right all along. Tacitus' tone implies that he believes Hortensius should have received the award, since he finds it "amazing" that he was singled out when other men had been funded.<sup>62</sup>

Hortensius' example as a target of Tiberius' scorn does not stand alone. In the case of Propertius Celer, who wished to be excused from the Senate because of poverty (*veniam ordinis ob paupertatem*), Tiberius offered him a million sesterces.<sup>63</sup> This might

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<sup>59</sup> 2.37: *non sponte sustuli sed quia princeps monebat . . . non pecuniam, non studia populi neque eloquentiam. . . habebam . . . stirps et progenies tot consulum, tot dictatorum*. At 2.38 Tiberius comments that Augustus had provided Hortalus money.

<sup>60</sup> *Ann.* 2.38. Cf. Martin 1981: 122 on Tiberius' lengthy list of benefactions, *contra* any notion that Tiberius refused to show liberality during his reign; Tacitus records them at *Ann.* 2.47-8.

<sup>61</sup> Tacitus' text does not make it perfectly clear whether Hortensius was awarded money. He gives the choice to the Senate; the Senate thanks him; Hortensius is silent with fear (*egere alii grates: siluit Hortalus pavore*); Tiberius feels no pity afterward. I proceed from the assumption that no money changed hands, although it does not affect the argument.

<sup>62</sup> *Ann.* 2.37: *magis mirum fuit*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ann.* 1.75.

normally indicate a generous attitude on the emperor's part, but Tiberius added that additional cases would be tried harshly in the Senate itself. As a result, says Tacitus, "all preferred silence and poverty to confession and charity" (*unde ceteri silentium et paupertatem confessioni et beneficio praeposuerunt*). Poverty has a multiple function in these two narratives. It contributes to the Tacitean portrait of Tiberius as harsh and capricious behind a façade of Republicanism; he refers the matter to the obsequious Senate, knowing that the threat of his own power makes the decision for them. Tacitus shows him adopting an Augustus-created institution – relief to poor aristocrats – and twisting it into a method of exercising his own power, backed by cynical rhetoric. The pretense of *moderatio* masked actual cruelty.

This is not to say that Tacitus envisioned the policy of tightening the ranks of the Senate and refraining from monetary gifts as an unmistakable signpost for imperial corruption. Much later in the *Annals* Claudius declines to aid poor senators, commending those who voluntarily retire and removing those who, by remaining, had "added impudence to poverty."<sup>64</sup> The choice of language, especially *impudentia*, indicates that the senators are at fault for their poverty, at least in the emperor's eyes; Tacitus-as-narrator does not show any disagreement. In this case the passage shows the emperor's competent management of the composition of the Senate's financial and moral status in his role as censor. Perhaps the most telling indication is that at one point even Tiberius takes a middle path - in relieving the poverty of some but not of others. At 2.48, not long after the Hortensius example, Tacitus describes the emperor's liberality, including that he "relieved innocent senators of their virtuous poverty" (*honestam innocentium*

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<sup>64</sup> *Ann.* 12.52: *laudati dehinc oratione principis qui ob angustias familiaris ordine senatorio sponte cederent, motinque qui remanendo impudentiam paupertati adicerent.*

*paupertatem levavit*) but not those who were “destitute because of prodigality or vice” (*prodigos et ob flagitia egentis*), including five examples.<sup>65</sup> Even a cruel emperor could exercise good decision-making and carry out the moral purpose of the censorial office. This may speak to the necessity in practice of creating a balance between freely handing out fortunes and actively seeking to benefit the senatorial class as a whole. Alternately, the variation in the Tacitean treatment of “social maintenance” may simply indicate that Tacitus was willing to tailor his narrative to the needs of character development, even if he contradicted his prior depictions of imperial policies. The two earlier passages may have been molded to characterize Tiberian harshness and bile in a way the later passage was not. Stark differences in tone, detail, and authorial sympathies among these passages imply that the Hortensius and Celer incidents were intended to bolster Tacitus’ idea of Tiberius rather than render an account of his historical financial policy. Tacitus uses (and perhaps, in Hortensius’ case, invents) these two stories about managing wellborn *paupertas* as a means of emphasizing Tiberius’ overbearing management of the Senate.

The deployment of shame (*pudor*) in descriptions of “social maintenance” testifies to its power as an imperial tool for manipulating senators. After his castigation by Tiberius, Hortensius’ poverty is *pudendam*; when Claudius removes senators who refuse to retire voluntarily, they display *impudentiam*. In the Suetonian account of the Hortensius episode, after Tiberius relieves the poverty of a few senators, he declared that all future applicants would have to submit an explanation for their neediness.<sup>66</sup> This turned away most of the poor senators (including Hortensius), who were too overcome by

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<sup>65</sup> *Vibidium Varronem, Marium Nepotem, Appium Appianum, Cornelium Sullam, Q. Vitellium movit senatu aut sponte cedere passus est.*

<sup>66</sup> *Tiberius 47: nisi senatui iustas necessitatium causas probassent.*

*modestia et pudore* to trouble him. Despite the ostensible willingness of the *princeps* to offer succor to these senators, his hardline stance dissuaded them from seeking aid. The decision-making thus devolved to the emperors, who, most of the time, used this policy to reward “virtuous poverty” – as we can see when Tacitus repeatedly uses phrases denoting “virtuous poverty” in the context of social maintenance.<sup>67</sup>

The difficulty of elites who felt *pudor* in the face of imperial generosity illustrates a conflict between two ideas about the ethics of imperial distribution. Emperors (as censors) could reward virtuous poverty (and they did) without disgrace, but good senators, as with the praiseworthy Hortensius, should feel shame in applying for it. Paul Veyne interprets this mechanism as a method for preserving a form of *pudor*, arguing that imperial gifts spared the Senate the discomfort of purging itself, and that the senators could blame the emperor instead.<sup>68</sup> Shame clearly plays into the narratives of emperors reproving nobles for their poverty, highlighting the negligence, and resultant humiliation, implicit in not maintaining one’s own station. Nobles who needed help had few choices in terms of *pudor*; they could either endure a perceived disgrace in appealing to the *princeps* and accepting charity, thus overtly acknowledging their *clientela* to the emperor, or sink down the social ladder. Considering Hortensius’ example, those who wanted the funds had to walk a fine line between deserving relief and seeming too assertive in asking

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<sup>67</sup> *Annals* 2.48, 13.34. It also explains how Nero perverted the normal operation of the principate, as Tacitus relates how he rewarded the virtuous poverty of Valerius Messalla, but also rewarded Aurelius Cotta and Haterius Antonius, who had squandered their wealth (13.34).

<sup>68</sup> Veyne 1990: 358. It is unclear what protocols Veyne refers to by which the Senate could purge its poorer members without the intervention of a censor. Cf. Seneca *De Ben.* 2.7-8, which states that emperors should not make gifts because they cause humiliation to their upper-class clients, with Tiberius also functioning as the monarch pointing out the failures of his senatorial subjects.

for it. Poor Hortensius, and the senators driven off by Tiberius' harsh reply, probably would have kept more *dignitas* if they had refused public aid.<sup>69</sup>

Social maintenance functioned not only as life support for the dying Roman elites, but also as an ideological statement about the universality of the emperor's *liberalitas*. The maintenance of nobles was a differently-scaled version of typical munificence, applied to the very top of society just as it was to the bottom, with the emperor as supreme benefactor. Augustus and his successors rewarded their deserving citizens regardless of class or occupation; it became a trait associated with the "good emperor."<sup>70</sup> We can also imagine the maintenance of the nobles as an additional dimension to previously emplaced imperial distribution systems. The maintenance of aristocratic houses provided an analogue to the system of distributions of money, food, oil, and gifts to the lower classes. No wonder that it contradicted elite standards for *pudor*, as it forced the rich to equate themselves consciously with society's lower orders. In this way rich and poor were more alike than they seemed (or, in the elite case, wished to seem), both dependent on the largesse of a judgmental emperor.

In the city, virtuous poverty, for Tacitus and, to some degree, Suetonius, was limited to those senators who needed financial assistance from the emperor for the right reasons. While the rich and poor shared certain interests in terms of seeking imperial generosity, urban, lower-class poverty *qua* poverty never becomes a topic of discussion;

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<sup>69</sup> Following this line of reasoning, our authors probably wish the poor would refuse public aid; one could read the mob's gluttonous attitude towards public benefaction as a lack of *pudor*. Their impudence is perennially on display, as in the aforementioned episode when they pelt Claudius with bread during a grain shortage.

<sup>70</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 85, 168-9. Rewards to non-senators: Augustus rewards Horace twice in the *Vita Horatii*; Tiberius frivolously rewards an odd poem by Asellius Sabinus (*Tiberius* 42.2); Vespasian rewarded poets and other skilled persons handsomely (*Vespasian* 18-19.1).

we instead have a vast and undifferentiated urban mob whose *paupertas* rarely earns a mention. While their common poverty was largely a nonissue, because of assumptions that Roman aristocrats were comfortable making, ideas about poverty of a different sort were emerging in elite discourse and strategies of self-representation for elites whose origins lay outside the center of empire.

### **Poverty and Provinciality**

In the era of the Flavians and early Antonines, perspectives on poverty and its moralizing rhetoric acquired a new, locative dimension. Previously surveyed attitudes about poverty and its imagery often situated poverty outside urban space, but without a specific location: poverty resided in the virtues of the spatially undefined Roman agrarian past. In this period poverty and frugality no longer exist only without place, and now reside not only in the Roman past, but in the imperial hinterland. Descriptions of virtuous poverty and revived “antique” morality now include mentions of Italy and beyond as loci for the cultivation of correct financial attitudes and the cultivation of the proper sort of attitudes toward wealth. As the cultural idea of poverty found a definite place outside the imperial center, it coincided with an age where the center of power no longer originated in the city aristocracy. Virtues displayed by outsiders and social upstarts coincided with the decline of traditional Roman aristocrats, their decay expressed as a failure of morality, as financial and ethical suicide yielded to practical, provincial frugality.

Our authors make clear the contrast between Roman opulence and virtuous Italian simplicity on numerous occasions. When Pliny recommends Minucius Acilianus as a worthy husband, he describes Minucius’ hometown as “Brixia, a town in our Italy which

still retains and preserves much modesty and frugality, and even ancient rusticity.”<sup>71</sup> This short description tells us something not only about Minucius, but also about Brixia, Italy, and Pliny himself. It is a recommendation, in part, of Italy and the moral qualities it connotes. It implies that other places outside *nostra Italia* have fallen prey to corrupting forces, while also asserting Pliny’s in-group status in the pristine “good Italy.” It is *his* Italy which possesses old-fashioned financial prudence, and he is the one steeped enough in such virtues to recognize its presence. Likewise, Tacitus calls Italy “poor” (*inops Italia*) through the mouthpiece of disgruntled Gauls, and follows this description by noting the cowardice of the urban population (*quam inbellis urbana plebes*), signaling the superior hardiness of the rustic sort.<sup>72</sup> Unsurprisingly, Tacitus employs the imagery of rustic, severe Italy mostly to critique the behavior of the *vulgus*. In describing crowds who witnessed the performances of Nero, he compares the adulation of the urban mob to groups from the Roman hinterlands: those from remote municipalities and “austere Italy, still retaining its ancient morals,” were unused to the spectacle or the sycophancy of the city folk.<sup>73</sup> For Tacitus, the unimpressed country crowd reveals the depth of the divergence between moral dichotomies: urban and rural, antique and modern morality, obsequious mob and severe yeomen. Tacitus’ point here aligns with his argument in Messalla’s voice at *Dialogus* 26 that the decline of eloquence started in Rome and

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<sup>71</sup> *Letters* 1.14.4: *Brixia, ex illa nostra Italia quae multum adhuc verecundiae frugalitatis, atque etiam rusticitatis antiquae retinet et servat*. Sherwin-White 2003 describes this passage and several of the Tacitus portions quoted in this section as illuminating “the influences moulding the tone of Roman society in the Flavian age” (117).

<sup>72</sup> *Ann.* 3.40.

<sup>73</sup> *Ann.* 16.5: *remotis e municipiis severaque adhuc et antiqui moris retinente Italia*. Syme 1958 accepts this Plinian/Tacitean perspective, claiming that “The habit of parsimony endured even in the opulent, and, with other antique virtues, kept its dominance in the provinces, as in the remoter tracts of Italy, where it had long since fled from the capital” (26), and that “new men[’s] native parsimony endured despite opulence and success” (444). But these ideological assertions cannot be accepted as historical fact.

radiated outward, first to Italy, and then to the provinces. Corruption spread through urbanity as well as the flow of time. The notion that the good virtues have migrated outward coincides with the image of the moral and frugal provinces as the answer to a wasteful, lavish, and unapologetic Rome.<sup>74</sup>

The idea of outside financial prudence replacing internal decay extends not only to Italy, but to other provinces as well. When Tacitus provides a narrative of rich families ruined through profligacy (*Annals* 3.55), he states that they are replaced by "new men from colonies, towns, and even provinces" who "bring in their household parsimony."<sup>75</sup> This passage coincides with the advent of Vespasian to imperial power as the example *par excellence*.<sup>76</sup> Yet a discussion of the Italian Vespasian did not necessitate a mention of the provinces (*provinciis*), showing that Tacitus believed *parsimonia* could be found in the Roman periphery writ large. He does not make distinctions between individual provinces in this regard. Tacitus describes Agricola's childhood at Massilia, a place that happily blended "Greek refinement and provincial parsimony."<sup>77</sup> However, the presence of *parsimonia* does not exclude the possibility of staggering wealth in such places: in Tacitus' debate over the addition of Gauls to the Senate, both Claudius and the senatorial opposition mention the financial power of the provincial aristocracy as a factor in

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<sup>74</sup> This narrative bears some similarities to Livy's relocation of *paupertas* outside the Roman dominions after the Second Punic War. Cf. Chapter 1.

<sup>75</sup> *simul novi homines e municipiis et coloniis atque etiam provinciis in senatum crebro adsumpti domesticam parsimoniam intulerunt.*

<sup>76</sup> Dench 1995: 107 mentions the rustic crowd of aristocrat that arrives in Rome along with Vespasian: "they herald the beginning of fashionable frugality when they arrive in greater numbers in the train of Vespasian, the Sabine emperor" (107).

<sup>77</sup> *Agr. 4: Massiliam ... locum Graeca comitate et provinciali parsimonia mixtum ac bene compositum.*



including them: the emperor as something positive, the senators as part of their fear of being swept underfoot.<sup>78</sup>

One way that this generation's ideas of provinciality perhaps manifested themselves was in the suggestion that the proper aristocrat should not be constantly in Rome, but should instead manage municipal affairs in his spare time. In the introduction to the *Dialogus*, Aper criticizes Maternus for devoting his leisure to dramatic composition while "so many of your friends, their cases, and so many clients from colonies and municipalities, call you to the courts."<sup>79</sup> While Maternus does offer a defense of poetry and *otium* in the next chapter, Aper's argument points towards a valid option for rural elite life which is not itself refuted – one where the aristocrat splits his time between work in Rome and in service to clients back in the *municipium*.. While Tacitus' Rome-focused narratives rarely offer glimpses into non-urban life, Pliny's letters read, not unintentionally, like a handbook in managing aristocratic affairs vis-à-vis one's home community. In personal moments, Pliny offers a schematic of the services he renders for *Comum*, including oratorical displays, public endowments, service as a *iudex*, advice and recommendation letters for fellow country elites, and generosity towards his

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<sup>78</sup> The senatorial position calls them *dives* (*Ann.* 11.23), while the emperor wishes them to bring their gold and wealth (*aurum et opes*) to the city instead of languishing in the provinces (11.24). One might also note that the senatorial speaker describes the Roman gentry, not the outsiders, as poor (*quis pauper e Latia senator foret?*). On the Lyon Tablet (*CIL* 13.1668) Claudius does not include wealth, poverty, or frugality as reasons to accept the *Galli novi homines*; the closest language is his claim that Augustus and Tiberius absorbed the best men of colonies and municipalities, good and wealthy men (*omnem florem ubique coloniarum ac municipiorum, bonorum scilicet virorum et locupletium*). This seems to support the idea that ideas of provinciality took hold after the end of the Julio-Claudian regimes.

<sup>79</sup> 3: *cum te tot amicorum causae, tot coloniarum et municipiorum clientelae in forum vocent.*

rural clients.<sup>80</sup> When “off duty,” he managed municipal affairs, staying in touch with the Italian gentry, “for at heart this is very much what he remained.”<sup>81</sup>

These new notions about the social meaning of wellborn poverty and its connections to places of origin reflect demographic changes in elite circles. The increasing prominence of Italy and the provinces in the elite zeitgeist might explain the transference of old beliefs about antique Republican morality to the towns and municipalities of the now-widened imperial center. Claudius’ admission of (Narbonese) Gallic senators in 48 CE took place in an ongoing process whereby the traditional apparatus of power was progressively extended to Romanized peoples. Cicero had remarked a hundred years prior that old aristocratic families had to combat influential upstarts coming from all over *Italia*.<sup>82</sup> Julius and Augustus Caesar had invited a tremendous influx of Italian notables into the government to replace earlier aristocratic families. Tiberius followed Augustan policy in encouraging the Italian component of the Senate.<sup>83</sup> This progression did not advance homogeneously, but at different speeds throughout the empire, as the urban and social conditions of Rome were replicated slowly in Spain, Gaul, Africa, Asia Minor, and Syria.<sup>84</sup> Vespasian, himself Italian, pushed men

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<sup>80</sup> 1.8, 1.19. A fuller analysis of Pliny’s self-representation as considerate Italian magnate follows below.

<sup>81</sup> Radice 1969: xv. Noreña 2007: 256 hypothesizes that Pliny’s very public focus on rural matters attempted to compensate or occlude his successful career under the despised Domitian.

<sup>82</sup> Sherwin-White 1969: 235, with reference to *Pro Sulla* 24: *ex tota Italia delecti tecum . . . contentent*.

<sup>83</sup> Sherwin-White 1969: 239.

<sup>84</sup> Alföldy 1985: 94-5, 105.

of Italian, Greek, Asian, and African origin, into public service, including the first African consul.<sup>85</sup>

By the time of the Flavians and the early Antonines, the center of empire had never been less centered on Rome. Italy received special attention. Domitian pushed to force grain production and limit provincial competition with Italian produce;<sup>86</sup> Trajan appointed special *curatores rei publicae* for Italian cities in charge of controlling their public expenditure;<sup>87</sup> he and Vespasian spearheaded the creation of new colonies of Italian extraction in Pannonia and the Danubian provinces.<sup>88</sup> Among the many explanations offered for the creation of the *alimenta* system have been that it meant to “‘Italianise’ a Senate whose membership was rapidly becoming more and more variegated, by obliging provincial senators to acquire a real stake in Italy,”<sup>89</sup> or that Trajan designed to specially reward Italy: “En tant qu’empereur, il devait manifester sa preoccupation pour ses sujets en general, et ceux de l’Italie en particulier.”<sup>90</sup> While the Flavians did expand the senatorial franchise, Trajan’s reign also pushed the process forward: according to Duncan-Jones, “the material strength of Rome passed to Italy from the provinces for ever.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Vespasian* 9.2, Garzetti 1974: 248.

<sup>86</sup> *Domitian* 7.2. Cf. Bourne 1960: 52.

<sup>87</sup> Duncan-Jones 1964: 133.

<sup>88</sup> Sherwin-White 1969: 252-3.

<sup>89</sup> Duncan-Jones 1964: 128.

<sup>90</sup> Bossu 1989: 373.

<sup>91</sup> Duncan-Jones 261. 1964: Additionally, Woolf 1990 suggests that the *alimenta* might be seen as an extension to Italians of the privileges provided in the capital as the *frumentatio* (226).

In terms of their historical context, the new, outside families employed rhetoric linking their moral character to antique virtues as a way to be “more Roman than the Romans” and to contrast themselves with entrenched senatorials. Claiming traditional virtues was a typical strategy for outsiders who wished to join the political elite,<sup>92</sup> although in this case they placed their origins within a grand narrative of the decay of the conspicuously old-fashioned ideal of frugality. Self-promotion in terms of *frugalitas* and *parsimonia* attempted to legitimate the arrival of the provincial newcomers. They possessed worthwhile models at the highest levels, and of the highest public esteem: Augustus had incorporated respectable men from the towns of Italy,<sup>93</sup> displayed public frugality, and conspicuously preferred homespun clothing and simple food;<sup>94</sup> Vespasian’s tightfistedness was famous enough to be jested about at his funeral;<sup>95</sup> Trajan himself tried to legitimate his newcomer status by stressing traditional values.<sup>96</sup> The influx of Italian and provincial power at the highest level provided a model for the self-representation of the new aristocratic upstarts.

In general the new waves of non-Roman aristocrats are not denigrated for their newness or their external origin by Pliny, Suetonius, or Tacitus.<sup>97</sup> One possible reason for

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<sup>92</sup> Hopkins 1983: 38.

<sup>93</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 114.

<sup>94</sup> *Augustus* 65, 73, 76. Also worth consideration are the insults leveled at Augustus alleging his lowborn ancestry and its connection to manual labor (2, 4). Tiberius displayed similar stinginess, but is represented negatively, being *pecuniae parcus ac tenax* (*Tiberius* 46).

<sup>95</sup> *Vespasian* 19. Cf. Veyne 1990: 297.

<sup>96</sup> Woolf 1990: 226.

<sup>97</sup> This does not include Juvenal or Martial, who will be addressed in Ch. 4. The outside men of the Flavian era and beyond burst into the upper classes without an ancient pedigree but seem to have spawned few Trimalchios worthy of scorn in our historical texts. Syme 1958 comments that there were good and bad provincials (608) with some depraved examples (609), although not all were despicable (613). Their

the relative absence of criticism is that our authors themselves might have fallen into these categories. Questions of their ancestries are complicated by a paucity of information, although it is quite possible that they were part of the new blood operating at high levels in the Roman state. Pliny makes no secret of his hometown of Comum in modern Lombardy (although his grandfather Gaius Caecilius had been a senator). Inscriptions seem to place Suetonius' birthplace in Africa before he became a *grammaticus* and then secretary in the imperial court,<sup>98</sup> although no clear traces of this origin arise in his surviving work: as Wallace-Hadrill states, "Rome remained the center of his universe."<sup>99</sup> For Tacitus the picture becomes less clear. Syme, Mellor, and Martin all point to a possible origin for him in Southern Gaul.<sup>100</sup> If this argument is correct, their connections to the outside talent sweeping in would naturally temper their attitudes towards its impact on Roman society.

These cultural notions about provinciality and its components had clearly entered elite society by the time of Trajan, and certainly influenced Tacitus and Pliny in their accounts of contemporary and historical life in Rome. While the presence of this trend

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incoming wealth might have mattered: Tacitus does not hide his assessment of the prospective Gallic senators as as rich men (*dives*). The criteria for criticism, broadly interpreted, seem to be access to power/influence despite low birth (as in Trimalchio or Pallas), obsequiousness (the mob, or Pallas again), shameful behavior (Aquillius Regulus at Pliny 2.10.13), or being a *delator* (Regulus in Tacitus, along with many others). While outside origins might draw some suspicion, we know from *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* that profound respect for talent could override suspicious or atypical upbringings: of the noteworthy grammarians fourteen were freedmen, six from the provinces, and five from non-Roman Italy. The text does not indicate that their origins counted against them, although it would be optimistic to assume that they (or their enemies) would forget where they came from.

<sup>98</sup> With some debate: Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 5 covers the course of the dispute. Townend 1967 suggests a birthplace at Hippo Regius, but perhaps also in Italy.

<sup>99</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 5.

<sup>100</sup> Syme 1958: 798; at 612 he argues that Tacitus is part of the new provincial nobility. Cf. Mellor 1993: 6, Martin 1981: 26f., *Ann.* 3.65.

has been adequately demonstrated, that still leaves the issue of its foundation. When faced with the question of whether this particular idea emerged gradually over the course of a century, or started at a specific historical moment, it might be useful to discuss the prominence of *frugalitas* at its point of entry to the imperial stage.

### **Imperial Provinciality in the Flavian Age**

Despite intermittent episodes detailing an emperor's generosity, humble self-presentation, or sound financial policies, frugality only becomes a fully embraced part of an emperor's persona after the civil war of 69. Tacitus and Suetonius depict a wave of moral and financial refurbishment arriving with the advent of the Flavians, Vespasian in particular. Financial prudence surfaces as one of Vespasian's central characteristics, contrasting with the financial irresponsibility and splendor of some of his predecessors, especially the extravagant Nero. Vespasian's dominant image endured as an especially frugal, practical, rough-around-the-edges pragmatist with the common touch and no tolerance for waste. Considering Vespasian's Italian origin, it should be unsurprising that his character was associated in the popular consciousness with his place of origin and the idea of "outside blood."

Frugality and concern for citizens of all stripes (an adoption of elements of voluntary poverty) formed a major component of the emperor's self-promotion. He adopted frugal personal habits and attempted to exemplify fiscal shrewdness in his private life.<sup>101</sup> He enacted financial prudence for the state through a lengthy series of

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<sup>101</sup> Bourne 1946: 54 and Syme 1958: 40 discuss the extent to which Vespasian, and later Trajan, exaggerated their personae as 'plain and honest men'. In the *Panegyricus* Pliny salutes Trajan as "an emperor who behaved the same as a common man (*privatum*), a leader no different from the led" (64.4).

measures to rebuild the depleted treasury, such as the famous tax on urinals.<sup>102</sup> In addition, he sponsored subventions and pensions for senators who lacked the required census,<sup>103</sup> reclamation of taxable lands, new *vectigalia* (import/export dues), sale of conquered lands<sup>104</sup> and *subseciva* (unused public lands), moderation in *congiaria*, creation of additional granaries and aqueducts, treasury reform and establishment of provincial fisces,<sup>105</sup> restoration of temples,<sup>106</sup> and even so humble a policy as street cleaning.<sup>107</sup> The special attention he paid to the common people is symbolized in an anecdote where an inventor creates a novel and efficient construction machine, which the emperor refused to use, asking instead that he be wished to be allowed the duty of feeding the needy *plebs* (*plebiculam*).<sup>108</sup> This strategy of acting as visible advocate for the poor (the truth of the anecdote notwithstanding) looked to create a support base for a figure with few bonds to the Roman aristocracy;<sup>109</sup> garnering public acclaim through sponsoring public works had been a strategy since at least Augustus.<sup>110</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>102</sup> *Vespasian* 23.3.

<sup>103</sup> *Vespasian* 17.1.

<sup>104</sup> Bourne 1946: 5-13.

<sup>105</sup> Garzetti 1974: 241-4. Vespasian only gave one *congiarium*, in 71, held in Titus' name.

<sup>106</sup> *CIL* 6.934.

<sup>107</sup> *Vespasian* 8.5. Emperors and their use of state funds were a tool which Roman historians used to evaluate them, if perhaps inconsistently. Some emperors (Suet. *Tiberius* 46, 49, Galba at *Hist.* 1.18) earned criticism for being spendthrifts; Vespasian's own thriftiness, while effective in stabilizing the state, was not universally praised. The historian's overall judgment of the emperor may well have been the determining factor in *post facto* praise for an emperor's fiscal shrewdness.

<sup>108</sup> *Vespasian* 18.1: *operam remisit praefatus sineret se plebiculam pascere*. Despite this, Vespasian did reward the inventor.

<sup>109</sup> Garzetti 1974: 239. For the new men who entered the Roman elite along with Vespasian, cf. Mellor 2003.

<sup>110</sup> Bourne 1946: 15.

Vespasian's rough persona, his pride in of his undistinguished origin,<sup>111</sup> and his famously coarse humor might have increased his appeal with the lower orders.

Vespasian did not lack for prior imperial models upon which to base and contrast himself with in terms of his approach to a provincial identity and its associated virtues. As previously mentioned, Augustus had ostentatiously consumed ordinary food, worn common clothing, and apparently dressed in a beggar's habit because of a portentous dream.<sup>112</sup> But there were also other figures, more negative and more contemporary, to distinguish himself against. Like Vespasian, Vitellius had emerged from the Italian nobility and posed as a modest man of the people; both he and Otho were *novi homines*. Suetonius mentions Otho's low-status freeborn mother (*matre humili*) and Vitellius' uncertain origin, mentioning that his family might have been noble or might have included a shoemaker and a baker.<sup>113</sup> Vespasian's origin story, it seems, was not unique. But the greatest contrast to be achieved by standing for provincial thrift, and associating oneself with aspects of voluntary poverty, would be with the unchecked expenditure of the *princeps* who had provoked the civil war. Vespasian used parsimony and the idea of the communal good to distance himself from Nero,<sup>114</sup> a practice made manifest in his

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<sup>111</sup> *Vespasian* 12.1: *mediocritatem pristinam neque dissimulavit umquam ac frequenter etiam prae se tulit*. Even as emperor he frequently visited his family home in Reate (24).

<sup>112</sup> *Augustus* 76, 91. Another noteworthy connection might be between anti-Augustan invective about his artisan ancestry (*Aug.* 3-4) and the slanderous accusation against Vespasian that his father had been a Transpadine labor contractor (*mancipem*). Suetonius implicitly denies the latter assertion by stating he could find no documentary evidence (1.4).

<sup>113</sup> Garzetti 1974: 205, 215; Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 107, *Otho* 1, *Vitellius* 1-2. Accusations of banaisic ancestry are a commonplace in Greco-Roman invective, although the emperor's acceptance, and perhaps self-generation, of such details, is atypical.

<sup>114</sup> Bourne 1946: 54.



repurposing of the space which would become the Flavian Amphitheater.<sup>115</sup> His policies and public image consciously set him up as the antithesis of Neronian *luxuria*.

Although Tacitus and Suetonius put forth character portraits of Vespasian that emphasize his thrift, both offer ambivalent interpretations of the moral virtues of his policies.<sup>116</sup> Suetonius highlights Vespasian's generosity towards all classes but classifies his approach to state finance as greed (*pecuniae cupiditas*),<sup>117</sup> including as examples his increases in levies and tribute, his insider trading, and his deliberate appointment of greedy governors so he could later squeeze them in extortion trials. Tacitus is of two minds about Vespasian's character, as the emperor comes to represent the worst of parsimony, but not of leadership. He would have equaled famous generals of old, if only he were not so greedy (*si avaritia abesset, antiquis ducibus par*); once he took office, he "plundered the richest men," spurred on by his good fortune and depraved advisors.<sup>118</sup> We might see the negative characterization of Vespasian's greed as indicative of the biographical focus of Suetonius and, to some extent, Tacitus (always prone to attribute the health of the empire to the character of the *princeps*). Vespasian's financially stingy policies became historical fodder for constructing the imperial personality. Yet our portraits of Vespasian are not all bad. Even after critiquing Vespasian for rapacity, Suetonius rationalizes his actions, claiming that the emptiness of the treasury forced his

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<sup>115</sup> Martial *De Spectaculis* 2 gives thanks for the restoration of the space which Nero had stolen from the populace (*abstulerit miseris tecta superbus ager*), although he gives the credit to Domitian.

<sup>116</sup> Pliny infrequently mentions Vespasian, and never with much critical or moral judgment; he calls him *divus* on three occasions (*Pan.* 10, *Letters* 1.14, 10.65).

<sup>117</sup> *Vespasian* 17.1 (*in omne hominum genus liberalissimus*), 16.1 (*pecuniae cupiditas*).

<sup>118</sup> *Hist.* 2.5, 2.84: *locupletissimus quisque in praedam correpti . . . indulgentia fortunae et pravis magistris didicit aususque*.

hand, and that he spent his income to the best possible advantage.<sup>119</sup> As mentioned earlier, Tacitus credits Vespasian as the “chief encourager of strict manners in dress and diet,”<sup>120</sup> and notes that he, unlike the temporary emperors of 69, became a better man after becoming *princeps*.<sup>121</sup> The emperor’s generous patronage of poets and artists, combined with his donations to unfortunate senators (Tacitus’ preferred class) might also have influenced Tacitus’ moderately positive portrait of Vespasian.<sup>122</sup>

Associations with provinciality and modest expenditure adhered so strongly to Vespasian that they bled through to the narratives of his children's lives as well. The *Lives* of Titus and Domitian both begin with atypical "monetary" anecdotes about their upbringing. Titus’ birth was poor and sordid, in “a tiny, dark bedroom in a filthy house near the Septizonium,”<sup>123</sup> and Domitian “spent a poverty-stricken and degraded youth,” without even any household silver.<sup>124</sup> This consistency should not surprise us, since both boys came from the same household (although born twelve years apart), but the implausibility of these details implies that this narrative was constructed by Suetonius, or his sources, to accentuate the "Flavian poverty" angle. By the time of Titus’ birth, Vespasian had already served as aedile; he actually held the consulship when Domitian was born in 51 CE. Despite Vespasian's Italian frugality, his children probably did not

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<sup>119</sup> *Vesp.* 16.3: *necessitate compulsus summa aerarii fiscique inopia . . . male partis optime usus est.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ann.* 3.55: *praecipuus adstricti moris auctor Vespasianus fuit, antiquo ipse cultu victuque.*

<sup>121</sup> *Hist.* 1.50: *et ambigua de Vespasiano fama, solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est.* Haynes 2003: 116 characterizes this ambivalence about Vespasian an interpretation of a success that came about through “happy coincidence rather than outstanding ability.”

<sup>122</sup> *Vespasian* 17, 18. Syme 1958 notes that Tacitus concedes special force to the personality and example of Vespasian (444).

<sup>123</sup> *Titus* 1.1: *prope Septizonium sordidis aedibus, cubiculo uero perparuo et obscuro.*

<sup>124</sup> *Domitian* 1.1: *pubertatis ac primae adulescentiae tempus tanta inopia tantaque infamia.*

grow up amid slums and destitution; this is a clear invention where the Flavian connection to thrift and penury were retrojected onto the narrative.

Both Titus and Domitian displayed their father's common touch, although, as with the overall narrative of Domitian's virtues, his financial caution decayed over time. Titus humored the people by picking favorite teams at the games and letting the crowd make decisions,<sup>125</sup> and personally financed relief efforts in Campania and after a fire in Rome.<sup>126</sup> Domitian's early years included a ban on certain types of legacies to the exchequer, a vigorous public building program, and the sponsoring of multiple *congiaria*.<sup>127</sup> According to Suetonius, his later reign changed drastically due to excessive "Flavian parsimony" taking hold, and he suffered "greed from poverty" (*inopia rapax*).<sup>128</sup> In improper hands or for improper reasons the harshness of *parsimonia* does not equal prudence: whereas the emptiness of the treasury justified Vespasian's acts, Domitian's cruelty invalidated his. This period included a moment where Domitian sent a humble spectator to be mauled by dogs<sup>129</sup> and a financial crisis which he attempted to solve by cutting troop numbers and by gross extortion.<sup>130</sup> Anti-Domitianic bias affects the presentation of these episodes, but they do maintain thematic continuity in terms of

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<sup>125</sup> *Titus* 8.1, Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 164.

<sup>126</sup> *Titus* 11.1, Garzetti 1974: 260-1.

<sup>127</sup> *Domitian* 4.5. They took place in 84, 89, and 93, and according to Garzetti 1974: 275, signify Domitian's perpetually sunny relationship with the urban proletariat via the offering of bread and circuses.

<sup>128</sup> *Domitian* 3.2.

<sup>129</sup> *Domitian* 10, Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 164.

<sup>130</sup> 12. Garzetti 1974 displays reasonable skepticism over the reality of this financial crisis, arguing that we have no reason to believe that Domitian did anything but follow in his father's footsteps and run an empire on the same austere lines, and that the only reasons his methods were criticized were ulterior in nature (281).

Flavian relationships with the *plebs* and via moral judgments about expenditure. At the end of Domitian's *Life/life*, Flavian *paupertas* comes full circle. After Domitian's disgraceful death, his body was carried out on a litter by public undertakers (*populari sandapila per uispillones*) in the fashion of a common pauper;<sup>131</sup> in the Suetonian narrative, Flavian *frugalitas*, both in Domitian's life and in the dynasty writ large, enters and exits the body politic at the same time the family does. At least, that is what the work's form would lead us to believe. Since the *Twelve Caesars* ends with Domitian's death, it appears as a closed circuit, not indicating whether or not Flavian parsimony influenced the principate going forward.

Surviving evidence suggests that the Flavian ideological package proved useful for future emperors to incorporate into their own self-presentation.<sup>132</sup> Trajan, a non-Roman himself, seems to have adopted the public promotion of provinciality and financial prudence. In terms of *frugalitas*, we can note that Trajan appointed special curators (*curatores rei publicae*) specifically for Italian cities to reduce their public expenditure.<sup>133</sup> In the *Panegyricus* Pliny twice mentions Trajan's *frugalitas*, as something wondrous (*tantas vires habeat frugalitas principis*), but also deftly applied.<sup>134</sup> But even more than frugality, Trajan promoted the public image of Italy: among the many explanations offered for the creation of the *alimenta* system are (a) that Trajan intended it to incentivize senators to be more engaged in Italy's municipal and agricultural life,<sup>135</sup> or

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<sup>131</sup> 17.

<sup>132</sup> Syme 1958: 40.

<sup>133</sup> Duncan-Jones 1964: 133.

<sup>134</sup> 41.2, 49.6.

<sup>135</sup> Duncan-Jones 1964: 128.

(b) that its very structure was designed to materially reward Italy.<sup>136</sup> As the majority of sources for Vespasian's life were written under Trajan or Hadrian, it is potentially possible, considering the explosion of ideological material about Italy under Trajan,<sup>137</sup> that aspects of provinciality were projected back onto Vespasian as the putative progenitor of Italian identity and of the promulgation of "Italian virtues" at the imperial center.

### ***In mensa luxuria specie frugalitatis: Pliny's Provincial Frugality***

Pliny's *Letters* offer the possibility of viewing provinciality in self-presentation on a stage below the imperial, in the day-to-day business of a self-obsessed municipal aristocrat. His narratives about *frugalitas* and provincial poverty operate, if not at the ground level, at least in the realities of quotidian interactions. Pliny, ever conscious of his image, fashions his persona as man who fulfills expectations about rural Italian prudence, describing himself in detail as a country gentleman.<sup>138</sup> His vaunted identity maps onto the conception of the prud municipal aristocracy, concerned with proper financial management as well as with moral propriety. He portrays himself as possessing a deep understanding of suitable financial behavior and proper *frugalitas*, not only in himself but in others. In doing so he fits the Flavian mold of the wise and thrifty, but not ungenerous,

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<sup>136</sup> Bossu 1989: 373.

<sup>137</sup> This can be seen, for instance, in the appearance of a personified Italy on the Anaglypha Traiana or on Trajanic coins which proclaim *Italia Restituta*. Italy does not appear on Flavian imperial art, and appears on only one known Flavian coin type (Cody 2003: 122).

<sup>138</sup> Even if he only rarely visited his hometown; Syme 1958 argues that Pliny saw Comum only a couple of times in a decade, and that Roman business kept most municipal men from accepting honors at home (446).

Italian.<sup>139</sup> Amidst his frequent praise of his home town of Comum are his accounts of his magnificent benefactions to the city, including a miniature version of the Trajanic *alimenta*. Thus he not only aligned himself with the cultural figure of the wise, frugal outsider, but with Trajan himself: two outsiders attempting to create and embody valuable public *personae*.

Pliny's main modes of discussing *frugalitas* position him as a master of this worthwhile quality. Previous scholars have commented on how Pliny's self-praise, and construction of himself-as-exemplar, function throughout the *Letters*; frugality operates no differently.<sup>140</sup> When devoting a bronze statue to a public temple, he points out that he has no fancy Corinthian bronze at home.<sup>141</sup> Instead of keeping the statue for himself, he pronounces it a worthy gift, to be devoted to public vision, although not without his name and official titles (*nomen meum honoresque*) inscribed. When forgiving Calvina's debt in 2.4, he asks her not to worry about the state of his wealth, despite his moderate finances (*modicae facultates*) and expensive public duties (*dignitas sumptuosa*). He explains that, despite such a small income, he manages its deficiencies via frugal living (*frugalitate suppletur*). In this moment Pliny seeks to magnify the impact of his gift, painting himself as beset by financial obligations and distress, but still able, through frugality, to be magnanimous to a family friend. While this image of Pliny's precarious finances might

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<sup>139</sup> Depending on the dates of composition and publication, this stance could be construed as an anti-Domitianic image, considering how Domitian's *frugalitas* manifested itself as cruelty.

<sup>140</sup> Gibson 2003: 235: "If there is an art of praising the self inoffensively, then Pliny may be felt not to have mastered it. Few of his letters lack an element of self-praise"; Henderson 2002: xii: "Pliny is much too clear far too often that he has lessons to coach, even if they are disguised in a protreptic for participation in sociality on his terms." Cf. Leach 1990: 13, Riggsby 1998, Radice 1969: 461, Veyne 1990: 9.

<sup>141</sup> 3.6.4: *neque enim ullum adhuc Corinthum domi habeo*. He also mentions his disapproval of the passion for Corinthian bronze at 1.9. Cf. Sherwin-White 2003: 225.

seem unlikely, considering his immense wealth and opulent descriptions of his pleasure villas in multiple letters (5.6, 9.36, 9.40), it makes sense in the context of acting out provinciality. Frugality had its own public cachet.

But more often than Pliny remarks on his own *frugalitas*, he positions himself as an arbiter of it in others. At several points he takes the time to praise simplicity of lifestyle in his friends, kinsmen, and associates. His uncle the Elder Pliny ate light, simple, old-fashioned (*levem et facilem more veterum*) meals;<sup>142</sup> his friend Spurrina serves a proper but simple (*frugi*) meal, although on pristine silver;<sup>143</sup> his close friend and fellow aristocrat Atilius Crescens has no investments, but lives off of what a frugal way of life provides for him (*nullius illi nisi ex frugalitate reditus*).<sup>144</sup> These episodes do not always present this virtue as perfect – Pliny, in praise of his sickly freedman Zosimus, mentions that his abstemious living went too far, to the degree that his frugality endangered his health.<sup>145</sup> Even *frugalitas*, improperly applied, could upset *moderatio* and have its drawbacks. Pliny uses these comments on other men in his social world to praise them for their rural and traditional values,<sup>146</sup> but always in a fashion which presents himself as the commentator, he judges of the capacity of other men to exhibit *frugalitas* and have it publicly praised, both in his social sphere and among men of lesser accomplishment.

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<sup>142</sup> 3.5.10.

<sup>143</sup> 3.1.9.

<sup>144</sup> 6.8.5.

<sup>145</sup> 5.19.9: *non solum delicias verum etiam necessitates valetudinis frugalitate restringat.*

<sup>146</sup> Castagna 2003: 147.

*Frugalitas*, but also *paupertas*, surface as commendable traits in Pliny’s recommendation letters: *paupertas* perhaps constituted an attribute more fitting for men just starting out in the world. Only one commendatory mention of *frugalitas* appears: Titius Aristo’s simple habits and clothing (*quam parcus in victu, quam modicus in cultu*) earn a positive mention before praise for his bygone-era *frugalitas*.<sup>147</sup> In other cases, Pliny focuses instead on the commended man’s relationship with *paupertas*. Cornelius Minicianus, a man of many resources (*abundat facultatibus*), nevertheless loves education and learning as only poor men usually do (*amat studia ut solent pauperes*).<sup>148</sup> Pliny emphasizes how noble birth and wealth have not corrupted the young man’s native drive, and that, despite clear temptations, his habits reflect the diligence of his home region, which, not coincidentally, was Pliny’s own (*meae regionis*).<sup>149</sup> Likewise, Attius Sura had a good reputation because of his family (*natalium splendor*) but also conducted himself with integrity when faced with poverty (*summa integritas in paupertate*).<sup>150</sup> Here the components have been jumbled: the rich man actually *was* poor instead of emulating the poor, and instead of wealth serving as an incitement to vice and immorality, poverty

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<sup>147</sup> 1.22.4.

<sup>148</sup> 7.22.2. The crediting of the “poor” as lovers of learning is unusual; perhaps it refers to the category of the aspirational poor seen in Suetonius’ *DGR*. Cf. Chapter 4 for the occasional mention of the “educated poor” in Martial and Juvenal, as well as Sherwin-White 1969: 87 on Pliny’s “social conscience” in Book 10. The interconnectedness of education and poverty is a topic I hope to develop further at a later time. Pliny notes at 7.17 that even the sight of dirty working clothes (*sordidos pullatos*) – code for poor onlookers – can be intimidating. Cf. Sherwin-White 2003: 421. This observation comments on proper conduct for the orator, as he should be able to ignore anxieties no matter how small.

<sup>149</sup> *ornamentum regionis meae seu dignitate seu moribus*.

<sup>150</sup> 10.12.2. Sherwin-White 2003: 579 notes Sura’s at-least-moderate resources, as he has completed the *cursus* up to the praetorship already. Cf. 1.22.4, where Pliny recommends Titius Aristo for his *priscae frugalitatis*.



is implicitly framed as the seductress.<sup>151</sup> Yet both letters aim at the same result. The contrast between poverty and wealth, skillfully mixed, could convey the right kind of character: ideas of *paupertas*, as often, do not stay consistent, even among texts by the same author in the same genre, but serve greater rhetorical purposes.

Pliny's self-positioning as arbiter of proper *frugalitas* is never clearer than when things go wrong. Letter 2.6 offers Pliny's indignation over a dinner party gone sour, where he reproves a host for confusing praiseworthy economy with "stingy extravagance" (*cenarem apud quendam, ut sibi videbatur, lautum et diligentem, ut mihi, sordidum simul et sumptuosum*). The critical faux pas was the host's choice to gradate the meal, having himself and a select few eat different and more sumptuous dishes than his guests.<sup>152</sup> Pliny calls this an insult (*contumelia*). When offering a better and more just alternative, Pliny states that he would eat the same food as his dinner companions – that is, he would drink the cheap stuff along with them, even if they were freedmen. In doing so he would discharge his duty as a proper host without giving way to luxury. He finishes the letter by summarizing his message: that the addressee, the young Junius Avitus, should learn the proper boundaries of expenditure, and that he should not give in to luxury while paying lip service to frugality (*in mensa luxuria specie frugalitatis*). Pliny focuses on the divide between his "correct" brand of frugality, which includes a proper self-restraint (*si gulae temperes*), and a version which visibly skimps on expenditures towards others while still pampering oneself. Of course, this letter was meant not only for

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. Regulus' emergence from poverty and his immersion in *flagitia* at 2.20.13.

<sup>152</sup> Clear similarities to Juvenal 5, where a host serves himself a better meal than his dependents – although in Pliny's case, he and the host are all social equals. Sherwin-White 2003: 152 offers a chronology of this custom from Cato the Elder to Lucian.

its recipient, but for a larger audience; note the public nature of the dinner-party as a theater for acting out provinciality as well as the public nature of the letter itself.

**Gifts for Comum: *intentionem effectumque muneris nostri***

Pliny's consistent promotion of his hometown and his own financial genius come together in a series of passages in the *Letters* which record his civic euergetism in Comum.<sup>153</sup> They include the donation of a statue to a temple, the foundation of a library, a pension system for a hundred of his freedmen, and the creation of an *alimenta* based on the Trajanic model.<sup>154</sup> But while Pliny's beneficence might reveal a generous slant to his character, there also exists the question of exactly whom he aimed to benefit. Any institution of an *alimenta* might reasonably be expected to serve as a support system for the local poor; the possibility of *paupertas* as a motivating factor occupies a place in the voluminous scholarship on the program.<sup>155</sup> Other stimuli are possible: the establishment of a local alimentary scheme does not necessitate poverty as the cause or a discussion of poverty by the self-promoting benefactor. Pliny's approach to his *alimenta* deserves investigation as to whether he employs the rhetoric of poverty, the rhetoric of citizenship, or some alternative.

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<sup>153</sup> Comum was not his only client city. The Italian town of Tifernum adopted him as a patron (4.1). Cf. Nicols 1980: 368-79. Pliny served as a benefactor for at least one city in Baetica, where he had been stationed in the *cursus honorum* (3.4), and his grants to various populations in Bithynia have the tinge of *clientela* about them.

<sup>154</sup> Woolf 1990: 209.

<sup>155</sup> Any synopsis of the considerable bibliography on the *alimenta* must necessarily be cursory and incomplete. See Syme 1958: 71f. on its administration, Bourne 1960 for evidence across a variety of times and genres, Duncan-Jones 1964 for numismatic evidence and continuation into the 3rd century, Bossu 1989 on possible rationales, Crook 1967: 55 for alternate definitions of *alimenta*, Nerva's institutions, and *alimenta* outside Italy, Veyne 1990: 205 on its focus on birthrate and connections to imperial image construction, not poverty (cf. Hands 1968), and Woolf 1990 on its emphasis on *clientela* and *Italia restituta* rather than the poor. Sherwin-White 2003 sides with the population-increase explanation, based on Pliny *Letters* 1.8.11 and *Pan.* 28.5-6 (105).

Poverty is notably absent from Pliny's descriptions of his *alimenta*. In the two letters which discuss its foundation (1.8, 7.18), he never uses *paupertas* or *pauperes* as explanatory terms when he describes his motivations. He specifies that he intends his donation to finance the upbringing of freeborn young men and women, using near-identical terminology in both letters (*alimenta ingenuorum ingenuarumque*).<sup>156</sup> Never does he indicate that these young people suffer any financial difficulties, but instead frames his gift as a reward for the hardships of, and a promotion of the benefits of, child-rearing.<sup>157</sup> In the passage where he explains his motivations in detail (1.8.10-16), he discusses topics not related to financial need. He touts the power of persuasion and its ability to inspire the childless to reproduce, and explains how that his promotion of the joys of child-rearing works more for the common benefit than for his private self-glorification (*communibus magis commodis quam privatae iactantiae*).<sup>158</sup> What he does, he does for the sake of the community. Or so he claims.

While we might doubt Pliny's sincerity, he actively denies that class and financial divisions play a part in his beneficence. The closest he comes to this in his accounts of his euergetism is a mention of the *plebs* when giving a speech on his library dedication in Comum, emphasizing that he did so with the populace (*plebem*) not in attendance, so as

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<sup>156</sup> 7.18, *alimenta ingenuorum* at 1.8.10.

<sup>157</sup> 1.8.11, 12: *Educationis taedium laboremque . . . quod parentibus dabatur*. Pliny's boasting of his generosity specifically to the *children* of Comum has been interpreted as a strategy to obtain imperial favor, gain a consulship, and secure for himself the coveted *ius trium liberorum* (which he did successfully acquire). Sherwin-White 2003: 691 imagines various limitations on the *ius* and notes that Martial received it as well. Cf. Hoffer 1999: 94-5.

<sup>158</sup> 1.8.13. This dovetails with Gibson 2003: 252-3 on Pliny's adherence to a self-consciously "old-fashioned," community-centered system of ethics based on social standing. Cf. Castagna 2003: 156-8.

to appear not to court their favor.<sup>159</sup> When Pliny does mention class differences and their effects on beneficence, he does so as a negative; being too popular with the plebeians might cause difficulties, either for Pliny's proper relationship to his hometown or perhaps even in the emperor's eyes. In other letters, Pliny has fewer problems with the aristocrat's relationship to plebeians. When discussing ideal *liberalitas* in the abstract, Pliny has no problem arguing that the liberal man should support his poor friends.<sup>160</sup> A surviving inscription commemorating Pliny's career describes the *alimenta* thus:

DEDIT.IN.ALIMENT.PUEROR.ET.PUELLAR.PLEB.URBAN<sup>161</sup>

*Dedit in aliment[am] pueror[um] et puellar[um] pleb[is/em] urban[ae/am].*

He created an alimentum for the boys and girls of the urban plebs.

In a local context, away from watchful eyes (and perhaps at the end of Pliny's life), there was no danger in crediting the recipients as not only *pueri et puellae*, but also *plebs urbana*. Still, poverty never entered the equation.

### **Pliny's Peasants**

While Pliny passes over any possible connection between poverty in Comum and his euergetism, he does record his interactions with actual poor persons in the form of his tenants. These farmers, who grew grapes and presumably other crops, recur with some

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<sup>159</sup> 1.8.17. Pliny's stance regarding the *plebs* in this situation, doing them a benefit through his public works but conspicuously ignoring them in his account of the works, aligns well with Veyne's conclusion that euergetism functioned as an expression of elite superiority; it worked to depoliticize the citizens (who are barred from the meeting of the town council the speech takes place at) and served both to express and to maintain elite power, not popularity (259-61).

<sup>160</sup> 9.30.1: *Volo . . . eum . . . tribuere . . . amicis pauperibus.*

<sup>161</sup> *CIL* 5.5262: *ILS* 2917: S. 230.

frequency in the *Letters*.<sup>162</sup> He never explicitly describes them as poor, using instead vocabulary which refers to their social station and their status as non-urbanites: *rustici*, *coloni*, *pagani*.<sup>163</sup> The question of their status occasionally poses a conundrum: 9.20 has *urbanis* who exercise control over *rusticis* but does not indicate whether these stewards are of slave or free status. The renters of 3.19 and 9.37 were most likely free (why else would they pay rent?), but Pliny does mention that he provides them with *mancipiis* (3.19.7), while including the self-aggrandizing fact that he never makes use of chained slaves (*vinctos*).<sup>164</sup> His complaints over his poor resources and the scarcity of tenants (*penuria colonorum*) show that he was on the lookout for free, rent-paying tenant farmers, as opposed to a majority-slave workforce.<sup>165</sup>

The tone of Pliny's interaction with his rustic tenants provides insight as to his level of compassion for them and their concerns. When discussing their complaints and their need to consult him on professional business, he mentions them only in passing; on these two occasions they do not occupy enough space for even a complete sentence.<sup>166</sup>

Pliny portrays their complaints as quibbles (*querelae*), to be dealt with quickly en route to

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<sup>162</sup> Pliny mentions the grape harvest (*vindemias*) at 9.20.2 and elsewhere; his interest in varied forms of produce at 3.19.5 indicates his willingness to farm other crops, not necessarily attesting to experience.

<sup>163</sup> Peasant workers are *coloni* at 3.19.6 and 7 and 10.8.5, *rustici* at 5.14.8 and 7.30.3, *pagani* at 7.25.6, *agrestes* at 6.16.13.

<sup>164</sup> Crook 1967: 180 and Kehoe 2007: 156, 173 on intermingling of slaves and free men in the rural workforce, as attested in the *Digest* and on Pliny's land holdings. Cf. Sherwin-White 2003: 256-7 for sources on changes in the agricultural workforce.

<sup>165</sup> 3.19.7. Bossu 1989: 374-6 connects this passage to possible difficulties in agricultural productivity in the reigns of Nerva and Trajan, pointing to Nerva's land distributions and Trajan's ban on Italians leaving the provinces; he argues that concern for productivity spawned the *alimenta*. Cf. Sherwin-White 2003: 257-9.

<sup>166</sup> 5.14, 7.30. Kehoe 2007: 145-6 argues for Pliny being a generally absentee owner and only personally intervening in moments of crisis; if so, these moments might hide actual emergencies.

more pleasurable business: <sup>167</sup> on no occasion are individual problems covered in detail, or any *rustici* presented as individuals.<sup>168</sup> In a letter of congratulation to Calestrius Tiro, he praises Tiro for preserving the distinctions of social ranks (*discrimina ordinum dignitatumque custodias*) in his provincial administration.<sup>169</sup> While such a stance on maintaining the proper place of men might be only natural for Pliny the image-obsessed statesman, he continues to say that, were such distinctions removed, the resultant state would be chaotic, and concludes that “nothing is more unequal than equality” (*nihil est ipsa aequalitate inaequalius*). Extrapolating from these excerpts alone might lead to the conclusion that Pliny held a low opinion of the people under his control, and a low opinion of their capacity for self-control.

Other evidence in Pliny suggests that this disdainful attitude may be fairly artificial, and that he proved malleable in the face of his tenants’ financial distress. Letter 9.37 details how he, reacting to his tenants’ complaints about poor yields and high rent, reduced the rent significantly multiple times (*magnas remissiones*), and considered implementing a sharecropping system because his renters were reduced to eating their own produce.<sup>170</sup> He mentions possible rent reductions even in a letter to Trajan (10.8.5) which may refer to the same or an analogous situation. Kehoe’s *Law and Rural Economy*

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<sup>167</sup> These situations formed part of Pliny’s obligations to his community - as an elite landholder and experienced orator and *iudex*, he would be expected to serve as a judge in resolving local complaints. One might also note observations about common folk made in the Pompeii letters, where the mob of refugees constitutes a *vulgus* (6.20.7) and Pliny the Elder, in his nephew’s account, allays fears about the eruption by claiming the fires of Vesuvius were merely bonfires made by terrified *agrestes* (6.16.13).

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Syme 1958: 84 on his “tiresome tenants” being part of Pliny’s façade of elite life, beset by financial troubles and endless obligations. Sherwin-White 2003 describes his disinterest as “the disdainful pose of a man of letters to conceal his keen interest in the management of his estates” (345).

<sup>169</sup> 9.5.3. Cf. Syme 1958: 80. Sherwin-White 2003: 484-5 connects this to a widening gap in class distinctions between the *humiliores* and *honestiores*.

<sup>170</sup> 9.37.2

*in the Roman Empire* argues that Pliny's conflict resolution in this matter avoids legal recourse which he had the right to use against his tenants, instead settling for a more accommodating step.<sup>171</sup> Rent remissions were not legally required, and Pliny opted for a moderately creative solution in order to preserve his agricultural productivity.<sup>172</sup> This situation offers several avenues of interpretation: Pliny may have cynically offered back to the renters the fruits of their labor by reducing rents, or pragmatically invested for the future by presenting a genial solution.<sup>173</sup> These ideas are not necessarily incompatible. Pliny could have had an honest desire to improve the lives of his dependents or provide assistance to those in need – generosity which could enhance the *fama* of Pliny's *liberalitas* – either through practicality or compassion. Perhaps he was not always as brusque as he portrayed himself to be elsewhere; desire for *otium* amidst worldly *querelae* could do the work of self-presentation as much as conspicuous *liberalitas* in other spots. Such detail as Pliny includes about his rent relief suggests that he was receptive to and observant of voices from below, or, at least, that he would not hesitate to publish narratives that magnified his magnanimity.

The *Letters* contain occasional moments where Pliny expresses measured praise for rustic persons and their abilities. When praising Terentius Iunior for his learning, he mentions how Terentius' example led him to respect “men turned rustic” (*quasi rusticos*)

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<sup>171</sup> Kehoe 2007: 105-8.

<sup>172</sup> Kehoe 2007: 113, Kehoe 1997: 189-197. Crook 1967: 157 argues that Pliny's action turns his renter tenants into *coloni* tied to the land. Pliny himself comments on a similar problem that faced the previous owner of a property of his and the way that the owner's solution – selling the tenants' property – only exacerbated the problem (3.19.6).

<sup>173</sup> Hoffer 1999: 97 for the former, Kehoe 1997: 197 for the latter.

as much as stereotypically learned men.<sup>174</sup> He expands this into an analogy in order to advise his addressee Caninius Rufus, stating that many men who look rustic (*plures cultu pagano*) can have the most ardent and intelligent spirits.<sup>175</sup> The outward lack of urbanity might hide inner potential, although this characterization might only apply in context to rural elites; Pliny does not indicate the social or economic position of the men he praises. In terms of the lower social classes, Pliny mentions the necessity for a high-quality slave overseer to manage rural estates, complaining that none of his peers fit the bill. Such exertion requires *durum aliquem et agrestem*, who can endure difficult work, filthy labor (*sordida cura*), and a lonely life.<sup>176</sup> Pliny does not volunteer himself for the position. He also states that his associates are all too affected by urban living (*omnes togati et urbani*) to handle such a rough existence.

Pliny clearly counts himself amongst the *urbani* in this case, a stance which connects to his repeated advertisement of his provincial *otium*. In situations with his *rustici*, he fulfills the role of the man of *urbanitas*, interacting with quarrelsome peasants and their petty concerns. This contrasts with “his” rustic Italy<sup>177</sup> and shows the diversity with which he could position himself rhetorically: the frugal country statesman when

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<sup>174</sup> 7.25.6.

<sup>175</sup> A thread that arises with unexpected frequency, as in the aforementioned letter (7.22) which mentions how much poor men love learning. Cf. instances of the talented poor in Quintilian and Juvenal, which I discuss in Chs. 2 and 4.

<sup>176</sup> 6.30.4: *rusticorum autem praediorum administratio poscit durum aliquem et agrestem, cui nec labor ille gravis nec cura sordida nec tristis solitudo videatur*. Pliny uses the same phrase (*sordidas curas*) at 1.3.3, also to Caninius, about the duties of a country gentleman; once again he is outwardly dismissive of his social obligations. Hoffer 1999: 38 interprets this as Pliny comfortably exercising control over his lands and parading the blessedness of ownership.

<sup>177</sup> 1.14.4: *nostra Italia . . . verecundiae frugalitatis . . . rusticitatis antiquae*. Sherwin-White 2003 reads Pliny’s jumping between the two modes of self-presentation as “the growing separations of town and country interests at this period, to which Pliny persistently subscribes, perhaps insincerely yet significantly for the tastes of his audience” (390).



interacting with the city, and the thorough urbanite when dealing with tenants and harsh labor. As at 9.20.2, when presented with the actual presence of the tenants, he positions himself with the *urbani*. His reluctance to align himself securely with his tenants shows the limits of rusticity as aristocratic self-presentation - the façade splinters when its proponent has to deal with the grungy reality. However, this does not mean that he scorned his tenants as much as might appear at first glance. Pliny's presentation of these interactions, as always, depends on his attempts to personify specific virtues and idealized modes of behavior. His interactions with his peasants show a calculated disdain at the appropriate times, and a practical understanding of his clients' needs at others.

### **Conclusion: Pliny's *Traianitas* in realms of poverty and beyond**

Pliny's self-presentation regarding *frugalitas*, *liberalitas*, and matters concerning poverty can perhaps be best explained by his relationship to the figure at the imperial center. Trajan, like Pliny, was a *novus homo*, a representative of his time, an outsider attempting to act out traditional virtues for personal credibility and profit.<sup>178</sup> Much of Pliny's surviving oeuvre asserts his proximity to the center of power,<sup>179</sup> often Rome, but oftener the emperor himself, and it should not be surprising that Pliny's generosity mirrors the methods of generosity displayed by Trajan.<sup>180</sup> Much as Pliny's judgments about *frugalitas* showed his mastery of that particular virtue, his praise of the emperor in the *Panegyricus* puts on display Pliny's closeness to the *princeps* and his understanding of the principles which kept him popular. Comparison with the emperor explains the

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<sup>178</sup> Lang 2007: 125.

<sup>179</sup> Noreña 2007: 29.

<sup>180</sup> In Pliny's catalogue of imperial virtues in the *Panegyricus*, *liberalitas* appears 13 times, *humanitas* 7 (Roche 2011: 8). Pliny only offhandedly mentions *alimenta* in the *Pan.* (28.2), but alludes frequently to Trajanic generosity.

scale and form of Pliny's beneficence, and perhaps tells us why he excludes poverty as an operative factor. In this, as with much else, he consciously and publicly emulated his imperial model.

Pliny's euergetism copied, on a smaller scale, greater imperial bequests. His creation of a temple in Tifernum (4.1.5) consciously mimicked Trajan's own building projects in Italy, where the act of giving and construction functioned as a projection of imperial *indulgentia*.<sup>181</sup> His support of a client community in Baetica neatly matches Trajan's own Spanish connection.<sup>182</sup> Henderson sees Pliny's donation of a statue to his local temple to Jupiter as "writing himself large as the consular protégé of Trajan," creating a "homology" between Caesar and senator.<sup>183</sup> Pliny himself expounds on such donations (*frumentationes, congiaria*) in the *Panegyricus*, stating that Trajan's bounty caused the Roman *plebs* "to see themselves as citizens as much as men."<sup>184</sup> Pliny's moderately-sized *alimenta* copied the imperial scheme, and its focus on freeborn children parallels the *Panegyricus*' mention of Trajan's support of 5000 freeborn children, using the same word – *ingenuorum*.<sup>185</sup> The shared nature of Pliny and Trajan's *alimenta* as public self-promotion has been commented on by several modern scholars, with differing opinions as to cause and effect (whether Trajan pressured Pliny to institute an *alimenta*,

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<sup>181</sup> Bossu 1989: 374, 382. One might also note Pliny's legal support for his former post in Baetica (3.4).

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Nicols *passim*.

<sup>183</sup> Henderson 2002: 165. He also stresses the theme of piety towards adoptive fathers between the two: Trajan to Nerva, Pliny to Pliny.

<sup>184</sup> 25.5: *quis e plebe Romana . . . hominem se magis sentiret fuisse quam civem*.

<sup>185</sup> 28.4: *quinque milia ingenuorum, quae liberalitas principis nostri . . . adscivit*. Cf. *Letters* 1.8.10, *alimenta ingenuorum*. Sherwin-White 2003: 422 points out that *Letters* 7.18 brings up the memory of Pliny's foundation to intertwine it with the memory of Trajan's.

or whether Pliny did so by choice).<sup>186</sup> Pliny's continual promotion of self as exemplar makes the question of compulsion doubtful; he would have eagerly snapped up any opportunity to promulgate an image of proper generosity and his own resemblance to the emperor.

The exchange of letters between Pliny and Trajan in Book 10 puts their mutual work of self-promotion in high relief. Pliny explicitly connects himself to the euergetism of Nerva and Trajan in setting up statues of the emperors at Tifernum;<sup>187</sup> he seeks a reputation boost for them both in asking the emperor for the grant of a new bathhouse at Prusa.<sup>188</sup> This conduit, however, did not run only one way; Trajan set limits on Pliny's benefactions, pushing *moderatio* and presenting his own input about Pliny's plans. He allows the bath construction only under the condition that it not strain other public services,<sup>189</sup> and when he responds to Pliny's inquiry about benefit societies (ἑρανοί), he permits them only on the condition that they assist the poor (*ad sustinendam tenuiorum inopiam*).<sup>190</sup> Via these exchanges, both participants worked to create useful images of themselves as agents of *liberalitas*, benefactors to individual communities and to the poor. As Noreña has argued, their letters, and their self-presentation as friends and

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<sup>186</sup> Gibson 2003: 248, Hoffer 1999: 95 (suggests compulsion for Pliny), 115, Manuwald 2003: 205-6 (Pliny's free will).

<sup>187</sup> 10.8.1.

<sup>188</sup> 10.23.

<sup>189</sup> 10.24. Radice 1969: 196n2 suggests that the services in question were distributions of free oil at the baths for the use of the poor. Sherwin-White 2003: 594 provides an account of the various interpretations of this phrase, as to whether the oil was edible and the methods of its collection and distribution.

<sup>190</sup> 10.93. Cf. Sherwin-White 2003: 689 on Eastern forms of benefaction.

intimates, “can be interpreted as symbolic exchanges in a system in which the demonstration of friendship could serve as an important bearer of social capital.”<sup>191</sup>

Pliny’s persona provides the most immediate example of the provenance of poverty and frugality in the Trajanic era. An ambitious nobleman, versed in the ideological vocabulary of the time, he could manipulate the images of provinciality, and of the poor nobleman, and the virtues of social assistance, to improve his own standing. The emperor was not unaware of, and quite possibly complicit in, this enterprise. Pliny used the imperial image of generous and universal benefaction to align himself with the popular image of the regime, to create a public, and not not necessarily inaccurate, portrait of himself as an imperial confidante, or better still, a smaller and more community-centered version of the emperor himself. When he discusses his rebate to some disadvantaged grape dealers after a poor harvest, he begins his letter by commenting that “other people go to their estates to come away richer, but I go only to return poorer (*pauperior*) than earlier.”<sup>192</sup> No wonder then that in the *Panegyricus* he had already said the same thing, in almost exactly the same words, about Trajan.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Noreña 2007: 239.

<sup>192</sup> 8.2.1: *alii in praedia sua proficiscuntur ut locupletiores revertantur, ego ut pauperior.*

<sup>193</sup> 27.4: *locupletatisque tam multis pauperiorem esse factum principem tantum.*

## Chapter Four

### *Non est paupertas habere nihil: Poverty in Urban Satire*

Roman satire of the late first and early second century CE offers us narratives of poverty which, more than any genre of the early empire, provide quasi-realistic accounts of the lives of the poor in the city of Rome. In doing so Juvenal and Martial diverge not only from Roman satire as it existed before them, but from previously held literary traditions concerning the urban poor. They tie their own identities to vague and sometimes contradictory subgroups of poverty, presenting destitution in Rome as an experience in which they participate. Their Rome is a city full of poor people trying to scratch out an existence, striving to push their way up the social ladder into a comfortable lifestyle, competing for the attention of capricious and indifferent patrons. The *personae* they projected switched between multiple definitions of poverty, the better to emphasize the abjectness of their social positions. While they do not explicitly connect their status to political developments, the prominence of the poor in their texts coincided with the greater public visibility of the poor in the imperial art and policies of the Flavian and early Antonine age, as seen in Chapters Three and Five.

By positioning themselves as the poor, the satirists present us with tantalizingly rare instances of poor people as even moderately developed characters. Poverty in their texts was innately tied to their strategies of self-representation. Their (at least imagined) proximity to the man on the Roman street, and their ability to stand in for him, gave them ample opportunity to comment upon his living conditions and the challenges he faced. But this did not automatically translate to a positive attitude toward the poor and their inability to achieve traditionally defined honors and *dignitas*. Martial replicated the

traditionalist disdain for poverty and its accoutrements, eventually depicting himself as having escaped the disgraced and destitute of Rome to lounge in provincial splendor provided by a rich patroness. Only in Juvenal do we find, at certain moments, the inklings of a qualified respect and compassion for citizens at the bottom of the economic ladder.

## **Background**

The city of Rome itself formed the originating locus for the genre of satire. Satirists emerged as an urban outgrowth, with the city central to their self-definition.<sup>1</sup> Their art depended on characteristically Roman urban settings, contemporary names and places, and critiques of social habits, rituals, mores, and ideas.<sup>2</sup> Satire's main setting was Rome itself, and at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, the prominent satirists who surfaced – or at least have survived – created a variation on an older theme, a subsection of satire that envisioned the condition of the urban poor as a vital strand in the satiric web. More than their predecessors, Martial (active c. 80-101 CE) and Juvenal (active c. 100-130 CE)<sup>3</sup> concentrated on the specifics of life in the city, creating “urban satire,” a shorthand I will use throughout this chapter.<sup>4</sup> Their urban focus did not exclude fantasias about rusticity: when satire ventured beyond the city walls, the journey outside functioned as a means of comparison, to shed light on the virtues and failings of the culture inside.

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards 1996: 128.

<sup>2</sup> Jones 2007: 49.

<sup>3</sup> I adopt Courtney's dates for Juvenal and Sullivan's for Martial.

<sup>4</sup> Fitzgerald 2007: 177 argues that Martial's interplay with the works of Catullus “urbanizes” the “urbane” Catullus, “inject[ing] the sprawl of urban life into the tight little world of Catullan urbanity. What appeared in one poet as the wit and salt of educated elite life in a circle of *otium* lapsed into the banal, the commonplace, the cheap and commercial world of the street.”

Umbricius' self-imposed exile in Juvenal 3 is less about rural utopia than it is about civic dystopia.<sup>5</sup>

Despite their debts to their satiric antecedents, Juvenal's and Martial's closest literary connections were to each other.<sup>6</sup> They were personally familiar with one another, as Juvenal is the subject of three of Martial's later epigrams.<sup>7</sup> As satirists of the same society in roughly the same era, they predictably covered similar topics.<sup>8</sup> They appealed to the same taste, supposed similar habits in their listening and reading public, and Juvenal frequently reworked and built off material from Martial; according to Mason, Juvenal "lavishly exploited" the work of his older contemporary.<sup>9</sup> Although their subject matter is clearly intertwined, Juvenal did not simply copy Martial's attitudes and opinions indiscriminately. One trend in the scholarship has been to point out differences in the tenor of the two men's arguments about the proper state of social relations,<sup>10</sup> a subject that will be covered later in this chapter. Although they share much in terms of their portraits of social perspective, class, and genre, they did not have identical attitudes toward poverty and the poor.

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<sup>5</sup> Braund 1989: 26; she also cites Hodgart on satire as an "urban art" (23).

<sup>6</sup> While Martial is not consistently included in discussions of Roman satire, his tone and subject matter clearly indicate that his work operated in a satiric vein. Sullivan argues that half his material shows clear signs of being satiric (104); I operate from the assumption that his epigrams belong in the satire "box."

<sup>7</sup> 7.24, 7.91, 12.18.

<sup>8</sup> Coffey 1976: 7.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson 1982: 371, interpreting Mason 1963, goes so far as to claim that the key to Juvenal's art lies in Martial. Cf. Sullivan 104. Additional work on the intertextual links between Juvenal and Martial can be found in Anderson 1970: 19, Mason 1963: 124-5, Colton 1966: 157, Malnatti 1988:133-4.

<sup>10</sup> Coffey 1976: 139 on the declamatory influence on Juvenal not being present in Martial; Malnatti 1988 and Colton 1966 on the differences in the poems each satirist writes about the fourteen rows reserved for equestrians at the theater are discussed later in this chapter.

Juvenal and Martial did not invent Roman satire anew, and their works do not wholly diverge from their satiric predecessors. Poverty and rusticity appear as topics, to some degree, down the family tree. Lucilius' fragments critique excessively rural food, mention poor men's occupations, and contain the ubiquitous invitation to a "morally unexceptionable" meal, but are tantalizingly incomplete.<sup>11</sup> Like Horace and the later satirists, Persius pleaded poverty (despite being rich),<sup>12</sup> but refrained from discussing it thoroughly, mostly jibing at misers<sup>13</sup> and treating ordinary citizens as a powerless, easily manipulated collective mass.<sup>14</sup> Horace presents a complex and ambivalent attitude toward the common people: this attitude occupies a space in his own poetic biography, as he constructs his literary self as the offspring of a poor freedman father who had turned to poetry to secure the favor of the rich and virtuous.<sup>15</sup> His portraits of the common man can range from inherently decent but foolish (the *praeco* Volteius Mena of *Epistles* 1.7)<sup>16</sup> to the violent workmen and buffoons of *Satires* 1.5,<sup>17</sup> as well as the claim at the start of *Odes* 3.1 that he hates the vulgar crowd (*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, 1). His stance on poverty, tied as it is to his poetic biography, is too complex to be easily summarized, and

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<sup>11</sup> Coffey 1976: 7, 52. Varro is apparently an outlier; Knoche 1975 states that he "spoke to people of his own class," (57) meaning the upper class, in his *Saturae Menippeae*.

<sup>12</sup> Rudd 1986: 20.

<sup>13</sup> 1.53-4, 3.111-2, 4.30-2, 6.20-2.

<sup>14</sup> Rudd 1986: 144-5. Cf. 5.73-5, 177-8, 6.50. Coffey 1976: 109: "The immediate presentation of real human experience was of little interest to Persius."

<sup>15</sup> Gowers 2005: 55 provides a synopsis of how recent criticism has identified Horace's self-portrait as a composite of comic types – cowed son, parasite, and bumbling Cynic. Cf. Gowers 2012: 2-3 for further discussion.

<sup>16</sup> Volteius is taken in by the rustic enticements of the country, but finds the actualities of rural life to be more difficult than anticipated. Horsfall memorably uses Volteius as a Roman everyman in his *The Culture of the Roman* (2003: 28, 67, 69, 100). Satiric attacks on *praecones* date back as far as Lucilius (Gowers 2012: 9); see later in this chapter for my discussion of the *praeco* in Juvenal and Martial.

<sup>17</sup> Gowers 2012: 184-5.



his life too distant chronologically to consider him in contemporary space with Martial and Juvenal.<sup>18</sup> That said, the urban satirists present a similar interpretive problem, since they, too, need to construe their material through the screen of the poetic *persona*.

### **Personae and Problems**

Claims to poverty form a standard part of the poetic *persona* for poets of both Latin elegy and satire; for example, Juvenal 7.59-62 complains about financial hardship keeping poets from singing the Muses. For the most part this study has veered away from considering such claims within discussions of Roman poverty in context; the operative factors have been the baldly fictive nature of poetic poverty, its clear ties to the culture of patronage, and its distance from “realistic” (if not necessarily “true”) attitudes to poverty as part of the Roman social fabric. Yet some portions of Roman satire, by virtue of their urban setting and focus on the affairs of men whose *personae* self-identify as poor, offer a useful perspective, outside the realms of lyric, elegy, and pastoral. Unlike the other poets, or indeed most authors of Latin prose, Martial and Juvenal address social issues within the city of Rome from the ground floor of the social structure, giving us a window, distorted as it may be, into attitudes toward poor persons in Rome at the turn of the first century CE. Their works are invaluable in addressing the scope of cultural attitudes during this era of Roman history.

Yet the satirical picture of Rome should be examined with a skeptical eye. Scholars disagree on how closely satire depicts the realities of the imperial city. After classicists and social historians in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century showed their willingness to accept these depictions of Rome at face value, more recent scholars have rejected that

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<sup>18</sup> I hope to investigate Horace in more detail in a future version of this project.

reading.<sup>19</sup> Common targets for modern skepticism include the programmatic claims from the surviving satirists that their works contain the unabashed truth or the entirety of human experience,<sup>20</sup> the conscious inclusion of mundane and minuscule details which form a significant part of satire's realistic world-building,<sup>21</sup> and, upon closer inspection, the conscious errors, simplifications, and anachronisms which disjoin the world of satire from historical reality.<sup>22</sup> As Rimell puts it, "we have long stopped labeling ... satire as documentary 'realism'," <sup>23</sup> and now must interrogate Juvenal and Martial more critically about the conditions of their society.

But although it might be "a pointless exercise to try and reconcile Juvenal with Martial and the reality of social practice," as Cloud argues, these poets offer us a glimpse of an intellectualized reality.<sup>24</sup> They present a distorted picture of specifically Domitianic Rome,<sup>25</sup> but one that offers the modern reader pictures of lower-class life that are more plausible than the traditional, regurgitated stories of poor, virtuous ancestors.<sup>26</sup> In their metropolitan dystopia, literariness and realism conflict with one another constantly,

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<sup>19</sup> E.g., Carcopino's *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, which treats exaggerated fears about fires and collapsing buildings, as well as Umbricius' comment about exorbitant urban rents, as simple truth (cf. critique by Braund 1989b: 33), or the wholesale acceptance of the biographical fallacy in Highet's *Juvenal the Satirist*.

<sup>20</sup> Horace *Satires* 2.1, Persius 1.120-125 (cf. Anderson 1982: 6), Martial 8.3.20, Juvenal 1.80-85. Cf. Jones 2007: 17 for Lucilius' everyman ambitions as transmitted through Horace. Gold 2003: 595 describes how the authors' insistence that they present transparent reality tries to co-opt the reader into believing the truth of the satiric message.

<sup>21</sup> Jones 2007: 109, Gold 2003: 612.

<sup>22</sup> Stephenson 1887 on the anachronistic *sportula*, as cited in Cloud 1990: 213; Braund 1989a: 1 on the exaggerations of satire; Gold 2003: 596.

<sup>23</sup> Rimell 2005: 82.

<sup>24</sup> Cloud 1990: 214.

<sup>25</sup> Braund 1989b: 39.

<sup>26</sup> Bellandi 1980: 40.

surrounded by the “litter and detritus of the real world” in the form of discrete and highly visual elements: jeweled rings, the inlaid leg of a table, roof tiles clattering onto the cobblestones.<sup>27</sup> If not confessional, or a documentary about the living conditions of the historical city, these portraits represent a paradigm of urban social conditions inaccessible elsewhere. That satire is not a mirror of reality, however, does not prevent satire’s urban world from being a vital source for the discourse of poverty. Charges of unreality do not obviate the fact that “above all else, Roman satire is about Roman life.”<sup>28</sup> Satire’s tendency towards realism, which made prior historians eager to accept literary fictions about life in the metropolis, enabled Juvenal and Martial to open new avenues in representing the urban underclass.<sup>29</sup>

Issues from genres other than satire play into the work of deconstructing Juvenal’s presentation of poverty. De Decker’s 1913 work *Juvenalis Declamans* introduced the notion that Juvenal’s argumentative framework owed its structure and content to declamation. While de Decker’s general thesis reflects a true influence of declamation on Juvenalian tone and argumentative form,<sup>30</sup> we should be skeptical of his concluding comment that “la pensée de Juvenal est fondamentalement celle des rhéteurs,”<sup>31</sup> as well as the argument that Juvenal’s false *indignatio* undermines the effect of his poetic efforts,

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<sup>27</sup> Jones 2007: 60, 149.

<sup>28</sup> Rudd 1986: ix. Also Saller 1983: 246, Gold 2003: 591.

<sup>29</sup> Sullivan’s comment on realism, that poets and satirists work by transmuting social, historical, and personal materials into art which embodies life and experience (1985: xxii), applies here.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Kenney 1963: 707.

<sup>31</sup> De Decker 1913: 199. For a more modern approach, cf. Keane 2001: 215, who sees declamation as only one element in Juvenal’s literary genealogy.

as though rhetorical flourish and poetic brilliance were entirely segregated.<sup>32</sup> Declamation did not exert any comprehensive influence on Juvenal's portrayal of poverty. *Dives* and *pauper* do appear in Juvenal, but distant from their declamatory form. In Juvenal, we only rarely recede into the rustic/countryside setting common to declamation and its conflicts between the rich and poor, and never as a battlefield for social conflict. De Decker has a stronger case in terms of Juvenal's castigation of wealth, but, when approaching the counterpoint of happy or virtuous poverty, he is only able to summon one passage, 3.147-53, in support.<sup>33</sup> Declamation provided raw material for Juvenal's harangues, but its influence on his thoughts on poverty should not be overstated in comparison to his capacity for independent social conscience.

One major facet of urban satire's departure from declamation (and many other genres) is its denial that poverty creates contentment. The urban *pauper* is never happy. His life consists of a mixture of dangers, humiliations, and resentment, often caused by classes further up the social ladder. Unlike many examples of the literary poor, he does not farm for a living: Juvenal and Martial distort and parody stereotypical rustic charms, crafting the hinterland as bizarre fantasy or elite playground, but rarely as a font of rustic virtue. The urban poor, whatever their misfortunes, still possess some ancestral dignity; for Juvenal especially, the urban poor preserved a remnant of Roman citizen virtue. Unfortunately, these innovations coexist with kaleidoscopic problems of definition which complicate the task of isolating the "poor" for analysis. Our authors often claim that *they*,

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<sup>32</sup> A point made by Anderson 1982: 9. Kenney 1963: 707 disparages modern authors who misrepresent de Decker's argument as dismissing Juvenal as nothing but a declaimer; but de Decker's disdain for oratory does reveal itself throughout. Cf. Anderson 1982: 220, 415.

<sup>33</sup> De Decker 1913: 44-50. This is not to claim that poverty's place in Juvenal does not often parallel the corrupting nature of wealth, just that it does not follow the model provided by declamation.

embattled members of the elite, are the urban poor, a conflict born from competing Roman conceptions of poverty.<sup>34</sup> This represents a daunting obstacle for the historian, but one that must be traversed to get at urban satire's message(s) on *paupertas*. Urban satire presents a uniquely "realistic" counterpoint to typical idealized poverty, despite its schizophrenic split between destitute poor and embittered aristocrats.

### **Jumping Between Two Poverties**

A central difficulty in evaluating the role of poverty in urban satire arises from the centrality of the dual definitions of *pauper* within these texts. The satirists present themselves as both the common poor and the wellborn poor: they portray themselves as destitute, but also as aristocrats struggling to maintain their station. The interactions between these definitions constitute a systematic problem for interpretation. These two groups populate satire in the form of the indigent urban poor, but also as a self-applied description for the underclass of urban elites to which "Juvenal" and "Martial" (our occasionally inconsistent satiric *personae*) belong.<sup>35</sup>

In general our authors position their *personae* in line with the second definition from the Introduction, presenting themselves as poor poets,<sup>36</sup> living side-by-side with impoverished equestrians and sons of old, established families. Martial calls himself

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<sup>34</sup> Urban satire's paradigmatic portrayal of the author's own *persona* as poor and maligned replicates declamatory practice, since *dives et pauper* declamations, almost without exception, preserve speeches written in the poor man's voice. While this may indicate a point of declamatory influence on Juvenal's narrative style, Martial adopts a nearly identical practice as well.

<sup>35</sup> There are occasional extreme exaggerations such as Martial's anecdote about Apicius, who killed himself because a fortune of ten million sesterces was too little to live on (3.22), but these are easily identifiable and not intended to be taken seriously. Cf. Sullivan 1982: 100-1.

<sup>36</sup> The satirists pleaded their moderate means to a man: cf. Coffey 1976: 76-7, 108 for information on Horace and Persius.

*pauper* outright (2.90.3: *quod propero pauper nec inutilis annis*)<sup>37</sup> and critiques wealthy patrons for their stinginess.<sup>38</sup> Frequently criticizing his poverty,<sup>39</sup> he compares such a lifestyle to slavery.<sup>40</sup> A thorough inspection reveals that self-professed satiric *paupertas* soon proves unreliable: in Sullivan's words, "the mendicant persona which Martial found it desirable to adopt should not be taken too literally."<sup>41</sup> He lurked around the inner sanctums of the tycoons of the era.<sup>42</sup> He apparently had an apartment and later a house at Rome<sup>43</sup> and a farm at Nomentum, perhaps a gift from the Seneca family;<sup>44</sup> while he criticizes the farm for its lack of self-sufficiency, he also claims elsewhere that the farm could support himself and others.<sup>45</sup> According to his account, his resources included a slave staff<sup>46</sup> which he mentions with some frequency; enough money to lend to others;<sup>47</sup> and, later in life, a Spanish farm supplied by a local patroness. Juvenal the narrator, in contrast, rarely talks about his own wealth, but has enough to present a fine country

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. 2.30, where he admits to picking an insufficiently lucrative profession.

<sup>38</sup> 3.12 (mimicking Catullus; cf. Fitzgerald 2007: 169), 4.40.

<sup>39</sup> Sullivan 1982: 27-8, 6.13, 11.3. Cf. Hennig 2003: 90-1.

<sup>40</sup> Fitzgerald 2007: 127. Cf. 2.18, 2.32, 2.68, 3.46.

<sup>41</sup> 1982: 4.

<sup>42</sup> Hennig 2003: 248.

<sup>43</sup> Sullivan 1982: 27, citing 1.117 for the apartment and 9.18, 9.97, 10.58, 11.1 for the house.

<sup>44</sup> Carrington 1960: 6. For the culture of patronage in the Flavian age, see Newlands 2011: 17-20, which argues for a considerable number of potential patrons available to poets; Statius and Martial shared several friends and dedicatees (20).

<sup>45</sup> For the former, 5.16, 7.31, 10.58, 10.94, 11.18, Saller 1983: 247, Sullivan 1982: 27. For the latter, 10.48, Saller 1983: 247.

<sup>46</sup> Sullivan 1982: 27.

<sup>47</sup> Gerard 1976: 160.

dinner to a friend and to sacrifice some money for various purposes.<sup>48</sup> In 12.18, Martial (from afar in happy Bilbilis) presents his friend Juvenal as unhappily (*inquietus*) stuck in the Roman rat race, visiting patrons and sweating through his toga in hopes of reward.<sup>49</sup> They, in the varieties of their self-presentation, straddled the gap between common and wellborn poverty.

Our satirists and their peers are shown competing for the favors, gifts, attention, and patronage of rich *amici* in order to secure a (better) living. They frequently present their class as more or less equivalent to the poor man on the Roman street, perpetually scraping to get by, clad in frayed and threadbare clothing, menaced by untold dangers, and without an adequate support system.<sup>50</sup> But their material conditions do not match the actual difficulties they face: their struggle is not to escape starvation, but to avoid the indignity of having to work.<sup>51</sup> At first impression, Juvenal and Martial posit themselves as desperate merely to survive, while simultaneously competing with the dregs of the nobility for pieces of an ever smaller and more whimsically distributed piece of the *clientela* pie. In the abstract, people should only occupy one category of poverty: urban satire operates under the pretense that they can simultaneously be members of both.

In many cases the precise boundaries distinguishing one sort of poverty from another are not made clear, a state of affairs brought into relief at the moments when the

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<sup>48</sup> 11.60-208; 12.1-18, 10-16, 83-93. For a discussion of Juvenal's wealth in Satire 12, see Gerard 1976: 159.

<sup>49</sup> *Dum per limina te potentiorum/ sudatrix toga ventilat*. George 2009: 103 discusses how Martial contrasts his and Martial's clothing as an indicator of the ease of his rural life.

<sup>50</sup> Highet 1961 describes this state as the (oxymoronic) "peculiar sufferings of middle-class penury" (8) and "rootless middle-class" (68), situated between an elite they must supplicate and the brutalized poor they pity from afar. Cf. Hennig 2003: 88-9.

<sup>51</sup> Highet 1961: 253n8.

satirist self-consciously sticks to a specific form of poverty. Most often the two definitions phase into one another, with the semiotics of poverty being applied, seemingly indiscriminately, to hybrid visions of urban poverty. Our authors transition back and forth between material coded for each group depending on the sympathies they wish to engender and the narrative impact they wish to achieve. This section will unpack the interplay of these two definitions, show how the authors obscure their differences, create episodes in which one particular definition clearly exists, and, finally, address the moments when the satirist pulls back the curtain a bit and exposes how he has consciously blended competing definitions for comic or narrative effect.

Our authors' cognizance of the differences between wellborn and common poverty is made clear by situations which include explicit acknowledgements of the differences between the two conditions. Martial notes that a *pauper* named Gaurus had only one hundred thousand sesterces to his name and begged a praetor to subsidize his census (*praetorem pauper centum sestertia Gaurus/ orabat*).<sup>52</sup> No mention here of the harsh living conditions at the bottom of the Roman social ladder, or at 5.13, where a knight mentions his continuous poverty (*sum fateor semperque fui, Callistrate, pauper*) before delivering a rebuke to a wealthy freedman.<sup>53</sup> The best example of a clear division between different modes of poverty comes in Martial 11.32:

*Nec toga nec focus est nec tritus cimice lectus  
nec tibi de bibula sarta palude teges,  
nec puer aut senior, nulla est ancilla nec infans,*

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<sup>52</sup> 4.67.1-2.

<sup>53</sup> 5.13.1. In addition, 4.40 features a character who was once a *pauper* equestrian who later became a wealthy consul, conveniently forgetting Martial's friendship in the process.



*nec sera nec clavis nec canis atque calix.*

*Tu tamen affectas, Nestor, dici atque videri*

*pauper et in populo quaeris habere locum.*

*Mentiris vanoque tibi blandiris honore.*

*Non est paupertas, Nestor, habere nihil.*

You don't have a toga or a hearth or a bed gnawed by bugs

or a mat patched with thirsty reeds.

No boy-slave, old slave, maid-slave, baby slave,

not a lock or a key or a dog or a cup.

Nevertheless you strive to be called and considered poor,

and you want to hold a place among the people.

You're a liar and flattering yourself with empty honor.

It's not poverty, Nestor, to have nothing.<sup>54</sup>

Martial uses a sprawl of items associated with many motifs from the narrative construction of Roman poverty. His details cut across different sub-portraits: some belong to the streetside beggar (mat and staff), others to the filthy urban poor man (unhygienic bed, hearth), while others, like the slaves, indicate the possession of wealth. Nestor, despite his epic name, has no property at all, not even a beggar's paraphernalia. The epigram's concluding paradox – that a desperately poor man could not fulfill the expected portrait of poverty – draws attention to the common fictions of poverty on

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<sup>54</sup> This epigram recreates and reorganizes the opening lines of Catullus 23, although Martial invents the discussion of poverty in the epigram's second half. Cf. Harris 2011: 39.

display.<sup>55</sup> Martial's level of genre self-consciousness puts us in position to recognize the invented nature of the "poor man" both in literature and community; being demonstrably "poor" and promoting *parsimonia* could convey social capital, even if the miseries were fictive or self-inflicted. The elite man who wanted to display voluntary poverty needed to fit the bill, while the truly indigent man, without the ability to match the image well, might not be considered "poor" in terms of the possible benefit. Martial 3.48 speaks of Olus, who built a special *cella* in imitation of a simple, Spartan domicile, all to demonstrate his own marketable *paupertas*.<sup>56</sup> Much as satirists could derive rhetorical gain from positioning themselves as poor and needy, the relatively well-off – not the poor – could exploit the ideological power of poverty in the construction of their public *persona*.

Most direct comparisons between the wellborn and actual poor focus on ethical differences between the two, most often in the context of competition for elite *amicitia*.<sup>57</sup> The common poor appear far superior. In these situations the wellborn poor garner the narrator's explicit disfavor because of their willingness to abase themselves, something we are reminded the actual poor would never do. In Juvenal's fifth Satire, which catalogues the myriad abuses suffered at a dinner with an uncharitable patron, the author repeatedly skewers the diners for voluntarily enduring humiliating conditions. He

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<sup>55</sup> Kay 1985: 142-3, drawing on Greek comparative evidence, describes well the difference between fuzzy conceptions of the able poor as opposed to beggars. Cf. Whittaker 1993: 280.

<sup>56</sup> The joke being that he had overspent and thus made himself actually *pauper*, as opposed to the rich who only imitated the impoverished life. For more on this phenomenon, cf. Seneca *Epistles* 18.7 and 100.

<sup>57</sup> This is a phenomenon which does not precisely occur in Martial; the closest equivalents occur in epigrams where poor men become sexual playthings for undesirable women: 9.80, where a poor man marries a rich lady and is only described as servicing his wife, and 11.87, in which a newly-poor man sexually pursues old women for their cash.

remarks that the freeborn poor, or beggars, would never tolerate such things, that an honest man would rather beg,<sup>58</sup> and later states outright that no truly free person, whether destitute or of moderate means, could tolerate such things.<sup>59</sup> The end result is that the wellborn poor man eventually assumes the spot in the social hierarchy he deserves, lower than the common poor, in the position of a virtual slave to another's kitchen and another's whims.<sup>60</sup> By subsuming themselves to their misplaced desire for gain, they abdicate from the *libertas* inherent in free citizens, which, at least in this context, the poor appear to retain. This concept reverses a traditional reason for contempt towards the poor - that they would do anything for money. Here it has been transposed to the wellborn poor, whereas the common poor have too much dignity to debase themselves. While their social inferiors labor for an income, the wellborn poor are the ones who compromise their integrity in search of financial gain.

The discrepancy between the doomed obsequiousness of the wellborn poor and the dignity of the common poor, despite the humorous intent of the satire, has potential real-world explanations. One lies in the practical mechanisms of *amicitia*. As mentioned elsewhere in urban satire, the actual poor occupy a position outside the norms of reciprocal gift-giving: our authors mention that truly poor friends either receive no attention at all, or can exploit reciprocal giving because of the cheapness of the gifts they

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<sup>58</sup> 5.7-11: *nulla crepido vacat?/ Nusquam pons et tegetis pars/ dimidia brevior? Tantine iniuria cenae,/ tam ieiuna fames, cum possit honestius illic/ et tremere et sordes farris mordere canini?* Juvenal returns to this phrasing at 14.134, commenting that a miser's poor victuals are so sparing that a beggar would refuse them (*invitatus ad haec aliquis de ponte negabit*).

<sup>59</sup> 5.163-5: *quis enim tam nudus, ut illum/ bis ferat, Etruscum puero si contigit aurum/ vel nodus tantum et signum de paupere loro?*

<sup>60</sup> 5.170-3.

have to offer.<sup>61</sup> While the maltreated elites at Juvenal's dinner table suffer in order to gain their chance at a big break, indigent men would never be in that spot. Additionally, Juvenal's equation of the aspirational dinner-party guests with slaves, in a situation the poor men refuse to enter (whether true or not, Juvenal speaks as if they possess the ability to do so), prompts the question as to whether the poor characters, because of their social position, are meant to be more aware of the boundaries between free and servile behavior than their richer counterparts.<sup>62</sup> Given the chance, they refrain from sacrificing their dignity; the poor man acts more nobly (*honestius*) in eating stale bread instead.<sup>63</sup> While this speculation might be overly optimistic about Juvenal's conception of poor men's psychology, the true *pauperes* clearly emerge as the morally superior party in the course of Juvenal 5.

Circumstances in which the two definitions of poverty are sharply contrasted with one another strongly imply that Juvenal and Martial were commenting on inconsistencies within Roman cultural conceptions of poverty. In doing so they acknowledged the presence in the cultural consciousness of opposing, mutually incompatible notions about what constituted poverty. They employed poverty and its disordered images as part of various rhetorical stances, and also knew how to separate these images and exploit them for their comic potential. While they did so on certain occasions, they also developed an alternative approach, where differences between the types of poverty disappear, often

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<sup>61</sup> Shades of Pseudo-Quintilian, *Declamationes Minores* 301, where the poor man invites the rich man to dinner, and 332, where the rich man leaves the poor man everything in his will. Examples in satire include Martial 5.18, 5.19, 10.10, Juvenal 3.160-2.

<sup>62</sup> George 2009 discusses in detail how the satirists criticize clientship for its similarities to slavery (103-5), as well as their point that the poor man had more self-respect in eschewing such abasement (106).

<sup>63</sup> 5.10-11.

amidst narratives about the disingenuous culture and hazardous nature of the city of Rome. As demonstrated above, these episodes should not be read as the products of thoughtless ambiguity or lack of distinction, but rather as places where the authors willfully concealed the difference between variant definitions of *paupertas*. This process, like much of satire, exaggerates and obscures real aspects of Roman life, with an occasional wink at the audience.

### **Playing with Rusticity**

Although satire centers on the Roman cityscape, it does not completely eschew the other side of the city-country dichotomy. Rome's dystopic status would logically contrast with images of virtuous rural life, suggesting to the reader that humble country living provides a convenient antithesis to urban wickedness.<sup>64</sup> On many occasions this comes to pass: the pragmatism and restraint of the rustic household and simple meal feature in both Juvenal and Martial's self-glorifying narratives of their home life. In this they follow literary as well as satiric tradition; Horace in *Satires* 1.6 described in great detail his uncomplicated daily routine, eating homemade meals of vegetables on plain ware.<sup>65</sup> Among the multitudinous interpretations of Persius' self-description as *ipse semipaganus* are that it identified the satirist as rustic outsider seeking a place in urbane literary circles.<sup>66</sup> Yet satire's relationship with rusticity should not be accepted at face value. Urban chaos is not balanced against a constant image of a pacific periphery. At

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<sup>64</sup> Hudson 1989: 73, although this argument over-generalizes the consensus of the satirists as to the meaning and nature of countryside life.

<sup>65</sup> 1.6.114-5. Coffey 1976: 77. Cf. Gowers 1993: 129 on Horace's modest diet standing in for his economy with words, as well as his reactions to culinary pretension (135-179).

<sup>66</sup> Persius *Prologue* 6. For a recent summary of the bibliography on this topic, with commentary, see Ferris-Hill 2015: 56n46; cf. Kerney (122), Cucciarelli (173), Roche (194), and van den Berg (273) in Braund and Osgood 2012.

times portraits of rural areas do fulfill expectations about rustic poverty narratives and their virtues vis-à-vis the city, and at times they do not. Much of the ambivalence lies in Juvenal's quirky takes on the standard attributes of rural scenes; Martial presents a more straightforward picture.

In Martial the subject of the countryside presents an unproblematic image.<sup>67</sup> His glimpses of rural life exude all the standard features of idealized rustic bounty: in 1.55 his character Marcus wishes to be a farmer (*arator*, 3) working with rough and meager means (*sordidaque in parvis otia rebus amat*, 4), a life Martial depicts as full of reward (*exuviis nemoris rurisque*, 7; *plenas ...plagas*, 8). At poem's end, he comments that anyone who loves him should love this lifestyle as well, or else be pale in the city (*non amet hanc vitam quisquis me non amat, opto, / vivat et urbanis albus in officiis*, 13-14).<sup>68</sup> The rustic picture radiates health and vitality; the man in the city grows wan and is subject to numerous obligations. For Marcus, his rustic desires constitute an unfulfilled wish; when Martial describes the quasi-rustic aspects of his own urban life, the picture remains sunny. Despite the oft-mentioned need to cadge dinners, borrow money, and the "constant reference, subtle or direct, to Martial's poverty," his life contains many aspects of positively-portrayed rustic plenty.<sup>69</sup> Country food delivered by a *vilica* soothes the maladies of the city's immoderate heat;<sup>70</sup> in his dinner invitation to Junius Cerealis, he

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<sup>67</sup> Gold 2003: 595 n. 10 comments on Martial's frequent, positive portraits of the country, as opposed to Juvenal.

<sup>68</sup> 1.55. The poverty coded into the rustic portrait is keyed by the adjective *sordida*.

<sup>69</sup> Sullivan 1982: 27-8.

<sup>70</sup> 10.48. The list includes mallows, lettuce, leeks, eggs, beans, greens, leftover ham, and a sow's udder (*malvas, lactuca, porrum, ova, faba, prototomi, sumen*). He explicitly remarks that the aphrodisiac *eruca* (*herba salax*, 10) will not be present.

promises lettuce, leeks, tuna, eggs, and cheese before denying the possibility of even countryside meats at the table.<sup>71</sup> At his villa at Nomentum, near Rome, he lauds the availability of sleep (12.57) and security there (10.94), as well as the gifts his farm can provide (10.94, 13.15, 13.42, 13.119).<sup>72</sup> While this portrait might contain more *otium* than the normal laborer's life, Martial's pleasure derives from the simple delights his estate can offer.

When he retreats from the hubbub of Rome to his Spanish villa, his new home exudes rustic charm, with a *vilica/us* pair, warm hearth (*focus*), and an excess of sleep.<sup>73</sup> This is not without mention or praise of his patroness Marcella, indicating that Martial's leisure involves no personal labor, but stands as a well-deserved prize for his literary activities.<sup>74</sup> All the problems of life emerge in the metropolis, as opposed to the soporific hinterlands. In other moments which deal with rusticity, Martial shows the ability to manipulate the tropes of poverty, but he does not problematize the stereotyped image of rural pleasures and blameless morality. Martial does provide a modest critique of *pauper* Numa, as well as Fabricius, a common exemplar of prudent poverty, in 11.5, claiming that Rome's early poverty directed them more easily to virtue. These points form part of his overall argument that Domitian's own moral fiber exceeds theirs, and does not

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<sup>71</sup> 11.52.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Bellandi 1980: 46, who argues that Martial sees the villa as the escape route for the aristocratic poor, and Saller 1983: 246-7 on the wildly contrasting images of the farm's productivity. See Sullivan 1982: 28 for the possible connection of Martial's estate to the generous artistic patronage of the Flavians, especially towards Spaniards.

<sup>73</sup> 12.18. This poem notably addresses Juvenal, describing him as wandering unhappily through the noisy Subura (*inquietus erras/ clamosa Iuvenalis in Subura*, 1-2) in contrast to Martial's own happiness. It also, as at Juvenal 3.172, mentions that no one wears the toga out there (*ignota est toga*, 17). Cf. also 12.31 on the beauty of nature at the villa. His behavior in this case echoes that of the rich men who adopt Spartan rooms in their houses and wish to be called *pauper*, in that they partially mimic the lives of the actual poor.

<sup>74</sup> 12.21 and 12.31.

disparage their traits as much as exalt the emperor.<sup>75</sup> Generally speaking, the positive image of rural life and its moral associations remains intact.

To some extent Juvenal presents similar narratives and positive *exempla* of interwoven poverty and rusticity when referring to episodes from Roman history.<sup>76</sup> In Satire 11, as an example of luxury's ill effects, Juvenal mentions that the tiny hearth of the incorruptible Republican hero Curius and the cabbage from his garden would be despised by even a ditch-digger.<sup>77</sup> Following this passage, the uncomplicated (*rudis*) soldier of the Republic is described as fearing his superiors, eating spelt for dinner, and using silver only for weaponry.<sup>78</sup> In a rare discussion of poor women, Satire 6 describes how the humble fortune and soul-hardening toil of early times kept the women of Latium chaste.<sup>79</sup> In each case, Juvenal makes the historical distances precise: Curius held the consulship in 290 and 275 BCE, whereas Hannibal's march on Rome (213 BCE) is one of the factors fortifying the women's spirits.<sup>80</sup> Immediately following this latter passage comes an assertion that long peace and luxury weakened and wounded the state's integrity "from the time when Roman poverty perished" (*ex quo/ paupertas Romana*

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<sup>75</sup> In another incident, the former lawyer Pannychus purchases a farm at 12.72 and is forced to buy grain. Depending on the sense of the joke, this is either because he is a bad farmer, or because he needs seed grain to start his crops. Either way, the agricultural life is not inherently flawed.

<sup>76</sup> The use of specifically historical examples in these cases is strong evidence for Juvenal's debt to declamation for source material.

<sup>77</sup> 11.78-80: *Curius parvo quae legerat horto/ ipse focus brevibus ponebat holuscula, quae nunc/ squalidus in magna fastidit compede fossor.* M. Curius Dentatus was famous for refusing a bribe from the Samnites. Cf. Valerius Maximus 4.3.

<sup>78</sup> 11.90-109.

<sup>79</sup> 6.287-90: *praestabat castas humilis fortuna Latinas/ quondam, nec vitiis contingi parva sinebant/ tecta labor somnique breves et vellere Tusco/ vexatae duraeque manus.*

<sup>80</sup> 6.290-1: *proximus urbi/ Hannibal et stantes Collina turre mariti.*



*perit*).<sup>81</sup> This contention obeys the dominant trend in Roman moral rhetoric, depicting the present as undeserving inheritor of a morally superior past. In doing so, Juvenal's narrator falls in line with a historiographical argument about Roman virtue that, at this time, must have been a classic.

In other narratives Juvenal introduces problematic elements into traditional images of poverty and rusticity. Satire 3 begins with boilerplate praise of the countryside with a locative twist: Umbricius' jeremiad about alternatives to Rome begins with a list of specifically Italian hubs of simplicity.<sup>82</sup> While Umbricius' beliefs might not be identical to those of Juvenal's narrators elsewhere,<sup>83</sup> they do provide a wealth of information about definite places where one might envision rusticity in action. The decaying state of Roman architecture contrasts with the lack of danger at pleasant Praeneste, Volsinii, Tivoli, and unspoiled Gabii (*simplicibus Gabiis*).<sup>84</sup> As mentioned above, cheap houses with idyllic gardens abound in Sora, Fabrateria, and Frusino, all places near Aquinum in Latium.<sup>85</sup> The dinner-tables of the Marsi and Sabellic peoples boast earthenware dishes (*fictilibus*) which indicate their lack of pretension, a disclosure

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<sup>81</sup> 6.294-5. Based on this line, the narrator of 6 would disagree with the figuration of poverty created by the narrator of, for instance, 1 or 3.

<sup>82</sup> Rustic images of Italy also occur at: 14.179-88, a father among the antique "Marsi or Hernici or Vestinians" (180-1) instructs his son to live in the hills, grow his own bread and crops, and shun fancy clothing; 10.298-306, where a hypothetical rustic home propounds sacred morals in imitation of the ancient Sabines.

<sup>83</sup> On attempting to separate Umbricius from Juvenal: "Umbricius [is] in many respects a doublet of the author's own *persona* ... and an embodiment of how Juvenal's satire works" (Rolfe 2012: 204, partially citing Jones 2007: 154). Roche 2012 argues that Umbricius' presence prevents Juvenal from being in the awkward position of delivering a tirade against the city, only to remain in it (208). For more on the uncertain relationship between Umbricius and Juvenal, cf. Keane 2001: 227-8, Braund 1988: 14.

<sup>84</sup> 3.190-2. Cf. Courtney 1980 for mentions of these scattered places in Horace, and Gabii's status as a comparative backwater (although it did receive state subsidies under Hadrian: *CIL* 14.2797). Juvenal also mentions Gabii at 7.4 as an undignified place for an educated man to do contract work.

<sup>85</sup> 3.223-4, Courtney 1980: 185.

designed to shame the interlocutor into rethinking his own attitudes (*fictilibus cenare pudet, quod turpe negabis/ translatus subito ad Marsos mensamque Sabellam*).<sup>86</sup> These episodes contain specific locative information, with the lone exception being the indistinct picture of rustic *Italia* which hosts a festival and theatrical performance at 3.171-9.<sup>87</sup> Taken as a whole, “the Italian towns represent a sort of idealised vision of escape from what Rome has become.”<sup>88</sup> These miniature narratives also connect to the arguments presented in the previous chapter about the contemporary alignment of Trajanic/Flavian Italy with ideas of rusticity and pristine moral virtues. Juvenal’s overall portrait of Rome operates in line with this ideological stance, positioning Italy as the frugal counterexample to Rome’s destructive decadence (although his pessimistic text does not posit it as the solution).

In his one nonspecific example, Umbricius employs a conventional picture of rusticity as an antithesis to the unwelcoming urban landscape. His retiring curmudgeon wishes for the simplicity of a rustic community, where, out in unspecified Italy, a toga-less crowd watches a stage show in a grassy theater, eschewing fancy dress or officious ostentation.<sup>89</sup> This picture of leisure, relaxation, and moderation hides certain distortions: Braund calls it “as much as an idealisation as the picture of city life is an exaggeration

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<sup>86</sup> 3.68-9. Earthenware shows up repeatedly as a signifier of the absence of corrupting wealth, appearing in the narratives of the Marsian table, the early Roman soldier mentioned above, and the observation at 10.26 that no poison is drunk from *fictilibus*. This compares positively to the obsession with silver plate as a desirable gift; a man who squanders his wealth on food has to eat from “hungry earthenware” (*gulosum/fictile*) at 11.19-20. An early clay statue of Jupiter protects the Latin people with greater care than his later golden version at 11.113-5.

<sup>87</sup> This segment is discussed in greater detail below.

<sup>88</sup> Jones 2007: 56.

<sup>89</sup> 3.171-9. Only the dead bother with the formality of wearing togas (*nemo togam sumit nisi mortuus*, 172).

and a caricature.”<sup>90</sup> This sort of idealized portrait also appears in Umbricius’ fantasy of the inexpensive country houses to be had outside Rome. The small but fruitful garden, the shallow well (*puteusque brevis*, 226), the life as a “friend of the mattock” (*bidentis amans*, 228) all play into typical sentiments about agricultural labor and the contented life.<sup>91</sup> Other details corroborate these ideas, such as the boots Umbricius promises to use to tramp across icy grounds to hear his friend recite (*gelidos veniam caligatus in agros*, 322). Even in Umbricius’ strict chiaroscuro of evil city and pure country, these stock images of Roman rustic rhetoric deploy some lightly-shadowed irony. His ultimate destination is no frozen field or backwoods retreat, but Cumae on the Gulf of Baiae, a pleasure resort for Roman socialites, as Juvenal hints (*gratum litus amoeni secessus*, 4) in the satire’s opening lines.<sup>92</sup> Even a font of morality like Umbricius could make use of the inconsistency between ideal and practice.

A similar, but stronger, bait-and-switch underlies Juvenal’s appropriation of the rhetoric of rusticity in the dinner-invitation narrative of Satire 11. This satire offers a scenario where the author’s persona adheres to cultural expectations of frugal dining before eventually undermining his own claims. At the start of the text, the narrator distances himself from gustatory moral failings, describing the harmful version of conspicuous consumption they entail before continuing to his own morally upright taste in food. He mentions the public disgust visited on men who dine above their means,<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> 27.

<sup>91</sup> 3.226-231.

<sup>92</sup> 3.4-5.

<sup>93</sup> 11.2-3: “What is laughed at more by the crowd than a poor Apicius?” (*Quid enim maiore cachinno/ excipitur vulgi quam pauper Apicius?*).

recapitulates the Delphic dictum of “know thyself” as a maxim for moderation,<sup>94</sup> and describes knights who exhaust their census with their unhinged gluttony.<sup>95</sup> Afterward he preaches his own immunity to such faults, boasting of how he will act the good host and not give way to hypocrisy by praising beans but secretly ordering pastries.<sup>96</sup> Then comes the food, replete with signifiers directly linked to the country: a suckling kid, asparagus gathered by the *vilica*, eggs (still warm!) carried in hay,<sup>97</sup> along with chicken, home-grown grapes and apples, and Syrian and Signian pears. This rural bounty, according to Juvenal, would form a feast not only for the rustic fathers of the early Republic, but even to a less early Senate that had already grown luxurious in its tastes (*Haec olim nostri iam luxuriosa senatus/ cena fuit*).<sup>98</sup> Most of the remaining satire concentrates on aspects of contemporary life that have grown unnecessarily decadent: furniture (90-9), dinnerware (100-10, 131-5), temples (111-6), tables (117-31), slaves (136-61), and entertainment (162-82). When Juvenal does provide details of his own accoutrements, they exhibit simplicity and rusticity, such as his bone knife-handles, modest slaves from herder

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<sup>94</sup> 27. An ironic choice for a fictive monologue by a *persona* who, as the satire slowly reveals, serves up a stew of deceptive rhetoric.

<sup>95</sup> 42-3: *talibus a dominis post cuncta novissimus exit/ anulus et digito mendicat Pollio nudo*. After he parts ways with the ring denoting his status, the gourmand knight must resort to begging – a clear example of the blending of aristocratic and actual poverty. The narrative continues in this vein, describing an old age worse than death for such a man (44-5).

<sup>96</sup> 58-9: *si laudem siliquas occultus ganeo, pultes/ coram aliis dictem puero, sed in aure placentas*. This Satire has a clear intertext with Horace *Epodes 2*'s stock praise of the country through the character of the *faenerator* Alfius. It may also refer to Horace *Satires 2.7.22-31*, where the slave Davus criticizes Horace's extolling of pristine manners and food when he does not live in a commensurate way, including his praise of vegetables when he would actually rather eat delicacies at a patron's dinner. This reference resonates further when the narrator's own false pretences are revealed at the satire's end.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Martial 3.47, Courtney 1980: 499.

<sup>98</sup> 77-8.

parents, and the reciting of epic for entertainment.<sup>99</sup> On the surface level, the mass of detail, and the narrator's apparently honest envisioning of his humble home, promote and recapitulate stock cultural images of ideal rustic life. Considering the frequency of this trope (the invitation to a frugal meal),<sup>100</sup> a reader would expect the entirety of the text to proceed in the same vein, perhaps with a mild jab at either the host's financial insufficiency or the invited man's reluctance to appear.

The swerve comes in the satire's final fifteen lines, which introduce elements which destabilize the earlier protestations of rusticity and call attention to the fictive nature of the pastoral clichés. Our narrator mentions the celebration of the Megalesian games, including the audible roars of the crowd emanating from the nearby Circus.<sup>101</sup> It immediately becomes apparent that the poem's actual setting is no rustic farm or villa, but the heart of Rome itself.<sup>102</sup> This sudden revelation punctures the fantasy of the bucolic overtones - items such as the newborn kid and the supposedly-warm eggs must have been shipped in from the countryside for a faux-rustic charade. Other scholars have commented on this inconsistency: Hudson describes the setup as an extended literary joke caught up in the trappings of the moral virtues of Rome's innocent past,<sup>103</sup> and Rimell goes further, describing the proceedings as "a yuppie farce held within earshot of the

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<sup>99</sup> 131-4, 142-61, 179-82.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Martial 5.78, 10.48, Hudson 1989: 77-8.

<sup>101</sup> 197-8: *fragor aurem/ percutit*.

<sup>102</sup> This dissonance between presumed and actual setting might have been assumed all along, considering that the host refers to himself as Evander visited by Hercules, an event which took place in Rome (60-1).

<sup>103</sup> Hudson 1989: 77-8. Hight 1961: 131-2 and Braund 1989b: 46-7 describe the scene's moral components, but do not discuss the jarring revelation of the actual setting.

Circus, possibly the epicenter of urban filth.”<sup>104</sup> The narrator’s deceit about the dinner’s precise location, and its delayed revelation, embody the Juvenalian approach to the moral stature of rusticity. While at first glance such rusticity narratives in Juvenal might seem to operate within the bounds of classic moral rhetoric, they either collapse under scrutiny or involve images dissonant with typical notions of rustic virtue.

Juvenal does include several passages which interact with the theme of antique Rome as a haven for virtuous poverty and overall moral purity, but which represent this era in unconventional and disorienting ways. Satire 13 states that perjury was absent during the reign of Saturn, going on to describe how even the gods had not given themselves over to banqueting, instead dining alone in a sparsely populated heaven.<sup>105</sup> The human character then mimicked the moral simplicity of the times, never being dishonest or experiencing envy even if another man possessed more strawberries or acorns.<sup>106</sup> The details seem much like the standard trappings of the Golden Age, and are supplemented by the start of 6, which places Chastity’s last residence among humans back in Saturn’s time (*Saturno rege*).<sup>107</sup> The account in Satire 6 describes the status of these earliest humans in greater detail, making clear that their Golden Age setting lacks the typical utopian touches.<sup>108</sup> They live in caves along with their fires and cows and

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<sup>104</sup> Rimell 2005: 89.

<sup>105</sup> 13.38-52.

<sup>106</sup> 13.53-7.

<sup>107</sup> 6.1.

<sup>108</sup> Courtney 1980: 262 argues that Juvenal’s Golden Age lacks idealization (1) because Juvenal believes, as 6.286ff. shows, that proper morality is linked to a hard life, and (2) his “satiric astringency” deflates the models he holds up for imitation. If true in 6, this rationale does not hold universally true for all of Juvenal (cf. the sentimental take on the universal brotherhood of man at 15.131-158). In terms of Juvenal’s attitude toward the moral model of Rome’s rustic heritage, I think it critical that he rejects the traditionalist portrait

Lares; their beds are leaves, grass, and animal skin; the rough-and-tumble women breastfeed their babies and keep themselves shaggier than their husbands belching up acorns (*horridior glandem ructante marito*, 10).<sup>109</sup> Although Juvenal maintains the moral-purity angle of standard narratives of the Roman past, his upstanding characters are not the normal citizen farmers of the Roman imagination; they are primitives. Their consumption of acorns signals their ignorance of agriculture.<sup>110</sup> The husband's eructation deflates any notion of a reverent tone in favor of gross comedy. Additionally, the traditional comforts and rewards of the rustic farm instead become the interior of a chilly (*frigida*, 2) cave, crowded with odorous livestock and acrid smoke. This would be a difficult and uncomfortable Golden Age in which to flourish.

Similar problems persist even when the narrative progresses into ages nearer to historical time. Juvenal does mention the presence of unwalled gardens and the consumption of fruits and semiotically-charged cabbages, but indicates that Pudicitia and Justice departed, and thieves arrived, before the end of mythological time.<sup>111</sup> Compared to typical approaches to this topic (something with which he, given his knowledge of declamation, would have been very familiar), Juvenal's version of mythological time upsets the foundations of the common narrative. He transports the idea of pristine, but always historically-centered, poverty in historical time back into legend, but not without

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of the distant past that both epic and declamation might suggest. Things had never been perfect since the onset of civilization.

<sup>109</sup> 6.1-10.

<sup>110</sup> Courtney 1980: 263. Cf. 14.182-4.

<sup>111</sup> 6.17-20: *cum furem nemo timeret/ caulibus et pomis, et aperto viveret horto./ Paulatim deinde ad superos Astraea recessit/ hac comite, atque duae pariter fugere sorores*. The departure of Astraea to the heavens occurred during the Iron Age (Courtney 1980: 264).

showing that early poverty involved substantial encumbrances and stipulating that morality was perverted at an early moment. If we accept his progression, then it follows that the early Republic and its heroes were deeply flawed and morally compromised, along with women of the regnal period like the Sabine women and Lucretia.<sup>112</sup> The off-kilter construction of this timeline implies that the fantasy of a morally immaculate early Rome was indeed fantasy, and never had any basis in reality. Juvenal perverts the customary narrative by making the past grotesque and by limiting the era of perfection to a tiny sliver after the creation of man.<sup>113</sup> This does not mean that he truly believed this account of the ages of man, or that he intended it to be taken seriously, but it attests to his willingness to modify standard conceptions of rusticity. Clearly he had no difficulties constructing narratives contrary to the cultural clichés about interwoven poverty, virtue, and rural life in archaic time, and had no compunctions about pointing out their fictitiousness, and their implausibility, to his readers.

### **The Question of Sympathy**

Martial and Juvenal occupy very different positions as participants in the discourse of poverty. Martial maintains a level of respect for wealth and social position (despite the many foibles of individuals) and never makes his satire into commentary on the sufferings of the poor.<sup>114</sup> While Juvenal does argue from different perspectives at

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<sup>112</sup> Even though Pudicitia had departed, Juvenal does mention the chastity of the Sabine women at 6.163-4.

<sup>113</sup> While he does include images of early virtue and poverty at 13.38-52, this does not undermine his picture of archaic times in this passage. Internal consistency, especially across satires, is not a requirement of the genre.

<sup>114</sup> Anderson 1970: 14 argues that Martial “never portrays a poor man as genuinely pathetic, and never allows his audience to engage its emotions with problems of Roman justice.” Coffey 1976: 249 n. 119 contrasts Martial’s persistent sneer at the poor with the pity often seen in Juvenal’s portraits of poor men, as at 3.200-209.



different times, a fundamental respect and empathy for the disenfranchised classes of Rome suffuses his *Satires*. This does not automatically equate to compassion for the actual poor. The layers of fiction surround his work too deeply: any honest feeling must penetrate the web of generic norms as well as the distance created by the satiric *persona* and the conscious equation of equestrian- and lower-class identities. After sifting through what evidence can be sifted, any conclusions about Juvenal as champion of the poor must be carefully qualified.

Martial does have isolated moments where the social condition of the poor as a group enters into focus, although these moments typically only supplement more important aspects of an epigram. At 1.59 he complains about the paltry state of the dole he receives at Baiae, a mere 100 *quadrantes*, and asks the meaning of such meager support amidst a world of splendor (*inter delicias quid facit ista fames*, 2). Yet any social impact is ameliorated by the poem's setting in a resort town, and by the following lines, which form a sardonic complaint about choosing between first- and second-rate baths.<sup>115</sup> Martial mentions that Nero's Golden House "robbed the unfortunate of their dwellings" (*abstulerat miseris tecta superbus ager*, 8) in *De Spectaculis* 2, claiming that Domitian transformed the misused space into a public delight (*deliciae populi*, 12). That said, the rest of the poem focuses on the buildings themselves and the restitution of the city as a whole. In perhaps his most compassionate epigram regarding poverty (4.5), Martial delivers a sympathetic lecture to a *vir bonus et pauper* coming to Rome, explaining how his moral uprightness will go unrewarded.<sup>116</sup> Since he cannot assume the role of a pimp,

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<sup>115</sup> 3-4: *Redde Lupi nobis tenebrosa que balnea Grylli, / tam male cum cenem, cur bene, Flacce, laver?*

<sup>116</sup> 4.5. The ideal exemplified in the phrase *vir bonus* permeates various genres of Roman thought; cf. Ch. 2 for thoughts on its presence in Quintilian and declamation.

drinking-companion, *delator*, debaucher, seducer of hags, or a flatterer, his positive qualities doom him to failure.<sup>117</sup> Some of these professions might be fitting for a poor man in the city, with the exception, perhaps, of the *delator*, but the addressee's moral standing disqualifies him from the sort of careers which could materially reward his ambitions. Still, this advice concentrates less on the concerns of the poor man than on the inadequacies of contemporary *amicitia*. As such, it sympathizes with the difficulties experienced by upward-aiming hangers-on rather than the concerns of ordinary men.

### **Social Mobility and Disreputable Professions**

In terms of their attitudes toward social mobility, Juvenal and Martial attack similar, if not entirely distinct, targets. An illustrative example can be found in the scholarly discussion about parallel episodes concerning the fourteen rows of the circus granted to equestrians by the *Lex Roscia theatralis*.<sup>118</sup> Martial makes this regulation the subject of eight epigrams in his fifth book (8, 14, 23, 25, 27, 35, 38, and 41), while Juvenal describes an altercation based on it at 3.153-9. A 1966 article by Colton argued that Juvenal and Martial both criticize interlopers and pretenders in the fourteen rows because of their successful social mobility. In his estimation, the difference between the two lay in the bitterness of their tone. This perspective was challenged and improved upon by a 1988 article by T. P. Malnatti, who re-examined the evidence and concluded

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<sup>117</sup> 3-8. Juvenal presents a similar list which casts aspersions on specifically Greek interlopers in Rome at 3.75-77. While perhaps derived from Martial's epigram, it casts the narrator's anger in a different direction: here the professions are not all inherently disgraceful (grammarians, orators, painters, doctors), while the poet's main target is the duplicity, pretentiousness, and national origin of the Greek who pretends to hold them. At 3.29-48 Juvenal similarly casts aspersions on specifically deceitful professions and practices; cf. 1.74. Cf. note 128.

<sup>118</sup> 67 BCE. The law restored an ancestral right of the equestrians to occupy the first fourteen rows of seats, and was revived numerous times under the early Empire. For a fuller discussion of the sources behind the law cf. Rawson 1987: 102-105.

that the critical factor lay in the authors' attitudes toward social mobility. He argues that Martial's disdain was leveled against those who failed to adhere to social rules, only targeting those who transgressed *ordines*, in this case the men pretentiously sitting in the equestrian seats without the necessary census. Juvenal, on the other hand, focuses on questions of birth and its moral relevance, being incensed that the power of new money forces out the traditional, indigent, citizen-born aristocracy. The men who sit in the fourteen rows meet the census qualifications, but do not deserve the respect owed to the class' original, aristocratic members.

While Malnatti's conclusion does apply to the specific question of the fourteen rows in Martial and Juvenal, its conclusions do not apply universally across the two authors' work. Juvenal's hatred for upstarts persists throughout his satires, in line with Malnatti's claim that for him "social mobility is in itself a cause for indignation."<sup>119</sup> But the claim that Martial considers only money, and not a person's background, in these cases<sup>120</sup> fizzles once we look beyond the "seating" epigrams of Book Five. Overall, the satirists display similarly disparaging attitudes towards the upwardly mobile. This can be tracked through Juvenal and Martial's attitudes towards three typical low-status occupations: barbers, auctioneers, and cobblers.<sup>121</sup>

Early in his first Satire Juvenal mentions the rise to riches of the "barber of his youth" at 1.24-5, one of the developments the author claims makes it difficult *not* to write

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<sup>119</sup> Malnatti 1988: 134. Malnatti's article contains in-depth analyses of each of the Martial epigrams listed, which cannot be replicated here for reasons of space. For a study of *indignatio* throughout Juvenal, see the first chapter of Braund 1988, with bibliography (1-2).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>121</sup> For a study of professions tainted by *infamia*, cf. Edwards 1997.

satire.<sup>122</sup> Juvenal finds absurdity in the barber's success in transcending his original class: his sin lies in challenging established elites with his wealth (*patricos omnis opibus cum provocet*, 24). Richlin 1983 sees this character as one among several of the wicked, including the upwardly mobile freedman at the *sportula* scene in 1.95-102, whom the satirist envies for enjoying wealth and security at his expense.<sup>123</sup> This same barber recurs at 10.226, where he owns untold numbers of villas; he may correspond to a *tonsor* named Cinnamus who appears in Martial 7.64.<sup>124</sup> In this epigram Cinnamus receives his equestrian census through his mistress' favor (*dominae munere factus eques*, 2) and flees Rome for unclear reasons.<sup>125</sup> While some disgrace might have prompted his flight (Martial calls the reason *tristia iura fori*, 4), the author's punchline mocks not necessarily his original rank, but his inability to adapt to the customs and manners of his new rank. After listing a variety of possible alternate occupations of varying prestige ranging from *rhetor* to philosopher to actor,<sup>126</sup> Martial states that Cinnamus cannot be anything but a barber (*quod superest, iterum, Cinname, tonsor eris*, 10).<sup>127</sup> In sum, the epigram may hint at Cinnamus' impropriety in transcending his proper place in society, but focuses mostly on his inability to acclimatize to success.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The barber character(s) could be of free, freedman, or slave status while working as barbers; after they acquired enough wealth to qualify for the equestrian rank, they are clearly free and must be citizens. Vioque 2002: 375 provides a bibliography for *tonsores* as domestic slaves for important families.

<sup>123</sup> 199-200.

<sup>124</sup> Courtney 1980: 90.

<sup>125</sup> Vioque 2002 presents several possible explanations at 374-5.

<sup>126</sup> Note the similarity to the aforementioned list of professions in Martial at 4.5 and at Juvenal 3.75-7.

<sup>127</sup> "Meanwhile, Cinnamus, what remains is that you will [always] be a barber."

<sup>128</sup> A female barber (*tonstrix*) appears in Martial 2.17, her practice located in the Subura next to a cobbler's shop, the potter's field, and a torturer's establishment. Such unpleasant surroundings might transfer some

In Juvenal the job of a *praeco*, a public crier or auctioneer, appears at 7.5-6, where it offers an escape route for starving writers, and at 3.157, where a *praeco*'s son is one of the *nouveaux riches* occupying the rightful seats of dispossessed aristocrats. Courtney comments that *praecones* practiced “a despised but lucrative profession,” but that only tells part of the story.<sup>129</sup> The level of opprobrium aimed at them depends on context and author. In Juvenal's Satire 3, the *praeconis filius* sits next to the sons of pimps (*lenonum*), of a gladiator (*pinnirapi*), and of a *lanista*.<sup>130</sup> Here a person connected by family to public criers occupies a spot adjacent to men linked to occupations tainted by sex, blood, and public performance.<sup>131</sup> In Satire 7, our *praeco* appears more sympathetic: Juvenal favorably compares auctioneers to *delatores* and to freedmen risen to become equestrians.<sup>132</sup> Mentions of *praecones* in Martial are typically neutral; at both 5.56 and 6.8 they appear as more profitable alternatives to loftier occupations, but without any overt word of contempt. The only continuous variable across these texts seems to be the *praeco*'s ability to amass wealth. What seems to emerge, rather than Courtney's conclusion that the vocation was inherently despicable, is that the profession was despicable (at least for Juvenal) *because it was lucrative* and because the *praeco*, through his trade, had the capacity to break into the equestrian order.

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moral stain to her, as might the poem's unclear punchline, which states that instead of “cutting” (*tondet*), she “scrapes” or “skins” you (*radit*).

<sup>129</sup> Courtney 1980: 351.

<sup>130</sup> 3.156-8.

<sup>131</sup> We might see analogous disapproval in Umbricius' inventory of the groups who, unlike him, he feels are fit to remain in Rome at 3.30-40. He describes men who formerly worked as horn-players (*cornicines*) and small-town arena-attendants (*municipalis harenae perpetui comites*) and who have hit the big time: now they contract for construction, drainage, slave auctions, corpse disposal, and public toilets.

<sup>132</sup> 7.12-6. Not the kindest of comparisons, but certainly a kinder sentiment than that in *Satire 3*.

Martial's attitude towards shoemakers, *sutores*, is similar to the attitude Juvenal displays toward barbers and auctioneers. They earn his ire only when their money or power makes them notable. In addition to the cobblers who set up shop near an executioner and a potter's field in 2.17, he describes them among generally unpleasant persons to meet in the city at 12.59, and calls a cup a "cheap reminder" (*vilia . . . monimenta*) of the deformed cobbler Vatinius at 14.96. This third epigram ties into the negative connotations of social mobility: the historical Vatinius had risen from a cobbler's life to become a powerful courtier of Nero, and long-spouted glassware became associated with his name as a jibe at his lengthy nose.<sup>133</sup> The three other epigrams where Martial mentions *sutores* all revolve around his *indignatio* over their accumulation of wealth. 9.73 portrays a cobbler who has inherited great wealth from his patron; Martial explicitly voices his indignation (*indignor*, 4), and describes the mechanics of shoemaking in a distinctly unflattering light, complaining that the man once stretched leather with his teeth and bit into a rotten old sole covered in mud.<sup>134</sup> Both 3.16 and 3.59 describe occasions where a shoemaker produced a public show, in the first case gladiatorial combats and in the second a *munus* at Bononia:<sup>135</sup> the second poem consists of only two lines, expressing incredulity and wondering if a fuller or a tavernkeeper will give one, but the first contains a variety of insults. Martial insists the *sutor* must be drunk,

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<sup>133</sup> Vatinian glasses appear at 10.3, 14.96, and Juvenal 5.46. Cf. Courtney 1980: 237 and Tacitus *Annals* 15.34 for a mention of the historical Vatinius.

<sup>134</sup> 1-2: *Dentibus antiquas solitus producere pelles/ et mordere luto putre vetusque solum.*

<sup>135</sup> Juvenal 3.34-40 has a strong affinity with these poems, as it describes members of various professions associated with disreputable things (slaves, cadavers, excrement) ascending from their original social station to produce public shows (36: *munera nunc edunt*). Umbricius derides them for their ambition and their success: "since they are the sort that Fortuna raises to the great heights of human affairs, whenever she wants to have a joke" (38-40: *cum sint/ quales ex humili magna ad fastigia rerum/ extollit quotiens voluit Fortuna iocari*).

since no one would do such a thing sober (*neque enim faceres hoc sobrius umquam*, 3). He twice belittles the cobbler with diminutives, first calling him the “little king” of his profession (*sutorum regule*, 1), then puns on his profession by calling his skin “little” when advising him idiomatically to stick to his proper place in society (*memento/ nunc in pellicula, cerdo, tenere tua*, 5-6).<sup>136</sup> While Martial was willing to countenance members of disreputable professions (as long as they obeyed the rules) in his sequence of epigrams on the fourteen rows, his attitude here is far less inclusive.<sup>137</sup>

Common occupations are depicted as bringing disgrace most often within contexts which emphasize their social mobility. While everyday jobs are sometimes mentioned without reference to social mobility, these descriptions are fairly rare and lack the same undeniable bitterness. Juvenal calls the fisherman of *Satire* 4 the “master of boat and line” (*cumbae linique magister*, 45) and “naked” (*nudus*, 49), in a patronizing tone which contrasts his humble status with the grandeur of the emperor and imperial court. The bully of Juvenal 3.278-301 envisions a shoemaker (*sutor*, 294) as a fitting dining companion for the poor man he assaults in the street. This remark is certainly not meant as a compliment, considering the unpleasant low-status foods he mentions and the Jewish prayer-meeting (*proseucha*, 296) he suggests the poor man visits. While the bully’s attitude is wholly contemptuous, the narrator’s sympathies lie with the victim; it is not entirely clear whether his harangue repeats the author’s own views about the baseness of lower-class life, or is meant to sound like what a villainous snob might say.

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. n. 149 on the difficulties in discerning whether *cerdo* serves as a proper name or describes a profession.

<sup>137</sup> An attitude also commented upon by Boyle 1995: 257, who argues that Martial’s social hierarchy dictates that people know their place, and that the epigrams are especially derisive of breaches of this principle in the classes lower than the author’s.

Even if both examples are interpreted as disparagement of poor occupations, the reader of urban satire most often encounters characters with these jobs as evidence for the topsy-turvy misalignment of the social order; they become symbols of the disenfranchisement of the traditional elites, of the reliance upon money as the measure of personal worth, and of the neglect of worthy equestrians, clients, and literary artists. Any effort to determine the comparative level of shame deserved by members of these professions must decontextualize them from the satirists' frequently-expressed revulsion at social mobility. Instead of attitudes to the poor *per se*, these instances indicate the authors' fixation on boundaries of rank. Whatever measure of ignominy such men incur via their vocations alone, their success in transcending their original rank crosses a more important line of propriety.

### **The Sadness of the Poor**

The vilification of the upwardly mobile among the lower classes must color any account of our authors' overall stances on poverty. Whether or not their texts praise or express compassion for the poor (a subject discussed below), they do not believe the poor should stop being poor. Social historians might utilize their treatment of *paupertas* and its escapees as *evidence* for social mobility, but not *support* for it. A poor man can rightly hope for wealth, as in the mention of the *pauper* runner Ladas who hopes for the rich man's gout, but he should not achieve it.<sup>138</sup> The satirists' desire for the unappreciated and underfunded to advance in the world applies only to the faction to which their *personae* belong: "poor," deserving wellborn men searching for generous patrons. Only they

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<sup>138</sup> 13.96-8: *pauper locupletem optare podagram/ nec dubitet Ladas si non eget Anticyra nec/ Archigene*. Anticyra and Archigenes, respectively, refer to an island that produced hellebore and a doctor who wrote a treatise on it; Ladas is not insane for hoping for the rich man's life.



should move upward, and no other.

Although both restrict their approval of social mobility to established classes, Juvenal and Martial both subvert the persistent myth of happy poverty. Bellandi has expressed this viewpoint in focusing on the travails of the poor man in Juvenal 3, arguing that he becomes so subhuman as to barely exist.<sup>139</sup> In contrast to positive depictions of honest poverty fulfilling man's natural desires,<sup>140</sup> Juvenal 3 presents an urban hellscape where the *pauper* faces contempt, ridicule, constant danger, and sleeplessness.<sup>141</sup> As for this last complaint, Martial presents a similar sentiment in 12.57.3-4 (*nec cogitandi, Sparse, nec quiescendi/ in urbe locus est pauperi*), but he tempers the forcefulness of his point by the revelation at the epigram's end that he can always find sleep at the villa (*taedio fessis/ dormire quotiens libuit imus ad villam, 27-8*).<sup>142</sup> *Pauper* Martial was not so poor after all. His proposal of a solution which requires substantial wealth indicates his lesser interest in the well-being of the actual poor as opposed to his wellborn-poor self. While he does expose a nasty fact of life for the poor trapped in the city, his escape route would not be available to those without villas of their own.

In addition to Juvenal 3's concentrated portrait of lower-class unhappiness, snippets from Martial's epigrams supply evidence for the miseries of the urban poor. Yet, as with the retreat to his villa above, his perspective typically focuses on problems that affect the wellborn not-so-poor. Martial 5.18 and 5.19 both comment on the inability of

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<sup>139</sup> Bellandi 1980: 39: "Il *pauper* a Roma é una figura subumana, quasi non esiste."

<sup>140</sup> First-century CE examples include Seneca *Epistles* 2, 6, 25, and 119.

<sup>141</sup> Bellandi 12-6 discusses of Seneca's conception of happy, untroubled poverty, and 39-47 for the catalogue of difficulties facing the poor man in Juvenal 3.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Bellandi 1980: 47.

the poor man to engage in *amicitia*. Martial here makes use of the classic arguments: in 5.18, that the *pauper* by nature cannot perform equal exchanges with his rich counterpart and so makes unfair demands upon him;<sup>143</sup> in 5.19 that, because of this inability to reciprocate, the poor man can cultivate only ungrateful friendships (*colit ingratas pauper amicitias*, 5.19.8). While this presents the *pauper*'s lack of social opportunities sympathetically, the sensibilities behind the search for *amicitia* apply more to Martial's second-definition *paupertas* than to the truly destitute. Martial does provide occasional examples of the hardships of the actual poor. He comments on the paraphernalia of a hypothetical poor man at 1.92: skeletal bed, ragged clothes, with only filthy water to drink.<sup>144</sup> One might compare these details to the inventory of broken possessions carried by the disgraceful (*dedecus*) Vacerra at 12.32, which include a three-footed bed, a two-footed table, a leaky chamberpot, and foul food, an assortment which the author calls worthy of the bridge, and hence, beggary.<sup>145</sup> Such items indicate a life fraught with difficulty, despite Martial's unsympathetic tone in this epigram.

Fewer vicissitudes of opinion plague Juvenal's narratives of unhappy poverty. Not without reason does he describe *paupertas* as "gloomy" (*maesta*) at 7.60. In addition to the myriad hazards contained in *Satire* 3, his other satires develop the condition of

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<sup>143</sup> 5.18.9-10: *Quotiens amico diviti nihil donat, / o Quintiane, liberalis est pauper*. Despite this sentiment, Martial does list numerous gifts from poor men to rich men in the *Apophoreta* of Book 14. Cf. Howell 1995: 96 for additional ancient sources which describe stereotypically "poor" gifts such as wax candles.

<sup>144</sup> 1.92.5, 8, 10: *Nudi ...grabati / ...dimidiasque nates Gallica paeda tegit / ... et bibis immundam cum cane pronus aquam*. Not only is the water filthy, but he consumes it alongside a dog, which equates him with a notoriously servile kind of animal.

<sup>145</sup> 12.32.25: *Haec sarcinarum pompa convenit ponti*. This epigram, as with 11.32, takes its inspiration from Catullus 23, and draws directly from it for a number of particulars. Watson 2004 catalogues Martial's borrowings from Catullus in this poem (315-6), as well as its connection to the *parva casa* poetic motif which it transposes to the city. Watson also argues that Martial's derisive attitude to poverty in general derives from his Neoteric literary models (315).

poor people as powerless targets to be acted upon by elites. The indignities of unequal meals at elite dinners have been covered above; as we have seen, they mostly reflect the concerns of wellborn poverty. Actual poor men experience different problems. After catching a gigantic fish, the *remex nudus* of *Satire* 4 must immediately volunteer his catch to the emperor's table lest *delatores* conducting an inquisition claim the mullet as an unlikely runaway from the imperial ponds.<sup>146</sup> The text provides no account of the ramifications of attempting to retain the fish, although they would clearly be unpleasant. A more direct example of helplessness amongst the poor comes at 6.413-5, where a wealthy woman has her poor neighbors (*vicinos humiles*, 414) seized and beaten with straps for no apparent reason.<sup>147</sup> Juvenal says such behavior is wrong, as seen in his descriptions of it as *vitium* and *intolerabile* (413). This tidbit, along with the account of the one-sided brawl at 3.278-301, highlights the lack of social mechanisms by which the poor can defend themselves from aggression. No advocates will step in to defend them; the rich woman will receive no punishment; the poor man has no means of appealing to authority. Much as the giant logs and stones carted through the streets at 3.255-61 could potentially crush bystanders at any moment, so could the unpredictable and irresistible wrath of the rich be summarily inflicted upon the poor. They walked an uncertain line in a chaotic and unforgiving world.

### **Siding with the Poor**

The above sections have established a portrait, especially within Juvenal, of the urban poor as a downtrodden and victimized class. Social mobility represented a threat,

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<sup>146</sup> 4.45-51.

<sup>147</sup> 6.413-15: *Nec tamen id vitium magis intolerabile quam quae/ vicinos humiles rapere et concidere loris/ exorata solet.*

but only the notorious examples who succeeded earn his disdain; he describes the working poor neutrally or with a mixture of pity and empathy. He sidesteps the trends of Roman literature in presenting the poor neither as happy and satisfied ideological symbols nor as a constantly foolish and destructive *vulgus*. His work, and to a lesser extent Martial's, describes details of individual lives in a quasi-realistic manner. In moments where rich and "poor" come into conflict, he sides with the poor, although problems of definition often interfere with pinpointing the exact status of "the poor." Martial adopts a more aloof attitude, occasionally darting in with a compassionate episode but more often mocking an impoverished peer or pleading his own destitution. Juvenal's systematic compassion invites the question of why his presentation of poverty differs from that of his contemporaries, both inside and outside satire. His work supplies two compelling explanations for his qualified sympathy toward the poor of Rome.

Juvenal frequently takes the side of the poor because his Rome is dominated by an unbalanced social system where the gospel of wealth has usurped what he considers natural citizen rights. Juvenal's sensibilities parallel the social position of his *persona*: on the outside of elite circles looking in, believing his standing within society warrants certain privileges, protections, and guaranteed social relationships. He frequently frames his concerns in the rhetoric of citizenship, a citizenship the poor Roman shares. The emphasis on citizenship also implies that such respect would be denied to other groups Juvenal disparages, such as Greeks and Jews. When providing advice to a social superior, he asks for at least the illusion of parity in dining (5.111-13):

*Solum*

*poscimus ut cenes civiliter. Hoc face et esto,*

*esto, ut nunc multi, dives tibi, pauper amicis.*

We only ask that you dine like a fellow-citizen. Do this and let it be so; be, as many are nowadays, a rich man to yourself, and a poor man amongst friends.

Juvenal-as-client seeks from his host a “civil” dinner; that is, a meal surrounded by an atmosphere of respect which results from a position of essential, or at least pretended, equality and respect between the participants. He frames this dinner in the guise of outwardly poor men sharing company (a spirit which connects to ideas of wholesome social consensus in legendary time). Additionally, the use of *civiliter* emphasizes the citizenship shared by all participants at the dinner; in an ideal world, the obligations demanded by their common homeland would ensure proper conduct between them. Because of this shared status, the aristocratic host would have the responsibility to safeguard the dignity of his poorer guests and to preserve a semblance of egalitarianism in his public relationships with other men. Satire being satire, the advice is unheeded.

The larger obligations which should exist between elite and non-elite follow a similar model, based in the interplay of citizenship and core Roman virtues. As society does not reward the virtuous poor or advance them socially, Juvenal suggests that “the poor Quirites ought to have seceded long ago” (*agmine facto/ debuerant olim tenues migrasse Quirites*).<sup>148</sup> In response to their poor treatment, they should perform a modern-day *secessio plebis*, going on strike or abandoning the city entirely. The word *Quirites*, the ancestral name for Roman citizens, occupies a prominent position at line-end and provides rhetorical punch as the closing word of the *sententia*. The poor (with whom the

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<sup>148</sup> 3.162-3.

narrator associates himself), are citizens by birth and long inheritance, and merit assistance based on their participation in the body politic. According to the narrator's rhetorical stance, this formulation has been changed by hosts, patrons, foreigners, and upstarts who no longer adhere to traditional social arrangements. Like the *plebs* of the early Republic, the only power the *Quirites* have to affect the state may be to exit it en masse. As their birthright no longer automatically earns them respect, honest citizens fail to receive the help they deserve from the more fortunate – a position mirrored by Cordus, who loses “all his nothing” in an apartment fire but receives no help, unlike his rich double, who profits from the disaster because his friends give him sumptuous gifts afterward.<sup>149</sup> Likewise, the assaulted pedestrian of 3.278-301 receives the less-desirable *libertas* (299) of returning home with a few teeth rather than the actual rights a citizen status deserves. The sufferings of the poor are harshly juxtaposed with language that suggests the rights and responsibilities they have been denied.<sup>150</sup>

Juvenal's urban poor might, then, possess a power implied by their citizenship - the unharnessed possibility expressed in Umbricius' exhortation to secede. Regardless of their material position, the downtrodden have the potential to affect political reality. If they seceded, the *tenues Quirites* could reclaim their rights – rights which some of the wellborn poor happily abjured in the hopes of securing an “in” with unscrupulous

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<sup>149</sup> 3.208-22. Such a windfall earns him suspicion that he might have set the fire himself (*suspectus tamquam ipse suas incenderit aedes*, 222).

<sup>150</sup> The rhetoric of citizenship as a neglected element in poverty may also encompass the frequent mentions of togas in poor condition as visual symbols of the patron's and society's neglect and as a symbolic marker of unrewarded citizen virtue. For examples, cf. Juvenal 3.143-53, 9.28-31, Martial 1.103, 3.36, 4.34, 6.50, 7.92, 8.28, 9.49, 9.57, 9.100, 12.36.

patrons.<sup>151</sup> An echo of this assumed potential occurs at the close of the fourth Satire, where the narrator states that the emperor Domitian only met his downfall after he became a terror to men of the artisanal class (*periit postquam cerdonibus esse timendus/coeperat*).<sup>152</sup> While this statement is not historically accurate,<sup>153</sup> it attributes change at the pinnacle of the imperial power structure to the power of lower-class men. Despite the fictive nature of the episode, it implies that the Roman citizen, no matter how low his social standing, still has the ability to act on his birthright and influence political events.

The second reason for Juvenal's sympathies is that the poor men of his world, as opposed to Tacitus' feckless mob, have talents and abilities which an unfair world does not allow to flourish. This viewpoint emerges most strongly in Satire 8, which addresses the overvaluing of ancestry in Rome.<sup>154</sup> In a rebuke to a puffed-up noble touting his family tree and deriding the common people for their lack of heritage,<sup>155</sup> Juvenal launches into his most coherent defense of the lower classes (8.47-52):

*Tamen ima plebe Quiritem*

*facundum invenies: solet hic defendere causas*

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<sup>151</sup> See the above section on the discrepancy in *dignitas* between self-disgraced dinner guests and the superior self-respect exhibited by beggars on the street.

<sup>152</sup> 4.153-4. Cf. Courtney 1980: 228-9 on the history of the term *cerdo*, from its origin as a slave-associated name to a more generic word for a tradesman. In some cases in satire (Martial 3.16, 59, 99) it may be a proper name, but here it is clearly a generalizing plural.

<sup>153</sup> Courtney 1980: 228 for a synopsis of the historical sources: the actual assassin was a freedman but the conspirators were largely members of the nobility. Never is it suggested that Domitian's death came about as the result of a mass popular movement.

<sup>154</sup> One might also cite the disparagement of the poor man's relationship with the gods at 3.145-6 (*contemnere fulmina pauper creditur atque deos dis ignoscentibus ipsis*). While those who worship wealth believe the *pauper's* oath is worthless, and so the gods despise him, the divinities forgive the man, "because he perjures himself through necessity, not wickedness" (Courtney 1980: 175). His relationship with the heavens, if not perfect, surpasses that of his richer peers.

<sup>155</sup> 8.44-5: "*Vos humiles,*" *inquis,* "*volgi pars ultima nostri,/ quorum nemo queat patriam monstrare parentis.*"

*nobilis indocti; veniet de plebe togata*  
*qui iuris nodos et legum aenigmata solvat;*  
*hinc petit Euphraten iuvenis domitique Batavi*  
*custodes aquilas, armis industrius.*

You will discover an eloquent citizen in the lowest plebeian, one who is accustomed to prosecute cases for an uneducated noble; one will come from the toga-wearing *plebs* who loosens the knots of justice and solves the mysteries of law; from this place a more industrious youth in arms seeks the Euphrates and the guardian eagles of the conquered Batavians.<sup>156</sup>

Even the least reputable plebeian (*ima plebe*, 47), not far from Tacitus' *sordida plebs*) can display oratorical talent similar to Quintilian's *vir bonus*.<sup>157</sup> Much like the upwardly mobile *literati* of *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*, he can advance his career through legal and rhetorical acumen, and his career will parallel that of a vigorous and courageous soldier from the same background who marches to the ends of the earth. Distinguished ancestry guarantees neither ability nor success, as the brilliant plebeian performs the mental legwork for an uneducated aristocrat. This presentation neatly coalesces with the latter part of *Satire* 8, which traces the ignoble backgrounds of statesmen and heroes from Roman history: Cicero, Marius, the Decii, concluding with the servile origin of Servius Tullius and the heroism of an unnamed slave (8.231-68). The final *sentential* of *Satire* 8, though framed as an insult, collapses any notion of equating social class and personal

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<sup>156</sup> Note the repeated insistence of the narrator on the citizen standing of this hypothetical plebeian: not only *Quiritem*, but also "toga-wearing" (*plebe togata*, 49), and the fact that he serves as a legionary, which the text implies would require citizen status.

<sup>157</sup> Note Martial's equivalent use of *vir bonus* to describe a *pauper* coming to Rome in 4.5, an epigram which might have influenced Juvenal's creation of this passage.



worth in Rome by invoking the race's legendary origin as a refuge for outcasts (*ab infami gentem deducis asylo*, 273). If heritage counts against anyone, it should count against everyone, as each family started with a shepherd, or something worse (*aut pastor fuit aut illud quod dicere nolo*, 275).<sup>158</sup> In a reductive sense, the poor Roman and the distinguished elite share the same origin.

## Conclusion

Both of Juvenal's categories of praise for the poor Roman, however, fall afoul of the same methodological problem, one tied to the slippery construction of the author's *persona* and the equally slippery definition of *paupertas*. The combination of multiple definitions into a single inconsistent picture of poverty leaves only isolated moments where the actual poor can be separated from their better-off counterparts: the *ima plebe* of 8.47, the *remex nudus* of 4.49, perhaps unlucky Cordus at 3.203-11. At most other times the narrator's attitude could apply as well to the destitute as it does as to the peer group he vilifies for selling their birthright for oily shrimp, hard bread, and the never-fulfilled promise of a major payday. The satire of the atrocious patron's dinner (5.1-92) provides a rare instance where he establishes clear boundaries between different subgroups: the disgraceful poor aristocrats, the self-respecting poor aristocrats (in the form of the narrator), and the actual poor. Rarely is it so clear. More often than not, any conclusion must embrace a caveat about the impossibility of absolute knowledge, given the shifting definitions and the author's control over them.

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<sup>158</sup> 8.273-5. This entire satire clearly owes much of its content to declamation, with the neatly subdivided narratives coming in staccato order, starting at the close of the Republic and working steadily backwards, with its crescendo at the servile heroes of the regal period. Its own literary genealogy, however, should not count against the force of its message.

Language expressing sympathy for the poor is also colored by the persistent connection in Juvenal between the satirist and the problems of poverty in Rome. As Juvenal's *persona* often includes himself under the vague umbrella of "the poor," his self-presentation contributes to poverty's place in the reality he depicts. As much as he is a witness to poverty, he is a participant. Juvenal and his *persona(e)*, or figures once removed such as Umbricius (and, to a lesser degree, Martial, who pleads poverty but also depicts himself delighting in his patron's wealth), lurk behind the praise for simple meals, the vicious critiques of apathetic or cruel patronage, and the praise of talent left unrewarded. Poverty is not the social problem that needs to be fixed, but social structures that deny opportunity and advancement to deserving artists, loyal friends, and traditional elites. Self-pity does not monopolize the narrative, as the narrator also lambastes members of his own "poor" peer group for debasing themselves in search of handouts or respect or a legacy, but still fundamentally affects Juvenal's discourse on poverty.<sup>159</sup> A hypothetical hard-line persona theorist might interpret his diatribes about poor citizens whose rights go unprotected and whose virtues go uncompensated as purely the concerns of his *persona* and not the product of any altruistic impulse.

Is it true, then, that the atypical amount of sympathy for the urban poor in these satires is irretrievably marred by Juvenal's sly inclusion of himself within that class? Not necessarily so. When poor persons do appear who cannot be easily aligned with any manifestation of "Juvenal," they appear virtuous, honest, humble, and inoffensive. With the exclusion of those who have transcended their class, the positive portrayal of the poor is so systematic that one must take notice. One influence on this stance might have been

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<sup>159</sup> This argument owes a debt to Keane 2003's articulation of the satirist's role in the world he creates, especially 263 and 274.

Flavian and Trajanic state support for, and promotion of images of, frugality and *paupertas* (as discussed in the previous chapter). The consistently optimistic view of the poor in declamation may bleed into Juvenal's worldview; this influence appears overtly in 14.235-7, which parrots a declamatory theme by denouncing a man who insults his son for relieving the poverty of a relative.<sup>160</sup> But this does not suffice to explain every instance; declamation exercised no such indomitable power over Juvenal's content. His portrayal of the urban poor in a positive light, and as the inheritors of the rights and virtues of their heroic ancestors, stands nearly without precedent. He did borrow and adapt from Martial in myriad ways, but without absorbing Martial's indifference, or his automatic acceptance of the rightness of the social order. Although we have ample reason to discount Juvenal's motivations, and must struggle with our inability to peel back the layers of *personae*, his work still represents a groundbreaking innovation in the Roman discourse of poverty. Juvenal's self-presentation built upon the literary tradition of the poor poet seeking recognition, but his images of the poor as a class were alone in representing a modern poverty deserving of rights, respect, and reward.

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<sup>160</sup> *Cum dicis iuveni stultum qui donet amico,/ qui paupertatem levet attolatque propinqui,/ et spoliare doces et circumscribere.* Cf. Ch. 2 for a fuller discussion of declamation's generous opinion of its poor characters.

## **Chapter Five: Poverty and Representation in Roman Art: A Preliminary Study**

### **Introduction**

Up to this point this study has investigated mainly representations of poverty as expressed in literary texts. In this chapter I have expanded my field of inquiry beyond textual representations in an attempt to understand how Roman of all kinds represented and consumed ideas of poverty and lower-class labor in their encounters with visual art. This preliminary analysis asks whether the *topoi* we find consistently in the Roman discourse on poverty have visual analogues in domestic and imperial art, and the methods in which such analogues would be consumed by a range of audiences. Before continuing I must acknowledge my tremendous debt to practitioners of the “sociology of art” who have pioneered approaches to social and cultural history through the study of Roman art, especially Natalie Kampen and John R. Clarke, and additionally Lauren Hackworth Petersen, Eve D’Ambra, and Jeannine Uzzi. Without their efforts there would be precious little opportunity to analyze the role art played in the lives and self-representation of low-status persons in Roman society. Their works are cited throughout, in addition to the survey of Roman sculpture by Diana E. Kleiner. I attempt to follow in their footsteps by analyzing images of poverty and the lower classes in art in order to pinpoint the attitudes they reveal and the symbolic messages they carry.

It has been well established that many parts of the Roman house at the municipal level and above were, by and large, public space.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the owners and their guests, domestic art and its messages were consumed by members of the household

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<sup>1</sup> By many, including Clarke 1991, Wallace-Hadrill 1994, and Elsner 1995.

*familia* across a spectrum of status and social categories: free and slave women, children, freedmen, slaves – as well as the artists, free and slave, Roman and peregrine, who created the artworks.<sup>2</sup> This social cross section might be further expanded by those hired to do cleaning and maintenance for domestic art. In terms of imperial monuments, which will be covered in the last third of this chapter, a similarly broad audience consumed the images they carried, which aimed to communicate ideological messages to perhaps every level of Roman society.

This chapter attempts to provide an overview of how poverty and labor were represented in art commissioned by the Roman upper classes. While working to do justice to the many varieties of Roman visual art, I intend to focus mainly on interior painting, with attention paid also to mosaics, sarcophagi, murals, monuments, and statuary. Some of the material originates in Rome, with substantial amounts also from Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Ostia, as these places provide the greatest surviving caches of Roman art (especially private art); provincial art will be included when it is especially illuminating. The scope and breadth of Roman art allows only a preliminary study here; to the best of my knowledge, no full-scale investigation of the poor in art has been yet carried out, which has made indexing a fairly challenging endeavor.<sup>3</sup> Ancient art criticism

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Clarke 1991: 45-48, 57-61, 348-354 for discussion of the identity of wall and panel painters in Pompeii and of the techniques they used.

<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in Introduction n. 48, a comprehensive study of labor in Roman art has not been undertaken in many decades. One trend which forms a limiting factor has been the difficulty of talking about “genre scenes,” and the related problem that much of the artwork relevant to poverty and labor, such as rural scenes and harbor scenes, might fall into this category, which are often passed over in scholarship without citation, images, or thorough description.

rarely proves helpful, as it seldom deals with the questions I raise here.<sup>4</sup> The final section of this chapter will address the emergence of the poor as a component in Roman state art at the turn of the second century CE, and the ways in which the presentation of common people on imperial reliefs aimed to advertise popular acceptance of idealized hierarchies, as well as to advance an image of the *princeps* as a universal benefactor.

**Definitions:**

While most literary sources addressed above can be safely considered “elite,” artworks and domiciles do not betray their owners’ status as consistently. In the case of interior art, it becomes difficult to apply the term “elite” (or even “poor”) to persons and families based on the size of their houses and the décor within. The barrier between elites and non-elites can be imagined in terms of model classes such as senators, equestrians, and *plebs*, but the Pompeian, Herculanean, Ostian (et al.) evidence does not divide so easily; these cities were not simply appendages of the city of Rome.<sup>5</sup> Art which survives often comes from the houses of successful artisans, business owners, or town officials and decurions, who were certainly the largest fish in their pond, even if the plutocrats of the capitol might have snubbed them. My analysis will attempt to tread the line between lumping municipal and Roman elites together and considering them separate entities; much like poverty is often a comparative evaluation, so is “elite-ness.” Even then, the style and quality of art inside a home does not easily divulge the social status of its owner(s); the less well off imitated the décor of the better off, “follow[ing] the same

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<sup>4</sup> Allison 2001: 183: “Very little of the fragmentary remains of Roman written works pertains directly to living conditions in the Roman world; still less do they pertain to domestic practices and their physical setting.”

<sup>5</sup> Leach 2004: 17.

cultural norms of decoration as far as they could.”<sup>6</sup> In attempting to find out how elites chose to represent poverty in their domestic art, I consider the range of surviving domestic art *except for* examples which advertise the presumptive owner’s or owners’ occupation, instead considering interior art that depicts types of labor in which the owner probably did not participate. As such I am attempting to consider this art from the vantage point of the master and his priorities. This does not mean that no one in the household could have interpreted images of labor differently: the slave who looked at the painting of the bucolic shepherd probably appreciated the image in a way far different than his or her master or mistress did.

Sussing out the “poor” in visual media presents us with inescapable difficulties of identification. The definitions of common, wellborn, and voluntary poor I offer in the Introduction do not easily translate to visual media.<sup>7</sup> Especially in the context of labor, it becomes challenging, and often impossible, to determine whether any specific figure represents any clear status category: slave, free person, citizen, foreigner. Clothing can occasionally provide a clue: togas generally denote citizen status, at the very least, and often an elevated social position, whereas tunics often encoded the wearer as a member of a non-elite class.<sup>8</sup> The performance of labor almost certainly indicates that the performer is not a member of any sort of elite class. However, labor *per se* does nothing to

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<sup>6</sup> Beard 2008: 140, with reference to Wallace-Hadrill 1994. Kampen 1981: 19 argues that lower-class artistic culture that coexisted with the artistic and social values of the prosperous, and modified those values without abandoning them.

<sup>7</sup> To my knowledge, wellborn and voluntary poverty do not appear in extant examples of Roman art.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Kampen 1981: 71. Tunics, however, do not provide an infallible criterion; even the emperor could wear one, as on the Arch of Trajan at Benevento (Uzzi 2005: 42). Figures can occasionally be identified as slaves when they wear shorter tunics without sleeves (Lenski 2013: 132). Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 45-57 for general developments in styles of clothing in Greek and Roman scultural iconography.

differentiate the working free poor from slaves.<sup>9</sup> In addressing this topic I have chosen to take an inclusionary approach, considering for analysis figures which may very well (certainly in rural scenes, or typically servile categories of work such as shepherding) be intended to depict slaves instead of, or in addition to, the free poor.<sup>10</sup> I do so because, considering the degree to which slavery could coexist with lower-class labor, to do otherwise might limit this approach to sources which could be unambiguously identified as free and poor from visual clues alone: a much smaller pool, and one less representative of how labor appears in Roman domestic art. Fortunately, on reliefs depicting imperial beneficence, the poor, or at least the lower classes, can be more easily identified, because they needed to be both free and citizens in order to receive imperial largesse.

It is also important to specify that I am omitting, through this elite-centered approach, the spectacular volume of artworks commissioned by the Roman lower classes. Many Romans from lower-class social backgrounds, including many who might fit any definition of “poor”, commemorated their lives, occupations, or families in painting, mosaics, and funerary reliefs.<sup>11</sup> Business owners and craftsmen, free, freed, and slave, men and women, decorated their shops and their tombs with pictures of their occupations, often in exceptional detail and at a presumably impressive cost, such as the famous tomb

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<sup>9</sup> Uzzi 2005: 31 and Kleiner 1991: 227 describe how the “hierarchy of scale” led artists to show more important figures as larger and slaves as smaller. Yet this factor only applies when multiple social classes are depicted in proximity, and does not seem to apply often to, for instance, sacro-idyllic art.

<sup>10</sup> The challenges of status ambiguities in images of labor continue to affect studies of slavery in art and material culture. George 2013b reflects on earlier work by Kolendo in noting that labor in itself is not specifically identifying in the way that, for instance, chains are (4-5); Lenski’s 2013 study of material object depicting slaves disclaims “very few of them can be irrefutably argued to have represented slaves” (130), and argues that the ambiguities we face in identification may have also been relevant to the experience of Romans who encountered such pieces.

<sup>11</sup> Among the many who address this material are Clarke 2003, Petersen 2006, and Kampen 1981.



of Eurysaces the baker (figure 289), often identified as a piece of “freedman” art.<sup>12</sup> As the work of Joshel and Kampen has explored, one’s occupation formed a substantial pillar of identity among the sub-elite classes.<sup>13</sup> While this study need not and cannot provide a complete survey of occupational art,<sup>14</sup> it will address situations where labor does appear in homes and businesses outside of the context of immediate advertisement, and analyze the relation of such pieces to unquestionably elite art.

Issues of chronology and cultural influence deserve a brief word. Much of Roman art, especially art found in elite homes, replicates Greek forms and genres; yet the surface continuity hides active reinterpretation and the use of specifically Roman mimetic strategies. Wallace-Hadrill argues for the presence of both Greek and Roman influences in the creation of culture objects during the late Republic and early Empire, neither style overriding or displacing the other.<sup>15</sup> Romans who commissioned and selected art for their homes were participating in a Hellenic context in which art provides a world of luxury, from the wealthiest Romans down to more middlebrow homeowners.<sup>16</sup> Greek influence was not monolithic, but part of cultural developments of aesthetics in which Greek elements were more or less natural aspects of domestic and public Roman art. Graecisms functioned to advertise one’s education and urbanity, but Italian styles also assert

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<sup>12</sup> Because of his Greek cognomen, his associations with a manual trade, and the style of his tomb, Eurysaces has been often assumed to have been of freedman status. This may or may not be true: Peterson 2006: 89-98 discusses the origins of this idea and the circular aspect of the reasoning behind the concept of “freedman” art. Joshel and Petersen 2014: 125-7 discusses the likelihood of slave labor in the Eurysaces frieze and types of labor which such friezes typically omit.

<sup>13</sup> Joshel 1992, Kampen 1981.

<sup>14</sup> For more complete coverage, cf. Kampen 1981, Clarke 2003, Petersen 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 26-7. He argues that the search for a “pure” Roman artistic identity is “highly tendentious,” (26) and that styles historically developed in a sea of influences, not as part of a unitary culture.

<sup>16</sup> Wallace Hadrill 2008: 364-6, 437.

themselves in myriad places; what is found is eclectic and multiform, differing in regional tastes (for instance, as catalogued in Katherine Dunbabin's work on North Africa) and revealing diverse preferences.<sup>17</sup> Homeowners and artists adapted form and genre to fit their own needs, using artistic content to reinforce the norms of their own cultural system.<sup>18</sup>

Chronology poses a particular difficulty, as art in general cannot be dated as precisely as literature. With the images from the Bay of Naples, the eruption of Vesuvius gives us a *terminus ante quem* (79 CE) for pieces originating there. While I have generally confined this study to the first century CE, pieces from outside this range often prove illuminating in tracking the trajectory of poverty and labor in Roman art; it will be noted when they fall beyond my standard chronological parameters.

### **Exemplary Art**

In comparison with literary sources, Roman art drastically under-represents the moral importance of the Roman past. Paul Zanker has demonstrated that moralizing exempla are conspicuously absent from private decoration in villas, a notion which seem to apply also to Roman houses.<sup>19</sup> Not only do Roman historical heroes not appear in domestic art, but neither do images of the morally pure agrarian society typically associated with the legendary origins of the Roman state. The lone exception appears to be the early life of Romulus: his shepherd stepfather Faustulus appears in a panel at the Esquiline necropolis, while images of the she-wolf, infant twins, and shepherds appear on

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<sup>17</sup> Kleiner 1992: 9.

<sup>18</sup> Elsner 1995: 86, with reference to Geertz 1972: 23 on the social meaning of the Balinese cockfight.

<sup>19</sup> Zanker 1988: 27; corroborated for mosaics by Dunbabin 1999: 299.

an Augustan altar at Arezzo.<sup>20</sup> That said, the Romulan origin story is neither precisely historical, nor concerned with agriculture, nor particularly exemplary. Despite remaining the primary mode of employment and subsistence for the vast majority of the population, farming almost never appeared in elite domestic art.<sup>21</sup> Instead of depicting legends of early Roman culture, patrons of interior art adopted Hellenistic styles, often in a form called in modern times the “sacro-idyllic,” which represented images from mythology, both stock and specific, amidst rustic landscapes and temples. This genre provided, perhaps, a visual equivalent to bucolic poetry. When poverty and labor do appear in these rural settings, it does so most often in the form of minor characters peripheral to stereotypical scenes. If the moralistic primacy of their ancestors was present in the minds of citizens who could afford to commission paintings for their amusement, it was not present in their art.

### **Shepherds and Fishermen in Sacro-Idyllic and Maritime Landscapes**

Rural landscapes that combined religious and mythological elements formed one of the most popular and enduring genres of Roman interior painting. These scenes usually consist of lush expanses of wild foliage, ruined temples or shrines, columns, waterways, rural folk, and occasional private dwellings. Tied to Hellenistic foundations, this genre established a foothold in Italy starting during the first century BCE and was dominant in interior decoration for at least two centuries.<sup>22</sup> Both Italian elite and non-elite communities enjoyed the genre: these sorts of landscapes are attested in households

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<sup>20</sup> Donati 1998: 75, Hölscher 2007: 58.

<sup>21</sup> Zanker 1988: 287.

<sup>22</sup> Peters 1963: 2-3. Pliny the Elder’s (*NH* 35.116-7) account of Studius, attested as the first real Roman landscape painter in the sacro-idyllic and maritime villa genres, argues that the genre started in the Augustan age; the material data does not support this (Ling 1977: 15-6).

owned by the imperial family (such as the Casa de Livia at Rome and the Boscotrecase villa of Agrippa Postumus), as well as the villas of private citizens and family residences in the town of Pompeii. Prominent among both the elites of the capital and in smaller cities, this genre formed a major component of the Pompeian Second, Third, and Fourth Styles.<sup>23</sup> Scenes of this type, while becoming less popular over time, did persist well into the later Roman Empire in places outside Italy.<sup>24</sup>

Sacro-idyllic subject matter either drew from Greek mythology or else involved generic rural landscapes with consistent basic elements; quite often, the image had no clear narrative precedent. Landscapes were not popular on their own: in the existing panels no landscapes exist without buildings or human characters inside them.<sup>25</sup> Lower-class characters, of which shepherds and fishermen most often appear, were frequently included in sacro-idyllic compositions as secondary aspects of larger scenes.<sup>26</sup> It is quite possible that these herdsmen and fishermen could be interpreted as being of slave status. In addition to being central characters in bucolic poetry, shepherds, both slave and free, played roles in numerous mythological tales. Their often ambiguous social positions should be kept in mind. These figures are so prevalent as decoration that their inclusion probably does not reveal any special elite interest in the practices of angling or animal husbandry, or the allegorical or metaphorical possibilities that could be ascribed to either labor or pastoralism, but instead implies that such characters occupied spaces in a

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<sup>23</sup> Peters 1963: 62.

<sup>24</sup> Dunbabin 1999: 232.

<sup>25</sup> Peters 1963: 3.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the *l'Ariete smarrito* scene from Naples (figure 290), which features a herdsman and a man driving a ram on the periphery of a mountain scene (Peters 1963: 148-9).

catalogue (mental or physical) of touches which artists could include in a stock scene. As decorative elements, they never occupy a central position in any surviving scene; the patrons probably did not often intend for them to merit a second thought by the casual, or perhaps even the dedicated, viewer.

The typically monotonous portrayals of sacro-idyllic herdsmen exhibit occasional variation, although those that do rarely invite extraordinary interest. Artists or patrons occasionally included deviations from standardized portrayals of such figures, such as including an accompanying dog, or giving the picture a specialized setup, such as a milking scene, or the herding of goats instead of sheep. The painter of the pastoral scenes in the Boscotrecase villa of Agrippa Postumus gave his shepherd a canine companion (figure 291, top),<sup>27</sup> as did the decorator of a scene in the Columbarium of the Villa Pamphili, in Rome (figure 291, bottom);<sup>28</sup> a tondo from Pompeii depicts goat-milking (figure 292);<sup>29</sup> and scenes of goat-herding are found in a pilaster of an Odyssean landscape at the Via Graziosa and in an intercolumnium in the Casa de Livia, both in Rome.<sup>30</sup> Adding creative details could possibly brought some additional value or enjoyment to either patron or painter: the Boscotrecase scene mentioned above shows the shepherd in talking to his pet dog, who raises a paw in response.<sup>31</sup> While it may be an

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<sup>27</sup> Pappalardo 2009: 134, Ling 1977: 10, Peters 1963: 69-71. Roman audiences clearly delighted in seeing artistic representations of dogs: Beard 2008: 168 comments on the ubiquity of dogs in Pompeian decorations, and they occur with some frequency in Peters' catalogue of Romano-Campanian landscapes (seen at 39, 51, 54, 57).

<sup>28</sup> Peters 1963: 57.

<sup>29</sup> Donati 1998: 133.

<sup>30</sup> Pappalardo 2009: 28 and 39.

<sup>31</sup> Ling 1977: 10. These and other lively features in sacro-idyllic landscapes have been ascribed to the influence of the Augustan painter Studius (see note 17). The description in Pliny remarks that Studius added lively details to his images of lower-class characters. While Pliny's account mentions fishing and

overstatement to claim that this facet humanizes a type of lower-class character normally presented without distinguishing features, it adds a touch of complexity to the shepherd and his relationship with his working animal. Such details might have provided moments of levity to a variety of audiences: perhaps the master, but perhaps also the painter or the low-status members of Postumus' household.

In certain cases the shepherds of domestic art lose their normally faceless quality and instead represent specific mythological figures, such as scenes of Endymion with Selene at Pompeii I.2.17<sup>32</sup> or Paris-as-shepherd in the tablinum of VII.2.14.<sup>33</sup> The possibilities of representation in domestic art allowed for both aspects to be present in any piece: figures could be generic or tied to specific stories or divine personalities.<sup>34</sup> As the experiential nature of Roman domestic art invited interpretation and reinterpretation, especially amongst those encountering such paintings for the first time,<sup>35</sup> to determine in which mode (generic or mythological) the painting operated might be an activity, perhaps even a game, in which visitors could engage.<sup>36</sup> The parallels between specific and generic can also reveal additional information about sequences of artistic inspiration. As Peters points out, the postures and placement of the Endymion and Selene at I.2.17 (figure 293, top left) match the placement of figures in the generic Boscotrecase painting

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gathering grapes for harvest, he does not mention shepherds: his description indicates that elite viewers could derive amusement from such details, not compassion or social commentary.

<sup>32</sup> Peters 1963: 87.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 129.

<sup>34</sup> Perhaps not in *every* case: the Polyphemus-as-shepherd in the House of the Priest Amandus would suffer little misinterpretation (Peters 1963: 92).

<sup>35</sup> Bergmann 1994: 254.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Brilliant 1984: 16-17 on liberty in experience and interpretation in the coding and decoding of classical art.

mentioned above, an arrangement also seen with Actaeon and Artemis in a scene from the House of Epidius Sabinus in Pompeii (figure 293, bottom left).<sup>37</sup> Problems of dating complicate the conclusions that can be drawn from this material; although we know when Postumus died (14 CE), we cannot know if other, lost works inspired the Boscotrecase scene; in addition, dates are much more approximate for the Pompeian material.

Connections between specific and generic modes of presentation encouraged the viewer to pay greater attention to figures that were not overtly mythological or inherently deserving of much interest. By assimilating them to characters with known personalities and backgrounds, artists invited the audience to consider lowly workers and ponder whom, and what, they were meant to represent. An analogy can be found in recurring sacro-idyllic figures, such as the donkey driver in the Casa de Livia at Rome and the House of M. Obellius Firmus in Pompeii,<sup>38</sup> or the fisherman who evidently became a stock detail in the moderately common “fall of Icarus” mythological scene (as mimicked, with an added shepherd, in Breughel’s *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*).<sup>39</sup> We find substantial variation in the placement and reaction of the lower-class characters in various versions of the scene.<sup>40</sup> For culturally literate viewers, the different representations of the

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<sup>37</sup> Peters, 87.

<sup>38</sup> For the first, Peters 1963: 40 (found in the fourth intercolumnium); for the second, Ling 1977: 9.

<sup>39</sup> Counterparts to this sort of reappearing secondary figure in a mythological scene can be found in the cupids (cf. George 2014a) who appear in various guises and positions in the popular scene of Ariadne abandoned by Theseus (Elsner 2007: 92-101). One example of this scene, from cubiculum D of the House of the Vettii, even includes a fisherman.

<sup>40</sup> Pompeii V.2.10 (figure 294, top right): fisherman sits in right foreground, seemingly inattentive, while three men in a rowboat stare up at the falling Icarus (Peters 1963: 83); in the Caserma dei Gladiatori scene, an angler is in the foreground of a small scene (Peters 1963: 133); in the House of the Priest Amandus at Pompeii (figure 294, bottom center), a fisherman approaches the fallen body while the occupants of two rowboats react excitedly (Peters 1963: 94); in a British Museum piece from Pompeii (figure 294, bottom right, Peters 1963: 132), a donkey-driver raises his arms in dismay as Icarus tumbles from the sky.

stock characters might have formed an appealing aspect in this fairly popular scene. Still, while this inclusion might have brought them into the spotlight alongside the falling Icarus, it did not necessarily invite contemplation of their social status. In fact, the ubiquity of rustic occupations in similar modes of painting, and the need to have secondary characters to respond to the scene's main action, underscores their presence in these scenes. The audience's focus would be most likely directed to their reaction, or lack thereof, to the fatal plunge.

Along with herdsmen, sailors and fishermen appear frequently in figural pieces, partially in the sacro-idyllic, but also in related scenes revolving around *otium* spent by the seaside, in the so-called "*villa maritima*" genre. In Rome, fishermen mend nets in the House of Livia,<sup>41</sup> sail in the corridors of the Villa Farnesina,<sup>42</sup> and navigate through a sea of giant fish in the bathing rooms at Porto Fluviale.<sup>43</sup> They do not always ply their trade on large bodies of water; we find casual angling from a bridge in an image from the Boscoreale villa of P. Fannius Synistor.<sup>44</sup> Similar naval scenes can be found in African tombs, and, later, as a frequent element in mosaics.<sup>45</sup> If we shift to working class art, fishermen are used as part of guilds' self-representation in late reliefs from Ostia. A relief housed at the Museo Torlonia depicts a busy harbor with a crowded ship occupying the

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<sup>41</sup> Ling 1977: 9. Cf. Peters 1963: 39 and 40 from the Casa degli Epigrammi.

<sup>42</sup> Pappalardo 2009: 120-1, Villa Farnesina corridor G (figures 295 and 296), landscape with sailors and fishermen.

<sup>43</sup> Joyce 1981: 58; two bathing rooms at Porto Fluviale, with images of large fish in the sea, topped with richly decorated sailboats manned by several youths.

<sup>44</sup> Peters 1981: 12, Donati 1998: 160.

<sup>45</sup> At Haidra and Djemila, or in a tomb at Sousse with the image of a ship unloading in harbor (Dunbabin 1999: 112 and 126). Note also Dunbabin 1999: 266, from Corinth: a 4<sup>th</sup> century building with a marine panorama, with complex harbor scenes and cityscapes featuring fishermen and ships at sea.



left side of the panel, and an image of sailing men stands on the tomb of Eutychus (figure 296).<sup>46</sup> In occasional instances, a lighthearted aspect could be added by making the human figures *erotes* and Psyches, as in a third-century sarcophagus at Rome.<sup>47</sup>

Depictions of maritime workers seem to have had special popularity around the Bay of Naples, whose economy, and charm, derived much of its value from the nearby Tyrrhenian Sea.<sup>48</sup> Fishermen in art from this region form part of decorative landscapes, go sailing in a lost panel image, row around a panel painting in the House of Lucretius Fronto, and perform physical labor in harbor scenes<sup>49</sup> such as one found at Stabiae (figure 297).<sup>50</sup> Fishermen also appear in a mythological/epic landscape in the Casa degli Epigrammi: in a room which offers distinctive takes on the sacro-idyllic throughout, one wall features a scene of hunters and fishermen dedicating nets to Pan, while the north wall sees two fishermen that have been interpreted as being in a contest of riddles with Homer, who appears next to them.<sup>51</sup> The inclusion of these standard characters in

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<sup>46</sup> D'Arms 1981: image facing 76, image 22 from Isola Sacra. Additional Ostian depictions of harbors can be found in a sarcophagus scene from Isola Sacra (Kampen 1981: image 18) and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek sarcophagus housed in Copenhagen (Kampen 1981: image 21).

<sup>47</sup> Donati 1998: 96. Sarcophagi in general (or their buyers, rather) tended to prefer mythological or heroizing imagery over literal work scenes (Kampen 1981: 87). Examples of *Erotes* performing labor on sarcophagi include the Terme sarcophagus and on a 3<sup>rd</sup> century example in the Museo Nazionale in Ancona which depicts a wine shop (Kampen 1981: 88, fig 74).

<sup>48</sup> A notion which, as seen from the evidence in the previous paragraph, also applies to some degree to art found in Ostia.

<sup>49</sup> Donati 1998: 125, image 14; Leach 2004: 13; Zanker 1998: 163; Donati 1998: 126, image 15.

<sup>50</sup> Perhaps worth mentioning in a discussion of the popularity of harbor scenes is a Neronian sestertius which features a bird's eye view of the harbor at Ostia (Reece 1983: 176). Probably referring to the creation of the harbor under Claudius, it speaks to the ability of public works and economic structures to influence both private and imperial art.

<sup>51</sup> Leach 2004: 136, Peters 1963: 26. Other walls in this structure depict a fisherman, a herdsman tending goats, a man warding off a dog with a stick, and a unique scene of two workmen carrying out repairs on the ubiquitous sacro-idyllic temple's *cella* – an atypical portrayal of labor outside the genre's prescribed roles.

nonstandard situations gives them a more interesting role, as they speak with a famous literary personality in the role of accepted conversational partners, if not as equals.

The subgenre of Nilotic scenes incorporated characters and themes from both the sacro-idyllic and the maritime villa genres. These images generally depict complex fantasy scenes set on the Nile River, replete with exotic Egyptian elements such as crocodiles or pygmies (figure 298). Pygmies in these artworks often perform examples of the kinds of labor described above. One very early mosaic from Palestrina (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) depicts a herdsman and a man riding in a canoe, while a later example from Praeneste shows peasants in small boats and huts.<sup>52</sup> Moving four centuries forward in time, comparable mosaics can be found in Africa, as in two 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE mosaics from El Alia which portray men in boats floating in a flooded agricultural landscape.<sup>53</sup> Examples also exist from Pompeii, such as a painting created shortly before the town's burial which shows men sailing down the Nile.<sup>54</sup> Despite the alien elements which undoubtedly formed a substantial part of this genre's appeal, Nilotic painting appears to portray labor in roughly analogous ways to sacro-idyllic and maritime villa landscapes. In this foreign setting, the same categories of lower-class labor recur; this may indicate that the genre conventions of landscape dominated art consumption to the degree that the standards of sacro-idyllic were applied to artworks depicting an entirely different culture.

In both the sacro-idyllic and *villa maritima* genres, labor does not appear to have spurred much non-decorative interest. Generally interchangeable portrayals of herdsmen,

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<sup>52</sup> Ling 1998: 41 and Dunbabin 1999: 49 (the Barberini Mosaic, currently in the Museo Nazionale Prenestino).

<sup>53</sup> Dunbabin 1978; 20, image 6.

<sup>54</sup> Donati 1998: 127, image 16.

fishermen, and sailors employed laborers as background material or as occasional points of interest subsumed in expansive rural and maritime landscapes. As characters these men (working women rarely appear in the sacro-idyllic landscape) were seldom afforded a mote of personality and never a central role, rather serving only secondary and peripheral functions.<sup>55</sup> Similar patterns emerge also in the Nilotic scenes; the viewer's interest is not often directed to the well-being or personality of a single figure, but to the action, richness, and novelty of the whole. These images were probably created with the aim of emphasizing the cultured pursuits and leisurely life (imagined, or desired) of the owner. In a certain sense, one might not expect these genres of painting to present realistic images of labor, since they do not depict realistic images of reality. Even the template of the maritime villa, and its connection to the actual Pompeian economy, does not indicate realism asserting itself. These seascapes proved no less fantastical than their sacro-idyllic counterparts and were elements of elite fantasies about leisure; as Jongman has argued, these villas operated as pleasure spots and should not be considered in discussions of agricultural history.<sup>56</sup>

The prominence of the sacro-idyllic and maritime villa modes of figural representation (genres outnumbered only by images of gods in domestic art) speaks to their importance as a cipher for the mentalities of the classes which commissioned them. To judge purely from these varieties of private art, elite attitudes about the lower classes and the countryside were dominated by escapist fantasies embodied in mythic landscapes,

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<sup>55</sup> Joshel and Peterson 2014's discussion of the space of slaves in domestic art equally applies here: "slaves tend not to be the protagonists in the imagery; rather, they form part of the scenery as anonymous props, in a way that seems analogous to the Roman practice of identifying slaves by task or place" (27).

<sup>56</sup> Jongman 1991: 105.

tranquil greenery, and otiose villas. If patterns in elite art can provide evidence for cultural attitudes, then the near-universal absence of non-stereotyped labor would suggest that elites (at Rome, Pompeii, and elsewhere) thought about lower-class labor in limited, highly idealized categories. The frequent appearances of animal husbandry and fishing, but not agriculture, enhanced the idyllic qualities of the whole, staying away from the trappings of civilization.<sup>57</sup> The agricultural focus attributed to early Roman society, as embodied in moralistic literature, never appears. My findings concur with Zanker's villa-centered argument about the internal contradictions of the escapist sacro-idyllic, that its world of opulence and fantasy never interacts with peasants at work or even the Augustan propaganda image of the fertile Italian soil.<sup>58</sup> If these homeowners emulated the Vergilian escape into countryside pleasures, they also discarded the *Georgics*' glorification of farming. When we encounter members of the lower classes, they are not meant to inspire thought or reverence; their subjectivity is rarely in evidence. The sacro-idyllic and the *villa maritima* replicate a system of values, but a system which largely ignored the more traditional package of Roman moral virtues centered around the nobility of agriculture.

### **Poverty and Labor in (Elite) Roman Art**

I will now consider the representations of labor across a wider spectrum. Even within the sacro-idyllic genre, one occasionally finds depictions of labor which do not correspond to the principal herdsman/fisherman motif. While rare, they deserve consideration for how they complicate the underlying mythic narrative. As mentioned above, our capacity to distinguish the social status of a home's owner suffers from some

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<sup>57</sup> Peters 1963: 191.

<sup>58</sup> Zanker 1988: 287.

difficulties of definition, not least because persons of moderate wealth consciously emulated aesthetic trends among those of extreme wealth.<sup>59</sup> Instead of applying an artificial divide or relying on personal aesthetic judgment, I place under consideration any art which possesses no clear connection to a(n) owner(s) who sought to advertise a trade or the sources of their wealth. While imperfect, this approach intends to prevent excessive exclusion of valuable material evidence.

Among the most dominant characteristics of non-elite Roman art is the tendency of working persons under the Empire to commemorate and catalogue their occupations. This trend has inspired works of scholarship that study the art of freed slaves,<sup>60</sup> working people,<sup>61</sup> merchants,<sup>62</sup> and “everyday Romans.”<sup>63</sup> Regardless of category, the overwhelming conclusion remains indisputable. Non-elites in the Empire, especially in the surviving data from Pompeii and Rome, deliberately celebrated and prided themselves on their occupations as a cornerstone of their identity. In many cases context makes clear the connection between the individual and his trade, or between the representation of the trade and the working environment. Much like Eurysaces fits this mode of self-representation by depicting the making of bread on his tomb, so do other

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<sup>59</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 90 argues for a unified material culture in Pompeii, contending that house size cannot be taken as the determining factor for measuring wealth. Cf. Hölscher 2007: 125 on the ability of Roman art to fit the needs of both an educated elite and the larger population, and Potts 2009: 66 on the “anticipatory socialization” of Roman businessmen in attempting to embody elite values in their self-presentation. Beard 2008: 140-1 elaborates on Wallace-Hadrill’s argument in terms of the participation of the poor in the same cultural norms of decoration.

<sup>60</sup> Petersen 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Joshel 1992.

<sup>62</sup> D’Arms 1981.

<sup>63</sup> Clarke 2003. Additionally, Kampen 2003, Dunbabin 1999, and sections of Kleiner 1992, Leach 2004, Potts 2009, and Schefold 1972.

tradesmen such as Longidienus, an Ostian *faber navalis* whose grave stele shows a ship under construction (figure 299),<sup>64</sup> or the fullers of Pompeii at VI.8.2 and elsewhere, whose shop walls replicated in paint the processes of making and cleaning cloth (figure 300).<sup>65</sup> A profusion of similar examples can be found in Pompeii and across the Empire.

When we eliminate the variable of the working-class or shopowner patron from the investigative equation, images of labor virtually disappear. This perhaps reflects obvious skew factors of taste and context; a patron might feel less interest in subjects which did not relate to his personal experiences. But, again, it is not merely urban trades that do not appear in art from elite homes, but even idealized or exemplary conceptions of agriculture. We know from the ubiquity of mythological and sacro-idyllic scenes in modest homes that trends and styles in painting could travel down the social ladder,<sup>66</sup> but it seems that the reverse rarely happened in the domestic sphere. Few elite homes during this period contain any hints of the vibrant self-promoting and identity-asserting art with reference to labor produced *en masse* by their social inferiors. Instances where a connection can be found are limited to a handful of cases; these are often evocative of a patron's liminal status, where the homeowner had strong connections to both working-class and elite personal identities.

To start with statuary, freestanding statues of Greco-Roman origin on occasion depict the human body in ways that might relate to social class.<sup>67</sup> Several statue “types”

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<sup>64</sup> Clarke 2003: 118-121.

<sup>65</sup> Pirson 2007: 465-7.

<sup>66</sup> Beard 2008: 140-1.

<sup>67</sup> As cited in the introduction to this chapter, Laurence 1994: 19 has argued that scholars should not overestimate the tyranny of Greek forms in the development of distinctly Roman methods of using statuary to create and transmit meaning.

which portrayed potentially lower-class people enjoyed some popularity, such as the Old Fisherman and the Drunken Old Woman, which derive from Greek prototypes.<sup>68</sup> One Roman example from this category is an Old Fisherman found in Rome (figure 301 top), whose sagging, veiny body has been reconstructed to show that he carried a net and bucket.<sup>69</sup> His knees and back show contortion, unlike those of a heroic statue, and he stands in a hunched-over position, his expression indicating discomfort and despair. This contrasts with the ideal body type usually employed for mythological statues, and presents unpleasant detail in a fairly realistic fashion. Lawrence argues that these details play to “the native Roman love of realism” and “appetite for the lifelike,” although these considerations were more normally applied to portraiture.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the Dresden “Old Market Woman” depicts an elderly lady with stooped posture and sunken features carrying fruit and chickens (figure 301 bottom).<sup>71</sup> While both examples replicate the effects of age and exertion, we cannot conclude that these suffering bodies indicate any special sympathy for poverty or labor on the part of the patron or artist. Such statues might equally showcase a stylistic turn towards realism, artistic interest in the aesthetic details of age, or the turn towards pastoral themes, albeit in a harsh light.

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<sup>68</sup> Lawrence 1972: 262-3. For a Greek example of the Drunken Old Women, see Richter 1950 image 74. Bradley includes both types in his article on specifically Roman art, but cites only Hellenistic examples (20); his piece also includes the statement that tradesmen and workmen could be identified by their “lean and sinewy bodies,” once again without examples provided.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence 1972: 283, plate 90.

<sup>70</sup> Lawrence 1972: 283.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence 1972: 263, plate 81a. Cf. D’Ambra 1993: 51 (with bibliographic note) for a discussion of whether this type is Hellenistic or Augustan in origin.

The emaciated body, seen in the fisherman, appears in various contexts, as in two pieces from c. 50 BCE-50 CE which depict a tremendously thin young man and old woman (figure 302 top and bottom).<sup>72</sup> Bradley's contention that emaciation points to poverty in such examples seems to lack a substantive basis.<sup>73</sup> While the woman's accoutrements might point to an impoverished background, the young man's clothing may in fact indicate a high standard of living; ancient sources which discuss emaciation in art focus not on social position, but the effects of illness and envy upon the body.<sup>74</sup> The genre of grotesque miniatures, which were popular from Hellenistic into early Imperial times, suggest that viewers found deformity entertaining, or at least interesting, in and of itself.<sup>75</sup> As Garland argues, examples of this humble medium can be found across the entire ancient Mediterranean, and may have substantial connections to comedic genres or perhaps had magical significance.<sup>76</sup> I will reserve further analysis on this intriguing subgenre until I have a chance to study the material in detail.

Moving on to painting and its portrayals of the non-idealized working class, two major Pompeian examples of everyday labor (outside of an obvious labor context) are found in the House of the Vettii and in the Praeda Iuliae Felicis. Belonging to two *Augustales* who had found their way to financial prosperity, the House of the Vettii

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<sup>72</sup> Garland 1995, plates 52 and 53.

<sup>73</sup> Bradley 2011: 20.

<sup>74</sup> A selection of the ancient evidence on bodily emaciation can be found in Garland 1995: 118, including excerpts from Lucian, Horace, and Menander.

<sup>75</sup> Garland 1995: 108.

<sup>76</sup> Garland 1995: 105-112.



constitutes a treasury of Fourth-Style interior art which can be dated from 62-79 CE.<sup>77</sup> Its largest *oecus* (reception room), which presumably served as the house's makeshift *tablinum*, is ringed with a custom-made miniature frieze which documents Cupids engaging in a variety of industries.<sup>78</sup> Specific scenes depict the creation of garlands and perfume from flower oil,<sup>79</sup> goldworking with anvil and chisel, wine pressing, and various steps of the fulling process, all in sharp and illustrative detail (figures 303 and 304). A celebration by a company of bakers, dart-playing *Psychai*, and a Dionysiac *thiasos* procession fill out the room's decorations.<sup>80</sup> The artist clearly had a thorough knowledge of each of these specific trades, perhaps through the frequent commissioning of art which advertised one's trade, as often seen in Pompeian businesses.

Modern conclusions have been mixed about what the friezes reveal about the occupants of the house. Rostovtzeff originally speculated, based on Dionysus' inclusion, that the owners had made their fortune in wine, which spawned scholarly reactions urging increased caution in interpretation, especially considering the variety of activities pictured on the walls.<sup>81</sup> Whatever the source of the Vettii's income, the array of occupations on the frieze celebrates a wide range of labor, not simply a single profession. Although the specificity of the images might indicate honest interest on the part of the

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<sup>77</sup> Clarke 1991: 208; cf. Jashemski 1963: 115.

<sup>78</sup> The inclusion of Cupids is a characteristic element of Roman art, as is the practice of depicting them engaging in human activities and professions (George 2013a: 159-160).

<sup>79</sup> Additional depictions of garland-making can be found on the Florence Baptistery sarcophagus (Kampen 1981: 89, image 76), which includes Erotes on the edges of the façade but not performing the actual work, and in a mosaic *in situ* at a village in Dersanzo (1981: image 88). For an investigation of the flower industry in Pompeii, cf. Jashemski 1963.

<sup>80</sup> Clarke 1991: 215-7.

<sup>81</sup> Rostovtzeff 1963: 92; Clarke 1991: 215 n. 77 gives a fuller account of the history of this topic.

patron, the seriousness of the portrayals can be called into question, given the fanciful touch of having *erotes* carry out the work.<sup>82</sup> Clarke argues that the overall effect, given the social aspects of the *oecus*, was to present guests with a fashionable series of images which aimed to impress and entertain.<sup>83</sup> The inclusion of cupids as workers perhaps detracted from the realism of the labor.<sup>84</sup> Clarke further argues that the room “consisted of pretty, whimsical translations of the sweaty realities of work into the never-never land of myth,” serving as a trophy of the owners’ status.<sup>85</sup> What feelings these friezes might have inspired in lower-class viewers are more uncertain: they might have enjoyed the friezes’ fanciful elements, or simmered at having their areas of expertise reduced to farce. Such blendings of whimsy and the celebration of physical work can be seen elsewhere in the house, as in a scene where Daedalus presents his wooden cow to Pasiphäe, which places the artisan’s pride in his labor within an erudite framework.<sup>86</sup>

The décor of the House of the Vettii’s main *oecus* walked the line between romanticizing labor and presenting it as idealized fantasy, and for good reason. As mentioned above, the owners used interior art to document industries they may have engaged in, while presenting a sanitized version of the activities involved.<sup>87</sup> But, as their membership in the *Seviri Augustales* proves, they were of freedman status, not freeborn,

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<sup>82</sup> Beard 2008: 167 describes their presence as potential “kitsch.” *Erotes* also work as shoemakers in a scene from Herculaneum (Kampen 1981: fig. 52).

<sup>83</sup> Clarke 2003: 105, Clarke 1991: 218.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. George 2013a: 167. For analogous examples, Dunbabin 1999 records cupids performing vintage and artisan scenes in much later African examples (152, 181).

<sup>85</sup> Clarke 2003: 105.

<sup>86</sup> A fuller description can be found at Clarke 1991: 224.

<sup>87</sup> As with many domiciles in Pompeii, the identification of the house’s owners cannot be made with absolute certainty; in this case the identities were assumed from electoral graffiti on the house’s front.

and were prevented by reasons of status from reaching the highest ranks of the traditional aristocracy. They occupied a liminal space between ranks of society, despite their considerable resources. Blending “aspirational” aspects of decoration based on elite standards, such as the *thiasos* and other mythological scenes, with celebrations of personal industry, positioned them between the world they remembered (or still participated in) and the one they ultimately wished to join.

A semi-public artwork more reliably identified as elite survives a frieze that once decorated the *praedia* (rental property) of Julia Felix, dated after the earthquake of 62 CE.<sup>88</sup> This building’s grand scale, and advertisement of its space to those who could afford it, restricted its audience to the well-off.<sup>89</sup> Originally part of a large frieze circling the building’s huge atrium high off the ground, it depicts a forum scene alive with representations of everyday happenings in front of a painted colonnade. These represent in detail an array of urban and commonplace elements rarely found in ancient private art. Along with images of education, magistrates, children,<sup>90</sup> animals pulling carts, and togate citizens conversing are found men selling goods to various customers (figures 305 and 306). An ironworker displays a panel of metal tools, two men negotiate with two women over cloth, a man sells a metal container to a customer, and a vendor dangles shoes or sandals in front of several interested onlookers. In a rare visual representation of

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<sup>88</sup> Hartnett 2008: 93, Clarke 2003: 96-7, Beard 2008: 73-4.

<sup>89</sup> Clarke 2003: 96 finds the material context “highly problematic if we wish to see [its art] as evidence of attitudes that non-elite Pompeians had towards visual representations of their work.”

<sup>90</sup> Kleiner 1992: 253, with reference to statuary, but this holds true for painting as well. See later in this chapter for examples of children on imperial monuments; Uzzi 2005 discusses the portrayal of children across the range of Roman visual art.

mendicancy, a beggar, with a dog and a staff, stands on the far left of one panel, receiving a handout from a woman and her servant.

Despite its naturalistic aspects, the atypical images contained in this frieze should not be taken unreservedly as realism. The Praedia paintings exhibit an exceptional variety of activities which might occur throughout a cityscape; Clarke's analysis points out elements that do not belong in realistic accounts of forum life.<sup>91</sup> Even if more decorative than documentary, however, the Praedia scenes offer a heretofore unequalled approach to representing the lower classes. Certainly these works offer a less mythologizing angle than sacro-idyllic scenes, and their foregrounding of common scenes of person buying and selling mundane objects might suggest a patron who found aesthetic pleasure in everyday sights, and, perhaps, common people. The beggar is presented as all too human and in no way grotesque; his dog, curiously cocking its head at the events transpiring around it, might easily engender sympathy for its owner. Images of salesmen and animal handlers display them in mid-performance or in casual positions, stressing neither hardship nor difficulty in the performance of their work. The laborers are clothed identically to many of their peers: their bodies are not filthy, distorted, or shown as aesthetically perfect impossibilities. This work is perhaps unique in presenting artisans, salesmen, and everyday people from the lower classes in such significant roles.

Expanding our search beyond friezes thematically centered on labor, isolated examples of depictions of semi-realistic work do occur throughout the Roman world. Numerous sacro-idyllic landscapes include men at work alongside the stereotyped herdsmen and fishermen, such as a crude scene from Pompeii which shows multiple men

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<sup>91</sup> Clarke 2006: 97, citing previous work by Tanzer. Clarke considers the collection of images here "a sort of compendium of what could go on in public spaces like Pompeii's Forum" (97).

carrying buckets on yokes (figure 307).<sup>92</sup> Similarly, a man struggles to carry a bucket in an Odyssean sacro-idyllic scene from a house in Rome.<sup>93</sup> By and large these examples do not stand out from their environment and seem to blend neatly into idealized visions of rustic labor. In a late piece which repeats the whimsical detail of having *erotes* perform labor, several of them pick grapes on a fragment of a Roman 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE sarcophagus.<sup>94</sup> In general, these slight deviations from typical portraits of rural labor follow established patterns and provide little additional depth of commentary.

Some exceptional specimens, however, supply different, inventive, and personalized portraits of labor. A Julio-Claudian era relief currently housed in Munich centers on a bearded peasant in front of a ruined sacro-idyllic temple; he drives a cow to market, and both are laden with farm products: the man carries a basket and a dead rabbit, the cow at least one dead sheep (figure 308).<sup>95</sup> This piece forms one of the few clear depictions of agricultural labor in Roman art. Zanker calls the scene an attestation of “aboriginal piety,” with the fat cow and goods as a didactic signpost for agricultural prosperity.<sup>96</sup> The shape of the man’s figure complicates this conclusion. Despite not bearing a visibly heavy load, the man hunches over, presumably from a lifetime of effort, and his expression does not appear pleased. Zanker reads the fruitfulness of the scene as

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<sup>92</sup> Donati 1998: 125.

<sup>93</sup> Ling 1977: Plate 1.

<sup>94</sup> Donati 228: image 135.

<sup>95</sup> Lawrence 1972: 264, plate 81b; Zanker 1988: 289. It is currently housed in the Munich Glyptothek; I have been unable to find information about its original provenance.

<sup>96</sup> Zanker 1988: 289. Lawrence 1972: 265 mentions surviving copies of a group in the round similar to this, with a peasant on a rock holding a rope attached to a cow’s neck, but without additional details.

“rewards [...] not for hard work but for the proper way of life.”<sup>97</sup> Considering the difficulties evident in the man’s life, a contrary reading is also possible: the peasant earns his bounty through lengthy and unpleasant toil, and while he may reap moderate rewards, they do not guarantee happiness, or even fulfillment.<sup>98</sup> The beauty of the background scene stands in sharp contrast to the roughness of the man’s stance, face, and raiment. One source for his grimness may be by way of analogy to expressions in Roman elite portraiture, where the virtuous life finds expression in naturalistic faces with serious or grimacing visages. Only with difficulty can this relief be likened to the unabashedly idealistic portrayals of rustic labor in the sacro-idyllic.<sup>99</sup> This ambiguous message, neither unilaterally positive nor idealistic, might indicate an ambivalent attitude on the part of the patron or artist to the virtues of poverty and the realities of lower-class existence.

Two separate pieces provide evidence for related industries, construction and carpentry, which must have had high visibility in Rome and other cities. On the tomb of the freedman Haterius’ family in Rome sits an image of a temple with Corinthian columns, incorporating busts of family members and various mythological decorations. This image is compressed over to the right side of its panel to accommodate an unusual item on the left side: a treadmill construction crane, with men operating a wheel below and hanging from its top, ready to attach a finishing piece to the temple’s gable (figure

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<sup>97</sup> 289.

<sup>98</sup> With regard to the diversity of products the man carries, one might ponder what sort of work the peasant actually does. His bounty involves cows, sheep, a hare, and some sort of difficult-to-discern agricultural product: is this a smorgasbord of potential agricultural goods without reference to a specific task or concentration? This aspect might argue for the variety of rewards available in the rural lifestyle.

<sup>99</sup> Much of Roman painting that involves cattle includes them in a sacral or sacrificial, not agricultural, context.

309).<sup>100</sup> The figures of the men are too small to admit much detail, but they are similar in size, proportion, and posture to the other people on the panel. Bonanno and Kleiner have offered explanations for why such an extraordinary element was included; both point to the common practice of recording major episodes in the deceased's life, in this case the Haterii family's role in the contracting of public buildings during the Flavian era.<sup>101</sup> Thus the atypical choice to include workers and the construction in progress – but only at the final stage before completion, to communicate both the temple's grandeur and the Haterii's role in creating it. The memorial's celebration of work, if perhaps not work physically undertaken by the occupants of the tomb, mixes facets of upper- and lower-class commemoration strategies in ways common to aspirational entrepreneurs. It adapts the working-class celebration of labor performed, combining it with upper-class advertisement of one's civic accomplishments and euergetism.<sup>102</sup> In a similar if less obvious example of depicting construction in progress, one panel in the House of Livia depicts a man undertaking temple repair in a scene that includes sacro-idyllic elements such as herdsmen, temples, and fishermen, making a clever palliative to the frequent sight, in pastoral scenes, of a temple in ruins.<sup>103</sup> While not an overt celebration of this particular industry, it draws attention to its existence in a way that plays with the typical features of the genre.

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<sup>100</sup> Lawrence 1972: 270, Bonanno 1983: 92-4, Kleiner 1992: 196-8.

<sup>101</sup> Bonanno 1983: 92, Kleiner 1992: 196-7.

<sup>102</sup> One might also note the style, which has similarities to “indigenous Italian” portrayals of stumpy bodies, flat perspective, and vertical hierarchical arrangements. Considering that “Italianate” art has been linked lower-class instead of elite contexts, the labor-involving content of the Haterii relief might have dictated the form. Cf. Bonanno 1983: 66 and Kleiner 1992: 12, with reference to Bianchi Bandinelli.

<sup>103</sup> Ling 1977: 8-9, plate 4.3.

Although the majority of evidence from the early Empire lacks any reference to agricultural labor or historical *exempla* (concerning *paupertas* or otherwise), later data beyond the limits of this study attests that farming did eventually become a popular subject in specific contexts. The work of Dunbabin and others has shown that the third century witnessed tremendous increase in agricultural scenes on North African mosaics, such as in the House of the Laberii at Oudna (figure 310) and at Cherchel (figure 311), along with many other sites.<sup>104</sup> They often incorporate elements from preexisting models: the sacro-idyllic clearly informs the presentation of the rustic backgrounds, and in various scenes *erotes* replace human forms.<sup>105</sup> Images of agriculture became part of the visual vocabulary of 3rd century CE Gaul, including the grid of panels depicting agricultural scenes on the Rustic Calendar of Saint-Romain-en-Gaul (figures 312 and 313)<sup>106</sup>: Kampen states that agricultural scenes, in addition to school scenes and scenes showing the sale of fabric, are common on the sides of Gallic funerary pillars.<sup>107</sup> Rural labor had gone from nonexistent in elite art to part and parcel of the standard interior aesthetic repertoire, at least in particular regions – but only in the later Empire, not the early.

### **The *Princeps* and the *Pauper* : The Poor on Imperial Art, Statuary, and Alimentary Monuments**

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<sup>104</sup> Cherchel: Smith 1983: 126-7, Dunbabin 1978: 114-5, Ling 1977: 94; Oudna: Ling 1977: 93, Dunbabin 1978: 112; Dominus Julius: Dunbabin 1978: 119-21, Ling 1998: 94, Parrish 1979: 281; Others: Dunbabin 1978: 117, 122, 110 (part of the El Alia complex described above).

<sup>105</sup> Dunbabin 1978: 117.

<sup>106</sup> Dunbabin 1999: 76-81. It is now housed in the National Archaeology Museum in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

<sup>107</sup> Kampen 1981: 90-91.



Whereas private art represented the aspirations and tastes of individuals and their strategies of self-representation, monuments and art designed and constructed under the aegis of the standing regime . Imperial art worked with a different set of symbols and forms, featuring images of the emperor in judgment, at war, in contact with the gods, and as patron for his citizens. The semantic system of imperial art offered ideologically charged images meant to communicate with the empire's heterogeneous, multicultural, and often illiterate population.<sup>108</sup> Monuments, coins, and statues allowed for the likeness of the emperor to travel to distant and secluded areas of the empire, and to broadcasting images manufactured to solidify the legitimacy of the regime and dictate its relationship to its citizens.<sup>109</sup> Those in charge of imperial commemoration infrequently depicted the common people, and even less often at work. One exception is the Temple of Minerva in the Forum Transitorium, started under Domitian but finished under Nerva.<sup>110</sup> Its frieze represents a series of activities based around Minerva and the myth of Arachne, and several of its pieces show women concerned with the production of fabric, including spinning, dyeing, and inspecting the finished product.<sup>111</sup> While the frieze does constitute a rare state documentation of ordinary labor, and the labor of women at that (only one male laborer appears alongside the workers),<sup>112</sup> it depicts an idealized version of cloth

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<sup>108</sup> Hekster 2006: 157, with reference to Zanker 1988.

<sup>109</sup> Their consistent iconography and historical context also allows for more precise dating than private or otherwise decontextualized art, and so makes it easier to establish a chronology.

<sup>110</sup> D'Ambra 1993: 3.

<sup>111</sup> Kampen 1981: 104. Kampen includes scenes of soldiers undertaking construction and military labor on Trajan's Column under the heading of everyday labor. Considering the social distance between the military and the general public, I am more inclined to view soldiers' work as a separate category.

<sup>112</sup> D'Ambra 1993: 65 connects the working tunic of the man to that of the Old Fisherman statue type, as discussed above. Two other male figures can be seen on fragments of the frieze, both personifications.

production under divine supervision. The images of weaving are not entirely realistic, but instead were meant to carry an ideological message; woolworking and its connections to images of the virtuous matron symbolized a return to the *mores maiorum*, which D'Ambra connects to an attempted moral revival under Domitian.<sup>113</sup> As players in a mythological drama, it may be difficult to attribute a social status to these women, but the unusual sight of women's work on official monumental art certainly placed the fact of their labor in the public sphere.

The start of the second century CE saw an increase in visual renderings of imperial generosity to subjects as depicted on public reliefs; this trend instantiated in monumental art ideas that had previously only occurred on coins and in private art. It adopted features of elite and sub-elite self-advertisement into the public promulgation of ideas at the imperial center. This new practice modified traditions about elites and public euergetism into part of imperial self-fashioning, and, through the inclusion of the common citizens in official tableaux, aimed to cement the image of the emperor as provider for and benefactor to his citizens in the public imagination.

Imperial benefactions had been recorded outside of official art long before Trajan. Augustus recorded his donations to the populace at *Res Gestae* 5 and 15, the latter of which catalogues seven separate events.<sup>114</sup> Julius Caesar carried out similar acts of generosity, and earlier grain donations date back at least to the Gracchi. The new

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<sup>113</sup> D'Ambra 1993: 49-50, 104-6. Cf. Kampen 1981: 105.

<sup>114</sup> A votive altar housed in the Capitoline Museum shows Augustus handing over a statue of Minerva to the ministers of the cult of the woodworker's guild. On one side the ministers present the statue an offering, while on another side displays woodworking tools. Zanker 1988 reads this as evidence for local organizations working in line with the regime's sponsoring of *pietas*, with the emperor rewarding them in return (133-4). As such it is not precisely a donation, but does document how ordinary people played roles in the social plans of the state. Cf. D'Ambra 1993: 65.

contribution of this era comes in the recording of these donations on large stone monuments. Also, we must recall that monuments do not exist in a vacuum; propagandistic art was coupled with numismatic images and other materials which publicized the *annona* and other donations.<sup>115</sup> A personified *Annona* appears on coins under most of the Flavian and Antonine emperors, often alongside a child which might symbolizing prospere, the importance of family, or the emperor's symbolic interest in the future of the Roman populace;<sup>116</sup> in addition, coins carried related images such as the harbor of Ostia, so critical to the grain supply,<sup>117</sup> and pictures of public games as signified by images of the Colosseum.<sup>118</sup> More specifically, coins under Trajan publicized the *alimenta* through the legend *alim.[enta] Ital.[iae]*.<sup>119</sup> This novel form of distribution was advertised on coins, but also on monumental reliefs.

Several examples from Rome and Italy suggest a Hadrianic increase in the monumental presentation of imperial generosity to the poor, combined with the novel inclusion of the poor on such monuments. The *Anaglypha Traiani*, a set of reliefs surviving from a lost edifice in the Forum, features two historical scenes which depict acts of imperial *liberalitas*. The reliefs display the burning of debt records before the

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<sup>115</sup> As always, it should be kept in mind that in most if not all civic handouts, social rank was still asserted; recipients of higher status received proportionally more than the poor (Beard 2008: 292, but also Veyne, *Bread and Circuses, passim*).

<sup>116</sup> Uzzi 2005: 36. Fears' 1981 article in ANRW covers alimentary imagery in the coins of Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, A. Pius (cf. D'Arms 1981: 125) and Septimius Severus, but most prominently under Trajan (936, with images). Uzzi 2005: 37 and Kleiner 1992: 248 also refer to Trajanic coins of 103-111 which depict the distribution of the *annona* to the figure of Italia and to children.

<sup>117</sup> Reece 1983: 176.

<sup>118</sup> Clarke 2003: 156.

<sup>119</sup> Kleiner 1992: 224.

statue of Marsyas, possibly aligning with a real event in 118;<sup>120</sup> a scene depicts an audience of persons of mixed social rank looking up to a figure on a raised platform in an *adlocuti*; some wear tunics, and others togas. This image promises beneficence will be extended to members of the entire society, regardless of class, with poor persons specifically included. On another relief from the Anaglypha, the emperor appears seated and addresses the populace, composed of groups of citizens in tunics and togas, in an *adlocutio* scene.<sup>121</sup> This scene's precise message remains in question.<sup>122</sup> Some have read the image as related to the *alimenta* program, as it contains Trajan extending his hand to a group consisting of Italia and children, a formulation which appears on Trajanic coins celebrating the *alimenta*.<sup>123</sup> Italia occupies a central position, standing directly next to the seated emperor; four men in tunics stand next to Trajan, calmly watching his gesture. While precisely which historical act the images refer to may remain unclear, both panels unmistakably include ordinary citizens among the crowd. Their inclusion stresses the emperor's generosity to a wide social range of recipients, including those whom the *congiaria* and grain dole would benefit the most.

On a surviving relief from the Arco di Portogallo in Rome, Hadrian appears on a pedestal, surrounded by figures representing the Genius of the Senate and of the Roman

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<sup>120</sup> Kleiner 1992: 249, citing the SHA. These friezes currently reside in the Curia. Note that (cf. Habinek 2005) the statue of Marsyas functioned as a rallying point for the disadvantaged.

<sup>121</sup> Debate has raged over which emperor – Trajan or Hadrian – appears in this scene. Kleiner 1992: 248-9 inclines toward a Hadrianic dating for it; Stewart 2003: 116 is more skeptical.

<sup>122</sup> Uzzi 2005 remarks that these friezes “have caused scholars enormous grief, with no end in sight” (76).

<sup>123</sup> This group notably also appears on the Ara Pacis. Uzzi 2005: “the panels together announce and celebrate Hadrian's generosity and investment in the future of Rome” (82).

people, and a young boy (figure 314).<sup>124</sup> Other scenes on the monument reveal the apotheosis of Sabina, placing the monument after her death in 136/7.<sup>125</sup> As children rarely appear in imperial sculpture before the reign of Trajan (except for the Ara Pacis), the boy's presence might suggest a relationship to the *alimenta* and the continuation of Trajanic policy, although, as Uzzi 2005 points out, the child's clothing indicates wealth and status, and the emperor makes a gesture not normally associated with largesse.<sup>126</sup>

Outside of Rome, the Arch of Trajan at Benevento is less ambiguous in its presentation of imperial generosity.<sup>127</sup> One of the eight panels on the main body, all of which portray major events in Trajan's reign, is one in which the emperor stands before several female personifications of cities as well as numerous persons dressed in clothing denoting the lower classes, including men, women, and children (figure 315).<sup>128</sup> A wide range of children are portrayed, greater in number than on the Portogallo arch, from infants carried in arms to older ones standing on their own; two are carried on the shoulders of who are presumably their parents. They look expectantly to Trajan in the center; a platform stands near him, holding lumpy objects which may be food or small sacks. The composition seems to stress the closeness of the emperor to his people and his accessibility to persons on the lower rungs of the social ladder. In this crowded scene

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<sup>124</sup> Stewart 2003: 114.

<sup>125</sup> Kleiner 1992: 254.

<sup>126</sup> Uzzi 2005: 57.

<sup>127</sup> Uzzi 2005: 42-3 takes a skeptical approach toward considering the relief an *alimenta* relief, considering its divergence from *alimenta* coin types. According to Kleiner 1992: 228, its emphasis on Hadrian, and its focus on a complete panoply of events from Trajan's life, hint that Hadrian commissioned it after Trajan's death.

<sup>128</sup> Kleiner 1992: 226. Note that Kleiner's monograph contains longer bibliographies (264-5) on each of these artworks, although none of the cited material explicitly addresses the social issue in question.

tunicate citizens<sup>129</sup> stand in close proximity to the emperor, on the same level as him, and are generally the same height as him, perhaps signaling a common humanity between the *princeps* and his subjects. As on the Anagypha relief, they stand upright, and do not appear dirty, deformed, or agitated. The realism of their portrayal does not pitch them as exemplars of virtue, nor as compromised by need: they wait calmly for the events to proceed. Other portions of the arch, such as a port scene which perhaps represents care for the Annona, also indicate the philanthropy of Trajan's reign.<sup>130</sup>

Kleiner, addressing all three pieces, argues in *Roman Sculpture* that they represent a Hadrianic attempt to consolidate his tenuous position at the start of his reign by extolling Trajan's social policies and indicating that they would be continued under his successor. This would explain the inclusion of Hadrian, or events from his reign, in other scenes on each of these monuments.<sup>131</sup> In terms of how these images were consumed by everyday Romans, the presence of members of their own class, and of children, on these reliefs could have assured them that citizen benefits would continue despite the regime change. Such reliefs advertised to lower-status citizens that they were important members in the hierarchy of the state (note that, in these pieces, the poorer sorts are afforded roughly equal space to, and stand as tall as, their higher-status counterparts), and that they should transfer their loyalties to their new benefactor. Such pieces argued for the

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<sup>129</sup> These figures can be identified as citizens because of their presence at a distribution; imperial largesse only applied to members of the citizen body.

<sup>130</sup> Another alimentary scene also appears on the upper right panel, with Trajan, a girl and boy child, and various gods and personifications (ibid. 227).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 228, 249, 253-4. Uzzi 2005 accepts Kleiner's argument that Hadrian's monuments are meant to show his piety toward Trajan (82).

importance the emperor placed on maintaining good relations with the entire citizen body, including the disadvantaged.

An analogous situation can perhaps be found, outside the chronological bounds of this study, in the *liberalitas* scene from the Arch of Constantine. In a scene despoiled from a monument of Marcus Aurelius, the seated emperor hands down largesse to a group of everyday citizens below him. The group includes men, a woman, and children, one carried in the same piggyback fashion as on the Benevento arch (figure 316).<sup>132</sup> The scene may have originally depicted distributions in 176/7, and thematically matches a scene on the north side of the same arch which depicts Constantine's benefaction in 313.<sup>133</sup> In this scene, Constantine sits centrally, approached by lines of tunic-wearing figures below him; the *plebs* below are smaller than the elites above, and their hands stretch up to Constantine (figure 317). Here, as in reliefs of Hadrian and Trajan, the emperor acts out the continuance of state support to the lowly, in an attempt to secure public support after a regime change. In turn, the people are shown eagerly accepting the emperor's gifts and acclaiming him; this spectacle, showing idealized model behavior on both sides, presented to a lower-class audience an idealized version of the social order in which they were entreated to participate.<sup>134</sup>

To return to the era of Trajan and Hadrian, each of the surviving beneficence or *adlocutio* reliefs insert Hadrian into the narrative of Trajanic generosity. The overall picture gleaned from these works seems not like a constant stream of celebration, or

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<sup>132</sup> Kleiner 1992: 291.

<sup>133</sup> Stewart 2003: 115.

<sup>134</sup> Clarke 2003: 64.

necessarily even a commemoration, of Trajanic social policy. Instead, they imply a Hadrianic “media blitz” in public images to hammer home his legitimacy, his connection to Trajan, and his continuation of Trajanic policies – all via exalting Hadrian’s predecessor and touting their shared connection to the common people. Trajan’s own imperial monuments shied away from depicting the *alimenta*, restricting its publicity to coins and epigraphy.<sup>135</sup> Political expediency contributed to the surge in the promotion of the emperor’s connection to the poor.

It should be noted that images of benefaction on these pieces of monumental art were not wholesale innovations, but adapted from elements in pre-existing forms of imagery depicting public euergetism. Predecessors to these images can be found in private and domestic Roman art: such pieces depict scenes not drastically different from the Hadrianic distribution scenes, well before they had entered the imperial vocabulary of images. This suggests that scenes of imperial beneficence had been influenced by municipal and elite methods of cataloguing one’s civic-centered generosity.

Several reliefs which attest to private *liberalitas* benefiting the poor have been found at Pompeii and elsewhere. None provide as specific a context as is available for the imperial monuments; however, they serve similar functions in advertising the prestige of the commemorated and their relationship to the larger urban community. As in the imperial *largitio* scenes, common people appear in a panel from the elaborate tomb of the freedman C. Lusius Storax, found in an enclosure owned by a funerary *collegium* in Teate Marrucinatorum.<sup>136</sup> The scene records the occupant’s organization of gladiatorial

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<sup>135</sup> A reticence which may be echoed in his statement to Pliny that he was “most sparing” (*eius modi honorum parcissimus tamen patior*) in allowing statues to be erected to himself (10.9).

<sup>136</sup> Clarke 2003: 145.



games; in one portion on the far left side of one relief three men and a woman, all dressed in clothing that signifies their low social class, are standing or sitting on bleachers, with a row of sitting men in front of them and horn-players to their side. These four figures react excitedly to events not shown, perhaps events in the show, or the start of a riot or brawl.<sup>137</sup> Their emotive reactions seem to indicate the popularity of the entertainment Storax had provided, although their oddly agitated character is rather puzzling. It is possible that the relief refers to a specific incident, perhaps a disturbance similar to the Pompeii-Nuceria riot of 59.<sup>138</sup> This scene shows poor characters expressing emotion, perhaps with an intended comic element (unfortunately, only the face of one of the men survives intact); their bodies react more expressively than the pleased-but-passive recipients of imperial benefaction.

*Liberalitas* scenes much like those on the imperial arches can also be found in domestic settings. One colorful painting from House VII.3.30 (figure 318) in Pompeii depicts a man seated inside a bakery counter handing bread down to two men and a child in black cloaks (the oft-mentioned *sordidus* clothing of the poor).<sup>139</sup> Rarely is the economic status of figures so blatantly apprehensible. Although this scene was originally interpreted as a normal shopkeeping scene, later analysis of clothing, gesture, and context has suggested that it recollects a special occasion where the owner engaged in an act of generosity to the public.<sup>140</sup> The baker stands at the center, handing bread from his

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<sup>137</sup> Clarke 2003: 151.

<sup>138</sup> Clarke 2003: 152.

<sup>139</sup> Clarke 2003: 259, Donati 1998: 136, Beard 2008: 173. The panel is housed in the Museo Nazionale Archeologico in Naples.

<sup>140</sup> Clarke 2003: 259.

bountiful stores downward and over to a group of men and children, one of whom reaches up to receive it; its presentation reflects on the owner's wealth as well as the willing participation of both parties in the transaction. In a more nebulous case, a scene from the tomb of the Pompeian aedile Vestorius Priscus depicts either a scene of judgment, reception, or *largitio*; it generally replicates the image and gesture from the bakery scene, with its central figure on a raised dais (figure 319, top).<sup>141</sup> Less ambiguous is the monument of the freedwoman Naevoleia Tyche from Herculaneum, whose bust prominently stands above a relief of a grain dole ceremony.<sup>142</sup> Men in togas on the right observe, while on the left ordinary men, women, and children carrying baskets approach the place of distribution (figure 319, bottom).<sup>143</sup> Much like the imperial monuments, it contains a class spectrum which included the poor, as denoted by their attire and position in the scene. It communicates their need, and the patron's generosity, but also the patron's position of power and control, much like the later imperial monuments which placed the benefactor in a spot above the groups of citizens below. Likewise, the baker's posture and gesture from the Pompeian scene appear nearly identical to the *adlocutio* scene from the Anaglypha Traiani, created fifty years later.

These similarities do not necessarily mean that scenes from these specific private monuments influenced the development of imperial statues and monumental art, but that

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<sup>141</sup> Clarke 2003: 196-7.

<sup>142</sup> Clarke 2003: 184. Dixon 2001 uses Naevoleia's monument as the springboard for her approach to reading the presence of Roman women across an array of genres; her analysis critiques prior work by Koortbojian (ix, 187 n 86).

<sup>143</sup> Similar iconography has led to debates on the meaning of banquet scenes at Djem and Carthage over whether they portray scenes from elite culture, patronage, or from scenes of beneficence, considering the prominence of baskets of food in the African reliefs (Dunbabin 1978: 124-5).

images for generosity filtered up from a common catalogue to the imperial level.<sup>144</sup> Each of the private images, Pompeian and otherwise, predates the Hadrianic monuments. We find not a trickle-down effect, but instead a seeping-up, as images common to decurial classes and other wealthy members of municipalities entered into imperial art.<sup>145</sup> In this way they followed the same trajectory as the acts of benefaction themselves; private and Republican sponsoring of grain doles, *congiaria*, and public euergetism in Rome and elsewhere transformed into the privileges and responsibilities of the emperor, and similarly, images which communicated individual generosity were adopted into the imperial statuary. The precise influences may be impossible to trace, perhaps being dependent on artists who had worked on or were influenced by the smaller-scale images; regardless of the patron, those who created the sculptures were very unlikely to be aristocrats. To speculate, they might have been inclined to not only include members of their class in crowd scenes, but also to sculpt people of their social station in more positive ways than a member of the elite.

The Hadrianic strategy of representing alimentary systems on monuments led to the first definite representations of the common people in imperial art. The sudden appearance of the lower classes on monumental art at this historical moment might form a forerunner to the *Stilwandel* hypothesized by Bianchi Bandinelli, who argued that lower-class styles crept into imperial art around 200 CE because of the increased political

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<sup>144</sup> This is not to claim that images which might connote imperial generosity through symbolic means (Ceres, grain, Tellus, Italia) had not found a home in official art. Such images occur in the Ara Pacis complex, across numismatic evidence and statuary, but they always signifying agricultural wealth indirectly, by means of metaphor and metonymy, never in the form of directly handing resources to the lower classes of Rome.

<sup>145</sup> I have not conducted a full study of gesture in ancient art, but it seems possible that such gestures trace from previous Hellenistic models. They do not appear to have precedents in Roman art.

power of the *plebs* – in this case, the increasingly prominent role of soldiers in determining the leadership of the state.<sup>146</sup> Bianchi Bandinelli’s conjecture makes for an interesting possibility, especially in light of the parallels between private alimentary artworks such as that of Naevoleia Tyche and the later alimentary scene from the Arch of Constantine. As shown above, the alimentary sections of Hadrianic reliefs have their closest correspondences with private images of benefaction. If indeed these images were adopted, it seems possible that they were adopted from below.

In their first appearances on imperial art, the Roman poor serve as ideological projections. They form components in a hierarchical vision of the Roman community: their giving of homage, and their acceptance of donations, marks their reception of imperial favor and their participation in a system which they, in addition to elite citizens, affirmed a consensus centered on the emperor. In scenes of imperial generosity, elites and lower-class citizens often appear together in balanced scenes with the emperor at center.<sup>147</sup> As such, they function as part of a larger message about the stability and internal harmony of the state; their poverty matters because it presents an opportunity to demonstrate the emperor’s compassion to his subjects and the workings of his universal patronage.<sup>148</sup> Poverty has not become a social problem to be solved, but a condition which binds the poor to their *princeps* in an attempt to secure their loyalty. By placing them prominently, but not centrally, on monuments, the regime presented the poor as

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<sup>146</sup> Cited at Clarke 2003: 3, explaining the formal shifts of the monuments of the monuments over time.

<sup>147</sup> While such scenes do not directly record the wealthier citizens receiving the emperor’s gifts, they certainly did so in reality, and in greater amounts than those afforded to the poor (Veyne *passim*). The message *advertised* is not necessarily that the emperor’s generosity reaches all classes, but that all classes together support and legitimize the regime.

<sup>148</sup> Uzzi 2005: “The symbolic nature . . . of images of imperial largesse speaks to every Roman citizen as a potential recipient” (50).

active participants in the operations of the state and actively courted their favor by advertising the rewards to be gained.

## **Conclusion**

Even this preliminary study suggests some conclusions about the overall representation of the poor in Roman art. Perhaps the most striking aspect is the near-total absence of idealized historical poverty as connected with morality and agriculture.

*Paupertas* as an exemplary tool to instill and reinforce moral norms simply does not appear except in a scant few possible cases; interior art shies away from nearly all Roman mytho-historical material. These genres of art on the whole do not replicate *paupertas* as imagined in texts; instead, the evidence indicates that artistic fashions clearly worked in different ways than literary ideas of moral instruction.

Yet the nonappearance of Roman historical narrative in private art does not mean the absence of poverty or the poor. The sacro-idyllic and other forms of “leisure landscape” provide ample occasions for observing lower-class (or slave) labor in action: much as Romans altered Greek forms to suit their desires, so even the minor characters in such paintings might have evolved to suit Roman cultural conceptions of rural work. If so, it was not as one might predict. Roman and municipal elites included almost no depictions of the kind of idealized poverty or the agricultural basis of society exalted in much elite literature. Farming is depicted only rarely; the workers of the sacro-idyllic fit into stereotypical, pastoral categories. No Cato or Cincinnatus haunts the rural landscape, only bucolic shepherds and fishermen.

Of the Romans with sufficient wealth to commission interior art, only those who had a personal connection to an occupation or industry displayed labor on decorative or

commemorative art. They did so energetically. Celebration of one's occupation, and the role it played in one's identity, formed a massive part of self-memorialization among the Empire's lower classes. In the rare exceptions which do represent labor without a clear correlation to the owner's work, such as the House of the Vettii, they may lack identification with a merchant or artisan owner only through lack of evidence. Even if that were the case, with the wide range of trades portrayed by the Vettii, it seems likely that the owners took pleasure in pictorial representations of industries which were not their own. The mural from the Praeda Julia Felicis perhaps stands alone as expensive decoration that depicted varying social levels, including both everyday people on the job and moving around the city, with equal consideration, compassion, and verve.

Even this preliminary study suggests some conclusions. The literary modes of articulating antique poverty and its virtues, self-contradictory as they were, did not find expression in domestic or public art. Even when we do possess images of labor, status identification, including economic conditions, remains tenuous. Interest in the character or the exaltation of the lower classes or labor is seldom observable even given a generous definition of "elite", despite the prodigious commemoration of occupations and industries by their practitioners. When the well-off did commission images of the poor, the object was to communicate their own praiseworthy qualities, either through their educated appreciation of mythologically-inspired landscape or through visual records of their generosity. This last self-representational strategy perhaps found the apex of its expression in the sudden inclusion of the common citizen on the Nevertheless, at the end of the era this study covers occurred a new wave of iconography which saw previous images of public benefaction replicated on the imperial stage, as part of an ideological

package which targeted working-class citizens poor audiences with the message that they should be enthusiastic participants in a state system in which the emperor himself would ensure them economic support.

## Conclusion

The cultured, educated, and wealthy society of Roman elites was not a society which had agreed on what poverty meant to them. Their culture tended to evaluate groups in society through hierarchies of status and order; considering purely economic factors as critical means by which to evaluate subunits of their society would have been alien to how they perceived their world. Such elites lacked the vocabulary, or a coherent cultural discourse, to discuss how the moral concept of *paupertas* applied to social realities. They instead employed mutually incompatible definitions, which I have labeled common poverty, wellborn poverty, and voluntary poverty, to attempt to express various sets of economic conditions and character traits which they saw in themselves and others. These three definitions all relied upon a set of images, attributes, and moral qualities associated with *paupertas*, but the disordered discourse surrounding this virtue never coalesced into clear consensus about who the poor were, how they fit morally into the greater society, and what relationship the rich and poor should have to one another. Their civilization would only develop a fully fledged discourse under the influence of Christian leadership, as the works of Peter Brown have articulated.

Even when new circumstances and contexts arose, conventional *topoi* were redeployed to meet them, often without comment or significant adaptation. Poverty and the moral qualities associated with it proved useful as a tool for representation and self-representation. Ancestral Romans, villa-owning elites, and Flavian-age Italian newcomers could apply images of the frugal peasant and his virtues to themselves without necessitating redefinition. In the rare instances where authors questioned the applicability of these images, they did so in an oblique manner, without a proposed



alternative for re-conceptualizing “the poor” and their place in systems of hierarchy, patronage, beneficence, and citizenship.

In terms of poverty’s historical and moral trajectory, Livy’s Preface is paradigmatic in terms of expressing a traditional ideal of Roman poverty and arguing how its decline encapsulated essential transformations in the Roman character. He considers its fall from a nebulously defined past state to be symptomatic of the gradual and inevitable decline of the Republic. Yet when it comes to specifics, concrete examples of Rome’s historical poverty come few and far between. When poverty does appear in his account of the halcyon days of early Rome, his account typically does not bear close scrutiny. Those credited with antique poverty are rarely poor; when they do choose to exemplify forms of parsimony, they do so because of external factors such as spite. In addition to this murky portrait of elite poverty, Livy often elides poverty as a motivating factor among the plebeians and lower classes of Rome, instead portraying them as agitators who threaten the stability of the state. Poverty receives perhaps its clearest and most consistent depiction in the latter part of the surviving text, when it appears as a quality of the foreign peoples coerced into becoming part of her expanding empire and an indicator of what Rome had lost.

Declamation presents us with a window into the social imagination regarding ideal interactions between the rich and the poor, as conducted by elite audiences, students, and the socially-mobile rhetoricians who instructed elite youths. In presenting the poor man as a consistently moral figure, as well as a consistently victimized figure, it trained its practitioners not only to consider the poor as virtuous figures but to be active

in protecting them. The genre defined a cynical and brutally pragmatic relationship between *dives et pauper*, with one as the exploited target of the other, and urged its students to rectify the wrong inherent in this model. Declamation in practice pushed the declaimer to fulfill the role of an engaged and compassionate *amicus*, who played a paternal (or, framed another way, paternalizing) role in advocating for the disadvantaged. While the poor man was not empowered to seek justice on his own behalf, declamation's moral paradigm insisted, at least, that he receive it.

Elites at the end of the first century CE stood at a crossroads in terms of the meaning of rustic virtues in their sector of society. With the old aristocracy decimated by slow decay, civil wars, and the predation of anti-senatorial emperors, new men of wealth from Italian and provincial backgrounds had a golden opportunity to insert themselves into the power structure. They did so by employing a reformulation of moralistic rhetoric, fashioning their non-Roman *personae* in line with traditional perceptions of the hinterlands as moral, frugal places. Their rhetoric was buoyed by Vespasian's legacy, which provided an imperial model for how to exploit an outsider identity. His success would inspire a method of self-presentation for new waves of aristocrats coming to power, one that was replicated in the public personality and iconography of future emperors. The strategy of playing oneself as an aristocrat with the common touch found expression in images as well as public policies such as the *alimenta*, which positioned the *princeps* as benefactor to all his subjects: Aelius Aristides would praise Antoninus Pius in 155 CE for "pleasing and conciliating rich and poor alike, leaving no land untouched: the harmony of the entire state is celebrated in song."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *To Rome* (Dindorf page 348): οὕτω καὶ πένησι καὶ πλουσίοις εἰκότως τὰ παρόντα καὶ ἀρέσκει καὶ συμφέρει, καὶ ἄλλως οὐ λέλειπται ζῆν: καὶ γέγονε μία ἀρμονία πολιτείας ἅπαντας συγκεκλεικυῖα.

Satire, unlike most other literary genres, took a keen interest in the living conditions, accoutrements, and social standing of the urban poor. Martial and Juvenal situated themselves, or at least their textual selves, at the bottom of the social hierarchy. There they often found occasion to describe the poor: not only their shortcomings, but also the indignities they suffered from peers and superiors. Their work attests to their understanding of the unstable definitions of poverty within their own culture, and supplies an array of opinions about the moral standing of the poor: some deserved hatred, others compassion. In some cases *paupertas* serves as a moral stick with which to beat the dissolute rich, and at others it symbolizes the departed political power and privileges of the free man. Martial's pose falls in line with a traditional respect for wealth and social capital, coupled with disdain for the man who has nothing; Juvenal's insistence that the citizen poor deserve respect and protection, and that the potential for political power lies hidden within them, represents only an ideal, but an ideal no less unreal than notions of a morally stainless rustic past.

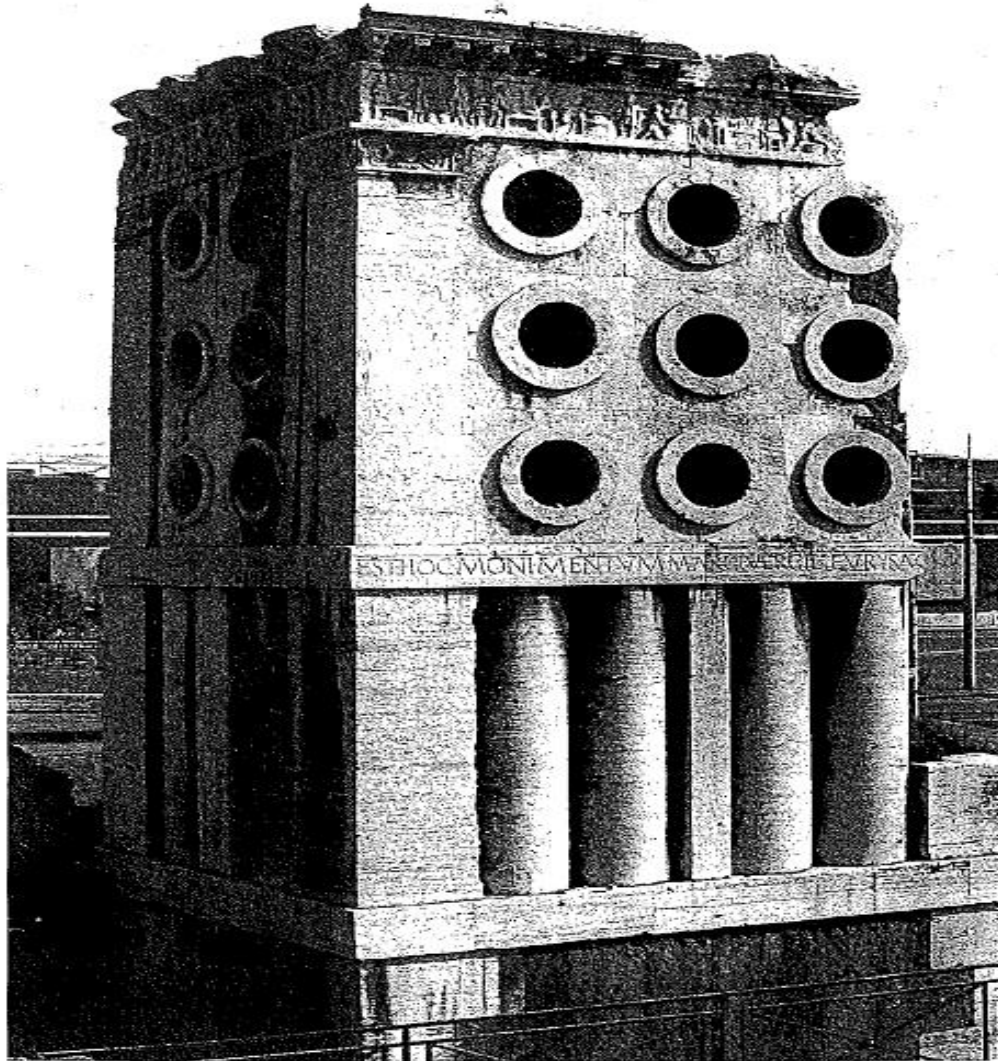
Inconsistencies between the three definitions of poverty were as strong at the end of the period this dissertation covers as at the beginning. Even Juvenal, whose work betrays a fundamental compassion for the impoverished citizen, devotes his energy to exploiting such inconsistencies in his self-presentation rather than offering an alternative. The concepts of common, wellborn, and voluntary poverty ultimately informed elite Roman thought about what *paupertas* entailed. Through a multifaceted set of definitions, a clearer picture of the issues underlying the confused nature of Roman elite thought on this concept can hopefully be brought into focus.

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To return once more to the messages of Cicero *De Officiis* 1.150-1 and Tacitus *Histories* 1.4, this study has shown that the images we do have of Roman elite disdain toward their social and economic inferiors were not universally applicable. Elites could direct various types of invective against those without money or social capital, as Tacitus and Martial do, but these incidents are counterbalanced, sometimes within the oeuvre of the same authors, with rhetoric that attributes hardiness, virtue, and self-respect to poor men and peoples, often in comparison to rich and urbane degenerates. The dichotomy of city and country informs some of these incidents, but not all.

While poverty's discourse may have been disordered, it is possible to trace change over time in terms of the general elite attitude towards poor citizens. It is no secret that Roman society had numerous social institutions by which the wealthy were rewarded for providing benefits and distributions to the lower classes of citizens; to these were added at the start of the second century CE the downward-aimed benefits of the *alimenta* and the sudden prominence of the common people on imperial monuments, pushing them further into the public consciousness. The emperor's example pulled along in his wake even the well-born who might have been ambivalent about openly ingratiating themselves with the poor, such as the younger Pliny. Declamation, which increasingly features the *pauper* over time, pulls no punches in stressing that society's sympathies should be on his side. At the start of the second century CE Roman elite culture had evolved mechanisms to incentivize and glorify protection of the citizen poor, and was more willing to imagine the *pauper* as, if not their civic equal, at least as a creature that deserved at least a modicum of respect and protection.

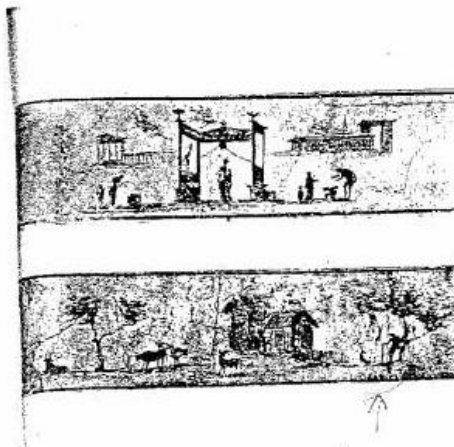
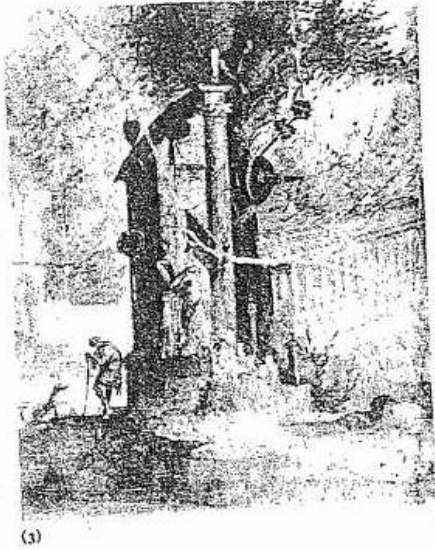
## **Appendix: Images**



**Tomb of Eurysaces the Baker, Rome**



**L'Ariete Smarrito Scene, Naples**



**Top: Boscotrecase Herdsman Scene, Villa of Agrippa Postumus**

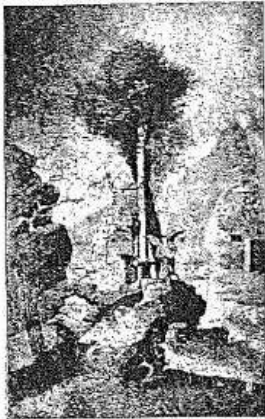
**Bottom: Villa Pamphili Scene**



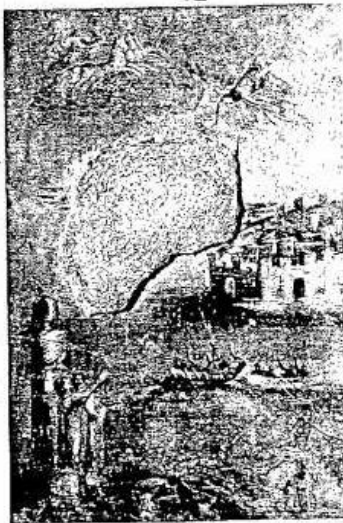
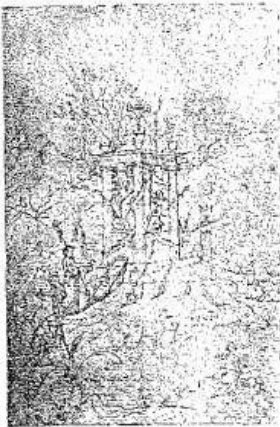


**Goat-Milking Tondo**

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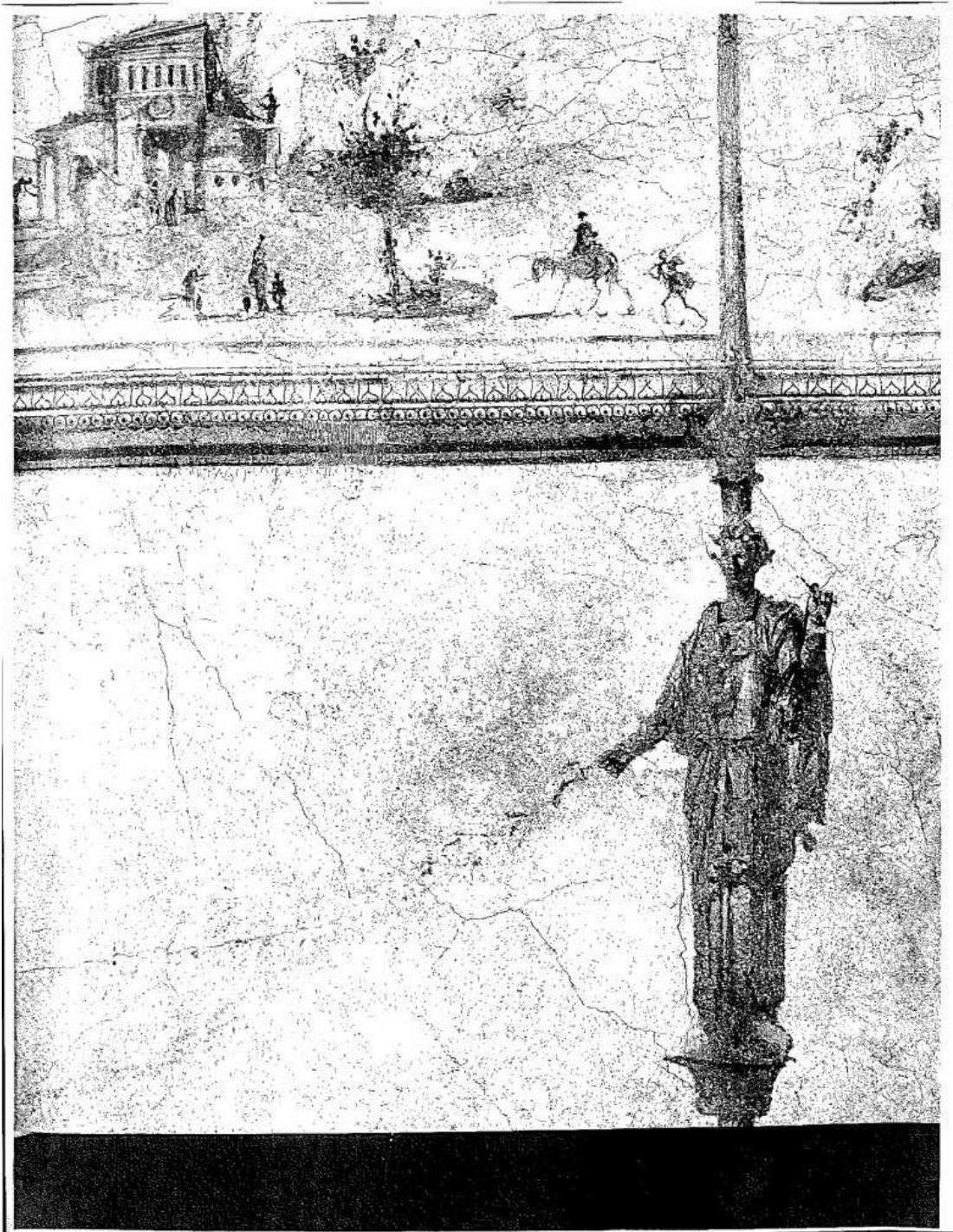
**Top Left: Endymion and Selene Scene**

**Bottom Left: Actaeon and Artemis Scene, House of Epidius Sabinus, Pompeii**

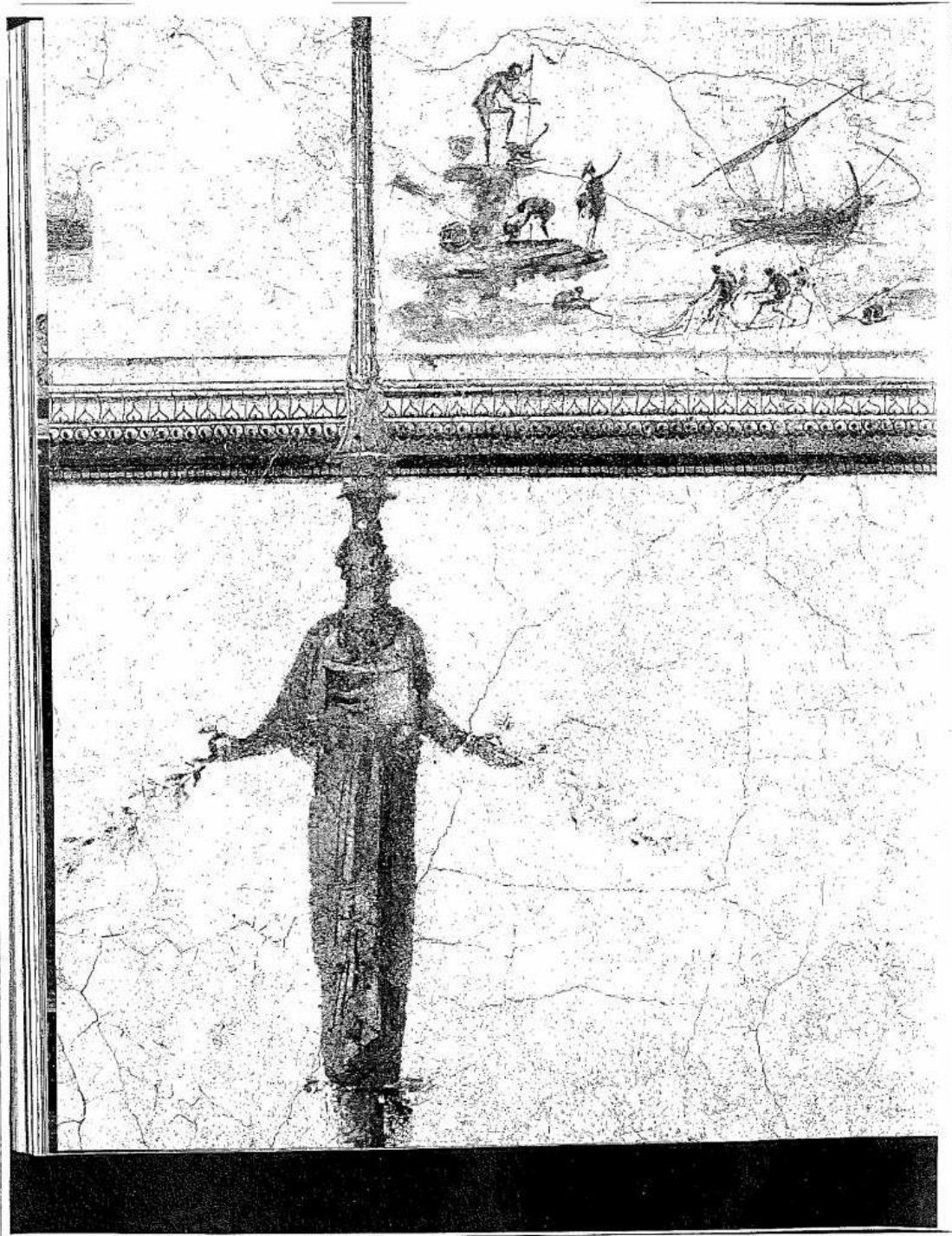
**Top Right: Icarus Scene, V.2.10, Pompeii**

**Bottom Center: Icarus Scene, House of the Priest Amandus, Pompeii**

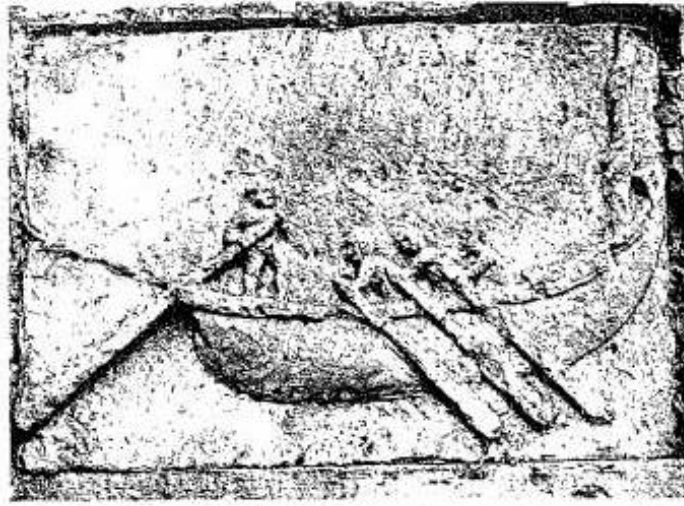
**Bottom Right: Icarus Scene from Pompeii, British Museum**



**Villa Farnesina Scene, Corridor G**

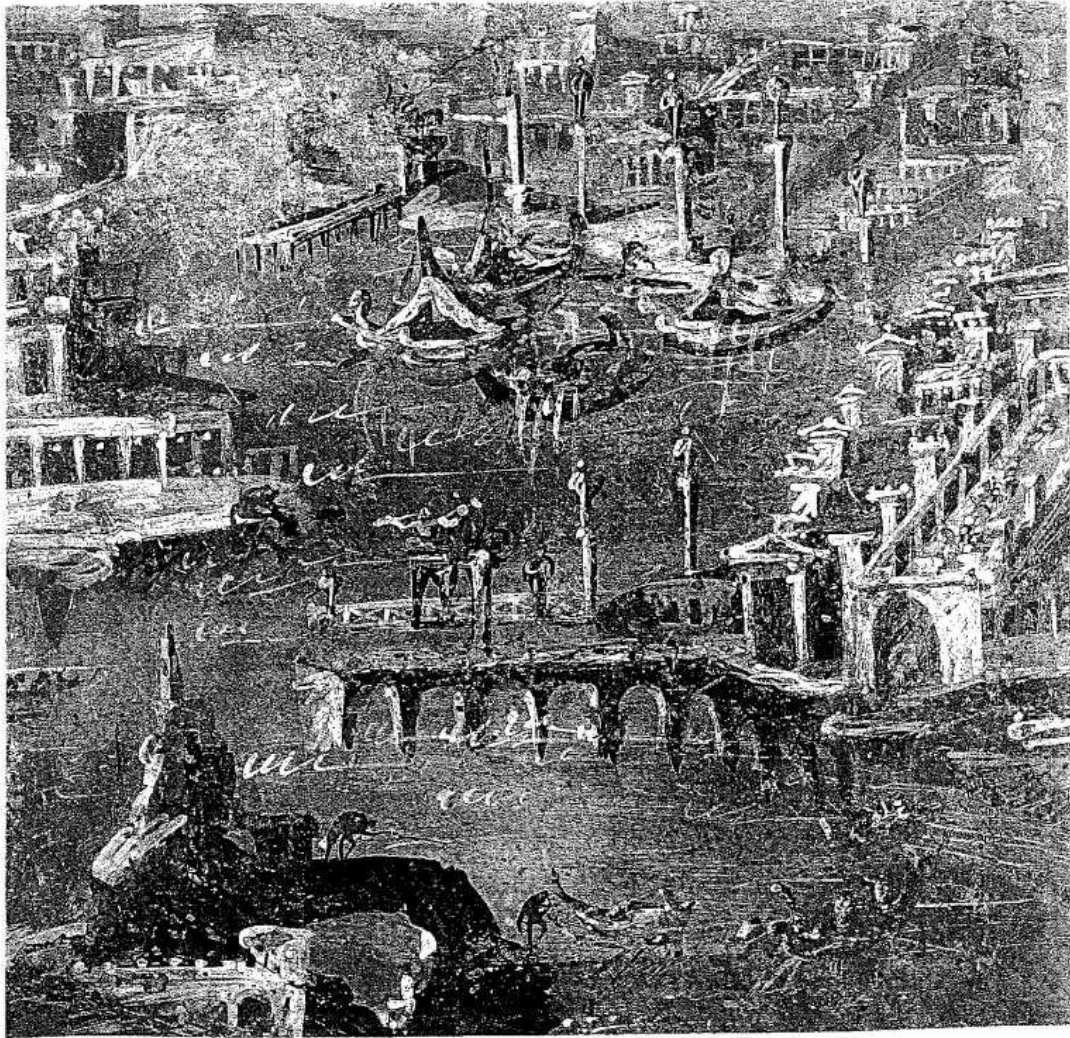


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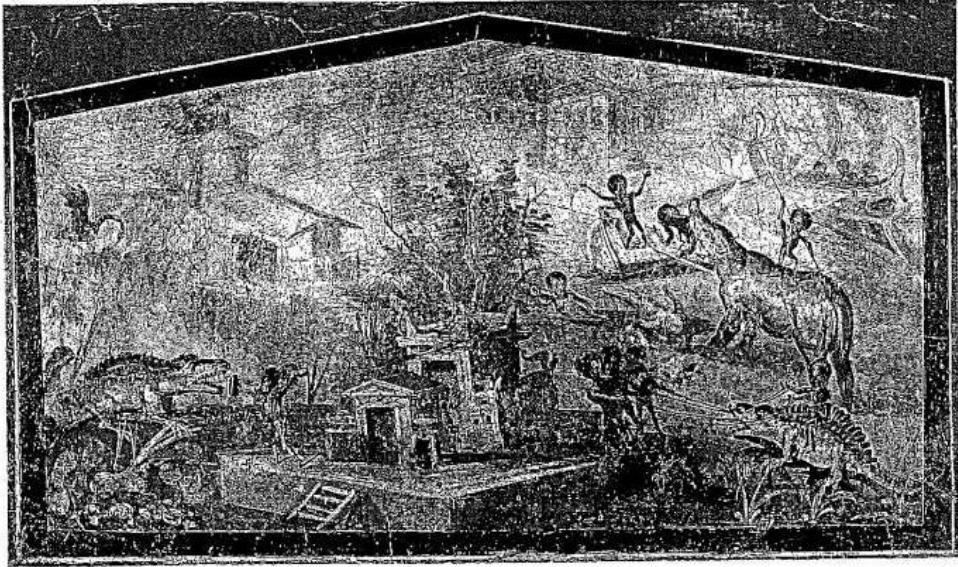


**Tomb of Eutychus**





**Harbor Scene from Stabiae**

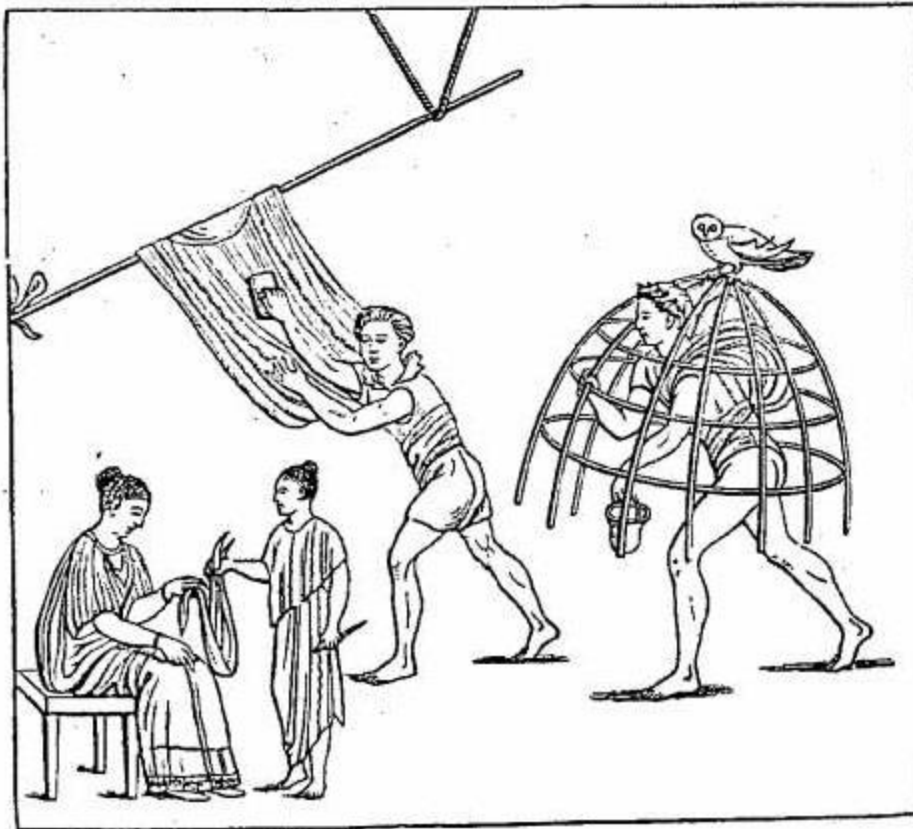
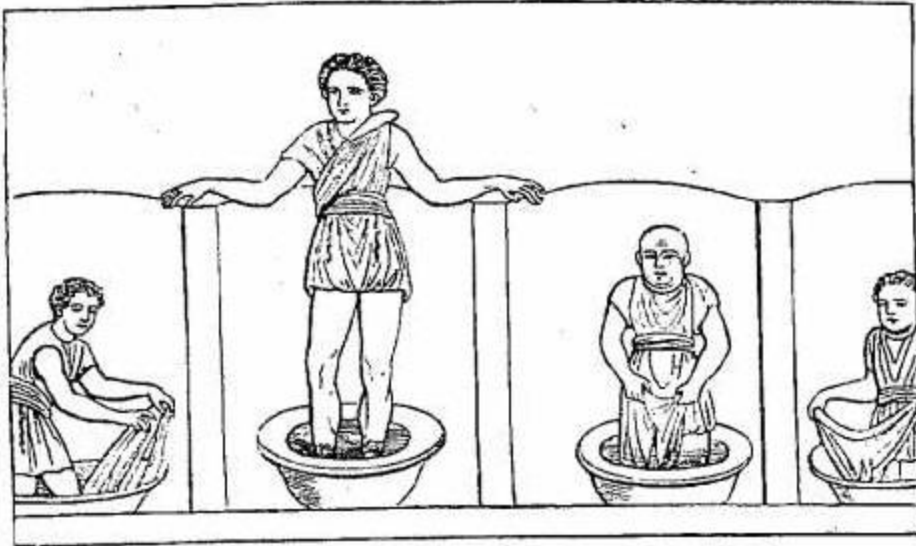


**Pompeii Nilotic Scene**



**Tomb of Longidienus**





Fulling Scenes from Pompeii (VI.8.2)



**Top: Old Fisherman Statue**

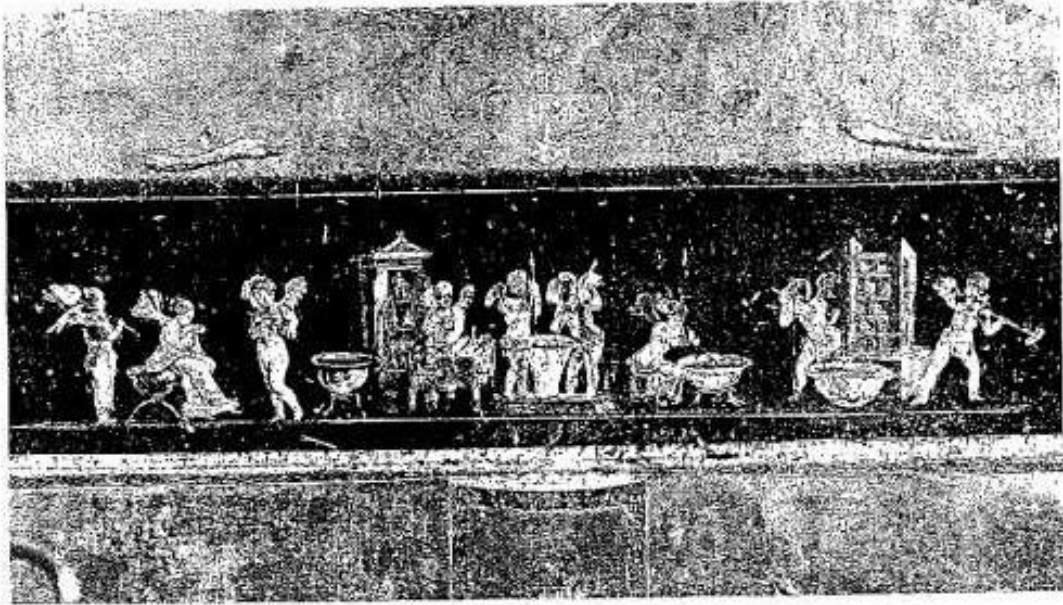
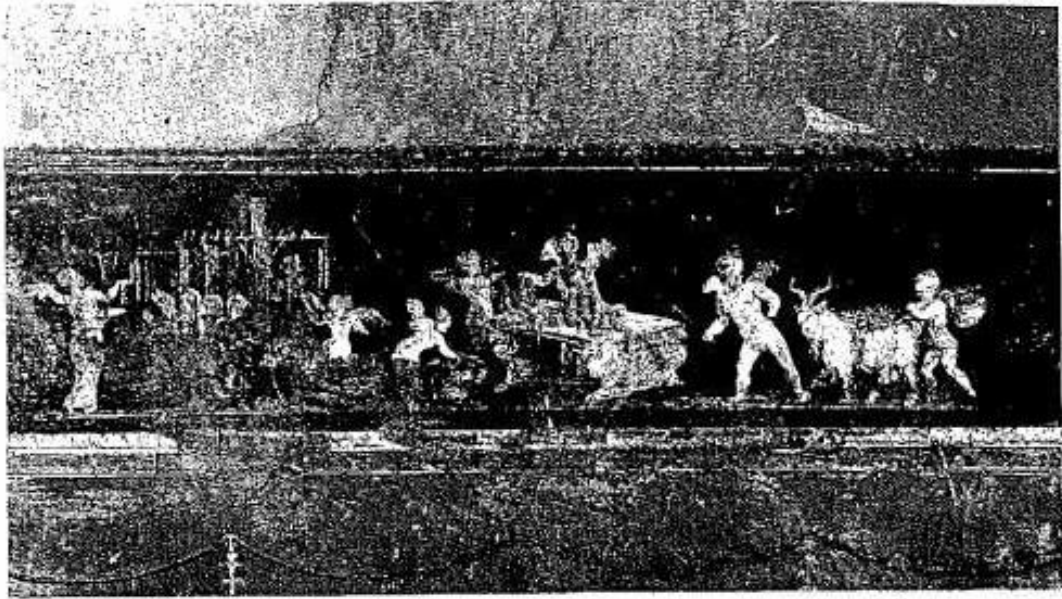


**Bottom: Old Market Woman Statue**

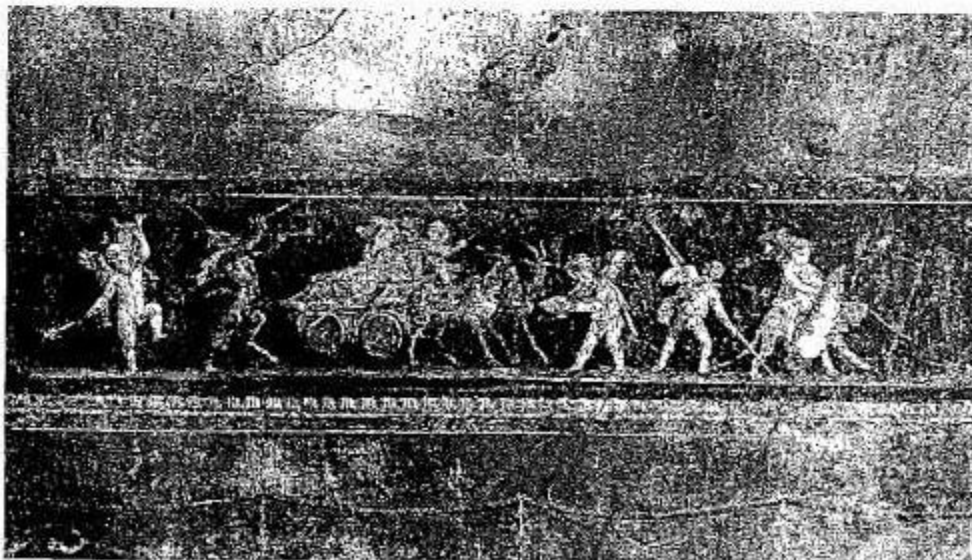
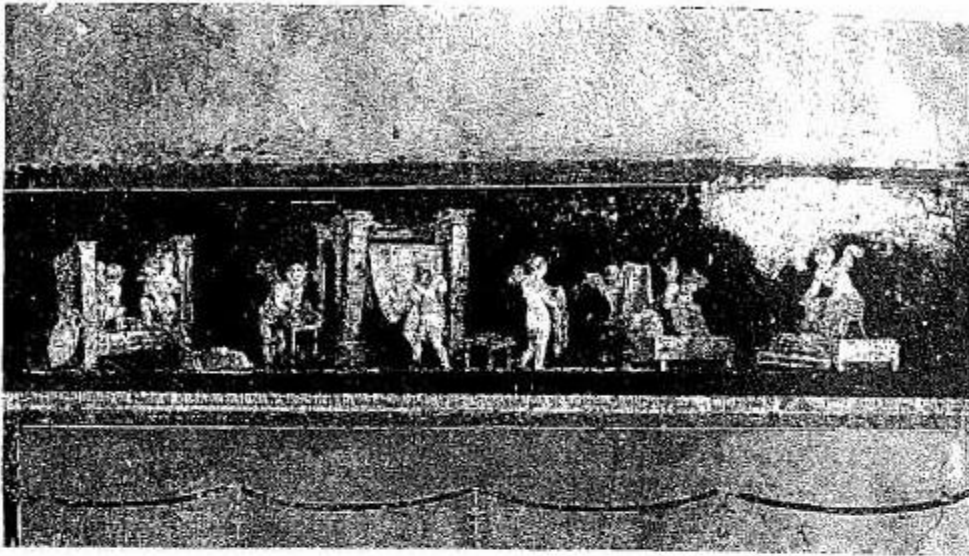


**Top: Emaciated Youth**

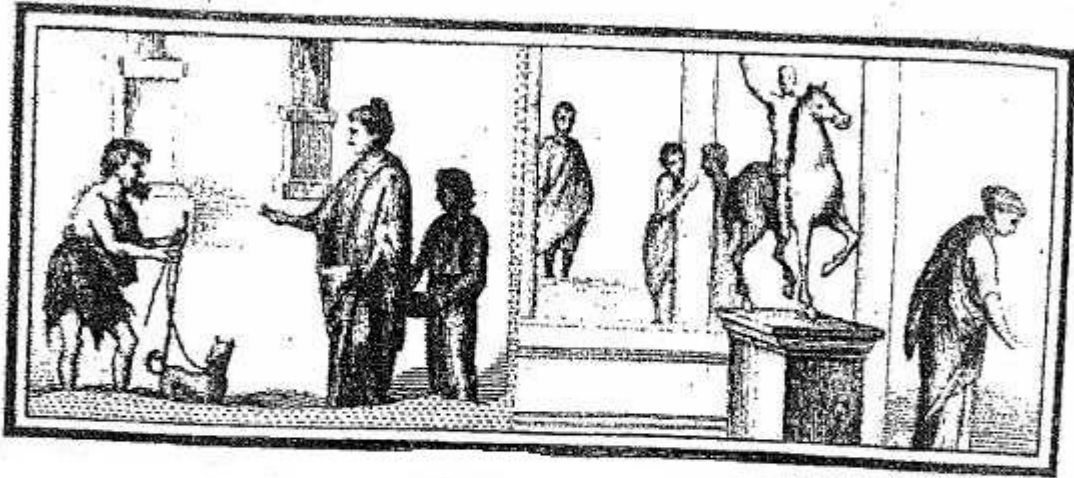
**Bottom: Emaciated Woman**



**House of the Vettii Labor Friezes**



Continued

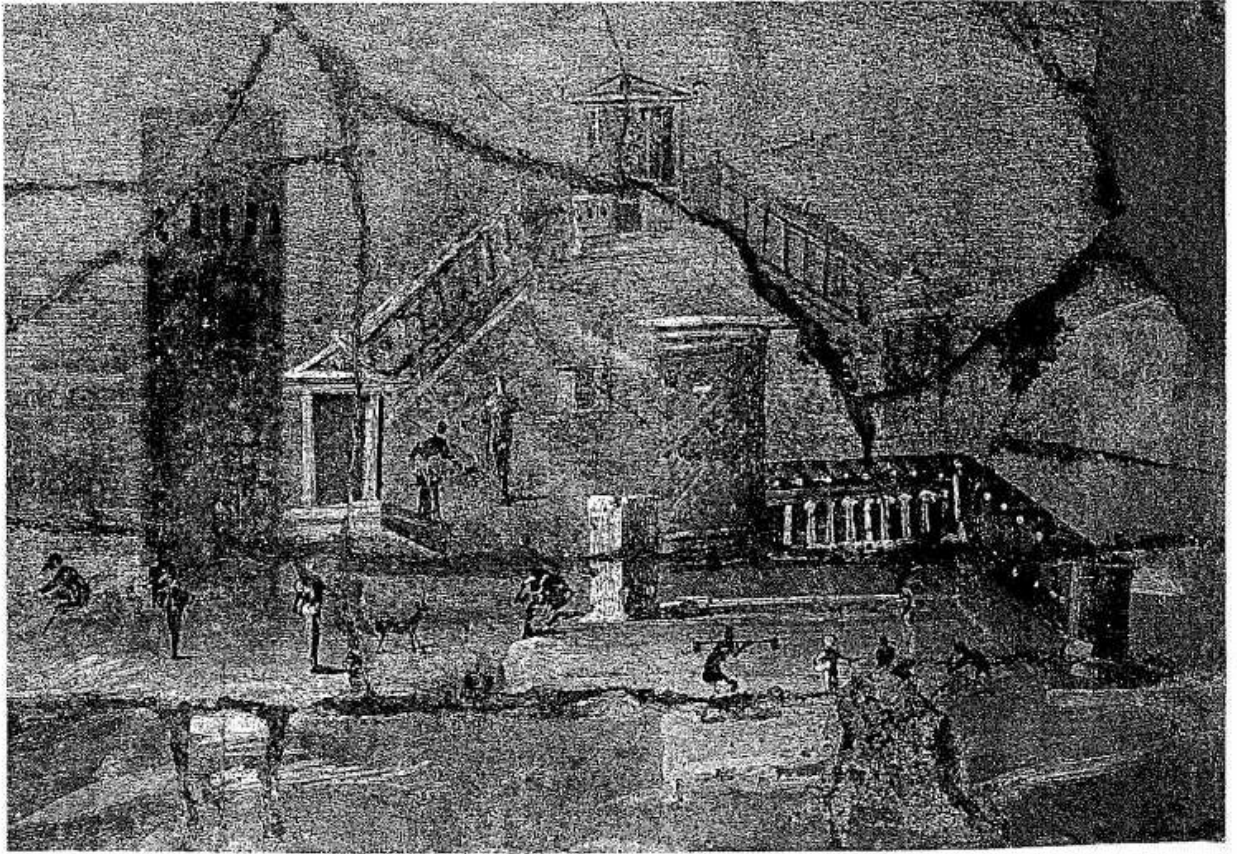


Praeda Iuliae Felicis Friezes



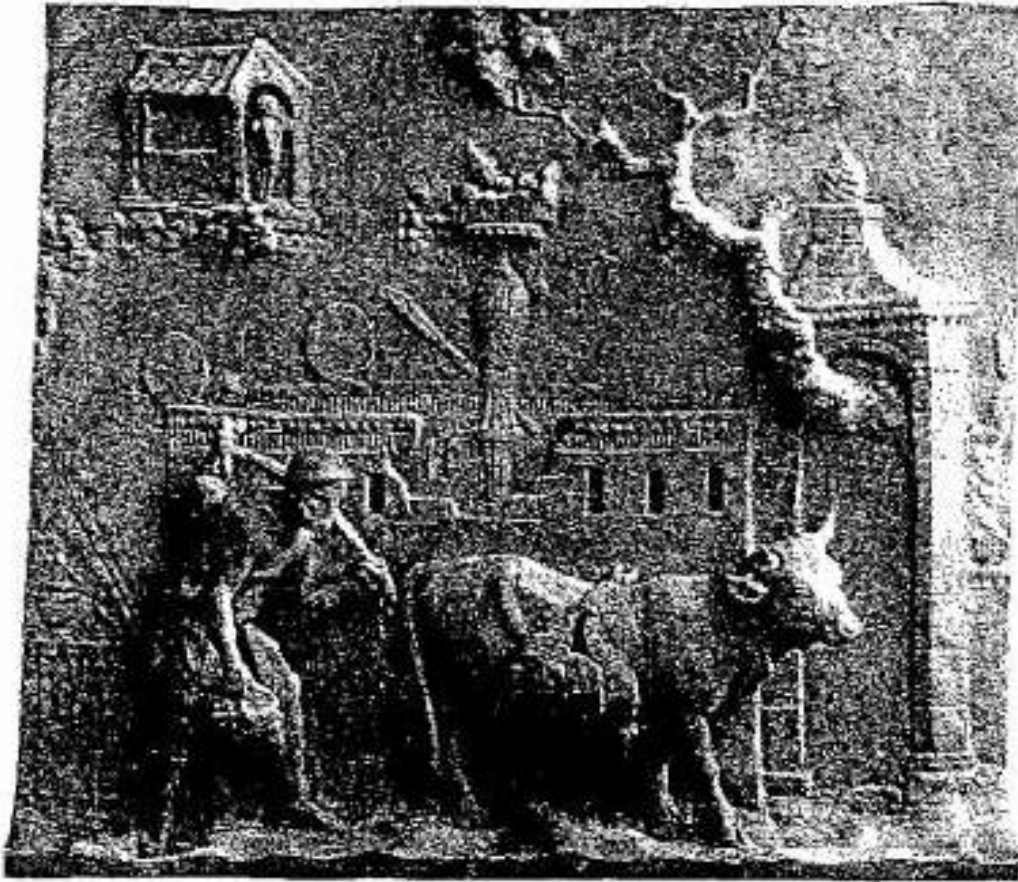


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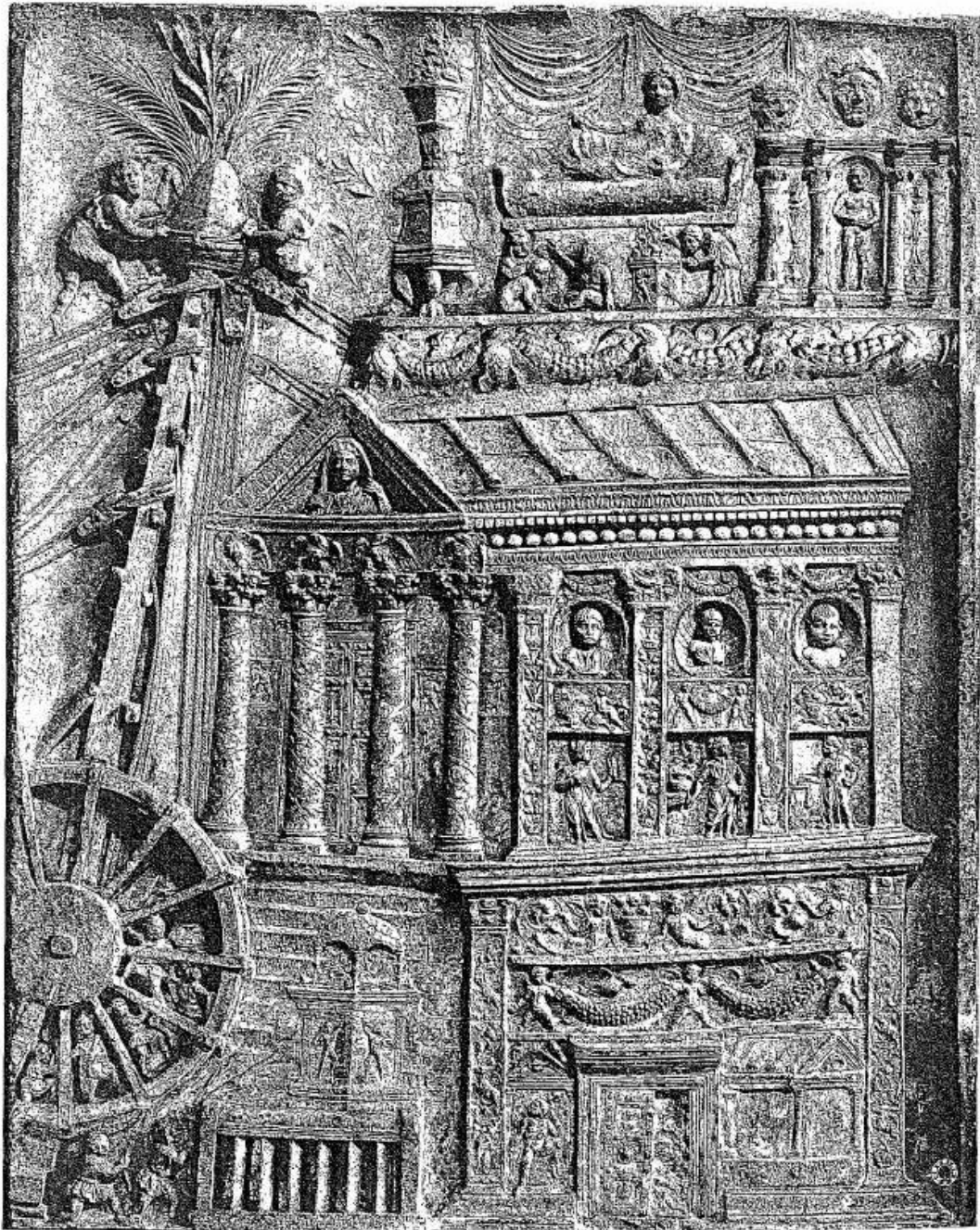


**Pompeian Scene with Men Carrying Yokes**

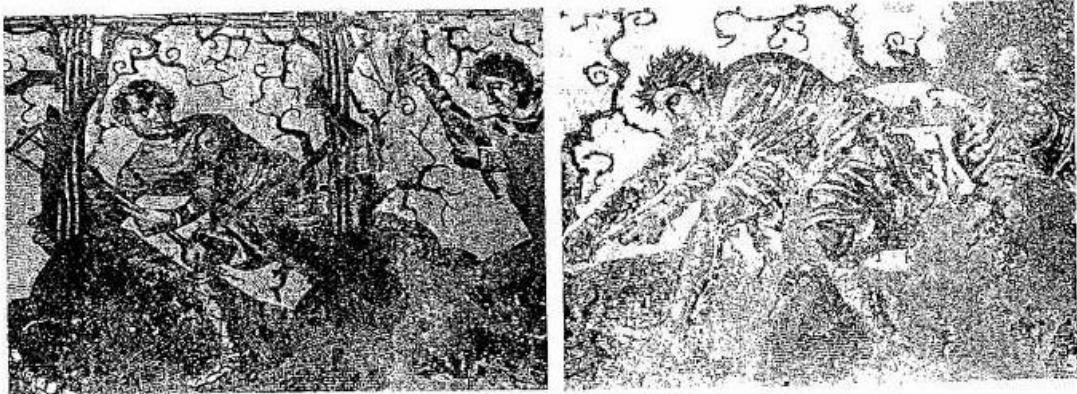




**Man and Cow Relief, currently in Munich**



**Tomb of the Haterii**



**Labors of the Fields, Oudna**

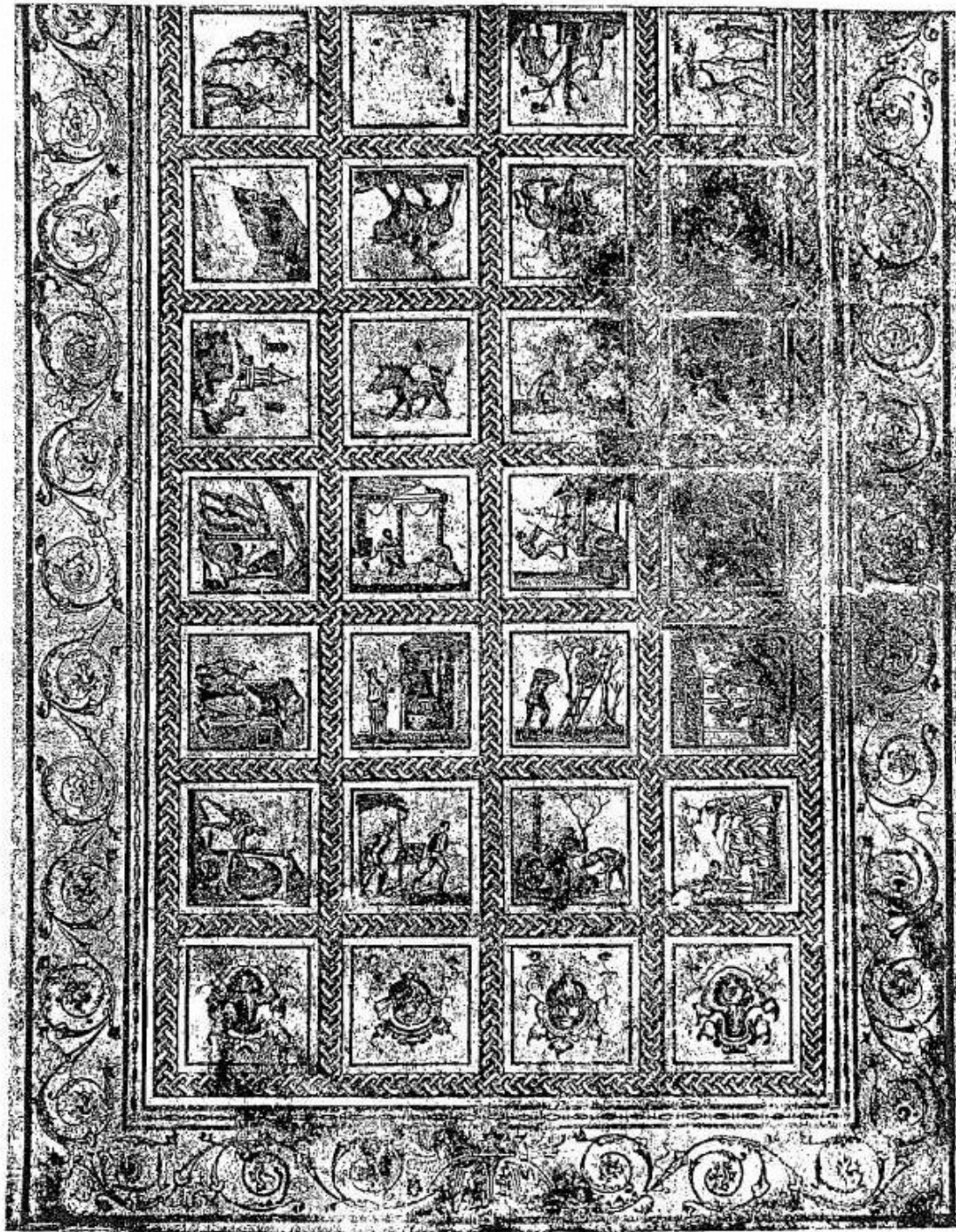


**Agricultural Scenes at Cherchel**



**Saint-Romain-en-Gaul Rustic Calendar Scene, detail**

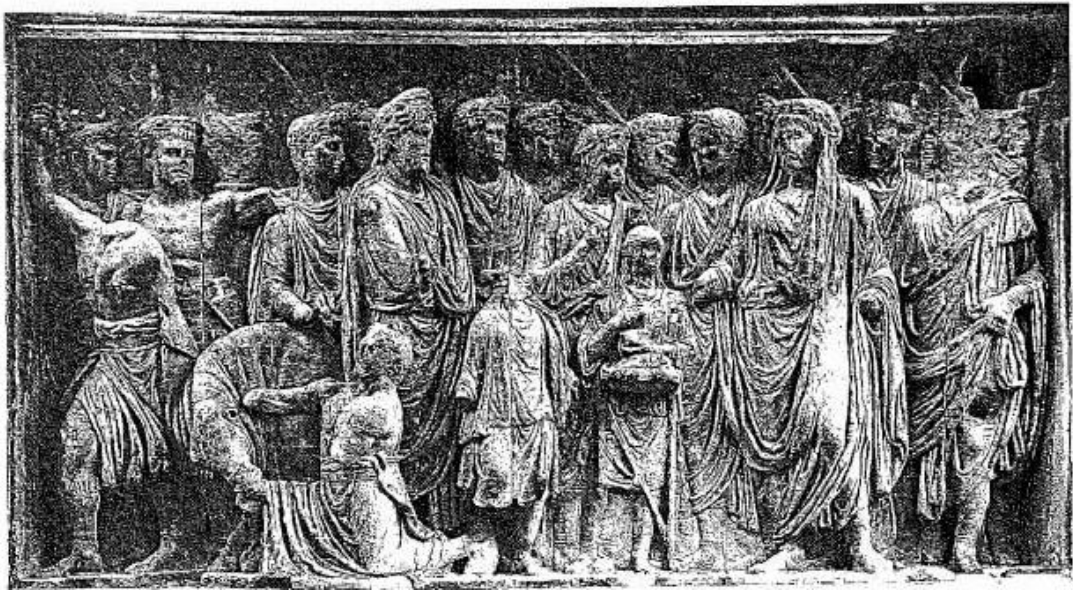




**Saint-Romain-en-Gaul Rustic Calendar**

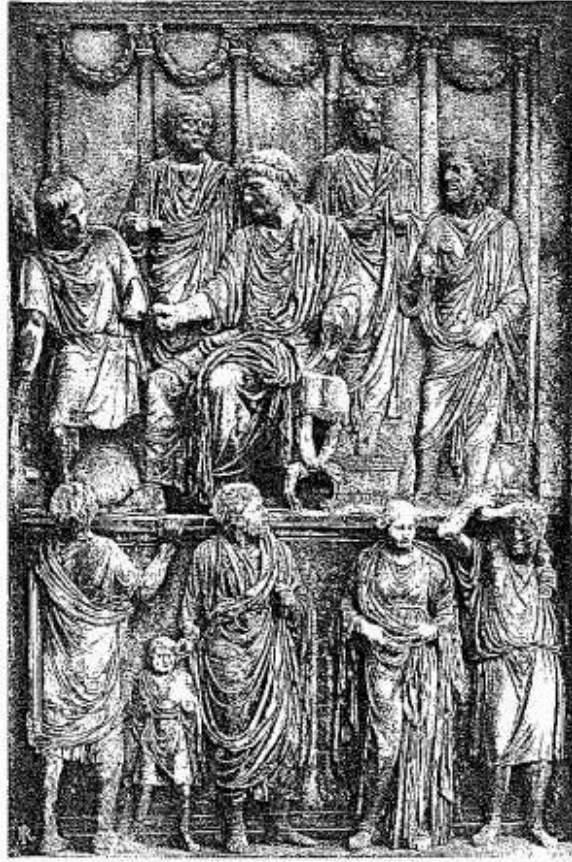


*Arco di Portogallo Adlocutio*



**Alimentary Scenes from Arch of Trajan at Benevento**





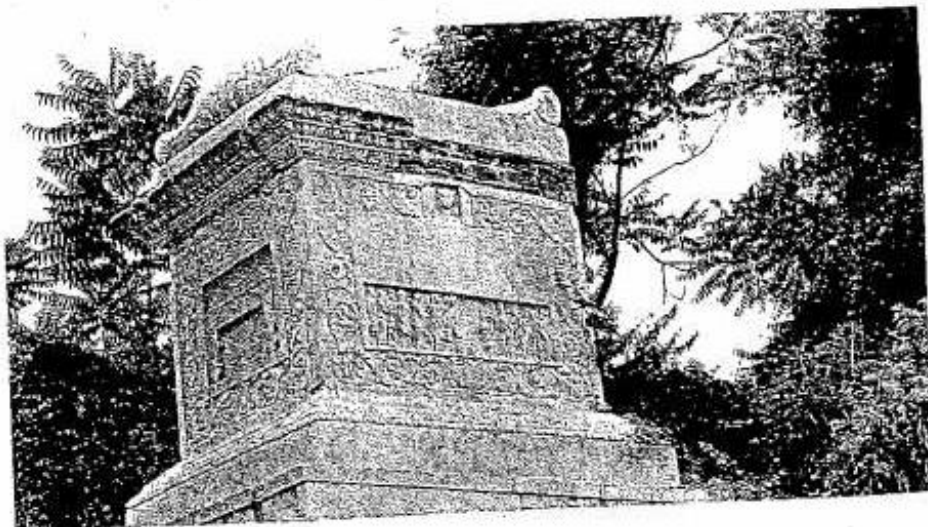
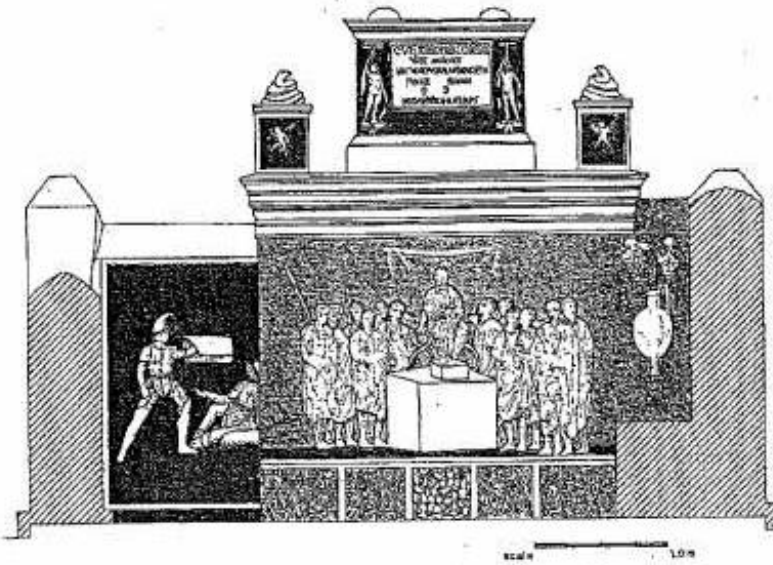
**Alimentary Scene from Arch of Marcus Aurelius,  
now on Arch of Constantine**



*Adlocutio* Scenes from Arch of Constantine



**Private Beneficence Bakery Scene from Pompeii VII.3.30**



**Top: Tomb of Vestorius Priscus**

**Bottom: Tomb of Naevoleia Tyche**

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